OUR OWN DEAR SHEPHEARD
NO. 1877

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 3, 1886,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 26, 1885.

"I am the good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine. As the Father knows Me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down My life for the sheep."
John 10:14, 15.

AS the passage stands in the Authorized Version, it reads like a number of short sentences with scarcely any apparent connection. Even in that form it is precious, for our Lord's pearls are priceless even when they are not threaded together. But when I tell you that in the Greek the word "and" is several times repeated, and that the translators have had to leave out one of these "ands" to make sense of the passage on their line of translation, you will judge that they are none too accurate in this case. To use many "ands" is after the manner of John, but there is usually a true and natural connection between his sentences. The "and" with him is usually a real golden link, and not a mere sound, we need a translation which makes it so. Observe also that in our Version the word "sheep" is put in italics, to show that it is not in the original. There is no need for this alteration if the passage is more closely rendered. Hear, then, the text in its natural form—

"I am the good Shepherd; and I know My own, and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me, and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep."

This reading I have given you is that of the Revised Version. For that Revised Version I have but little care as a general rule, holding it to be by no means an improvement upon our common Authorized Version. It is a useful thing to have it for private reference, but I trust it will never be regarded as the standard, English translation of the New Testament. The Revised Version of the Old Testament is so excellent, that I am half afraid it may carry the Revised New Testament upon its shoulders into general use. I sincerely hope that this may not be the case, for the result would be a decided loss. However, that is not my point. Returning to our subject, I believe that, on this occasion, the Revised Version is true to the original. We will therefore follow it in this instance, and we shall find that it makes most delightful and instructive sense. "I am the good Shepherd; and I know My own, and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me, and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep."

He who speaks to us in these words is the Lord Jesus Christ. To our mind every word of Holy Scripture is precious. When God speaks to us

by priest or prophet, or in any way, we are glad to hear. Though when, in the Old Testament, we meet with a passage which begins with "Thus says the Lord" we feel especially charmed to have the message directly from God's own mouth, yet we make no distinction between this Scripture and that. We accept it all as inspired, and we are not given to dispute about different degrees and varying modes of inspiration, and all that. The matter is plain enough if learned unbelievers did not mystify it, "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim 3:16). Still, there is to our mind a peculiar sweetness about words which were actually spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself; these are as honey in the comb. You have before you, in this text, not that which comes to you by prophet, priest, or king, but that which is spoken to you by one who is Prophet, Priest, and King in one, even your Lord Jesus Christ. He opens His mouth, and speaks to you. You will open your ears, and listen to Him, if you are indeed His own.

Observe here, also, that we have not only Christ for the speaker, but we have Christ for the subject. He speaks, and speaks about Himself. It is not seemly for you, or for me, to extol ourselves, but there is nothing more comely in the world than for Christ to commend Himself. He is other than we are, something infinitely above us, and is not under rules which apply to us fallible mortals. When He speaks forth His own glory, we feel that His speech is not vain-glory; no, rather, when He praises Himself, we thank Him for so doing, and admire the lowly condescension which permits Him to desire and accept honor from such poor hearts as ours. It were pride for us to seek honor of men; it is humility in Him to do so, seeing He is so great a One that the esteem of beings as inferior as we are cannot be desired by Him for His own sake, but for ours. Of all our Lord's words, those are the sweetest in which He speaks about Himself. Even He cannot find another theme which can excel that of Himself.

My brethren, who can speak of Jesus but Himself? He masters all our eloquence. His perfection exceeds our understanding; the light of His excellence is too bright for us, it blinds our eyes. Our Beloved must be His own mirror. None but Jesus can reveal Jesus. Only He can see Himself, and know Himself, and understand Himself, and therefore none but He can reveal Himself. We are most glad that in His tenderness to us He sets Himself forth by many choice metaphors, and instructive emblems, by which He would make us know some little of that love which passes knowledge. With His own hand He fills a golden cup out of the river of His own infinity, and hands it to us that we may drink and be refreshed. Take, then, these words as being doubly refreshing, because they come directly from the Well-Beloved's own mouth, and contain rich revelations of His own all-glorious self. I feel that I must read them again—"I am the good Shepherd; and I know My own, and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me, and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep."

In this text there are three matters about which I shall speak. First, I see here *complete character*. "I am the good Shepherd." He is not a half shepherd, but a shepherd in the fullest possible sense. Secondly, I see

complete knowledge, "and I know My own, and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me, and I know the Father." Thirdly, here is *complete sacrifice*. How preciously that sentence winds up the whole, "and I lay down My life for the sheep!" He goes the full length to which sacrifice can go. He lays down His soul in the stead of His sheep, so the words might not be incorrectly translated. He goes the full length of self-sacrifice for His own.

I. First, then, here is COMPLETE CHARACTER. Whenever the Savior describes Himself by any emblem, that emblem is exalted, and expanded, and yet it is not able to bear all His meaning. The Lord Jesus fills out every type, figure, and character, and when the vessel is filled there is an overflow. There is more in Jesus, the good Shepherd, than you can pack away in a shepherd. He is the good, the great, the chief Shepherd, but He is much more. Emblems to set Him forth may be multiplied as the drops of the morning, but the whole multitude will fail to reflect all His brightness. Creation is too small a frame in which to hang His likeness. Human thought is too contracted, human speech too feeble, to set Him forth to the full. When all the emblems in earth and heaven shall have described Him to their utmost, there will remain something not yet described. You may square the circle before you can set forth Christ in the language of mortal men. He is inconceivably above our conceptions, unutterably above our utterances.

But notice that He here sets Himself forth as a shepherd. Dwell on this for a moment. A shepherd is hardly such a man as we employ in England to look after sheep for a few months, till they are large enough to be slaughtered; a shepherd after the Oriental sort, such as Abraham, Jacob, or David, is quite another person.

The Eastern shepherd is generally *the owner* of the flock, or at least the son of their owner, and so their proprietor in prospect. The sheep are his own. English shepherds seldom, or never, own the sheep, they are employed to take care of them, and they have no other interest in them. Our native shepherds are a very excellent set of men as a rule—those I have known have been admirable specimens of intelligent working men—yet they are not at all like the Oriental shepherd, and cannot be, for he is usually the owner of the flock which he tends. He remembers how he came into possession of the flock, and when and where each of the present sheep was born, and where he has led them, and what trials he had in connection with them, and he remembers this with the emphasis that they are his own inheritance.

His wealth consists in them. He very seldom has much of a house, and he does not usually own much land. He takes his sheep over a good stretch of country, which is open common for all his tribe, but his possessions lie in his flocks. Ask him, "How much are you worth?" He answers, "I own so many sheep." In the Latin tongue the word for money is akin to the word "sheep," because, to many of the first Romans, wool was their wealth, and their fortunes lay in their flocks. The Lord Jesus is our Shepherd; we are His wealth. If you ask what His heritage is, He tells you of "the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." Ask Him what His jewels are, and He replies, *"They* shall be Mine in that day." If you

ask Him where His treasures are, He will tell you, "The Lord's portion is His people. Jacob is the lot of His inheritance." The Lord Jesus Christ has nothing that He values as He does His own people. For their sakes He gave up all that He had, and died naked on the cross. Not only can He say, "I gave Ethiopia and Seba for you," but He "loved His church, and gave Himself for it." He regards His church as being His own body, "the fullness of Him that fills all in all."

The shepherd, as he owns the flock, is also *the caretaker*. He takes care of them always. One of our brethren now present is a fireman, and as he lives at the fire station, he is always on duty. I asked him whether he was not off duty during certain hours of every day, but he said, "No, I am never off duty." He is on duty when he goes to bed, he is on duty while he is eating his breakfast; he is on duty if he walks down the street. Any time the bell may ring the alarm, and he must be in his place, and hasten to the fire. Our Lord Jesus Christ is never off duty. He has constant care of His people day and night. He has declared it—"For Zion's sake will I not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest." He can truly say what Jacob did, "In the day the drought consumed Me, and the frost by night." He says of His flock what He says of His garden, "I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment, lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." I cannot tell you all the care a shepherd has over his flock, because his anxieties are of such a various kind. Sheep have about as many complaints as men. You do not know much about them, and I am not going to enter into details, for the all-sufficient reason that I do not know much about them myself, but the shepherd knows, and the shepherd will tell you that he leads an anxious life. He seldom has all the flock well at one time. Some one or other is sure to be ailing, and he spies it out, and has eye and hand and heart ready for its succor and relief. There are many varieties of complaints and needs, and all these are laid upon the shepherd's heart. He is both possessor and caretaker of the flock.

Then he has to be *the provider* too, for there is not a woolly head among them that knows anything about the finding and selecting of pasturage. The season may be very dry, and where there once was grass there may be nothing but a brown powder. It may be that herbage is only to be found by the side of the rippling brooks, here and there a bit, but the sheep do not know anything about *that;* the shepherd must know everything for them. The shepherd is the sheep's providence. Both for time and for eternity, for body and for soul, our Lord Jesus supplies all our need out of His riches in glory. He is the great storehouse from which we derive everything. He has provided, He does provide, and He will provide, and each one of us may therefore sing, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want."

But, dear friends, we often dream that we are the shepherds, or that we, at any rate, have to find some of the pasture. I could not help saying just now to our friends at our little prayer meeting, "There is a passage in the Psalms which makes the Lord do for us what one would have thought we could have done for ourselves—'He makes me to lie down in green pastures.'" Surely, if a sheep can do nothing else it can lie down. Yet to

lie down is the very hardest thing for God's sheep to do. It is here that the full power of the rest-giving Christ has to come in to make our fretful, worrying, doubtful natures lie down and rest. Our Lord is able to give us perfect peace, and He will do so if we will simply trust to His abounding care. It is the shepherd's business to be the provider; let us remember this, and be very happy.

Moreover, he has to be *the leader*. He leads the sheep wherever they have to go. I have often been astonished at the shepherds in the South of France, which is so much like Palestine, to see where they will take their sheep. Once every week, I saw the shepherd come down to Mentone, and conduct all his flock to the beach. I could see nothing for them but big stones. Folk say that perhaps this is what makes the mutton so hard, but I have no doubt the poor creatures get a little taste of salt, or something which does them good. At any rate, they follow the shepherd, and away he goes up the steep hillsides, taking long steps, till he reaches points where the grass is growing on the sides of the hills. He knows the way, and the sheep have nothing to do but to follow him wherever he goes. Theirs is not to make the way; theirs is not to choose the path, but theirs is to keep close to his heel.

Do you not see our blessed Shepherd leading your own pilgrimage? Cannot you see Him guiding your way? Do you not say, "Yes, He leads me, and it is my joy to follow"? Lead on, O blessed Lord, lead on, and we will follow the prints of Your feet!

The shepherd in the East has also to be *the defender* of the flock, for wolves yet prowl in those regions. All sorts of wild beasts attack the flock, and he must be to the front. Thus is it with our Shepherd. No wolf can attack us without finding our Lord in arms against him. No lion can roar upon the flock without awakening a greater than David. "He that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep."

He is a shepherd, then, and He completely fills the character—much more completely than I can show you just now.

Notice that the text puts an adjective upon the shepherd, decorating him with a chain of gold. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself says, "I am the *good* Shepherd." "The *good* Shepherd"—that is, He is not a thief that steals, and only deals with the sheep as He bears them from the fold to the slaughter. He is not a hireling, He does not do merely what He is paid to do, or commanded to do, but He does everything *con amore,* with a willing heart. He throws His soul into it. There is a goodness, a tenderness, a willingness, a powerfulness, a force, an energy in all that Jesus does that makes Him the best possible Shepherd that can be. He is no hireling, neither is He an idler. Even shepherds that have had their own flocks have neglected them, as there are farmers who do not well cultivate their own farms, but it is never so with Christ. He is the good Shepherd, good up to the highest point of goodness, good in all that is tender, good in all that is kind, good in all the directions in which a shepherd can be needed, good at fight and good at rule, good in watchful oversight, and good in prudent leadership, good every way most eminently.

And then notice He puts it, "I am *the* good Shepherd." That is the point I want to bring out. Of other shepherds we can say, he is *a* shep-

herd, but this is *the* Shepherd. All others in the world are shadows of the true Shepherd, and Jesus is the substance of them all. That which we see in the world with these eyes is after all not the substance, but the type, the shadow. That which we do not see with our eyes, that which only our faith perceives, is after all the real thing. I have seen shepherds, but they were only pictures to me. *The* Shepherd, the real, the truest, the best, the surest example of shepherding is the Christ Himself, and you and I are the sheep. Those sheep we see on yonder mountainside are just types of ourselves, but we are the true sheep, and Jesus is the true Shepherd. If an angel were to fly over the earth to find out the real sheep, and the real Shepherd, he would say, "The sheep of God's pasture are men, and Jehovah is their Shepherd. He is the true, the real Shepherd of the true and real sheep." All the possibilities that lie in a shepherd are found in Christ. Every good thing that you can imagine to be, or that should be, in a shepherd, you find in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, I want you to notice that, according to the text, the Lord Jesus Christ greatly rejoices in this. He says, "I am the good Shepherd." He does not confess that fact as if He was ashamed of it, but He repeats it in this chapter so many times that it almost reads like the refrain of a song. "I am the good Shepherd," He evidently rejoices in it. He rolls it under His tongue as a sweet morsel. Evidently it is to His heart's content. He does not say, "I am the Son of God, I am the Son of man, I am the Redeemer," but this He does say, and He congratulates Himself upon it, "I am the good Shepherd."

This should encourage you and me to get a full hold of the word. If Jesus is so pleased to be my Shepherd, let me be equally pleased to be His sheep, and let me avail myself of all the privileges that are wrapped up in His being my Shepherd, and in my being His sheep. I see that it will not worry Him for me to be His sheep. I see that my needs will cause Him no perplexity. I see that He will not be going out of His way to attend to my weakness and trouble. He delights to dwell on the fact, "I am the good Shepherd." He invites me, as it were, to come and bring my wants and woes to Him, look up to Him, and be fed by Him. Therefore I will do it.

Does it not make you feel truly happy to hear your own Lord say Himself, and say it to you out of this precious Book, "I am the good Shepherd"? Do you not reply, "Indeed You are a good Shepherd. You are a good Shepherd to me. My heart lays emphasis upon the word 'good' and says of You, 'there is none good but One, and You are that good One.' You are the good Shepherd of the sheep"?

So much, then, concerning the complete character.

II. May the Holy Spirit bless the word still more, while I speak in my broken way upon the next point; THE COMPLETE KNOWLEDGE.

The knowledge of Christ towards His sheep, and of the sheep towards Him, is wonderfully complete. I must read the text again—"I know My own, and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me, and I know the Father."

First, then, consider *Christ's knowledge of His own, and the comparison by which He sets it forth,* "As the Father knows Me." I cannot conceive a stronger comparison. Do you know how much the Father knows

the Son, who is His glory, His darling, His *alter ego,* His other self—yes, one God with Him? Do you know how intimate the knowledge of the Father must be of His Son, who is His own wisdom, yes, who is His own self? The Father and the Son are one spirit. We cannot tell how intimate is that knowledge, and yet so intimately, so perfectly, does the great Shepherd know His sheep.

He knows their *number*. He will never lose one. He will count them all again in that day when the sheep shall pass again under the hand of Him that tells them, and then He will make full tale of them. "Of all that You have given Me," He says, "I have lost none." He knows the number of those for whom He paid the ransom price.

He knows their *persons*. He knows the age and character of each of His own. He assures us that the very hairs of our head are all numbered. Christ has not an unknown sheep. It is not possible that He should have overlooked or forgotten one of them. He has such an intimate knowledge of all who are redeemed with His most precious blood that He never mistakes one of them for another, nor misjudges one of them. He knows their constitutions—those that are weak and feeble, those that are nervous and frightened, those that are strong, those that have a tendency to presumption, those that are sleepy, those that are brave, those that are sick, sorry, worried, or wounded. He knows those that are hunted by the devil, those that are caught up between the jaws of the lion, and shaken till the very life is almost driven out of them. He knows their feelings, fears, and frights. He knows the secret ins and outs of every one of us better than any one of us knows himself.

He knows our *trials*—the particular trial under which you are now bowed down, my sister, our difficulties—that special difficulty which seems to block up your way, my brother, at this very time. All the ingredients of our life cup are known to Him. "I know My own, as the Father knows Me." It is impossible to conceive a more complete knowledge than that which the Father has of His only-begotten Son, and it is equally impossible to conceive a more complete knowledge than that which Jesus Christ has of every one of His chosen.

He knows our *sins*. I often feel glad to think that He always did know our evil natures, and what would come of them. When He chose us, He knew what we were, and what we would be. He did not buy His sheep in the dark. He did not choose us without knowing all the devious ways of our past and future lives—

"He saw us ruined in the fall,
Yet loved us notwithstanding all."

Herein lies the splendor of His grace. "Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate." His election implies foreknowledge of all our ill manners. They say of human love that it is blind, but Christ's love has many eyes, and all its eyes are open, and yet He loves us still.

I need not enlarge upon this. It ought, however, to be very full of comfort to you that you are so known of your Lord, especially as He knows you not merely with the cold, clear knowledge of the intellect, but with the knowledge of love and of affection. He knows you in His heart. You are peculiarly dear to Him. You are approved of Him. You are accepted of

Him. He knows you by acquaintance with you, not by hearsay. He knows you by communion with you; He has been with you in sweet fellowship. He has read you as a man reads his book, and remembers what he reads. He knows you by sympathy with you, He is a man like yourself—

"He knows what sore temptations mean,
For He has felt the same."

He knows your weaknesses. He knows the points wherein you suffer most, for—

"In every pang that rends the heart
The Man of sorrows had a part."

He gained this knowledge in the school of sympathetic suffering. "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered." "He was in all points made like unto His brethren," and by being made like us, He has come to know us, and He does know us in a very practical and tender way. You have a watch, and it will not run, or it runs very irregularly, and you give it into the hands of one who knows nothing about watches, and he says, "I will clean it for you." He will do it more harm than good. But here is the very person who made the watch. He says, "I put every wheel into its place, I made the whole of it, from beginning to end." You think to yourself, "I feel the utmost confidence in trusting that man with my watch; he can surely put it right, for he made it." It often cheers my heart to think that since the Lord made me, He can put me right, and keep me so to the end. My Maker is my Redeemer. He that first made me has made me again, and will make me perfect, to His own praise and glory. That is the first part of this complete knowledge.

The second part of the subject is *our knowledge of the Lord, and the fact by which it is illustrated*. "And My own know Me, even as I know the Father." I think I hear some of you say, "I do not see so much in that. I can see a great deal more in Christ's knowing us." Beloved, I see a great deal in our knowing Christ. That He should know me is great condescension, but it must be easy to Him to know me. Being so divine, with such a piercing eye as His, it is amazingly condescending, as I say, but it is not difficult for Him to know me. The marvel is that I should ever know Him. That such a stupid, blind, deaf, dead soul as mine should ever know Him, and should know Him as He knows the Father, is ten thousand miracles in one. Oh, sirs, this is a wonder so great that I do not think you and I have come at it yet to the full, or else we would sit down in glad surprise, and say—This proves Him to be the good Shepherd indeed, not only that He knows His flock, but that He has taught them so well that they know Him! With such a flock as Christ has, that He should be able to train His sheep so that they should be able to know Him, and to know Him as He knows the Father; is miraculous.

O beloved, if this is true of us, that we know our Shepherd, we may clap our hands for very joy! And yet I think it is true even now. At any rate, I know so much of my Lord that nothing gives me so much joy as to hear of Him. Brethren, there is no boasting in this personal assertion of mine. It is only the bare truth. You can say the same, can you not? If anybody were to preach to you the finest sermon that was ever delivered, would it charm you if there were no Christ in it? No. But you will come

and hear me talk about Jesus Christ in words as simple as ever I can find, and you cry one to another, "It was good to be there."—

"You dear Redeemer, dying Lamb,
We love to hear of Thee:
No music's like Your charming name,
Nor half so sweet can be."

Now mark that this is the way in which Jesus knows the Father. Jesus delights in His Father, and you delight in Jesus. I know you do, and herein the comparison holds good.

Moreover, does not the dear name of Jesus stir your very soul? What is it that makes you feel as if you wish to hasten away, that you might be doing holy service for the Lord? What makes your very heart awake, and feel ready to leap out of your body? What but hearing of the glories of Jesus? Play on what string you please, and my ear is deaf to it, but when you once begin to tell of Calvary, and sing the song of free grace, and dying love, oh, then my soul opens all her ears, and drinks in the music, and then her blood begins to stir, and she is ready to shout for joy! Do you not even now sing—

"Oh, for this love let rocks and hills
Their lasting silence break,
And all harmonious human tongues
The Savior's praises speak.
Yes, we will praise You, dearest Lord,
Our souls are all on flame,
Hosanna round the spacious earth
To Your adored name"?

Yes, we know Jesus. We feel the power of our union with Him. We know Him, brethren, so that we are not to be deceived by false shepherds. There is a way nowadays of preaching Christ against Christ. It is a new device of the devil to set up Jesus against Jesus, His kingdom against His atonement, His precepts against His doctrines. The half Christ in his example is put up, to frighten souls away from the whole Christ, who saves the souls of men from guilt as well as from sin, from hell as well as from folly. But they cannot deceive us in that way. No, beloved, we know our Shepherd from all others. We know Him from a statue covered with his clothes. We know the living Christ, for we have come into living contact with Him, and we cannot be deceived any more than Jesus Christ Himself can be deceived about the Father. "My own know Me, even as I know the Father." We know Him by union with Him, and by communion with Him. "We have seen the Lord." "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."

We know Him by love; our soul cleaves to Him, even as the heart of Christ cleaves to the Father. We know Him by trusting Him—"He is all my salvation, and all my desire." I remember once feeling many questions as to whether I was a child of God or not. I went into a little chapel, and I heard a good man preach. He was a simple working man. I heard him preach, and I made my handkerchief drenched with my tears as I heard him talk about Christ, and the precious blood. When I was preaching the same things to others I was wondering whether this truth was mine, but while I was hearing for myself I knew it was mine, for my very soul lived upon it. I went to that good man, and thanked him for the

sermon. He asked me who I was. When I told him, he turned all manner of colors. "Why," he said, "Sir that was your own sermon." I said, "Yes, I knew it was, and it was good of the Lord to feed me with food that I had prepared for others." I perceived that I had a true taste for what I myself knew to be the gospel of Jesus Christ. Oh, yes, we do love our good Shepherd! We cannot help it.

And we know Him also by a deep sympathy with Him, for what Christ desires to do, we also long to do. He loves to save souls, and so do we. Would we not save all the people in a whole street if we could? Yes, in a whole city, and in the whole world! Nothing makes us as glad as that Jesus Christ is a Savior. "There is news in the paper," says one. That news is often of small importance to our hearts. I happened to hear that a poor servant girl had heard me preach the truth, and found Christ, and I confess I felt more interest in that fact than in all the rise and fall of Whigs or Tories. What does it matter who is in Parliament, so long as souls are saved? That is the main thing. If the kingdom of Christ grows, all the other kingdoms are of small account. That is the one kingdom for which we live, and for which we would gladly die. As there is a boundless sympathy between the Father and the Son, so is there between Jesus and ourselves.

We know Christ as He knows the Father, because we are one with Him. The union between Christ and His people is as real and as mysterious as the union between the Son and the Father.

We have a beautiful picture before us. Can you realize it for a minute? The Lord Jesus here among us—picture Him! He is the Shepherd. Then, around Him are His own people, and wherever He goes they go. He leads them into green pastures, and beside the still waters. And there is this peculiarity about them, He knows them as He looks upon each of them, and they every one of them know Him. There is a deeply intimate and mutual knowledge between them. As surely as He knows them, they know Him. The world knows neither the Shepherd nor the sheep, but they know each other. As surely, as truly, and as deeply, as God the Father knows the Son, so does this Shepherd know His sheep, and as God the Son knows His Father, so do these sheep know their Shepherd. Thus in one band, united by mutual communion, they travel through the world to heaven. "I know My own, and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me, and I know the Father." Is not that a blessed picture? God help us to figure in it!

III. The last subject is COMPLETE SACRIFICE. The complete sacrifice is thus described—*"I lay down My life for the sheep."*

These words are repeated in this chapter in different forms some four times. The Savior keeps on saying, "I lay down My life for the sheep." Read the eleventh verse, "The good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep." The fifteenth verse, "I lay down My life for the sheep." The seventeenth verse, "I lay down My life, that I may take it again." The eighteenth verse, "I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." It looks as if this was another refrain of our Lord's personal hymn. I call this passage His pastoral song. The good Shepherd with His pipe sings to Himself

and to His flock, and this comes in at the end of each stanza, "I lay down My life for the sheep."

Did it not mean, first, that He was always doing so? All His life long He was, as it were, laying it down for them, He was divesting Himself of the garments of life, till He came to be fully disrobed on the cross. All the life He had, all the power He had, He was always laying it out for His sheep. It means that, to begin with.

And then it means that the sacrifice was actively performed. It was ever in the doing as long as He lived, but He did it actively. He did not die for the sheep merely, but He laid down His life, which is another thing. Many a man has died for Christ; it was all that he could do. But we cannot lay down our lives, because they are due already as a debt of nature to God, and we are not permitted to die at our own wills. That is suicidal and improper. With the Lord Christ it was totally different. He was, as it were, actively passive. "I lay down My life for the sheep. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father."

I like to think of our Good Shepherd, not merely as dying for us, but as willingly dying—laying down His life; while He had that life, using it for us, and when the time came, putting off that life on our behalf. This has now been actually done. When He spoke these words, it had not been done. At this time it has been done. "I lay down My life for the sheep" may now be read, "I have laid down My life for the sheep." For you, beloved, He has given His hands to the nails, and His feet to the cruel iron. For you He has borne the fever and the bloody sweat, for you He has cried "Eloi, Eloi, lame Sabachthani," for you He has given up the ghost.

And the beauty of it is that He is not ashamed to avow the objective of it. "I lay down My life *for the sheep."* Whatever Christ did for the world—and I am not one of those who would limit the bearings of the death of Christ upon the world—yet His peculiar glory is, "I lay down My life *for the sheep*.

Great Shepherd, do You mean to say that You have died for such as these? What! For these sheep? Died for them? What! Die for sheep, Shepherd? Surely You have other objectives for which to live beside sheep. Have You not other loves, other joys? We know that it would grieve You to see the sheep killed, torn by the wolf, or scattered, but You really have not gone so far in love for them that for the sake of those poor creatures You would lay down your life? "Ah, yes," He says, "I would, I have!" Carry your wondering thoughts to Christ Jesus. What! What! What! Son of God, infinitely great and inconceivably glorious Jehovah, would You lay Your life down for men and women? They are no more in comparison with You than so many ants and wasps, pitiful and obnoxious creatures. You could make ten thousand millions of them with a word, or crush them out of existence at one blow of Your hand. They are poor things; make the most you can of them. They have hard hearts, and wandering wills, and the best of them are no better than they should be. Savior, did you die for such? He looks around, and says, "Yes, I did. I did. I laid down My life for the sheep. I am not ashamed of them, and I

am not ashamed to say that I died for them." No, beloved, He is not ashamed of His dying love. He has told it to His brethren up yonder, and made it known to all the servants in His Father's house, and this has become the song of that house, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain!" Shall not we take it up, and say, "For You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood"? Whatever men may talk about particular redemption, Christ is not ashamed of it. He glories that He laid down His life for the sheep. *For the sheep,* mark you. He says not for the world. There is a bearing of the death of Christ towards the world, but here He boasts, and glories in the specialty of His sacrifice. "I lay down My life *for the sheep"*—"instead of the sheep," it might be read. He glories in substitution for His people. He makes it His boast, when He speaks of His chosen, that He suffered in their stead—that He bore, that they might never bear, the wrath of God on account of sin. What He glories in, we also glory in. "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world!"

O beloved, what a blessed Christ we have who loves us so, who knows us so—whom we also know and love! May others be taught to know Him, and to love Him! Yes, at this hour may they come and put their trust in Him, as the sheep trust to the shepherd! We ask it for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 10.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—23 (VERSION 2), 402, 400.

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

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

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

A TRAITOR SUSPECTED AND CONVICTED
NO. 1878

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JANUARY 10, 1886,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S DAY EVENING, AUGUST 16, 1885.

"The carnal mind is enmity against God."
Romans 8:7.

MEN naturally mind the things of the flesh. This is as sad as if a seraph should rake upon a dunghill. It is not a wonder that a brute beast cares for the flesh, for it is only flesh, but it is lamentable in the highest degree that man, in whom there is a principle infinitely superior to mere materialism, should nevertheless so generally give himself up to minding the things of the body—the things of time and earth.

The world's catechism is, "What shall we eat? What shall we drink? With what shall we be clothed?" Men begin with these questions as soon as they leave their father's roof, and they often die with them upon their lips. It is said of the peasants around Nice that they seem to have no thought of anything but how they can make a living, and save a little money, and I am afraid they are by no means a singular people; in some form or other the world is in all men's hearts and thoughts. The dust of earth has blinded eyes that were meant for heaven. You would think, from the talk of many a human being, that he himself was meant to walk about for a few years, and then to occupy six feet of earth, and never be heard of more. The creature's life seems in consistency with such a destiny, and is by no means suggestive of a life to come, or an existence in a nobler sphere. Yet there is in us an immortal spirit, the very heathen were convinced of this. Man has an inborn consciousness that he is not to be extinguished by death. His strange longings, hopes, and fears, are, in a disjointed way, the proofs of this primeval knowledge, which he can never quite forget. It was not needful that Scripture should reveal the future existence of the soul. When you miss a clear statement of that truth, you only miss that which is supposed to be already known. The existence of God and of an immortal soul in man is taken for granted in Scripture. A future state is plain upon the face of things. Every thoughtful man can see that there is a wide difference between the brute that grovels and man that aspires.

Now, if this is so, one would have supposed that this immortal being would, in thought, have projected himself into the next state, and that he would have been very much occupied with the consideration of where he should be, and what he should be, in the world to come. One would have

suspected that he would have shaped the actions of the present with a view to the future, and so have ceased to be earth-bound and hide-bound, and would have risen into something superior to the life of the mere animal. Yet men by nature do not give dominion to their nobler part, but allow the brute in them to overrule the mind in them. They are earthly-minded, and then, because they are earthly-minded, spiritual things are despised by them, and the great God, who is the Spirit of all spirits, is most of all neglected, and treated as if He were of small account. The minding of the flesh sours the soul against God, so that he who minds the flesh is soon filled with enmity against God.

Our apostle declares this fact, and declares it very positively. He does not say that the carnal mind is *at* enmity to God, but he gives us the solid noun, he says, "The carnal mind *is* enmity against God." It is enmity in essence, altogether and always enmity against God. It is a solid block of aversion to God, and animosity against Him. It is very strong language to use, but so he puts it under the guidance of inspiration, and therefore he does not mistake or exaggerate. The mind that looks after the flesh, the carnal mind, is a mass of downright, undiluted enmity to the Most High God. Such a mind is opposed, not merely to the things of God, the laws of God, and the truth of God, but to God Himself. The mind which is under the dominion of the flesh cannot endure the being of God; His character is the object of its hate; no, such a mind is hate, itself, towards God.

Of some men this need not be stated, for they declare it themselves. There are men (God be merciful to them, and change them!) who deliberately say that they do not believe in God, and who use all kinds of opprobrious epithets towards our Lord, and the divine truth which He has been pleased to reveal. These men's sins "go before them into judgment." They will need no witnesses against them at the bar of their Maker, they themselves have testified against themselves. Their mind is evidently, confessedly, intensely enmity against God.

Many others would not care to confess their enmity so distinctly, and yet their lives proclaim it. Their outward conduct shows that they are not only enemies of God and to His Christ, but that their heart is a mass of enmity to Him; their speech betrays the fact that they are not reconciled to God. Some of these even make profession of being His friends, and yet of such Paul said, "Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ"—*the* enemies beyond all others, for they have entered into the church by treachery, and thus have attacked the Lord in His own house, where they can do most mischief. They blasphemously misuse their profession of faith to comfort them in their sins, and while they vow that they are God's servants, their lives show that they are the willing slaves of a very different master.

I am not at this time intending to speak to these persons, of whom I will only say—The Lord have mercy upon any of us if that is our unhappy case! If we have dared to play the Judas, if we have ventured to enroll

ourselves among the friends of Jesus, and yet are giving Him a traitorous kiss, may infinite grace yet convert us! Oh, that we may not turn out to be sons of perdition, but may we be delivered from hypocrisy, and made honest in the sight of the Most High!

But I am going to deal at this time with another class of persons who would say, each one for himself, "I am not a Christian, but I hope to be so one of these days. I do not think that I am converted. I could not claim to be a believer in Christ savingly, or a lover of God so as to take my place among His people, but yet I do not think that I am an enemy to God." The accusation of our text is very distasteful to such persons; they think it too harsh a charge to bring against them. Yet, dear hearer, you live not for the world to come, nor for spiritual things, nor for God, and therefore, according to the teaching of the text, your mind, being carnal or fleshly, is enmity against God. I do not like to say any hard thing of you, because you are a very kind person, but I dare not say less than the Word of the Lord, and you would not respect me if I were wicked enough to flatter you. You are moral, excellent, and amiable, but still you are enmity against God in your heart, for the things of the flesh are uppermost in your mind. Are you angry that I tell you this? What would you have me do? You expect your physician to spy out your disease, and your lawyer to discover any flaw there may be in the deeds of an estate you are purchasing, should not your minister tell you of the evils of your heart? If you want to hear soft falsehoods, go elsewhere, I will have none of your blood on my garment. If you are not born again from above, I am compelled to say, even of the best of you, that your fleshly mind is enmity against God.

At this time my business shall be, first, to *discover that enmity;* secondly, *to deplore it,* and then, thirdly, may God the Holy Spirit be pleased to *deliver you from it,* and deliver you from it even while we are talking about it! O eternal Spirit, renew us in the spirit of our mind and cause us to receive that spiritual mind which is the mark of the friend of God!

I. First, then, I HAVE TO DISCOVER THIS ENMITY which is in your heart. I know what you are saying, "You cannot do so. I am indifferent, but I am not enmity, and I will not be called so." I hear your denial, but the cap will fit you very well before I have done, and you will be obliged to wear it, I am sure you will. If you are not obliged to plead guilty, none will rejoice more than I if you can prove that you are reconciled to God by the death of His Son.

The man who does not love God, nor serve Him, nor even profess to do so, has in his heart a settled enmity against God. Let me show it to you. Do not shut your eyes to clear evidence.

First, the carnally-minded man is enmity against God as a *servant*. Take this description of yourselves, and see if it does not lead to your conviction. You are all servants to God, for He has made you, and not you yourselves and He that made you ought to have the use of you. You are under obligations to your Creator, your Preserver, your Redeemer, and these obligations ought to be recognized, but you do not recognize

them, on the contrary, you act in a way which leads me to charge you with enmity against God, your liege Lord and King. Judge if it is not so. Here is a servant of yours, and he will not serve you. Set that down to laziness if you please, and the case will be bad enough. But you find him working very hard for somebody else! Then it cannot be laziness which makes him decline your service. See him, he is toiling for your enemy from morning to night, but though he is your servant, he altogether refuses to serve *you*. What can be his motive? Many of you are not serving God, and yet you are not lazy. Your neglect of obedience to the Lord is not caused by love of ease. You are working very hard for something else—for yourselves, for your family, for approval, for wealth, or some other objective, so that while you will not obey your God, whom you ought to honor, you are serving some other lord. Does not this create a natural suspicion that you are not on good terms with your Maker?

But suppose, in the case of your servant, it should turn out that he actually does heavier work for another than he would have been expected to do for you? Suppose that he does harder and more degrading labor than you would have required of him and that he does it willingly; does it with all his might, and yet he will not serve *you?* I think you would say, "This man must be filled with enmity to me. He works for another, and will not work for me; he does far harder work for another than ever I have proposed that he would do for me." Do not forget that the slavery of sin is much harder, and much more degrading, than the service of God. The service of the world is much sterner, much more exacting, and much more wearisome, than the service of the Lord Jesus Christ. They that have served the world best will tell you that there is but little solace in the labor, while those who serve God best continually say that His yoke is easy, and His burden is light. They that serve God with all their heart find an intense delight in His service, and this is not true of the vassalage of sin. "His commandments are not grievous," but the ways of sin are full of travail and disappointment and anguish. If a man prefers to bear the weary burden of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and will not take upon his shoulders the lighter load of Christ, what can be the reason of it but that he is at enmity with God?

And suppose, moreover, that your servant, who is working for somebody else, should get very poor wages, while you are willing to pay him the largest wages that can be proposed, and yet he will take the harder work and the lesser wage, and will not come to you and take the easier work at higher wages? How could you account for this, except upon the supposition that the man hated you? Sirs, the case is thoroughly parallel with yours. "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life." Let a man work as hard as ever he may for himself and for the world, the whole that he can make of it is death. Why then, does he choose a bitter toil and a deadly wage? "What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his soul?" Why does a man follow such a profitless business? You know what the world's poet makes Wolsey say, when he comes to die—

"Had I but served my God with half the zeal
I served my king, he would not in my age
Have left me naked to my enemies."

The service of God is a remunerative service, He gives wages in the work, and an abundant reward, according to His grace, when the work is done. If men refuse such service, what can their motive be? The wages of sin is death—eternal death. Infinite misery follows upon the course of this world, if men choose such service, what can be their motive, what but downright hatred of God as a Master, and a resolve to have the devil himself for lord, and hell for a wage, sooner than serve the living God? Why then, sir, it must be so, if I take you on the footing of a servant, that, inasmuch as you will serve other things with all your might at the poorest wage, and will not serve God when the recompense of His reward is altogether boundless, then my reason forces me to the conclusion that your mind is enmity against God.

Let me consider you under another figure. This time it shall be that of a *subject* towards a king. Suppose that we are living in times in which there is a king, a rightful monarch upon the throne, but there is also a pretender who has set up a claim for the crown, and there is a war going on between the true monarch and the pretender? You are one of those who do not side with the pretender; at least, you say you do not. You dwell among the subjects of the king, and though you act somewhat strangely, yet you deny that you are the king's enemy. But, listen to me. There might be, in this city of London, certain persons who would not be willing to confess that they were on the pretender's side, and yet their course of action might lead you to feel that they must be so, and that they must be enemies of the king. Suppose that a certain man lives on your street, and you meet with him in business, in trade, and in common conversation from day to day, and yet you never hear him mention the name of the king. Would not his silence be suspicious? If anybody else mentions the king's name, he edges off from it. He never utters a word that would enable you to feel that he is a loyal subject. He does not openly propose three cheers for the pretender in a public meeting, nor does he hang out the pretender's flag, but, on the other hand, you noticed that the last time they were crying, "Bravo," for the king, he was as quiet as if he had been a mute. And you have also seen that whenever conversation has gone that way, he has been as mute as a fish. He has no opinion on politics; he says that he has enough to do to mind his own business. I am half afraid that the fellow is an enemy. Still waters run deep, and I fancy that we shall find a deep traitor under the coat of this silent gentleman. I begin to think that he must be on the wrong side, and it grows upon my mind that he must be an enemy to our lawful sovereign, for month after month, while all the country has been ringing with the war-cry, and the whole nation has been divided into two camps, this man has never said a good word for the king—has never so much as mentioned him. I feel morally certain that in his heart this close-mouthed being must be an enemy to the king. Are you not very much of my mind? Do you want me to explain the parable? Does it not fit your case, my friend?

All these years you have been hearing about God and His Christ, but you have not had a good word to say for either of them. When you are in company, you manifest a discreet silence. If there were a debate upon vital godliness, you would take no side. You have nothing to say for Jesus and His precious blood. You are neutral and silent; and why? You are such "a good easy man" that you are not willing to fight for truth and righteousness. I suspect you greatly. I am solemnly afraid that you are an enemy.

Now, suppose that the king has achieved a great success. News has come that in a great battle the pretender has sustained a heavy defeat. The flags are hanging out along the streets, and there is an illumination at night. There is no flag at your house. At night there are no candles in your window. You have nothing to say upon the important tidings. Friends, what are we to make of this man? He never says a word about our king or his doings, and he does not share in the joy when everybody is in the street at night, hurrahing because of his Majesty's victory. He walks along as if he had no interest in it. I am afraid that, if there were any spies about, they would report him for an enemy, and I do not think they could be much blamed if they did so. Dear hearers, some of you feel no interest in the triumphs of Messiah's kingdom, and are under no concern about His gospel. So many persons were converted under a revival, but it is nothing to you. Whole streets in this city are Godless and Christless, but what of that? You do not really care whether this nation or that shall begin to own the sway of Christ. You show no opposition to King Jesus, but still you take no delight in the growth of His dominion, or the increase of His glory. If true religion were banished out of the land, you would not lose a single night's rest, and if it covered the whole earth, it would excite in you no enthusiasm. Does it not look as if you might be very shrewdly suspected to have the carnal mind which is enmity against God? I might work out this subject further, but I only need to light the candle of your conscience, and you will not have to look far to find a traitor.

Further than that, they have been raising regiments in the city to help the king. There have been enthusiastic meetings of young men who have enlisted in his cause. They have shouldered their rifles, and have been ready to shed their blood on the behalf of their lawful sovereign. There is news of an invasion, the enemy's ships are near the shore; the citizens have come together in crowds. This man was not at the meeting. He did not propose to be a soldier. He did not contribute a farthing to the expenses of the campaign. He did nothing whatever for his king. Putting all this with the rest, it seems to me that he must be an enemy. Why, surely, if we had enemies at London's gates today—if we knew that they were about to sack this city, and kill our wives and children, why even the peace men among us would forget our peacefulness, and shoulder arms on behalf of our hearths and homes! If any man said, "Yes, they have been blowing up some of the houses, they are about to destroy our city, but it is no concern of mine, I am not going to bear a hand in the strug-

gle, one way or the other," we would say, "Why, the fellow is not a true-born Englishman! He is an enemy. Depend upon it he is a traitor." In such a world as this, where sin is rife, if a man does not contend against evil, he is on the side of it. If a man does not serve Christ, and endeavor to extend His kingdom, however humble may be his power, surely it must be that his carnal mind is enmity against God. Jesus says, "He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathers not with Me scatters abroad."

And suppose, further, that this man should find that the king had issued a certain proclamation, and promulgated a code of laws, and that this man should say, "Read them? No, not I! I would not read such dry book-stuff as that!" But these laws affect your daily life, your business, your prosperity, your very life. "I do not care what they affect," he says "they are very dry and dull reading. I do not care to hear them, much less to study them." The proclamation of the king is posted up publicly, and the man turns his back upon it. A play-bill is pasted on the wall, he reads that, and is very interested in it. Now, I should say that he must be an enemy, for he will not even read what the will of his king is, and what the law of his country is. There must be in his heart some enmity against the law-giver who promulgated that law. My hearer, your non-searching of the Scriptures, your weariness under gospel preaching, your lack of care to understand the mind of God, is *prima facie* evidence that there is some enmity in your heart against the Most High. When your King sends you a message of love, and you are not willing to hear it, surely you have a prejudice against Him. When you do not even wish to know what He promises to those who are His friends, you must have made up your mind to be His foe.

But, further, suppose, as in some olden time, this king was to say to all his subjects, "You are surrounded by the enemy. The city is tightly shut up, and famine threatens you, but I am going to feed you all out of the royal granaries. There will be so much of bread, and so much of provender, for all of you who choose to come and have it, a daily portion freely given to all who ask for it." Suppose this man, though evidently very hungry and thirsty, never went to eat at the public table. He need not say anything against the king and his table, but suppose he persistently abstained from putting himself under any obligation to the royal provider, and would sooner go and eat with dogs, or pluck meat out of the hog's dish, than he would be nourished by the king's bounty. I should say that the fellow who starved himself in that fashion must have deep enmity in his heart against the king. Your case is just the same. You will not go to Christ Jesus that you may have eternal life. You do not go to the Creator of your spirits that you may find comfort and joy in Him; you are willing rather to perish than to apply to the Father of mercies. You look for pleasure and happiness anywhere else rather than in God, yes, in places only comparable to the dog kennel, or the sty of the swine! Hence you cannot persuade me out of my solemn anxiety that your heart is enmity against God. I am sure that, hungry as you are, you

would go to His table to be fed; naked as you are, you would go to His wardrobe to be clothed; if it were not that you have an enmity in your heart against the Lord, terribly deadly even though unacknowledged by yourself. He that will sullenly perish rather than accept the gift of God must entertain desperately evil thoughts of God.

Suppose, once more, that you had offended this king, and you had been tried for treason against him, and had been found guilty, and he were to say to you, "Freely confess your treason, and there is the pardon drawn out for you by which your life shall be spared, and you yourself shall be taken into favor." If you were to reply, "I will not have it," yes, and if you were not even to say as much as that, but only neglected to accept it, and just sat carelessly in prison until the day of execution, I would say that you must have a most awful enmity in your heart against your sovereign! He that will not even accept pardon must be rancorous indeed. My hearer, your not accepting the free pardon of Christ, your not receiving the benefit of the act of amnesty and oblivion which the great God has passed, proves that your traitorous heart is dyed to the very core with the blackest enmity against the Majesty of heaven. I am not talking about the villains of whom we have been reading lately in the newspapers, who would commit the foulest deeds of unmentionable crime, but I am talking about you good people who are not far from the kingdom, and yet are base enough to spurn your Savior's love and blood. If you have not accepted the favor of your King, and the pardon provided by a bleeding Savior, there must, at bottom, be a cruel enmity in your heart against the King of love. Is it not so? Do you not begin to suspect yourself of not being quite all you fondly hoped you were?

So I will use yet another similitude, and but one, that I may not weary you. This time it shall merely relate to the common conduct of one *person* to another. I might profess of a certain person that I had no enmity against him, but suppose that whenever I met him in the street, I would not see at him, and if he was on my side of the street, I somehow or other had a call from the other side of the way; and suppose that when I came into a room to meet friends, if I saw him there, and always backed out, and went somewhere else. I should think that people would, before long, suspect that I had great enmity towards that person. There are people who act in that manner towards God. They find hearing sermons very dull work. Talking with Christian people about divine things they cannot endure. Reading a religious book is slavery, they find themselves very soon reduced to a state of slumber by treatises upon true religion. They have no care about such things. They want to get out of God's way. Their heart has no delight in the thought of God. If there were information in tomorrow morning's paper that God was dead, would not some of you be very happy? You would say, "Then there will be no day of judgment, and I may enjoy myself, for my greatest dread is gone." To us who love the Lord it would be a calamity worse than ten thousand deaths if we could lose our God, but your condition of mind towards God is clear proof of enmity against Him.

Again, suppose that a person has written you a letter, and you have taken no notice of it. When did it come? It came last Monday morning. Have you read it? "Oh, no!" you say, "I do not bother to read his letters." You have had a good many, then? "Oh, yes, hundreds of them!" What have you done with them? "I have done nothing with them. I leave them alone, and do not trouble to read them." Are these letters rational? "Yes, they are wise and kind." Yet you do not care to read them? Did you say that you are not the writer's enemy? Ah, my friend, I suspect that there is not much affection in your heart to him. There must, indeed, be a good deal of animosity. When you did read one of his letters, what was it about? "Well, it was about wishing to be at peace with me, and desiring to do me good. He spoke of my being in great danger, and said that he would help me; and of my being poor, and offered to make me rich." Did he talk so, and have you never read any more of his letters? What can ail you? Were these letters full of bitter upbraiding, and fierce threats? Do you reply, "Oh, no, they were kind, and good, and affectionate, and I have no doubt they were meant to benefit me, but I don't care about them! I think that other people ought to read them, but I have no mind to do so?" From this I feel sure that you hate the writer very heartily. Have I not described your conduct towards your Bible? That blessed Book is a love-letter from God, the great Father, and you do not read it, nor care about it, and therefore, I am sure that there must be in your heart enmity against Him. I do not think that you can argue me out of that conviction. I would, therefore, be glad to convince you of your wrong state of mind, until you become ashamed of it, and turn to God.

Is prayer neglected by you? Is it a burden? Have you no pleasure in it? Then how can you say that you are a friend of God? Do you utterly neglect all communion with God? Do you never speak with Him? How can you think that you love Him? If I had a son who lived in my house, ate at my table, and was clothed by my kindness, and that boy were to say to people outside, "I never speak to my father, he speaks to me, but I never listen to him. I live in his house, but I treat him as if he were dead," would not everybody rightly conclude that there was a deadly animosity in the heart of such a son towards his father? I cannot help thinking that if you live without speaking to God, or hearing Him speak to you, you have a carnal mind which is enmity against God.

There I leave the matter, hoping that your conscience will awake, and concern itself about this business. If these things should suggest a suspicion of your horrible and unnatural enmity against the good God, and that should send you to your knees, I shall bless the Holy Spirit that it is so. Come, O great Convincer, and cause my unregenerate hearers to know their own true condition before the Lord, and then guide them to Jesus, the Savior!

II. But now, secondly, and very briefly, LET US DEPLORE THIS ENMITY AGAINST GOD. Come, gracious Spirit, and melt our hearts to penitence!

For, first, *what an injustice it is!* I cannot bear for anybody to speak ill and think ill of one who is good, and kind, and generous. I would interpose, if possible, to rectify that mistaken judgment. But for you not to think well of God, for you not to love the God of love, for you not to be at peace with the sweet Lord Jesus, for you not to delight in Christ, is a gross injustice to Him. Oh, do not continue in it! If you have any sense of rightness, may God make you to feel shame that you should treat Him ill!

Moreover, I venture to say that it is more than an injustice. *What an infamy it is!* If anyone in this country could point to a person, and say, "There is a man who hates the Queen, and who, wherever he goes, speaks against her," we would feel that he was no man of honor, no person of right feeling. Yet to slander a lady of blameless life is nothing compared with hating the perfect Lord. When I think of a man's not loving God, not loving Christ, I feel that it is an awful thing for him, an infamous thing for him. Come here, angels, if you will! If you can turn your eyes from the august sight of your crowned Lord, come and look in this direction! Here is a man whom God has made, who does not love his Maker! Here is a monster that is fed every day by God's bounty, and never thanks Him! Here is an immortal being that hears of the death of Christ, and is told that if he believes in Him he shall live in happiness forever, and he will not believe in Him, and does not care for Christ, or for His love, His life, or His heaven! Surely those blessed spirits avert their faces. They stretch their wings for flight from such loathed company. They cry, "Let us not look on such a monster. He is not fit to live." There is an infamy about not loving Christ.

In addition to all this I would say *what an injury is this to yourself!* It is a very great injury to any man not to be perfectly at peace with God. You are losing happiness, you are losing holiness, which is still more, you are losing the full development of your being; you are missing the destiny for which a God-created soul is intended. You are finding your way into darkness which will gather blackness upon blackness forever. Oh, sirs, I cannot bear that this should be the case—that you should be at enmity with God! Oh, the mournful consequences of living and dying at enmity with God! You cannot succeed in this enmity. You have no power with which to contend against the Lord, and to prosper. You need not wish that you could have such power. Why should you want to contend against love, and mercy, and truth, and goodness, and righteousness? Oh, that the Spirit of all grace would lead you to loathe yourself! You have never committed adultery, you were never a thief, you were never a swearer, but do not compliment yourself upon being free from those crimes; *it is sin enough not to love God.* It is proof enough of a base heart not to have delighted in the Lord. When I take a friend to see a landscape that enchants me, and he looks at it, and mutters, "I see nothing in it," I feel sorry for him. When I cause him to hear the delightful strains of Handel's music, and he murmurs, "There is a deal of noise, and I can hear a big drum," I feel greatly sorry for him that he has no ear for music. So it is when I think of the glories of God, and meet with men who do

not appreciate them; I feel grieved for them. I would sooner be blind, and deaf and mute, and lose all feeling, than lose the sense of the beauty and perfection of God. The capacity to enjoy God, and to understand His superlative excellence, is the grandest faculty that a being can possess, and he that has it not is dead while he lives. He, who does not love the ever-blessed Lord, is a very Nabal, whose heart is like a stone within him. He is a fool writ large who knows not God. May the Lord manifest His grace to those of you who are in such a condition, and bring you to deplore it, and escape from it!

III. This brings me to a close. The third point was to be—LET US SEEK DELIVERANCE FROM THIS CONDITION OF ENMITY AGAINST GOD. How is it to be done?

Truly, I do not believe it ever will be done in any man except by the Holy Spirit. This incapacity to see the beauty and loveliness of God is such an inveterate disease that none can remove it but the Holy Spirit. You must be washed, I know. You must be healed, I know. You must be clothed, I know. But I know another thing quite as clearly—"You must be born again." Do you say, "How can a man be born when he is old?" There is but one way, He that first made you must make you over again. The change in you must be radical and thorough, and you cannot work it of yourself. You are cast upon the omnipotent mercy of God, and that omnipotent mercy will freely come to your rescue if you will accept it in the Lord Jesus Christ. The crucified Son of God alone can be your salvation from all this spiritual inability and aversion. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to lead you to accept Jesus, and so to be delivered from your enmity.

Next, the enemy of God needs to be delivered from the great guilt of not having loved God. How is that to be done? That can only be accomplished through the infinite atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. Great guilt has accrued to you from having lived so long without loving God. The first precept of the law is, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might," and that you have not done. Now, the guilt of that unjust omission can only be put away through the bloody sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. By that one omission you have violated the whole law of God, and nothing but the blood of Jesus can make amend to its honor. Thanks be to God, that precious expiation can cleanse you! Trusting in that glorious sacrifice, the guilt of your not loving God shall vanish quite away.

How can the enmity itself go? I have shown you that this must be removed by the heart being changed by the Holy Spirit, but the means of it will be this—your enmity will depart by a sense of God's love to you. I think that it is Aristotle who says that it is impossible for a person to believe that another loves him, without feeling some kind of love in return. I concede that it is almost impossible, but I am not sure that it is quite so. However, this I know—if you could but believe at this moment that God loves you, if trusting in Christ, you could but know the infinite affection that there is in the heart of the great Father towards you, His child, you

would love God in return; you could not help it. Oh, could you understand the love that dropped from those five wounds, the love that forced your Savior to a bloody sweat, the love that cried, "It is finished," as He gave up the ghost, the love which, when He rose from the dead, still thought on you, and which, when it mounted to its throne, still remembered you, the love that pleads for the guilty now, and intercedes for sinners now—oh, could you understand it, you would cry, "I cannot be at enmity with God any longer! I must love Him who has done so much for me." The love of Jesus has such a melting power that even a heart of hell-hardened steel softens, and flows away in streams of penitence beneath its influence—

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

May you receive a sense of that love at once, and you will then find that your enmity is gone, that you are spiritually-minded, and that you love God!

For that—to conclude with—is the main thing. While the man continues to mind the flesh he cannot love God. While his first business is his body, and the things of time and sense, he is and must be at enmity with God. But when the Lord Jesus Christ wins his heart, when the Spirit of God renews his mind, when he comes to love God, then he cares for spiritual things, then his treasure is in heaven, and his heart is there also. Then his hopes are in the advent of the Lord Jesus Christ when He shall come a second time, and then his life tends towards glory, and honor, and immortality. Thus the man is raised from being a worm of the earth to kinship with angels. He drops the serpentine slough, and puts on the seraphic wing. He gets away from the mole life, burrowing under ground in the dark, and gains the eagle's eye, and the eagle's pinion. He quits the gloom and night of earth, and mounts aloft with his eyes upon the sun of glory, delighting in the holy, and the heavenly.

God bring you to that state by faith in Jesus Christ! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ROMANS 8.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—385, 639, 461.

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

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

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

A PLAIN MAN'S SERMON
NO. 1879

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JANUARY 17, 1886,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"It shall be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no blemish therein."
Leviticus 22:21.

THE ceremonial law, as ordained by the hand of Moses and Aaron, called the worshippers of God *to great carefulness before Him*. Before their minds that solemn truth was ever made visible, "I the Lord your God am a jealous God." Nothing might be done thoughtlessly. Due heed was the first requisite in a man who would draw near unto the thrice-holy God, whose perfections demand lowly and considerate reverence from all those who are round about Him. The spirit must be awake, and on the stretch, if it would please the great Father of Spirits. There were little points—I may truthfully call them *minutiae*—upon which everything would depend as to right worship, and its acceptance with the Lord. No Israelite could come to the tabernacle door aright without thinking of what he had to do, and thinking it over with an anxious fear lest he should, by omission or error, make his offering into a vain oblation. He must draw near unto the Lord with great carefulness, or else he might miss his aim, spend his money upon a sacrifice, cause labor to the priest, and go home unaccepted. He might duly perform a large portion of a ceremony, and yet no good might come to him through it, because he had omitted a point of detail, for the Lord would be sought according to the due order, or He would not be found by the worshipper. Of every ceremony, it might be said, "It must be perfect to be accepted." There was the rule, and the rule must be followed with the most careful exactness. God must have the minds and thoughts of men, or He counts that they are no worshippers.

This is no easy lesson to learn, dear friends, for I am afraid that in our usual worship we are not always as thoughtful as we ought to be. Mark well our singing. Do we join in it with the heartiness, the solemnity, and the correctness which are due to Him who hears our psalms and hymns? I may not judge, but I have my suspicions. Look at the way we pray. Is it not to be feared that at times we rush into God's presence and utter the first words that come to hand? Are not liturgies repeated with minds half asleep? Are not extempore prayers uttered in the most formal manner? I refer both to public and private prayer. Moreover, see the style in which some will even preach. With facility of language they will deliver themselves of their own thoughts, without seeking the anointing from on high, and the power of the Spirit of God. I do not say that any of you ever go

into your Sunday school classes without thought; I do not say that any of you ever take your tract district, and go from door to door without seeking a blessing; I will not say that any of you ever come to the communion table without examining yourselves, and discerning the Lord's body, but if I do not say it, I may think it, and possibly that thought may be true. O, my brethren, let conscience sit in judgment, and decide this matter! We need to think a great deal more about how we come before the Most High, and if we thought more, and prayed more, we would become more certain of our inability to do anything as we ought to do it, and we should be driven to a more entire dependence upon the Spirit of God in every act of worship. This in itself would be a great blessing.

I do not know, however, that the ceremonial law did make men thoughtful, since for the most part, it failed of its designed effect through the hardness of men's hearts. Earnest heed was the design of it, but superstition and a spirit of bondage were the more usual results. Brethren, without a multitude of ceremonies, which might become a yoke to us, let us by other means arrive at the same, and even a better, thoughtfulness of heart! Let love to God so influence us that, in the least and most ordinary matters, we shall behave ourselves as in the immediate presence of the Lord, and so shall strive with the utmost watchfulness of holy care to please the Lord our God.

The ceremonial law also engendered in men who did think *a great respect for the holiness of God*. They could not help seeing that God required everything in His service to be of the very best.

The priest who stood for them before God must be himself in bodily presence the perfection of manhood. When old age crept upon him, he must give place to one who showed no such sign of decay. His garments must be perfectly white and clean in his daily service, and when once a year there was a joy day, then for glory and beauty he shone in all the radiance that the purest gold and the most precious stones could put upon him.

The victims that were offered must all be without blemish. You are constantly meeting with that demand, and it was carried out with rigid care. You meet with a stringent instance in the text, "It must be perfect to be accepted."

Under the law of Moses, the guilt of sin and the need of atonement were always most vividly brought before the mind of the worshipping Israelite. If you stepped within the holy place, everywhere you saw the marks of blood. Our very delicate-minded friends, who raise the silly objection that they cannot bear the sound of the word "blood"—what would they have done if they had gone into the Jewish tabernacle, and had seen the floor, and the curtain, and every article stained, like a shambles? How would they have endured to worship where the blood was poured in bowlfuls upon the floor, and sprinkled on almost every holy thing? How would they have borne with the continual spattering of blood—all indicating that without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin? Truly, there can be no approach to a thrice-holy God without the remission of sin, and that remission of sin must be obtained through the atoning

blood. The Israelite, if he thought rightly, must have been deeply aware that he served a God who was terrible out of His holy places, a God who hated sin, and would by no means spare the guilty, or pardon man without atonement. All the more would this be sealed home upon the mind of the Israelite by the knowledge that in every case the sacrifice must be unblemished. As he looked on the blood of the victim, he would remember the sacred rule, "It shall be perfect to be accepted." He saw in the necessity for a perfect sacrifice a declaration of the holiness of God. He must have felt that sin was not a trifle—not a thing to be committed, winked at, and blotted out, but a thing for which there must be life given, and blood shed, before it could be removed, and that life and blood must be the life and blood of a perfect and unblemished offering.

Under the Jewish ceremonial law, one of the most prominent thoughts, next to a great respect for the holiness of God, would be *a deep regard for the law of God*. Everywhere that the Israelite went he was surrounded by law. He must not do this, and he must do that, the law was continually before him. Now, brethren, it is a blessed thing to declare the gospel, but I do not believe that any man can preach the gospel who does not preach the law. The book of Leviticus and all the other typical books are valuable as gospel-teaching to us, because there is always in them most clearly the law of God. The law is the needle, and you cannot draw the silken thread of the gospel through a man's heart, unless you first send the needle of the law through the center thereof, to make way for it. If men do not understand the law, they will not feel that they are sinners; and if they are not consciously sinners, they will never value the sin offering. If the Ten Commandments are never read in their hearing, they will not know wherein they are guilty, and how shall they make confession? If they are not assured that the law is holy, and just, and good, and that God has never demanded of any man more than He has a right to demand, how shall they feel the filthiness of sin, or see the need of flying to Christ for cleansing? There is no healing a man till the law has wounded him, no making him alive till the law has slain him.

I do pray, dear friends, that God, the Holy Spirit, may lay the law, like an axe, at the root of all our self-righteousness, for nothing else will ever hew down that Upas tree. I pray that He may take the law, and use it as a mirror, that we may see ourselves in it, and discover our spots, and blots, and all the foulness of our lives, for then we shall be driven to wash until we are clean in the sight of the Lord. The law is our pedagogue to bring us to Christ, and there is no coming to Christ unless the stern pedagogue shall lead us there, with many a stripe and many a tear.

In this text we have law and gospel too. There is the law which tells us that the sacrifice must be perfect to be accepted, and behind it there is the blessed hint that there is such an unblemished sacrifice which is accepted, which we may by faith bring to God without fear of being rejected. Oh, for grace to learn both law and gospel at this time!

This is the text for our present meditation, "It shall be perfect to be accepted." I want to preach this truth right home into every heart by the power of the Spirit of God. If I could be an orator, I would not be. The

game of eloquence, with the souls of men for the counters, and eternity for the table, is the most wicked sport in the world. I have often wished that there were no such things as rhetoric and oratory left among ministers, but that we were all forced to speak in the pulpit as plainly as children do in their simplicity. Oh, that all would tell the gospel out with plain words! I long that all may understand what I have to say. I would be simpler if I knew how. The way of salvation is far too important a matter to be the theme of oratorical displays. The cross is far too sacred to be made a pole on which to hoist the flags of our fine language. I want just to tell you things that make for your peace, things which will save your souls. At least, I would declare truths which, if they do not save you, will leave you without excuse in that dread day when He, whose ambassador I am, shall come to judge both you and me.

I. First, then, THE RULE OF OUR TEXT, "IT SHALL BE PERFECT TO BE ACCEPTED," MAY BE USED TO SHUT OUT ALL THOSE FAULTY OFFERINGS ON WHICH SO MANY PLACE THEIR CONFIDENCE.

It most effectually judges, and casts forth as vile, *all self-righteousness,* although this is the great deceit by which thousands are buoyed up with false hopes. Alas! This is the destroyer of myriads, and therefore, I must speak as with a voice of thunder, and with words of lightning. Hearken unto me, you that hope to be accepted of God by your own doings! Look to what will be demanded of you if you are to be accepted on your own merits! "It shall be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no blemish therein." If you can come up to this rule you shall be saved by your righteousness, but if you cannot reach this mark, if you come short in any degree whatever, you must fail acceptance. It is not said, "It shall be partially good to be accepted," or "It shall be hopefully good." No. "It shall be perfect to be accepted." It is not written, "It shall have no great and grievous blemish," but "There shall be no blemish therein." See you not the height of the standard, the absolute completeness of the model set before you? Let the plummet hang straight, and see whether you can build to it, whether, after all, your building is not as a bowing wall, and as a tottering fence, altogether out of the perpendicular as tested by this uncompromising text—"It shall be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no blemish therein."

Why, look you, sirs, you that hope to be saved by your own doings, *your nature at the very first is tainted!* God's Word assures you that it is so. There is evil in your heart from the very beginning, so that you are not perfect, and are not without blemish. This sad fact spoils all at the very beginning. You are yourself blemished and imperfect. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one. If the fountain is tainted, shall the streams be pure? Do you think it possible that you, who are a fallen man in your very parentage, in whom there is a bias towards evil, can possibly render perfect service unto God? Your hands are foul, how can your work be clean? How can it possibly be that you should produce sweet fruit when you as a tree are of sour stock, and of bitter nature? O my friend, it cannot be that darkness should produce light, nor death,

bring forth life! How can your thoughts, and words, and ways, be perfect? And yet all must be perfect to be accepted.

Look again, for I feel sure that *there must have been a blemish somewhere as matter of fact*. As yet you are not conscious of a blemish, or of a fault, and possibly there is some justification for this unconsciousness. Looking upon you, I feel inclined to love you, as Jesus loved that young man who could say of the commandments, "All these have I kept from my youth up." But I must beg you to answer this question—*has there not been a blemish in your motives*? What have you been doing all these good things for? "Why, that I might be saved!" Precisely so. Therefore, selfishness has been the motive which has ruled your life. Every self-righteous man is a selfish man. I am sure he is. At the bottom, that is the motive of the best life that is ever lived which is not actuated by faith in Jesus Christ. The law is, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." But you have loved yourself, and lived for yourself, how then can you have kept the first precept of the law? What has been done by you has been done either out of a servile fear of hell, or else out of a proud and selfish hope that you would win heaven by your own merits. These are not love, nor even akin to it. The absence of love is a flaw, and a very serious one, it taints and spoils the whole of your life. "It shall be perfect to be accepted," and if the motive is imperfect, then the life is imperfect altogether.

Moreover, it is not only your nature and your motive which are imperfect. My dear friend, you certainly must have erred somewhere or other, in some act of your life. If you can say that you have served God and man without fault throughout all your days, you can say much more than I would venture to do. The Scripture also is dead against you when it says, "there is none righteous; no, not one." If you can say that in no one action of your life, select what you may, was there anything blameworthy, anything that fell short, anything that could be censured, you say very much more than the best of men have ever claimed for themselves. As for the poor faulty being who now addresses you, I dare not claim that the best deed I have ever done, or the most fervent prayer I have ever prayed, could have been accepted in and of itself before God. I know that I have no perfection in my best things, much less in my worst. Tell me, my friend; was there not something amiss in your spirit? Was there not a shortcoming in the humility with which you worshipped; or in the zeal with which you served; or in the faith with which you prayed? Was there not somewhat of omission, even if nothing of commission? Could not the work have been better done? If so, it is clear that it was not perfect, for had it been perfect it could have been no better. Might you not have lived better than you have lived? Might you not have been more pure, more generous, more upright, more loving, more gentle, more firm, more heavenly-minded, than you have been? Then this confession shows that, to some extent, you must have fallen short, and remember, "It shall be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no blemish therein."

Ah! I am talking very smoothly now, for I am only touching the surface, and dealing with guess-work, but I fear there are greater evils un-

derneath, could all be known. I think if I could read all hearts, there is not one here, however self-righteous he may be, who would not have to *confess distinct acts of sin*. Still, I will keep to the smooth strain, and believe that you are as good as you seem to be, indeed, I have a high opinion of many of you. I know how some of you have lived. You were amiable girls and excellent young women, and have grown up to be careful, loving wives, and therefore you say, "I never did anybody any harm, surely I may be accepted." Or, perhaps, you are quiet young men, blessed with excellent parents, and screened from temptation, and so you have never gone into open vice, but have gained a most respectable character. I wish that there were more like you. I am not condemning you, far from it, but I know that your tendency is to think that, because of all this, you must in yourselves be accepted of God. Give me your hand, and let me say to you, with tears, "It is not so, my sister; it is not so, my brother. It must be perfect to be accepted; there must be no blemish in it." This is a deathblow for your self-confidence, for there was a time, some day or other in your life, in which you did wrong. What! Have you no hasty temper? Have no quick words escaped you, which you would wish to recall? What! Have you never murmured against God, or complained of His providence? Have you never been slothful when you ought to have been diligent? Have you never been careless when you ought to have been prayerful? Have you always spoken the truth? Has a lie never fallen from your lips? Can you say that your heart has never desired evil—never imagined impurity? Remember, the thought of evil is sin, even a wanton desire is a blemish in the life, and an unchaste imagination is a stain upon the character in the sight of God, though not in the sight of man. "It shall be perfect to be accepted."

I verily used to think concerning myself that I was a quiet, good, hopeful lad, addicted much to reading, seldom in brawls, and doing nobody any hurt. Oh! It was the outside of the cup and the platter I had seen, and when I was led by grace to look inside, I was astonished to see what filthiness was there. When I heard in my heart that sentence of the law, "It shall be perfect to be accepted," I gave up all hope of self-righteousness, and now I hate myself for having doted upon such a lie as that I could be acceptable with God in myself.

Have you never gone to live in an old house which looked like new? You had fresh paint, and varnish, and paper in superabundance, and you thought yourself dwelling in one of the sweetest of places, till, one day, it happened that a board was taken up, and you saw under the floor. What a gathering of every foul thing! You could not have lived in that house at peace for a minute had you known what had been covered up. Rottenness had been hidden, decay had been doctored, and death had been decorated. That is just like our humanity. We put on fresh paper, and varnish, and paint, and we look very respectable, and yet from below an abomination of the sewer gas of sin comes steaming up, enough to kill everything that is like goodness within us, while all manner of creeping lusts and venomous passions swarm in the secret corners of our nature. When lusts are quiet, they are still there. The best man in

this place who is not a believer in Christ would go mad if he were to see himself as God sees him. No eye could bear the horrible sight of the hell within the human breast. Yes, I mean you good people—you very nice, amiable, lovable sort of people! You will have to be born again, and you will have to give up all trust in yourselves, as much as even the worst of men must do. As surely as the chief of sinners, are unaccepted, so surely are you, for righteousness must be perfect to be accepted, there must be no blemish in it, and that is not the case with your righteousness. You know it is not.

"Well," says one, "this is very hard doctrine." I mean it to be so, for I love you too well to deceive you. When a door has to be shut to save life, there is no use in half-shutting it. If a person may be killed by going through it, you had better board it up, or brick it up. I want to brick up the dangerous opening of self-confidence, for it leads to deception, disappointment, and despair. The way to heaven by works is only possible to a man who is absolutely perfect, and none of you are in that condition. Do not pretend to it, or you will be arrant liars. I put no fine face upon it—you are not perfect, no, not one of you, for "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

Thus, then, our text shuts out all self-righteousness. *It also shuts out all priestly performances*. There is a notion among some people that the priest is to save them, *alias* the minister, for men easily in these charitable days make even Dissenting ministers into priests. I have heard people say, "Just as I employ a lawyer to attend to my temporal business, and I do not bother my head any more about it, so I employ my priest or my clergyman to attend to my spiritual business, and there is the end of it." This is evil talk, and ruinous to the man who indulges in it. I will speak of this priestcraft very plainly. Recollect, "It shall be perfect to be accepted," therefore all that this gentleman does for you must be perfect. I do not know what it is that he does, I am sure. I never could make out what a priest of the Roman or Anglican order can be supposed to do in his highest function of the mass. I have seen him walk this way, and I have seen him walk that way, and I have seen him turn his back, and it has been decorated with crosses and other embellishments, and I have seen him turn his face, and I have seen him bow, and I have seen him drink wine and water, and I have seen him munch wafers, and I have seen him perform many genuflections and prostrations, but what the performance meant I have not been able to gather. To me it seemed a meaningless display. I would not like to risk my soul on it, for suppose that during that service he should think of something that he ought not to think upon, and suppose he should have no intention whatever of performing the mass, what then becomes of those who trust in him and it? Everything, you know, depends upon the intention of the priest. If a good intention is not there, according to the dictates of his own church, it is all good for nothing, so that your souls all hang upon the intention of a poor mortal in a certain dress. Perhaps he has not after all been rightly anointed, and is not in the apostolic succession! Perhaps there is no apostolic succession! Perhaps the man himself is living in mortal sin! Ah, me! There are

many dangers about your confidence. Are you going to hang your soul on that man's orders or disorders? Mine is too heavy to hang upon so slender a nail, driven into such rotten wood. If you have a soul big enough to think, you will feel, "No, no, there cannot be sufficient ground of dependence in the best pontiff that ever officiated at an altar. God requires of me, myself, that I bring to Him a perfect sacrifice, and it is all a device of my folly that I should try and get a sponsor, and lay this burden on him. It cannot be done. I have to stand before the judgement bar of God in my own person, to be tried for the sins that I have done in the body, and I must not deceive myself with the idea that another man's performance of ceremonies can clear me at the judgement seat of Christ. This man cannot bring a perfect sacrifice for me, and it must be perfect to be accepted." O sirs, do not be deluded by priestcraft and sacramentarianism, whether the priest is of the school of Rome, or of Oxford, you must believe in the Lord Jesus for yourselves, or you will be lost forever!

This text makes a clean sweep of all other kinds of human confidences. Some are deceived in this way, "Well," they say, "I do not trust in my works, but I am a religious person, and I attend the sacrament, and I go to my place of worship pretty regularly. I feel that I must certainly be right. I have faith in Jesus Christ and in myself." In various ways men thus compose an image whose feet are part of iron and part of clay. With that kind of mingle-mangle, many unconsciously are contenting themselves. But hear this word, "It shall be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no blemish therein." If we trust Christ and nothing else, that will be perfect, but if you are trusting Christ up to fifteen ounces in the pound, and yourself for the last ounce of the sixteen, you will be a lost man, for that last ounce is an ounce of imperfection, and therefore you cannot be accepted of God.

There are some others who say, "I have suffered a great deal, and that will make amends." There is a current idea among men, that all will go well with poor people, and hard-working people, because they have had their bad times here. When a man has had a long illness, and suffered a great deal in the hospital, his friends say, "Poor soul, he has gone where he is better off!" They feel sure of it, because he has suffered so much. Ah, me! But "It shall be perfect to be accepted," and what is there perfect in a human life, even if it is checkered with suffering, poverty, and want? Ah, no! Poverty does not work perfection, sickness does not make perfection. My text stands like a cherub, waving a fiery sword before the gates of Paradise, shutting out all fancies and notions, of which I will not now speak particularly, by this dread sentence, "It shall be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no blemish therein."

II. This brings me to note, with great delight of heart, that, as this rule shuts out all other confidences, SO THIS RULE SHUTS US UP TO THE SACRIFICE OF JESUS CHRIST. O beloved, if I had the tongues of men and of angels, I could never fitly tell you of Him who offered Himself without spot unto God, for He is absolutely perfect, there is no blemish in Him!

He is perfect in His *nature* as God and man. No stain defiled His birth; no pollution touched His body or His soul. The prince of this world himself, with keenest eyes, came and searched the Savior, but he found nothing in Him. "In all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." There was not the possibility of sinning about the Savior—no tendency that way, no desire that way. Nothing that could be construed into evil ever came upon His character. Our perfect sacrifice is without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.

As He was perfect in His nature, so was He in His *motive*. What brought Him from above but love to God and man? You can find no trace of ambition in Christ Jesus. In Him there is no thought of self. No sinister or sordid motive ever lingered in His breast, or even crossed His mind. He was purity and holiness in the highest degree. Even His enemies have nothing to allege against the purity of the motive of Jesus of Nazareth.

As His nature was perfect, so was His *spirit*. He was never sinfully angry, nor harsh, nor untrue, nor idle. The air of His soul was the atmosphere of heaven rather than of earth.

Look at His *life of obedience,* and see how perfect that was. Which commandment did He ever break? Which duty of relationship did He ever forget? He honored the law of God, and loved the souls of men. He gave the character of God perfect reflection in His human life. You can see what God is as you see what Christ is. He is perfect, even as His Father who is in heaven is perfect. There is no redundancy, or excess, or superfluity in His character, even as there is no coming short in any point.

Look at the perfection of *His sacrifice*. He gave His body to be tortured, and His mind to be crushed and broken, even unto the death agony. He gave Himself for us a perfect sacrifice. All that the law could ask was in Him. Stretch the measure to its utmost length, and still Christ goes beyond, rather than falls short of the measure of the requirements of justice. He has given to His Father double for all our sins. He has given Him suffering for sin committed, and yet a perfect obedience to the law. The Lord God is well pleased with Him, He rests in the Son of His love, and for His sake He smiles upon multitudes of sinners who are represented in Him. My heart rejoices as I think of Gethsemane, and Calvary, and of Him who by one offering has perfectly sanctified all who put their trust in Him. "It is finished," He said, and finished it is forever. Our Lord has presented a perfect sacrifice. "It shall be perfect to be accepted," and it is perfect. "There shall be no blemish therein," and there is no blemish in it. Glory be to God Most High!

Now, I want you just to let me stop preaching, as it were, while every man among you brings this sacrifice to God. By faith take it to be yours. You may. Christ belongs to every believer. If you trust Him, He is yours. Poor guilty soul, as you are, whether you have been a Christian fifty years or ten years, or whether you are just now converted, if you believe, you may now come with Christ in your hand, and say to the Father, "O my Lord, You have provided for me what Your law requires—a perfect sacrifice, there is no blemish in it. Behold, I bring it unto You as mine!"

God is satisfied. What joy! God is satisfied! The Father is well pleased! He has raised Christ from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places in token of that satisfaction. Let us be satisfied too. That which contents God may well content me. My soul, when your eyes are full of tears on account of your sin, and your heart is disquieted on account of your infirmities and imperfections, look right away from yourself "to the full atonement made, to the utmost ransom paid." The offering of Jesus is perfect and accepted. The righteousness of your Lord Jesus is without blemish, and you are "accepted in the Beloved."

That delightful passage in Exodus came flashing up to my mind just now, where the Israelite sprinkled the blood on the lintel and the two side posts. Then he shut the door. *He* was inside: he did not see the blood any more. The blood was outside upon the posts, and he could not see it himself, but was he safe? Yes, because it is written, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." It is God's sight of the blood of His dear Son that is the everlasting safeguard of all who are in Christ. Though it is most precious and sweet to me to look at that blood once shed for many for the remission of sins, and I do look at it, yet if ever there should come a dark night to me in which I cannot see it, still God will see it, and I am safe. I am saved, because it is written, not "when *you* see it," but "when *I* see the blood I will pass over you." It is the perfection of the sacrifice, not your perfection of sight, which is your safeguard. It is the absence of all blemish from the sacrifice—not the absence of blemish from your faith—that makes you "accepted in the Beloved."

Well, now, as is too often the case, I have run on so much upon the first points that I have not time enough for much more, but I was going to finish up by saying that I address myself for a minute or two to Christians only. Listen, you that follow after righteousness, you that know the Lord! You are saved. You have not, therefore, to bring any sacrifice by way of a sin offering, but you have to bring sacrifices of thanksgiving. It is your reasonable service that you offer your bodies a living sacrifice unto God. If you do this you cannot bring an absolutely perfect sacrifice, but you must labor to let it be perfect in what is often the Biblical sense of perfection.

Beloved brethren, you must take care that what you bring is not blind, for the blind were not to be offered. You must serve God with a single eye to the glory of God. If you attend a prayer meeting, or teach a class, or preach a sermon, you must not do it with a view to your own selves in any way, or it cannot be accepted. The sacrifice must see, it must be intelligent, reasonable service, having for its objective the glory of God. It must in that sense be perfect to be accepted.

And as it must not be blind, so it must not be broken. Whenever we serve God, we must do it with the whole of our being, for if we try to serve God with a bit of our nature, and leave the rest unconsecrated, we shall not be accepted. Certain professors prefer one class of Christian duties, and they neglect others, this must not be. Christ gave "Himself" for you, and you must give your whole self to Him. To be acceptable the life must be entire; there must be complete consecration of every faculty.

How is it with you? Have you brought to the Lord a divided sacrifice? If so, He claims the whole.

Next, they were not to bring a maimed sacrifice, that is, one without its limbs. Some people give grudgingly, that is to say, they come up to the collection box with a limp. Many serve Christ with a broken arm. The holy work is done, but it is painfully and slowly done. Among the heathen, I believe, they never offered in sacrifice to the gods a calf that had to be carried. The reason was that they considered that the sacrifice ought to be willing to be offered, and so it must be able to walk up to the altar. Notice in the Old Testament, though there were many creatures both birds and beasts, that were offered to God, they never offered any fish on the holy altar. The reason probably is that a fish could not come there alive. Its life would be spent before it came to the altar, and therefore it could not render a life unto God. Take care that you bring your bodies a living sacrifice. I notice that many men are all alive when they are in the shop. The way they talk; the way they call out to the men, and the way they bustle everybody about, are conclusive evidence that their life is abundant. But when they get into the church of God, what a difference! There may be life somewhere or other, but nobody knows where it is. You have to look for it with a microscope. You see no activity, no energy. Oh, that these people would remember, "It shall be perfect to be accepted!" That is to say, there must be energy put into it, soul put into it, heart put into it, or God will not accept it. We must not bring Him the mere chrysalis of a man, out of which the life has gone, but we must bring before Him our living, unmaimed selves if we would be acceptable before Him.

It is then added, "or having a cyst." It does not look as though it would hurt the sacrifice much to have a cyst, yet there must not be a cyst, or spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. Above all, avoid that big cyst of pride. When we feel that we are doing a grand thing, and are acting in a most satisfactory manner, we may know that we are not accepted. A sermon wept over is more acceptable with God than one gloried over. That which is given to God with a sigh because you cannot do more, and with the humble hope that he may accept it for Christ's sake, is infinitely superior to that which is bestowed with the proud consciousness that you deserve well of your fellow men, if not of your God.

The sacrifice was not to be scabbed, or to have the scurvy. That is to say, it was to be without any sort of outward fault. I have heard men say, "It is true I did not do that thing well, but my heart was right." That may be, my dear brother, but you must try and make the whole matter as good as it can be. What a deal of scabbed service our Lord gets! Men try to be benevolent to their fellow creatures with an irritable temper. Certain people try to serve God, and write stinging letters to promote brotherly love, and dogmatic epistles in favor of large-mindedness. Too many render to the Lord hurried, thoughtless worship, and many more give for offerings their smallest coins, and such things as they will never miss. God has many a scurvy sheep brought before Him. Did you never bring any, my brother? Did I never bring any? Ah, me! Ah, me! But still, let us

mend our ways, and since the Lord Jesus offered Himself without spot, let us try to serve Him with our utmost care. The best of the best should be given to the Best of the best. We sometimes sing—

"All that I am, and all I have,
Shall be forever Yours."

Oh, that we practiced it as well as sang it! Would God that the best of our lives, the best hours of the morning, the best skill of our hands, the best thoughts of our minds, the very cream of our being, were given to our God! But, alas! Christ's cause is sent round to the back door to get the broken meat, and "Mind you do not leave too much meat on the bone," is the kind of instruction that is given to her who hands it out. Christ Jesus is sent to the dung heap for the odds and ends. Cheese parings, and candle ends are given to the Missionary Society. Perhaps the statement is too liberal; it would be well if they were. Three-pennies and four-pennies are gracious gifts from struggling tradesmen and poor work people, but they are hardly decent when sent in by folk who spend hundreds of pounds upon their own pleasure. To God's altar we ought to bring the best bullock from the stall, and the best sheep from the fold. I leave you to yourselves to judge whether it is not so. If you are not over head and ears in debt to the mercy of God in Christ, then it is not so, but if you are debtors to divine mercy beyond all compute, you shall each one reckon up for himself—"How much owe you unto my Lord?" If it is a debt you can never calculate, then give the Lord, from this day forth the fullness of your being. May God grant that you and your offerings may be accepted in Christ Jesus! Amen and amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—HEBREWS 9.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—397, 555, 1,035.

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

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

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

A LESSON AND A FORTUNE FOR CHRISTIAN MEN OF BUSINESS
NO. 1880

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JANUARY 24, 1886,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 12, 1885.

"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as you have: for He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you." Hebrews 13:5.

THE apostle warns us against a tendency very natural to our race. "Let your conversation be without covetousness." I am afraid that the precept is even more needed now than in the days of the apostle. We are still more sharp and keen in competition, and men in trade are even more anxious to accumulate money than they were in apostolic times. It is not easy for a man to keep his heart clear of covetousness, or his hands clean from moral bribes. There is a singular stickiness about gold and silver. They have a great tendency to birdlime our souls, and hold them fast, so that they cannot rise superior to their influence. The Revised Version reads our text, "Be you free from the love of money," and it puts in the margin, "Let your turn of mind be free from the love of money." May we all enjoy that freedom, and may our turn of mind lead us to seek better things than the miser is able to hoard!

There is a laudable pursuit of gain, without which business would not be properly carried on, but there is a line, scarcely as broad as a razor's edge, between diligence in business and greediness for gain. We can so easily pass from the one into the other, that we may hardly be aware of it ourselves. When a man is increasing his investments, when he is extending his agencies, when he is enlarging his warehouse, when he is employing a larger number of persons than formerly, or even when he is bemoaning the depression of his trade, and his heart is aching because he has to do only half as much business as before, covetousness may insinuate itself into his conversation. It is a snake which can enter at the smallest hole. It lurks in the grass where it is long, but it glides also where the pasture is bare. It may come in, either in prosperity or in adversity, and it is needful to whisper in the ear of each believer, whether going up or down in the world, "Let your conversation—your daily conduct—be without covetousness." Any brother here—and it is to the brethren mainly that the temptation comes, I think—any brother here may have present need of such a warning as this, and if he does not need it just now, he may lay it by till he does, for it will keep. Yet let me not

restrict the text or the sermon to the male side of the house, the sisters may fall into a like temptation, in the saving, as their husbands in the getting. You godly matrons, you industrious Marthas, "Let your conversation be without covetousness."

The apostle here hints at what is the real cure for covetousness, namely, contentment. This is a rare drug in the market. The words of the apostle make up a golden sentence—"Be content with such things as you have."

It is supposed by most persons that they could be content if they were not exactly what they are, and where they are, but the precept exhorts them to be content with their present circumstances. If they had a little more they would be satisfied, but that is not the contentment to which we are exhorted. It is written, "Be content with such things as you have." If God has multiplied your possessions, you ought the more readily to be content with such things as you have, though I am not sure you will be, for there is a saltiness in the water which comes out of wells dug by the Philistines, so that he who drinks from them shall thirst again. I once thought that a million would satisfy any mortal man, but I have been assured by one who has considerable experience in that direction that he who has one million is unable to see any reason why he should not have two or ten. However, I may let that pass, for millions or thousands are not likely to tempt the most of us who are here assembled, if you have little possessions, yet still hear the voice of wisdom, which says, "Be content with such things as you have." You now have a measure of trouble by reason of the limited capacity of your means; you might have more trouble with the breadth of your means, if you had all you would like to have. It may not be quite easy to travel when your garments are too short, but it is much harder to keep them from dragging in the mire when they are very long. Though a single staff is such a convenience that a traveler without one may sigh for it, yet a dozen staffs would be a load, which would make the burdened man prefer rather to have no staff at all than to have so many to carry. I believe that it is an advantage to have wealth when wealth is kept in its right place, but the difficulty is that the horse often runs away with the rider, and he who has wealth too often loses his liberty, and falls into sore bondage, by becoming the slave of his own possessions. "Be content with such things as you have." After all, contentment drinks the cream of life. So far as earthly things are concerned, he is the happiest, no; he is the richest man, who is content with such things as he has. The ripest apple in the garden grows on the tree of contentment. The garments which fit us best are the most fit for us, and are the most comfortable wear. He who is where he should be, and where he would be, has no cause to envy Solomon in all his glory. He that lives in the Valley of Humiliation, among the fragrant flowers and the sweet-voiced birds, and looks up to heaven for his treasure, and to God for his home, he is the happiest of mortal men. God teach us how to shun the vice of covetousness by cultivating the virtue of contentment! May the sweet flower choke the ill weed! "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as you have."

I asked a question, some years ago, of a person whom I believed to be one of the most covetous individuals in my acquaintance, and I received from him a singular reply. I said, "How was it that St. Francis de Sales, who was an eminent confessor, to whom persons went in the Romish church to confess their sins, found that persons confessed to him, in private, all sorts of horrible sins, such as adultery, drunkenness, and murder, but never had one person confessed the sin of covetousness?" I asked this friend whether he could tell me why it was, and he gave me this answer, which certainly did take me rather aback. He said, "I suppose it is because the sin is so extremely rare." Blind soul! I told him that, on the other hand, I feared the sin was so very common that people did not know when they were covetous, and that the man who was most covetous of all was the last person to suspect himself of it. I feel persuaded that it is so. Covetousness breeds insensibility in the heart, a mortification in the conscience, a blindness in the mind. It is as hard to convict a man of it as to make a deaf ear hear of its own deficiencies. You cannot make a horseleech see the impropriety of desiring to suck; to all your expostulations it renders the one answer, "Give, give." Covetousness goes about in disguise. In the "Holy War" we read that, when Diabolus sent traitors to lurk about the town of Mansoul, he sent among the rest a young fellow named Covetousness, but when he entered into the town of Mansoul, he took the name of Mr. Prudent Thrifty, and he was engaged at once as a servant, I think it was in the house of Mr. Conscience, the Recorder. He seemed such a likely young man, this youth of the name of Prudent Thrifty. Now, mind you, friends, when you are taking a servant, that you do not engage one with the name of Prudent Thrifty, for I have information that he comes of the family of the Greedies, and that his true name is, "Covetousness," though it may be long before you find it out. His near relations are the Screws, the Skinflints, and the Grab-alls, but he will not own them, but always mentions his great-uncle, Squire Prudence, and his mother's brother, Professor Economy, of the University of Accumulation. You will have need to carry your eyes in your head if you mean to practice the precept, "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as you have."

I am exceedingly glad that the Apostle Paul had met with certain covetous Hebrews. This epistle was written by a Hebrew of the Hebrews, to the Hebrews, and Hebrews, from Jacob downwards, were never quite free from this sin. They are not so today. I am glad he met with some of them, because, in giving an exhortation to them, he let drop one of the choicest pearls in all the treasury of God's Word, a pearl which Gentiles will prize as much as their brethren the Jews. Here it is—"For He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you." This is the reason why we must not be covetous. There is no room to be covetous, no excuse for being covetous, for God has said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." We ought to be content. If we are not content, we are acting insanely, seeing the Lord has said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." If we have God's presence, God's help, God's covenant favor, God's gracious providence; God's covenant engagements for our good, what can we want more?

I. The first observation I am going to make upon this most weighty text is this, THAT A WORD OF THE LORD IS OF GREAT WEIGHT TO A BELIEVER. Paul said, "Let your conversation be without covetousness," and there was weight in that. He added, "Be content with such things as you have," and there was weight in that also, for there was inspiration at the back of each sentence. But when he went on to say, "FOR HE HAS SAID," and to bring in the personality of God as distinctly speaking to each one of us, saying, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you," then he felt that he had brought the weightiest argument that he himself, as an inspired man, could think of. When Jehovah Himself speaks, there is no excuse for doubting, questioning, or answering again. When God Himself deals with our souls, we are like wax under the seal, at least, we desire to be so.

I want you, my hearer, to discern whose child you are by this. I observe, growing up everywhere, a trifling with the Word of God, a questioning of this, and a questioning of that. I am not half so much concerned about the false doctrine that is being taught, when the teacher of it thinks he gets it from the Bible, as I am when I find men treating the Bible as though it were just nothing at all, or, at least, an exceedingly small matter. If the Scripture stands in their way, our modern divines drive a tunnel through it, as readily as men make a railroad through a hill. They toss the sacred Book on one side, as if it were quite a common document which might be treated with indifference, since the age has outgrown its Bible. Now, mark this; by this shall you know whether you are a child of God, or not; by the respect that you have to your Father's Word. If you have small respect for that Word, the evidences of a bastard are upon you.

If you tremble at God's Word, if you stand in awe of it, if you can read the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm through, and can join with David in intense delight in the Law of God, you have the traits of a true-born child of God, and the Book is yours, with all that it contains, but if not, you are one of the children of that evil one who questioned the Word of the Lord in the beginning, and continues to deny it to this day. If you pick and choose in the teachings of inspiration, if you believe this, and slight that, you make yourself a judge of that which is your Judge, and you have not the tokens of a child of God. See well to this, for there is more in this test than quibblers will allow. That which they lightly esteem is precious in the sight of the Lord. If you are a child of God, you may find it needful to protest against what I say on my own authority, for what am I but a poor creature like yourself? If you are a child of God, you may have to stand out against even that which is a settled doctrine among renowned divines, for we know no human authority in the church of God, *but if you are a child of God, a single text will be enough for you.* I set a solitary passage of God's Word against a Sanhedrim of philosophers. They may argue and dogmatize as they will, but one Word from the mouth of the Lord has more weight than all their counsels. If God's light and God's Word are not in them, we need not pay regard to them. Even the babe in grace shall triumph, by the aid of God's Word, over the

most learned and mighty of those who despise the Book. The day is coming when all this "modern thought" will pass away like the leaves in autumn. How soon shall the white frost of scientific infidelity pass from off the face of the Lord's green pastures! O Jerusalem, those who invade you shall be as the foam upon the waters! Where is the scribe? Where are the counters of the towers? God has made nothing of the great ones, and made foolishness of the wisdom of this world. By this shall you know the children of God—one Word of God has weight and authority with them, but the seed of the serpent still say, "Yes, has God said?"

See then the argument, "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as you have: for *He has said."* That *"He has said"* is the hammer which drives the nail home, and clinches it, with every true child of God.

II. My second observation is this; THE WORD OF THE LORD MAY HAVE A THOUSAND FULFILMENTS.

When man makes a promise, and he keeps it, that promise is done with. You cannot expect a banker to pay a check a second time. The merchant who duly meets his bill once has met it once and for all, and the document is from that time of no value. But when God makes a promise He fulfils it, fulfils it, and fulfils it, again, and again, and again, to the same man, and to hundreds of other men. The Lord's promise once given is never recalled. He does as good as give forth each inspired promise every moment anew; He is forever promising that which is once promised in His Word. He has made a promise for all time when He has once made it. So long as there shall be need of such a promise, God will never speak in secret, in a dark place of the earth, and revoke what He has said—

"Engraved as in eternal brass
The mighty promise shines;
Nor can the powers of darkness erase
Those everlasting lines"

Now, I do not think this particular promise is recorded anywhere in the Old Testament in these exact words. There are great differences between the Hebrew and the Septuagint, and this particular Greek text, "He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you," is not to be found with exact accuracy in either. I suspect that this is, in fact, a household word of the Lord our God, which, though you find the like of it in Scripture, needs not to have been expressly recorded there, because essentially, and from the very nature of things, it must be true of Jehovah our God. He, who is the God of grace and of immutable love, has virtually said, by His very nature, to those that seek His face, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." All that we know about God says, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." All that we have ever experienced about God, all that our fathers have experienced, goes to show that Jehovah does not forsake His people, nor cast away those whom He did foreknow.

Still, this promise is in the Word of God—if not in the letter of it exactly, yet in the full meaning and spirit of it, which is more. For instance, we meet with this promise, probably, first of all, when Jacob fell asleep, after he had left his father's house, a lone man, to go off to a land which he

had never seen. You will remember, in the twenty-eighth chapter of *Genesis,* how it was recorded that Jacob lay down in a certain place which would seem to have been a lonely, rugged den, and as he lay and slept, he dreamed a dream, and beheld a wondrous ladder set upon the earth, the top of which reached to heaven, and behold the angels of God ascended and descended on it. Then it was that the Lord said to him, "I am with you and will keep you in all places where you go, and will bring you again into this land, for I will not leave you until I have done that which I have spoken to you of." That is a blessed shape of the promise, is it not?—"I will not leave you until I have done that which I have spoken to you of." That assurance meant—I will bless you, and I will bless your future seed. I will give you all the blessedness which you are able to receive at My hands, and I will not leave you till I have fulfilled with you the covenant of which you are the heir. So the Lord, in effect, says to each believer at this hour, "I will not leave you till I have done that which I have spoken to you of." All the processes of grace shall be carried out in each humble, trustful soul. Our heavenly Father may be heard to say to each one of us by the Holy Spirit—"I have washed you from your sin in the precious blood of Christ; I will also deliver you from the stain, the power, and the indwelling of sin. I will perfect you; I will lead every thought captive to My love. I have already made you to be a partaker of My grace, and you shall surely be a partaker of My glory."

Come, child of God, is not that a blessed promise as Jacob received it? "Alas!" you say, "I do not know how to get a similar hold upon the promise." Ah, that is the point! But there is a Word of the Lord in that vision which I should greatly like you to notice. The Lord said to Jacob, "I am the Lord God of Abraham your father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon you lie, to you will I give it, and to your seed." Brother, if you can lie down on a promise, the Lord has given it to you. There Jacob lies. He stretches himself out at full length, and with all his weight, in all his weariness, he lies down and goes to sleep, and by that act he takes possession of the land where he lies. What a sweet and sure mode of inheriting promises, namely, by resting on them! Behold the promise, and just say, "I believe this to be the sure and true word of the Lord. I will gladly lie down on it." Let your faith be serenely confident, and then the promise rested on is yours. If you can lie down upon a promise it is yours. Oh, for faith, then, to stretch ourselves upon the blessed Word of our text at this moment! He has said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." Let us each one say, O my God, I do believe this to be true, and I hereby venture my body, soul, and spirit upon this promise! For time and for eternity I trust my all with You.

Furthermore, our text occurs in the Book of *Deuteronomy.* We find Moses delivering this same Word, or one even more nearly like it than the Genesis edition, to the whole house of Israel, just before they were about to cross into the land of Canaan, to take possession of their inheritance. In the thirty-first of Deuteronomy, at the sixth verse, Moses said to the people, "Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the Lord your God, He it is that does go with you; He will not fail you,

nor forsake you." When God's people are beginning a long and fierce warfare, and when their enemies seem like giants in their sight, let them sharpen their swords upon this assurance, "He has said, I will not fail you, nor forsake you." Go on, then, though you seem as grasshoppers in the sight of your foes, and in your own sight. Though there is very much land to be possessed, yet plunge into the war without fear, for "He has said, I will not fail you, nor forsake you." We are able to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil, since the Lord our God will be with us as our strength and our song, our sword and our shield.

In this same chapter of Deuteronomy you get the same text given to *Joshua,* who was the leader of the host, as also in the first chapter of the Book of Joshua, at the fifth verse, where the Lord expressly tells him, "I will not fail you, nor forsake you." If you, my brother, are called to be a leader among God's people, your heart, I know, will sometimes grow very heavy. In the midst of my own band of worthies I am often sore put to it, and you will be the same. You may meet defeats where you hoped for victories, and faint hearts where you looked for heroes, but the Lord, who calls you to play the part of a Joshua among His people, will be Jesus to you, if you are Joshua for Him, He will stand at your side as the Captain of the Lord's host, and you shall surely win the victory.

This is the same Word which was afterwards spoken to David in his grey old age, when he was about to resign the scepter to his son Solomon. Solomon had to build a great and exceedingly magnificent house for the Lord, and it was no small enterprise for so young a man, and therefore David, in the first Book of the *Chronicles,* at the twenty-eighth chapter, and the twentieth verse, says to him, "Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed: for the Lord, even my God, will be with you; He will not fail you, nor forsake you, until you have finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord." Beloved, God was with Solomon in his colossal enterprise. He did build the temple. Whatever treasure was needed came in due time. Whatever art and skill were required—and the temple needed skill of a very unusual order for that early age of the world—yet everything was forthcoming. Tyre and Sidon yielded themselves as the servants of the God of the Hebrews for the building of the house. To the astonishment of the age, the great temple was built, and became the glory of all lands, for the Lord did not fail His servant.

You see, then, we have found four cases in which this promise was fulfilled. It held good after it had been already carried out. Do you, my Brother, leave your father's house as a young man? Are you about to enter upon a very perilous course of life that will be set thick with trials, like the life of Jacob with Laban? "Fear not, for God will not fail you, nor forsake you." On the other hand, are you as a child of God fighting with inward sin, because the Canaanite is still in the land? Is the inward spiritual battle very severe just now? Yet, "He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you." Or, are you responsible for others? Are you called to watch for souls, and to lead others to the conflict? Be not cast down nor disquieted, as you will be very apt to be if you look to yourself, for this is

an office involving sore travail. Find your strength in this word—"He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you." Is it that God has put into your hands some great work to do for His name? Is your whole life to be as a temple, adorned with the riches of faith, and the glories of hope and love? Fear not, you shall finish your design. You shall make a temple for God to dwell in. Go boldly on in the matter to which God has called you. Go to the quarries, or to the gold mines, and do as God bids you, for "He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you."

So you see the promise is in many ways fulfilled. I have seen a check for a million pounds. I have seen only one in my life. I handled it. It is on the wall of a friend's house now, framed and glazed, but it is worth nothing as money. I suppose the million pounds were paid, the check is so marked. It is of no use to anyone. If a thief were to get in and steal it, it would be of no use to him. But God's promises are always useful; you may receive them, and still receive them, over and over again. They stand forever true, and they are true this night to you and to me. If the world shall last ten thousand years, as I hope it may not, yet the promise will remain as a nail fastened in a sure place—"I will never leave you, nor forsake you."

Thus have we had two observations; and I will now make a third with great brevity.

III. The WORD OF THE LORD IS TO BE APPROPRIATED BY EACH CHILD OF GOD, AND ACTED ON. "He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you."

I like this singularity of the person. You see Paul had been saying in general, "Let *your* conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as *you* have." And then he changes from the plural and writes, "for He has said, I will never leave *you,* nor forsake *you."* When the Lord speaks in this instance, His promise is in the singular. He says not "your" plural and "you" plural; but "you" singular. He speaks to us with that—I do not know what to call it unless I use a French word—sweet *tu-toiage,* which is the language of endearment, the chosen speech of love. When one man speaks to another, and means him to know that his promise is assuredly and altogether for him, and that he is most lovingly his friend, he cannot do better than use the singular and personal pronoun. "I will never leave *you,* nor forsake *you."*

Take the "you" plural out of all God's promises, and put the "you" singular into its place, for you are permitted to do so. We make fearful failures with God's promises through not appropriating them. I have heard of a Sunday school teacher who performed an experiment which I do not think I shall ever try with Sunday school children, for it might turn out exactly as it did in his case. He had been trying to illustrate what faith was, and as he could not get it into the minds of his children, he took his watch, and he said, "Now, I will give you this watch, John. Will you have it?" John fell thinking what the teacher could mean, and did not seize the treasure. He said to the next, "Henry, there is the watch. Will you have it?" The boy replied, "No, thank you, sir," with a very proper modesty. He went by several boys, till, at last a youngster who was not as wise or

thoughtful as the others, but rather more believing, said, "Thank you, sir," and put the watch into his pocket. Then the other boys woke up to a startling fact; their companion had received a watch, and they had not. One of the boys inquired of the teacher, "Is he to keep it?" "Of course he is," said the teacher, "I put the watch before you, and said that I gave it to you, but none of you accepted it." "Oh," said the boy, "if I had known you meant it, I would have taken it." And all the boys were in a dreadful state of mind to think that they had lost the watch. Each one cried, "I did not think you meant it, *but I thought,"* each one said, "Please, teacher, I thought." Each one had his theory except the simple little boy who believed what he was told, and got the watch! Now, I wish that I could always be such a simple child as literally to believe what the Lord says, and live by that belief. The apostle drives us to such practical faith when he says, "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as you have: for He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you."

You smiled just now. I do not think that there was any harm in your doing so, but I will tell you what we must not smile at, and that is, I believe that nine out of ten of you do not believe that God has said to you, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." You think you do, but you do not. You also have got some most powerful reason why you dare not take the watch—I mean the promise. You are so wise that you feel that you cannot expect the Lord to interfere in any way for you. No, no, no; either you are not worthy of it (which is quite correct), or else you do not like to take things quite so literally, or there is some other reason why you cannot literally accept the divine assurance. There are perhaps, one or two fools among us who have got a hold of God's Word, and actually believe it to be a matter of fact, but I do not think that many are so simple. Those who do so are generally poor obscure persons, but I should greatly envy them if I were not one of their number. With all my heart I do believe that "He will never leave me, nor forsake me."

When the service is over, I know who will go away with dancing feet, and sparkling eyes, to sleep sweetly through the night, and wake tomorrow morning fresh as the lark with a song on his tongue. It is that poor simpleton of a Christian who really believes his God, and says, "Yes, He will never leave me, nor forsake me." Though he has scarcely a shoe to his foot, though he has scarcely a copper in his pocket, and though he is brought very low, and has to live from hand to mouth, yet if he has grasped the promise, he has such a wellspring of delight within him that his soul shall be satisfied in time of drought, and in the days of famine he shall be filled to the full. Oh, to be full of that blessed folly which treats God as He ought to be treated, and believes what He says, and acts thereon, and finds it to be true! If you have a sham god, and a sham faith, and sham troubles, and sham experiences, why, you are yourself a sham altogether, but he that believes in a real God, and has such a real faith in God as a child has in its mother, shall find God's promises to be the verity of verities.

IV. A further observation is this; EACH WORD OF GOD HAS ITS OWN USEFULNESS. This particular Word that we have before us is an illustration of this fact.

This particular text is an extraordinarily useful one, for, first, if you notice*, it covers all time*. "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." Well, if God will *never* leave me, He will not leave me now. If He will *never* leave me, no time is excluded from the word "never." However dark or however bright, it says "never." Suppose I am going to live till I am ninety or a hundred—what then? You will call me a poor old soul, but *He* has said, "I will never leave you." Suppose I should be very sick indeed, and my reason should begin to fail? Even then "He has said, I will never leave you." Might there not occur a few minutes in which the Lord may forget me? Certainly not, "for He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you." Is not this a blessed cover for the whole of life, and all the exigencies of it? It matters not how long we live, we cannot outlive—"I will never leave you." You that are familiar with the Greek text know that there are five negatives here. We cannot manage five negatives in English, but the Greeks find them not too large a handful. Here the negatives have a fivefold force. It is as though it said, "I will not, not leave you; I will never, no never, forsake you." Perhaps a verse of one of our hymns hits it off as nearly as can be—

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

Our text *covers all space,* as well as all time. Suppose we emigrate. Suppose we are compelled to go to a backwoods settlement of America or Canada, or away to Australia or New Zealand, this promise will go with us all the way—"I will never leave you, nor forsake you." Suppose we have to take to sea, and lead the risky life of a sailor; we will sail with this at the masthead—"I will never leave you." But suppose we should get into prison. Does not Jesus visit those who are prisoners for His name's sake? Has He not said, "I will never leave you?" Suppose we go up in the world, and fall under great responsibilities, this goes up with us, "I will never leave you." Suppose, more likely, we go down in the world, this goes down with us, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you."

And then *it covers all circumstances*. "I will never leave you." I may get to be a very childish old body. "I will never leave you." But my dear children may all be dead, and I may be quite a solitary person. "I will never leave you." But every friend may turn tail, and desert me. "I will never leave you." But I may be in such a state that nobody will own me. "I will never leave you, nor forsake you."

I find the first Greek word has something of this meaning, "I will never sit loose by you," or "I will never relax." That is the root of the word. I will never let you slip. I will never let you go, as it were, from Me though holding you loosely.

The other word has in it something of the idea of a person remaining in a spot and another person going away from him, and so forsaking

him. The Lord seems to say, "I will never leave you where I cannot be with you. I will never let you stand alone. I will always be with you."

This is a blessed, blessed promise. You see it takes in *all contingencies,* however serious. It takes in *all anticipations,* however doleful. It takes in *all suppositions,* and it includes *all actualities*. "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." Oh, dear! We sometimes sit down, and imagine all manner of dreadful, sorrowful things. I will not repeat what things I have said to myself, for I do not want you to know how foolish I sometimes am. But I have heard persons bemoaning themselves like this, "Perhaps I may lose my job. I may not get another. I may starve." What then comes of, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you?" Another says, "I fear I shall live to be very old. I do not know how I shall be supported. I shall get into the workhouse, and have to be buried by the parish. I cannot bear to think of it." Friend, do you not after all believe the Word, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you"?

I will tell you this morsel of my own faults; sometimes I have said, "I suffer so much. I become so ill. I shall be so long away from the Tabernacle. The congregation will be greatly injured. Perhaps I shall never be able to preach again." I have struggled to this pulpit when I could hardly stand, and when the service was over, and I have been weary, the wicked whisper has come, "Yes, I shall soon be useless. I shall have to stay in my bed, or be wheeled about in a chair, and be a burden instead of a help." This has seemed a dreadful prospect, but "I will never leave you, nor forsake you," has come in, and I have shaken off my fears, and have rejoiced in the Lord my God.

Suppose we were to lose our eyes, we should still see God, and God would see us. Suppose we were to lose our hearing, we should still hear our Father's voice. Suppose we should gradually fail in every faculty, the Holy Spirit would still comfort us, and be with us. Many children of God have been very happy in the most deplorable circumstances. And suppose we should die. Ah, well! That is the best thing that can be, for then we shall go home, to be with our heavenly Father forever.

I cannot under the influence of this grand text find room for doubt or fear. I cannot stand here and be miserable tonight. I am not going to attempt such a thing, but I cannot be despondent with such a text as this, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." I defy the devil himself to mention circumstances under which I ought to be miserable if this text is true. Child of God, nothing ought to make you unhappy when you can realize this precious text.

Some of you cannot bask in this sunshiny promise. It is not yours. The words are "I will never *leave* you." This implies that God must be with us, and if He is not with us, the promise is not ours. You cannot take home to yourself the promise, "I will never leave you," if you have nothing to do with God. "I will not forsake you," does not this also take something for granted? If the Lord has never been with you, if He has never forgiven you, if you have never sought His face, if you have never accepted His mercy in Christ Jesus, why, then the promise is not yours, and you have cause for trembling rather than for rejoicing! God is

against you. He fits His arrow to the string. He prepares His bolts against you. Tremble, and submit yourself to Him. Oh, that you would do so at once, and trust in Jesus, and live!

If the Lord is with you, and if you are with Him, the promise stands forever, "I will never leave you." If you have trusted in Him—if you are trusting in Him—He has said, "I will never forsake you." Go away and rejoice, O child of God! You must have troubles. Where could we go to have no cares? Unless a man could leap over the edge of the universe, or fly from under this cloudy sky, how could he escape from care? It you were to dive to the bottom of the sea, this crooked serpent would bite you. If you could fly above the clouds, this eagle would pursue you. If you were to hide in the heart of the earth, the death damp would overpower you. But with all actual trouble, with all possible trouble, with all impossible trouble, if you bear this promise with you, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you," you may sing hallelujahs both in life and in death, and with such music you may wing your way to the world of bliss.

Let us begin the music now by singing right heartily—

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, you heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ISAIAH 54.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—
246, 243, 733, AND THE DOXOLOGY,
WHICH CONCLUDED THE SERMON.

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

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

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

THE DYING THIEF IN A NEW LIGHT
NO. 1881

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 31, 1886,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 23, 1885.

"But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Do you not fear God, seeing you are in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this Man has done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." Luke 23:40-42.

A GREAT many persons, whenever they hear of the conversion of the dying thief, remember that he was saved in the very article of death, and they dwell upon that fact, and that alone. He has always been quoted as a case of salvation at the eleventh hour, and so, indeed, he is. In his case it is proven that as long as a man can repent he can obtain forgiveness. The cross of Christ avails even for a man hanging on a gallows, and drawing near to his last hour. He who is mighty to save was mighty, even during His own death, to pluck others from the grasp of the destroyer, though they were in the act of expiring.

But that is not everything which the story teaches us, and it is always a pity to look exclusively upon one point, and thus to miss everything else—perhaps miss that which is more important. So often has this been the case that it has produced a sort of revulsion of feeling in certain minds, so that they have been driven in a wrong direction by their wish to protest against what they think to be a common error. I read the other day that this story of the dying thief ought not to be taken as an encouragement to death-bed repentance. Brethren, if the author meant—and I do not think he did mean—that this ought never to be so used as to lead people to postpone repentance to a dying bed, he spoke correctly. No Christian man could or would use it so injuriously; he must be hopelessly bad who would draw from God's long-suffering an argument for continuing in sin. I trust, however, that the narrative is not often so used, even by the worst of men, and I feel sure that it will not be so used by any one of you. It cannot be properly turned to such a purpose; it might be used as an encouragement to thieving just as much as to the delay of repentance. I might say, "I may be a thief because this thief was saved," just as rationally as I might say, "I may put off repentance because this thief was saved when he was about to die." The fact is, there is nothing so good but men can pervert it into evil, if they have evil hearts, the justice of God is made a motive for despair, and His mercy an argument for sin. Wicked men will drown themselves in the rivers of truth as readily as in the pools of error. He that has a mind to destroy himself can choke his soul with the Bread of life, or dash himself in pieces against the Rock of

ages. There is no doctrine of the grace of God so gracious that graceless men may not turn it into licentiousness.

I venture, however, to say that if I stood by the bedside of a dying man tonight, and I found him anxious about his soul, but fearful that Christ could not save him because repentance had been put off so late, I would certainly quote the dying thief to him, and I would do it with good conscience, and without hesitation. I would tell him that, though he was as near to dying as the thief upon the cross was, yet, if he repented of his sin, and turned his face to Christ believingly, he would find eternal life. I would do this with all my heart, rejoicing that I had such a story to tell to one at the gates of eternity. I do not think that I would be censured by the Holy Spirit for thus using a narrative which He has Himself recorded—recorded with the foresight that it would be so used. I would feel, at any rate, in my own heart, a sweet conviction that I had treated the subject as I ought to have treated it, and as it was intended to be used for men *in extremis* whose hearts are turning towards the living God. Oh, yes, poor soul, whatever your age, or whatever the period of life to which you have come, you may now find eternal life by faith in Christ!—

"***The dying thief rejoiced to see***
That fountain in his day;
And there may you, though vile as he,
Wash all your sins away."

Many good people think that they ought to guard the gospel, but it is never as safe as when it stands out in its own naked majesty. It needs no covering from us. When we protect it with provisos, and guard it with exceptions, and qualify it with observations, it is like David in Saul's armor, it is hampered and hindered, and you may even hear it cry, "I cannot go with these." Let the gospel alone, and it will save, qualify it, and the salt has lost its savor. I will venture to put it thus to you. I have heard it said that few are ever converted in old age, and this is thought to be a statement which will prove exceedingly awakening and impressive for the young. It certainly wears that appearance, but, on the other hand, it is a statement very discouraging to the old. I object to the frequent repetition of such statements, for I do not find their counterpart in the teaching of our Lord and His apostles. Assuredly our Lord spoke of some who entered the vineyard at the eleventh hour of the day, and among His miracles He not only saved those who were dying, but even raised the dead. Nothing can be concluded from the words of the Lord Jesus against the salvation of men at any hour or age. I tell you that, in the business of your acceptance with God, through faith in Christ Jesus, it does not matter what age you now are at. The same promise is to every one of you, "Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts," and whether you are in the earliest stage of life, or are within a few hours of eternity, if now you fly for refuge to the hope set before you in the gospel, you shall be saved. The gospel that I preach excludes none on the ground either of age or character. Whoever you may be, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved," is the message we have to deliver to you. If we address to you the longer form of the gospel, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved," this is true of every living man, be his age whatever it may. I am not afraid that this story of the dying and repenting thief, who went straight from the cross to the crown, will be used by you

amiss, but if you are wicked enough so to use it, I cannot help it. It will only fulfill that solemn Scripture which says that the gospel is a savor of death unto death to some, even that very gospel which is a savor of life unto life to others.

But I do not think, dear friends, that the only specialty about the thief is the lateness of his repentance. So far from being the only point of interest, it is not even the chief point. To some minds, at any rate, other points will be even more remarkable. I want to show you very briefly that there was a specialty in his case as to *the means of his conversion,* secondly, a specialty in *his faith,* thirdly, a specialty in *the result of his faith while he was here below,* and fourthly, a specialty in *the promise won by his faith*—the promise fulfilled to him in Paradise.

I. First, then, I think you ought to notice very carefully, THE SINGULARITY AND SPECIALITY OF THE MEANS BY WHICH THE THIEF WAS CONVERTED.

How do you think it was? Well, we do not know. We cannot tell. It seems to me that the man was an unconverted, impenitent thief when they nailed him to the cross, because one of the Evangelists says, "The *thieves* also, which were crucified with Him, cast the same in His teeth." I know that this may have been a general statement, and that it is reconcilable with its having been done by one thief only, according to the methods commonly used by critics, but I am not enamored of critics even when they are friendly. I have such respect for revelation that I never in my own mind permit the idea of discrepancies and mistakes, and when the Evangelist says "they" I believe he meant *"they,"* and that both these thieves did at their first crucifixion rail at the Christ with whom they were crucified. It would appear that by some means or other this thief must have been converted while he was on the cross. Assuredly nobody preached a sermon to him, no evangelistic address was delivered at the foot of his cross, and no meeting was held for special prayer on his account. He does not even seem to have had an instruction, or an invitation, or an expostulation addressed to him, and yet this man became a sincere and accepted believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Dwell upon this fact, if you please, and note its practical bearing upon the cases of many around us. There are many among my hearers who have been instructed from their childhood, who have been admonished, and warned, and entreated, and invited, and yet they have not come to Christ, while this man, without any of these advantages, nevertheless believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, and found eternal life. O you that have lived under the sound of the gospel from your childhood, the thief does not comfort you, but he accuses you! What are you doing to abide so long in unbelief? Will you never believe the testimony of divine love? What more shall I say to you? What more can anyone say to you?

What do you think must have converted this poor thief? It strikes me that it may have been—it must have been the sight of our great Lord and Savior. There was, to begin with, our Savior's wonderful behavior on the road to the cross. Perhaps the robber had mixed up with all sorts of society, but he had never seen a Man like this. Never had a cross been carried by a Cross-Bearer of His look and fashion. The robber wondered who this meek and majestic Personage could be. He heard the women weep,

and he wondered in himself whether anybody would ever weep for him. He thought that this must be some very singular Person that the people should stand about Him with tears in their eyes. When he heard that mysterious Sufferer say so solemnly, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but for your children," he must have been struck with wonder. When he came to think, in his death-pangs, of the singular look of pity which Jesus cast on the women, and of the self-forgetfulness which gleamed from His eyes, he was smitten with a strange relenting, it was as if an angel had crossed his path, and opened his eyes to a new world, and to a new form of manhood, the likes of which he had never seen before. He and his companion were coarse, rough fellows, this was a delicately formed and fashioned Being, of superior order to himself, yes, and of superior order to any other of the sons of men. Who could He be? What must He be? Though he could see that He suffered and fainted as He went along, he marked that there was no word of complaining, no note of execration, in return for the reviling cast upon Him. His eyes looked love on those who glared on Him with hate. Surely that march along the Via Dolorosa was the first part of the sermon which God preached to that bad man's heart. It was preached to many others who did not regard its teaching, but upon this man, by God's special grace, it had a softening effect when he came to think over it, and consider it. Was it not a likely and convincing means of grace?

When he saw the Savior surrounded by the Roman soldiery—saw the executioners bring forth the hammers and the nails, and lay Him down upon His back, and drive the nails into His hands and feet, this crucified criminal was startled and astonished as he heard Him say, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." He himself, probably, had met his executioners with a curse, but he heard this man breathe a prayer to the great Father, and as a Jew, as he probably was, he understood what was meant by such a prayer. But it did astound him to hear Jesus pray for his murderers. That was a petition the like of which he had never heard, nor even dreamed of. From whose lips could it come but from the lips of a divine being? Such a loving, forgiving, God-like prayer, proved Him to be the Messiah. Who else had ever prayed so? Certainly not David and the kings of Israel, who, on the contrary, in all honesty and heartiness imprecated the wrath of God upon their enemies. Elijah himself would not have prayed in that fashion, rather would he have called fire from heaven on the centurion and his company. It was a new, strange sound to him. I do not suppose that he appreciated it to the full, but I can well believe that it deeply impressed him, and made him feel that his Fellow-Sufferer was a being about whom there was an exceedingly mystery of goodness.

And when the cross was lifted up, that thief hanging on his own cross looked around, and I suppose he could see that inscription written in three languages—"Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." If so, that writing was his little Bible, his New Testament, and he interpreted it by what he knew of the Old Testament. Putting this and that together—that strange Person, incarnate loveliness, all patience and all majesty, that strange prayer, and now this singular inscription, surely he who knew the Old Testament, as I have no doubt he did, would say to himself, "Is

this He? Is this truly the King of the Jews? This is He who worked miracles, raised the dead, and said that He was the Son of God, is it all true, and is He really our Messiah?" Then he would remember the words of the prophet Isaiah, "He was despised and rejected of men, a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. Surely, He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows." "Why," he would say to himself, "I never understood that passage in the prophet Isaiah before, but it must point to Him. The chastisement of our peace is upon Him. Can this be He who cried in the Psalms—'they pierced My hands and My feet'"? As he looked at Him again, he felt in his soul, "It must be He! Could there be another so like to Him?" He felt conviction creeping over his spirit. Then he looked again, and he marked how all men down below rejected, and despised, and hissed at Him, and hooted Him, and all this would make the case the more clear. "All they that see Me laugh Me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver Him: let Him deliver Him, seeing He delighted in Him."

Perhaps, this dying thief read the gospel out of the lips of Christ's enemies. They said—"He saved others." "Ah!" he thought, "did He save others? Why could He not save me?" What a grand bit of gospel that was for the dying thief—"He saved others!" I think I could swim to heaven on that plank—"He saved others" because, if He saved others, He can surely save me.

Thus the very things that the enemies disdainfully threw at Christ would be gospel to this poor dying man. When it has been my misery to read any of the wretched prints that are sent us out of scorn, in which our Lord is held up to ridicule, I have thought, "Why, perhaps those who read these loathsome blasphemies may, nevertheless, learn the gospel from them!" You may pick a jewel from a dunghill, and find its radiance undiminished, and you may gather the gospel from a blasphemous mouth, and it shall be none the less the gospel of salvation. Perhaps this man learned the gospel from those who jested at our dying Lord, and so the servants of the devil were unconsciously made to be the servants of Christ.

But, after all, surely that which won him most must have been to look at Jesus again, as He was hanging upon the cruel tree. Possibly nothing about the physical person of Christ would be attractive to him, for His visage was more marred than that of any man, and His form more than the sons of men, but yet there must have been in that blessed face a singular charm. Was it not the very image of perfection? As I conceive the face of Christ, it was very different from anything that any painter has yet been able to place upon his canvas. It was all goodness, and kindness, and unselfishness, and yet it was a royal face. It was a face of superlative justice and unrivalled tenderness. Righteousness and uprightness sat upon His brow, but infinite pity and goodwill to men had also there taken up their abode. It was a face that would have struck you at once as one by itself, never to be forgotten, never to be fully understood. It was all sorrow, yet all love, all meekness, yet all resolution, all wisdom, yet all simplicity, the face of a child, or an angel, and yet peculiarly the face of a man. Majesty and misery, suffering and sacredness, were therein strangely combined, He was evidently the Lamb of God, and the Son of

man. As the robber looked, he believed. Is it not singular, the very sight of the Master won him? The sight of the Lord in agony, and shame, and death! Scarcely a word, certainly no sermon, no attending worship on the Sabbath, no reading of gracious books; no appeal from mother, or teacher, or friend, but the sight of Jesus won him. I put it down as a very singular thing, a thing for you and for me to recollect, and dwell upon, with quite as much vividness as we do upon the lateness of this robber's conversion.

Oh, that God in His mercy might convert everybody in this Tabernacle! Oh, that I could have a share in it by the preaching of the word! But I will be equally happy if you get to heaven anyhow, yes, if the Lord should take you there without outward ministries, leading you to Jesus by some simple method such as He adopted with this thief. If you do but get there, He shall have the glory of it, and His poor servant will be overjoyed! Oh, that you would now look to Jesus, and live! Before your eyes He is set forth, evidently crucified among you. Look to Him and be saved, even at this hour.

II. But now I want you to think with me a little upon THE SPECIALITY OF THIS MAN'S FAITH, for I think it was a very singular faith that this man exerted towards our Lord Jesus Christ.

I greatly question whether the equal and the parallel of the dying thief's faith will be readily found outside the Scriptures, or even in the Scriptures.

Observe that this man believed in Christ *when he literally saw Him dying the death of a felon,* under circumstances of the greatest personal shame. You have never realized what it was to be crucified. None of you could do that, for the sight has never been seen in our day in England. There is not a man or woman here who has ever realized in their own mind the actual death of Christ. It stands beyond us. This man saw it with his own eyes, and for him to call *Him,* "Lord," who was hanging on a gallows, was no small triumph of faith. For him to ask Jesus to remember him when He came into His kingdom, though he saw Jesus bleeding His life away, and hounded to death, was a splendid act of reliance. For him to commit his everlasting destiny into the hands of One who was, to all appearance, unable even to preserve His own life, was a noble achievement of faith. I say that this dying thief leads the van in the matter of faith, for what he saw of the circumstances of the Savior was calculated to contradict rather than help his confidence. What he saw was to his hindrance rather than to his help, for he saw our Lord in the very extremity of agony and death, and yet he believed in Him as the King shortly to come into His kingdom.

Recollect, too, that at that moment when the thief believed in Christ, *all the disciples had forsaken Him and fled.* John might be lingering at a little distance, and holy women may have stood farther off, but no one was present bravely to champion the dying Christ. Judas had sold Him, Peter had denied Him, and the rest had forsaken Him, and it was then that the dying thief called Him, "Lord," and said, "Remember me when You come into Your kingdom." I call that splendid faith. Why, some of you do not believe, though you are surrounded with Christian friends—though you are urged on by the testimony of those whom you regard with

love, but this man, all alone, comes out, and calls Jesus his Lord! No one else was confessing Christ at that moment, no revival was around him with enthusiastic crowds; he was all by himself as a confessor of his Lord. After our Lord was nailed to the tree, the first to bear witness for Him was this thief. The centurion bore witness afterwards, when our Lord expired, but this thief was a lone confessor, holding on to Christ when nobody would say, "Amen" to what he said. Even his fellow thief was mocking at the crucified Savior, so that this man shone as a lone star in the midnight darkness. O sirs, dare you be Daniels? Dare you stand alone? Would you dare to stand out amidst a vulgar crew, and say, "Jesus is my King. I only ask Him to remember me when He comes into His kingdom"? Would you be likely to avow such a faith when priests and scribes, princes and people, were all mocking at the Christ, and deriding Him? Brethren, the dying robber exhibited marvelous faith, and I beg you to think of this the next time you speak of him.

And it seems to me that another point adds splendor to that faith, namely, that *he himself was in extreme torture*. Remember, he was crucified. It was a crucified man trusting in a crucified Christ. Oh, when our frame is racked with torture; when the tenderest nerves are pained, when our body is hung up to die by we know not what great length of torment, then to forget the present and live in the future is a grand achievement of faith! While dying, to turn one's eyes to Another dying at your side, and trust your soul with Him, is very marvelous faith. Blessed thief, because they put you down at the bottom, as one of the least of saints, I think that I must bid you come up higher and take one of the uppermost seats among those who by faith have glorified the Christ of God!

Why, see, dear friends, once more, the specialty of this man's faith was that *he saw so much,* though his eyes had been opened for so short a time! He saw the future world. He was not a believer in annihilation, or in the possibility of a man's not being immortal. He evidently expected to be in another world, and to be in existence when the dying Lord should come into His kingdom. He believed all that, and it is more than some do nowadays. He also believed that Jesus would have a kingdom, a kingdom after He was dead, a kingdom though He was crucified. He believed that He was winning for Himself a kingdom by those nailed hands and pierced feet. This was intelligent faith, was it not? He believed that Jesus would have a kingdom in which others would share, and therefore he aspired to have his portion in it. But yet he had fit views of himself, and therefore he did not say, "Lord, let me sit at Your right hand," or, "Let me share in the dainties of Your palace," but he said only, "Remember me. Think of me. Cast an eye my way. Think of Your poor dying comrade on the cross at Your right hand. Lord, remember me. Remember me." I see deep humility in the prayer, and yet a sweet, joyous, confident exaltation of the Christ at the time when the Christ was in His deepest humiliation.

Oh, dear sirs, if any of you have thought of this dying thief only as one who put off repentance, I want you now to think of him as one that did greatly and grandly believe in Christ, and oh, that you would do the same! Oh, that you would put a great confidence in my great Lord! Never did a poor sinner trust Christ too much. There was never a case of a guilty one, who believed that Jesus could forgive him, and afterwards

found that He could not—who believed that Jesus could save him on the spot, and then woke up to find that it was a delusion. No; plunge into this river of confidence in Christ. The waters are waters to swim in, not to drown in. Never did a soul perish that glorified Christ by a living, loving faith in Him. Come, then, with all your sin, whatever it may be, with all your deep depression of spirit, with all your agony of conscience. Come along with you, and grasp my Lord and Master with both the hands of your faith, and He shall be yours, and you shall be His—

"Turn to Christ your longing eyes,
View His bloody sacrifice;
See in Him your sins forgiven;
Pardon, holiness, and heaven;
Glorify the King of kings,
Take the peace the gospel brings."

I think that I have shown you something special in the means of the thief's conversion and in his faith in our dying Lord.

III. But now, thirdly, as God shall help me, I wish to show you another specialty, namely, in THE RESULT OF HIS FAITH.

Oh, I have heard people say, "Well, you see, the dying thief was converted, but then he was not baptized. He never went to communion, and never joined the church!" He could not do either, and that which God Himself renders impossible to us He does not demand of us. He was nailed to a cross, how could he be baptized? But he did a great deal more than that, for if he could not carry out the outward signs, he most manifestly exhibited the things which they signified, which, in his condition, was better still.

This dying thief first of all confessed the Lord Jesus Christ, and that is the very essence of baptism. He confessed Christ. Did he not acknowledge Him to his fellow thief? It was as open a confession as he could make it. Did he not acknowledge Christ before all that were gathered around the cross who were within hearing? It was as public a confession as he could possibly cause it to be. Yet certain cowardly fellows claim to be Christians, though they have never confessed Christ to a single person, and then they quote this poor thief as an excuse. Are they nailed to a cross? Are they dying in agony? Oh no, and yet they talk as if they could claim the exemption which these circumstances would give them. What a dishonest piece of business!

The fact is, that our Lord requires an open confession as well as a secret faith, and if you will not render it, there is no promise of salvation for you, but a threat of being denied at the last. The apostle puts it, "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." It is stated in another place this way—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved"—that is Christ's way of making the confession of Him. If there is a true faith, there must be a declaration of it. If you are candles, and God has lit you, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Soldiers of Christ must, like her Majesty's soldiers, wear their uniforms, and if they are ashamed of their uniforms, they ought to be drummed out of the regiment. They are not honest soldiers who refuse to march in rank with their comrades. The very least thing that the Lord Jesus Christ can

expect of us is that we do confess Him to the best of our power. If you are nailed up to a cross, I will not invite you to be baptized. If you are fastened up to a tree to die, I will not ask you to come into this pulpit and declare your faith, for you cannot. But you are required to do what you can do, namely, to make as distinct and open an avowal of the Lord Jesus Christ as may be suitable in your present condition.

I believe that many Christian people get into a deal of trouble through not being honest in their convictions. For instance, if a man goes into a workshop, or a soldier into a barracks, and if he does not fly his flag from the first, it will be very difficult for him to run it up afterwards. But if he immediately and boldly lets them know, "I am a Christian man, and there are certain things that I cannot do to please you, and certain other things that I cannot help doing, though they displease you"—when that is clearly understood, after a while the singularity of the thing will be gone, and the man will be left alone, but if he is a little sneaky, and thinks that he is going to please the world and please Christ too, he is in for a rough time, let him depend upon it. His life will be that of a toad under a harrow, or a fox in a dog kennel, if he tries the way of compromise. That will never do. Come out. Show your colors. Let it be known who you are, and what you are, and although your course will not be smooth, it will certainly be not half as rough as if you tried to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds—a very difficult piece of business that.

This man came out, then and there, and made as open an avowal of his faith in Christ as was possible.

The next thing he did was to rebuke his fellow sinner. He spoke to him in answer to the vulgarity with which he had assailed our Lord. I do not know what the unconverted convict had been blasphemously saying, but his converted comrade spoke very honestly to him. "Do not you fear God, seeing you are in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this Man has done nothing amiss." It is more than ever needful in these days that believers in Christ should not allow sin to go unrebuked, and yet a great many of them do so. Do you not know that a person who is silent when a wrong thing is said or done may become a participator in the sin? If you do not rebuke sin—I mean, of course, on all fit occasions, and in a proper spirit—your silence will give consent to the sin, and you will be an aider and abettor in it. A man who saw a robbery, and who did not cry, "Stop thief!" would be thought to be in league with the thief, and the man who can hear swearing, or see impurity, and never utter a word of protest may well question whether he is right himself. Our "other men's sins" make up a great item in our personal guilt unless we in any manner rebuke them. This our Lord expects us to do. The dying thief did it, and did it with all his heart, and therein far exceeded large numbers of those who hold their heads high in the church.

Next, *the dying thief made a full confession of his guilt*. He said to him who was hanged with him, "Do not you fear God, seeing you are in the same condemnation? *And we indeed justly."* Not many words, but what a world of meaning was in them—"we indeed justly." "You and I are dying for our crimes," he said, "and we deserve to die." When a man is willing

to confess that he deserves the wrath of God—that he deserves the suffering which his sin has brought upon him—there is evidence of sincerity in him. In this man's case, his repentance glittered like a holy tear in the eye of his faith, so that his faith was bejeweled with the drops of his penitence. As I have often told you, I suspect the faith which is not born as a twin with repentance, but there is no room for suspicion in the case of this penitent confessor. I pray God that you and I may have such a thorough work as this in our own hearts as the result of our faith.

Then, see, *this dying thief defends his Lord right manfully*. He says, "We indeed justly, but this Man has done nothing amiss." Was not that beautifully said? He did not say, "This Man does not deserve to die," but "This Man has done nothing amiss." He means that He is perfectly innocent. He does not even say, "He has done nothing wicked," but he even asserts that He has not acted unwisely or indiscreetly—"This Man has done nothing amiss." This is a glorious testimony of a dying man to one who was numbered with the transgressors, and was being put to death because His enemies falsely accused Him. Beloved, I only pray that you and I may bear as good a witness to our Lord as this thief did. He outruns us all. We need not think much of the coming of his conversion late in life, we may far rather consider how blessed was the testimony which he bore for his Lord when it was most needed. When all other voices were silent, one suffering penitent spoke out, and said—"This man has done nothing amiss."

See, again, another mark of this man's faith. He prays and *his prayer is directed to Jesus*. "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." True faith is always praying faith. "Behold, he prays," is one of the surest tests of the new birth. Oh, friends, may we abound in prayer, for thus we shall prove that our faith in Jesus Christ is what it ought to be! This converted robber opened his mouth wide in prayer, he prayed with great confidence as to the coming kingdom, and he sought that kingdom first, even to the exclusion of all else. He might have asked for life, or for ease from pain, but he prefers the kingdom, and this is a high mark of grace.

In addition to thus praying, you will see that *he adores and worships Jesus,* for he says, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." The petition is worded as if he felt, "Only let Christ think of me, and it is enough. Let Him but remember me, and the thought of His mind will be effectual for everything that I shall need in the world to come." This is to impute Godhead to Christ. If a man can cast his all upon the mere memory of a person, he must have a very high esteem of that person. If to be remembered by the Lord Jesus is all that this man asks, or desires, he pays to the Lord great honor. I think that there was about his prayer a worship equal to the eternal hallelujahs of cherubim and seraphim. There was in it a glorification of his Lord which is not excelled even by the endless symphonies of angelic spirits who surround the throne. Thief, you have well done!

Oh, that some penitent spirit here might be helped thus to believe, thus to confess, thus to defend his Master, thus to adore, thus to worship, and then the age of the convert would be a matter of the smallest imaginable consequence.

IV. Now, the last remark is this: There was something very special about the dying thief as to OUR LORD'S WORDS TO HIM ABOUT THE WORLD TO COME. He said to him, "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." He only asked the Lord to remember him, but he obtained this surprising answer, "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise."

In some respects I envy this dying thief, for this reason—that when the Lord pardoned me, and pardoned the most of you, who are present, He did not give us a place in Paradise that same day. We are not yet come to the rest which is promised to us. No, you are waiting here. Some of you have been waiting very long. It is thirty years with many of us. It is forty years, it is fifty years, with many others since the Lord blotted out your sins, and yet you are not with Him in Paradise. There is a dear member of this church who, I suppose, has known the Lord for seventy-five years, and she is still with us, having long passed the ninetieth year of her age. The Lord did not admit her to Paradise on the day of her conversion. He did not take any one of us from nature to grace, and from grace to glory, in a day. We have had to wait a good while. There is something for us to do in the wilderness, and so we are kept out of the heavenly garden. I remember that Mr. Baxter said that he was not in a hurry to be gone to heaven, and a friend called upon Dr. John Owen, who had been writing about the glory of Christ, and asked him what he thought of going to heaven. That great divine replied, "I am longing to be there." "Why," said the other, "I have just spoken to holy Mr. Baxter, and he says that he would prefer to be here, since he thinks that he can be more useful on earth." "Oh," said Dr. Owen, "my brother Baxter is always full of practical godliness, but for all that I cannot say that I am at all desirous to linger in this mortal state. I would rather be gone." Each of these men seems to me to have been the half of Paul. Paul was made up of the two, for he was desirous to depart, but he was willing to remain because it was needful for the people. We would put both together, and like Paul, have a strong desire to depart and to be with Christ, and yet be willing to wait if we can do service to our Lord and to His church. Still, I think he has the best of it that is converted, and enters heaven the same night. This robber breakfasted with the devil, but he dined with Christ on earth, and supped with Him in Paradise. This was short work, but blessed work. What a host of troubles he escaped! What a world of temptation he missed! What an evil world he left! He was just born, like a lamb dropped in the field, and then he was lifted into the Shepherd's bosom straight away. I do not remember the Lord ever saying this to anybody else. I dare say it may have happened that souls have been converted and have gone home at once, but I never heard of anybody that had such an assurance from Christ as this man had, "Verily, I say unto you," such a personal assurance, "Verily I say unto *you,* Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." Dying thief, you were favored above many, "to be with Christ, which is far better," and to be with Him so soon!

Why is it that our Lord does not thus imparadise all of us at once? It is because there is something for us to do on earth. My brethren, are you doing it? *Are you doing it?* Some good people are still on earth, but why? But why? What is the use of them? I cannot make it out. If they are indeed the Lord's people, what are they here for? They get up in the morn-

ing and eat their breakfast, and in due course eat their dinner, and their supper, and go to bed and sleep. At a proper hour they get up the next morning, and do the same as on the previous day. Is this living for Jesus? Is this life? It does not come to much. Can this be the life of God in man? Oh, Christian people, do justify your Lord in keeping you waiting here! How can you justify Him but by serving Him to the utmost of your power? The Lord help you to do so! Why, you owe as much to Him as the dying thief! I know I owe a great deal more. What a mercy it is to have been converted while you were yet a boy, to be brought to the Savior while you were yet a girl! What a debt of obligation young Christians owe to the Lord! And if this poor thief crammed a life full of testimony into a few minutes, ought not you and I, who are spared, for years after conversion, to perform good service for our Lord? Come; let us wake up if we have been asleep! Let us begin to live if we have been half dead. May the Spirit of God make something of us yet, so that we may go as industrious servants from the labors of the vineyard to the pleasures of the Paradise! To our once crucified Lord be glory forever and ever! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—LUKE 23:27-49. HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—872, 285, 548, 288.

Mr. Spurgeon begs to salute the readers of the sermons with tidings of his speedy return to the pulpit of the Tabernacle. Through the goodness of God he feels greatly refreshed by his rest in a genial climate, and trusts that he may begin on the first Sabbath of February a long season of earnest ministry. He begs to thank thousands of friends for generous help rendered to the College and the Orphanage during his absence, and to entreat their renewed prayers for a blessing on those works, and on these weekly sermons.

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

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

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

THE PASTOR'S RETURN.

THREE SPECIALLY SELECTED SERMONS TO HIS CHURCH, CONGREGATION, READERS AND FRIENDS, CONSISTING OF

A RETROSPECT, A PROSPECT [No. 1883], AND AN EXHORTATION [No. 1884].

RETROSPECT—"THE LORD HAS BLESSED" NO. 1882

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

"Forasmuch as the Lord has blessed me until now."
Joshua 17:14.

IT is not an easy task to divide land among different claimants. Joshua divided Canaan with strict impartiality. He was a man of God, and he was also shrewdly wise, as you may gather from many of his speeches. But, for all that, he could not satisfy everybody. He who would please all attempts the impossible. God Himself is quarreled with. If it is the design of providence to please men, it is a melancholy failure. Do we not find men everywhere dissatisfied with their portions? This man would like his lot if it were not where it is, and that man would be perfectly satisfied if he had a little more. One would be contented with what he has if he could keep it always, while another would be more pleased if life could be shortened. There is no pleasing man. We are like the sons of Joseph in the chapter before us, ready to complain of our inheritance. It should not

be so. We who have pined in the wilderness of sin should rejoice that we have entered the land of promise, and we ought to be glad to have a portion among the people of the Lord. Contentment should be natural to those who are born of the Spirit of God; yes, we ought to go beyond contentment, and cry, "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loads us with benefits."

Brethren, the best advice that I can give to each man among you is, that he should endeavor to make the best of the portion which God has given him, for, after all, *Joshua* had not arbitrarily appointed Ephraim and Manasseh their lots, but they had fallen to them by the decree of God. Their portions had been marked out by a higher hand than Joshua's long before. You and I ought to believe that—

"There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will."

Let us fall back upon predestination, and accept the grand truth that "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord." An all-wise God disposes His people according to His sovereign will. Let us not seek to alter our destiny, but let us try to make the best of our circumstances. This is what Joshua exhorted Ephraim and Manasseh to do. "You have a hill country crowned with forests: hew them down. You have fat valleys occupied by Canaanites: drive out the present inhabitants." O sirs, if we would but thoroughly enjoy what God has freely given us, we should be happy to the full, and even anticipate the joys of heaven. We have a deep river of delights in the covenant of grace, yet we are content to paddle about its shores. We are only up to our ankles, the most of us, whereas the waters are "waters to swim in." A great sun of everlasting love shines upon the globe of our life with tropical force, but we get away to the North Pole of doubt and fear, and then complain that the sun has such little heat, or that he is so long below the horizon. He who will not go to the fire ought not to complain that the room is cold. Did we heartily feed upon what the Lord has set on our table, accept the ring which He has prepared for our finger, and wear the garments which He has provided

for our comfort, we might here on earth make music and dancing before the Lord.

I am going to speak upon my text thus: First, here is *a confession,* which I think many of us will be very happy to make, "Forasmuch as the Lord has blessed me until now." Secondly, here is *an argument,* which is stated after the manner of logic, "Forasmuch as the Lord has blessed me until now, therefore," so and so.

I. We look at our text, then, first of all, as A CONFESSION—"The Lord has blessed me until now."

I will not at present speak to those of you upon whom the blessing of God has never rested. Remember, my dear hearers that every man is either under the curse or under the blessing. They that are of the works of the law are under the curse. Those upon whom their sin is resting are under the curse, for a curse always attends upon sin. Though we read no denunciation service; though we do not speak to you from Ebal and Gerizim, with the blessing and the curse, yet rest assured that there is before the living God a separation of the precious from the vile, and each day there is a judgment which, in God's apprehension, puts some upon the right hand with the "Come, you blessed," and others upon the left hand with the "Depart, you cursed." This will be finally done in "that day of days for which all other days were made." At this hour, my hearer, if you are not the blessed of the Lord, you are resting under the dark shadow of a curse from which I pray God you may at once escape. Faith in Him who was made a curse for us is the only way to the blessing.

But I speak to as many as have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the Lord says, "Surely, blessing I will bless you."

You can say at this time, "God has blessed me *until now."* He has blessed you with those *blessings which are common to all the house of Israel*. Ephraim and Manasseh had received a blessing when God blessed Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, seeing they were in the loins of Abraham. You and I, who are in Christ, are partakers of all covenant blessings in Christ Jesus. "If children, then heirs," and if we are children of

God, then we are heirs of all things. I like to think of the old Scottish woman, who not only blessed God for the porridge as she ate it, but thanked God that she had a covenant right to the porridge. Daily mercies belong to the Lord's household by covenant right, and that same covenant right which will admit us into heaven above also gives us bread and water here below. The trifles in the house, and the jewels of the house, belong equally to the children. We may partake of the common mercies of providence, and the extraordinary mercies of grace, without stint. None of the dainties of the royal house are locked up from the children. The Lord says to each believer, "Son, you are ever with Me, and all that I have is yours." "You are Christ's, and Christ is God's," and therefore "all things are yours."

Can you not say—"The Lord has blessed me *until now"?* Has He ever denied you one of the blessings common to the covenanted family? Has He ever told you that you may not pray, or that you may not trust? Has He forbidden you to cast your burden on the Lord? Has He denied to you fellowship with Himself and communion with His dear Son? Has He laid an embargo on any one of the promises? Has He shut you out from any one of the provisions of His love? I know that it is not so if you are His child, but you can heartily exclaim "The Lord has blessed me until now." "Such honor has all the saints." By His gracious past of love the Lord guarantees to His redeemed a future of equal blessedness, for His loving kindness never departs from those on whom it lights.

But then, dear friends, besides this, Ephraim and Manasseh had *special blessings,* the peculiar blessing of Joseph, which did not belong to Judah, or Reuben, or Issachar. In the end of the Book of Genesis, you will see how Jacob blessed the two sons of Joseph, and you will observe with what prodigality of benediction he enriched them among his sons. "Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall." Moses also, before he died, seemed to glow with a divine fervor when he came to the tribe of Joseph, and blessed him in some respects above his brethren. Now, I think that many of you

may say, "Though I am least of all His saints, yet in some respects the Lord has especially blessed me until now." I believe that every flower in a garden, which is tended by a wise gardener, could tell of some particular care that the gardener takes of it. He does for the dahlia what he does not for the sunflower, something is needed by the rose that is not required by the lily, and the geranium calls for an attention which is not given to the honeysuckle. Each flower wins from the gardener a special culture. The vine has a dressing all its own, and the apple tree a pruning peculiar to itself. There is a blessing of the house of Manasseh, and a blessing for the house of Ephraim, and so is there a special benediction for each child of God. All the names of the tribes were written on the breastplate, but there was a different color in the jewel allotted to each tribe, and I believe that there is a specialty of grace about every child of God. There is not only an election from the world, but an election out of the elect. Twelve were taken from the disciples; three were taken out of the twelve; one greatly beloved was taken out of the three. Uniformity of love does not prevent diversity of operations. As a crystal is made up of many crystals, so is grace composed of many graces. In one ray of the light of grace there are seven colors. Each saint may tell his companion something that he does not know, and in heaven it will be a part of the riches of glory to hold commerce in those specialties which each one has for himself alone. I shall not be you, neither will you be me, neither shall we two be like another two, or the four of us like any other four, though all of us shall be like our Lord when we shall see Him as He is. I want you each to feel at this hour—"The Lord has blessed *me* until now." Personally, I often sit down alone, and say, "Why this to *me*?" I cannot but admire the special goodness of my Lord to me. Sister, have you never done the same? Have you not said to yourself, in deep humility, "Surely, I have been a woman highly favored?" Do you not, my brother, often feel that the name given to Daniel might be given to you, "O man greatly beloved"? Perhaps you are greatly tried, but then, you have been graciously sustained. Perhaps you are free from troubles; then you are bound to

bless the Lord for a smooth path. A peculiarity of love colors each gracious life. As God is truly everywhere, yet specially in certain places, so does He manifest His love to all His people, and yet each one enjoys a specialty of grace. "The Lord has blessed *me* until now."

I think, besides this, that these two tribes which made up the house of Joseph, also meant to say that, not only had God blessed them with the common blessings of Israel, and the special blessing of their tribe, but also with *actual blessings*. As far as they had gone they had driven out the Canaanites, and taken possession of the country. They had not received all that was promised, but God had blessed them *until now*. Come, brethren, we have not driven out all the Canaanites yet, but we have driven out many of them. We are not what we hope to be, but we are not what we used to be. We cannot yet see everything clearly, but we are not blind, as once we were. We have not overcome every sinful propensity, but no sin has dominion over us, for we are not under the law, but under grace. We do not know all that the Lord will yet teach us, but what we do know we would not lose for ten thousand worlds. We have not seen our Lord as He is, but we have seen Him, and the joy of that sight will never be taken from us. Therefore, before the Lord and His assembled people, we joyfully declare that "The Lord has blessed us until now."

Let us expand this confession a little, and speak thus—

First, *all the blessings that we have received have come from God*. Do not let us trace any blessing to ourselves, or to our fellow men, for though the minister of God may be as a conduit to bring us refreshing streams, yet all our fresh springs are in God, and not in men. Say, *"The Lord* has blessed me until now." Trace up every stream to the fountain, every beam to the sun, and say, "I will bless the Lord as long as I live, for *He* has blessed me. Every good gift which has come to me has come from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Trite as the thought is, we have often to recall God's people to the confession—that all the blessings of the covenant come from the God of the covenant.

The Lord has given each one of us a great multitude of blessings. He has blessed us in His promises. Oh, that we did but know how rich we are! He has blessed us in His providence—in the brightness and in the darkness of it, in its calms and in its storms, in its harvests and in its famines. He has blessed us by His grace. I shall not dwell upon these themes; I should want a century for my sermon, if I did. But He has blessed you, beloved, who are in Christ, with all heavenly blessings in Christ Jesus, according as He has chosen you in Him from before the foundation of the world. Never will you be able to reckon up, even in eternity, the total sum of the benedictions which God has bestowed upon you in promise, in providence, and in grace. He has given you "all blessings" in Christ, and that is the short way of putting it. He has given you more than you know of, more than you have asked for, more than you can estimate. He has given you not only many things, but all things, in Christ Jesus, and He has declared that "No good thing will he withheld from them that walk uprightly." The Lord has, indeed, blessed us until now.

And mark you, there has been a continuity of this blessing. God has not blessed us, and then paused, but He has blessed us *"until now."* One silver thread of blessing extends from the cradle to the grave. "He has blessed us until now." When we have provoked Him, when we have backslidden from Him, when we have been making an ill use of His blessings, yet He has kept on blessing us with a wondrous perseverance of love. I believe in the perseverance of the saints, because I believe in the perseverance of the love of God, or else I should not believe in it. The Lord Himself puts it so—"I am God, I change not; therefore, you sons of Jacob are not consumed." There is an unconquerable pertinacity in the love of God, His grace cannot be baffled or thwarted, or turned aside; His goodness and His mercy follow us all the days of our lives.

In addition to that continuity, there is a delightful consistency about the Lord's dealings. "The Lord has *blessed* us until now." No curse has intervened. He has blessed us and only blessed us. There has been no,

"yes" and "no," with Him, no enriching us with spiritual blessings, and then casting us away. He has frowned upon us, truly, but His love has been the same in the frown as in the smile. He has chastened us sorely, but He has never given us over unto death.

And what is more, when my text says, "The Lord has blessed me until now," there is a kind of prophecy in it, for "until now" has a window forward as well us backward. You sometimes see a railway carriage or truck, fastened on to what goes before, but there is also a great hook behind. What is that for? Why, to fasten something else behind, and so to lengthen the train. Any one mercy from God is linked on to all the mercy that went before it, but provision is also made for adding future blessings. All the years to come are guaranteed by the ages past. Did you ever notice how the Bible ends? It closes with that happiest of conclusions, marriage and happiness. The marriage of the Lamb is come, and His bride has made herself ready. Infinite felicity closes the volume of revealed history. Earthquakes, falling stars, and the pouring out of vials, follow with terrible speed, but it all ends in everlasting bliss and eternal union. Even thus shall it be with us, for the Lord has blessed us until now.

Until now—*until now*—He has blessed us, and it implies that He will always bless us. Never will the silver stream of His love cease to flow. Never will the ocean of His grace cease to wash the shores of our life. He is, He must be, to His people the blessed and blessing God. "Surely blessing I will bless you," is a word of Jehovah that stands fast forever and ever. Thus far is our confession of gratitude.

II. Now we come to THE ARGUMENT, which I wish to press home upon all my dear brethren and sisters in Christ. The tribe of Joseph says, "Forasmuch as the Lord has blessed me until now."

What is the inference from that fact? The argument that the sons of Joseph wanted to draw was peculiarly Jewish, it was the inference of business. It was the plea that they should have more because they had so much. Because they had one lot, therefore they were to have two por-

tions in the Promised Land. I want no man to infer that, because God has blessed him in providence, he is to expect to have still more riches and still more pleasure. Ah, no! Do not wish to have your portion in this life; lest you get it, for then you will be as the ungodly.

Their argument, again, was one of grumbling. They said, "God has blessed us until now," as much as to say, "If we do not get two portions, we shall not say that God is still blessing us, but we will draw a line, and say *until now."* God has many very naughty children; they fall into quarrels with their heavenly Father. "Ever since that dear child died," says one, "I never felt the same towards God." "Ever since my mother was taken away," cries another, "I have always felt that I could not trust God as I used to do." This is shocking talk. Have done with it. If you quarrel with God, He will say to you, "It is hard for you to kick against the pricks." There is no happiness but in complete submission. Yield and all will end well, but if you stand out against the Most High, it is not God's rod that makes you smart; it is a rod of your own making. End this warfare by saying, "It is the Lord: let Him do what seems good to Him." Do not say, "He blessed me up to a certain point, and then He changed His hand." This is a most slanderous falsehood.

Let us say, rather, "The Lord has blessed me until now, and this is cause for *holy wonder* and amazement. Why should the Lord have blessed me?"—

"Pause, my soul! Adore and wonder!
Ask, 'Oh, why such love to me?'
Grace has put me in the number
Of the Savior's family:
Hallelujah!
Thanks, eternal thanks to Thee."

We read in 2 Samuel 7:18, 19, "Then went King David in, and sat before the Lord, and he said, 'Who am I, O Lord God? And what is my house, that You have brought me until now? And is this the manner of man, O Lord God?'" Thus let each one of us be amazed at the great loving kindness of the Lord.

Be full of *holy gratitude*. Do not say, "I will look on the bright side." Beloved, the Lord's ways to us are all bright. Do not say, "I will trust God where I cannot trace Him," but rather trace God everywhere. Get into the state of that poor man who was so greatly blessed to pious Tauler. He wished the man a good day. The man replied, "Sir, I never had a bad day." "Oh, but I wish you good weather." Said he, "Sir, it is always good weather. If it rains or if it shines, it is such weather as God pleases, and what pleases God pleases me."

Our sorrows lie mainly at the roots of our selfishness, and when our self-hood is dug up, our sorrow, to a great extent is gone. Let us, then, utter this text tonight, "Forasmuch as the Lord has blessed me until now," with hearty gratitude for all His holy will. Summing up gains and losses, joys and griefs, let us say with Job, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord."

Say also, with *holy confidence,* "The Lord has blessed me until now." Speak as you find. If any inquire, "What has God been to you?" answer, "He has blessed me until now." The devil whispers, "If you are the son of God," and he then insinuates, "God deals very harshly with you. See what you suffer. See how you are left in the dark!" Answer him, "Get you behind me, Satan, for surely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life, and if God takes from me any earthly good, shall I receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall I not receive evil?" He, who can stand to this, stands on good ground. "In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." But he who gets away from this drifts I know not where. Come, let us each one bless the Lord, and say, "If He should treat me harshly in the future, I will still praise Him for what He has done until now." I remember saying to myself, when I was in sorrow for sin, that if God would only forgive me my sin, and give me rest from my despair, if I had to live in a dungeon on bread and water, all the rest of my life, I would do nothing else but sing to His praise." I am afraid that I have not fulfilled that promise, but I confess my wrong in not having done so. You, my brethren, I dare say, made much the same spiritual covenant with

God, and you have not stood to it. Let us unite our sincere confessions, and say, each one, "The Lord has blessed me until now; therefore blessed be His name."

Furthermore, if this be true, let us resolve to *engage in enlarged enterprises*. If the Lord has blessed us until now, why should He not bless us in something fresh? I want to say somewhat to you as a church, dear friends, for the text is a church text, and the "me" here comprehends all the tribe of Joseph. Let us joyfully say as a church, "The Lord has blessed us until now." Strangers will excuse us if we have a little mutual joy in what the Lord has done for us during a considerable period of time. Those who have been with me from our earliest days, when we were a mere handful of people, may well rejoice that the Lord taught us to pray, and to trust, when we were so few and feeble, and then He visited us with favor, and greatly multiplied us, and since then He has continued to bless us without pause or stint. These thirty-three years He has been with us, we have never been without conversions, never without fresh labor for Christ, and fresh projects, and never a failure, never a schism, or a division of heart. I am amazed and humbled by the Lord's goodness. We have gone from strength to strength in the Lord's work. I have been feeble, and I fear I may be so still, but the Lord has not ceased to work by you who are with me. Well, what then? College, Orphanage, Colportage, Evangelists, Mission Halls—thirty-four of them, Sunday schools, and so forth. What then? "Stop," says the devil. You would like us to stop, would you not, foul fiend? But we shall do nothing of the kind. Wherever you are, O fiend, in this city, it is our business and our desire to fight with you, and drive you out! We cannot cease to be active, for the Lord has blessed us until now. "You will get to meddling with too much, and get too many irons in the fire." None of them in *your* fire, O Satan! Brethren, we must have more fire, and more irons in it! I beseech you, do not slacken in any way, but press on. Let us do more. Have I an alabaster box anywhere? Is it lying by? Perhaps the aroma may begin to ooze out. It is not safe in the drawer. It may get cracked and broken. Let

me have the privilege of breaking it myself, and pouring it on my Master's feet, that I may anoint them with the most precious thing I have. Can you not think of something you could do for Jesus, each one of you personally? Cannot the whole church say to itself, "We must keep our institutions going at a greater rate for Christ's sake"? The world is very dark, and needs more light; the poor are very hungry, and need bread; and the ignorant are very faint to know more.

Did you say, "Now, do not project anything"? I do not know that I shall, but at the same time, I am not sure that I shall not. If the Lord has blessed us until now, let us go a little further. When certain brethren raise a stone of Ebenezer, they sit down on it. That is not what the stone is meant for. I have a commission to put spikes on the top of those stones. You must not dream of sitting down upon—"Until now has the Lord helped us." The voice from the throne says "Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward." Though the sea rolls before you, forward! Forward, in God's name! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOSHUA 17.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—720, 703, 688.

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

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

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

THE PASTOR'S RETURN.

THREE SPECIALLY SELECTED SERMONS TO HIS CHURCH, CONGREGATION, READERS AND FRIENDS, CONSISTING OF

A RETROSPECT [No. 1882], A PROSPECT, AND AN EXHORTATION [No. 1884.]

PROSPECT—"HE WILL KEEP"

NO. 1883

A SERMON

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your own name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one, as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name: those that You gave Me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled."
John 17:11, 12.

WHAT a wonderful intercommunion and fellowship exists between the Father and the Son in the matter of redemption! It is the Father who gave the Son; it is the Son who gave Himself. It is the Father who gave us to the Son; it is the Son who has bought us with a price, and has kept us by His hand. Here, in the text, the Father who gave receives back from the Son, the Son praying to Him in these terms, "Holy Father, keep through Your own name those whom You have given Me." We cannot doubt the personality of the Father and of the Son, nor their essential unity. There are not three Gods, but one God. The Father and the Son, though two in one sense, are one in another. I delight to see the traces of the Trinity in every act of grace. From the first transactions of covenant love, even to the ingathering of the whole election of grace, and the introduction of the chosen into glory, we hear the sound of that voice which of

old said, "Let *us* make man." The three divine Persons work together in absolute union for the production of one grand result. "Glory be unto the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end! Amen."

Observe that our text is all about *keeping*. Three or four times over we have some tense or other of the word *"keep."* "Holy Father, keep those whom You have given Me." "While I was with them in the world, I kept them." Greatly we do need keeping. You have been redeemed, but you must still be kept. You have been regenerated, but you must be kept. You are pure in heart and hands, but you must be kept. You are quickened with the divine life, you have aspirations after the holiest things, your love to Christ is intense, but you must be kept. You have had a deep experience, and you know the temptations of the enemy, but still you must be kept. The sunlight of heaven rests upon your honored brow, you are near the gates of glory, but you must be kept. The same hand that bought you must keep you, and the same Father, who has begotten you again unto a lively hope, must keep you to His eternal kingdom and glory. All glory be unto Him who is able to keep us from falling! Let all those unite in the song who are kept by the power of God. Here lies our topic, and we will not wander far from it.

First, we will notice *a choice pastorate* which was enjoyed by some of God's people. Secondly, we shall observe that this choice pastorate was, after all, but *a temporary privilege*. And thirdly, we shall see that those who enjoyed it were brought by and by, to the exact place where we must always be, and therefore were made the objects of *a blessed prayer,* "Holy Father, keep through Your own name those whom You have given Me."

I. First, here is A CHOICE PASTORATE. Our little children sing—

"I think when I read that sweet story of old,
When Jesus was here among men,
How He called little children like lambs to his fold,
I should like to have been with them then!"

and so forth. Might not you and I well wish that we had been numbered with the twelve, or that we had been among the Marys? It was certainly a choice privilege to be one of the apostles, who were the intimates of Christ, the bodyguard of Jesus. These men saw Him in His privacy, un-

derstood His dark sayings, and read His heart. That privilege cannot be ours. Let us think of them without envy, and learn something from them.

You notice what the Savior did for the twelve who were round about Him—"While I was with them in the world, I *kept* them." *This care was continuous*. It looks as if He did this above everything else. He kept them. He was a guard to His people. He made this the chief employment of His life. While He went about doing good, and reclaiming the wandering, He never diverted His care from His people. Loving them as His own, He loved them to the end. In this chapter you have "the ruling passion strong in death." He has kept them in life, and now He says, "I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You," and the one thought of His heart is, "What is to become of *them?* While I was with them, I kept them. What will they do now that I am taken from them? They will have nobody to resolve their doubts, nobody to abate their discords, no one to answer their adversaries, no one to cheer them into holy confidence. What will the poor babes do when their Nurse has gone? What will the half-instructed scholars do when their Teacher shall be taken up from among them?" He closes His life on earth by commending them to the keeping of His heavenly Father.

Surely, brethren, this teaches us that *this care is ever needed*. Sheep never outgrow the necessity for their being kept by the shepherd. If the eleven always required keeping, I am sure that you and I do. We are not better than Thomas, or Peter, or John. We have among us many a Thomas, who will not believe without a superfluity of evidence, many a Peter, rash and impetuous, and many a John, who would call fire from heaven upon the adversaries of the cause. We are full of flaws and failures, are we not? We shall crumble to the dust if the Lord does not keep us. Is there one man among us that can live unless the eternal life shall continue to flow into him? I am sure there is not.

We are all so greatly dependent upon the continual keeping of our Lord, that I look with joy to *a care ever personal*. I read with pleasure that the Lord Himself, all the while that He was here, kept those whom the Father gave Him, those eleven priceless gems were ever in His custody. I bless His name that they enjoyed a ministry so tenderly personal,

"While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name." He lays stress upon His personal care—"*I* kept them." The Good Shepherd kept the sheep, not by proxy, but by His own hands. There is no nourishment for the child like that which comes from its own mother's breast, and a child of God only thrives as he lives upon Christ Himself. Those of us who are under-shepherds exercise a very poverty-stricken ministry compared with that of our Lord, but we should at least give the best we have. We should be willing, night and day with tears, to the utmost of our strength, and even beyond it, to help the feeble and cheer the faint, if by any means we may preserve the flock of God committed to our imperfect charge. Do you not wish that you had Christ for your pastor? You may well wish it. But it cannot be, for He has ascended. Truly, it was a choice privilege to the eleven that Christ could say of them, "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name."

What must have been the effect of the personality of Christ upon those eleven? There are some men whose influence upon others has, for lack of a better word, been called "magical." History tells us of warriors who have been courageous and skillful in the marshalling of battalions, and these have inspired their soldiers with boundless loyalty, grappling them to themselves with hooks of steel. Certain heroes have been absolutely supreme over their fellow men; a willing homage has been rendered to them. The influence of the Christ upon those who actually lived with Him must have been superlative. Think of it. There were but eleven of them, but He so molded them that the little handful of seed brought forth a harvest, the fruit of which did shake like Lebanon. They were nothing but peasants when they came under His hand, but when they left it they were the fathers of a new age. They were the Patriarchs of twelve tribes of a new Israel. The apostles, after they had been with Jesus, were men of a superior mold. Though they had little human learning, they were the best educated men on the earth. Each man of them was more than a prince, in having touched the skirts of Deity, in bearing upon his face the brightness of the eternal Godhead, in speaking with a word which, like the Word of God Himself, was utterly irresistible. They were men anointed above their fellows, men to the fullness of manhood, men beyond the

utmost height to which the schools could have trained them. What a privilege to have had Jesus Himself for one's own private Tutor!

Our Lord's care was most successful. Of the eleven not one was lost. I should not have marveled at all, apart from what we know of our Lord's gracious power, if the whole eleven had gone back. They were very fickle at first, and extremely ignorant. And at the same time, they were strongly tempted. Influences which made some go back, and walk no more with Jesus, would naturally have had the same power over them if Jesus had not kept them, yet of those whom the Father gave Him not one of them was lost. His marvelous pastorate was so successful that He could say, "Of those whom You have given Me I have lost none." Thomas, John, Peter, James; they are all kept. The training of the Master has qualified each one for his lofty office. Oh, that you and I may be helped by divine grace to keep with us all the souls God has given to us, that we may at last say of all our hearers, "Here am I and the children that You have given me!" Our Lord's was a wonderful pastorate, was it not?

But, nevertheless, it was *attended with an awful sorrow,* for He says, "None of them is lost, but the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled." Our Savior never meant us to understand that Judas was one of those whom the Father gave Him. He never made a mistake about that. Very early he said, "I have chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil." He had spoken distinctly about the character and doom of Judas. Some have asked, "How could Jesus have all knowledge, and yet permit a man like Judas to be one of the twelve?" Brethren, He did it advisedly, with wisdom aforethought, for He knew that often, in the ages to come, people would say, "Can this Christianity be true which has such false-hearted traitors in its midst, which has such sellers of the Master even among its leaders?" He allowed that objection to come up at the very first, and suffered a covetous traitor to be one of the twelve. The Savior sometimes seemed to speak of Judas as if he was one of His, but then He was speaking popularly, and according to the method of common conversation. He permits the Evangelist to call him "one of the twelve," as if He would let us feel that men may go very far on the way to heaven, and have everything except the essential matter, and yet may perish. When

Judas cast out devils, and in Christ's name did many wonderful works, it would have been impossible for any but the omniscient God to have seen any difference between him and any other of the twelve. In some respects Judas excelled others of the apostles; probably he had not half the faults of Peter, nor half the doubts of Thomas. There were fine qualities within him, but they were all leavened by that supreme covetousness which mastered him, and made him the son of perdition. He seemed very near to being all that he should be, yet the Master described him in this prayer, not as one that would be lost, but as one that was already lost. "None of them *is* lost but the son of perdition." He calls him "the son of perdition," and you may be sure that He did not give him that name without great sorrow. The Watcher over the sons of men could not lose even Judas, without deep regrets. He sighs, "He that eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me." Among the bitter herbs of His Passover, none was more like to wormwood and gall than that word, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, one of you shall betray Me." As there is inexpressible sweetness in the doctrine of the final perseverance of the Saints, so there is an unutterable horror in other doctrines which guard it, such as that which our Lord lays down in the words, "if the salt has lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is therefore good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men." Final perseverance is a rose of heaven's own garden, but it is set with thorns, and those thorns are such cases as those of Judas and of others that drew back unto perdition.

See then in this choice pastorate of our Master the great need there is of keeping. Let us pray for Him to keep us to the end.

II. Secondly, and very briefly, let us speak of A TEMPORARY PRIVILEGE. The eleven were not to have Christ with them always. He was to ascend unto His throne, and then they were to fall back on another mode of living, common to all saints.

Now, why was Christ with them at all? It was because they were very weak. They needed fostering and nurturing. Look, brethren, you had great joys in your early days, you then enjoyed raptures and transports. You have not had them lately; it may be, for you have traveled to heaven at a steadier pace. My mother bounced me upon her knee when I was a

babe, but she never thought of nursing me when I became a man. Certain spiritual joys are the privilege and the necessity of our religious babyhood, but we outgrow them. The Lord took the eleven when they were in their infancy, and He was with them in the world, and kept them. Why then did He go away? Why, for this reason, that they might grow to spiritual manhood! If He had always remained with them, working miracles, and teaching them by His personal presence, they would always have been mere children, but it was expedient for them that He should go, for then the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they rose into the full vigor of manhood. While Jesus was with them, they were little children, but in His absence they became men in Christ, quitting themselves valorously through faith in His name. Many joys of sense are allowed to trembling saints, which are taken from them when they become strong in the Lord.

You also, dear friends, have enjoyed a profitable pastorate, and you are now about to lose it. You have not been under Christ's personal teaching, that could not be, but you have been under the teaching of some man whom God has very greatly blessed in the ministry of His Word. Alas, you are now going far from the much-loved means of grace! I pray God that you may now grow stronger. Now that the plant is put out into the cold, may it have strength and vigor enough to bear the frost! I see my gardener hardening off young plants, and it may be the Lord is about to do the same with you. A boat in the builder's yard has been gradually fashioned to perfection, and beautified with abundant care. But it must be launched, it must be washed by the rough sea, it must know the wear and tear of storms. Israel must not always fatten in Goshen, the tribes must be led into the wilderness, and must be conducted over stony places, for thus the Lord brings His chosen to their promised rest.

Please note that, choice as the privilege was of having Jesus Himself to be their pastor, apart from the grace of God, this special gift had no power in it. The Lord Jesus Christ might preach, but He could not touch the heart of the son of perdition. He looked on Peter, and Peter went out and wept bitterly, but the Lord might have looked till Dooms Day at Judas, and there would have been no tears of penitence in Judas's eyes. Alas!

Judas heard every sermon that Christ preached, saw all the mighty deeds that He did, even saw the bloody sweat upon His face in the Garden of Gethsemane, and kissed that face with traitorous lips! No ministry of itself can turn a heart of stone into flesh. "You must be born from above." Though the Son of God Himself is the preacher, yet when the congregation goes out, eleven in whom there is the grace of God are blessed, but the son of perdition remains just what he was—hardened even to the end. Let this be a warning to such as be not profited under the word when faithfully preached. Beware lest you perish under the gospel, and so perish with a vengeance. If, however, a choice ministry is about to be removed from any of you, let this thought minister a measure of comfort to you, that, after all, the essential thing is not to be taken from you, for even in the absence of the best outward ministry the Spirit of God can bless you, but without that Spirit of God even the ministry of Christ Himself, in the days of His flesh, could not have been effectual to you.

III. So now I come, in the last place, to show you where the Master left His disciples, where we all are, where we may well be content to be. We are all the objects of A BLESSED PRAYER. "Holy Father, keep through Your own name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one, as we are." Beneath this divine petition we all find shelter.

Notice how He begins—*"Father."* Oh, yes, it is the Father who keeps us! Children of God, who can be a better keeper for you, than your Father? To whom can you cry with such certainty of being heard as to your Father in heaven? Whose heart will so soon be moved, whose ears will be so quick to hear, and whose feet will be so swift to save as your Father's? The Lord Jesus was tender to us when He selected that title of the great God, and did not say, "Jehovah," or "Elohim, keep Your people," but "Father, keep them."

And then He puts it *"Holy* Father," but why that? Why, just because the keeping means, keep us holy, and who can make us holy but the Holy God, and who can keep us holy but He who is Himself holy? Who will have such an intense interest in our growing holiness as One whose name is the Holy Father? Beloved, I love well this title; it commends itself

to my faith, and breeds assurance in my soul. If the blessed hand of Jesus has put me into the bosom of the Holy Father that I may be kept, why, the keeping is sure and certain! The Holy One will never suffer us to be polluted or defiled.

Carefully note that the prayer is still—"Keep them: keep them." What keeping do you and I require? I was thinking of the various forms of keeping that we as a church might seek for. We need keeping from discord. "Holy Father, keep them that they may be one." It is a very wonderful thing when a dozen people agree for a dozen weeks. We are such an odd lot of people—I did not mean you in particular, but I mean all members of Christian churches—that it is really no wonder when we disagree. The wonder is that we have been so long and so heartily united. I praise and bless God for our years of spiritual harmony. Knowing that despite our imperfections, our tendencies to self-exaltation, and the easiness of misunderstanding one another, and the readiness with which we provoke, and are provoked without cause, it is very a wonder to me that we should have had no strifes or divisions. "Holy Father, keep us." Let us pray that prayer very often. We do not know how soon we may be all sixes and sevens. Let us pray God that we may not fall foul of one another through the entrance of some serpents of discord into our happy paradise.

But, brethren, to be kept in unity is not enough, we need keeping from error. The world swarms with false doctrines, like Egypt with frogs in the day of her plague. You cannot put your head outside the door without having a flight of heresies buzzing around you. As some cities on the Continent have been full of cholera, so has this city been full of "modern thought," and I will not attempt to decide which the worse of the two is. But it is a great mercy to be kept from the silly love of novelties, and to be helped to adhere to the old faith, to cling to the old cross. Happy is he who is determined to know nothing save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. "Holy Father, keep us." We have seen some go to the east, and some to the west, some to the moon, and some to the stars, some to perfection, and some to licentiousness. Keep us, Holy Father, keep us staunch in Your truth even to the end.

But it would not be enough for us to be kept united and firm in the truth, we need also to be kept from sin. Saints must be kept, or they will soon be sinners. How have I seen the brightest men tarnished with the foulest lusts! How have I mourned as I have known those who preached holiness with wondrous power to practice unholiness in their private lives! You and I are so ready to be upset by a sudden squall of temptation, especially such as carries much sail and little ballast, that we have need to pray each one for himself, and then for all his brethren, "Holy Father, keep us: keep us from all evil."

Nor would that be enough, for there is such a thing as being kept perfectly moral, outwardly proper and decorous, and yet our hearts may gradually subside into spiritual death. Have you never seen it? It was not putridity, it was not even ghastliness. The corpse was washed—washed with rosewater, and there were touches of paint on the cheeks and lips that almost veiled the work of death. Fitly draped, and with a smile upon its countenance, it looked a welcome to you, yet it was a corpse. Could you have thought it? O church of God, beware of accepting the semblance of life. In the battles between the Spaniards and the Moors, when the Cid, Rodrigo Diaz, had fallen in the fight, the Spaniards set his body upright upon his milk-white steed, and went forth to battle with his corpse at their head. How often had his presence made victory secure to his comrades! Until the Moors discovered that the mighty arm was palsied by death, they fled before the sword of the great Cid, but when once they knew that the uplifted falchion was held in a dead hand, they recovered spirit. And so you can make a dead church sit upright in the saddle, wearing all its harness of war, and you can make it bear aloft the great sword of the Lord, and for a time its death may be unsuspected, but once let the world find out the dreadful secret, and its hour of defeat has come. A dead church, like a dead lion, is sport for children. A church devoid of spiritual life is the laughing stock of devils. God keep us that we never fall into the condition of spiritual decay! Pray from the bottom of your hearts, my brethren, in unison with the sweet prayer of our living, loving Lord, "Holy Father, keep through Your own name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one, as we are."

Observe, further, that our Lord Jesus Christ asks that we may be kept *through God's own name*. It requires the very name of God to keep a Christian.

By the word "name" is sometimes meant the whole character of God, the whole royal power and prerogative of God. Frequently *power* is meant by the word "name." There is no keeping one of us, much less the whole ship's company, except the sacred name of God shall exert all its power to keep off our foe. The Savior concludes with this plea, "Holy Father, keep through Your own name those whom You have given Me." I do not know whether it will strike you, but it strikes me as very touching. He seems to say, "Father, You did give these to Me, they are very precious to Me, they are My jewels. Now I am going away, and therefore I must leave them. O My Father, keep for Me the sweet tokens of Your own love to Me! These are Your forget-me-nots, and I have valued them, therefore I ask you, while I go up to yonder bloody tree and die, and when afterwards I come to You, and enjoy My eternal rest, take care of these whom You have given Me." It is like a husband who has obtained his bride, but now finds that he must go away from her. He gives her back to her father who originally gave her to him, and says, "Take care of her for my sake. As you love me, take care of *her."* We are talking about you, you believers in Christ, listen, therefore, with diligence. "The Father Himself loves you." The Father gave you to Jesus because He loved Jesus. He wanted Jesus to have that which would give Him most delight, and so He gave *you* to Him, and now that Jesus cannot be with you by His bodily presence, He gives you over to the great Father, from whose loving hands He first received you, and He says, "Holy Father, keep them." Do you think the Father will answer the Son's request? I am sure that He will. I feel safe in that Almighty hand in which Jesus has placed me—

"I know that safe with God remains,
Protected by His power,
All that to Jesus appertains,
Till the decisive hour."

Remember that double-handed safety of which Jesus speaks in John 10:28, 29, "They shall never perish; neither shall any man pluck them

out of My hand. My Father, which gave them to Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand."

Do you belong to Christ, dear hearer? You are not alone in being owned by that royal Proprietor, many of us are the sheep of His flock, and the children of His love. We are going to gather around our Lord's table. Will you go away, or will you come with us and say, "We belong to Him, and we would share His banquet of love?" If you must go away this once, hasten to put yourself right, that you may obey your Lord in the future. End this forgetfulness of your dying Lord, I pray you. Give yourself to Jesus, and that shall be the best evidence that the Father gave you to Jesus, for never did a heart give itself to Jesus except as the result of the eternal purpose of God, and the work of the Spirit within. Beloved hearer, yield yourself to the Well-beloved, whose love shall henceforth be your joy, your safeguard, your perfection, your bliss! Yield yourself now without an hour's delay!

Let the Lord's people now come, and keep the feast with joy and gladness, singing praises unto the name of the Great Keeper of Israel, who does neither slumber nor sleep.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 17.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—675, 668, 670.

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

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

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

THE PASTOR'S RETURN.

THREE SPECIALLY SELECTED SERMONS TO HIS CHURCH, CONGREGATION, READERS AND FRIENDS, CONSISTING OF A RETROSPECT [No. 1882], A PROSPECT [No. 1883], AND AN EXHORTATION.

EXHORTATION—"SET YOUR HEART"

NO. 1884

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

"Now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God."
1 Chronicles 22:19.

THIS exhortation may be most fitly directed *to those who are already saved.* It was first given to the elders of Israel, and we would gladly hope that they were already good men and true, but, secondly, the language might be very fitly addressed *to the unconverted*. There may be a little straining in this latter case, for we can hardly call the Lord *their* God as yet, but still we shall venture to say to the unconverted that have come up with God's people, "Set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God."

I. Let us take it, first, in ITS REFERENCE TO GOD'S OWN PEOPLE. You have already found the Lord. There is a sense in which you have not to seek Him, for you already know Him, but in another sense you are still to seek Him, for seeking the Lord is a description of the whole of the believer's life. After he has found God as his salvation, he has to seek him as his Friend, as his Sanctifier, as his Example. Until they come to that

glorious perfection which belongs to the better world, Christian men have something still to seek.

Our first inquiry is, *"What are they to seek?"* Beloved friends, I say to you, as David said to the princes of Israel, "Seek the Lord your God." *Do it by endeavoring to obey Him in everything*. Let it be our study to test everything that we do by God's Holy Word. Let us not willfully sin, either in commission or in omission. Let us be very particular to seek out the will of the Lord, so as to fulfill not only commands which are plain, but those about which there is a question. In the service of God nothing is little, and loyalty to the great royalty of God comes out in tenderness of conscience concerning little things. He that carelessly offends in trifles shall fall by little and little. The greatest catastrophes in moral life come not usually all of a sudden, but by slow degrees. The dry rot enters under the timbers of the house of human character, and when it has silently worked its mischief, the house falls with a shock. It is not the wind of temptation that brings it down, that may be the apparent instrument, but the sly, secret rot that has all the while been going on is the real destroyer. Therefore let us pledge ourselves unto God to live more and more watchfully, seeking the Lord with our heart and soul in everything—in private, in the family, in business, and in the house of God. He that walks hastily without consideration will assuredly err, but he that takes counsel of God, and watches to know what the will of the Master may be, shall walk uprightly and surely. O Christian, set your heart to this, that the Lord Jesus is your absolute Lord and Master, and that, at every point, you will scrupulously endeavor to do His will, yielding a cheerful obedience as the fruit of the Spirit within your soul!

Seek the Lord also especially, as David wanted these princes to do, in *the building up of His temple*. He says, "Set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God. Arise therefore, and build the sanctuary of the Lord." Beloved, it ought to be the main business of the life of every Christian to build up the church. It ought to be mine, and I trust that it is. I know that this is the main business of many of my brethren and sisters here, since for its sake they forego many an hour of leisure and to it they give the best of their faculties. We are sent here on purpose to build the

city of God, which is His church. The foundations have been laid in the fair vermilion of our Savior's precious blood. Stone upon stone the walls have risen. It is ours to help onward the building, in quarry or in forest, with saw or with axe. If we cannot do great works, we must weave the hangings, or fashion the pins, or twist the cords. It should be the main objective of our life to seek the Lord by building up His church. Oh, how I wish that all Christians thought so! Alas, many fancy that the work of the church is to be left to a dozen or two of us—that the minister is to do his best with a few friends, but the bulk of the people are to be excused the glorious liberty of the service of the blessed God. Come, my brethren, one and all, seek the Lord with all your heart and soul in the building up of His church. Let nothing be lacking to the church of God in the Tabernacle, which is as a city set upon a hill.

Let all you do, whether it is of personal obedience or in connection with the church, be done with a single eye to God's glory. O Christian men and women, what have you to do with worldly honor? What have you to do with ease? The target towards which your life's arrow should speed is the glory of Him who made you, who has redeemed you with His precious blood, and has created you a second time, that you may be for Him, and for Him alone. Know you not that the Lord's portion is His people? Jacob is the lot of His inheritance. How heartily we ought to respond to the Lord's choice of us by glorying that we are Christ's chosen servants, and that now the one thing for which we live is to reflect the glory of His blessed name! To this are you called, O you elect and redeemed of the Most High! This is your high destiny. Answer to it on earth, as you hope to fulfill it in heaven. Seek the Lord. That is what is intended in the text—to render obedience, and to labor for the building of His temple, and the honor of His name.

Next, let us inquire, *how are they to seek?* Here is the text, "Set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God." Does not that intend a fixity of purpose? *"Set* your heart and your soul." There are plenty of flimsy creatures about—whose manhood has long ago evaporated, who are "everything by turns and nothing long." These fritter away life, like fluttering butterflies of the garden; they stay not long enough in any

place to gather sweetness even from the choicest flowers. The genuine man of God, who is going to serve the Lord, puts his foot down, and you might as well hope to pluck up the North Pole as to move him from his chosen sphere. He has looked ahead, and he sees on what tack he ought to steer, and he will hold the tiller to that point, over mountain waves, or through the trough of the billows, he still will speed his way, he has looked to his chart, and settled his course, and he is not to be turned aside. You who are men must now serve your God with a determination that cannot be shaken. Resolve that you will glorify God by holding fast His truth, and by following in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus, for the times are flippant and only the resolute can master them.

You see that David says, "Set your *heart."* That is, have an intense affection towards God's service and glory. A man never does a thing well if his heart is not in it. No painter has attained to excellence unless he has mixed his colors, not only with his brains, but with the life-blood of his heart. Success comes not to heartless efforts. Certainly it is so in the service of the living God. He will not accept a sacrifice which lacks the life-blood of a warm, affectionate intent. Brethren, nobody is good by accident. No man ever became holy by chance. There must be a resolve, a desire, a panting, a pining after obedience to God, or else we shall never have it. Set your heart, then, to seek the Lord your God.

There are other parts of your nature besides your heart. Your soul has in it, among other things, an intellect. I would that all who serve God would serve Him with their intellect, for many seem to jog on in the service of God like old horses that have gone their round so often that they now crawl over the road in their sleep. Alas, the first big stone in the road throws them over! Let us resolve neither to leave our heads nor our hearts at home when we come into God's house. The whole man should be present, and energetic, when God is to be honored. We ought to plot and plan how to win a soul as earnestly as we contrive to make a profit in our trade. We ought as much to speculate and scheme to glorify God as we meditate how to advance our business. Our inventive genius should be more concerned to set jewels in the Redeemer's crown than to perfect the most beautiful work of art. Let our motto be—"All for Jesus,"

for He has redeemed us altogether. Every thought of throbbing brain, every affection of beating heart, every movement of cunning hand, all should be for Him at its best, and kept well at work for His royal service. The yoke of Christ should be laid not merely on the shoulder, but on every part, and power, and passion of our entire manhood. So should it be. God grant it may be so!

And then if I am again asked the question, "How ought we to seek the Lord?" I answer—by the union and concentration of all our faculties. Our life should be comparable to sunlight, and holy zeal, like a magnifying glass, should focus upon a given spot, and cause it to burn its way to success. He will never do much for God who attempts to serve a dozen masters. I have been called upon this week by several persons to give my aid in trifling matters of politics, finance, and social arrangement. "Why," I said to the applicants, "there are hundreds of people who can attend to these matters quite as well as I can." "Yes, sir, but we want your weight and influence." I replied, "My weight and influence belong to Another. I am very willing to help you in any good thing if I can do it without diverting my attention from the service of my Master, but my time is not my own. I have to preach the gospel; you can get any blind fiddler to canvass for your candidate. I must attend to my Master's business, and let the dead bury their dead." I would have you Christian people, while you attend to everything that is just, and right, and kind, and proper, and of good repute—everything that can benefit your fellow men, or help the cause of liberty and righteousness, yet, still, keep your souls undivided and entire for the service of your God. Throw your life into your religion. Do not be like the man, whose child at Sunday school was asked, "Is your father a religious man?" "Yes, sir," she said, "Father has religion, but he has not done much at it lately." I am afraid there are many, of that sort. They have not taken their coats off at it; they have not thrown their whole souls into it. Brethren, if you follow Christ, follow Him fully. If you mean to be Christians, *be* Christians. If you are worldlings, give your hearts to the world, or you will make nothing of it, it would be a pity to halt between two objects so as to miss both. If Jehovah is God, serve Him

with your *heart,* with the concentrated energy of your entire nature at its best. See, Christian people, to what you are called.

But the text also tells us *when we are to seek the Lord.* It has a little word in it—a golden monosyllable it is. It is a word which comprehends the whole almanac, every day in the week, all the year round. *"Now* set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God." Now is the only time worth having, because indeed it is the only time we ever have. While I speak it is gone, and another "now" has come up. Take your moments on the wing, and use them as they fly. Now, now, now, let us give ourselves, heart and soul, to the service of the Lord our God.

When did David mean by his *"now"?* I think he meant, first, when the people had an efficient leader. "I am dying," he said, "but there is Solomon, my son. He is a man of peace, and God has said that he shall build His temple; therefore arise, and seek the Lord." It is a grand thing for any church when God sends them one who can lead them, about whom they are united in judgment, and with whom they can hopefully march to the conflict. Alas! I know several churches that have been sadly troubled by the deaths of faithful ministers. I pray you, if you are members of a church which has a God-sent minister still alive, and at its head, *now* set your heart and your soul to serve God. While He spares His servant to lead you on to success, take care that you follow with holy enthusiasm. *"Now"* is the time for activity.

He means, also, when God is with you. Read the eighteenth verse, "Is not the Lord your God with you?" When God is with you, get to work. What can you do if God is gone? And how soon you will drive Him away unless you work while you are in His company! God never came upon earth to live among sluggards, and to have communion with drones. Two cannot walk together unless they are agreed, and one thing they must assuredly be agreed on, and that is the rate at which they mean to walk, they cannot walk together except at the same pace. Jesus Christ never travels slowly. It is quick marching with Him. Ho, you laggards, quicken your steps, or He will leave you far behind! Serve the Lord with greater diligence, or you will lose delight in His ways. While God is with you, O gracious men, set your hearts and your souls to seek Him!

Note again, that David says, "Has He not given you rest on every side?" That is another set time when we ought to serve the Lord with all our might. When we have rest from care, then our care should be to please the Lord. You, my brother, are released from all that affliction which wearied you a few weeks ago, therefore praise the Lord. Your enemies are quiet; your anxieties do not harass you as they used to do, therefore extol your God. Serve God with all your might when He deals out His favor to you. When there has been dull weather and no wind, how eagerly the mariner hails the first breath of air! If there is but a capful of wind, he labors to make headway with it. He uses every movement that would flutter a handkerchief. So it ought to be with God's people, they should turn the least favor to advantage, and much more the greater. When God gives us rest, and joy, and peace, let us make a Sabbath of it, and consecrate the gladsome hours to His highest glory.

But, indeed, this "now," as I have said, is of general acceptation. *Now,* you young men in the prime of your vigor, set your heart and your soul to the service of God. We want more men for our Evangelists' Association. We are very short of preachers—preachers to go to rooms, and mission halls, and suburban villages, to declare Christ to the people. Now, then, set your heart and soul to the service of God while you are young. Sunday schools around us are pining for lack of teachers. Young men and women, you are the people to undertake such service as this. Do not stand back. There is nothing like serving God in your youth. As soon as you are saved yourselves, seek to rescue others. The Christian man who does not give God the morning of his days is not very likely to give Him much of the evening. He who does not rise with the lark is not likely to sing like him.

If I speak thus to the young, I would speak with equal force to the middle-aged. Now, my brethren and sisters, we have had some experience, we are no longer children, we know a little of the good way, and some of that little was learned in a painful school. I have had my knuckles rapped very often to make me learn how to make simple up-strokes and down-strokes, and now I desire to fill my page with my Master's name. If we have learned anything, let us set our heart and our soul to

serve the living God with all the wisdom and experience which grace has given us.

You, upon whose heads I see the snows of many a winter—you, whose bare heads show how often the rough winds of age have swept over your brows—surely with so short a time to live, it becomes you to set your heart and your soul to serve the Lord. If men knew how brief their time is, how much would they quicken their service, if they really loved Christ as He ought to be loved! At this hour this is my one message to old and young, to myself and to you, let us be up and doing. Beloved brethren and sisters, you who have been with me these many years, and you who have lately come among us, let us begin again. Let us set our hearts and our souls with dogged determination to serve the Lord. If the work is difficult, a hard thing can always be cut with something harder. You can cut a diamond with a diamond. Oh, to have a divinely hardened resolution that will cut through anything for Christ! Comrades, we will win souls for Jesus, or we will break our hearts over it! God help us, for His name's sake!

II. Brethren in Christ, I have done with you now. You can sit still, and pray while I talk to the others. I have now to SPEAK TO THOSE WHO ARE UNCONVERTED, just whispering to you, dear friends, that I should like to spread the big net, and take many in it, and they will be taken if the Holy Spirit is here in answer to your prayers.

To you who are unconverted, I would earnestly say, set your hearts on true religion, and be not content with the outward form of it. Observe that David had gathered these noblemen and gentlemen around his bed to urge them to build a temple, but he was a spiritual man, and he knew that temple building was not everything, although he valued it highly. He knew that there was something better than outward service, and so he said to these men, "Now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God." By all manner of means attend the house of God, though you are not a Christian, but go with the desire that God will bless the word, and make you a Christian. While you diligently attend to the outward ordinances of God's house, I pray you do not trust in them, but seek the Lord your God Himself. Baptism is the duty of every believer, but it is not

the duty of anybody except a believer, I pray you do not put the sign in the place of the thing signified. Do not trust in baptism! Why, if you were not only immersed, but immersed in a thousand seas, this would not help you to salvation! You must be born again. You must seek the Lord. There is no salvation in an outward ceremony. If any of you come to the Lord's Table, I pray you do not come with any view of getting grace by coming, or finding salvation in the eating of a morsel of bread, and the taking of a sip of wine. The elements upon the table cannot help you. The communion will be injurious to you, if you are not a true believer. Examine yourself whether you are in the faith, and so eat of that bread, but do not dare to eat of it unless in your very heart you have first known the Lord, and are feeding upon Him. I put this to every person who is not yet converted. Do not rest in hymn singing, church going, and chapel going, bending your knees in private prayer, or in anything else that comes of yourself. Your salvation lies outside of yourself, in Christ Jesus. Fly away to Jesus! Tarry not in any outward signs or symbols. Build the temple by all means, but first of all set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord.

Now observe that the end which we would persuade you to, by God's good Spirit, is that you seek the Lord Himself. Do not merely seek to know doctrine, or to learn precept. Seek the Lord. There is such a person as Jesus Christ the Lord. Seek *Him*. The keynote of the gospel is from the lips of Jesus, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." Seek not your minister, your hymnal, your prayer book, or even to your Bible, but seek the Lord. Some think to find salvation in the Bible, and fancy that Bible reading is the way of salvation, but it is not. "You search the Scriptures," says Christ, "for in them you think you have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me. And you will not come to Me, that you might have life." If you put Bible reading in the place of coming to Christ by faith, you will miss the mark. You must come to a personal Savior in your own person, by putting your trust in Him. Trust in Jesus, not in a doctrine, nor in a command, but *in Him,* and then you will be saved. You must trust in Him of the five wounds, in Him of the bloody sweat, in Him of the crown of thorns, in Him of the deadly cross. Trust in Him at once. This alone is the way of salvation. "Set your heart and your soul to seek

the Lord," for He says to you by my mouth, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and beside Me there is none else."

But now observe—for I want to force this home, as God shall help me—that you must seek Him at once with all your heart and soul. That is to say, I believe that when a man is awakened, the first thing he ought to do is to find assured salvation. I have heard of a man who went upstairs to seek the Lord, with the desperate resolve that he would do no business till he was right with God. He did not open his shop shutters, for he had resolved to find a Savior before he took another penny across the counter. I cannot judge that man to have been unwise in the reckoning of God and the holy angels, for the first necessity of life is a renewed heart. If I thought that I was struck with a serious disease I would not wait until it grew incurable, but I would go to a physician, and have the matter attended to before it went further. Wouldn't you? Act with the same speed as to your souls. Oh, men and women, there is but a step between you and hell unless God's mercy shall interpose! How can you trifle! It is no trifling matter. A lost soul—what mourning can equal the sorrow of it? Hang the heavens in sackcloth, darken the sun, and extinguish the moon. Silence all mirth! Hush all music! You harps of heaven, be still! You angels, cease your sonnets! The funeral of a lost soul is the most awful solemnity that can be conceived. Such a funeral may be needed for you within an hour. What did I say? There may not remain a minute. Your breath fails, and you are lost. Oh, sirs, I pray you make short work of your rebellious delays! Put everything aside, and seek the Lord with heart and soul.

And does not that mean that, if anything hinders your finding salvation, you must have done with it? Does certain company hinder your religious thought? Do not go into such society. Is an allowable pursuit detrimental to your finding Christ? Do not follow it. It might be death to you, though it is sport for others. You must have Christ; see that you do have Him. That prayer of our hymn—

"Give me Christ, or else I die,"

ought to be in your heart and on your lips. Put everything else away until you get an answer to that petition. Follow after everything that may help you to find Christ. When I was seeking Christ, I was in the house of God whenever the doors were opened. I heard a preacher, who did not speak home to my heart, and therefore I went to hear another. I did not care who the preacher was, or what he was, if I could but find Christ under him. Neither was I particular whether I stood or sat, or whether I had a soft cushion to sit on, or none at all. I wanted Christ, and I declare that if I had been forced to sit on the gallery front, I would not have minded where I was so that I could have found the Savior. Any hayloft would have done for me, if I could have found forgiveness. Prayer meetings, little gatherings of godly people—why I was sure to be at them if I knew of them, for, I wanted to find the Savior. You will have the Savior when your whole heart and soul are after Him. Remember, the Lord will not save you while you are dreaming or dancing. He took Eve out of the side of Adam when Adam slumbered, but He will not take sin out of you when you are asleep. You must be awakened up in some way or other. You must be startled, if not with thunderbolts, yet with the sweet heart-searching love of Christ. You must be thoroughly awake, and when you are so, then, seeking the Lord in that fashion, you shall not be long before you find Him.

Lastly, *when are we to seek Him?* The text says *"now."* I forget what day of the month this is. It does not matter. You will never forget the day of the month in which you seek the Lord and find Him. Who among us ever forgot his natural birthday? Yet you are more likely to remember the day in which you begin to live unto God. A friend writes to me, and says, "Dear sir, my birthday was on such a day *and* such another day." For the minute I thought, "Dear man! Has he been born twice?" Then I guessed his meaning. Is not the second birthday much the better of the two? Born to sorrow the first time, born to bliss the second time. Born in sin the first time, born in Christ the second time. Born in depraved nature at first; born in the image of Christ Jesus at last. Oh, how happy the men who have that better birthday! May it come to you at this good hour! There is never a better time in which to seek the Savior than just now.

Stop not for anything. "I must get better," cries one. Must you? Is that what you do when you seek a surgeon? Do you say, "I must get a little better before I go"? You will never go at all if you wait to be better, for when you feel better, you will say, "I need not go now." Is not that the style? No time is like time present.

There is an old saying that, "Half a loaf is better than no bread," but that saying is not true spiritually. A man who has half a loaf of his own never seeks the bread which came down from heaven. The man who has no bread at all is in a better case, for he is more likely to come to the banquet of divine grace. Come, you starving ones, and eat of the bread of heaven. Believe and live. Faith brings God to you, and you to God, therefore believe and seek, seek and believe.

The Lord send all of you home with my text ringing in your ears, "Now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
1 CHRONICLES 21:14-30, 22:1-16.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—607, 606.

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

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

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

THE PROBLEM OF THE AGE
NO. 1885

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 7, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And His disciples answered Him, From where can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?" Mark 8:4.

I HAVE been for a while lying outside the crowd, unable either to feed the multitude or to bring the sick to the Master. Here and there one I have helped, as opportunity has occurred, but I have been called to rest rather than to serve. Yet all the while I have never ceased from constant thought about the perishing multitudes, this great city and its sad estate, this country, and Ireland, and continental nations are all under a cloud of deep depression. One can remove his body from the turmoil, but his heart is in it still. If ever there was a time when there was a call for the deep sympathy of all Christian people with the perishing multitudes, it is just now, if ever the church should gird herself to do her Master's service, it is today. Never forget that the church is the helpmeet of Christ. She is His chosen Bride, and she is, therefore, to unite with Him in His great enterprise among the sons of men. The work is salvation, and that work is to be worked by means of divine truth, carried to men externally by human hands, and internally through the Spirit of God. The church will be false to her heavenly Bridegroom if she does not sympathize with the tenderness of His heart, and enter into His gracious labor of love.

The question before us is certainly singular, if we remember that those who asked it had seen a former miracle of feeding the multitude. It would seem that those who had seen five thousand fed would not ask concerning the feeding of four thousand, "From where can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?" Inasmuch as on one memorable occasion they had seen the Master multiply loaves and fishes, they might have expected Him to do the same again. I grant you to the full that it was an inexcusable question. I will not offer the slightest apology for it, but yet it is a very *natural* question—natural, I mean, to that fallen and depraved human nature which is our daily grief. He that knows what human nature is will be astonished at nothing evil that it produces. I do not mean human nature merely unrenewed by grace, but I mean that carnal nature which remains even in the disciples of Christ. This is of such a character that it shamefully gives way to unbelief. You ask me to give an instance, I point to you. Have you not often seen the hand of God? And yet the next time you have needed divine help you have been in anxiety and doubt. Remember how Israel saw the Red Sea divided,

and yet the people feared that they would die of thirst? When the riven rock had relieved them, they were next afraid of hunger, and after the heavens had rained them bread, they became alarmed at the size of the giants who dwelt in Canaan. All that God had done seemed to go for nothing with them; they relapsed into their old unbelief. Are you and I much better? Alas, we may here see ourselves as in a mirror. Those who have a smooth path often boast of a vast amount of faith, or what they think to be faith, but those who follow a wilderness way must often confess to their shame that after receiving great mercy they still find unbelief creeping in. This is shameful to the last degree, and should cause us bitter sorrow and great fear lest we should provoke the Lord to anger. Before us must often rise the example of those whose carcasses fell in the wilderness because of their unbelief. All this makes us fear that had we been with our Lord in the desert we should not have behaved better than Peter and James and John. We, too, might have forgotten the former miracle of the loaves, and have anxiously inquired, "From where can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?"

The question, although it is thus surprising and inexcusable, may, however, be used this morning for our profit. It may at least do this good—as we shall not be able to answer it on any human lines, it will show us our inability, and that is what our Lord would make most clear before His power is revealed. I should not wonder but what He drew those people into the desert on purpose that there might be no suspicion that when they were fed they had been supplied from fields or gardens, or by the charity of inhabitants. It was a barren spot, out of which nothing could be got. The disciples had to feel this, and recognize this, and state this, and then the Lord had a clear platform for working His miracle. He wants to clear you out, brother, He wants to make you see what a weak, poor, petty, miserable thing you are, and when He has brought you to that, then His own arm shall be revealed in the eyes of all the people, and all who behold it shall give to Him the glory due unto His name.

Let us come, then, to our question with the hope that it may be sanctified to holy ends.

"From where can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?" First, *this is a pressing problem,* how to meet the wants of the multitude. Secondly, press as it may, *it is one of tremendous difficulty;* but thirdly, and cheeringly, *it is capable of a very glorious answer.* There is a man who, from His infinite resources, can satisfy the countless myriads of our race even in this wilderness.

I. First, then, IT IS A VERY PRESSING PROBLEM. What is to be done for the perishing multitude? What is to be done to satisfy men's souls? I confine the question to spiritual matters at this time, though I by no means slight the dreadful social and material questions which are also especially urgent at this hour.

At this present moment myriads of *souls are in present need.* We sometimes think too exclusively of salvation as having reference to the world to come, but it has an urgent, all-important reference to this present state. A man who does not know Christ is a wretched man, a man

who has never been renewed in heart, who lives in sin and loves it, is a pitiable being, a lost soul over whom angels might weep. If there were no heaven to miss, and no hell to merit, sin is a curse upon this life. It is hell to live without a Savior. If there were no poverty in London, it would be quite enough to break one's heart to think that there is sin in it, reigning over the ungodly.

That grievous side of London life which raises "the bitter cry," is not after all the worst side of it, it is to a great extent the outer disease which marks a secret cancer at the heart. If drunkenness brought no consequences, if vice involved no misery, it would not be better, but far worse, for our race. It is a more horrible thing when wickedness wraps itself in scarlet and fine linen, and when vice, by the help of an abominable protectorate, is enabled to escape scot free. Sin rampant without check would be even worse than the present woe. It is an awful thing to think that masses of our fellow men have never turned to their Creator with obedient hope, have never confessed their sin against Him, and have lived without thanking Him for His mercy, or trembling at His justice. Great Lord, You know better than we do what horror dwells in the ungodliness of men! Brethren, the multitudes are without the bread of life. Shall we not distribute it among them at once?

The multitudes are also in *awful peril as to the future*. When our Savior looked with compassion on the multitude, He not only noticed their present hunger, but He foresaw what would come of it. "If I send them away fasting to their own houses, they will faint by the way: for many of them came from far." Their immediate hunger touched the Savior, but He did not forget its consequences, they would go back to their mountain dwellings, and in the attempt to climb their terraces one would fall by the hillside from want of food, and another would drop in the sun from sheer exhaustion. Perhaps, a mother carrying her babe at her bosom might find it dead for want of nourishment, or the women themselves might faint and perish by the way. This our tender Lord could not bear to think of. Thus, when we look into the future of a soul, we start back aghast from the vision. In these times, my brethren, many attempts have been made to represent the condition of impenitent sinners in the world to come as less dreadful than the plain Scripture declares it to be. I cannot see what practical result can arise out of such teaching except it be the hardening of men's hearts, and placing them more at ease than they are now in their indifference with regard to their fellow men. I know that at this hour a master argument with my heart in seeking to save my fellow men is the intolerable thought that, if they die without a Savior, they enter upon a fixed state, in which they will continue in sin, and in consequent misery without hope of change. I am anxious to save men from hell at once, because I see no other day of hope for them. Since these things are so—and I am assured they are—every man who has a spark of humanity and a grain of grace is bound to cry mightily unto God concerning the vast multitude of men who are passing away from under the sound of the gospel, rejecting it, who are living in the land of gospel light and willfully closing their eyes to it, and so are choosing endless darkness. If you are not awakened to action, O Christian man, by the twofold belief that

sin in this life is an intolerable evil, and that, in the world to come, it involves endless woe, what will bestir you? If this does not awaken your compassion for men, if this does not bring you heart-break, are you not hard as stones, unfeeling as savage beasts?

The case of the multitude is laid upon the church of God. The Lord Jesus Christ took up all the hungry thousands, and laid them at the feet of His disciples. These were His own words, as He commissioned them, "Give you them to eat." It was a great honor to them to be taken into co-partnership with their Lord—a high privilege to be workers together with Him in relieving this far-spread hunger. It was a great honor, but what a responsibility it involved! If one of them had quietly stolen into the background, whispering to himself, "This is a Quixotic notion," if another had hidden behind a rock and said, "I shall pray about it, but that is all I can do"—why what a disgrace it would have been to them! Instead of which, they were found true-hearted to their Master, and the burden being laid upon them, they took up that burden in a fashion, and their Lord enabled them to carry it with joy. They had the special happiness of handing out the bread to the vast host, who gratefully received the gift. The twelve were very popular men that day, I guarantee you, and they were looked upon with great envy by all who surrounded them. Was it not a high privilege to distribute food among so many hungry men, and women, and children? They must have been flushed with excitement, and filled with delight. I know I would have been. To go among a crowd of eager, hungry people, and to feed them to the full, is a work an angel might covet. I am sure that many generous hearts here are already devising ways of feeling this delight. Are you not? I mean literally. Will you not help to relieve the present distress by gifts of food and clothing? Returning to the spiritual aspect of the matter, the Lord has called His church in these days to this work, onerous and indeed impossible without Himself, but with Him, honorable, simple and easily accomplished. He calls His church to the great task of feeding the multitudes of London, the multitudes of our empire, the multitudes throughout the whole world, and since He is present to multiply our loaves and fishes, the pressing problem may not be abandoned in despair.

Brethren, *we cannot put aside this work,* we that are Christians cannot escape from this service. The Master has laid it upon us, and the only way to get out of it is by renouncing His leadership altogether. To attempt to be a Christian and not to live for your fellow men is hypocrisy, to suppose that you can be faithful to Christ and let these multitudes die without an effort is a damnable delusion. He is a traitor to his Master who does not enter heart and soul into the great life-work of that Master, and His life-work was "that the world through Him might be saved" (John 3:17). If you will say good-bye to Jesus, you may run away with your own loaf and your own little fish, and eat them in secret selfishness, but if you mean to be with Christ, you must bring here your loaf and your fish and contribute it, you must bring yourself, and be the personal dispenser of the multiplied bread and fish, and you must persevere in the distribution till the last man, the last woman, the last child shall be filled. Then Jesus shall have all the glory of the feast, but to you will be the honor of

having been a servitor at His royal table in the august banquet of His love.

So you see where we are this very morning. We are called to work out a very pressing problem, "From where can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?" Let us not sleep, as do others, but let us awaken ourselves to work side by side with those dear and faithful brethren who are toiling manfully to hand out the bread of life to the millions of this city, the teeming myriads of this world.

II. But now secondly, IT IS A PROBLEM OF TREMENDOUS DIFFICULTY. The difficulty of feeding the four thousand was enormous, but the difficulty of saving the multitudes of the human race is as high above it as the heaven is high above the earth. After all, this miracle only gave a single meal to a few thousand, who soon grew hungry again; the work needed is to feed myriads so that they shall not hunger again forever. Think of this!

For first, what a thing it is to satisfy *the needs of a single soul!* I should like those who think the salvation of souls from sin to be easy to try to convert one person. Sunday school teacher, did you ever attempt to bring one girl to Christ yourself? She shall be one of the sweetest children in the whole school, but if you have attempted her conversion without seeking divine aid in prayer, and without looking to the Spirit of God to influence that little heart for good, you have made a miserable failure of it. If you had to save a soul, where would you begin? The introduction of a holy thought into carnal minds is a miracle as great as to get a beam of light into a blind eye, or a breath of life into a dead body. How hard it is to deliver a man from brutish carelessness, and make him think of his soul, and eternity, and God! As to renewing the stony heart, as to quickening the dead soul into life, who, can do it? Here we enter into the region of miracles! Can you create a fly? When you have created the minutest creature, then talk about making a new heart and a right spirit.

To "satisfy," says the text—"from where shall a man satisfy these men?" To satisfy a soul is a work which only God can accomplish. Open your mouth, O man of ambition! We put the round world upon his tongue, and when he has swallowed it, he cries, like Alexander, for another. He is no more satisfied with the whole world than with a pill of bread. As to the spiritual cravings of men, how can you satisfy them? Pardon for sin, a hope of eternal life, likeness to Christ, these are necessary to satisfy, how can we give them? The world has no such food in all its stores. The work is impossible at the outset, when only one claimant appears. From where can a man satisfy the spiritual hunger of a single soul? I should like every Christian man to be laid low with this thought, that he may be driven entirely out of conceit of himself, and may at once cry to the strong for strength, and use the simple weapon of the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit, and not in his own strength.

But, brothers and sisters, what am I talking about? One soul! What of that? *Think of the numbers who need heavenly bread.* We have not only one soul, not only one million souls, but hard upon five millions of immortal beings in this single city. In this huge world what myriads have we? A thousand millions would not compass the countless army now en-

camping on the globe. Would we deliberately exempt one of these from hope? Would we desire one of these to be willfully left to perish? Must not all be fed, if possible? Shall not every man and woman and child, as far as our desire can go, partake of the feast? Well, then, where are we? We are altogether at sea. Why, we have not a notion of what a million is. It will take a very, very long time even to count to that number. Think of this City of London—why, you shall ride through it, or you shall traverse it on weary foot for a year, and at the end you shall only wonder more at its incalculable vastness. To supply this great metropolis with gracious influences is a labor worthy of a God. The church of God is called to feed all these with the bread of heaven, and all those out yonder in the heathen world. O feebleness! What can you do alone? Yet, O feebleness, how gloriously God can use you for the accomplishment of His divine purposes! There is the problem. Said I not truly that it is one of tremendous difficulty?

What seems to have struck the disciples was the place they were in—it was *a desert place*. Perhaps you might see here and there a little bitter herbage, which a goat would disdain to browse, but for the most part it was bare ground. Our evangelist, in describing the first miracle, is quite graphic in describing the green grass, but in this case he says that they sat on "the ground"—the ground bare of green grass. There were no corn fields, nor fruit-bearing plants; there was literally nothing to turn to account. If the stones could have been turned into bread, the people might have been filled, but the ground itself yielded absolutely nothing. I may be supposed, perhaps, to croak when I say that the present period is as bare of all help to the gospel as that ground was barren of help to the feast. The world has never known a period less helpful to the gospel than the present. We read in the Revelation of a time when "the earth helped the woman," but it is not so now. I see no element favorable to the conversion of the world to Christ, but everything is in array against it. The people are not as attentive to the gospel as once they were, the masses do not care even to enter the house of prayer. In London they have, to a very large extent, ceased to care about the preaching of the Word. They are to be reached, blessed be God, they shall be reached, but the tendency of the times is not towards religion, but towards unbelief, materialism, and sordid selfishness. A current, no, a torrent, of unbelief is roaring around the foundations of society, and our pulpits are reeling beneath its force. Many Christian people are only half-believers now; they are almost smothered in the dense fog of doubt which is now around us. We have come into cloud-land, and cannot see our way. Many are sinking in the slough, and those of us who have our feet upon the Rock of Ages have our hands full with helping our slipping friends.

Standing before God with a child-like faith, and trusting in Him without question, it does not matter to us personally if the surrounding darkness should deepen into seven midnights black as hell, for we walk by faith and not by sight. Though the earth was removed, and the mountains cast into the midst of the sea, we would still hold to God and to His Christ in a death grip of unshaken confidence. But the mass of professors are not so. I constantly meet with brethren who are reeling to and

fro, and staggering like a drunken man, and who are at their wits' end; and rejoicing that I have been given my sea-legs, I have to cheer them and assure them that we are not shipwrecked after all. The good ship is not going down, the everlasting truth is as sure as ever, the day is not far distant when the Lord shall send us a great calm. It will before long come to pass, that the infidel philosophies of the nineteenth century will be exhibited to little children in our Sunday schools, as an instance of the monstrous folly into which wise men were allowed to plunge when they refused the word of the Lord. I am as sure of it as I am sure I live, that the present wisdom is foolery written large, and that the doctrine which is now rejected as the ineffectual theory of Puritans and Calvinists will yet conquer human thought and reign supreme. As surely as the sun which sets tonight shall rise tomorrow at the predestined hour, so shall the truth of God, shine forth over the whole earth. But this era is a desert place, in pulpits and out of pulpits, in social morals and in politics, it is a dreary wilderness. "From where can a man satisfy these men with bread here in this wilderness?"

The Lord has often suffered the multitude to be in straits that He might work gracious deliverances. Take a modern instance. One hundred and fifty years ago or so, there was a general religious lethargy in England, and ungodliness was master of the situation. The devil, as he flew over England, thought that he had drugged the church so that it would never wake again. How deceived he was! A student at Oxford, who had been a bar tender down in Gloucester, found the Savior, and began to preach Him. His first sermon was said to have driven nineteen people mad, because it awakened them to true life. Certain other scholars in Oxford met together and prayed, and were dismissed from the university, for the horrible iniquity of holding a prayer meeting. Out of the same university came another mighty evangelist—John Wesley—and he, with Whitefield, became the leader of the great Methodist revival, its effects are with us to this day. The arch-enemy soon found that his hopes were blighted, for the church awoke again. The poor miners were listening to the gospel; their tears were making gutters down their black cheeks, while seraphic men told them of pardoning love. Then respectable dissent awoke from its bed of sloth, and the Church of England began to rub her eyes, and wonder where she was. An evil time brightened into a happy era. Shall it not be so again? Have no fear about it. All things shall work together for good. The Lord brings the people into the wilderness on purpose, that there it may be seen that it is not the earth, but Himself, that feeds the people.

The sting of the question before us, however, I have not quite brought out, *it was human feebleness*. His disciples answered Him, "From where can *a man* satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?" From where can *a man* do it? We are only men. If we were angels! Oh, if we were angels! Well, what of it? If we were angels I am sure we would be quite out of the business, for, "Unto the angels has He not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak?" The angels are not in the field. But from where can a man or a woman do it? From where shall a man feed this multitude? "Why, see," says one, "what I am! I am no great

orator, I have not ten talents; I am a weak creature. From where can I feed this multitude? What can I do?" This is the sting of it all to earnest hearts. "Ah," says one, "if I were So-and-So, what I would do!" You may thank God you are not anybody but yourself, for you are best as you are, though you are not much to speak of now. "But if I were somebody else, I could do something," which means this—that since God has chosen to make you what He has made you, you will not serve Him, but if He will make you somebody else—that is, if your will may be supreme, then, of course, the house will be ordered rightly. You had better be what you are, and a little better, and get to work and serve your Master, and no longer talk about "From where shall a man do this or that?" The possibilities of a man are stupendous. God with a man, nothing is impossible to that man. Give us not the power of gold, or rank, or eloquence, or wisdom, but give us a man. Our Lord thought so when He went up to heaven. He meant, as He entered the pearly gates, to scatter a divine largess among His people down below, and He reached His hand into His Father's treasury, and He took out of it—what? He took men. "And He gave some, apostles, and some, prophets, and some, evangelists, and some, pastors and teachers." These were His ascension gifts to the sons of men.

Though we speak thus of what God can make of us, we are in and of ourselves poor creatures. We do meet with a perfect brother now and then, and I always feel inclined to break that bubble. The imperfections of the perfect are generally more glaring than those of ordinary believers. Alas! We are all such poor, frail creatures, that we are driven away from all confidence in ourselves, and we ask with emphasis the question, "From where can *a man* satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?"

III. I am happy, therefore, to come to a blessed conclusion in the third head of our discourse, by saying that, laying the emphasis on its weakest word, "From where, can a *man?"*—THIS QUESTION IS CAPABLE OF A VERY GLORIOUS ANSWER.

I might almost say, as John the Baptist did, "There stands one among you, whom you know not." Though He has stood among us all these centuries, yet His people scarcely know Him. Who knows Him fully? "Oh," says one, "I know Christ." Yes, in a sense, but yet He passes knowledge. "I believe in God," says one; are you sure you do? I remember reading of a certain minister who spent many days in wrestling prayer because he was tempted to doubt whether there was a God, and when he came into the full conviction of it he said to his people, "You will be surprised at what I say; but it is a far greater thing to believe in God than any of you know." And so it is a greater thing to believe in Jesus than most people dream. To believe in the notion of a god is one thing, but to believe God is quite another matter. One said to me when I was troubled, "Have you not a gracious God?" I answered, "Certainly I have." He replied, "What is the good of having Him, then, if you do not trust Him?" I was sorely struck by that reply, and felt humbled in spirit. We do not fully know what Jesus is. He is far above our highest thought of Him. He stands among us and we know Him not.

But what I want you to think of is that this wonderful Man can feed this people with bread this day, and in this wilderness. I hope to make you believe it by the power of the Spirit of God. Therefore I ask you, first, to *listen to what this Man says*. I read to you just now this narrative as we find it in the fifteenth of Matthew. Turn again to the thirty-second verse, "Jesus called His disciples unto Him, and said"—Stop a moment. Prepare your ears for music. He said, "I have compassion on the multitude." Oh, the sweetness of that word! When you are troubled about the people, troubled about Ireland, troubled about London, troubled about Africa, troubled about China, troubled about India, hear the echo of this word—"I have compassion on the multitude." If Jesus spoke thus to His people while here, He equally says it now that He is exalted on high, for He has carried His tender human heart up to heaven with Him, and out of the excellent glory we may hear Him still saying, in answer to His people's prayers, "I have compassion on the multitude." There is our hope, that heart through which the spear was thrust, and out of which there came blood and water, is the fountain of hope to our race. "I have compassion on the multitude."

Hear Him speak again, and I think you will grant that there is much sweetness in the utterance. At the end of the 32nd verse we read, "I will not send them away fasting." We do not wish to judge Peter, and James, and John, but it seems to me that after hearing the Master say, "I will not send them away fasting," they hardly ought to have said, "From where can a man satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?" They ought quietly to have replied, "Good Lord, You have asked us a question which You must Yourself answer, for You have distinctly made the promise, 'I will not send them away fasting!'"

Do you think the Lord Jesus Christ means after all to leave this world as it is? It is written that, "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." Will He forego His purpose? The chronicle of time's history will not wind up with this horrible state of things. The loom of providence will not leave its piece of cloth with its edge so fearfully unraveled, it shall be finished off in due order, and yet be bordered with thread of gold. The glory of God shall yet illuminate history from the beginning even to the end. All flesh shall see the salvation of God, and all nations shall yet call the Redeemer blessed. "I will not send them away fasting." The people must therefore eat bread from the Lord's hands. Great Master, the task is far too much for us alone, but if You have said, "I have compassion on the multitude, I will not send them away fasting," then we will feed them at Your command. Your humble servants are waiting to do Your bidding, whatever it may be, assured that You will be with them in it all.

I beg you also to think for a moment of what the Lord did not say, because He was speaking about common bread; but *of what we know to be true of Him* concerning His spiritual supplies for men. The greatest spiritual need of man is the pardon of sin by atonement. Brothers, if the question were now standing, "Where shall we find atonement?" it would indeed stagger us. Blessed be God, that question does not remain, for the atonement has been presented, completed, and fully accepted. Jesus has

said, "It is finished," and the real difficulty is over. The cross has rolled away the stone from the sepulcher, and hope has arisen. The application of the atonement may be difficult, but it must be a small labor compared with the making of the atonement. The well has been dug; the drawing of the water is an easier task. If Jesus died there must be life for men, if He has prayed "Father, forgive them" there must be pardon for the guilty. If Jesus has risen into glory our race cannot perish in shame. We argue from the cross a millennium of glory. This Man can satisfy the people because of the rich merit of His blood.

Next, remember that this glorious Man is now invested with omnipotence. His own words are, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them." Our Jesus is omnipotent. It is He who, by the infinite wisdom of God, made the world, and without Him was not anything made that was made. Is anything hard for the Creator? Is anything impossible, or even difficult to Him who rules all things by the power of His Word? Courage, brothers, the grand question is answered. Since there is a full atonement and there is an exalted Savior, with all power in His hands, what remains to dismay us?

Listen once more. The Spirit of God has been given. Better than Christ's bodily presence among us is the presence of the Holy Spirit. It was expedient that Jesus should go away that the Holy Spirit might abide with us, as a greater blessing for the church. Is the Holy Spirit gone? Has the Holy Spirit left the church of God? Is the church appalled by her difficulties though the Spirit of God is poured out upon her? What is she doing? Has she forgotten herself? Has she become insane? Brother, with Jesus Himself slain as an atonement—Jesus exalted as a Prince and a Savior at the right hand of God, and with the divine Spirit abiding with us forever, what is there impossible to the church of God?

So I close by one more point, which is this: As I have made you hear our Lord's words, and also led you to remember the infinite resources at His disposal, I now want you to *anticipate His working*. How does the Christ work among men? How will He proceed when He gets fairly to work among the masses? There are varieties of operations, but there is a continuity of law running through them all, and the divine line of action is much the same in all cases.

The way of the Christ was, first of all, to find out what there was which He could use. The little store provided by His followers consisted of a few loaves and fishes. Is it not wonderful how the Lord sometimes finds out little matters which have been hidden away, and makes much of them? Scotland was once under the sway of unbelief and formalism, how was it to be delivered? Thomas Boston went into a shepherd's hut, and found a book which had become extremely scarce. It was Fisher's "Marrow of Modern Divinity." Boston rejoiced in the light of the gospel which flashed in upon his soul, and he began to bear witness to it. A great controversy followed, and what was far better, a great awakening, the lovers of the marrow of the gospel soon broke the bones of error. See what one book may do? Sweden, too, was greatly blessed by the discovery in a country

house of an old copy of Luther on Galatians. See how one voice may wake a nation.

Brethren, who knows, what may come out of seven loaves and a few small fishes? Yes, the enemies may do what they like, they may preach what they please, they may take away one pulpit after another from the orthodox, they may bury us under the rubbish of evolution, and false philosophy, but we shall rise again. These small clouds will soon blow over. There may not remain one single sound expounder of the gospel, but as long as God lives, the gospel will not die. Its power may slumber, but before long it shall awake out of sleep, and cry like a mighty man who shouts by reason of wine. As long as we have one match left we can yet set the world on fire. As long as one Bible remains the empire of Satan is in danger. Only barley loaves and a few small fishes were in the possession of the apostolic company, but Jesus found them, and began to work with them.

The next thing was a secret and mysterious multiplication. The bread began to grow in the disciples' hands as before it had grown in the ground. Peter had a loaf in his hand, and he began to break off a corner; to his amazement it was just as big as before. So he broke off the other end and gave that to another hungry person, and lo, the loaf was still complete. He kept on breaking as fast as ever he could, and the loaf continued increasing till everybody had received his full. Wonderful hands they were; were they not! No, they were not; they were only the rough hands of weather-beaten fishermen. Those other hands which first took, and blessed, and broke, were doing the deed all the while. It is wonderful how God works by our hands, and yet His own hand does it all.

Apart from human agency, the Lord can impress the minds of men and women, and so multiply His truth. I heard of a woman in the Isle of Skye, when there was very little gospel preaching there, who all of a sudden felt God was not working in Skye. She journeyed till she reached the ferry, and then she crossed to the mainland. She asked those she met where she could find God. At last she met with a good woman who said, "I will tell you where you will find Him." She took her into a place of worship where Jesus was plainly set forth. She heard the gospel, and went back to tell others about the Savior.

The devil's work is never done; it is undone again in five minutes when the grace of God is at work. Even in our ashes live our common fires, a breath from heaven shall kindle them into a flame. God is never at a loss for agents. He could turn the Pope into an evangelist, a cardinal into a reformer, a priest into a preacher of the gospel. The most superstitious, the most ignorant, the most infidel, the most blasphemous, the most degraded, may yet be made the champions of His truth. Therefore let no man's heart fail him, the bread shall be multiplied, and the people shall be fed.

It was done by everybody distributing his portion. Peter was dividing his loaf, and many people were especially pleased to be fed by Peter. It was quite right that they should be. If Peter fed them, let them be satisfied with Peter. Yonder was John with the same bread, breaking it with less impetuosity and more graciousness of manner, and yonder was

James working away very steadily and methodically, but what of the difference of distribution? The bread was the same. So long as the people were filled, what did it signify which hand passed them their bread and fish? Dear friends, do not imagine that God will bless one preacher only, or one denomination only. He does bless some preachers more than others, for He is Sovereign, but He will bless you all in your work, for He is God. I shall never forget one day, when my dear old grandfather was alive, I was to preach a sermon. There was a great crowd of people, and I did not arrive, for the train was delayed, and therefore the venerable man commenced to preach in my place. He was far on in his sermon when I made my appearance at the door. Looking at me, he said, "You have all come to hear my dear grandson, and therefore I will stop that you may hear him. He may preach the gospel better than I can, but he cannot preach a better gospel. Can you, Charles?" My answer from the aisle was, "I cannot preach the gospel better, but if I could, it would not be a better gospel." So it is, brethren, others may break the bread to more people, but they cannot break better bread than the gospel which you teach, for that is bread from our Savior's own hands. Get to work each one of you with your bread-breaking, for this is Christ's way of feeding the multitude. Let each one who has himself eaten divide his morsel with another. Today fill someone's ear with the good news of Jesus and His love. Endeavor this day, each one of you who are Christian people, to communicate to one man, woman, or child, something of the spiritual meat which has made your soul glad. This is my Master's way; will you not drop into it? You cannot propose a better; none can contrive a method more likely to be successful, more honorable to your Lord and more beneficial to yourself. Bring your barley loaf, bring your little fish, and put your provision into the common store. Take it back again from the great Master's hands filled with that blessing which makes it fruitful, and multiplies it, and then feed the multitude with it. So shall you go forth with joy, and be led forth with peace. So be it. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—MATTHEW 15.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—196, 33, 357.

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

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

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

GOD'S REMEMBRANCE OF HIS COVENANT
NO. 1886

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 14, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Nevertheless He regarded their affliction, when He heard their cry: And He remembered for them His covenant, and repented according to the multitude of His mercies."
Psalm 106:44, 45.

THIS Psalm deserves to be read very carefully. It mentions many of the afflictions of God's ancient people, but it clearly sets forth that their afflictions were the distinct result of their rebellions and sins. It is not so with all the afflictions of God's people. It is written, "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten," and again, "Every branch in me that bears fruit, He purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit." Yet it is often so to this day, that the servants of God smart because of disobedience. They are chastened for their sin, as it is written, "You only have I known of all the people of the earth, therefore I will punish you for your iniquities." Sin in a child of God cannot go unchastened. The rod of chastisement is included in the covenant, and if we are in the covenant, the Lord will keep His promise. "If his children forsake My law, and walk not in My judgments, then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes."

The miseries of Israel of old were distinctly the result of their sins. They lived under a dispensation in which there was a visible reward for obedience, and a prompt temporal punishment for disobedience. Therefore one might suppose that if the people fell into affliction willfully, and through their own fault, the Lord might see fit to leave them in it. Did they not procure it unto themselves? Yet such is the abundant compassion of our God that as soon as ever these people, smarting under the result of their sin, began to cry to Him, "He regarded their affliction when He heard their cry." He might have justly said, "Go to the gods that you have set up; tell your sorrows to the calves that you have made, ask succor at the hands of the dead whom you have consulted, or of the cruel deities to whom you have sacrificed your sons and your daughters," but instead of thus meeting them in righteous wrath, He is tender and full of compassion to them. I will read you the words again, for they are inexpressibly sweet, "Nevertheless He regarded their affliction, when He heard their cry." There is something very powerful about the cry of a child to its own parent, and God, the tenderest of all fathers, cannot bear to hear His children cry—

"Such pity as a father has
Unto his children dear,
Like pity shows the Lord to such

As worship Him in fear."

If there are any here who are brought low and sorely distressed through their own wrong-doing, let them nevertheless cry unto the Lord. Though it is because of your transgressions and your iniquities that you are afflicted, yet you may cry unto the Lord in your trouble, and He will save you out of your distresses. Turn unto the hand that wounds you, and that hand will bind you up. Turn unto the Lord in repentance, and He will turn unto you in loving kindness.

What was the secret reason why God thus dealt with His people, and heard their cry when they were in affliction through their sin? The secret reason was, that "He remembered for them His covenant." If He looked upon His people in their sin and their sorrow, He could not see anything in them to justify why He should have pity upon them. What they endured they richly deserved, and He knew that if He took away His rod from them, they would go and commit the same wickedness again. They were not to be driven by judgment nor drawn by mercies. Though they humbled themselves for one moment they would soon be proud again. The Lord could see nothing hopeful about them, nothing in their future any more than in their past which should plead for mercy. Why should they be smitten any more? Or why should gentleness be further wasted on them? Was it not high time to say, "They are given to their idols, let them alone, that we may see what their end will be"? One divine reason prevented the infliction of justice—this and this alone, sufficed, "He remembered for them His covenant." If He could not see anything in the erring people, or hope for anything from them, He looked to another source for a motive and an argument for mercy, He looked to the covenant which He had made of old with their father Abraham, when He said, "Surely, blessing I will bless you, and in you and in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Because He had once permitted that promise to go out of His mouth, He would not withdraw it, and when He heard their cry, He regarded their affliction. Is it not a great wonder that God not only is willing to give mercy, should there be a manifest reason for it, but that He Himself finds and makes the reason? When there is no motive for grace discoverable to our anxious eyes, there is a fountain of self-created mercy in the Lord's own heart, and this He causes to overflow and fill a channel of His own making. Though there is nothing in the creature, there is everything in the covenant. If the Lord can find no plea in the character of the offender, He discovers an argument in Himself, He remembers His own covenant, and for His own name's sake He deals in mercy with the guilty.

Now, observe, that in the text it does not say, "He remembered *their* covenant." They stood at the foot of Sinai and said, "All these things which You have commanded we will do." They willingly, eagerly, hastily, loudly entered into a covenant with God, before whose terrible thunders they trembled. But that covenant they soon broke. Within a few days they had departed from the living God, and fallen down before the image of an ox which eats grass. The Lord does not dwell upon the matter, since it would be to their destruction. He forgets their falseness and treachery, and casts them behind His back. But what He does remember is *His* covenant, "Nevertheless He remembered for them His covenant."

This proves that the covenant referred to must have been one of pure grace. Do you not see this? These people were in affliction through sin. If that covenant had only been a covenant of works in which they were to be rewarded for doing good, and punished for doing evil, the more the Lord remembered that covenant, the more He would have been bound to punish them for their offenses. But a covenant which led Him to cease from punishing the guilty must have been one of grace only. Is it not so? A covenant was made long before that of Sinai, a covenant of grace, which is called in Scripture "the everlasting covenant." This was made known to man in that first promise which was given to him at the gates of Paradise, and it was afterwards revealed more clearly in the Lord's covenant with Noah, and in His gracious promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Lord said to Abraham, "I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your seed after you in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto you, and to your seed after you." This same covenant, after being made more fully known in promises to Moses and other saintly men, was stated anew in the Lord's dealings with His servant, David, whom He exalted as one chosen out of the people, "I have made a covenant with My chosen, I have sworn unto David My servant, Your seed will I establish forever, and build up your throne to all generations." Since then the Lord has given us promises, by His prophets and apostles, and especially in the person and ministry of His only-begotten Son. All these various forms of manifestation relate to one and the same everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure, which God had made with men in the person of His dear Son. It was that covenant which God thought upon, and when He remembered it, He was able to deal with them upon terms of grace, and even to change His hand, and no longer crush them with afflictions, for He "repented according to the multitude of His mercies."

Dear brethren, I want to show this morning how this remembrance of the covenant on God's part is the great ground of hope to all of us who are in covenant with God. Indeed the Lord's mindfulness of His covenant is the ground of hope to every one of you, whether as yet you have embraced the gospel promise or not. Inasmuch as God must, according to His law, look upon you with anger, on account of your sin, He has devised a way by which He can have regard unto the voice of your cry. Remembering His covenant, He can pass by your transgressions, and receive you, as His returning children, into the bosom of His love.

I. The first head of our discourse will be this—Then THE COVENANT EXISTS. God cannot remember, to any practical purpose, that which does not exist. Had the covenant been repealed or abrogated, it could not have availed for God to remember it, except to strike the people into a more complete and settled despair. In love He remembered the covenant as an abiding thing, according to the word "My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of My lips."

Beloved, *the covenant is in its own nature everlasting.* Dying David said, "Although my house is not so with God, yet has He made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure." The covenant is everlasting in its beginning, for it was made "or ever the earth was" between the first divine Person of the sacred Trinity and the Second, on the

behalf of His chosen. It is everlasting also as to its duration, for all things are still governed under this covenant, and shall be, world without end. "And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your seed after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant." "Thus says the Lord, if you can break My covenant of the day, and My covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season; then may also My covenant be broken with David My servant." Sooner shall the covenant with the earth concerning seedtime and harvest be broken, than this covenant of grace. By everything that is permanent in the universe, and by everything that is permanent in the Godhead, we are made to know that the covenant of grace is a fixed and settled thing, and abides today as it ever has done, for there is no variableness or turning with Him from whom every good gift comes down. The promises in Christ Jesus are Yes and Amen, to the glory of God by us. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle of the law shall fail, much less shall the covenant of divine grace be disannulled. Thus says the Lord—"The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, says the Lord that has mercy on you." God in remembering His covenant falls back upon everlasting and immutable things.

Well may the covenant of grace be everlasting, for *it was made with deliberation and foresight*. If two persons enter into a contract, and one afterwards wishes to escape from it, he may plead that he made the agreement in great haste, or under compulsion, or through being misinformed and over-persuaded, on any of these grounds he may make objections to the fulfillment of the covenant, and thus may attempt to justify his failure to keep his word. Now, on God's part, nothing of the kind can ever be urged, for He made the covenant Himself, on His own suggestion, according to the good pleasure of His will. It was a free covenant, entered into through the love of His own heart, according to the wise counsel of His infinite mind. He made it knowing all that would happen in time or in eternity. When He made the promise that, whosoever believes in Christ Jesus shall have everlasting life, He knew that those who believed in Christ Jesus would, nevertheless, be fallible creatures, and would commit mistakes and sins; He made the promise well knowing what believers would be. When He chose Abraham to be His friend, He knew what failures there would be in Abraham and in his seed. He made His choice deliberately, knowing the end from the beginning, and foreseeing all the provocations which He would endure for forty years in the wilderness, and how they would anger Him when they came to their own land. His choice of His redeemed was made deliberately, and the promises made to them were given forth in the full foresight of all our unbelief, and lukewarmness, and backsliding, and selfishness, and folly. The Lord is not deceived in the subjects of His grace. Hear how He puts it in the forty-eighth of Isaiah, verse four, "Because I knew that you are obstinate, and your neck is an iron sinew, and your brow brass," and again, verse eight, "I knew that you would deal very treacherously, and were called a transgressor from the womb." Man's love is blind, but the Lord's love sees all things—

"He saw me ruined in the fall,

Yet loved me notwithstanding all."

He knew as well in that day when He called me by His grace what I should be as He knows today. Every fault and folly stood clear before His vision, and yet, notwithstanding all, He determined to give faith, and through faith, to give eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Dear friends, every promise in the Bible is a part of the covenant. The covenant that now stands between the believer and his God is on this wise, that you take Him to be your God, and He takes you to be His people; He gives His promises to you, and you rely upon them; He will bless you in this life and perfect you in the world to come. The tenor of the covenant is not according to what you deserve, but according to the greatness of the Lord's love. In making this covenant, it is clear that God knew from the beginning what He was doing. He made no mistake, and said no more than He intended to fulfill. He deliberately said, "I will be their God, and they shall be My people," and in the day wherein we believed in Him He guaranteed to us that we should never perish, neither should any pluck us out of His hand. This covenant was made with such judicious deliberation and infallible foresight, that there is no conceivable reason why it should be revoked. God is not a man that He should lie or repent.

Moreover—and this is a point to which every child of God delights to turn his eyes—*that covenant was sealed and ratified in the most solemn manner*. When God made a covenant with Abraham, there was a slaying of sacrifices and a dividing of their bodies, and the Lord under the image of a burning lamp passed between the pieces, in this solemn sacrificial manner was the covenant established. But when the Lord made a covenant with us, the seal He gave was much more precious. He took from His bosom His Only-begotten Son, and He gave Him to be a covenant to His people. He died to make the eternal covenant sure. Paul speaks of "the blood of the everlasting covenant," and when we come to the communion table we hear our Lord say, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood." Jesus has gone into heaven bearing with Him the blood of sprinkling. Can God deny His promise to His bleeding Son? Can He run back from the promise which He has made to the Only-begotten in His death? "By His knowledge shall My righteous servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities." Can these promises fail? Impossible! The very thought would be blasphemous. A covenant which has been made in so solemn a manner, by the death of our great Surety and Sacrifice, can never be repealed, neglected, or changed.

My dear brethren, we may rest fully sure that this covenant will stand, because *the divine glory is wrapped up in it*. Why did God promise to save men through faith in Christ Jesus? Why? That He might manifest to angels, and principalities, and powers, the splendor of His love and the riches of His grace. He has selected for this reason the very worst of men, that in them He might show forth all long-suffering, and display the magnificence of His pardoning love. He selected beings that were depraved, and subject to grievous temptations, that, by regenerating them by His Spirit, and sustaining them by His grace, He might display the greatness of His power. We are witnesses to time and to eternity of the glory of the Lord. Are not these His own words—"This people have I

formed for Myself: they shall show forth My praise"? The manifestation of the glorious love of God is the design of the covenant, that where sin abounded grace might much more abound. He intends to show to all the ages His truth, His faithfulness, His patience, His tenderness, and His power. He designs to set heaven and earth wondering, until the whole universe breaks forth into the song, "Who is a God like unto You, that pardons iniquity, and passes by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retains not His anger forever, because He delights in mercy."

God is more glorified in the covenant of grace than in creation, or in providence; in fact, creation and providence are but the temporary scaffold of the great house which God is building, even the God who inhabits the praises of Israel. The Lord cannot break His word, nor forego His designs, nor forget His promises. Think not so. The crown jewels of God are staked and pawned upon the carrying out of the covenant of grace.

Furthermore, *it is not possible for God to break a covenant*. When you and I stand and tremble before a divine promise for fear it should not be fulfilled, we cast a slur upon the truth, faithfulness, and immutability of God. Has He ever changed? Has He ever been false? Has He ever lifted His hand and sworn by Himself, because He could swear by no greater, and by two immutable things wherein it was impossible for God to lie has He given us strong consolation, and yet has He failed us? Far from it; brethren, there has been nothing in the past to cast suspicion upon the veracity of Jehovah: Therefore then should we doubt Him or distrust His covenant? My text gives us an instance of a great strain that was put upon the covenant. These people whom God had chosen to be His heritage provoked Him constantly. I cannot imagine a greater extent of sin than that which is pictured in this 106th Psalm. The chosen seed were degraded below other nations; they had forsaken their own God to go after alien deities. Was it ever known in any other case that a nation changed her gods? Yet Israel departed from the one living and true God, willfully and wantonly, times without number, and God, instead of breaking His covenant because of their treachery, had pity upon them. When He found them in the throes of their grief as the result of their sin, He turned His eyes upon His covenant, and because of that covenant He delivered them; from which I gather that the covenant purpose of God to save His own people shall stand fast, come what may. "If we believe not, yet He abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself." They that trust in the Lord, notwithstanding all the enormous weight of their sin, shall find Him faithful to His word of pardon. He will keep His word to sinners who put their trust in Him, and they shall be saved. Oh, glorious fact, the covenant still exists!

II. But, secondly, THIS COVENANT IS TOO OFTEN FORGOTTEN BY US. The children of Israel had quite forgotten the covenant of their God. Elijah said, "They have forsaken Your covenant." Starting aside like a deceitful bow which fails the archer in the day of battle, they had been false to their God and useless for those great purposes for which He had chosen and ordained them. Have we not failed in the same manner?

Are not God's people at this day chargeable with forgetting the covenant by their *unspiritual carelessness?* Have you thought of yourself, my

brother, as a covenanted one, as one with whom God has entered into solemn compact, saying, "I am your shield and your exceedingly great reward: I am God Almighty: walk before Me, and be you perfect"? Have you realized your position as in covenant with God? When you have been staggered with its wonderful condescension and blessedness, as I have often been, have you not soon forgotten your great obligation, and thought only of earthly things? Have you not doubted your God because you have forgotten His covenant? When heaven and earth were rejoicing, Zion said, "The Lord has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me." Under such a slanderous charge, the Lord is gladly to speak with plaintive earnestness, and ask, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you. Behold, I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands; your walls are continually before Me." Let it be realized by us, and not passed over in a wicked carelessness, that as many as believe in Christ Jesus are in covenant with God, and He has promised not to turn away from doing them good. This cannot be better described than as a marriage covenant, even as it is written in the Book of the prophet Hosea, "And I will betroth you unto Me forever; yes, I will betroth you unto Me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth you unto Me in faithfulness: and you shall know the Lord." O my brother believer, as the man puts the ring on the woman's finger, and the words are said, and she is his, and he is hers, so has God, by giving you faith, put the ring on your finger once for all, and you are His, and He is yours, and He says to you today, "You shall not be for another man; so will I also be for you." Our response should be, "Other lords have had dominion over us, but now we are the Lord's alone." Oh, you covenanted ones, angels look at you with wonder, they regard you as the favorites of heaven, and yet you forget this, and live as if there were no covenant between God and you.

Sometimes, too—and in the case of Israel it was so—we get away from that covenant by *wanton sin,* or by negligent omission of most delightful duties. I need not go into the story of Israel again. You see in this Psalm how they transgressed. They took no notice of the covenant they had made with God, but violated all His precepts. May I ask whether we have not been guilty of this same sin? May not each man bury his face in his hands as he confesses, "My God, You know how often I have acted as if I were not in covenant with You. I have lived as if I were my own master, instead of yielding myself wholly to Your service. I have sometimes acted as a man of the world would have done, and not as one that belonged to Christ"? Be ashamed and be confounded for all this, and then wonder and admire that still that covenant stands, and the Lord has not recalled his gracious promises. He says, "Nevertheless I will remember My covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish unto you an everlasting covenant." This ought to yield in our hearts a harvest of repentance. It should bind us to God with intense affection that should tend towards perpetual sanctification from this day and onward.

These people had forgotten their God for another reason, namely, in *the depth of their sorrow*. A great sorrow stuns men, and makes them forget the best sources of consolation. A little blow will cause great pain,

but I have frequently heard in reports of assaults that far more serious blows have occasioned no pain whatever, because they have destroyed consciousness. So do extreme distresses rob men of their wits, and cause them to forget the means of relief. Under the chastening rod, the smart is remembered, and the healing promise is forgotten. The people of Israel, when they were under the afflicting visitations of God, failed to remember His covenant from the crushing effect of their sorrow and despair. Is it so with any of us? I may be addressing at this moment an ear which has grown dull through grief, a heart that is forgetful because of heaviness. Do not men even forget to eat bread in the hour of dire calamity? Ah, my brother! Your affliction seems more present to you than even God Himself. The black sorrow that lowers over you eclipses all the lamps of heaven and earth. May I be my Master's messenger to you, to remind you that He is still in covenant with you, and though He causes grief, yet will He have compassion? He has said, "All things work together for good to them that love God," and He will keep His word. He has also said, "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you; when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon you." Depend upon it He will preserve you. "Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain you; He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." Remember, "He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men," but in love He corrects and chastens. Therefore, brush those tears away, anoint your head, and wash your face, and be of good courage, for the Lord will strengthen your heart—

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

Oh that you could learn to sing in the dark like the nightingale, and praise God out of the midst of the furnace like the three holy children! Oh that you may cry with Job, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him!" This is what you should do, and it may help you to do it if you will remember the covenant, which God has not forgotten. O soul, why do you forget the covenant? Fall back upon it, and sing with Habakkuk, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be on the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." According to the covenant, God is to be everything to you. The covenant does not stipulate that you shall not lose your friends, nor does it promise that you shall not lose your property, nor that you shall have no sickness, the covenant is that God will be everything to you, take care that you use Him as such. "These things have I spoken unto you," said our Lord, "that in Me you might have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." If you have received the tribulation, be not satisfied till you have enjoyed the peace in Jesus which is equally promised. Alas! God's people forget this covenant. We have said enough upon this.

III. Though we forget the covenant, yet GOD REMEMBERS HIS COVENANT, "He remembered for them His covenant." What does this word mean? Beloved, of course the covenant is always on the mind of God, for the infinitely wise God cannot forget anything. But the text means that He stands to His covenant; He remembers it so as to cause it to abide. Even though these people had so grievously provoked Him, He remembers His covenant so as to find in it a reason for pardoning their sin, and dealing with them in a way of mercy. He meets the flood of their sins with the flood of His faithfulness—"Nevertheless He remembered for them His covenant." He remembers it practically, that is, He puts it into effect, and in this case He did so by repenting "according to the multitude of His mercies." He had formerly smitten them, but now He puts the rod away. He made His people to be pitied of all them that carried them away captive. He came to their relief and succor. And this is just what God will do with you, my afflicted friend, if you turn to Him with cries and tears, and a humble, penitent faith. He will remember for you His covenant by acting in a covenant way towards you, according to that word in the Book of Zechariah, "As for you also, by the blood of your covenant I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water."

O friend, God must remember His covenant, for He can never forget what the making of that covenant has cost Him. It cost Him nothing to make the heavens and the earth, He spoke and it was done. It costs him nothing to rule the nations, in the serenity of His omnipotence the Lord sits upon the floods, the Lord sits King forever. But to make the covenant with man, and to carry it out, cost Him His innermost self, it cost Him His Only-begotten, the eternal Son, the Well-beloved, must die the death of the cross that the covenant may be established. Covenant-making was no trifle with God. I have heard people speak sneeringly of the covenant, indeed, no one of note preaches upon it now, but yet it is the grandest of themes. It is a wondrous fact Godward, for it cost Him His dear Son's heart's blood. "It pleased the Father to bruise Him, He has put Him to grief," that this covenant might be fulfilled and eternally settled.

See how readily God turns to this covenant. You can be sure that He delights in it, for no sooner do His children cry than He at once remembers for them His covenant. It was only a cry forced from them by misery, but instead of upbraiding them for the past, and shutting out their cry, He straightway remembered His covenant. When a man is easily reminded of a thing, it shows that it is agreeable to him to think of it. We are sure that God's heart is much wrapped up in the covenant of grace, since the feeble cries of His children remind Him of it.

I think, however, the reason why God remembers His covenant most of all is because He remembers with whom He made it. A certain man had lived abroad for a while, and there he found a friend with whom for years he enjoyed delightful fellowship. In due time, he returned to England, to carry on a business; but he never forgot his friend. He had promised, and entered into brotherly covenant, that he would help his friend's family, and so, in due season, he received into his employment the young son of his old friend, and he was minded to instruct him, and help him, and promote his interests. He had given his friend his right hand, and said, "Trust your boy with me, I will see him through." The youth comes to

London, and enters the service of his father's friend, with every prospect bright before him, but, alas, he proves unworthy. He falls into all sorts of vices and follies, and grieves his friend—his father's friend. His employer says, "I shall be glad to get rid of this fellow, he is a burden to me. I cannot advance him; he is unworthy of my favor." See how loath he is to deal severely with him, for his father's sake! He calls him into his private office, and pleads and reasons with him. He says, "I have borne more with you than with anyone else in my establishment. Remember, it is for your father's sake. Had it not been for my promise to your father, I should have dismissed you long ago." One day he cries, "I really must dismiss him, he must go." But he thinks of the father, and of their days of fond familiarity with each other, and he cannot bear to deal harshly with the son of such a man, and therefore he says, "I will try him again; I will still bear with him, for my promise's sake, which I made to his father."

Now I am sure it was so with God and the seed of Abraham. These people had revolted and rebelled continually, but the Lord remembered Abraham His friend. A memory rose before the divine mind of the faithful man lifting the knife to slay his only son Isaac in obedience to the Most High. As the Lord saw that act of believing obedience He seemed to say, "I will have pity on his offspring still, they are the most undeserving and provoking people that ever breathed, but I have entered into a covenant with Abraham My friend, and therefore I will have pity upon them." The fact is, with regard to the great God and you and me that He would often say, "I must destroy them," but then He thinks of His dear Son upon the cross. He hears ringing through the midnight of that great day of sorrow, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" and the great heart of God is moved to pity us because of the death of His Son. There is merit enough in Jesus to remove all the demerit of our sins.

The great God was not thinking of a dead man when He thought of Abraham. Our Savior tells us, "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." Abraham is with God, and God looked at Abraham, His living friend, and restrained His indignation when Abraham's children provoked Him. Jesus also lives, He has gone up on high, He sits at the right hand of God, and when the Lord has looked at us and grown weary of our sins, He turns His eye upon the perfections of His dear Son, and He is well pleased for His righteousness' sake, for He has magnified the law and made it honorable. Thus the Lord turns back to the covenant made with Jesus, He hears our cry, and remembers for us His covenant. Oh, the grace of this! Because of Him with whom the covenant of grace is made, who is forever the Father's delight, and the joy of His soul, the Father has compassion on us. Does it not make you pray, "Behold, O God, our shield, and look upon the face of Your Anointed"? Or, to quote our hymn, do we not say—

"Him and then the sinner see,
Look through Jesus' wounds on me?"

The person of the Lord Jesus is the substance and seal of the covenant of grace, and God remembers it because He remembers *Him*.

IV. I will finish with this last point, which I am sure you will feel to be of the utmost importance. If God remembers for us His covenant, LET US REMEMBER IT. You that are the Lord's covenanted ones, think of the

sacred promise, and begin to enjoy it, and live upon it practically. What is the covenant? Here is one form of it, "I am God Almighty; walk before Me, and be you perfect." That is an early and condensed shape of it, that is to say, the Lord God Almighty gives Himself up to be our portion, and we are to yield ourselves to Him, to walk before Him in perfect obedience. This also is the covenant, "I will be their God, and they shall be My people." Come, beloved, make God your God. This means—make God your everything. Say not, "I am poor." Not so, for God is yours, and so all things are yours. Say not, "I am weak." Not so, God Almighty is yours, when you are weak, then you are strong. "But I have no wisdom." Is not the Lord Jesus made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification? He that has God has everything. Will you belittle your God and limit the Holy One of Israel? Come; find your all in God. This is your part of the covenant, to accept God as being to you what He says He is. He has made Himself to be your all in all, accept Him as such. Did not David say, "He is all my salvation, and all my desire?" This is the portion and heritage of the children of God. "Cursed be the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm; but blessed is the man that trusts in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is." Cast yourself upon the covenant, and find rest therein. Sing in your heart of hearts—

"He that has made my heaven secure
Will here all good provide;
Since Christ is rich, can I be poor?
What can I want beside?"

"The Lord is my shepherd: I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures: He leads me beside the still waters." Oh, the blessed result of standing to the covenant and letting God be our all in all!

In this covenant it is incumbent that we rest alone in our God. You have not taken God to be your God, if you cannot be content with Him alone. Abraham forsook everything for God. He went to a country he had never seen, followed a path that had never been mapped out, and God said to him, "Fear not, Abram: I am your shield." He was in the midst of enemies who would have destroyed him but for the mysterious protection which surrounded him like a shield. The Lord's word had gone forth, "Touch not My anointed, and do My prophets no harm." Abraham had no shield but his God, and yet no man in the world dwelt in greater safety. God said to him, "I am your shield and your exceedingly great reward," and so He was. Abraham once lamented that he had no seed, and that the steward of his house was his only heir, but the Lord who had promised him a seed yet said to him," I am your exceedingly great reward." Not the seed, but his God, must be his joy and crown, and Abraham felt it was so, and therefore stood ready to surrender that seed if the Lord commanded. That is what the Lord would have you do, beloved. Look not to what is seen with the eye, listen not to what is heard with the ear, live in the secret place of the tabernacle of the Most High, in the place where faith takes the place of sense. Endure as seeing Him who is invisible. Penetrate into the substance which is unseen, and pass by the shadow which is all that sense can discern. Live on the living God, and then you know the secret of the covenant, your soul shall dwell at ease, and your

seed shall inherit the earth. Your soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and you shall praise the Lord with joyful lips.

Remember, lastly, in order to look to this covenant well, that you must give yourselves wholly up to God. "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." Live only to glorify God. Have no other aim or objective but your God. Brother, if God gives you much, glorify Him with it by your generous consecration, if He takes it away, glorify Him by your patience under loss. Wherever you are, be always aiming to love your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and your neighbor as yourself, and verily it shall be well with you, and blessed shall you be, for God will remember for you His covenant.

I wish that the unconverted here would desire to be concerned in this covenant. If you do so, the very desire is the gift of divine grace. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you have entered into covenant with God. He that has faith in the Lord Jesus is a child of the Father of the faithful, and therefore he is concerned in the covenant which God made with Abraham and his spiritual seed. O Lord, of these poor stony hearts raise up children unto Abraham, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 106.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—106, 229, 226.

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

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

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

PLEADING FOR PRAYER
NO. 1887

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 21, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; that I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea, and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints; that I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed. Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen."
Romans 15:30-33.

THE apostle of the Gentiles held a very useful and glorious office, but he had by no means a smooth path in life. When we read the account of his sufferings, and persecutions, and labors, we wonder how a single individual could have gone through them all. He was a true hero. Though a Hebrew of the Hebrews, he stands in the very front of the whole Gentile church as its founder and teacher under God, and we owe to him what we can never fully estimate. When we consider the struggles of his life, we do not wonder that the apostle was sometimes in great sorrow of heart, and heavily burdened in spirit. He was so at the time when he wrote this Epistle to the Christian friends at Rome. It was a great delight to him to have to go to Jerusalem—it was a place which was much reverenced and loved by him, it was a greater privilege for him to go and exchange salutations with his brother apostles, and it was the most joyous privilege of all to be the bearer of a contribution from the Gentiles to relieve the necessities of the saints at Jerusalem. He rejoiced much more in that gift to Jewish believers than if it had been anything for himself. But he was well aware that there were those in Judea who hated him with deadly hatred, and would seek his life. He had been the rising hope of the Jewish party, and he had become a Christian, therefore the bigoted Jews regarded him as an apostate from the faith of their fathers. They had, moreover, special venom against him, since he was bolder than any other Christian teacher in going among the Gentiles, and shaking off altogether the bonds of the ceremonial law. He also came out more clearly than any other man upon the doctrines of grace, and salvation by the cross of Christ, and this provoked the fiercest hostility. Paul had also the apprehension that he would not be well received even by the brethren at Jerusalem. He knew what a strong conservative feeling there was among the circumcision for the maintenance of the old Jewish law, and how he was a marked man because he had shaken off entirely that yolk of bondage. Thus he had fears as to foes, and doubts about friends. His case was peculiarly hard.

What did Paul do when his spirit was greatly oppressed? He wrote to his brethren to pray for him. He asked the good friends at Rome that they would lift up their hearts earnestly and unitedly to God, that he might be preserved from the double evil which threatened him. In the last chapter of this epistle we have the names of a great many of those private individuals at Rome to whom the apostle appealed. We do not know any of them, except it is the Priscilla and Aquila, of whom we have heard elsewhere, but this great man, this inspired apostle of God, who was not a whit behind the very chief of Christ's servants, makes his appeal to these unknown and humble individuals, that they would strive together with him in their prayers. I delight in this, it shows the lowly spirit of the apostle Paul, and it reveals to us his high value for the prayers of obscure men and women. He feels that he needs what the prayers of these people can bring to him, he is sure that without those prayers he will be in danger of failure, but that with them he will be strong for his great enterprise. He sees what prayer can do, and he would awaken it into powerful action.

Does it astonish you that a man so rich in grace as Paul should be asking prayers of these unknown saints? It need not astonish you, for it is the rule with the truly great to think most highly of others. In proportion as a man grows in grace he feels his dependence upon God, and in a certain sense, his dependence upon God's people. He decreases in his own esteem, and his brethren increase in his estimation. A flourishing tradesman, a man who has a large business, is the man who needs others; he prospers by setting others to labor on his behalf, the larger his trade, the more he is dependent upon those around him. The apostle was, so to speak, a great master trader for the Lord Jesus, he did a great business for his Lord, and he felt that he could not carry it on unless he had the co-operation of many helpers. He did not so much want what employers harshly call "hands" to work for him, but he did need hearts to plead for him, and he therefore sent all the way to Rome to seek such assistance. He wrote to those whom he had never seen, and begged their prayers, as if he pleaded for his life. The great apostle entreats Tryphena and Tryphosa, and Mary and Julia, to pray for him. His great enterprise needs their supplications. In a great battle the general's name is mentioned, but what could he have done without the common soldiers? Wellington will always be associated with Waterloo, but, after all, it was a soldiers' battle. What could the commander have done if those in the ranks had failed him? The commander-in-chief might very well have touched his hat to the least subaltern or to the humblest private, and have said, "I thank you, comrade. Without you, we could not have conquered." The chief troubles of the great day of Waterloo arose from certain very doubtful allies, who wavered in the hour of battle—those were the general's weakness, but his hope and strength lay in those regiments which were as an iron wall against the enemy. Even thus the faithful are our joy and crown, but the unstable are our sorrow and weakness. Every ministering servant of the Lord Jesus Christ is in much the same condition as Paul. True, we are of a lower grade, and our work is on a smaller scale, but our needs are just as great. We have not all the grace which Paul possessed, but for that very reason we make the more pathetic an

appeal to you, our friends and fellow helpers, while we use the apostle's language, and cry, "We beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with us in your prayers to God for us."

I shall call your attention to this text with the longing in my own heart that I myself may more abundantly live in your prayers. I have to rejoice in the prayers of thousands of holy men and women who love me in the Lord. I am deeply grateful for the affectionate supplications of multitudes that I have not seen in the flesh, to which the printed sermons go week by week. I am a debtor, not only to the beloved people around me, but to a larger company all over the world. These are my comfort, my riches, my strength. To such I speak at this time. Beloved, I need your prayers more than ever. I am more and more conscious of their value, do not restrain them. Just now there is to me a special need of grace on many accounts, and I hope that some of those who have long borne me up will give me a special portion of aid at this hour. I am not worthy to use the same language as the apostle Paul, but I know no better, and my necessity is even greater than his, therefore I borrow his words, and say, "I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in your prayers to God for me."

In our text there are two things, *prayer asked,* and *a blessing given*—"Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen."

I. First, here is PRAYER ASKED FOR.

We will look at the apostle's request for prayer in general, and then afterwards we will look to the details which are mentioned in the thirty-first verse.

First, here is *a request to the people of God for prayer in general*. He asks it *for himself*—"That you strive together with me in your prayers to God *for me."* He knew his own weakness, he knew the difficulty of the work to which he had been called, he knew that if he failed in his enterprise it would be a sad failure, injurious through coming ages to the entire church. He cried, "Agonize *for me,"* because he felt that much depended upon him. It is like a man who is willing to lead the forlorn hope, but he says to his comrades, "You will support me." It is like one who is willing to go into a far country, bearing his life in his hands, but he plaintively exclaims, "You won't forget me, will you? Though you stay at home, will you think of me!" It reminds us of Carey, who says, when he goes to India, "I will go down into the pit, but Brother Fuller and the rest of you must hold the rope." Can we refuse the request? Would it not be treachery? It is not according to the heart of true yoke-fellows, it is not according to the instincts of our common humanity, that we should desert any man whom we set in the front of the battle. If we choose a man to be our representative in the service of our God, we must not desert him. A man cannot be charged with egotism if he begs for personal support when he is engaged in labors for others and is not seeking himself but the success of the great cause. Under heavy responsibilities he does well to enlist the sympathies and prayers of those whom he is serving, and he has a right to have them. Beloved friends, if you are with me in the great battle for God and truth, and if you count me worthy to bear the brunt of this war, I beseech you for Christ's sake, support me by your

persistent wrestling at the throne of grace. Pray for all ministers and workers, but pray also for me. I am of all men the most miserable if you deny me this.

Observe in what relationship he regards them when he puts the request. "Now," he says, "I beseech you, *brethren*." "I beseech you." It is the strongest word of entreaty he can find. It is as if he said, "I go down on my knees to you, and implore you. I ask it of you as the greatest favor you can do me. I ask it of you as the dearest token of your love, that you strive together with me in your prayers to God for me." He does not call them companions, or fellow workers, or friends, but he addresses them as brothers. "You are my brethren," he says, "I feel a love to you, you Romans, converted to God. I have a longing in my heart to see you, and though I have not so much as spoken with you face to face, yet we are brothers. The life that is in you beats also in my heart, we are born again of the same Father, we are quickened by the same Spirit, we are redeemed by the same Savior, therefore, spiritually, we are brethren. Shall not brothers pray for one another?" He seems to say, "If you are brethren, show this token of your brotherhood. You cannot go up with me to Jerusalem, and share my danger, but you can be with me in spirit, and by your prayers surround me with divine protection. I do not ask you to come, you Romans, with your swords and shields, and make a bodyguard about me, but I do beg of you, my true brothers, if you are so indeed, to agonize together with me in your prayers to God for me." If there remains in the Christian church any brotherhood whatever, every leader of the host, every preacher of the gospel, every pastor of a church, should receive the proof of that brotherhood in the shape of daily intercession. Every sent servant of God beseeches his brethren that they strive together with him in prayer to God for him, and I am not a whit behind any of them in the urgency of my request to the many who have until now proved themselves my brethren. I know your love has not grown cold to me; I have abundant evidence of that. O my brothers, act as brothers to me now, and beseech the Lord to bless me.

But observe what kind of prayer he asks for, "That you strive together"—that you *"agonize"*—that is the word. You have before you in this expression a reminder of that great agony in Gethsemane, and I should think the apostle had that picture before his eyes. In the garden our Lord not only prayed as was His habit, but with strong crying and tears He made His appeal to God. "Being in an agony He prayed more earnestly." He wrestled till He "sweat as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground," but none agonized together with Him. That was one of the deepest shades of the picture, that He must tread the winepress alone, and of the people there must none be with Him. Yet did our Lord seem to ask for sympathy and help—

"Backward and forward thrice He ran,
As if He sought some help from man;"

but He found none even to watch with Him one hour, much less to agonize with Him. The apostle felt that an agony alone was too bitter for him, and he therefore piteously cries, "I beseech you, brethren, that you agonize with me in prayer to God for me." Now, as the disciples ought to have sympathized with the Savior, and entered into His direful grief, but

did not, even so it may happen to us. But, brethren, I trust that the unfaithfulness to the Master will not be repeated upon His servants. It remains to all that are true brethren in Christ that, when they see a man in agony of heart for Christ's sake and for souls' sake, they should bow the knee side by side with him, and be true brothers to him. When his labors become intense, when his difficulties are multiplied, when his heart begins to sink, and his strength is failing him, then the man must wrestle with his God, then his brethren must wrestle at his side. When the uplifted hands of Moses are known to bring a blessing, Aaron and Hur must hold them up when they are seen to grow weary. When Jacob is struggling at Jabbok, and we see him there, we must turn in and help him to detain the angel of the covenant. If one man can hold Him fast by saying, "I will not let You go unless You bless me," surely a score of you can make a cordon round about him, and speedily win the blessing. What may not a hundred do? Let us try the power of agonizing prayer! Do we know as yet what it means? Let us rise as one man and cry, "O angel, whose hands are full of benedictions, we will not let You go, except You give us Your own blessing, the blessing of Your covenant." If two of you are agreed as touching anything concerning the kingdom, you shall be heard, but what if hundreds and thousands of the faithful are of one mind and one mouth in this matter? Will you not at once cry unto God, "Bless Your servants, establish the work of our hands upon us, yes, the work of our hands, establish it"? You see it is earnest prayer which Paul asks for, not the prayer which foams itself away in words, but prayer with force, with energy, with humble boldness, with intensity of desire, with awful earnestness, prayer which, like a deep, hidden torrent, cuts a channel even through a rock. His request was, "that you wrestle with me in your prayers to God for me," and this is our request this day.

He does not, however, wish for a single moment to exclude himself from the prayer, for he says, "that you agonize *with me."* He is to be the first to agonize. This should be the position of every minister. We ought to be examples of wrestling prayer. How I wish that you could realize more fully the work allotted to the apostles when they said that it was not reasonable that they should leave the word of God to serve tables! There was a difference about the distribution of the alms among the widows, and the twelve declared that they could not attend to such a matter, for, they said, "We will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." This would be heaven to me. But notice that at least half, and the first half of their work lay in prayer. Oh, if that could be our portion! If we could but have full space for prayer and meditation, and were set free from the petty secularities and differences incident to church life. Oh that we could have more to do with Him from whose right hand the supreme blessing comes—that were a joy indeed! But even if the apostle could thus himself agonize, he did not feel satisfied, for he beseeches others to wrestle with him in prayer to God. He sought communion in supplication. Even thus I would beseech you, brethren, to come with me into the inner chamber. Come with me into the holy of holies; let us together approach the mercy seat. Lend me the help of all the spiritual force you have, that we may together agonize in prayer to God that the blessing may descend upon the enterprises now in my hands.

You see the sort of prayer which is needed, even the effectual fervent prayer of righteous men, and may the Holy Spirit brace up our spirits, that we may be able to join in such agonizing in this time of need.

This verse is one of the most intense I ever remember to have read, even in so intense a book as this Holy Scripture. Observe the fervency of the pleading—"Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake." What an argument! That name is full of power with true hearts. You owe Him everything, you owe Him your souls, you owe Him every hope for the future, every comfort in the present, and every happy memory of the past. Your life would have been worse than death apart from Him. His love to you constrains you, because you thus judge, that when one died for all, all died, and that you so died that henceforth you should not live unto yourselves but unto Him. Now, he says, as you cannot repay the Lord Jesus Christ personally, repay it to His servant by your prayers, join him in his agony in recollection of that greater agony in which none could join, by which you were redeemed from death and hell. If there is any love to Christ in a Christian's heart he must pray that the Holy Spirit would bless the ministry of the word. Surely your hearts must be turned to stone if you do not plead for a blessing upon that ministry by which you yourselves have been brought to Christ. If I have been a spiritual father to any of you, you will not fail to pray for me. Will you? As you love that Savior whom I preach, I beseech you, for the sake of Jesus Christ that you strive together with me in your prayers to God for me.

But he adds to that another argument—*"for the love of the Spirit."* If the Spirit of God has indeed loved you and proved it by quickening and sanctifying you, then pray for His ministers. If the Spirit of God has created a love in you, which is stronger than mere natural affection—a love which does not arise out of any fleshly relationship, or any mere association, or any casual partiality, but a love which the Holy Spirit Himself creates and fosters in your heart—then pray for me. If there is such love in you, not natural and temporary, but spiritual and therefore everlasting, then pray for the Lord's servant. If there is in you a love which may exist, no, will exist, in heaven itself, if there is such a love in you, then says the apostle, I beseech you, pray for me. Brethren, I say the same. Unless our profession is a lie we love each other, and we must therefore show that love by our prayers for one another. Especially if any of you have been brought to the Lord Jesus Christ by the ministry of any man whom God favors with His help, then that man must live forever in your hearts, and be remembered in your prayers. You cannot escape from the obligation of intercession for the man who brought you to Jesus. As long as you live, and as long as he remains faithful, you must bear him on your heart in supplication. It must be so, the love of the Spirit has knit us to one another, and none can put us asunder. Ours is no feigned unity, but deep, and true, and real. In Christ Jesus, my brother, there has been begotten in our hearts an affection for one another which death itself shall not destroy. We will not be separated. Then, by the love of the Spirit, I beseech you that you agonize together with me in your prayers to God for me. Every word pleads with tears; there is not a wasted letter in the whole verse.

Why do you think the apostle at that special time asked these brethren to pray for him so? Was it not because he believed in the providence of God? He was going up to Jerusalem, and the Jews would seek to slay him. They hunted him in every place, and now he was going into the lion's den, but he believed that God in Providence could overrule all things, so that he should not suffer injury at the hands of blood-thirsty zealots, but should be delivered out of their malicious power. *We* also believe in God that works all things, therefore, let us pray that all opposition to His gospel may be overcome.

He believed also in the influence that God can have upon men's hearts, especially upon the hearts of His own people. He was afraid that the Jewish believers would be very cold to him, and therefore he prays God that His Holy Spirit may warm their hearts, and make them full of love, so that the offerings he took to them from the Grecian churches might be accepted, and might foster a sense of hearty fellowship in the hearts of the Hebrew saints towards their Gentile brethren. Do you not also believe that the hearts of all men are in the hands of the Lord? Do you not believe in the supremacy of the will of God over the free will of man? Do you not rejoice that there is not only a Providence that shapes our ends, but a secret influence which molds men's hearts? Therefore it is that we urge you to plead with God that we also may have acceptance with His people. We desire to render them much service, and to enjoy their loving regard. It is painful to us to differ with any, and joyous to be in communion with all parts of the church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What is more than this, the apostle believed in the power of the prayers of simple people so to move the mind of God that He would exert His hand in providence and His influence over the hearts of men. Never let us imagine that the doctrine of the fixity of events, or the supremacy of law, as the philosophers call it, is at all contrary to the truth that prayer is effectual for its own ends and purposes. In olden times a warrior was going forth to battle for his country, and a certain preacher of the word said to him, "My prayer is made continually for you that you may be victorious." The warrior, in his philosophic doubt, replied that he saw no use in the promised prayers, for if God had determined to give him victory, he would have it without prayer, and if fate had decreed that he should be defeated, prayers could not prevent it. To which the godly man very properly replied, "Then take off your helmet and your coat of mail, and hang up your sword and buckler. Go not forth to battle at all with your men-at-arms, for, indeed, if the Lord is to conquer your enemies He can do it without your weapons, and if He will not prosper you, it is in vain for you to mount your war horse." The argument, when carried out, answers itself, there is, in truth, no force in it. The net result of such reasoning would be absolute inaction. Common sense shows us how absurd it is. All means are to be used, notwithstanding the eternal purpose of God, for that purpose includes means and their uses. We declare that among the most potent means in all the world is prayer and this must not be neglected. There are certain ascertained forces, and among those forces, always to be reckoned with and relied upon, is the force of the cry of God's dear children to their great Father in heaven; in other words, the power of prayer. In prayer we present the sacrifice of God's own Son to

God's own self, and prevail by its means. O brothers and sisters, we ask your prayers without doubt or question. We know and are persuaded that they will avail much. By your power in prayer God's power will be set in motion, and by that force all will be accomplished which shall be for His glory and for our good.

I hope you have been so far interested, may God grant you may have been influenced by these remarks, and excited to incessant intercession!

In our text there is, in the next place, *a statement of the apostle's desires in detail*. When we pray, we should make a point of praying for something distinctly. There is a general kind of praying, which fails from want of precision. It is as if a regiment of soldiers should all fire off their guns anyhow, possibly somebody would be killed, but the majority of the enemy would be missed. I believe that at the battle of Waterloo, there were no arms of precision, they had only the old Brown Bess, and though the battle was won, it has been said that it took as much lead to kill a man as the weight of the man's body. This is a figure of the comparative failure of indistinct, generalizing prayer. If you pray anyhow, if it is with sincerity, a measure of blessing results from it, but it will take a great deal of such praying to accomplish much. But if you plead for certain mercies definitely and distinctly, with firm unstaggering faith, you shall richly succeed.

Our apostle gives his friends three things to pray for; first, he would have them ask that he might be delivered from them that did not believe in Judea. He was delivered, not perhaps in the precise manner which he hoped for, but he was to the letter delivered from the unbelieving Jews. Certain zealots bound themselves with an oath that they would not eat till they had slain him, but they went a long while hungry, for the arm of the Roman Empire was stretched forth to protect Paul against his infuriated countrymen. Strange it was that Caesar's power must be as a shield around the feeble servant of the mighty God! From raging mobs and secret confederacies Paul was saved, apparently, by Roman soldiers, but secretly by Roman saints. Against all oppositions from without let us pray.

They were also to ask of the Lord that his service which he had for Jerusalem might be accepted of the saints. This also was granted, the brethren did accept Paul's embassy. He met with little difficulty, the contribution was accepted with much gratitude, and we do not hear afterwards of those bickering between the Jewish and the Gentile believers. Much was done in the apostolic college at Jerusalem to create a heartier feeling towards the Gentile brethren, and the kingdom of Christ was henceforth owned to be over all races and kindred of men. Paul did accomplished very much, and had comfort in his mission to the mother church. Oh that we also could be of service to that community of Christians to which we belong! Brethren, pray that our word may be accepted by our own brethren, for some of these are wandering from the way of truth.

They were to pray next, that he might come unto them with joy by the will of God, and might, with them, be refreshed. That was to be the third prayer. It is to be observed that this petition was also heard, but it was not answered as Paul might have expected or desired. He did come to

them according to the will of God rather than by his own will. He may or may not have been on his way to Spain, as he purposed, he certainly was on his way to prison, as he had not purposed. His first prayer, that he might be delivered from them that believe not in Judea, was not answered in the way of his never being in danger from them, or coming into difficulties through them, but he was delivered out of their hands by becoming a prisoner to the Roman governor, and being sent under his guardianship to Caesar, to whom he had appealed. By that means he traveled to Rome at the expense of the Imperial Government, and on landing at Puteoli, close to Naples, he found friends waiting for him, and as soon as the Roman brethren heard of his landing, they dispatched a company to meet him at Appii-Forum, a place on the road to Rome, where they stopped to change horses, and to take refreshments. There he saw his prayer beginning to be answered. Further on, at a place called the Three Taverns, more dear friends from Rome met him, "whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage." The Roman saints had long looked for the apostle, and he came at last—an ambassador in bonds, a prisoner who must go to the Praetorian guardroom, and there await the emperor's will and pleasure. They had not expected to see him in such case, but they were not ashamed of his chains. They made a considerable journey to meet him, and he was filled with their company, and refreshed by their fellowship, as he had desired. Even his imprisonment may have been a rest for him; it could not have involved such wear and tear as his former labors and persecutions. We read the other day that Holloway Jail is a choice place for rest and enjoyment to a man with a clear conscience, and I dare say that Paul found his confinement at Rome to be rather a refreshment than otherwise after his years of weariness and buffetings. There he was shut away from his furious persecutors; certainly, no Jew could take his life there. He was not afraid of being stoned while in imperial custody, and probably he was the most at ease because he had not to preach to such as the Corinthians and the Galatians, from whom he had asked no prayers, but had received much grief. He asked the Ephesians and Philippians, the Colossians and the Romans, to pray for him, but from the others he would have received little benefit, for they were very weak in the faith, and troubled with sad disorders. He was in his imprisonment clear of those fickle and quarrelsome folk who had often pained him. His confinement under guard would not permit his preaching himself to death, or wearing himself out with watching, the soldier who kept him would make him reasonable, and so, I have no doubt, by the will of God he received precisely what he had asked his friends to pray for, "that I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed." It would not have been Paul's will to have come to Rome with chains on his wrists, binding him to a soldier, but he did so come, for this was the will of God, and was the surest way to his being refreshed. Paul refreshed the Romans and they refreshed him, and thus he had a happy sojourn in Rome. God was with him, and he had the privilege of testifying of Christ before the Roman emperor, and making Jesus to be known even in Caesar's household. Thus, brethren, the Lord heard the prayer of His servants. He will also hear our prayers, not in my way, not in your way, but in the way which

Paul has indicated, namely, "by the will of God." Therefore pray for a blessing, and leave the way of its coming to the good Lord who knows all things. Rest sure that it will come by the will of God, and then it will be according to our will if we are in full accord with the Lord, as we ought to be. See the efficacy of prayer, then, in Paul's case; though the desire did not seem to be accomplished, yet it was so. When the Lord does not appear to hear His people's prayers He is hearing them none the less, yes, rather He is answering them all the more fully and graciously. When the Lord replies by terrible things in righteousness rather than by sweet, smooth deeds of kindness, He is doubly blessing us. Do not vessels often sail more swiftly with a side wind than they would do with a directly fair wind? The sails are more under the action of a side wind than if it blew directly behind them. The Lord often gives His people side gales, and these turn out to be the best they can have. Let us trust the divine wisdom, and rest assured that the Lord will do better things for us than we can ask or even think.

II. I have but little time left to notice THE BLESSING GIVEN, indeed it occupies but one verse in the text, and that verse is the shortest of the four, and therefore I may give it due consideration in a brief space. See how Paul, with all his anxiety to gain the prayers of his friends, cannot finish the chapter without uttering a benediction upon them. *"Now the God of peace."* What a blessed name! In the Old Testament Scriptures He is the "Lord of Hosts," but that is never the style in the New Testament. The "Lord of Hosts" is God as He was revealed under the old dispensation; in the majesty of His power, "the Lord is a man of war, the Lord is His name." But now that our Lord Jesus Christ has further unveiled the Father, we see Him as "the God of peace." Is not this a greater, sweeter, and more cheering title? O God of peace, we long for Your presence with us all!

What does Paul wish for them? *"The God of peace be with you,"* not only "peace be with you," but, better far—"The God of peace," and so the source and fountain of peace. He wishes them, not the drops, but the fountain itself, not the light only, but the sun. He would have God Himself to be with us as "the God of peace." He would have the Lord to fill us with an inward peace, so that we may never be disturbed in our minds. He would have the Lord shed abroad His own peace in our hearts, so that we may always feel at peace with God; no cloud coming between our souls and our heavenly Father; no ground of quarrel arising between us and the great King.

When "the God of peace" makes peace with Himself, and so keeps our minds at peace within, He also creates peace with one another, so that we bear one another's burdens, and those who are strong are willing to bear the infirmities of the weak. "The God of peace be with you."

Our apostle says, "The God of peace be with *you all"*—not with some of you, with Priscilla and Aquila, but with Mary, and Amplias, and Apelles, and Tryphena and Tryphosa, and with "the beloved Persis which labored much in the Lord," and with "Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother," and "Philologus, and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are with them." The benediction is, "The God of peace be with you *all."* Unless all are at peace, none can be perfectly quiet. One

brother who is quarrelsome can keep a whole church in trouble. One fellow knocking about the boat may stop the oarsmen, rend the sails, and run the boat on a rock. I should not like one stray shot from a rifle to be traveling near my windows, for even if all the other shots which are in the armory should lie quiet, that one flying danger might be the end of me. Oh that the peace of God may be with *all* the saints in *all* the churches! It is a blessed benediction. Such a benediction we pronounce with all our heart this morning—"Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen."

Do you not think that Paul implies that this will be the *result* of their prayer? If you will but strive together with me in your prayers, then the God of peace will be with you. May we not view it as the *reward* of such prayer? You have prayed for the Lord's servant, and now God will bless you with an abundance of peace. Or did he hint that this is a necessary *condition* and *cause* of true prayer? When they were all at peace among themselves, happy in their own minds and full of communion with God, then they would begin to pray for God's servants. Put it first or last, may this peace come to you, and may there be hearty pleading prayer to God that His blessing may rest upon the church, and upon the testimony of His servants.

Now we draw to a close, brethren. Prayer is sought most earnestly by me at this moment. I speak, I think, in the name of all those who have to stand prominent as preachers of the gospel of Christ. We beseech you, our beloved friends and fellow laborers that you wrestle together with us with God on our behalf that our testimony may be with power and with success, for the times are very difficult. The very air is full of unbelief. The solid earth seems well near to tremble with unrest, social and political—a deep and terrible unrest that fills us with dark forebodings of the future. The hope of the world lies, under God, in the church of Jesus Christ. Therefore we beseech you, brethren, if in other days and softer times you did in a measure restrain prayer, do so no longer, but wrestle for us with God. What is coming no man knows. We wish not to play the Cassandra, prophesying evil things continually, but who is there, though he is a prophet bright-eyed as Isaiah, who can give you a good forecast? Are not all the signs of the times big with terror? Therefore go to your tents, O Israel, and in your tents cry to God that a blessing may come upon this nation and the world.

Men are perishing all around us. Whatever may have been the state of the world in Paul's day—and it was, no doubt, horrible to the last degree—it is not much better now; and the population of the world has so largely increased since those days that all her problems have become more difficult. We are much better aware of the miseries of vast populations than people could have been in apostolic times. Paul knew but little of the world except that portion of it which bordered on the Mediterranean Sea; the whole world then seemed to lie in a nutshell, but now our discoverers and geographers, our steamboats and telegraphs, have brought a greater world close to our doors. We share with the sorrows of India, we groan in the darkness of Africa, the cries of China are at our doors, and Egypt's griefs are our own. If a population anywhere is starving or suffering oppression our newspapers declare the evil to all readers,

and general feeling is awakened. Our sympathies for humanity are called forth much more than in former times; and so far, this is good, but then it heaps heavier burdens upon the thoughtful, and increases the terrible responsibility of those who are able to lend a helping hand. Increase of knowledge demands increase of prayer. "The world for Jesus" is our motto, but how the world for Jesus if the church of Jesus does not wrestle in her prayers?

Dear brethren, remember that the truth alone, if not enforced by the Spirit of God, will not sink into the hearts of men. They say, "Truth is mighty, and will prevail," but this is only half the case. If you put truth upon a shelf, and let the dust lie on her record, of what use will it be to men? Truth unknown, how can it enlighten? Truth not felt, how can it renew? There must therefore be the preacher to call attention to the truth, but how shall they preach except they are sent? And how shall they be sent aright except in the power of the Holy Spirit? And how can we expect the Holy Spirit if we do not ask for His working? Therefore, we pray you, wrestle together with us in your prayers that the Holy Spirit may go forth with the truth and by the truth.

This will be to your profit. No man hears his pastor preach without deriving some benefit from him, if he has earnestly prayed for him. The best hearers, who get the most out of a man, are those who love him best, and pray most for him. God can make us dry wells to you if you offer no prayers for us. He can make us clouds that are full of rain, if you have pleaded with God on our behalf.

But the master argument with which we close is that which Paul mentions—"For Christ's sake." Oh, for God's sake, for His name and glory's sake, if you would honor the Father, if you would let Jesus see of the travail of His soul, wrestle together with us in your prayers for the divine working. It is so, brother, you know it is so; we are wholly dependent upon the Spirit of God. If it is so, that without God's blessing we can do nothing, and that God's blessing is given if we inquire of God for it, then I need not press you further—you will pray for me and for other preachers of the word. If your hearts are right, you will each one resolve to offer special, continuous, and fervent prayer in private, and in your families and in our holy convocations, and these shall deepen into an agony before God, and then a blessing shall be given us which we shall scarcely have room enough to receive. Lord, teach us to pray!

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ROMANS 15.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—202, 993, 992.

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

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

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

THE BLOOD OF SPRINKLING (FIRST SERMON)
NO. 1888

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 28, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than that of Abel. See that you refuse not Him who 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." Hebrews 12:24, 25.

WE are joyfully reminded by the apostle that we have *not* come to Mount Sinai and its overwhelming manifestations. After Israel had kept the feast of the Passover, God was pleased to give His people a sort of Pentecost, and more fully to manifest Himself and His law to them at Sinai. They were in the wilderness, with the solemn peaks of a desolate mountain as their center, and from the top thereof, in the midst of fire, and blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and with the sound of a trumpet, God spoke with them. "The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel." We have not come to the dread and terror of the old covenant, of which our apostle says in another place, "The covenant from the Mount Sinai genders to bondage" (Gal 4:24). Upon the believer's spirit there rests not the slavish fear, the abject terror, the fainting alarm, which swayed the tribes of Israel, for the manifestation of God which he beholds, though not less majestic, is far fuller of hope and joy. Over us there rests not the impenetrable cloud of apprehension, we are not buried in a present darkness of despair, we are not tossed about with a tempest of horror, and therefore, we do not exceedingly fear and quake. How thankful we should be for this! Israel was privileged even in receiving a fiery law from the right hand of Jehovah, but we are far more favored, since we receive "the glorious gospel of the blessed God."

Our apostle next tells us what we *have* come to. I suppose he speaks of all the saints after the death and resurrection of our Lord and the descent of the Holy Spirit. He refers to the whole church, in the midst of which the Holy Spirit now dwells. We are come to a more joyous sight than Sinai, and the mountain burning with fire. The Hebrew worshipper, apart from his sacrifices, lived continually beneath the shadow of the darkness of a broken law; he was often startled by the tremendous note of the trumpet, which threatened judgment for that broken law, and thus he lived ever in a condition of bondage. To what else could the law bring him? To convict of sin and to condemn the sinner is its utmost power.

The believer in the Lord Jesus Christ lives in quite another atmosphere. He has not come to a barren crag, but to an inhabited city, Jerusalem above, the metropolis of God. He has left the wilderness for the land which flows with milk and honey, and the material mount which might be touched for the spiritual and heavenly Jerusalem. He has entered into fellowship with an innumerable company of angels, who are to him, not cherubim with flaming swords to keep men back from the tree of life, but ministering spirits sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation. He is come to the joyous assembly of all pure intelligences who have met, not in trembling, but in joyous liberty, to keep the feast with their great Lord and King. He thinks of all who love God throughout all worlds, and he feels that he is one of them, for he has come to "the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven." Moreover, he has come "to God the Judge of all," the umpire and rewarder of all the chosen citizens who are enrolled by His command, the ruler and judge of all their enemies. God is not to them a dreadful person who speaks from a distance, but He is their Father and their Friend, in whom they delight themselves, in whose presence there is fullness of joy for them. Brethren, our fellowship is with the Father, our God. To Him we have come through our Lord Jesus Christ. Moreover, in the power of the Spirit of God we realize the oneness of the church both in heaven and earth, and the spirits of just men made perfect are in union with us. No gulf divides the militant from the triumphant; we are one army of the living God. We sometimes speak of the holy *dead,* but there are none such, they live unto God, they are perfected as to their spirits even now, and they are waiting for the moment when their bodies also shall be raised from the tomb to be again inhabited by their immortal souls. We no longer shudder at the sepulcher, but sing of resurrection. Our condition of heart, from day to day, is that of men who are in fellowship with God, fellowship with angels, fellowship with perfect spirits.

We have also come to Jesus, our Savior, who is all and in all. In Him we live, we are joined unto Him in one spirit; He is the Bridegroom of our souls, the delight of our hearts. We are come to Him as the Mediator of the new covenant. What a blessed thing it is to know that covenant of which He is the Mediator! Some in these days despise the covenant, but saints delight in it. To them the everlasting covenant, "ordered in all things, and sure," is all their salvation and all their desire. We are covenanted ones through our Lord Jesus. God has pledged Himself to bless us. By two immutable things wherein it is impossible for Him to lie, He has given us strong consolation, and good hope through grace, even to all of us who have fled for refuge to the Lord Jesus. We are happy to live under the covenant of grace, the covenant of promise, the covenant symbolized by Jerusalem above, which is free, and the mother of us all.

Then comes the last thing of all, mentioned last, as I shall have to show you, for a purpose. We have come *"to the blood of sprinkling."* On that first day at Sinai no blood of sprinkling was presented, but afterwards it was used by divine order to ratify the national covenant which the tribes made with Jehovah at the foot of the hill. Of that covenant the Lord says, "which My covenant they broke, although I was an husband unto them." *He* never broke His covenant, but they broke it, for they

failed to keep that condition of obedience without which a covenant founded upon works falls to the ground. We have come to the blood of sprinkling which has fallen upon a covenant which never shall be broken, for the Lord has made it to endure though rocks and hills remove. This is called by the Holy Spirit, "a better covenant, which was established upon better promises." We have come to the covenant of grace, to Jesus the Mediator of it, and to His blood, which is the seal of it. Of this last we are going to speak at this time—"The blood of sprinkling which speaks better things than that of Abel."

I shall need this morning to occupy all the time with what I regard as only the first head of my discourse. *What is it?* "The blood of sprinkling." It will be our duty afterwards to consider *where we are*—"we are come unto this blood," and thirdly, to remember *what then?* "See that you refuse not Him who speaks."

I. FIRST, WHAT IS IT? What is this "blood of sprinkling?" In a few words, "the blood of sprinkling" represents the pains, the sufferings, the humiliation, and the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, which He endured on the behalf of guilty man. When we speak of the blood, we wish not to be understood as referring solely or mainly to the literal material blood which flowed from the wounds of Jesus. We believe in the literal fact of His shedding His blood, but when we speak of His cross and blood we mean those sufferings and that death of our Lord Jesus Christ by which He magnified the law of God; we mean what Isaiah intended when he said, "He shall make His soul an offering for sin;" we mean all the griefs which Jesus vicariously endured on our behalf at Gethsemane, and Gabbatha, and Golgotha, and especially His yielding up His life upon the tree of scorn and doom. "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed." "Without shedding of blood there is no remission;" and the shedding of blood intended is the death of Jesus, the Son of God.

Remember that His sufferings and death were not apparent only, but true and real, and that they involved an incalculable degree of pain and anguish. To redeem our souls cost our Lord an exceedingly sorrowfulness "even unto death;" it cost Him the bloody sweat, the heart broken with reproach, and especially the agony of being forsaken of His Father till He cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Our Mediator endured death under the worst possible aspects, bereft of those supports which are in all other cases of godly men afforded by the goodness and faithfulness of God. His was not merely a natural death, but a death aggravated by supernatural circumstance, which infinitely intensified its woe. This is what we mean by the blood of Christ, His sufferings, and His death.

These were voluntarily undertaken by Himself out of pure love to us, and in order that we might thereby be justly saved from deserved punishment. There was no natural reason on His own account why He should suffer, bleed, and die. Far from it—"He only has immortality." But out of supreme love to us, that man might be forgiven without the violation of divine rectitude, the Son of God assumed human flesh, and became in very deed a man, in order that He might be able to offer in man's place a full vindication to the righteous and unchangeable law of God.

Being God, He thus showed forth the wondrous love of God to man by being willing to suffer personally rather than the redeemed should die as the just result of their sin. The matchless majesty of His divine person lent supreme efficacy to His sufferings. It was a man that died, but He was also God, and the death of incarnate God reflects more glory upon law than the deaths of myriads of condemned creatures could have done. See the yearning of the great God for perfect righteousness; He had sooner die than stain His justice even to indulge His mercy. Jesus the Lord, out of love to the Father and to men, undertook willingly and cheerfully for our sakes to magnify the law, and bring in perfect righteousness. This work was so carried out to the utmost, that not a jot of the suffering was mitigated, nor a particle of the obedience foregone, "He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Now He has finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness, for He has offered such expiation that God is just, and the justifier of him that believes. God is at once the righteous Judge, and the infinitely loving Father, through what Jesus has suffered.

Brethren, though I have said that there was no reason why the Son of God should bleed and die on His own account, yet towards us there was a reason. Our Lord from of old in the eternal covenant was constituted the head and representative of all who were in Him, and so, when the time came, He took the place, bore the sin, and suffered the penalty of those whom the Father gave Him from before the foundations of the world. He is as much the representative man as the first Adam was the representative man, and as in Adam the sin was committed which ruined us, so in the second Adam the atonement was made which saves us. "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." There was no other person so fit to undertake the enterprise of our redemption as this second man, who is the Lord from heaven. He properly, but yet most generously and spontaneously, came and shed His precious blood, in the room and place and stead of sinners, to bring the guilty near to God.

But the text does not merely speak of the blood *shed,* which I have explained to you, but of "the blood *of sprinkling."* This is the atonement applied for divine purposes, and especially applied to our own hearts and consciences by faith. For the explanation of this sprinkling we must look to the types of the Old Testament. In the Old Testament the blood of sprinkling meant a great many things; in fact, I cannot just now tell you all that it signified. We meet with it in the Book of Exodus, at the time when the Lord smote all the first-born of Egypt. Then the blood of sprinkling meant *preservation.* The basin filled with blood was taken, a bunch of hyssop was dipped into it, and the lintel and the two side posts of every house tenanted by Israelites were smeared with the blood, and when God saw the blood upon the house of the Israelite, He bade the destroyer pass that family by, and leave their first-born unharmed. The sprinkled blood meant preservation; it was Israel's Passover and safeguard.

The sprinkled blood very frequently signified the *confirmation* of a covenant. So it is used in Exodus twenty-four, which I read to you just now. The blood was sprinkled upon the book of the covenant, and also upon the people, to show that the covenant was, as far as it could be, confirmed by the people who promised, "All that the Lord has said will we

do." The blood of bulls and of goats in that case was but a type of the sacrificial blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. The lesson which we learn from Exodus twenty-four is that the blood of sprinkling means the blood of ratification or confirmation of the covenant, which God has been pleased to make with men in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Since Jesus died, the promises are Yes and Amen to all believers, and must assuredly be fulfilled. The covenant of grace had but one condition, and that condition Jesus has fulfilled by His death, so that it has now become a covenant of pure and unconditional promise to all the seed.

In many cases the sprinkling of the blood meant *purification*. If a person had been defiled, he could not come into the sanctuary of God without being sprinkled with blood. There were the ashes of a red heifer laid up, and these were mixed with blood and water, and by their being sprinkled on the unclean, his ceremonial defilement was removed. There were matters incident to domestic life, and accidents of outdoor life, which engendered impurity, and this impurity was put away by the sprinkling of blood. This sprinkling was used in the case of recovery from infectious disease, such as leprosy; before such persons could mingle in the solemn assemblies, they were sprinkled with the blood, and thus were made ceremonially pure. In a higher sense this is the work of the blood of Christ. It preserves us, it ratifies the covenant, and wherever it is applied it makes us pure, for "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." We have our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, for we have come unto the obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.

The sprinkling of the blood meant, also, *sanctification*. Before a man entered upon the priesthood the blood was put upon his right ear, and on the big toe of his right foot, and on the thumb of his right hand, signifying that all his powers were thus consecrated to God. The ordination ceremony included the sprinkling of blood upon the altar round about. Even thus has the Lord Jesus redeemed us unto God by His death, and the sprinkling of His blood has made us kings and priests unto God forever. He is made of God unto us sanctification, and all else that is needed for the divine service.

One other meaning of the blood of the sacrifice was *acceptation and access*. When the high priest went into the most holy place once a year, it was not without blood, which he sprinkled upon the ark of the covenant, and upon the mercy seat, which was on the top thereof. All approaches to God were made by blood. There was no hope of a man drawing near to God, even in symbol, apart from the sprinkling of the blood. And now today our only way to God is by the precious sacrifice of Christ, the only hope for the success of our prayers, the acceptance of our praises, or the reception of our holy works, is through the ever-abiding merit of the atoning sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit bids us enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, there is no other way.

There were other uses besides these, but it may suffice to put down the sprinkling of the blood as having these effects, namely, that of preservation, satisfaction, purification, sanctification, and access to God. This was all typified in the blood of bulls and of goats, but actually fulfilled in the great sacrifice of Christ.

With this as an explanation, I desire to come still closer to the text, and view it with great care, for to my mind it is singularly full of teaching. May the Holy Spirit lead us into the truth which lies herein like treasure hid in a field!

First: *The blood of sprinkling is the center of the divine manifestation under the gospel*. Observe its innermost place in the passage before us. You are privileged by almighty grace to come first to Mount Zion, to climb its steeps, to stand upon its holy summit, and to enter the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. In those golden streets, surrounding the hallowed shrine, you behold an innumerable company of angels. What a vision of glory! But you must not rest here, for the great general assembly, the festal gathering, the solemn convocation of the enrolled in heaven, is being held, and all are there in glad attire, surrounding their God and Lord. Press onward to the throne itself, where sits the Judge of all, surrounded by those holy spirits who have washed their robes, and therefore, stand before the throne of God in perfection.

Have you not come a long way? Are you not admitted into the very center of the whole revelation? Not yet. A step further lands you where stands your Savior, the Mediator, with the new covenant. Now is your joy complete; but you have a further object to behold. What is in that innermost shrine? What is that which is hidden away in the holy of holies? What is that which is the most precious and costly thing of all, the last, the ultimatum, God's grandest revelation? The precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot—the blood of sprinkling. This comes last; it is the innermost truth of the dispensation of grace under which we live. Brethren, when we climb to heaven itself, and pass the gate of pearl, and wend our way through the innumerable hosts of angels, and come even to the throne of God, and see the spirits of the just made perfect, and hear their holy hymn, we shall not have gone beyond the influence of the blood of sprinkling, no, we shall see it there more truly present than in any other place beside. "What!" you say, "the blood of Jesus in heaven?" Yes. The earthly sanctuary, we are told, was purified with the blood of bulls and of goats, "but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these" (Heb 9:23). When Jesus entered once and for all into the holy place, He entered by His own blood, having obtained eternal redemption for us, so says the apostle in the ninth chapter of this epistle. Let those who talk lightly of the precious blood correct their view before they are guilty of blasphemy, for the revelation of God knows no lower deep; this is the heart and center of all. The manifestation of Jesus under the gospel is not only the revelation of the Mediator, but especially of His sacrifice. The appearance of God the Judge of all, the vision of hosts of angels and perfect spirits, do but lead up to that sacrifice which is the source and focus of all true fellowship between God and His creatures. This is the character which Jesus wears in the innermost shrine where He reveals Himself most clearly to those who are nearest to Him. He looks like a lamb that has been slain. There is no sight of Him which is fuller, more glorious, and more complete, than the vision of Him as the great sacrifice for sin. The atonement of Jesus is the concentration of the divine glory; all other revelations of God are completed and intensified here. You have not come to the central sun

of the great spiritual system of grace till you have come to the blood of sprinkling—to those sufferings of Messiah which are not for Himself, but are intended to bear upon others, even as drops when they are sprinkled exert their influence where they fall. Unless you have learned to rejoice in that blood which takes away sin, you have not yet caught the key-note of the gospel dispensation. The blood of Christ is the life of the gospel. Apart from atonement you may know the skin, the rind, the husk of the gospel, but its inner kernel you have not discovered.

I next ask you to look at the text and observe that *this sprinkling of the blood,* as mentioned by the Holy Spirit in this passage, *is absolutely identical with Jesus Himself*. Read it. "To Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than that of Abel. See that you refuse not *Him* who speaks." He says it is the blood that speaks, and then he proceeds to say, "See that you refuse not *Him* who speaks." This is a very unexpected turn, which can only be explained upon the supposition that Jesus and the blood are identical in the writer's view. By what we may call a singularity in grammar, in putting *Him* for *it,* the Spirit of God intentionally sets forth the striking truth, that the sacrifice is identical with the Savior. "We are come to the Savior, the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks; see that you refuse not *Him."* Beloved friends, there is no Jesus if there is no blood of sprinkling; there is no Savior if there is no sacrifice. I put this strongly, because the attempt is being made nowadays to set forth Jesus apart from His cross and atonement. He is held up as a great ethical teacher, a self-sacrificing spirit, who is to lead the way in a grand moral reformation, and by His influence to set up a kingdom of moral influence in the world. It is even hinted that this kingdom has never had prominence enough given to it because it has been overshadowed by His cross. But where is Jesus apart from His sacrifice? He is not there if you have left out the blood of sprinkling, which is the blood of sacrifice. Without the atonement, no man is a Christian, and Christ is not Jesus. If you have torn away the sacrificial blood, you have drawn the heart out of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and robbed it of its life. If you have trampled on the blood of sprinkling, and counted it a common thing, instead of putting it above you upon the lintel of the door, and all around you upon the two side posts, you have fearfully transgressed. As for me, God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, since to me that cross is identical with Jesus Himself. I know no Jesus but He who died the just for the unjust. You can separate Jesus and the blood materially, for by the spear-thrust, and all His other wounds, the blood was drawn away from the body of our Lord. But spiritually this "blood of sprinkling" and the Jesus, by whom we live, are inseparable. In fact, they are one and indivisible, the same thing, and you cannot truly know Jesus, or preach Jesus, unless you preach Him as slain for sin, you cannot trust Jesus except you trust Him as making peace by the blood of His cross. If you have done with the blood of sprinkling, you have done with Jesus altogether, He will never part with His mediatorial glory as our sacrifice, and neither can we come to Him if we ignore that character. Is it not clear in the text that Jesus and the blood of sprinkling are one?

What God has joined together, let no man put asunder. Note this right carefully.

Thirdly, observe that *this "blood of sprinkling" is put in close contact with "the new covenant."* I do not wonder that those who are lax in their views of the atonement have nothing honorable to say concerning the covenants, old or new. The doctrine of the covenants is the marrow of divinity, but these vain-glorious spirits tend to despise it. This is natural, since they speak slightingly of the atonement. What covenant is there without blood? If it is not ratified, if there is no sacrifice to make it sure, then is it no covenant in the sight of God or of enlightened men. But, O beloved, you who know your Lord, and follow on to know Him yet better, to you the covenant of promise is a heritage of joy, and His atonement is most precious as the confirmation of it. To us the sacrificial death of our Lord is not *a* doctrine, but *the* doctrine, not an outgrowth of Christian teaching, but the essence and marrow of it. To us Jesus in His atonement, is Alpha and Omega, in Him the covenant begins and ends. You see how it was confirmed by blood. If it is a man's covenant, if it is confirmed, it stands, but this is God's covenant, confirmed with promises, oaths and blood, and it stands fast forever and ever. Every believer is as much interested in that covenant as was Abraham the father of believers, for the covenant was made with Abraham and his spiritual seed, and in Christ it is confirmed to all that seed forever by His most precious blood. That, also, is evident enough in the text; fail not to consider it well.

But, fourthly, I want you to notice that according to the text *the blood is the voice of the new dispensation.* Observe that on Sinai there was "the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words, which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them anymore." You look, therefore, under the new dispensation, for a voice, and you do not come to any till you reach the last object in the list, and there see "the blood of sprinkling that speaks." Here, then, is the voice of the gospel, it is not the sound of a trumpet, nor the voice of words spoken in terrible majesty, but the blood speaks, and assuredly there is no sound more piercing, more potent, more prevailing. God heard the voice of Abel's blood and visited Cain with deserved punishment for killing his brother, and the precious blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cries in the ears of God with a voice which is ever heard. How can it be imagined that the Lord God should be deaf to the cry of His Son's sacrifice? Lo, these many ages the blood has cried—"Forgive them! Forgive them! Accept them! Deliver them from going down into the pit, for I have found a ransom!"

The blood of sprinkling has a voice of instruction to us even as it has a voice of intercession with God. It cries to us, "See the evil of sin! See how God loves righteousness! See how He loves men! See how impossible it is for you to escape from the punishment of sin except by this great sacrifice in which the love and the justice of God equally appear! See how Jehovah spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all."

What a voice there is in the atonement!—a voice which pleads for holiness and love, for justice and grace, for truth and mercy. "See that you refuse not Him who speaks."

Do you not hear it? If you take away the blood of sprinkling from the gospel, you have silenced it. It has no voice if this is gone. "Oh," they say,

"the gospel has lost its power!" What wonder when they have made it a mute gospel! How can it have power when they take away that which is its life and speech? Unless the preacher is evermore preaching this blood, and sprinkling it by the doctrine of faith, his teaching has no voice either to awaken the careless or to cheer the anxious. If ever there should come a wretched day when all our pulpits shall be full of modern thought, and the old doctrine of a substitutionary sacrifice shall be exploded, then will there remain no word of comfort for the guilty or hope for the despairing. Hushed forever will be those silver notes which now console the living, and cheer the dying, a mute spirit will possess this sullen world, and no voice of joy will break the blank silence of despair. The gospel speaks through the propitiation for sin, and if that is denied, it speaks no more. Those who preach not the atonement exhibit a mute and artificial gospel, a mouth it has, but speaks not; they that make it are like unto their idol.

Let me draw you nearer still to the text. Observe, that *this voice is identical with the voice of the Lord Jesus,* for it is put so. "The blood of sprinkling that speaks. See that you refuse not *Him* who speaks." Whatever the doctrine of the sacrifice of Jesus may be, it is the main teaching of Jesus Himself. It is well to notice that the voice which spoke from Sinai was also the voice of Christ. It was Jesus who delivered that law the penalty of which He was Himself to endure. He that read it out amidst the tempest was Jesus. Notice the declaration—"Whose voice then shook the earth." Whenever you hear the gospel, the voice of the precious blood is the voice of Jesus Himself, the voice of Him that shook the earth at Sinai. This same voice shall by and by shake not the earth only, but also heaven. What a voice there is in the blood of sprinkling, since indeed it is the voice of the eternal Son of God, who both makes and destroys! Would you have me silence the doctrine of the blood of sprinkling? Would any one of you attempt so horrible a deed? Shall we be censured if we continually proclaim the heaven-sent message of the blood of Jesus? Shall we speak with bated breath because some affected person shudders at the sound of the word *"blood?"* or some "cultured" individual rebels at the old-fashioned thought of sacrifice? No, verily, we will sooner have our tongue cut out than cease to speak of the precious blood of Jesus Christ. For me there is nothing worth thinking of or preaching about but this grand truth, which is the beginning and the end of the whole Christian system, namely, that God gave His Son to die that sinners might live. This is not the voice of the blood only, but the voice of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. So says the text, and who can contradict it?

Further, my brethren, from the text I learn another truth, namely, that *this blood is always speaking*. The text says not "the blood of sprinkling that spoke," but "that speaks." It is always speaking; it always remains a plea with God and a testimony to men. It never will be silenced, either one way or the other. In the intercession of our risen and ascended Lord His sacrifice ever speaks to the Most High. By the teaching of the Holy Spirit the atonement will always speak in edification to believers yet upon the earth. It is the blood that speaks. According to our text, this is the only speech which this dispensation yields us. Shall that speech ever be still? Shall we decline to hear it? Shall we refuse to echo it? God forbid.

By day, by night, the great sacrifice continues to cry to the sons of men, "Turn from your sins, for they cost your Savior dearly. The time of your ignorance God winked at, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, since He is able to forgive and yet be just. Your offended God has Himself provided a sacrifice, come and be sprinkled with its blood, and be reconciled once and for all." The voice of this blood speaks wherever there is a guilty conscience, wherever there is an anxious heart, wherever there is a seeking sinner, wherever there is a believing mind. It speaks with a sweet, familiar, tender, inviting voice. There is no music like it to the sinner's ear, it charms away his fears. It shall never cease its speaking so long as there is a sinner yet out of Christ, no, so long as there is one on earth who still needs its cleansing power because of fresh backslidings. Oh, hear its voice! Incline your ears and receive its blessed accents. It says, "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord; though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

This part of my discourse will not be complete unless I bid you notice that we are expressly told that *this precious blood speaks "better things than that of Abel."* I do not think that the whole meaning of the passage is exhausted if we say that Abel's blood cries for vengeance, and that Christ's blood speaks for pardon. Dr. Watts puts it—

"Blood has a voice to pierce the skies:
'Revenge!' the blood of Abel cries;
But the dear stream when Christ was slain
Speaks peace as loud from every vein."

That is quite true, but I conceive that it is not all the sense, and perhaps not even *the* sense here intended. Revenge is scarcely a good thing, yet Abel's blood spoke good things, or we should hardly read that Christ's blood speaks "better things." What does the blood of Abel speak? The blood of Abel speaks to a complete and believing obedience to God. It shows us a man who believes God, and notwithstanding the enmity of his brother, brings to God the appointed sacrifice of faith, strictly following up, even to the bitter end, his holy obedience to the Most High. That is what the blood of Abel says to me, and the blood of Jesus says the same thing most emphatically. The death of Jesus Christ was the crown and close of a perfect life; it was a fit completion of a course of holiness. In obedience to the Great Father, Jesus even laid down His life. But if this is all the blood of Jesus speaks, as some say that it is, then it does not speak better things than the blood of Abel, for it only says the same things in a louder voice. The martyrdom of any saint has a voice for obedience to God as truly as the martyrdom of Jesus, but the death of our Lord says far more, infinitely more, than this. It not only witnesses to complete obedience, but it provides the way by which the disobedient may be forgiven and helped to obedience and holiness. The cross has a greater, deeper, gladder gospel for fallen men than that of a perfect example which they are unable to follow.

The blood of Abel said this, too—that he was not ashamed of his faith, but witnessed a good confession concerning his God, even to the death, he put his life in his hand, and was not ashamed to stand at the altar of God, and avow his faith by obediently offering the ordained sacrifice. Now, I grant you that the blood of Jesus also declares that He was a

faithful and true witness, who willingly sealed His witness with His blood. He proved by shedding His blood that He could not be turned aside from truth and righteousness, even though death stood in His way. But if that is all that the blood of sprinkling speaks, it says no better things than the blood of Abel. "Be faithful unto death," is the voice of Abel as well as of Jesus. Jesus must have said more than this by his blood-shedding.

The blood of Abel said good things; that is implied in the fact that the blood of Jesus Christ says better things, and no doubt the blood of Abel rises to the dignity of teaching self-sacrifice. Here was a man, a keeper of sheep, who by his mode of life laid out his life for the good of those committed to his charge, and at the last, in obedience to God, he yielded himself up to die by a brother's hand. It was the first draft of a picture of self-sacrifice. Our Lord Jesus Christ also made a complete self-sacrifice. All His life He gave Himself to men. He lived never for Himself. The glory of God and the good of men were united in one passion which filled His whole soul. He could say, "The zeal of Your house has eaten Me up." His death was the completion of His perfect self-sacrifice. But if that were all, the blood of Jesus says no better thing than Abel's death says, though it may say it more emphatically.

Our Lord's blood says "better things than that of Abel," and what does it say? It says, "There is redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace." "He Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes we were healed." "He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." The voice of the blood is this, "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." Now, my brethren, these are better things than Abel's blood could say, and they are what the blood of Jesus speaks to everyone upon whom it is sprinkled by faith. It must be applied to each one of us by faith, or it says nothing to us. But when it falls on each believing individual, it says to him words of blessing which pacify his conscience and delight his soul.

The apostle says that "You have come to the blood of sprinkling." Is it so? Has that blood of sprinkling ever been applied to you? Do you feel it? Are you preserved? Are you cleansed? Are you brought near to God? Are you sanctified unto God's service by the atoning sacrifice? If so, then go out, and in firm confidence that never can be shaken, make your glory in the blood of sprinkling. Tell every sinner whom you meet that if the Lord Jesus washes him he shall be whiter than snow. Preach the atoning sacrifice of the Lamb of God, and then sing of it. Recollect that wondrous threefold song in the fifth chapter of Revelation, where, first of all, the elders and living creatures round about the throne sing a new song, saying, "You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." Then ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of angels take up the strain and cry, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." Nor is this all, for the apostle tells us, "Every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in

them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever." See you not that they all extol the Lord Jesus in His sacrificial character as the Lamb slain? I have scant patience with those who dare to put this great truth into the background, and even sneer at it or misrepresent it on purpose. Sirs, if you would be saved you must have the blood of Jesus sprinkled upon you. He that believes not in Christ Jesus, in Jesus the atoning sacrifice, must perish. The eternal God must repulse with infinite disgust the man who refuses the loving sacrifice of Jesus. Inasmuch as he counted himself unworthy of this wondrous sacrifice, this marvelous expiation, there remains no other sacrifice for sin, and nothing for him but that eternal blackness and darkness and thunder which were foreshadowed at Sinai. Those who refuse the atonement which wisdom devised, which love provided, and which justice has accepted, have signed their own death warrant, and none can wonder that they perish. The Lord lead us to glory in Christ crucified. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
EXODUS 20:1-21; 24:1-8.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—236, 279, 291.

Mr. Spurgeon concluded this Sermon in the evening, and he hopes to publish it next week.

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

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

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

THE BLOOD OF SPRINKLING (SECOND SERMON)
NO. 1889

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 28, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"You have come...to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than that of Abel. See that you refuse not Him that speaks."
Hebrews 12:24, 25.

IN the former part of this sermon the text grew upon me so largely that it was quite impossible to express all its meaning. In as condensed a manner as possible I explained what was meant by "the blood of sprinkling," and I also enlarged upon the high position which this precious blood occupies in the gospel dispensation. But I was obliged to leave for this second occasion two practical questions which the text is sure to raise if it is carefully thought upon.

The doctrinal portion of our meditation was greatly blessed to our hearts, for God the Holy Spirit refreshed us thereby, may He now fulfill His sacred office with equal power, by revealing the things of Christ to us in a way which shall cause self-examination, and awaken us to give more earnest heed than ever to the voice of Him that speaks from heaven. No theme can excel in value and excellence that of the precious blood of Jesus. Unless the Holy Spirit shall prepare our hearts, even with such a topic as this before us, we shall not be profited, but if He will show these choice truths unto us, we shall be comforted, quickened, edified, and sanctified by them.

It is a considerable disadvantage to some of you that you have not heard the former part of the sermon [Sermon #1888, "The Blood of the Sprinkling (First Sermon)], but I hope you will read it at your leisure, and then, if you read this in connection with it, the whole subject will be before you. Not that I can set it all out in words, I only mean that it will be before you as the ocean is before us when we sit on the beach, or as the heavens are before us when we gaze upon Arcturus with his sons. Finite language fails to convey the infinite, and if ever there was a text which deserved to be called infinite, it is that which is now before us.

Having touched, as with a swallow's wing, the surface of our great theme under the first division of the sermon, I have now to speak with you upon the second, which is this: *Where are we with reference to this blood of sprinkling?* The text says, "You are come." We are not come to Mount Sinai, but we are come to Mount Zion, to angels and their God, to

saints and their Mediator, and to the blood of sprinkling. This having had its share of our thoughts, we are to conclude with the question: *What then?* If we have, come to this blood of sprinkling, what then? The answer is, "See that you refuse not Him that speaks." Let us give to the wondrous truths revealed to us by the sacrifice of Jesus the most earnest heed, that our souls may hear and live. May the Holy Spirit enable us to hear the heavenly voice at this hour! "Faith comes by hearing," may it come at this time by our reverently hearing the voice of the blood of sprinkling!

II. My business under the second head of my discourse is to answer the question, WHERE ARE WE? I have to explain what is meant by the expression which is found in the twenty-second verse of the chapter, "You are come." Link the twenty-second verse with this twenty-fourth, and read, "You are come to the blood of sprinkling."

Well, first, you are *come to the hearing of the gospel of the atoning sacrifice*. The Israelites left Egypt, and having passed the Red Sea, they entered the desert, and at length came to the mount of God, even to Sinai, that terrible mountain. In the valley around that throne of God they were gathered together in their thousands. What a sight that vast multitude must have been! Probably two millions or more were encamped before the mount. Then, "The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; He shined forth from Mount Paran, and He came with ten thousands of His saints, from His right hand went a fiery law for them." Israel crouched in the valley below, subdued by the terrible majesty of the scene, and overawed by the trumpet voice which pealed forth from the midst of the thick darkness. The Lord spoke with them, but their uncircumcised ears could not bear His glorious voice, and they entreated that Moses might act as mediator, and speak in God's stead.

You and I have not come to such a terrible sight at this hour. No quivering mountain smokes before you, no terrible lightning appalls you; no thunder distresses you—

"Not to the terrors of the Lord,
The tempest, fire, and smoke;
Not to the thunder of that word
Which God on Sinai spoke:
But we are come to Sion's hill
The city of our God,
Where milder words declare His will,
And spread His love abroad."

Among the great things which you are called upon to consider under the gospel is "the blood of sprinkling." Count yourselves happy that you are privileged to hear of the divinely appointed way of reconciliation with God. You are come to hear, not of your sin and its doom, not of the last judgment and the swift destruction of the enemies of God, but of love to the guilty, pity for the miserable, mercy for the wicked, compassion for those who are out of the way. You are come to hear of God's great expedient of wisdom, by which, He, by the same act and deed, condemns sin, and lets the sinner live, honors His law, and yet passes by transgression, iniquity, and sin. You are come to hear, not of the shedding of your own

blood, but of the shedding of His blood who, in His infinite compassion, deigned to take the place of guilty men—to suffer, that they might not suffer, and die, that they might not die. Blessed are your ears that they hear of the perfect sacrifice! Happy are your spirits, since they are found where free grace and boundless love have set forth a great propitiation for sin! Divinely favored are you to live where you are told of pardon freely given to all who will believe on the name of the Lord Jesus, as the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world. You hear at this hour not law, but gospel, not the sentence of judgment, but the proclamation of grace. "See that you refuse not Him that speaks." It is no small thing for the kingdom of God to have come so near unto you. Awake to a sense of your privilege. You do not sit in heathen midnight, nor in Popish gloom, nor in Jewish mist, but day has dawned on you, do not refuse the light.

In a better sense, going a little further, we have not only come to the blood of sprinkling by hearing about it, but we have come to it because *the great God now deals with us upon methods which are founded and grounded upon the atoning sacrifice of Christ*. If God were to deal with us upon the terms laid down at Sinai, He need not be long in finding the "two or three witnesses" to prove that we have broken His law. We would be ourselves compelled to plead guilty, no witnesses would be required. Truly, He has not dealt with us after our sins. We are so faulty that we can draw no comfort from the prospect of judgment by law, we appeal to mercy alone, for on any other ground our case is hopeless. "This do and you shall live" is a covenant which brings us no ray of comfort, for its only word to us is that thunderbolt—"The soul that sins, it shall die."

By the works of the law none can be justified, for by that law we are all condemned. Read the Ten Commandments, and pause at each one, and confess that you have broken it either in thought, or word, or deed. Remember that by a glance we may commit adultery, by a thought we may be guilty of murder, by a desire we may steal. Sin is any lack of conformity to perfect holiness, and that lack of conformity is justly chargeable upon every one of us. Yet the Lord does not, under the gospel dispensation, deal with us according to law. He does not now sit on the throne of judgment, but He looks down upon us from the throne of grace. Not the iron rod, but the silver scepter, is held over us. The long-suffering of God rules the age, and Jesus the Mediator is the gracious Lord-lieutenant of the dispensation. Instead of destroying offending man from off the face of the earth, the Lord comes near to us in loving condescension, and pleads with us by His Spirit, saying, "You have sinned, but My Son has died. In Him I am prepared to deal with you in a way of pure mercy and unmingled grace."

O sinner, the fact that you are alive proves that God is not dealing with you according to strict justice, but in patient forbearance, every moment you live is another instance of omnipotent long-suffering. It is the sacrifice of Christ which arrests the axe of justice, which otherwise must execute you. The barren tree is spared because the great Dresser of the vineyard, who bled on Calvary, intercedes and cries, "Let it alone this

year also." O my hearer, it is through the shedding of the blood and the mediatorial reign of the Lord Jesus that you are at this moment on praying ground and pleading terms with God! Apart from the blood of atonement you would now be past hope, shut up forever in the place of doom. But see how the great Father bears with you! He stands prepared to hear your prayer, to accept your confession of sin, to honor your faith, and to save you from your sin through the sacrifice of His dear Son.

Through our Lord Jesus sovereign grace and infinite love find a free way to the most undeserving of the race. Through the divine sacrifice the Lord says, "Come now and let us reason together: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Thus the rebel is treated as a child, and the criminal as a beloved one. Because of yonder death on Calvary's cruel tree, God can invite guilty men to come to Him, and He can receive them to the bosom of His love. O my dear hearers; do remember this! I am not sent to scold you, but to woo you, not sent to thunder at you, but to let the soft cleansing drops from the heart of Jesus fall upon you. I beg you not to turn away, as men may well do when the tidings are heavy, but listen diligently, for the message is full of joy. You are now in the house of prayer, addressed by one of the Lord's ambassadors, and the tidings are of peace through a propitiation which God Himself has provided and accepted. We cry not to you, "Prepare for vengeance," but we proclaim, "A God ready to pardon." We do not threaten that He will no more have mercy upon you, but we tell you that He waits to be gracious. If I had to say, "You have provoked Him past bearing, and He now means to destroy you," what a miserable man I would be! How could I bring such evil tidings to my fellow creatures? Then would it have been woe to me that my mother bore me for so hard a fate. Thank God, it is not so. By virtue of the blood of sprinkling the language of boundless love is heard among our apostate race, and we are entreated to acquaint ourselves with God, and be at peace.

No, my hearer, the day of grace is not over, you are not come to Sinai. No, you are not yet condemned past all hope, for you are still within reach of Jesus the Mediator. There is forgiveness. The fountain which was opened of old for sin and for uncleanness is open still. If you have sinned like David, if you will but accept the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, I am able to speak to you as Nathan did to the guilty king, and say, "The Lord has put away your sin; you shall not die." At any rate, God is dealing with you now on gospel terms, He sits on Zion, not on Sinai, He pronounces invitations of grace, and does not utter the stern sentence of justice.

Further, there is a far more effectual way of coming to the blood of sprinkling than this—*when by faith that blood is sprinkled upon our souls*. This is absolutely needed, the blood *shed* must become to each one of us the blood *sprinkled*. "How can I know," says one, "that the blood of Christ is upon me?" Do you trust yourself with Christ? Do you believe that He made an atonement on the cross, and will you venture your eternal destiny upon that fact, *trusting* in what Jesus did, and in

that, alone? If you do thus trust, you shall not trust in vain. Do you apply your heart to the precious blood of Jesus? Then that precious blood is applied to your heart. If your heart bleeds for sin, bring it to the bleeding heart of Jesus and it shall be healed. I showed, in the early part of this discourse, that the blood sprinkled on the lintel and the two side posts of the door preserved the Israelites on the night of the Passover, it shall also preserve you. The blood sprinkled upon the defiled made them ceremonially clean, it shall cleanse you. Have I not often quoted those blessed words, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin"? That blood put upon the sons of Aaron dedicated them to God, and if it is applied to you, it shall consecrate you to God, and you shall become the accepted servant of the Most High. Oh, what a blessed thing to know assuredly that we have come to the blood of sprinkling by a true and humble faith! Can you say that you do alone rely on Jesus for salvation? Can you call heaven and earth to witness that you have no other confidence? Then remember the word of the Lord, "He that believes in Him has everlasting life. He that believes in Him is not condemned." "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God." Are not these words full of strong assurance? Indeed, we have not come to Mount Sinai, the place of trembling, but to Zion, the place which is beautiful for situation, the joy of the earth, the vision of peace, the home of infinite blessedness. Conscience no longer thunders at you for your sins, for your sins are gone. The expiation has covered them; the sprinkling of the blood has put them all away. Your iniquities are cast into the depths of the sea; God has cast them behind His back. The handwriting of ordinances that was against you Christ has taken away, nailing it to His cross, as a record in which there is no more condemning force. The debt is paid, the bill is receipted. Who can lay anything to the charge of God's elect? O beloved! It is a most blessed thing to come to the blood of sprinkling—

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

The act of faith, whereby we accept and trust in the Lord Jesus as our Mediator and Sacrifice is the true and effectual coming to the blood of sprinkling. May none of us forget to come! He is the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world, and those who come to Him shall be led into full salvation. Have you thus come? If you have not, why do you delay? He says, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." Come to Him, for He is calling you, come to Him, even as you now are, and He will receive you without fail.

Further, to come to this blood of sprinkling means *thankfully to enjoy all that comes to us through the blood of sprinkling*. I have intruded upon this somewhat already. Brothers and sisters, if you have come to the blood of sprinkling, believe in the full pardon which God has given you, and in your consequent peace with God. It is a blessed word in the Creed, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins." Do you believe in the forgiveness of sins? I have seen some of the children of God who have be-

lieved in Jesus, but it has been with a faith which did not realize the full blessing promised to it, for they were as troubled about their sins as if they had never been forgiven. Now, a man who receives a free pardon from the Queen, and goes his way out of prison, rejoices in that pardon as a reality, and therefore walks abroad without fear. You must believe in the pardon of God as a reality, and act accordingly. If He has absolved you for Jesus' sake, then you are absolved. Why tremble like a guilty wretch waiting for the verdict? Why talk about fearing divine wrath? If you are pardoned, the deed of grace is done, and can never be undone, for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance on His part. His remission of sin is a clear jail delivery, a sure plea, a full acquittal—

"Oh! How sweet to view the flowing
Of our Lord's atoning blood,
With divine assurance knowing
He has made my peace with God!"

I want every child of God in his inmost soul to come to the blood of sprinkling by full assurance of his justification, and then to go on to enjoy constant access to the mercy seat, and communion with the Lord God. We may now with holy boldness speak with God in prayer, for the mercy seat is sprinkled with the blood. O pardoned one, be not backward to enjoy your liberty of fellowship! You are clean through the blood, and therefore you may enter into the closest communion with the divine Father, you are consecrated by the blood, and therefore you may abound in the service of your God. Treat your God as a child would treat a father, and be not so awed by His majesty as to be cast down and distressed because of past sin, seeing it is pardoned. Take the good that God provides you; enjoy the peace the blood has bought you; enter into the liberty that your ransom price has ensured you. Do not stand in feelings, and fears, and dreams, but come unto this blood of sprinkling, and rest there, and be filled with joy and peace through believing. With such a ransom found for you, dream not of going down into the pit, but ascend with gladness unto the hill of the Lord, and stand in His holy place.

I think, once more, that this coming to the blood of sprinkling means also that *we feel the full effect of it in our lives*. The man who knows that Jesus shed His blood for him, and has had that blood applied to his conscience, becomes a sin-hating man, consecrated to Him who has cleansed him. "The love of Christ constrains us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again." I believe that there is no fruitful source of virtue like faith in the precious blood of Jesus. I hope your conduct will always support me in this assertion. Those who are debtors for salvation to their dying Lord should be the most holy of men. You people who think that you will get to heaven by some other way than by "the blood of sprinkling" have no sure bonds to hold you to holiness. You trust partly to your own works, and partly to what Jesus has done. Well, you do not owe Him much, and therefore you will not love Him much, and therefore you will not feel bound to live strict, holy, gracious lives. But the man who knows that his many sins are all washed away through

the blood of Jesus and that thus he is saved, he is the man who will serve the Lord with all his heart. He who has received a finished righteousness and complete salvation is under boundless obligations of gratitude, and the force of these obligations will urge him to a consecrated life. Over him the supreme power of gratitude will exert its sacred influence, and he will be not only carefully obedient, but ardently zealous in the service of his Redeemer. We know it is so, and we mean to prove it by our daily conduct. Brethren, I would have you exhibit more and more of the influence of the precious blood in sanctifying your lives. Are there not Christians who hold the doctrine of the atoning blood, and yet are no better than others? Alas, it is so! But it is one thing to hold to a doctrine, and another thing for that doctrine to take hold upon your heart and influence your life. Oh, if we believed practically what we profess to believe, what manner of persons we should be in all holy conversation and godliness! Hear me, my brother, and answer the appeals I make to you as in the presence of the Lord. Blood-bought; can you live for yourself? Blood-washed; can you defile your garments? Marked with the King's own name, in the King's own blood, how can you yield yourself to other rulers? God grant that we may come unto the blood of sprinkling till it shall purify our nature, and fill us with an all-consuming enthusiasm for Him whose heart was pierced for us!

I ask you, then, to put the question closely home, "Have I come unto this blood of sprinkling? If not, why should I not come at once?" I read the other day an imaginary story, which describes the need of looking well to this great business. Receive it as a parable—A little daughter of the house of Israel, had heard the commandment concerning the Passover night, and as she lay ill in her bed she cried, "Father, have you sprinkled the blood upon the lintel and the two side posts?" Her father answered, "Not yet, my child. It shall be done." The daughter was distressed, and filled with fear. After waiting a little while she again cried, "Father, father, have you sprinkled the blood upon the door?" He answered carelessly, "Child, I have told Simeon to sprinkle it, and I have no doubt it is done." "But, father," she cried, "it is near midnight, and the destroying angel will soon be abroad, are you *sure* that the blood is over the door? Jehovah our God has said that we must sprinkle the blood upon the lintel and the two side posts, or else the destroyer will not pass over us. Father, are you sure it is done?" The father passed over her inquiry; he had been eating of the lamb with his friends, and thought that this was sufficient. He did not care to give too much prominence to the ghastly idea of blood. He was of a liberal mind, and would not believe that a merciful God would smite his household for so small an omission.

Then his daughter arose from her bed, made strong by the God of Israel. Nothing would content her until she had been outside into the street, and seen for herself whether the saving mark was over the door of her father's house. It was almost midnight, but by the light of the moon she looked, and no blood-mark was there! How great was her distress! "Father," she cried, "make haste and bring the basin." There it stood, filled with blood, for the Paschal Lamb had been slain. The father, at her

entreaty, dashed the hyssop into it, struck the lintel and the two side posts and shut the door, and as he did so, the midnight hour arrived. They were saved so as by fire. The daughter's obedient care and reverence of the Lord had warded off the sword of the destroyer. Oh that the holy anxiety of someone now present would work the same blessing for other households! Ask, dear child, ask the question, "Father, have you come to the blood of sprinkling? Is the blood of the Lamb above your head, between you and God? Is it on both sides of you, when you come in and go out?" O soul, be thus anxious about yourself, and rest not till you have by faith been purged with hyssop, and cleansed by the blood of the one sacrifice for sin.

III. The last part of our subject is this, WHAT THEN? According to our text, the blood of Jesus is the voice of the new dispensation. It is the blood which speaks, and it speaks better things than the blood of Abel. What then is our duty? How does the apostle express our obligation? "See that you refuse not Him that speaks."

I would have a quarter of an hour's very quiet talk with you, without excitement or quibbling debate. Lend me your ears, for I speak in all love for your souls. I want, dear friends, that, this great truth atonement which I so often preach may have a fair hearing, and not be left to lie among the lumber of forgotten things.

Do not refuse the voice of Jesus by cold indifference. God was made flesh, and dwelt among men, and in due time He took upon Himself our sin, and suffered for it in His own body on the tree, that sin might be put away by the sacrifice of Himself. By His death upon the cross our Lord made atonement for the sin of man, and those who believe in Him are delivered from evil and its consequences. The main point is that Jesus died for us, the just for the unjust. His atoning blood has a voice, "See that you refuse not Him that speaks." The text says, see to it; look to it; make sure of it; be careful about it. Do not miss the salvation of your Lord through neglect, for he who dies by neglecting the healing medicine will as surely perish as he who stabs himself. Be in earnest to accept the Savior, I beseech you so to do, for I am afraid that many refuse Him that speaks, because they never think of Him, or of His sacrifice. It seems to me that if I were a young man I would give this matter very early notice. However deeply I might be engaged in business, I would feel that my first concern ought to be to set myself right with God. Other matters would be sure to drop into order if I could be right with the Lord of all. If I heard it said that salvation came by the blood of Christ, I think I would pull myself together and resolve to understand this singular statement. I would not let it go by me, but would endeavor to reach the bottom of it, and understand it practically. I would meditate much upon teaching as wonderful as this—that the Son of God, in man's stead, honored the justice of God by death, and so put away sin.

When I was a youth I had a great longing to begin life on right principles, I longed to find deliverance from sin. I would wake up with the sun in summer time to read my Bible, and such books as Bunyan's "Grace Abounding," Baxter's "Call to the Unconverted," Alleine's "Alarm," and

Doddridge's "Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul." In these books I tried to spell out the way of salvation, but the chief thing I longed to know was, "How can man be just with God? How can God be just with man and yet put away his sin?" Do you not think that these questions are of high importance? I beg that they may not have the cold shoulder from you. Give this question due space. I know that a great many things demand your attention nowadays, but I claim for this, which is the innermost revelation of God, that it should have an early and earnest hearing. God incarnate in Christ Jesus bleeding and dying for human sin is a marvel of love too great to be passed over without thought. I pray you, therefore, "refuse not Him that speaks." Do not say, "I pray you, have me excused." I do not suppose that you will become an infidel or act as a blasphemer towards this grand truth. I will not accuse you of denying the fact of the atonement, but my great fear is lest you should be indifferent to it. If it is so, that God Himself has come to earth to bleed and die to save guilty man, it is the greatest, gladdest news that ever came to our poor erring race, and every member of that race should receive it with hopeful attention.

When you resolve to study the doctrine, *do not approach it with prejudice through misapprehension*. Those that hate the gospel of Christ are very busy in caricaturing the doctrine of the atonement. They assert that we preach that God was not merciful by nature, but must be appeased by the blood of His own Son. They charge us with saying that Jesus by His death made God loving. We distinctly teach the very opposite of that statement. What we do say is this, that, God is infinitely loving—that, in fact, God is love, but that love does not cause Him to be unjust or unholy, for *that* in the long run would not be love. God is the Judge of all the earth and He must do right. The Lord, as the great moral governor, if He makes a law, and threatens a penalty, must execute that penalty, or else His law will lose its authority. If the penalty threatened is not executed, there is a tacit acknowledgment that it was threatened in error. Could you believe in a fallible God? The Lord has made a law which is perfect, and just, and good. Would you rather be without law? What reasonable person desires anarchy? God has backed up that law with a threat. What is the use of a law if to break it involves no evil consequences? A government that never punishes offenders is no government at all. God, therefore, as moral ruler, must be just, and must display His indignation against wrong and evil of every kind. It is written on the conscience of men that sin must be punished. Would you have it go unpunished? If you are a just man, you would not. To meet the case, therefore, the Lord Jesus Christ, by Himself bearing the penalty of death, has honored the divine law. He has shown to all intelligences that God will not wink at sin that even His infinite mercy must not come in the way of His justice. This is the doctrine; do not listen to those who twist and pervert it. It is the love of God which has provided the great atonement by which, in a judgment better than ours, the law finds a glorious vindication, and the foundation of moral government is strengthened. Do consider this matter, and judge it fairly, with candid minds. We assure you from God's

Word that apart from the atonement of our Lord Jesus you can never be saved either from the guilt or power of evil. You will find no peace for your conscience that is worth having, no thorough and deep peace, except by believing in this atoning sacrifice, neither will you meet with a motive strong enough to rescue you from the bonds of iniquity. Therefore, "See that you refuse not Him that speaks." Hear, and your soul shall live. Quibble and you will die in your sins.

Do not refuse the voice of the Lord Jesus by rejecting the principle of expiation. If God is content with this principle, it is not for us to raise objection. The Lord God is infinitely more concerned to fix matters on a right foundation than ever we can be, and if He feels that the sacrifice of Jesus meets the case in all points, why should we be dissatisfied with it? If there were a flaw in the proceedings, His holy eyes would see it. He would not have delivered up His own Son to die unless that death would perfectly fulfill the design intended by it. A mistake so expensive He would never have perpetrated. Who are you to raise the question? If God is satisfied, surely you should be. To refuse the atonement because we are too wise to accept so simple a method of mercy is the utmost height of folly. What! Will you refuse Him that speaks because the present phase of human madness dares to dispute the divine way of human redemption? I pray you, do not so.

Once more: *Do not refuse this voice of mercy by preferring your own way of salvation*. You have, no doubt, a way of salvation in your own mind, for few men have given up all hope. Perhaps your chosen hope is that you will be saved by doing your best. Alas! No man does his best, and the best acts of a rebel must be unaccepted of his king. So long as he is a rebel his acts are those of a rebel, and of no esteem with his prince. Perhaps your hope lies in saying so many prayers, and going to church, or attending chapel, or are you so unwise as to trust to a minister or priest? Now, we beseech you, hear the witness of God which He has given us in this book, and learn that other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ the righteous. There is one salvation, and there can be no other, all other hopes are lying vanities, and arrogant insults to Jesus. God has set forth Christ to be a propitiation for sin. There is no other propitiation, or atonement, or way of acceptance, and if you reject this way, you will die in your sins.

I cannot help it if you do not like this teaching, although I shall be grieved if you refuse it. I can only tell you the truth, and leave it with your own hearts. Do not willfully refuse it. When I meet you face to face in that last day, to which we all must come, I shall not be clear of your blood unless I tell you what is assuredly the truth—that in the precious blood of Christ is the only cleansing from sin, and the only acceptance with God. By believing in Jesus, as slain for you, you shall be saved, but do what you may, pray as you may, fast as you may, give alms as you may, you shall not enter heaven by any other road. The way to glory is by the way of the cross. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." Look to Him whom you have pierced, and mourn for your sins. Look not to any other, for no other is needed, no other is provided, and no other

can be accepted. Jesus is the sole messenger of the covenant of life and peace. "See that you refuse not Him that speaks."

"See that you *refuse* not." Then there is a choice about it. If you had never heard the gospel, you could not have refused it, but now that you have heard the message, it lies within your power, and it is an awfully dangerous power, to refuse Him that speaks. Oh, can you, will you, dare you refuse my bleeding Savior—refuse the Lord of love? I see Him now. The crown of thorns is about His brow. He is hanging on His cross expiring in unutterable agony! Can you refuse Him while He presents such a spectacle of sacrifice? His eyes are red with weeping; have you no tears for such sorrow? His cheeks are all stained with the brutal soldiers' spit; have you no love and homage for Him? His hands are fastened to the wood—His feet the same, and there He hangs to suffer in the sinner's stead. Will you not yield yourselves to Him? I could joyfully bow before the foot of the cross to kiss His dear feet stained with blood. What a charm He has for me! And you—do you refuse Him?

He is no mere man. It is God Himself who hangs upon the cross. His body is that of a man, but it is in union with the Godhead. He who died at Calvary is God over all, and this makes His death so effectual. He, whom you have offended, in order to be justly able to pardon you, hangs there and dies for you, and do you turn your back on Him? O sirs, if you are wise you will come, as I said I gladly would come, and kiss those bleeding feet, and look up and say, "My Lord, I am reconciled to You—how could I be otherwise? My enmity is dead. How can I be an enemy to Him that died for me? In shame, and scorn, and misery, Jesus dies that I may live. O Lord Jesus, You have worked in me, not merely reconciliation, but full submission and hearty love. I joy to sink myself in You, and to be Yours forever." See that you refuse not my Lord. May the sweet Spirit who loves the cross, and like a dove, hovers round it now, descend upon you all who hear my message! May the Holy Spirit apply the blood of sprinkling to you, and may you feel that, instead of refusing Him that speaks, you will rejoice in His name!

When the text says, "See that you refuse not," it tacitly and pleadingly says, "See that you accept Him." Dear hearers, I trust you will receive my Lord into your hearts. When we read of refusing, or receiving, we perceive an action of the will. Jesus must be willingly received; He will not force Himself upon any man. Whoever accepts Jesus is himself accepted of Jesus. Never was there a heart willing to receive Him to whom Jesus denied Himself. Never! But you must be willing and obedient. Grace works this in you, but in you this must be. Till the heart entertains Jesus gladly nothing is done. All that is short of a willing hearing of Jesus, and a willing acceptance of His great atonement, is short of eternal life. Say, will you have this Savior, or do you decline His love? Will you give Him a cold refusal? Oh, do not so, but on the contrary, throw open the doors of your heart, and entreat your Lord and Savior to come in.

I do not wonder that the Israelites asked that they might no longer hear the voice of thunder from the top of Sinai, it was too terrible for human ears, but you have no such excuse if you refuse Him that speaks,

for Jesus speaks in notes more sweet than music, more tender than a mother's sonnet to her babe. Let me remind you, that He was known to say, "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." He declared that all manner of sin and of blasphemy should be forgiven unto men. He stood and cried, on the last day of the feast, "If any man thirst let him come unto Me and drink." I am telling you no fables, for Christ, who was born at Bethlehem and died on Calvary, by His own blood which He shed for many, assures you that there is forgiveness for every man of you who, confessing his sin, will come and put his trust in Him.

"See that you refuse not Him that speaks," for though you hear only my poor feeble voice pleading with you, with an honest, loving heart at the back of it, yet God the Holy Spirit is speaking, and Jesus Christ Himself is speaking to you. Refuse *me* if you please, but do not refuse my Lord. The blood of Jesus says, "I was poured out for the guilty. I was shed to manifest divine love. I am sprinkled to cleanse from sin." Each drop as it falls creates peace of heart. Stand where that blood is falling. Let it sprinkle you.

Thus the blood speaks. Will you not answer, "Lord, we come to You, for You have drawn us. Your wounds have wounded our hearts. Your death has killed our enmity. Sprinkle us unto Yourself. Bedew us with Your blood. Let us be accepted in the Beloved"? Amen. So may God hear us!

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—HEBREWS 10.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—302, 294, 580, 288.

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

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

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

OUR LORD'S PRAYER FOR HIS PEOPLE'S SANCTIFICATION
NO. 1890

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 7, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Sanctify them through Your truth: Your word is truth."
John 17:17.

OUR Lord Jesus prayed much for His people while He was here on earth. He made Peter the special subject of His intercession when He knew that he was in extraordinary danger. The midnight wrestling of the Son of man was for His people. In the sacred record, however, much more space is taken up by our Lord's intercessions as He nears the end of His labors. After the closing supper, His public preaching work being ended, and nothing remaining to be done but to die, He gave Himself wholly to prayer. He was not again to instruct the multitude, or to heal the sick, and in the interval which remained, before He should lay down His life, He girded Himself for special intercession. He poured out His soul in life before He poured it out unto death.

In this wonderful prayer, our Lord, as our great High Priest, appears to enter upon that perpetual office of intercession which He is now exercising at the right hand of the Father. Our Lord ever seemed, in the eagerness of His love, to be anticipating His work. Before He was set apart for His life-work, by the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Him, He must necessarily be about His Father's business. Before He finally suffered at the hands of cruel men, He had a baptism to be baptized with, and He was straitened till it was accomplished. Before He actually died, He was covered with a bloody sweat, and was exceedingly sorrowful even unto death, and in this case, before He in person entered within the veil, He made intercession for us. He never tarries when the good of His people calls for Him. His love has wings as well as feet, it is true of Him evermore, "He rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yes, He did fly upon the wings of the wind." O beloved, what a friend we have in Jesus, so willing, so speedy to do for us all that we need! Oh that we could imitate Him in this, and be quick of understanding to perceive our line of service, and eager of heart to enter upon it.

This chapter, which ought to be universally known as the Lord's Prayer, may be called the holy of holies of the word of God. Here we are admitted to that secret place where the Son of God speaks with the Father in closest fellowship of love. Here we look into the heart of Jesus as He sets out in order His desires and requests before His Father on our behalf. Here inspiration lifts her veil, and we behold truth face to face. Our

text lies somewhere near the middle of the prayer; it is the heart of it. Our Lord's desire for the sanctification of His people pervades the whole prayer, but it is gathered up, declared, and intensified in the one sentence that I have read to you, "Sanctify them through Your truth: Your word is truth." How invaluable must the blessing of sanctification be when our Lord, in the highest reach of His intercession, cries, "Sanctify them"! In sight of His passion, on the night before His death, our Savior lifts His eyes to the great Father, and cries in His most plaintive tones, "Father, sanctify them." The place whereon we stand is holy ground, and the subject of which we speak demands our solemn thought. Come, Holy Spirit, and teach us the full meaning of this prayer for holiness!

First, I call your attention to *what it is the Savior asks*—"sanctify them," and then, *for whom He asks it*—it is for those whom His Father had given Him. Thirdly, we shall note *of whom He asks it,* He asks this sanctification of God the Father Himself, for He alone it is who can sanctify His people. Lastly, we will inquire *how is this blessing to be worked?*—"Sanctify them through Your truth," and our Lord adds an explanatory sentence, which was a confession of His own faith towards the word of the Lord, and an instruction to our faith in the same matter. "Your word is truth."

I. At the beginning, then, consider WHAT HE ASKED. What is this inestimable blessing which our Savior so earnestly requests at the Father's hand? He first prays, "Holy Father, keep them," and again, "Keep them from the evil," but this negative blessing of preservation from evil is not enough, He seeks for them positive holiness, and therefore He cries, "sanctify them." The word is one of considerable range of meaning, I am not able to follow it through all its shades, so one or two must suffice.

It means, first, *dedicate them to Your service*, for such must be the meaning of the word further down, when we read, "For their sakes I sanctify Myself." In the Lord's case it cannot mean purification from sin, because our Savior was undefiled, His nature was unblemished by sin, and His actions were unspotted. No eye of man, nor glance of fiend, could discover fault in Him, and the search of God only resulted in the declaration that in Him God was well pleased. Our Lord's sanctification was His consecration to the fulfillment of the Divine purpose, His absorption in the will of the Father. "Lo, I come to do Your will, O God." In this sense our interceding Lord asks that all His people may by the Father be ordained and consecrated unto holy service. The prayer means, "Father, consecrate them to Your own Self, let them be temples for Your indwelling, instruments for Your use." Under Jewish law the tribe of Levi was chosen out of the twelve, and ordained to the service of the Lord, instead of the first-born, of whom the Lord had said, "All the first-born of the children of Israel are Mine: on the day that I smote every first-born in the land of Egypt I sanctified them for myself" (Num 8:17). Out of the tribe of Levi one family was taken and dedicated to the priesthood. Aaron and his sons are said to have been sanctified (Lev 8:30). A certain tent was sanctified to the service of God, and hence it became a sanctuary, and the vessels that were in it, whether they were greater, like the altar, and the holy table, and the ark of the covenant, or whether they were of less degree, like the bowls and the snuff-dishes of the candlestick, were all ded-

icated or sanctified (Num 7:1). None of these things could be used for any other purpose than the service of Jehovah. In His courts there was a holy fire, a holy bread, and a holy oil. The holy anointing oil, for instance, was reserved for sacred uses. "Upon man's flesh it shall not be poured," and again, "Whosoever shall make like unto that, to smell thereto, shall even be cut off from his people." These sanctified things were reserved for holy purposes, and any other use of them was strictly forbidden. Bullocks and lambs and sheep and turtledoves, and so forth, were given by devout offerers, brought to the holy place, and dedicated unto God; henceforth they belonged to God, and must be presented at His altar. This is one part of the meaning of our Lord's prayer. He would have each of us consecrated unto the Lord, designated and ordained for divine purposes. We are not the world's, otherwise we might be ambitious; we are not Satan's, otherwise we might be covetous; we are not our own, otherwise we might be selfish. We are bought with a price, and hence we are His by whom the price is paid. We belong to Jesus, and He presents us to His Father, and begs Him to accept us and sanctify us to His own purposes. Do we not most heartily concur in this dedication? Do we not cry, "Father, sanctify us to Your service?" I am sure we do if we have realized our redeemed condition.

Beloved brethren, if the sprinkling of the blood, of which we spoke last Lord's-Day, [*The Blood of Sprinkling (Second Sermon)* Sermon No. 1889, Volume 32] has really taken effect upon us, we belong, from this time forth, unto Him that died for us, and rose again. We regard ourselves as God's men, the liveried servants of the great King—that livery, the robe of righteousness. We were as sheep going astray, but we have now returned unto the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls, and henceforth we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. If any should ask, "To whom do you belong?" we answer, "I belong to Christ." If any inquire, "What is your occupation?" we reply with Jonah, "I fear God." We are not now at our own disposal; neither can we hire ourselves out to inferior objects, mercenary aims, or selfish ambitions, for we are engaged by solemn contract to the service of our God. We have lifted up our hand unto the Lord and we cannot draw back. Neither do we wish to withdraw from the delightful compact and covenant, we desire to keep it even to the end. We seek no liberty to sin, nor license for self, rather do we cry, "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar. Sanctify us, O Lord. Let us know and let all the world know, that we are Yours, because we belong to Christ."

In addition to this, those who belonged to God, and were dedicated to His service, were *set apart and separated from others*. There was a special service for the setting apart of priests; certain rites were performed at the sanctifying of dedicated places and vessels. You remember with what solemn service the Tabernacle was set up, and with what pomp of devotion the Temple itself was set apart for the divine service. The Sabbath day, which the Lord has sanctified, is set apart from the rest of time. To man it is a *dies non*, because it is the Lord's-day. The Lord would have those who are dedicated to Him to be separated from the rest of mankind. For this purpose He brought Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees, and Israel out of Egypt. "The people shall dwell alone, and shall not be

reckoned among the nations." The Lord says of His chosen, "This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise." Before long this secret purpose is followed by the open call, "Come out from among them, and be you separate; touch not the unclean thing, and I will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters." The church of Christ is to be a chaste virgin, wholly set apart for the Lord Christ; His own words concerning His people are these, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

By the election of grace from before the foundation of the world, this distinction commences, and the names are written in heaven. Thereupon follows a redemption peculiar and special, as it is written, "These were redeemed from among men, being the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb." This redemption is followed by effectual calling, wherein men are made to come forth from the old world into the kingdom of Christ. This is attended with regeneration, in which they receive a new life, and so become as much distinguished from their fellow men as the living are from the dead. This separating work is further carried on in what is commonly known as sanctification, whereby the man of God is removed farther and farther from all fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, and is changed from glory unto glory, into an ever-growing likeness of his Lord, who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners."

Those who are sanctified in this sense have ceased to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers, they have ceased to run with the multitude to do evil, they are not conformed to this present evil world; they are strangers and pilgrims upon the earth. The more assuredly this is true of them the better. There are some, in these apostate days, who think that the church cannot do better than to come down to the world to learn her ways, follow her maxims, and acquire her "culture." In fact, the notion is that the world is to be conquered by our conforming to it. This is as contrary to Scripture as the light is to darkness. The more distinct the line is between him that fears God and him that fears Him not, the better all around. It will be a black day when the sun itself is turned into darkness. When the salt has lost its savor, and no longer opposes putrefaction, the world will rot with a vengeance. That text is still true, "You are of God, little children, and the whole world lies in the wicked one." The seed of the woman knows no terms with the serpent brood but continual war. Our Lord says that in this matter He came not to send peace on the earth, but a sword. "Because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." If the church seeks to cultivate the friendship of the world, she has this message from the Holy Spirit by the pen of the Apostle James, "You adulterers and adulteresses, know you not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." He charges all who would please the world with the black and filthy crime of spiritual adultery. The heart which ought to be given to Christ and purity must not wander forth wantonly to woo the defiled and polluted things of this present evil world. Separation from the world is Christ's prayer for us.

Put these two things together, dedication to God and separation unto Him, and you are nearing the meaning of the prayer. But, mark you, it is

not all separation that is meant, for, as I told you in the reading there are some who "separate themselves," and yet are sensual, not having the Spirit. Separation for separation's sake savors rather of Babel than of Jerusalem. It is one thing to separate from the world, and another thing to be separate from the church. Where we believe that there is living faith in Jesus, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we are not called to division, but to unity. For actual and manifest sin we must separate ourselves from offenders, but we err if we carry on this separation where it is not authorized by the word of God. The Corinthians and Galatians were far from being perfect in life, and they had made many mistakes in doctrine, yes, even upon vital points, but inasmuch as they were truly in Christ, Paul did not command any to come out of those churches, and to be separate therefrom, but he exhorted them to prove each man his own work, and he labored to bring them all back to the one and only gospel and to a clearer knowledge of it. We are to be faithful to the truth, but we are not to be of a contentious spirit, separating ourselves from those who are living members of the one and indivisible body of Christ. To promote the unity of the church by creating new divisions is not wise. Cultivate at once the love of the truth and the love of the brethren. The body of Christ will not be perfected by being torn. Truth should be the companion of love. If we heartily love even those who are in some measure in error, but who possess the life of God in their souls, we shall be the more likely to set them right. Separation from the world is a solemn duty, indeed it is the hard point, the crux and burden of our religion. It is not easy to be filled with love to men and yet for God's sake, and even for their own sake, to be separated from them. May the Lord teach us this.

At the same time, this word "sanctification" means what is commonly understood by it, namely, *the making of the people of God holy*. "Sanctify them," that is, work in them a pure and holy character. "Lord, make your people holy," should be our daily prayer. I want you to notice that this word here used in the Greek is not that which is rendered "Purify," but it has another shade of meaning. Had it meant "purify," it would hardly have been used in reference to our Lord as it is in the next verse.

It has a higher meaning than that. O brethren, if you are called Christians, there must be no room for doubt as to the fact that you are purged from the common sins and ordinary transgressions of mankind, otherwise you are manifestly liars unto God, and deceivers of your own souls. They that are not moral, they that are not honest, they that are not kind, they that are not truthful, are far from the kingdom. How can these be the children of God who are not even decent children of men? Thus we judge, and rightly judge, that the life of God cannot be in that man's soul who abides willfully in any known sin, and takes pleasure therein. No, purification is not all. We will take it for granted that you who profess to be Christians have escaped from the foul pollution of lust and falsehood, if you have not done so, humble yourselves before God, and be ashamed, for you need the very beginnings of grace. "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh." But sanctification is something more than mere morality and respectability, it is not only deliverance from the common sins of men, but also from the hardness, deadness, and carnality of nature, it is deliverance from that which is of the flesh at its very best, and admit-

tance into that which is spiritual and divine. That which is carnal, comes not into communion with the spiritual kingdom of Christ; we need that the spiritual nature should rise above that which is merely natural. This is our prayer:—Lord, spiritualize us, elevate us, make us to dwell in communion with God, make us to know Him whom flesh and blood cannot reveal or discern. May the Spirit of the living God have full sovereignty over us and perfect in us the will of the Lord, for this is to be sanctified."

Sanctification is a higher word than purification, for it includes that word and vastly more. It is not sufficient to be negatively clean; we need to be adorned with all the virtues. If you are merely moral, how does your righteousness exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees? If you pay your lawful debts, give alms to the poor, and observe the rites of your religion, what do you do more than others whom you yourselves reckon to be in error?

Children of God should exhibit the love of God, they should be filled with zeal for His glory, they should live generous, unselfish lives, they should walk with God, and commune with the Most High. Ours should be a purpose and an aim far higher than the best of the unregenerate can understand. We ought to reach unto a life and a kingdom of which the mass of mankind know nothing, and care less. Now, I am afraid that this spiritual sense of the prayer is one that is often forgotten. Oh that God's Holy Spirit might make us to know it by experientially feeling it in ourselves! May "Holiness to the Lord" be written across the brow of our consecrated humanity!

Beloved, this prayer of our Lord is most necessary, for without sanctification how can we be saved, since it is written, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord"? How can we be saved from sin if sin still has dominion over us? If we are not living holy, godly, spiritual lives, how can we say that we are redeemed from the power of evil?

Without sanctification we shall be unfit for service. Our Lord Jesus contemplated the sending of each one of us into the world even as the Father sent Him into the world, but how can He give a mission to unsanctified men and women? Must not the vessels of the Lord be clean?

Without sanctification we cannot enjoy the innermost sweets of our holy faith. The unsanctified are full of doubts and fears, and what wonder? The unsanctified often say of the outward exercise of religion, "What a weariness it is!" and no wonder, for they know not the internal joys of it, having never learned to delight themselves in God. If they walk not in the light of the Lord's countenance, how can they know the heaven below which comes of true godliness? Oh, it is a prayer that needs to be prayed for me, for you, for this church and for the whole church of God! "Father, sanctify them through Your truth."

II. Now I want you to notice, in the second place, FOR WHOM THIS PRAYER WAS OFFERED. It was not offered for the world outside. It would not be a suitable prayer for those who are dead in sin. Our Lord referred to the company of men and women who were already saved, of whom He said that they had kept God's Word, "Yours they were, and You gave them to Me." They were therefore sanctified already in the sense of being consecrated and set apart for holy purposes, and they were also

sanctified in a measure already in the sense of being made holy in character, for the immediate disciples of our Lord, with all their errors and deficiencies, were holy men. It was for the apostles that Jesus thus prayed, so that we may be sure that the most eminent saints need still to have this prayer offered for them, "Sanctify them through Your truth." Though, my sisters, you may be Deborahs, worthy to be called mothers in Israel, yet you need to be made more holy. Though, my brethren, you may be true fathers in God, of whom the Scripture says truly that we have "not many," yet you still need that Jesus should pray for you, "Sanctify them through Your truth."

These chosen ones were sanctified, but only to a degree. Justification is perfect the moment it is received, but sanctification is a matter of growth. He that is justified is justified once for all by the perfect work of Jesus, but he that is sanctified by Christ Jesus must grow up in all things into Him who is the Head. To make us holy is a life-work, and for it we should seek the divine operation every hour, for "He that has worked us for the selfsame thing is God." We should rise to the utmost pitch of holy living, and never content ourselves with present attainments. Those who are most pure and honorable have yet their shortcomings and errors to mourn over. When the Lord turns the light strong upon us, we soon see the spots upon our garments, it is indeed when we walk in the light as God is in the light that we see most our need of the cleansing blood of Jesus. If we have done well, to God be the glory of it, but we might have done better. If we have loved much, to God's grace be the praise, but we ought to have loved more. If we have believed, and believed steadfastly, we ought to have believed to a far higher degree in our Almighty Friend. We are still below our capacities; there is a something yet beyond us. O you sanctified ones; it is for you that Jesus prays that the Father may still sanctify you.

I want you to notice more particularly that these believers, for whom our Lord prayed, were to be the preachers and teachers of their own and succeeding generations. These were the handful of seed-corn out of which would grow the church of the future, whose harvest would gladden all lands. To prepare them to be sent out as Christ's missionaries they must be sanctified. How shall a holy God send out unholy messengers? An unsanctified minister is an unsent minister. An unholy missionary is a pest to the tribe he visits, an unholy teacher in a school is an injury rather than a blessing to the class he conducts. Only in proportion as you are sanctified unto God can you hope for the power of the Holy Spirit to rest on you, and to work with you, so as to bring others to the Savior's feet. How much may each of us have been hampered and hindered by lack of holiness! God will not use unclean instruments; no, He will not even have His holy vessels borne by unclean hands. "To the wicked, God says, What have you to do to declare My statutes?" A whole host may be defeated because of one Achan in the camp, and this is our constant fear. Holiness is an essential qualification to a man's fitness for being used of the Lord God for the extension of His kingdom, hence our Lord's prayer for His apostles and other workers, "Holy Father, sanctify them."

Furthermore, our Lord Jesus Christ was about to pray "that they all might be one," and for this desirable result holiness is needed. Why are

we not one? Sin is the great dividing element. The perfectly holy would be perfectly united. The more saintly men are, the more they love their Lord and one another, and thus they come into closer union with each other. Our errors and our sins are roots of bitterness which spring up and trouble us, and many are defiled. Our infirmities of judgment are aggravated by our imperfections of character, and our walking at a distance from our God, and these breed coldness and lukewarmness, out of which grow disunion and division, sects and heresies. If we were all abiding in Christ to the full, we would abide in union with each other and with God, and our Lord's great prayer for the unity of His church would be fulfilled.

Moreover, our Lord finished His most comprehensive prayer by a petition that we might all be with Him—with Him where He is, that we may behold His glory. Full sanctification is essential to this. Shall the unsanctified dwell with Christ in heaven? Shall unholy eyes behold His glory? It cannot be. How can we participate in the splendor and triumphs of the exalted Head if we are not members of His body? And how can a holy head have impure and dishonest members? No, brethren, we must be holy, for Christ is holy. Uprightness of walk and cleanness of heart are absolutely requisite for the purposes of Christian life, whether here or hereafter. Those who live in sin are the servants of sin, only those who are renewed by the Holy Spirit unto truth, and holiness, and love, can hope to be partakers of holy joys and heavenly bliss.

III. I am compelled by shortness of time to be brief upon each point, but I must dwell for a little upon the third subject of consideration, which is this—TO WHOM THIS PRAYER IS DIRECTED. "Sanctify them through Your truth." No one can sanctify a soul but Almighty God, the great Father of spirits. He who made us must also make us holy, or we shall never attain that character. Our dear Savior calls the great God *"Holy* Father" in this prayer, and it is the part of the holy God to create holiness, while a holy *Father* can only be the Father of holy children, for like begets like. To you that believe in Jesus He gives power to become the sons of God, and a part of that power lies in becoming holy according to the manner and character of our Father who is in heaven. As we are holy, so we do bear the image of that Lord from heaven who, as the second man, is the first-born to whom the many brethren are conformed. The Holy Father in heaven will own those as His children upon earth who are holy. The very nature of God should encourage us in our prayers for holiness, for He will not be slow to work in us to will and to do according to His perfect will.

Beloved, this sanctification is a work of God from its earliest stage. We go astray of ourselves, but we never return to the great Shepherd apart from His divine drawing. Regeneration, in which sanctification begins, is wholly the work of the Spirit of God. Our first discovery of wrong and our first pang of penitence, are the work of divine grace. Every thought of holiness, and every desire after purity, must come from the Lord alone, for we are by nature wedded to iniquity. So also the ultimate conquest of sin in us, and the making us perfectly like to our Lord, must be entirely the work of the Lord God, who makes all things new, since we have no power to carry on so great a work by ourselves. This is a creation; can we create? This is a resurrection; can we raise the dead? Our degenerate nature

can rot into still direr putrefaction, but it can never return to purity or sweeten itself into perfection, this is of God and God alone. Sanctification is as much the work of God as the making of the heavens and the earth. Who is sufficient for these things? We go not even a step in sanctification in our own strength, whatever we think we advance of ourselves is but a fictitious progress which will lead to bitter disappointment. Real sanctification is entirely from first to last the work of the Spirit of the blessed God, whom the Father has sent forth that He might sanctify His chosen ones. See, then, what a great thing, sanctification is and how necessary it is that our Lord should pray unto His Father, "Sanctify them through Your truth."

The truth alone will not sanctify a man. We may maintain an orthodox creed, and it is highly important that we should do so, but if it does not touch our heart and influence our character, what is the value of our orthodoxy? It is not the doctrine which of itself sanctifies, but the Father sanctifies by means of the doctrine. The truth is the element in which we are made to live in order to holiness. Falsehood leads to sin, truth leads to holiness, but there is a lying spirit, and there is also the Spirit of truth, and by these the error and the truth are used as means to an end. Truth must be applied with spiritual power to the mind, the conscience, and the heart, or else a man may receive the truth, and yet hold it in unrighteousness. I believe this to be the crowning work of God in man that His people should be perfectly delivered from evil. He elected them that they might be a peculiar people, zealous for good works; He ransomed them that He might redeem them from all iniquity, and purify them unto Himself, He effectually calls them to a high and holy vocation, even to virtue and true holiness.

Every work of the Spirit of God upon the new nature aims at the purification, the consecration, the perfecting of those whom God in love has taken to be His own. Yes, more; all the events of Providence around us work towards that one end, for this our joys and our sorrows, for this our pains of body and griefs of heart, for this our losses and our crosses—all these are sacred medicines by which we are cured of the disease of nature, and prepared for the enjoyment of perfect spiritual health. All that befalls us on our road to heaven is meant to fit us for our journey's end. Our way through the wilderness is meant to try us, and to prove us, that our evils may be discovered, repented of, and overcome, and that thus we may be without fault before the throne at the last. We are being educated for the skies, fitted for the assembly of the perfect. It does not yet appear what we shall be, but we are struggling up towards it, and we know that when Jesus shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. We are rising, by hard wrestling, and long watching, and patient waiting, we are rising into holiness. These tribulations thresh our wheat and get the chaff away; these afflictions consume our dross and tin to make the gold more pure. All things work together for good to them that love God, and the net result of them all will be the presenting of the chosen unto God, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.

Thus I have reminded you that the prayer for sanctification is offered to the divine Father, and this leads us to look out of ourselves and wholly to our God. Do not set about the work of sanctification yourselves, as if

you could perform it alone. Do not imagine that holiness will necessarily follow because you listen to an earnest preacher, or unite in sacred worship. My brethren, God Himself must work within you, the Holy Spirit must inhabit you, and this can only come to you by faith in the Lord Jesus. Believe in Him for your sanctification, even as you have believed for your pardon and justification. He alone can bestow sanctification upon you, for this is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

IV. This is a great subject, and I have but short time, so I have, in the last place, to notice with much brevity HOW SANCTIFICATION IS TO BE WORKED IN BELIEVERS. "Sanctify them *through Your truth:* Your word is truth." Beloved, observe how God has joined holiness and truth together. There has been a tendency of late to divide truth of doctrine from truth of precept. Men say that Christianity is a life and not a creed, this is a part truth, and very near akin to a lie. Christianity is a life which grows out of truth. Jesus Christ is the way and the truth as well as the life, and He is not properly received unless He is accepted in that threefold character.

No holy life will be produced in us by the belief of falsehood. Sanctification in visible character comes out of edification in the inner faith of the heart, or otherwise it is a mere shell. Good works are the fruit of true faith, and true faith is a sincere belief of the truth. Every truth leads towards holiness; every error of doctrine, directly or indirectly, leads to sin. A twist of the understanding will inevitably bring a contortion of the life sooner or later. The straight line of truth drawn on the heart will produce a direct course of gracious walking in the life. Do not imagine that you can live on spiritual carrion and yet be in fine moral health, or that you can drink poisonous error and yet lift up a face without spot before God. Even God Himself only sanctifies us by the truth. Only that teaching will sanctify you which is taken from God's word, that teaching which is not true, nor the truth of God, cannot sanctify you. Error may puff you up, it may even make you think that you are sanctified, but there is a very serious difference between boasting of sanctification and being sanctified, and a very grave difference between setting up to be superior to others and being really accepted before God. Believe me; God works sanctification in us by the truth, and by nothing else.

But what is the truth? There is the point. Is the truth that which I imagine to be revealed to me by some private communication? Am I to fancy that I enjoy some special revelation, and am I to order my life by voices, dreams, and impressions? Brethren, fall not into this common delusion. God's Word to us is in Holy Scripture. All the truth that sanctifies men is in God's Word. Do not listen to those who cry, "Lo here!" and "Lo there!" I am plucked by the sleeve almost every day by crazy persons and pretenders who think that they have revelations. One man tells me that God has sent a message to me by him, and I reply, "No, sir, the Lord knows where I dwell, and He is so near to me that He would not need to send to me by you." Another man announces in God's name a dogma which, on the face of it, is a lie against the Holy Spirit. He says the Spirit of God told him so and so, but we know that the Holy Spirit never contradicts Himself. If your imaginary revelation is not according to this Word, it has no weight with us, and if it is according to this Word, it is no new thing.

Brethren, this Bible is enough if the Lord does but use it, and quicken it by His Spirit in our hearts. Truth is neither your opinion, nor mine; your message, nor mine. Jesus says, "Your word is truth." That which sanctifies men is not only truth, but it is the particular truth which is revealed in God's Word—"Your word is truth." What a blessing it is that all the truth that is necessary to sanctify us is revealed in the Word of God, so that we have not to expend our energies upon discovering truth, but may, to our far greater profit, use revealed truth for its divine ends and purposes! There will be no more revelations; no more are needed. The Canon is fixed and complete, and he that adds to it shall have added to him the plagues that are written in this Book. What need of more when here is enough for every practical purpose? "Sanctify them through Your truth: Your word is truth."

This being so, the truth which it is necessary for us to receive is evidently fixed. You cannot change Holy Scripture. You may arrive more and more accurately at the original text, but for all practical purposes the text we have is correct enough, and our old Authorized Version is a sound one. Scripture itself cannot be broken; we cannot take from it nor add to it. The Lord has never re-written nor revised His Word, nor will He ever do so. *Our* teachings are full of errors, but the Spirit makes no mistakes. We have the "Retractations" of Augustine, but there are no retractations with prophets and apostles. The faith has been delivered once for all to the saints, and it stands fast forever. "Your word is truth." The Scripture alone is absolute truth, essential truth, decisive truth, authoritative truth, undiluted truth, eternal, everlasting truth. Truth given us in the word of God is that which is to sanctify all believers to the end of time; God will use it to that end.

Learn, then, my brothers, how earnestly you ought to search the Scriptures! See, my sisters, how studiously you should read this Book of God! If this is the truth, and the truth with which God sanctifies us, let us learn it, hold it, and stand fast in it. To Him that gave us the Book let us pledge ourselves never to depart from His testimonies. To us, at any rate, God's word is truth. "But they argue differently in the schools!" Let them argue. "But oratory with its flowery speech speaks otherwise!" Let it speak; words are but air and tongues but clay. O God, "Your word is truth." "But philosophers have contradicted it!" Let them contradict it. Who are they? God's word is truth; we will go no farther while the world stands. But then let us be equally firm in our conviction that we do not know the truth aright unless it makes us holy. We do not hold truth in a true way unless it leads us to a true life. If you use the back of a knife it will not cut, truth has its handle and its blade, see that you use it properly. You can make pure water kill a man, you must use every good thing aright or it will not be good. The truth, when fully used, will daily destroy sin, nourish grace, suggest noble desires, and urge to holy acts. O sirs, I do pray that we may by our lives adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things. Some do not so. I say this to our shame and to my own hourly sorrow.

The one point of failure to be most deeply regretted would be a failure in the holiness of our church members. If you act as others do, what witness do you bear? If your families are not graciously ordered, if your

business is not conducted upon principles of the strictest integrity, if your speech is questionable as to purity or truthfulness, if your lives are open to serious rebuke—how can God accept you or send a blessing on the church to which you belong? It is all falsehood and deceit to talk about your being the people of God when even men of the world shame you. Your faith in the Lord Jesus must operate upon your lives to make you faithful and true, it must check you here, and excite you there; it must keep you back from this, and drive you on to that; it must constantly operate upon thought and speech and act, or else you know nothing of its saving power. How can I speak more distinctly and emphatically? Do not come to me with your experiences, and your convictions, and your professions, unless you sanctify the name of God in your lives. O brethren, we had better quit our professions if we do not live up to them. In the name of Him who breathed this prayer just before His face was encrimsoned with the bloody sweat, let us cry mightily unto the Father, "Sanctify us through Your truth: Your Word is truth." As a people, we have stuck unto the Word of the Lord, but are we practically obeying it? We have determined as a congregation to keep the old ways, and I, for one, as the minister, am solemnly bound to the old faith. Oh that we might commend it by our holiness! Nothing is truth to me but this one Book, this infallibly inspired writing of the Spirit of God. It is incumbent upon us to show the hallowed influence of this Book. The vows of God are on us, that by our godly lives we should show forth His praises who has brought us out of darkness into His marvelous light. This Bible is our treasure. We prize each page of it. Let us bind it in the best fashion, in the best Morocco of a clear, intelligent faith, then let us put a golden clasp upon it, and gild its edges by a life of love, and truth, and purity, and zeal. Thus we shall commend the volume to those who have never looked within its pages. Brethren, the sacred roll, with its seven seals, must not be held in hands defiled and polluted, but with clean hands and pure heart we must hold it forth and publish it among men. God help us so to do for Jesus' sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 17.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—107 (SONG 1), 649, 645.

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

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

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

THE SERMON OF THE SEASONS
NO. 1891

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, MARCH 14, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease."
Genesis 8:22.

OUR Savior constantly taught the people by parables, and I think He would have His ministers do the same. The condition of things just now, both as to weather and business, furnishes a very plain and instructive parable which it would not be wise to pass over. Every morning when we wake we hope for a change of wind, a glimpse of the sun, and the end of the frost, but still we moan with the poet—

"Oh, the long and dreary winter!
Oh, the cold and cruel winter!"

We say to ourselves, Will spring time never come? In addition to this, trade and commerce continue in a state of stagnation, crowds are out of employment, and where business is carried on, it yields little profit. Our watchmen are asked if they discern any signs of returning day, and they answer, "No." Thus we bow our heads in a common affliction, and ask each man comfort of his fellow, for as yet we see not our signs, neither does the eastern sky grow grey with the hopeful light of the long-expected morning. Having faith in God we faint not, but believe that a lesson of love for us is written by His hand in these black characters. Let us spell it out with childlike confidence.

Our text takes us back to the time when the waters of the flood had just assuaged, and God opened the door of the ark and bade Noah and his family, come forth into a new world. For a time there had been confusion, the seasons were mixed up, the perpetual downpour of the rain had almost turned day into night, and whether it was summer or winter could scarcely be told. The frame of nature seemed to be out of joint, her order suspended. And now the Lord, in making a promise to Noah that He would never destroy the earth again with a flood, also declares that while the earth remains there shall be no more of the confusion of the seasons and mingling of day and night which had brought such destruction upon all living things. As there should be no more a general deluge, so should there be no more a serious disarrangement of the course of the seasons and the temperature appropriate thereto. Seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, are to succeed each other in their perpetually unchanging change, so long as the

present reign of forbearance shall last. Till comes the close of time, the rolling year, made up of alternate day and night, shall pass through cold and heat in due order. We are grateful to God for thus settling in His mind that so it shall be. We are at ease because we know that He will not lift His hand again to destroy every living thing with a flood of water. He will deal with men in long-suffering, and tender mercy, and forbearance. He will not use the stern weapons of destruction, but will try the tender ministrations of patience and grace, that men may be led to repentance. There will come an end to this dispensation, but while the reign of forbearance lasts, nature shall keep her appointed marches, and we need not fear a disorderly rush or a destructive chaos. "Four seasons fill the measure of the year." In their mysterious round they come and go, and all combined display a moving harmony of wise design most glorifying to our God. Fear not in the day of tempest, for the rain shall not deluge the earth. The Lord sets His bow in the cloud as the ensign of His covenant with mankind. Fear not in the black midnight, God will rekindle the lamp of day, and chase away the darkness.

It is very singular that when the Lord thus ushers in the reign of forbearance He gives as His reason the following statement—"I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." This is very singular, because this seems to have been the powerful reason why the Lord had already destroyed the guilty race from off the face of the earth. In the fifth and sixth verses of the sixth chapter we read, "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart." Here we have almost the same words. Can the reason for judgment become the argument for mercy? Assuredly it can. God who changes not absolutely, yet changes His hand in His dealing with men. He had left them to themselves and permitted them to live through centuries, but the longer they lived, the more wicked they grew, until sin reached to a horrible degree of infamy. Man becomes a bad enough sinner when he lives to be seventy, but what he became at seven hundred or more it is somewhat difficult to guess. We wonder not that there were giants in those days—giants in crime as well as in stature. The Lord saw that however long man lived he only grew greater adept in sin, for the imagination of his heart remained evil, and even grew to an intolerable height of iniquity, and therefore He said that He would destroy the race and begin anew. But when the Lord looked down upon those whom He had spared, who were to be the parents of a new race, He saw that in them also there was the same fountain of evil, and that their hearts also yielded evil desires and devices continually. Then He resolved to shorten the life of man, so that no individuals might ever arrive at so horrible a ripeness and cleverness of iniquity, but at the same time He said, "I will bear with them. I have dealt sternly with them, but they do not change; the few whom I have snatched from a watery grave are still inclined to sin. This dreadful expedient has not

washed away the rebellious tendencies of the human heart. Therefore I will deal leniently and gently with them, manifesting a long forbearance, that man may have space for repentance. I will no more destroy every living thing, because destruction itself does not avail to banish sin." Thus it seems by no means difficult to see how that which to divine holiness was a reason for judgement may be used by divine pity as a reason for mercy.

But what, do you think, could have made the reasoning assume this new form? I attribute it to one thing never to be forgotten. Read the verse which precedes our text, "And Noah built an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast and of every clean fowl and offered burnt offerings on the altar; and the Lord smelled a sweet savor." The sacrifice is the turning point. Without a sacrifice sin clamors for vengeance, and God sends a destroying flood, but the sacrifice presented by Noah was typical of the coming sacrifice of God's only begotten Son, and of the effectual atonement therein provided for human sin. The very shadow of the one great propitiation changed the state of the world. Now the Lord pleads with Himself for grace as once He argued for doom. He speaks of course after the manner of men; it is only to our apprehension that these things are so, for Jehovah changes not, and He is always love and wisdom. For the sake of the sacrifice God resolves to bear with man, as with one who is incurably unwise, or desperately sick. He determines to look upon the evil tendency of man's imagination rather as an inveterate disease than as an unbearable provocation. He deals very patiently with the race, and no more sweeps it away in His wrath. See what the Lord will do when a sacrifice is provided! I think I hear Him say of the earth, "Deliver it from flood, and bid the seasons keep their round of beneficence, for I have found a ransom."

I. Thus I introduce to you the text, and I would have you notice, dear friends, that in that text there is first of all a hint, A SOLEMN HINT, OF WARNING. It begins thus, "While the earth remains." I hear a sound in the heart of the text like subterranean thunder. The voice of the text is a voice of mercy, but there is an undertone of "terrible things in righteousness." "While the earth remains" implies that *the earth will not always remain*. There is an end appointed by the Most High, and it will surely come, then the seasons will melt into the endless age, and time shall be promoted into eternity. The earth has remained now century after century, alas, it has but little changed towards God. The whole world still lies in the wicked one, darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the nations. Jehovah has a people, "a remnant according to the election of grace," and for their sakes the earth remains yet a little while, but its end draws nearer every hour. "God has appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by the man Christ Jesus." An hour is set when mercy shall no longer hold back the axe from the barren tree, and forbearance shall no more restrain the angel with the sharp sickle from reaping the vintage of the earth. Love now journeys to and fro among the sons of men, with the voice of trembling pathos, pleading with them to be reconciled to God, but her mission will come to an end, the

day of grace will be over, and the reign of judgment will come. Let us not reckon too much upon this world's enduring even for a little while, let us not set our love upon anything that is upon it, for here we have no continuing city. "The things which are seen are temporal," the world therefore shall pass away, and all the works that are therein shall be burned up, even "the elements shall melt with fervent heat." There is a day coming when floods of fire shall be let loose, they shall fall from above, and burst upward from below, and all material things shall be melted in one common conflagration. Poor world! You, too, are surely doomed! God is gracious to you, but you are as a wreck drifting upon the rocks, or as a tree waiting for the axe. Believers in the testimony of God can joyfully say, "We, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness." Therefore we are not dismayed.

I would have you notice again, dear friends, that *the time when the earth shall no longer remain is not mentioned.* The warning is left indefinite as to time, though definite enough as to fact. The expression, "While the earth remains," is proof enough that it will remain only for a season, but it is mute as the tongue of death as to the date when that season shall close. "The whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now," but when the hour of her deliverance shall come the best instructed cannot tell. Do not attempt to prophesy, and especially do not venture upon dates. "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father has put in His own power." "Of that day and hour knows no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but My Father only." The uncertainty of the end of all things is intended to keep us continually on the watch. We are to remain upon the tiptoe of expectation, and never to dream that we can reckon upon a certain length of time before the great and terrible day of the Lord. If you knew when Christ would come you might be tempted to spend the interval in neglect and wantonness, but as it is written, "In such an hour as you think not the Son of man comes," it is the Lord's intent that you should stand with your loins girt and your lamps trimmed, waiting for the midnight cry, "Behold He comes."

Let me further remark that *the day when the remaining of the earth shall cease cannot be very far off,* for according to the Hebrew, which you have in the margin of your Bibles, the text runs thus, "As yet all the days of the earth, seedtime and harvest shall not cease." The "while" of the earth's remaining is counted by days, not even months or years are mentioned, much less centuries. The earth seems grey with age to us, but in the language of inspiration the present stage of its history is reckoned by days. There will one day come a last day, and let us not reckon that the time is distant, for Peter says, "The end of all things is at hand," and he adds, "Be you therefore sober, and watch unto prayer." "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness." One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. If geologists speak correctly concerning the history of the world, it has lasted many myriads of years already, and passed through many periods before it came to that which is described in the first chapter of Genesis. The

era of man is that which God describes to us by the inspired penman, and we are led to believe that this era will be a very short one. From the day when God fitted up this earth for the abode of man to the time when He shall consume it with fervent heat, there will be comparatively a very short space of time. God lives by millions of years, therefore, a few thousand years to Him are but as a watch in the night. Let it be thus far understood by us that this dispensation is not to be a protracted one, and that the duration of the world in its present state is to be exceedingly brief as compared with preceding and succeeding ages. The life of this present evil world is but a span, it also is of few days and full of trouble. But I must also add that the era of sin and grace is crowded with marvelous manifestations of the glory of God in infinite love and mercy.

II. Thus, then, there is a hint of warning in our text, but secondly, there is A SENTENCE OF PROMISE, rich and full of meaning, "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease." It is a promise concerning temporal things, but yet it breathes a spiritual air, and has about it the smell of a field that the Lord has blessed.

This promise has been kept. It is long since it was written, it is longer still since it was resolved upon in the mind of God, but it has never failed. There have been times when cold has threatened to bind the whole year in the chains of frost, but genial warmth has pushed it aside. Seedtime and harvest have been threatened, but they have come, the harvest may not have been abundant, but yet there has been a harvest sufficient to sustain the race. Days have been dark, and hardly discernible from night, like the gloom of Egypt's plague, but still, taking things as a whole, day and night have divided time between them. The ordinances of heaven have continued with us as with our fathers. No student of nature can doubt that to this hour, despite occasional extremes of heat and cold, the seasons are unchanged, and notwithstanding occasional absence of sunshine, and diminution of light, day and night have followed the diurnal revolution of the earth. Since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were. One great interruption occurred at the deluge, but the Lord has kept His promise to prevent any other.

So long-continued is the fulfillment of this promise that *even this race of unbelievers has come to believe in it.* We look for the seasons as a matter of course. I do not suppose that anyone in this audience doubts the coming of spring. The boughs are bare, the buds are not eager for their bursting, the crocus and the daffodil are afraid to show themselves, but yet the birds believe in the coming spring, for I hear them in sweet chorus every morning singing their songs of expectancy. Men and brethren, you are expectant also. Long observation has begotten in you an unwavering faith. When the sun goes down at night, not even a little child fears that God has blown out the sun, and that the great candle will never be lighted again. No, we look for the morning. When winter has chilled us a while, we look for the spring and the summer, and when summer has browned our faces, we expect the falling of the leaf, and the descent

of the snow. I want you to ask yourselves—Why do we not believe God's other promises? Why have we not as solid a conviction of the truth of other statements which our God has made as we have upon this point? Is it that we have experience in this case? O brethren, we have had experience concerning other matters also. If we were to deal with the weather with the same short-sighted doubt which governs us in our thoughts of divine providence, we might be doubtful about summer and winter. We might say, "It really does not look very likely that spring will come. Look at our meadows, and mark how the cold has literally burned the grass, see how hardy evergreens are many of them dead, and others sadly cut to pieces, see what mischief the cold has worked. Will there, ever be leaf and flower again? Is it possible that I shall ever wipe the sweat from my smoking brow on some blazing noontide? Can these frozen brooks leap into liberty? Today we crowd around the fire, hardly keeping ourselves alive from the bitter cold, shall we yet bask in the hay field, or fan ourselves amid the golden sheaves?" Had we less experience, it would seem highly improbable. Yet we enjoy a full assurance as to the revolution of the seasons and the succession of day and night, do we not? Why this assurance of one promise, and why such frequent distrust of others equally true?

When God's promises appear to be difficult of fulfillment, why do we doubt them? They are fulfilled in due season, which of them has ever failed? They come to pass without difficulty, why should we suspect them? When deliverance looks as though it could not come, it is none the less sure, for the Lord has promised it. The absence of visible means need not enter into the account; He who is Almighty God has infinite resources.

So, too, dear friends, we have to recollect, that if the Lord Himself does not send spring and summer we cannot create either of them. Here we are out of the field. When the sun goes down, if the Lord did not cause it to rise again, we could not open the doors of the morning. I love to get into the field of nature on a large scale, for there one is rid of man, and the Lord alone is seen working all things according to His will. The heavens and their ordinances know no presence and power but God alone. As far as we are concerned, we cannot lift a finger to change the seasons. What could all our Parliament—King, Lords, and Commons—do with all their Acts towards bringing on springtime or hastening summer and harvest? Nothing at all. These matters are out of man's power, and yet they are none the less sure. So, my brethren, when you get into such a condition that you can by no means help yourself, you are not, therefore, to doubt that God can achieve His purpose and fulfill His promise without your help. When has He asked your aid? Good men have gone very wrong when they have thought of aiding in the fulfillment of promises and prophecies. See how Rebecca erred in trying to get the promised blessing for Jacob. We had better leave the Lord's decrees in the Lord's hands. When any case comes to its worst, and you can do nothing whatever in it, you may safely stand still and see the salvation of God. At this hour

you feel sure that springtime and summer will come, though you cannot move the sun an inch beyond his predestinated course, be as much at ease about the other promises of God as you are concerning the cycle of the year.

Remember, also, that every coming of summer—yes, and every rising of the sun—is a great wonder. Only our familiarity leads us to think of these things without marveling. A real miracle is every break of day and every sunset. A world of wonders bursts forth in every springtide; each blade of grass and ear of corn is a display of divine omnipotence. We are surrounded with works of almighty power and goodness from morn till eve and through the watches of the night, from the first day of the year until its close the Lord is about us. Unseen by us, His hand propels the silent spheres which no force within human calculation could move in their orbits; that same power sustains and animates and perfects all things. God is in all, and in all wonderful. If God continues thus to work the pleasing changes of the year as He promised to do, why do you doubt Him concerning other things, O you of little faith? Will He not keep His word to His children if He keeps it to the earth? Will He not fulfill His every promise to His own elect if He is true to sun and stars? Seedtime and harvest, summer and winter, have come according to His word without our aid, and wonderful as these changes are, they have never failed, and will the Lord forget in other things? Will He forswear His covenant and deny His promise to His Only Begotten? God forbid.

Brethren, we have come not only to believe this promise as to the seasons and to be quite sure about it, but *we practically act upon our faith.* The farmers have sown their autumn wheat, and many of them are longing for an opportunity to sow their spring wheat, but what is sowing but a burial of good store? Why do farmers hide their grain in the earth? Because they feel sure that seedtime will in due time, be followed by harvest. They put their grain into the ground hoping to receive it again multiplied a hundredfold. Why do we not act in an equally practical style in reference to the rest of God's promises? True faith makes the promises of God to be of full effect by viewing them as true and putting them to the test. When faith asks of God, it believes that it has the petition which it has asked of Him. Many prepare their thinner garments in prospect of warm weather, or at the close of summer provide household flannels for the winter, because they reckon upon the season; why do we not also prepare ourselves to receive the Lord's blessing in the time appointed? Why do we not reckon upon every word of Scripture being fulfilled? We ought to take the promises into our matter-of-fact estimate, and act accordingly.

Let me go further—*If a man did not act upon the declaration of God in our text he would be counted foolish.* Suppose a man said, "I do not feel sure that there will come, a harvest, and therefore I shall not sow," his neighbors would look upon his uncultivated fields, and reckon him out of his mind. If another should say, "I shall lay by no stores for the winter, because I believe that we have arrived at perpetual summer, wherein

there will always be corn in the sheaf and fruit on the trees," we would regard him as fit for a lunatic asylum. Equally mad are they who treat other promises of God as if they were idle words, no more worthy of notice than the prophecies of a charlatan. The masses of our fellow men never search the Word of God to find a promise suitable to their cases, and even if such a promise were laid before them, they would only regard it as a matter of imagination or meaningless jargon. What shall I say of those who thus trifle with eternal truths, but that madness has carried away the heart of man? What God has promised ought to be a clear indication to us of the future, and a hint as to how we should act. Let us act in faith upon the divine promise. If the Lord says, "Seek you My face," take care that you seek His face. If He says, "Ask, and it shall be given you," be sure to ask and expect to receive. If the Lord promises pardon to those who believe on His Son, let us believe on His Son, and receive mercy. He keeps His covenant with day and night, let us, therefore, believe that He will keep His covenant with us, and do even as He has said. Oh that this lesson, simple as it is, may be learned by every believer, and by every unbeliever too!

Let me close this point by noticing that, *whether men believe this or not it will stand true*. A man says there will be no winter, and provides no garments, he will shiver in the northern blast all the same when December covers the earth with snow. An unbeliever declares that there will be no summer, and therefore he will not sow nor prepare a barn. Will his foolish skepticism prevent the coming of harvest? Miserable farmer that he is! He will secure a harvest of thorns and thistles to reward his own practical unbelief, but a harvest will come to the rest of the land, to his confusion. The year will go on whoever plays the fool, so, too, will the sun rise, whoever prophesies an endless night. God's purpose and God's promise will stand fast though the hills are removed. If you believe in the Lord Jesus, you shall be saved, but if you believe not, you must perish, in either case, the law will not alter for you. God's great laws in the spiritual world hold good with a certainty as great as those which govern the natural world. We cannot suspend the force of gravitation, and if we could, we would not even then be able to change the veracity of the Most High, who must be true so long as He is God. Has He said and shall He not do it? Yes, that He shall. Though we believe not, He abides faithful; He cannot deny Himself; therefore, you sons of men, be wise, and take heed to the word of the Lord. As in the summer you prepare yourselves for winter, and as at springtime you sow your seed that you may gather your harvest in the summer, and thus you obey the voice of God in nature, I pray you also have respect to that voice as it speaks in the pages of His Book, and shape your conduct by that which the Lord has revealed.

III. There is also in the text, I think, A SUGGESTION OF ANALOGIES. Reading these words, not as a philosophical prediction, but as a part of the Word of God, I see in them a moral, spiritual, and mystical meaning. Holy Scripture is intended not to teach us natural but spiritual things. I

conclude, therefore, that there is an analogy here well worthy of being worked out. May the good Spirit guide us therein!

While the earth remains *there will be changes in the spiritual world.* Read the text laying a stress upon the words of change, and see how it rises and falls like the waves of the sea, "While the earth remains, *seedtime* and *harvest,* and *cold* and *heat,* and *summer* and *winter,* and *day* and *night* shall not cease." Not one of these states continues; it comes and goes. The seasons are a perpetual procession, an endless chain, an ever-moving wheel. Cold flies before heat, and soon summer is chased away by winter. Nothing is stable. Such is this life; such are the feelings of spiritual life with most men, such is the history of the church of God. We sorrow and we rejoice; we struggle and we triumph; we labor and we rest. We are not long upon Tabor, neither are we always in the valley of Baca. Let us not be amazed, as though some strange thing happened to us, if our day darkens into night, or our summer chills into winter. From joy to sorrow, from sorrow to joy, from success to defeat, from defeat to success, we pass very rapidly. It is so, it will be so while the earth remains, and we remain partakers of the earth.

Yet, *there will be an order in it all.* Cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, do not come in a giddy dance or tumultuous hurry-burly, but they make up the fair and beautiful year. Chance has no part in these affairs. God compels winds and storms, and sun and sea, to keep the order of His house, and none rebels against His commandment. So in the spiritual kingdom, in the life of the believer, and in the history of the church of God, all things are made to work for good, and the spiritual is being educated into the heavenly. In our seasons there is an order visible to God, even when we walk in darkness and see no light. We have our winters, in which the sap is prepared in secret to produce the clusters of summer; we have our colds, in which we lose the superfluities bred of our heat. Expect the changes, and believe that they come by rule.

Great rules will stand while the earth abides, in the spiritual as well as in the natural world. For instance, there will be seedtime and harvest, effort and result, labor and success. There will be to you, dear brother, a time in which you will chiefly have to receive, it is your seedtime, and God is sowing you by instruction and sanctification, in order that in due time you may yield Him a harvest to His glory. Sometimes we lie passive, like the plowed fields, and then our divine Sower casts into us the living seed, but soon other days arrive, when we are active, and yield unto God the results of His grace experienced in former days. It ought to be so. To you, beloved workers in the Mission Hall, or the Sunday school, there will be a time of sowing, not much may be accomplished, though a great deal of effort may be put forth. To me in preaching there are times for sowing, and nothing else but sowing, few seem to be the green blades which spring up around me. Perhaps a year may intervene before the worker shall see any reward for his toil, "The farmer waits for the precious fruits of the earth." The missionary upon his district, the Bible-

woman on her rounds, may see no manifest effect produced by daily teaching, but harvest and seedtime are tied together in a sure knot. "He that goes forth and weeps, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." Brethren, believe that, and be of good cheer. "Your labor is not in vain in the Lord." While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest will take each one its turn.

So, too, while the earth remains there will be the interchanges of cold and heat. Where there is life there must be change, only in death is there monotony. There will be times in your experience when you will feel the awful withering of that convincing Spirit who dries up the glory of the flesh. "Who can stand before His cold?" Soon there will be a melting season of contrition and repentance, and then the Holy Spirit will have warmed your heart into hope and faith and love and joy and delight in God. Cold and heat come to the church. I have noticed oftentimes her bitter cold, and I have cried to God about it. But the heat has come, we have felt the glow of revival, enthusiasm has been kindled, zeal has abounded. I wish we could always keep at one glorious summer heat, walking in the light as God is in the light. It ought to be so with us. Some of us labor to be always zealous and full of fire, but should times come when we or others are not in the fullness of the blessing, we will not despair, but we will rather cry mightily unto the Lord to send His Word and cause the waters of His grace to flow, and make our winter to be over and gone, while flowers appear on the earth and the time of the singing of birds comes on.

So, too, I have seen in our mortal life summer and winter, prosperity and adversity. Do not expect, dear brother, while you are in this world, always to dwell among the lilies and roses of prosperity. Summer will come, and you will be wise to make hay while the sun shines by using all opportunities for usefulness, but look for winter. I do not know into what trade you can enter to be secure against losses, nor what profession you could follow in which you would escape disappointments. I know no corner of the earth without its night, no land without its stones, and no sea without its storms. As to spiritual and mental experience, it seems to me within myself that while the earth remains I shall have my ebbs and flows, my rising and my sinking. Do not therefore begin to kick and quarrel with the dispensations of God's providence. When it is summer time say, "The Lord gave, and blessed be His name." When it is winter say, "The Lord has taken away, and blessed be His name." Keep to the same music, even though you sometimes have to pitch an octave lower. Still praise and magnify the Lord whether you are sowing or reaping. Let Him do what seems Him good, but to you let it always seem good to praise.

Beloved, labor will be followed by rest, for while the earth remains there will be day and night. In the day man goes forth to his labor, at night he lies down. Let him bless God for both. There comes a night wherein no man can work, to us this is not dreaded, but expected. I do not know for which I thank God most, for day or for night. Our young people praise God for day, with its activities, but we who are older are

more inclined to bless the Lord for night, with its repose. The grey beard, the man of many years and sad experiences, looks forward to that night wherein, the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest. If we regard death as night, we look forward to an endless day, which will follow on, when the sun shall go no more down forever. Jesus our Lord is the Sun of that glorious country to which we wend our way. While the earth remains, there will continually be a variety of benedictions, a change ringing upon the silver bells of mercy. When you are on high, my brother, remember you must descend, and when you are cast down, expect a cheerful lifting up. When it is broad day, let us travel swiftly, for night comes on, but when it is dark, let us watch hopefully, for the morning comes. As sojourners in a changeful country, let us spend the days of our pilgrimage in a holy fear, which shall preserve us from love of the world. I need not further work out the analogies of the text, many more will rise before the meditative mind.

IV. Last of all, I want you to regard my text AS A TOKEN FOR THE ASSURANCE OF OUR FAITH. "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." And they do not. In this fact we are bidden to see the seal and token of the covenant. Look at the passage we read this morning in the thirty-third chapter of Jeremiah. Here is *the security of the King in whom we rejoice*. "If you can break My covenant of the day, and My covenant of the night, then shall David not have a son to reign upon his throne." God has promised never to change the royal line, but while the earth remains, and day and night are seen, the Son of David shall reign King of kings and Lord of lords. Until all enemies are under His feet He must reign. So, then, as I wrap my garment about me, feeling the cold of winter, I will say to myself, "God has, by sending cold, confirmed His covenant with Jesus our Lord and King." Every morning light salutes my eyes, and declares that "His name shall be continued as long as the sun," and when the shades of evening fall, and the stars look forth from their houses, I hear a sound of "abundance of peace so long as the moon endures." His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and of His kingdom there is no end. The Lord Jesus is King in Zion, and head over all things to His church while the earth remains.

The abiding of the ordinances of heaven is equally a token of *the continuance of the priesthood*. Under the type of the tribe of Levi the priesthood is vested in the person of our Lord. He is our Melchizedek, who is priest as well as king, and of His priesthood there is no end. While winter chills and summer burns, while day calls to labor and night to rest, our great High Priest abides in His office, still able to cleanse us, to make intercession for us, and to present our offerings unto God. His one sacrifice is perpetually a sweet savor unto God, and shall be till moons shall wax and wane no more. As I tread the soil which seems frozen into iron, and as I shiver in the bitter northeast wind, I say to myself, "The priesthood of our Lord abides, for cold has not ceased to visit us, and heat will come in its appointed months." As I go to my bed or as I rise from it, day and

night are to me a pledge that the Lord Jesus is a priest forever according to the law of an endless life.

A third thing was also assured by the same token. The Lord said that as long as His covenant with day and night remained *He would not put away the seed of Abraham*. Since a son of David must rule them, they must exist to be ruled. There will forever be a chosen people—a people for whom Jesus lives as king and priest. The Lord has not cast away the people whom He did foreknow, nor will He do so, come what may. While seedtime and harvest, cold and heat abide, the Lord will maintain a church, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. What a mercy is this! Alas! Men whom I hoped were faithful have turned aside from the truth, ministers who were regarded as pillars have fallen, and persons esteemed to be saints turned out to be hypocrites, yet "there is a remnant according to the election of grace." The Lord has a reserve of men who have not bowed the knee to Baal. Therefore, let us be of good courage, and never tremble for the ark of the Lord.

To end all, let our prayer be that the Lord would abide with us, and then the heat shall not smite us, nor the cold molest us. The presence of God makes fair weather. Let us sing with quaint John Ryland—

"Rise then, Sun of righteousness,
Me with Your sweet beams bless;
Winter then may stay or flee,
Lord, 'tis all alike to me."

Oh, you that know not our God, I feel heartily sorry for you! To you all seasons must be blank, for God is not in them. Oh that you knew Jesus. The world is a bleak house, a chill and empty corridor without God, and men are orphans, life is hopeless, and death is starless night, if Jesus is not known and loved. He who trusts his soul with Jesus has found the key of the great secret, the clue of the maze. Henceforth he shall see, in all that smiles or rages around him in our changeful weather, pledges of the love of the Father, tokens of the grace of the Son, and witnesses of the work of the Holy Spirit. To the one God be glory forever! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
PSALM 147; GENESIS 8:20-22; JEREMIAH 33:17-20.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—181, 211, 212.

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

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

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

WHY THEY LEAVE US
NO. 1892

A SERMON
SUGGESTED BY THE DEATH OF CHARLES STANFORD, D.D., MINISTER OF DENMARK PLACE CHAPEL, CAMBERWELL.

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 21, 1886, *BY C. H. SPURGEON,* AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Father, I will that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which You have given Me: for You loved Me before the foundation of the world."
John 17:24.

THE prayer of the Savior rises as it proceeds. He asked for His people that they might be preserved from the world, then that they might be sanctified, and then that they might be made manifestly one, and now He reaches His crowning point—that they may be with Him where He is, and behold His glory. It is well when in prayer the spirit takes to itself wings. The prayer that swings to and fro like a door upon its hinges may admit to fellowship, but that prayer is more after the divine pattern which, like a ladder, rises rung by rung, until it loses itself in heaven.

This last step of our Lord's prayer is not only above all the rest, but it is a longer step than any of the others. He here ascends, not from one blessing which may be enjoyed on earth, to another of higher degree, but He mounts right away from all that is of this present state into that which is reserved for the eternal future. He quits the highest peaks of grace, and at a single stride His prayer sets its foot in glory, "That they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am."

There is this to be noticed also concerning this divine prayer, that not only does it rise as to its subject, but it even ascends as to the place which the Intercessor appears to occupy. Has it not been so with yourselves in prayer at times that you have hardly known where you were? You might have cried with Paul, "Whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell." Do not these words of our Lord Jesus remind you of this? Was He not carried away by the fervor of His devotion? Where was He when He uttered the words of our text? If I follow the language I might conclude that our Lord was already in heaven. He says, "Father, I will that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory." Does He not mean that they should be in heaven with Him? Of course He does, yet He was not in heaven, He was still in the midst of His apostles, in the body upon earth, and He had yet Gethsemane and Golgotha before Him before He could enter His glory. He had prayed Himself into such an exaltation of feeling that His prayer was in heaven, and He Himself was there in spirit. What a hint this gives

to us! How readily may we quit the field of battle and the place of agony, and rise into such fellowship with God, that we may think, and speak, and act, as if we were already in possession of our eternal joy! By the ardor of prayer and the confidence of faith we may be caught up into Paradise, and there utter words which are beyond the latitude of earth, and are dated "from the Delectable Mountains."

Nor is this all, for still the prayer rises, not only as to its matter and place, but in a very singular way it also takes to itself a higher style. Before, our Lord had asked and pleaded, but now He uses a firmer word, He says, "Father, I will." I would not force that word so as to make it bear an imperious or commanding meaning, for the Savior speaks not so to the Father, but still it has a more elevated tone about it than asking. Our Lord here uses the royal manner rather than the tone of His humiliation. He speaks like unto the Son of God, He addresses the great Father as one who counts it not robbery to be equal with Him, but exercises the prerogative of His Eternal Sonship. He says, "I will." This is a tone which belongs not to us except in a very modified degree, but it teaches us a lesson. It is well in prayer, when the Holy Spirit helps us, not only to groan out of the dust as suppliant sinners, but to seek unto our Father in the spirit of adoption with the confidence of children, and then with the promise of God in our hands we may with consecrated bravery lay hold upon the covenant angel, and cry, "I will not let You go, except You bless me." Persistency is a humble approach to this divine "I will." The will consecrated, educated, and sanctified, may and must reveal itself in our more spiritual petitions, just as, with equal correctness, it hides away when the pleading is for temporal things, and whispers, "Not as I will, but as You will." The Lord pours upon His pleading servants at times a kind of inspiration, by which they rise into power in prayer, and have their will of the Lord. Is it not written, "Delight yourself in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart?" We come at last to feel that the desires of our heart are inspired of His Spirit, and then that we have the petitions which we have asked of Him.

There ought to be much for our edification in a text like this, which in subject, place, and style rises to such an elevation. It is the apex of this wonderful pyramid of prayer, the last rung of the ladder of the light. O Spirit of the Lord, instruct us while we behold it!

I have taken this text because it has taken hold on me. Our beloved brother, Charles Stanford, has just been taken from us. I seem to be standing as one of a company of disciples, and my brethren are melting away. My brethren, my comrades, my delights, are leaving me for the better land. We have enjoyed holy and happy fellowship in days of peace, and we have stood shoulder to shoulder in the battle of the Lord, but we are melting away. One has gone; another has gone; before we look round another will have departed. We see them for a moment, and they vanish from our gaze. It is true they do not rise into the air like the Divine Master from Olivet, yet they do rise, I am persuaded of that, only the poor body descends, and that is for a very little while. They rise, to be forever with the Lord. The grief is to us who are left behind. What a gap is left where stood Hugh Stowell Brown! Who is to fill it? What a gap is left

where stood Charles Stanford! Who is to fill it? Who among us will go next? We stand like men amazed. Some of us stood next in the rank with those who have been taken. Why this constant thinning of our ranks while the warfare is so stern? Why this removal of the very best when we so much need the noblest examples? I am bowed down, and could best express myself in a flood of tears as I survey the line of graves so newly dug, but I restrain myself from so carnal a mode of regarding the matter, and look upon it in a clearer light. The Master is gathering the ripest of His fruit, and well does He deserve them. His own dear hand is putting His apples of gold into His baskets of silver, and as we see that it is the Lord, we are bewildered no longer. His word, as it comes before us in the text, calms and quiets our spirits. It dries our tears, and calls us to rejoicing as we hear our heavenly Bridegroom praying, "Father, I will that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am." We understand why the dearest and best are going. We see, in whose hand is held the magnet which attracts them to the skies. One by one they must depart from this lowland country to dwell above, in the palace of the King, for Jesus is drawing them to Himself. Our dear babes go home because "He gathers the lambs with His arm and carries them in His bosom," and our ripe saints go home because the Beloved is come into His garden to gather lilies. These words of our Lord Jesus explain the continual homegoing; they are the answer to the riddle which we call death. I am going to talk of how our honored brethren are not, because God takes them, and I shall be happy if my words shall prepare us to exercise a holy readiness to see the grand request of our Redeemer fulfilled, even though it costs us many a sorrowful parting.

I. Let us begin as our text begins, and thus the first thought about the continual gathering to the house above will be THE HOME WORD—the rallying word, "Father." Observe, our Lord had said, "Holy Father," and toward the close of the prayer He said, "O righteous Father," but in commencing this particular petition He uses the word "Father" by itself alone, this relationship is in itself so dear that it agrees best with the loftiest petition. I like to think of that name "Father," as used in this connection. Is it not the center of living unity? If there is to be a family gathering and reunion, where should it be but in the father's house? Who is at the head of the table but the father? All the interests of the children unite in the parent, and he feels for them all.

From the great Father the Lord Jesus Himself came forth. We do not understand the doctrine of the eternal filiation—we adore the mystery into which we may not pry. But we know that as our Lord Jesus is God-and-man-Mediator, He came forth from the Father, and unto the Father's will He submitted Himself in so doing. As for us, we come distinctly of that Father, it is He that made us, and not we ourselves and better and brighter fact still, of His own will He begat us by the word of truth. We were born a second time from heaven, and from our Heavenly Father our spiritual life is derived.

The whole of this sermon through, I want to show you that it is right that we should part with our brethren and joyfully permit of their going home, and surely I may at once ask you—What can be more right than

that children should go home to their father? From Him they came, to Him they owe their life, should they not always tend towards Him, and should not this be the goal of their being, that they should at last, dwell in His presence? To go away from the Father and to live apart from Him is the sorrow of our fallen nature as it plays the prodigal, but the coming back to the Father is restoration to life, to peace, to happiness. Yes, all our hopeful steps are towards the Father. We are saved when by believing in the name of Jesus we receive power to become the sons of God. Our sanctification lies in the bosom of our adoption. Because Jesus comes from the Father and leads us back to the Father, therefore is there a heaven for us. Therefore, whenever we think of heaven let us chiefly think of the Father, for it is in our Father's house that there are many mansions, and it is to the Father that our Lord has gone, that He may prepare a place for us.

"FATHER!" Why, it is a bell that rings us home. He who has the spirit of adoption feels that the Father draws him home, and he would gladly run after Him. How intensely did Jesus turn to the Father! He cannot speak of the glory wherein He is to be without coupling His Father with it. Brethren, it is in the Father that we live and move and have our being. Is there any spiritual life in the world which does not continually proceed from the life of the great Father? Is it not by the continual emanation of the Holy Spirit from the Father that we remain spiritual men? And as from Him we live, so for Him we live, if we live aright. We wish so to act as to glorify God in everything. Even our salvation should not be an ultimate end with any of us; we should desire to glorify God by our salvation. We look upon the doctrines that we preach, and the precepts which we obey, as means to the glory of God, even the Father.

This is the consummation which the First-born looks for, and to which all of us who are like Him are aspiring also, namely, that God may be all in all, that the great Father may be had in honor, and may be worshipped in every place. Since, then, we are from Him, and of Him, and to Him, and for Him, this word "Father" calls us to gather at His feet. Shall any one of us lament the process? No, we dare not complain that our choicest brethren are taken up to gladden the great Father's house. Our brother is gone, and we ask, "Where is he gone?" and when the answer comes, "He is gone to the Father," all notion of complaint is over. To whom else should he go? When the great First-born went away from us, He told His sorrowing followers that He was going to their Father and His Father, and that answer was enough. So, when our friend, or our child, or our wife, or our brother, is gone, it is enough that he is with the Father. To call them back does not occur to us, but rather we each one desire to follow after them—

"Father, I long, I faint to see
The place of Your abode;
I'd leave Your earthly courts and flee
Up to Your seat, my God."

A child may be happy at school, but he longs for the holidays. Is it merely to escape his lessons? Ah, no! Ask him, and he will tell you, "I want to go home to see my father." The same is equally true, and possibly more so, if we include the feminine form of parentage. What a home cry is that

of "mother!" The sight of that dear face has been longed and hungered for by many a child when far away. Mother or father, whichever you will, they are blended in the great Fatherhood of God. Let it but be said that anyone has gone to his father, and no further question is asked as to the right of his going there. To the father belongs the first possession of the child, should he not have his own child at home? The Savior wipes our tears away with a handkerchief which is marked in the corner with this word—"Father."

II. Secondly, I want your thoughts upon THE HOME IMPETUS. The force which draws us home lies in the word, "I will." Jesus Christ, our most true God, veiled in human form, bows His knee and prays, and throws His divine energy into the prayer for the bringing home of His redeemed. This one irresistible, everlastingly almighty prayer carries everything before it. "Father, I will that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am," is the centripetal energy which is drawing all the family of God towards its one home.

How shall the chosen get home to the Father? Chariots are provided. Here are the chariots of fire and horses of fire in this prayer. "I will," says Jesus, "that they be with Me," and with Him they must be. There are difficulties in the way—long nights and darkness lie between, and hills of guilt, forests of trouble, and bands of fierce temptations, yet the pilgrims shall surely reach their journey's end, for the Lord's "I will" shall be a wall of fire round about them. In this petition I see both sword and shield for the church militant. Here I see the eagles' wings on which they shall be borne up till they enter within the golden gates. Jesus says, "I will," and who is he that shall hinder the homecoming of the chosen? As well hope to arrest the marches of the stars of heaven.

Examine the energy of this "I will" for a moment, and you will see, first, that it has the force of *an intercessory prayer.* It is a gem from that wonderful breastplate of jewels which our great High Priest wore upon His breast when He offered His fullest intercession. I cannot imagine our Lord's interceding in vain. If He asks that we may be with Him where He is, He must assuredly have His request. It is written, that "He was heard in that He feared." When with strong crying and tears He poured out His soul unto death, His Father granted the requests of His heart. I do not wonder it should be so, how could the best Beloved fail of that which He sought in intercession from His Father God! Mark, then, that the force of irresistible intercession is drawing every blood-bought soul into the place where Jesus is. You cannot hold your dying babe, for Jesus asks for it to be with Him. Will you come into competition with your Lord? Surely you will not. You cannot hold your aged father, nor detain your beloved mother, beyond the time appointed, for the intercession of Christ has such a force about it that they must ascend even as sparks must seek the sun.

More than intercession is found in the expression "I will." It suggests the idea of *a testamentary bequest* and appointment. The Lord Jesus is making His last will and testament, and He writes, "Father, I will that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me." No man who makes his will likes to have it frustrated. Our Savior's testament will assuredly be

carried out in every jot and tittle, and if for no other reason, yet certainly for this cause, that though He died, and thus made His will valid, yet He lives again to be His own executor, and to carry out His will. When I read in our Lord's testament the words, "Father, I will that they be with Me," I ask, "Who is to hold them back?" They must in due time be with Him, for the will of the ever blessed Savior must be carried out, there can be no standing against a force of that kind.

Nor is this all, the words read to me, not only like intercession and testamentary decree, but there is a strong expression of *desire, resolve, and purpose*. Jesus desires it, and says, "I will." It is a deliberate desire—a forcible, distinct, resolute, determined purpose. The will of God is supreme law. It needs not that He should speak, He does but will or purpose, and the thing is done. Now read my text, "I will that they be with Me." The Son of God wills it. How are the saints to be hindered from what the Lord wills? They must rise from their beds of dust and silent clay—they must rise to be with Jesus where He is, for Jesus wills it. By your anxious care you may seek to detain them, you may sit about their bed and nurse them both night and day, but they must quit these dark abodes when Jesus gives the signal. You may clutch them with affectionate eagerness, and even cry in despair, "They shall not go, we cannot bear to part with them," but go they must when Jesus calls. Take back your naughty hands, which would detain them, for naughty they are if you would rob your Savior. Would you cross *His* will? Would you set at nothing His testament? You could not if you would; you would not if you could. Rather be inclined to go with them than think to resist the heavenly attraction which raises them up. If Jesus says, "I will," then it is yours to say, "Not as I will, but as You will. They were never so much mine as they are Yours. I never had so much right to them as You have who have bought them. They never so truly could be at home with me as they will be at home with You in Your own bosom, so my will dissolves itself into Your will, and I say with steadfast resignation, 'Let them go.'"

Brothers and sisters, you perceive the forces which are bearing away our beloved ones. I see tender hands reaching after us this morning; they are invisible to sense, but palpable to faith. Cords of love are being cast about the chosen, and they are being drawn out secretly from their fellows. Would you break those bands asunder, and cast those cords from us? I beseech you, think not so, but let that pierced hand, which bought the beloved ones seek out its own purchase and bring them home. Should not Jesus have His own? Do we not bow our knee and pray for Jesus, "Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven"?

III. But now I want to conduct you farther into the text. We have had the home word and the home bringing impetus, and now let us carefully note THE HOME CHARACTER. "Father, I will that *they also, whom You have given Me*, be with Me where I am." The description is—"They also, whom You have given Me." The Greek is somewhat difficult to translate. The translators of the Revised Version were, no doubt, excellent Greek scholars, and if they had known a little more English, they might have come a little nearer to a perfect translation, but they do not always appear to think the common English reader to be worthy of their considera-

tion. This is their translation in the present instance—"Father, that which You have given Me, I will that, where I am they also, may be with Me." This, to speak plainly, sounds very much like nonsense. It is the translation which a boy would present to his tutor at school, but it is of small use to the general reader. It is literal, no doubt, but literalisms are often another proof that the letter kills. Translators into the English tongue might have contrived to have given us words with a meaning in them. I merely quote the version to show you that there is here a something in the singular as well as persons in the plural. "Father, I will concerning *that* which You have given Me, that *they* may be with Me where I am." Our Lord looked upon those whom the Father gave Him as one—one body, one church, one bride; He willed that as a whole the church should be with Him where He is. Then He looked again and saw each of the many individuals of whom the one church is composed, and He prayed that each, that all of these might be with Him and behold His glory. Jesus never so prays for the whole church as to forget a single member, neither does He so pray for the members individually as to overlook the corporate capacity of the whole. Sweet thought! Jesus wills to have the whole of what He bought with His precious blood with Him in heaven; He will not lose any part. He did not die for a part of a church, nor will He be satisfied unless the entire flock which He has purchased shall be gathered around Him.

But while the Lord looks at those whom His Father gave Him as one body, He looks upon you and me, and each believer here, as a part of that great unity, and His prayer is that all of us may be with Him. I believe that He prays as much for the least as for the greatest, as much for Benjamin as for Judah, as much for the despondent as for those who are fully assured. The prayer is one of great breadth and comprehensiveness, but yet it is not the prayer which those who believe in Universalism would put into His mouth. He does not pray that those who die unbelievers may be with Him where He is, neither does He will that souls in hell should one day come out of it and be with Him in glory. There is no trace of that doctrine in holy writ, those who teach such fables draw their inspiration from some other source. The new purgatory, in which so many have come to believe, is unknown to Holy Scripture. No, our Lord's prayer is distinctly for those whom the Father gave Him—for everyone of these, but for no others. His "I will," concerns them only.

I feel right glad that there is no sort of personal character mentioned here, but only—"Those whom You have given Me." It seems as if the Lord in His last moments was not so much looking at the fruit of grace as at grace itself, He did not so much note either the perfections or the imperfections of His people, but only the fact that they were His by the eternal gift of the Father. They belonged to the Father—"Yours they were." The Father gave them to Jesus—"You gave them to Me." The Father gave them as a love token and a means of His Son's glorification—"Yours they were and You gave them to Me," and now our Lord pleads that because they were the Father's gift to Him He should have them with Him. Does anybody raise a quibble as to Christ's right to have those with Him who were His Father's, whom His Father gave to Him, and whom He Himself

actually took into His own possession? No, they ought to be with Him, since they are His in so divine a manner. If I possess a love-token that some dear one has given me I may rightly desire to have it with me. Nobody can have such a right to your wedding ring, good sister, as you have yourself, and are not Christ's saints, as it were, a signet upon His finger, a token which His Father gave Him of His good pleasure in Him? Should they not be with Jesus where He is, since they are His crown jewels and His glory? We in our creature love lift up our hands, and cry, "My Lord, my Master, let me have this dear one with me a little longer. I need the companionship of one so sweet, or life will be misery to me." But if Jesus looks us in the face and says, "Is your right better than Mine?" we draw back at once. He has a greater part in His saints than we can have. O Jesus, Your Father gave them to You of old, they are His reward for the travail of Your soul, and far be it from us to deny You. Though blinded by our tears, we can yet see the rights of Jesus, and we loyally admit them. We cry concerning our best beloved, "The Lord has taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord." Does not the text sweetly comfort us in the taking away of one and another, since it shows how they belong to Christ?

IV. And now, advancing another step, Christ reveals to us something concerning THE HOME COMPANIONSHIP in the glory land. Those who are taken away, where have they gone? The text says, "I will that they also whom You have given Me be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory."

By this language we are impressed with *the nearness of the saints to Christ in glory*—"That they may be with Me." Think for a moment, when our Lord used these words, and John took them down, the disciples were with Him. They had left the supper table where they had feasted together. The Master had said, "Arise, let us go hence," and it was in the very midst of them that the Lord Jesus offered this choice prayer. Learn, then, that in heaven the saints will be nearer to Christ than the apostles were when they sat at the table with Him, or heard Him pray. That was a nearness which might consist only in place, and their minds might still be, as they often were, far away from Him. But up in heaven we shall be one with Him in sympathy, in spirit, in conscious fellowship. We shall be with Jesus in the closest, clearest, and most complete sense. No fellowship on earth can reach to the plenitude of the communion which we shall enjoy above. "With Him"—"forever with the Lord"—this is heaven. Who would wish to detain from such companionship those whom we love?

Yet do not drop the thought of place, lest you refine away the essence of the prayer. Let us see the spiritual clearly, but let us not, on that account, make the sense less real, less matter of fact. To the prayer that His saints may be with Him our Lord added the words, "May be with Me where I am." Our bodies will rise from the dust, and they *must occupy a place,* that place will be where Jesus is. Even spirits must be somewhere, and that somewhere with us is to be where Jesus is. We are to be, not metaphorically and fancifully, but really, truly, literally with Jesus. We shall enjoy an intense nearness to Him in that blessed place which the

Father has prepared for Him, and which He is preparing for us. There is a place where Jesus is revealed in all the splendor of His majesty, amid angels and glorified spirits, and those whom our Lord's will has taken away from us have not gone into banishment in a mysterious land, neither are they shut up in a house of detention till there is a general jail delivery, but they are with Christ in paradise. They serve Him, and they see His face. Who would be so cruel as to keep a saint from such a fair country? I would desire all good for my children, my relatives, my friends, and what good is better than to be where Jesus is? Are you not glad to hear of the promotion of those you love? Will you quarrel with God because some of your dearest ones are promoted to the skies? The thought of their amazing bliss greatly moderates our natural grief. We weep for ourselves, but as we remember their companionship with the Altogether Lovely One a smile blends with our tears.

Notice the *occupation* of those who are with Jesus, "That they may behold My glory." I do not wonder that Jesus wants His dear ones to be with Him for this purpose, since love always pines for a partner in its joys. When I have been abroad, and have been especially charmed with glorious scenery, I have a hundred times felt myself saying, almost involuntarily, "How I wish that my dear wife could be here! I would enjoy this a hundred times as much if she could but see it!" It is an instinct of affection to seek fellowship in joy. The Lord Jesus is truly human, and He feels this unselfish desire of every loving human heart, and therefore says, "Father, I will that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory." Our Lord graciously permits His disciples to have fellowship with Him in His sufferings, and therefore He is all the more desirous that they should participate in His glory. He knows that nothing will be a greater joy to them than to see *Him* exalted, therefore He would give them this highest form of delight. Was not Joseph delighted when he said to his brethren, "You shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt," and still more so when he could actually show his father how great was his power, how exalted was his rank. It is joy to Jesus to let us behold His joy, and it will be glory to us to behold His glory. Should not the redeemed ascend to such blessed delights? Would you hinder them?

How unselfish it is on our Lord's part to think Himself not fully glorified till we behold His glory! How unselfish He will make us also, since it will be our glory to see His glory! He does not say that He is going to take us home, that *we* may be in glory, but that we may behold *His* glory. His glory is better to us than any personal glory; all things are more ours by being His. Glory apart from Him is no glory. Beloved, even as our Lord seems to lose Himself in His people, His people hide themselves away in Him. It is His glory to glorify them, it is their glory to glorify Him, and it will be the glory of glories for them to be glorified together. Who would not go to this heaven? Who would keep a brother out of it an hour?

Observe the fellowship which exists in the glory land. Read the verse, "That *they* may behold *My* glory, which *You* have given *Me."* What a blending of persons! Where did our Lord's glory come from? "You gave it to Me," says Jesus. Hence it is the Father's glory passed over to the Son.

Yet Jesus calls it, "*My* glory," for it is truly His own. The saints are to behold this, and it will be their glory to see it. Here we have the Father, and the Elder Brother, and the many brethren, and a wonderful communism of interests and possessions. It is ever so in a loving family. There we draw no hard and fast lines of *meum* and *teum*. "All yours are mine, and mine are yours." We ask not "Whose is this?" or "Whose is that?" when we are at home. If you were to go into a stranger's house, you would not think of taking this or that, but as your father's own son you make yourself at home, and no one inquires, "What are you doing?" Bridegroom and bride do not quarrel about property whether it is his or hers. Laws have been made lately to settle different estates for those who are one; this is well enough when love is gone, but true conjugal love laughs at all that can make separate that which God has joined together. The wife says, "That is mine." "No" says the quibbler, "it is your husband's." Her answer is, "and therefore it is mine." In that blessed union into which divine love has admitted us Christ is ours, and we are Christ's, His Father is our Father, we are one with Him, He is one with the Father, and hence all things are ours, and the Father Himself loves us. All this will not only be true in heaven, but it will there be realized and acted on. So when the Lord brings His people home, we shall be one with Him, and He one with the Father, and we also in Him one with the Father, so that we shall then find boundless glory in beholding the glory of our Lord and God. My text has baffled me. I am beaten back by its blaze of light. Forgive me. I had a thought, but I cannot express it. The fire of my text burns with such fervent heat that it threatens to consume me if I draw nearer to it. Easily could I step into heaven—so I feel at this moment.

V. I must end by speaking of THE HOME ATMOSPHERE. None of us can wish our departed friends back from their thrones. Since they have gone to be where Jesus is, and to enter so fully into the most blissful fellowship with Him and the Father, we would not have them return even for an instant to this poor country. We only wish that our turn for migration may come soon. We would not be too long divided from our fellows. If some of the birds have gone to the sunny land, let us plume our wings to follow them. There will be only a little interval between our parting and our everlasting meeting. Look at the many that died before we came into the world. Some of them have been in heaven together now for thousands of years. To them it must seem that they were only divided by a moment's interval, their continents of fellowship have made the channel of death seem but a streak of sea. Soon we shall take the same view of things.

Breathe the home atmosphere. Jesus tells us that the atmosphere of His home is *love,* "You loved Me before the foundation of the world." Brethren, can you follow me in a great flight? Can you stretch broader wings than the condor ever knew, and fly back into the unbeginning eternity? There was a day before all days, when there was no day but the Ancient of Days. There was a time before all time, when only God was, the uncreated, the only-existent One. The Divine Three, Father, Son, and Spirit, lived in blessed consort with each other, delighting in each other. Oh the intensity of the divine love of the Father to the Son! There was no

world, no sun, no moon, no stars, no universe, but God alone and the whole of God's omnipotence flowed forth in a stream of love to the Son, while the Son's whole being remained eternally one with the Father by a mysterious essential union. How came all this which we now see and hear? Why this creation; this fall of Adam, this redemption, this church, this heaven? How came it all about? It needed not to have been, but the Father's love made Him resolve to show forth the glory of His Son. The mysterious volume which has been gradually unfolded before us has only this one design—the Father would make known His love to the Son, and make the Son's glories to appear before the eyes of those whom the Father gave Him. This Fall and this Redemption, and the story as a whole, so far as the divine purpose is concerned, are the fruit of the Father's love to the Son, and His delight in glorifying the Son. Those myriads, those white-robed myriads, harping to music infinitely deep, what do they all mean? They are the Father's delight in the Son. That He might be glorified forever, He permitted that He should bear a human body, and should suffer, bleed, and die, so that there might come out of Him, as a harvest comes from a dying and buried corn of wheat, all the countless hosts of elect souls, ordained forever to a felicity exceeding bounds. These are the bride of the Lamb, the body of Christ, the fullness of Him that fills all in all. Their destiny is so high that no language can fully describe it. God only knows the love of God, and all that it has prepared for those who are the objects of it.

Love wraps up the whole in its cloth of gold. Love is both the source and the channel, and the end of the divine acting. Because the Father loved the Son He gave us to Him, and ordained that we should be with Him. His love to us is love to the Son. "Not for your sakes do I this, O House of Israel; be ashamed and be confounded." Because of the boundless, ineffable, infinite love of the great Father toward His Son, therefore has He ordained this whole system of salvation and redemption, that Jesus in the church of His redeemed might everlastingly be glorified. Let our saintly ones go home, beloved, if that is the design of their going. Since all comes of divine love, and all sets forth divine love, let them go to Him who loves them—let divine love fulfill its purpose of bringing many sons unto glory. Since the Father once made our Lord perfect by His sufferings, let Him now be made perfectly glorious by the coming up of His redeemed from the purifying bath of His atonement. I see them rise like sheep from the washing, all of them gathering with delight at the feet of that great Shepherd of the sheep.

Beloved, I am lost in the subject now. I breathe that heavenly air. Love surrounds all, and conquers grief. I will not cause the temperature to fall by uttering any other words but this—Hold your friends lovingly, but be ready to yield them to Jesus. Detain them not from Him to whom they belong. When they are sick, fast and pray, but when they are departed, do much as David did, who washed his face, and ate, and drank. You cannot bring them back again, you will go to them, they cannot return to you. Comfort yourselves with the double thought of their joy in Christ and Christ's joy in them; add the triple thought of the Father's joy in Christ and in them. Let us watch the Master's call. Let us not dread the

question—who next, and who next? Let none of us start back as though we hoped to linger longer than others. Let us even desire to see our names in the celestial conscription. Let us be willing to be dealt with just as our Lord pleases. Let no doubt intervene, let no gloom encompass us. Dying is but going home, indeed, there is no dying for the saints. Charles Stanford is gone! Thus was his death told to me—"He drew up his feet and smiled." Thus will you and I depart. He had borne his testimony in the light, even when blind. He had cheered us all, though he was the greatest sufferer of us all, and now the film has gone from the eyes, and the *anguish* is gone from the heart, and he is with Jesus. He smiled. What a sight was that which caused that smile! I have seen many faces of dear departed ones lit up with splendor. Of many I could feel sure that they had seen a vision of angels. Traces of a reflected glory hung about their countenances. O brethren, we shall soon know more of heaven than all the divines can tell us. Let us go home now to our own dwellings, but let us pledge ourselves that we will meet again. But where shall we appoint the trysting place? It would be idle to appoint any spot of earth, for this assembly will never come together again in this world. We will meet with Jesus, where He is, where we shall behold His glory. Some of you cannot do this. Turn from your evil ways. Turn to the right, where stands that cross, and keep straight on and you will come to Jesus in glory. Blessed be the name of the Lord! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
REVELATION 21:22-27; 22.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—855, 865, 873.

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

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

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

JESUS ANGRY WITH HARD HEARTS
NO. 1893

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 28, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And when He had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, He said unto the man, Stretch forth your hand." Mark 3:5.

MY text will really consist of these words, "He looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts." It is the divine Lord, the pitiful Jesus, the meek and lowly in heart, who is here described as being angry. Where else do we meet with such a statement while He was here among men? A poor man was present in the synagogue that had a withered hand, it was his right hand, and he who has to earn his daily bread can guess what it must be to have that useful member dried up or paralyzed. In the same synagogue was the Savior, ready to restore to that hand all its known force and cunning. Happy conjunction! The company that had gathered in the synagogue, professedly to worship God, would they not have special cause to do so when, they saw a miracle of divine goodness? I can imagine them whispering one to another, "We shall see our poor neighbor restored today, for the Son of God has come among us with power to heal, and He will make this a very glorious Sabbath by His work of gracious power."

But I must not let imagination mislead me; they did nothing of the kind. Instead of this, they sat watching the Lord Jesus, not to be delighted by an act of His power, but to find something for which they might accuse Him. When all came to all, the utmost that they would be able to allege would be that He had healed a withered hand *on the Sabbath*. Overlooking the commendation due for the miracle of healing, they laid the emphasis upon its being done on the Sabbath, and held up their hands with horror that such a secular action should be performed on such a sacred day. Now, the Savior puts very plainly before them the question, "Is it right to do good on the Sabbath day?" He put it in a form which only allowed one reply. The question could, no doubt, have been easily answered by these Scribes and Pharisees, but then it would have condemned them, and therefore they were all as mute as mice. Scribes most skilled in splitting hairs, and Pharisees who could measure the border of a garment to the eighth of an inch, declined to answer one of the simplest questions in morals. Mark describes the Savior as looking round upon them all with anger and grief, as well He might.

You know how minute Mark is in his record, his observation is microscopic, and his description is graphic to the last degree. By the help of Mark's clear words you can easily picture the Savior looking round upon them. He stands up boldly, as one who had nothing to conceal, as one who was about to do that which would need no defense. He challenged observation, though He knew that His opposition to ecclesiastical authority would involve His own death, and hasten the hour of the cross. He did not defy them, but He did make them feel their insignificance as He stood looking round upon them all. Can you conceive the power of that look? The look of a man who is much given to anger has little force in it; it is the blaze of a wisp of straw, fierce and futile. In many cases we almost smile at the impotent rage which looks out from angry eyes, but a gentle spirit, like the Savior's, commands reverence if once moved to indignation. His meek and lowly heart could only have been stirred with anger by some overwhelming cause. We are sure that He did well to be angry.

Even when moved to an indignant look, His anger ended there, He only looked, but spoke no word of upbraiding. And the look itself had in it more of pity than of contempt, or, as one puts it, "more of compassion than of passion." Our Lord's look upon that assembly of opponents deserves our earnest regard. He paused long enough in that survey to gaze upon each person, and to let him know what was intended by the glance. Nobody escaped the searching light which those expressive eyes flashed upon each malicious watcher. They saw that to Him their base conduct was loathsome, He understood them, and was deeply moved by their obstinacy.

Note well that Jesus did not speak a word, and yet He said more without words than another man could have said with them. They were not worthy of a word, neither would more words have had the slightest effect upon them. He saved His words for the poor man with the withered hand, but for these people a look was the best reply, they looked on Him, and now He looked on them. This helps me to understand that passage in the Revelation, where the ungodly are represented as crying to the rocks to cover them, and the hills to hide them from the face of Him that sat upon the throne. The Judge has not spoken so much as a single word, not yet has He opened the books, not yet has He pronounced the sentence, "Depart, you cursed," but they are altogether terrified by the look of that august countenance. Concentrated love dwells in the face of Jesus, the Judge, but in that dread day, they will see it set on fire with wrath. The wrath of a lion is great, but it is nothing compared with that of the Lamb. I wish I had skill to describe our Lord's look, but I must ask the aid of your understanding and your imagination to make it vivid to your minds.

When Mark has told us of that look, he proceeds to mention the mingled feelings which were revealed by it. In that look there were two things—there were anger and grief—indignation and inward sorrow. "He looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness

of their hearts." He was angry that they should willingly blind their eyes to a truth so plain, an argument so convincing. He had put to them a question to which there could only be one answer and they would not give it, He had thrown light on their eyes, and they would not see it, He had utterly destroyed their chosen pretext for opposition, and yet they would persist in opposing Him. Evidently it is possible to be angry and to be right. Hard to many is the precept, "Be you angry and sin not," and this fact renders the Savior's character all the more admirable, since He so easily accomplished what is so difficult to us. He could be angry with the sin, and yet never cease to compassionate the sinner. His was not anger which desired evil to its object, no touch of malevolence was in it, it was simply love on fire, love burning with indignation against that which is unlovely.

Mingled with this anger there was grief. He was heart-broken because their hearts were so hard. As Manton puts it, "He was softened because of their hardness." His was not the pitiless flame of wrath which burns in a dry eye; He had tears as well as anger. His thunderstorm brought a shower of pity with it. The Greek word is hard to translate. There is what an eminent critic calls a sort of *togetherness* in the word, He grieved with them. He felt that the hardness of their hearts would one day bring upon them an awful misery, and foreseeing that coming grief, He grieved with them by anticipation. He was grieved at their hardness because it would injure them; their blind enmity vexed Him because it was securing their own destruction. He was angry because they were willfully rejecting the light which would have illuminated them with heavenly brightness, the life which could have quickened them into fullness of joy. They were thus determinedly and resolutely destroying their own souls out of hatred to Him, and He was angry, more for their sakes than His own.

There is something very admirable in our Savior even when we see Him in an unusual condition. Even when He grows angry with men, He is angry with them because they will not let Him bless them, because they will persevere in opposing Him for reasons which they cannot themselves support, and dare not even own. If I had been one of the disciples who were with Him in the synagogue, I think I should have burned with indignation to see them all sitting there, refusing to forego their hate, and yet unable to say a word in defense of it. I doubt not, the loving spirit of John grew warm. What a horrible thing that any creature in the shape of a man should act so unworthily to the blessed Son of God, as to blame Him for doing good! What a disgrace to our race, for men to be so inhuman as to wish to see their fellow man remain withered, and to dare to blame the gentle Physician who was about to make him perfectly whole! Man is indeed at enmity with God when he finds an argument for hate in a deed of love.

Our first question is, *What was the cause of this anger and this grief?* Then let us inquire, *Does anything of this sort rest in us?* Do we cause our Lord anger and grief? And thirdly, let us ask, *what should be our feeling,*

when we see that something about us may cause, or does cause Him, anger and grief? Oh that the Holy Spirit may bless this sermon to all who hear me this day!

I. WHAT CAUSED THIS ANGER AND GRIEF? It was their hardness of heart. To use other words, it was the callousness of their conscience, their lack of feeling. Their hearts had, as it were, grown hard, and had lost their proper softness. The hand may furnish us with an illustration. Some persons have very delicate hands, the blind who read raised type with their fingers develop special sensitiveness, and this sensitiveness is of great value. But when men are put to pick unraveling rope, or break stones, or do other rough work, their hands become hard and callous, even so is it with the heart, which ought to be exceedingly tender, through continuance in sin it grows callous and unfeeling. Use is second nature, the traveler's feet get hardened to the way, his face becomes hardened to the cold, and his whole constitution is hardened by his mode of life. Persons have taken deadly drugs little by little till they have been hardened against their results, we read in history that Mithridates had used poison till at last he was unable to kill himself by it, so hardened had he become. But hardening is of the worst kind when it takes place in the heart. The heart ought to be all tenderness, but when it is not, the life must be coarse and evil. Yet multitudes are morally smitten with ossification of the heart. Do we not know some men in whom the heart is simply a huge muscle? If they have any hearts they are made of leather, for they have no pity for anybody, no fellow feeling, even for their relatives. God save us from a hard heart, it leads to something worse than death! A heart of flesh may be gone out of a man, and instead thereof he may have a heart of stone, Scripture even calls it "an adamant stone"—unfeeling, unyielding, impenetrable, obstinate. Those enemies of our Lord who sat in the synagogue that Sabbath day were incorrigible, they were desperately set on hating Him, and they strengthened themselves in the resolve that they would not be convinced, and would not cease to oppose Him, let Him say or do whatever He might. Our Lord Jesus became angry, grieved, and sorrowful with them.

What was their exact fault?

First, *they would not see,* though the case was clear. He had set the truth so plainly before them that they were obliged to strain their understandings to avoid being convinced, they had to draw down the blinds of the soul, and put up the shutters of the mind, to be able *not* to see. There are none as blind as those that will not see, and these were of that blindest order, they were blind people that had eyes and boasted that they could see, and therefore their sin was utterly without excuse. Ah, me! I fear that we have many around us still, who know, but do not act on their knowledge, who do not wish to be convinced and converted, but harden themselves against known duty and plain right.

What was more, *what these people were forced to see they would not acknowledge*. They sullenly held their tongues when they were bound to

speak. Does it not happen to many persons that the gospel forces itself upon their belief? They feel that they could not conjure up an argument against the divine truth which is set before them. The word comes with such demonstration that it smites them with sledgehammer force, but they do not intend to admit its power, and so they brace themselves up to bear the blow without yielding. They shut their months against the water of life which is held up to them in the golden cup of the gospel. No child could shut his teeth more desperately against medicine than they against the gospel. Any man may take a horse to the water, but ten thousand cannot make him drink, and this is proved in many a hearer of the word. There sat these Scribes and Pharisees, it is a wonder that the stones did not cry out against them, they were so doggedly determined not to admit that which they could not deny. Are there none of that breed among us still?

More than that, *while they would not see what was so plain, they were diligently seeking to spy out flaws and faults where there were none, namely, in the Lord Jesus*. So there are many who profess that they cannot understand the gospel, but they have understanding enough to quibble at it, and cast slurs upon it. They have a cruelly keen eye for non-existent errors in Scripture; they find this mistake in Deuteronomy and another in Genesis. What great wisdom, to be diligent in making discoveries against one's own eternal interests! The gospel of the Lord Jesus is man's only hope of salvation, what a pity to count it the height of cleverness to destroy our only hope! Alas for captious skeptics! They are sharp-sighted as eagles against themselves, but they are blind as bats to those things which make for their peace. These Scribes and Pharisees tried to discover the undiscoverable, namely, some fault in Jesus, and yet they could not or would not see the wickedness of their own opposition to Him.

They dared to sit in judgment upon the Lord, who proved Himself by His miracles to be divine, and yet all the while they professed great reverence for God and for His law. Though they were fighting against God, *they made the pretense of being very zealous for Him,* and especially for His holy day. This is an old trick of the enemy, to fight true religion with false religion, to battle with godliness in the name of orthodoxy. This is a hollow sham, and we do not wonder that our ever sincere and truthful Lord felt indignant at it. You will know yourselves whether you ever do this. I fear that many do. By their zeal for the externals of religion they try to justify their opposition to the vital possession of it.

Brethren, I pray that none of us may be hypocrites, for the Lord Jesus cannot endure such. He cares not for whitewashed sepulchers, but proclaims woe unto all false professors. Here let me give you a parable—In our fine old churches and cathedrals you see monuments raised to the dead. These are rich in costly marble and fine statuary, with here and there a touch of gold, and a Latin inscription flattering the dead. What a goodly show! Yet what does it all mean? Why, that, corpses are under-

neath. Take down those marble slabs, remove a little earth, and you come to corruption and moving loathsomeness. Graves are fitter for cemeteries than for the place which is consecrated to the living God. I do not mean by this any censure upon the tombs, which are well enough, I only use them as a parable. What shall I say of those men and women of whom they are the type and emblem? They are dead while they live, and have a form of godliness but deny the power of it; they present a fair outside, but secretly practice all manner of abominations. What have these to do in the church of God? What a horror to know that there are such in the assemblies of the saints! O my hearers; dread the hardness which would permit you to be hypocrites! Shun above all things that deadness of soul which makes a false profession possible, for this is very grievous to the Lord.

A hard heart is insensible, impenetrable, and inflexible. You can no more affect it than if you should strike your hand against a stone wall. Satan has fortified it, and made its possessor to be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the works of sin. The enmity of such a heart leads it to resist all that is good, its hardness returns the efforts of love in the form of opposition. Our Savior saw before Him persons who would oppose Him whatever He did, and would not change their minds however they might be made to see their error. Let this suffice to explain the scene before us of our Lord grieved and angry.

II. I must now come closer to home, while I inquire, IS THERE ANYTHING OF THIS SORT AMONG US? Oh, for help in the work of self-examination!

Remember, we may grieve the Savior because of the hardness of our hearts, and yet be very respectable people. We may go to the synagogue, as these did, we may be Bible readers, as the Scribes were, we may practice all the outward forms of religion, as the Pharisees did, and yet the Lord Jesus may be grieved with us because of the hardness of our heart.

We may anger the Lord, and yet be strictly non-committal. I dare say there are some here who are not Christians, and yet they never say a word against Christianity. They are strictly neutral. They judge that the less they think or say about this great matter the better. Jesus was angry that men should be silent when honesty and candor demanded speech of them. You must not think you are going to escape by saying, “I am not a professor.” There can be no third party in this case. In the eternal world there is no provision made for neutrals. Those who are not with Jesus are against Him, and they that gather not with Him are scattering abroad. You are either wheat or tares, and there is nothing between the two. O sirs, you grieve Him though you do not openly oppose Him! Some of you are especially guilty, for you ought to be among the foremost of His friends. Shame on you to treat the Lord so ill!

You may be very tender towards other people; in fact, you may have, like the old Jewish king, great tenderness towards everybody but the Lord. Did not Zedekiah say, “The king is not he that can do anything

against you"? I know many who are so fond of pleasing others that they cannot be Christians. They have not the moral courage to oppose any one for the truth's sake. O sirs, this may well make Jesus look upon you with anger and grief, that you should be so self-denying, so kind, and so considerate to others, and yet act so cruelly to Him and to yourselves. To yourselves, it is a cruel kindness, to save yourselves from speaking out. Your fear is driving you to spiritual suicide. To save a little present trouble you are heaping up wrath and judgment.

Alas, this hardness of heart may be in us, though we have occasional melting! I think that man has a very hard heart that is at times deeply moved, but violently represses his emotions. He hurries home to his chamber greatly distressed, but in a short time he rallies, and shakes off his fears. He goes to a funeral, and trembles on the brink of the grave, but joins his merry companions, and is at his sins again. He likes to hear a stirring sermon, but he is careful not to go beyond his depth while hearing it. He is on the watch against his own welfare, and is careful to keep out of the way of a blessing. By a desperate resolve he holds out against the pressure of the grace of God, as it comes to him in exhortations and entreaties. He is often rebuked, but he hardens his neck, he is occasionally on the verge of yielding, but he recovers his evil firmness, and holds on his way with perseverance worthy of a better cause. How often have we hoped better things for some of you! How often have you blighted those hopes! You must be very hard in heart to hold out so long. It shows a strong constitution when a man has frequently been near to death, and yet has recovered and it shows an awful vitality of evil when you have been driven to the verge of repentance, and then have deliberately turned back to the way of evil, sinning against conscience and conviction.

Yes, and we may have this hardness of heart, and yet keep quite clear of gross sins. I have wondered at some men, how they have guarded themselves in certain directions, and yet have been lax in other matters. While they have gone to excess in sins against God, they have been scrupulous in avoiding wrong towards man. Their sins have not been stones, but sand, I hope they do not forget that "sand is heavy," and that a vessel can as easily be wrecked upon a quicksand as upon a rock. Your outwardly moral man is often a hardened rebel against God. His pride of character helps to harden him against the gospel of grace. He condemns others who are really no worse than himself. There is an abominable kind of prudence which keeps some men out of certain sins; they are too mean to be prodigal, too fond of ease to plunge into risky sins. Many a man is carried off his feet by a sudden flood of temptation, and sins grievously, and yet at heart he may be by no means as hardened as the cool, calculating transgressor. Woe unto the man who has learned to sin deliberately, and to measure out iniquity as if it were a lawful merchandize, to be weighed by the ounce and the pound! Why sir, on account of the evident strength of your mind better things are expected of you. You

cannot plead violence of passion, or feebleness of judgement. For you there will be reserved the deeper hell, though you escape present condemnation.

This hardness of heart may not overcome you to the full at present, and yet you may have grave cause to dread it. Hardness of heart creeps over men by insensible degrees. The hardest-hearted man in the world was not so once, the flesh of his heart was petrified little by little. He that can now curse and blaspheme once wept for his boyish faults at his mother's knee, and would have shuddered at the bare idea of falling asleep without a prayer. There are those about us who would give worlds to be free from the bondage of habit, so as to feel as once they did. Their soul is as parched as the Sahara, it has forgotten the dew of tears, their heart is hot as an oven with evil passions, and no soft breath of holy penitence ever visits it. Oh that they could weep! Oh that they could feel! Repentance is hidden from their eyes. There remains nothing sensitive about them, except it is the base imitation of it which comes over them when they are in a maudlin state through strong drink. What calamity can be greater? What can be said of sin that is more terrible than that it hardens and deadens? Well did the apostle say, "Exhort one another daily, while it is called today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

I cannot forbear saying that among the hardened there are some who may be said especially to provoke the Lord. Among these we must mention those who, from their birth and education, received an unusually keen moral sense, but have blunted it by repeated crimes. Those sin doubly who have had double light and special tenderness of nature. Judge, O you sons of the godly, whether there are not many such among you! Esau was all the more a "profane person" because he was a son of Isaac, knew something about the covenant heritage, and had certain fine touches of nature which ought to have made him a better man.

This is also true of those who have been indulged by Providence. God has dealt with them with wonderful favor, they have continued long in good health, they have been prosperous in business, their children have grown up around them, they have all that heart can wish, and yet God receives from them no gratitude; indeed, they hardly give a thought to Him. Ingratitude is sure to bring a curse upon the man who is guilty of it. Alas, the ungrateful are numerous everywhere! Some who are well known to me should have remembered the Lord, for He has granted them a smooth path, a full wallet, and sunshine to travel in. If there were an honest heart in you, your hearts would cleave to the Lord in deep and hearty love. Silken cords of love are stronger with true men than fetters of iron are to thieves.

Let me not forget the obligations of others who have been often chastened, for this side of the question has its force also. Certain persons have endured many trials; they have often suffered pain of body, and have been brought at times to the verge of the grave, they have lost the

beloved of their eyes with a stroke, they have followed their children to the grave, sorrows have been multiplied to them. Yet, after all, they are hard of heart. The fire of affliction has not softened their iron nature. Why should they be stricken any more? They will revolt more and more. The Lord Himself cries, "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto you?" Long-suffering fails, mercy is weary. There are no more rods to use upon you, as the bullock kicks out against the goad, so do you resist the chastening of the Lord God. The Savior looks upon all such with that grieving anger of which the text speaks.

Alas, I dare not omit those towards whom the Savior must feel this anger very especially, because they have been the subjects of a tender, earnest, faithful ministry. I will not say much of my own personal ministry, which has been spent for years upon many of you, but assuredly if it has not affected you; it is not for lack of strong desire and intense longing to be of service to your souls. God is my witness that I have kept back nothing of His truth. I have never flattered you, neither have I occupied this pulpit to make it a platform for self-display. I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God. But, apart from this, certain of you have had the tender ministries of a holy mother who is now with God, of a wise father who lives still to pray for you, of affectionate teachers who instructed you aright, and loving friends who sought your good. Father, your child has wooed you. Young man, your newly-converted wife has agonized for you, and is agonizing even now. Very select have been the agencies used upon you. Choice and musical the voices which have endeavored to charm you. If these do not reach you, neither would you be converted though one rose from the dead. If Jesus Himself were here again among men, how could even He reach you? If all the means He has already used have failed with you, I know not what is to be done with you. The Savior Himself will, I fear, leave you, with a look of grief and anger He will turn from you because of the hardness of your heart. Stay, Lord Jesus, stay a little longer! Perhaps they will be won next time. Bid not Your Spirit take His everlasting flight. Do not swear in Your wrath that they shall not enter into Your rest, but be patient with them yet a little longer, for Your mercy's sake.

III. We must now close. Oh that my poor pleading may not have been lost upon you! In many things which I have spoken there has been a loud voice to many of you, now hear me while I raise the question, WHAT SHOULD BE OUR FEELING IN REFERENCE TO THIS SUBJECT?

First, *let us renounce forever the habit of quibbling*. These Scribes and Pharisees were great word-spinners, critics, fault-finders. They found fault with the Savior for healing on the Sabbath day. He had not broken God's law of the Sabbath; He had only exposed their error upon that point. If the Sabbath had not furnished an opportunity for objection, they would have found another, for they meant to object, one way or another, they resolved to contradict. Multitudes of persons in this present day are most effectually hardening their hearts by the habit of quibbling. While

others are struck by the beauty of the gospel which they hear, these people only remember a mispronunciation made by the preacher. Having commenced in this line they begin to sit in judgment on the gospel preached, and before long the Scriptures themselves are subjected to their alteration and correction. Reverence is gone, and self-sufficiency reigns supreme. They criticize God's Word. Any fool can do that, but only a fool will do it. They give themselves the airs of literary men, they are not like common hearers; they require something more intellectual. They look down with contempt upon people who enjoy the gospel, and are proving the power of it in their lives. They themselves are persons of remarkable mind, men of light and leading, and it gives them distinction to act the part of skeptics. They show their great learning by turning up their noses at the plain teachings of the Bible. It seems to be the great feature of a cultured man nowadays to wear a sneer upon his face when he meets with believers in inspiration. An idiot can attain in five minutes to a high degree of contempt of others, do not exhibit such folly. Pride of this sort ruins those who indulge it. To be unbelieving in order to show one's superiority is an unsatisfactory business. Let us never imitate that evil spirit, who in the Garden of Eden proved himself to be the patron and exemplar of all skeptics. Remember how he raised the question, "Yes, has God said?" Forget not how he went further, and like a sage philosopher, hinted that there was a larger hope, "You shall not surely die," he said. Then he advanced to lay down a daring radical philosophy, and whispered, "God knows that in the day you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods." This old serpent has left his trail on many minds at the present day, and you can see it in the slimy questions and poisonous suggestions of the age. Get away from quibbling; it is of all labors the least remunerative.

Next, *let us feel an intense desire to submit ourselves unto the Lord Jesus*. If He is in the synagogue, let us ask Him to heal us, and to do it in His own way. Let us become His disciples, and follow Him wheresoever He goes. Yield yourselves unto God. Be as melted wax to the seal. Be as the water of the lake, which is moved with every breath of the wind. All He wills is our salvation. Lord Jesus, let Your will be done!

Let us be careful to keep away from all hardening influences, whether of books, or men, or habits, or pleasures. If there is any company which deadens us to spiritual things, which hinders our prayers, shakes our faith, or dampens our zeal, let us get out of it, and stay out of it. If any amusement lessens our hatred of sin, let us never go near it, if any book clouds our view of Jesus, let us never read it. We grow hard soon enough through the needful contact with the world which arises out of workday life and business pursuits; let us not increase these evils. Shun the idler's talk, the scorner's seat, and the way of the ungodly. Shun false doctrine, worldliness, and strife. Keep clear of frivolity and trifling. Be in earnest, and be pure, live near to God, and remove far off from the throne of iniquity.

Lastly, *use all softening influences*. Ask to have your heart daily rendered sensitive by the indwelling of the quickening Spirit. Go often to hear the word, it is like a fire, and like a hammer breaking the rock in pieces. Dwell at the foot of the cross; it is there that tenderness is born into human hearts. Jesus makes all hearts soft, and then stamps His image on them. Entreat the Holy Spirit to give you a very vivid sense of sin, and a very intense dread of it. Pray often according to the tenor of Charles Wesley's hymn, in which he cries—

"Quick as the apple of an eye,
O God, my conscience make!
Awake my soul when sin is nigh,
And keep it still awake.
Oh, may the least omission pain
My well-instructed soul;
And drive me to the blood again,
Which makes the wounded whole!"

If such is the condition of our heart our Lord will not be angry with us. He will look round upon us with joy, and take a delight in us.

So far I have kept to the text, bearing all the while the burden of the Lord. If it is not heavy hearing to you, it is certainly painful preaching to me. That same love which made the loving Jesus grieved has driven me to speak after this fashion. Not that I love men as much as He did, but a spark from His fire has kindled in my soul, and is burning there according to the measure of grace given. But now, my dear hearers, let me indulge myself with a word of gospel. Surely there are some among you who desire to lose your hardness. You are crying to yourselves—

"Heart of stone, relent! Relent!
Melt by Jesus' love subdued!"

To you there is abundant cause of hope. He who made the heart can melt it. Job said, "God makes my heart soft." It is the peculiar office of the Holy Spirit to renew our nature, indeed, He makes us to be born again, working on the behalf of our Lord Jesus, whose royal word is, "Behold I make all things new." The Holy Spirit can work in us conviction of sin, the new birth, faith in the Lord Jesus, deep contrition, and holy tenderness. Do you desire that it should be so? Will you join me in a silent prayer that His melting operations may at this moment be felt in your soul?

To you is the word of this salvation sent. The Lord God has undertaken to glorify Himself in redeeming His people from all iniquity. He has entered into covenant with His chosen, and all who believe in His Son Jesus are comprehended in that number. The covenant speaks on this wise, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh." (Eze 36:26). See how this promise exactly meets your case! That kind of heart which you so greatly need shall be given you, though indeed it is a miracle of miracles to do it. A new arm or leg would be a wonder, but what shall be said of a new heart? The spirit which you also so greatly require is to be bestowed; your whole tone,

temper, and tendency shall be altered in an extraordinary manner. The Lord can drive out the evil spirit, and then He can renew your spirit, and fill your being with His own Holy Spirit. As for that nature which refuses to feel or yield, or break or bend, the Lord is able to take this altogether away. What an operation to perform, and yet leave the patient alive! "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh." None but He that made the heart could execute such delicate surgery as this. Do you think that it can never be done in your case? Remember that the Lord never speaks beyond His line; there is no boasting with Him. His arm has not waxed short; He is still able to save unto the uttermost. When the old stony heart is gone, the Lord can fill up the empty space with the most gentle and sensitive affections, even as He says, "I will give you a heart of flesh." By this means we shall be made to stand in awe of God's word, we shall tremble before Him; we shall also feel a childlike gratitude, a filial love, and a holy obedience. Instead of needing to be smitten with a hammer we shall feel the slightest touch of the divine finger, and shall answer to the faintest call of the divine voice. What a change!

Now this is a matter of promise. See how the verse glitters with "I will," and "I will." The Lord, who is able to perform His word, has spoken in this fashion, and He will not run back from His promise. But please read the thirty-seventh verse of this thirty-sixth chapter of Ezekiel, and mark it well. "Thus says the Lord God; I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." Will you not inquire? Will you not ask the Lord to do this for you? If so, your prayer has begun to be answered. Your desire is a token that the stone is softening, and flesh is taking its place. O Lord, grant that it may be so! Believe in the Lord Jesus that He is able to do this unto you, and it shall be according to your faith.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
MARK 2:23-28; 3:1-7; HEBREWS 3:7-19.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—257, 579, 598.

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

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

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

THE TWO APPEARINGS AND THE DISCIPLINE OF GRACE
NO. 1894

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 4, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."
Titus 2:11-14.

UPON reading this text one sees at a glance that Paul believed in a Divine Savior. He did not preach a Savior who was a mere man. He believed the Lord Jesus Christ to be truly man, but he also believed Him to be God over all, and he therefore uses the striking words, "the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ." There is no appearing of God the Father, there is no such expression in Scripture, the appearing is the appearing of that second person of the blessed Trinity in unity who has already once appeared, and who will appear a second time without a sin offering unto salvation in the latter days. Paul believed in Jesus as "the great God and our Savior." It was his high delight to extol the Lord who once was crucified in weakness. He calls Him here, "the *great* God," thus especially dwelling upon His power, dominion, and glory, and this is the more remarkable because he immediately goes on to say, "Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity." He that gave Himself, He that surrendered life itself upon the accursed tree, He that was stripped of all honor and glory and entered into the utmost depths of humiliation, was assuredly the great God notwithstanding all. O, brothers, if you take away the Deity of Christ what in the Gospel is left that is worth preaching? None but the great God is equal to the work of being our Savior.

We learn also at first sight that Paul believed in a great redemption, "Who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity." That word "redemption," sounds in my ears like a silver bell. We are ransomed, purchased back from slavery and this at an immeasurable price, not merely by the obedience of Christ, nor the suffering of Christ, nor even the death of Christ, but by Christ giving *Himself* for us. All that there is in the great God and Savior was paid down that He might "redeem us from all iniquity." The splendor of the Gospel lies in the redeem-

ing sacrifice of the Son of God, and we shall never fail to put this to the front in our preaching. It is the gem of all the Gospel gems. As the moon is among the stars, so is this great doctrine among all the lesser lights which God has kindled to make glad the night of fallen man. Paul never hesitates, he has a divine Savior and a divine redemption, and he preaches these with unwavering confidence. Oh that all preachers were like him!

It is also clear that Paul looked upon the appearing of the Savior as a Redeemer from all iniquity as a display of the grace of God. He says, "The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men." In the person of Christ the grace of God is revealed, as when the sun rises and makes glad all lands. It is not a private vision of God to a favored prophet on the lone mountain's brow, but it is an open declaration of the grace of God to every creature under heaven—a display of the grace of God to all eyes that are open to behold it. When the Lord Jesus Christ came to Bethlehem, and when He closed a perfect life by death upon Calvary, He manifested the grace of God more gloriously than has been done by creation or Providence. This is the clearest Revelation of the everlasting mercy of the living God. In the Redeemer we behold the unveiling of the Father's face. What if I say the laying bare of the divine heart? To repeat the figure of the text, this is the dayspring from on high which has visited us, the Sun which has risen with healing in His wings. The grace of God has shone forth conspicuously, and made itself visible to men of every rank in the person and work of the Lord Jesus. This was not given us because of anything deserved on our part; it is a manifestation of free, rich, undeserved grace and of that grace in its fullness. The grace of God has been made manifest to the entire universe in the appearing of Jesus Christ our Lord.

The grand objective of the manifestation of divine grace in Christ Jesus is to deliver men from the dominion of evil. The world in Paul's day was sunk in immorality, debauchery, ungodliness, bloodshed, and cruelty of every kind. I have not time this morning to give you even an outline sketch of the Roman world when Paul wrote this letter to Titus. We are bad enough now, but the outward manners and customs of that period were simply horrible. The spread of the gospel has worked a change for the better. In the apostle's days the favorite spectacles for holiday entertainment were the butcheries of men, and such was the general depravity that vices which we hardly dare to mention were defended and gloried in. In the midnight of the world's history our Lord appeared to put away sin. The Lord Jesus Christ, who is the manifestation of the divine grace to men, came into the world to put an end to the unutterable tyranny of evil. His work and teaching are meant to lift up mankind at large, but also to redeem His people from all iniquity, and to sanctify them to Himself as His peculiar heritage.

Paul looks upon recovery from sin as being a wonderful proof of divine grace. He does not talk about a kind of grace that would leave men in sin, and yet save them from its punishment. No, his salvation is *salvation*

from sin. He does not talk about a free grace which winks at iniquity, and makes nothing of transgression, but of a greater grace by far, which denounces the iniquity and condemns the transgression, and then delivers the victim of it from the habit which has brought him into bondage. He declares that the grace of God has shone upon the world in the work of Jesus, in order that the darkness of its sin and ignorance may disappear, and the brightness of holiness, and righteousness, and peace, may rule the day. God send us to see these blessed results in every part of the world! God make us to see them in ourselves! May we ourselves feel that the grace of God has appeared to us individually! Our apostle would have Titus know that this grace was intended for all ranks of men, for the Cretans who were "always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons," and even for the most despised bond slaves, who under the Roman Empire were treated worse than dogs. To each one of us, whether rich or poor, prominent or obscure, the gospel has come, and its design is that we may be delivered by it from all ungodliness and worldly lusts.

This being the run of the text, I ask you to come closer to it, while I try to show how the apostle stimulates us to holiness, and urges us to overcome all evil. Firstly he describes *our position,* secondly, he describes *our instruction,* and thirdly, he mentions *our encouragements*. May the good Spirit bless our meditations at this hour!

I. First of all, the apostle in this text describes OUR POSITION. *The people of God stand between two appearances.* In the eleventh verse he tells us that "The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men," and then he says, in the thirteenth verse, "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ." We live in an age which is an interval between two appearings of the Lord from heaven. Believers in Jesus are shut off from the old economy by the first coming of our Lord. The time of man's ignorance God winked at, but now commands all men everywhere to repent. We are divided from the past by a wall of light, upon whose forefront we read the words Bethlehem, Gethsemane, Calvary. We date from the birth of the Virgin's Son, we begin with *Anno Domini.* All the rest of time is before Christ, and is marked off from the Christian era. Bethlehem's manger is our beginning. The chief landmark in all time to us is the wondrous life of Him who is the light of the world. We look to the appearing of the grace of God in the form of the lowly One of Nazareth, for our trust is there. We confide in Him who was made flesh and dwelt among us, so that men beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. The dense darkness of the heathen ages begins to be broken when we reach the first appearing, and the dawn of a glorious day begins.

Brethren, we look forward to a second appearing. Our outlook for the close of this present era is another appearing—an appearing of glory rather than of grace. After our Master rose from the brow of Olivet His disciples remained for a while in mute astonishment, but soon an angelic messenger reminded them of prophecy and promise by saying, "You men

of Galilee, why stand you gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into heaven." We believe that our Lord in the fullness of time will descend from heaven with a shout, with the trumpet of the archangel, and the voice of God—

"The Lord shall come! The earth shall quake;
The mountains to their center shake;
And withering from the vault of night,
The stars shall pale their feeble light."

This is the terminus of the present age. We look from Anno Domini, in which He came the first time, to that greater Anno Domini, or year of our Lord, in which He shall come a second time, in all the splendor of His power, to reign in righteousness, and break the evil powers as with a rod of iron.

See, then, where we are, we are compassed about, behind and before, with the appearings of our Lord. Behind us is our trust; before us is our hope. Behind us is the Son of God in humiliation; before us is the great God our Savior in His glory. To use an ecclesiastical term, we stand between two Epiphanies, the first is the manifestation of the Son of God in human flesh in dishonor and weakness, the second is the manifestation of the same Son of God in all His power and glory. In what a position, then, do the saints stand! They have an era all to themselves which begins and ends with the Lord's appearing.

Our position is further described in the text, if you look at it, as being *in this present world,* or age. We are living in the age which lies between the two blazing beacons of the divine appearings, and we are called to hasten from one to the other. The sacramental host of God's elect is marching on from the one appearing to the other with hasty feet. We have everything to hope for in the last appearing, as we have everything to trust to in the first appearing, and we have now to wait with patient hope throughout that weary interval which intervenes. Paul calls it "this present world." This marks its fleeting nature. It is present, but it is scarcely future, for the Lord may come so soon, and thus end it all. It is present now, but it will not be present long. It is but a little time, and He that will come shall come, and will not tarry. Now it is this "present world," oh, how present it is! How sadly it surrounds us! Yet by faith we count these present things to be unsubstantial as a dream, and we look to the things which are not seen, and not present, as being real and eternal. We pass through this world as men on pilgrimage. We traverse an enemy's country. Going from one manifestation to another, we are as birds migrating on the wing from one region to another, there is no rest for us by the way. We are to keep ourselves as loose as we can from this country through which we make our pilgrim-way, for we are strangers and foreigners, and here we have no continuing city. We hurry through this Vanity Fair, before us lies the Celestial City and the coming of the Lord who is the King thereof. As voyagers cross the Atlantic, and so pass from shore to shore, so we do speed over the waves of this ever-changing

world to the glory land of the bright appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Already I have given to you, in this description of our position, the very best argument for a holy life. If it is so, my brethren, you are not of the world even as Jesus is not of the world. If this is so, that before you blazes the supernatural splendor of the second advent, and behind you burns the everlasting light of the Redeemer's first appearing, what manner of people ought you to be? If, indeed, you are but journeying through this present world, suffer not your hearts to be defiled with its sins, learn not the manner of speech of these aliens through whose country you are passing. Is it not written, "The people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations"? "Come you out from among them, and be you separate, touch not the unclean thing," for the Lord has said, "I will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters." They that lived before the coming of Christ had responsibilities upon them, but not such as those which rest upon you who have seen the face of God in Jesus Christ, and who expect to see that face again. You live in light which renders their brightest knowledge a comparative darkness, walk as children of light. You stand between two mornings, between which there is no evening. The glory of the Lord has risen upon you once in the incarnation and atonement of your Lord, that light is shining more and more, and soon there will come the perfect day, which shall be ushered in by the Second Advent. The sun shall no more go down, but it shall unveil itself, and shed an indescribable splendor upon all hearts that look for it. "Put on therefore the armor of light." What a grand expression! Helmet of light, breastplate of light, shoes of light—everything of light: what a knight must he be who is clad, not in steel, but in light, light which shall flash confusion on his foes! There ought to be a holy light about you, O believer in Jesus, for there is the appearing of grace behind you, and the appearing of glory before you. Two manifestations of God shine upon you. Like a wall of fire the Lord's appearings are round about you, there ought to be a special glory of holiness in the midst. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." That is the position of the righteous according to my text, and it furnishes a loud call to holiness.

II. Secondly, I have to call your attention to THE INSTRUCTION which is given to us by the grace of God which has appeared unto all men. Our translation runs thus, "The grace of God has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." A better translation would be, "The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, disciplining us in order that we may deny ungodliness and worldly lusts." Those of you who know a little Greek will note that the word which in our version is rendered "teaching," is a scholastic term, and has to do with the education of children, not merely the teaching, but the training and bringing of them up. The grace of God has come to be a schoolmaster to us, to teach us, to train us, to prepare us for a more de-

veloped state. Christ has manifested in His own person that wonderful grace of God which is to deal with us as with sons, to educate us unto holiness, and so to the full possession of our heavenly heritage. We are the many sons who are to be brought to glory by the discipline of grace.

So then, first of all, *grace has a discipline*. We generally think of law when we talk about schoolmasters and discipline, but grace itself has a discipline and a wonderful training power too. The manifestation of grace is preparing us for the manifestation of glory. What the law could not do, grace is doing. The free favor of God instills new principles, suggests new thoughts, and by inspiring us with gratitude, creates in us love to God and hatred of that which is opposed to God. Happy are they who go to school to the grace of God! This grace of God entering into us shows us what was evil even more clearly than the commandment does. We receive a vital, testing principle within, whereby we discern between good and evil. The grace of God provides us with instruction, but also with chastisement, as it is written, "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten." As soon as we come under the conscious enjoyment of the free grace of God, we find it to be a holy rule, a fatherly government, a heavenly training. We find, not self-indulgence, much less licentiousness, but on the contrary, the grace of God both restrains and constrains us; it makes us free to holiness, and delivers us from the law of sin and death by "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus."

Grace has its discipline, and *Grace has its chosen disciples,* for you cannot help noticing that while the eleventh verse says that, "the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men," yet it is clear that this grace of God has not exercised its holy discipline upon all men and therefore the text changes its *"all men"* into *"us."* Usually in Scripture when you get a generality you soon find a particularity near it. The text has it, "teaching *us* that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, *we* should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." Thus you see that grace has its own disciples. Are you a disciple of the grace of God? Did you ever come and submit yourself to it? Have you learned to spell that word "faith"? Have you childlike trust in Jesus? Have you learned to wash in the laver of atonement? Have you learned those holy exercises which are taught by the grace of God? Can you say that your salvation is of grace? Do you know the meaning of that text, "By grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God"? If so, then you are His disciples, and the grace of God which has appeared so conspicuously has come to discipline you. As the disciples of grace, endeavor to adorn its doctrine. According to the previous verses, even a slave might do this. He might be an ornament to the grace of God. Let grace have such an effect upon your life and character that all may say, "See what grace can do! See how the grace of God produces holiness in believers!" All along I wish to be driving at the point which the apostle is aiming at, that we are to be holy—holy because grace exercises a purifying discipline, and because we are the disciples of that grace.

The discipline of grace, according to the apostle, has three results—denying, living, and looking. You see the three words before you. The first is *"denying."* When a young man comes to college he usually has much to unlearn. If his education has been neglected, a sort of instinctive ignorance covers his mind with briars and brambles. If he has gone to some faulty school where the teaching is flimsy, his tutor has first of all to fetch out of him what he has been badly taught. The most difficult part of the training of young men is not to put the right thing into them, but to get the wrong thing out of them. A man proposes to teach a language in six months, and in the end a great thing is done if one of his pupils is able to forget all his nonsense in six years. When the Holy Spirit comes into the heart, He finds that we know so much already of what it were well to leave unknown; we are self-conceited, we are puffed up. We have learned lessons of worldly wisdom and carnal policy, and these we need to unlearn and deny. The Holy Spirit works this denying in us by the discipline of grace.

What have we to deny? First, we have to deny ungodliness. That is a lesson which many of you have great need to learn. Listen to working men. "Oh," they say, "we have to work hard; we cannot think about God or religion." This is ungodliness! The grace of God teaches us to deny this; we come to loathe such atheism. Others are prospering in the world, and they cry, "If you had as much business to look after as I have, you would have no time to think about your soul or another world. Trying to battle with the competition of the times leaves me no opportunity for prayer or Bible reading, I have enough to do with my day-book and ledger." This also is ungodliness! The grace of God leads us to deny this; we abhor such forgetfulness of God. A great work of the Holy Spirit is to make a man godly, to make him think of God, to make him feel that this present life is not all, but that there is a judgment to come, wherein he must give an account before God. God cannot be forgotten with impunity. If we treat Him as if He were nothing, and leave Him out of our calculations for life, we shall make a fatal mistake. O my hearer, there is a God, and as surely as you live, you are accountable to Him. When the Spirit of God comes with the grace of the gospel, He removes our inveterate ungodliness, and causes us to deny it with joyful earnestness.

We next deny "worldly lusts," that is, the lusts of the present world or age, which I described to you just now as coming in between the two appearings. This present age is as full of evil lusts as that in which Paul wrote concerning the Cretins. The lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life are yet with us. Wherever the grace of God comes effectually, it makes the loose liver deny the desires of the flesh, it causes the man who lusted after gold to conquer his greediness; it brings the proud man away from his ambitions; it trains the idler to diligence, and it sobers the wanton mind which cared only for the frivolities of life. Not only do we leave these lusts, but we deny them. We have an abhorrence of those things wherein we formerly placed our delight. Our cry is, "What have I to do any more with idols?" To the worldling we say, "These things

may belong to you, but as for us, we cannot own them, sin shall no more have dominion over us. We are not of the world, and therefore its ways and fashions are none of ours." The period in which we live shall have no paramount influence over us, for our truest life is with Christ in eternity; our conversation is in heaven. The grace of God has made us deny the prevailing philosophies, glories, maxims, and fashions of this present world. In the best sense we are nonconformists. We desire to be crucified to the world and the world to us. This was a great thing for grace to do among the degraded sensualists of Paul's day, and it is not a less glorious achievement in these times.

But then, brethren, you cannot be complete with a merely negative religion, you must have something positive, and so the next word is *living*—that "we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." Observe, brethren, that the Holy Spirit expects us to live in this present world, and therefore we are not to exclude ourselves from it. This age is the battlefield in which the soldier of Christ is to fight. Society is the place in which Christianity is to exhibit the graces of Christ. If it were possible for these good sisters to retire into a large house, and live secluded from the world, they would be shirking their duty rather than fulfilling it. If all the good men and true were to form a select colony, and do nothing else but pray and hear sermons, they would simply be refusing to serve God in His own appointed way. No, you have to live soberly, godly, righteously in this world, such as it is at present. It is of no use for you to scheme to escape from it. You are bound to breast this torrent, and buffet all its waves. If the grace of God is in you, that grace is meant to be displayed, not in a select and secluded retreat, but in this present world. You are to shine in the darkness like a light.

This life is described in a three-fold way. You are, first, to live *"soberly"*—that is, for yourself. "Soberly" in all your eating and your drinking and in the indulgence of all bodily appetites—that goes without saying. Drunks and gluttons, fornicators and adulterers, cannot inherit the kingdom of God. You are to live soberly in all your thinking, all your speaking, all your acting. There is to be sobriety in all your worldly pursuits. You are to have yourself well in hand, you are to be self-restrained. I know some brethren who are not often sober. I do not accuse them of being drunk with wine, but they are mentally intoxicated; they have no reason, no moderation, and no judgment. They are all spur, and no rein. Right or wrong, they must have that which they have set their hearts upon. They never look round to take the full bearing of a matter, they never estimate calmly, but with closed eyes they rush on like bulls. Alas for these unsober people! They are not to be depended on, they are everything by turns, and nothing long. The man who is disciplined by the grace of God becomes thoughtful, considerate, self-contained, and he is no longer tossed about by passion, or swayed by prejudice. There is only one insobriety into which I pray we may fall, and truth to say, that is the truest sobriety. Of this the Scripture says, "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit." When the Spirit of God

takes full possession of us, then we are borne along by His sacred energy, and are filled with a divine enthusiasm which needs no restraint. Under all other influences we must guard ourselves against yielding too completely, that thus we may live "soberly."

As to his fellow men the believer lives *"righteously."* I cannot understand that Christian who can do a dirty thing in business. Craft, cunning, over-reaching, misrepresentation, and deceit are no instruments for the hand of godly men. I am told that my principles are too angelic for business life—that a man cannot be a match for his fellow men in trade, if he is too Puritanical. Others are up to tricks, and he will be ruined if he cannot trick them in return. O my dear hearers do not talk in this way. If you mean to go the way of the devil, say so, and accept the consequences, but if you profess to be servants of God, deny all partnership with unrighteousness. Dishonesty and falsehood are the opposites of godliness. A Christian man may be poor, but he must live righteously; he may lack sharpness, but he must not lack integrity. A Christian profession without uprightness is a lie. Grace must discipline us to righteous living.

Towards God we are told in the text that we are to be *godly*. Every man who has the grace of God in him indeed and of a truth, will think much of God, and will seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. God will enter into all his calculations, God's presence will be his joy, God's strength will be his confidence, God's providence will be his inheritance; God's glory will be the chief end of his being, God's law the guide of his conversation. Now, if the grace of God, which has appeared so plainly to all men, has really come with its sacred discipline upon us, it is teaching us to live in this three-fold manner.

Once more, there is *looking,* as well as living. One work of the grace of God is to cause us to be "looking for that blessed hope of the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ." What is that "blessed hope"? Why, first, that when He comes we shall rise from the dead, if we have fallen asleep, and that, if we are alive and remain, we shall be changed at His appearing. Our hope is that we shall be approved of Him, and shall hear Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." This hope is not of debt, but of grace, though our Lord will give us a reward, it will not be according to the law of works. We expect to be like Jesus when we shall see Him as He is. When Jesus shines forth as the sun, "then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of our Father." Our gain by godliness cannot be counted down into the palm of our hand. It lies in the glorious future, and yet to faith it is so near that at this moment I almost hear the chariot of the Coming One. The Lord comes, and in the coming of the Lord lies the great hope of the believer, his great stimulus to overcome evil, his main incentive to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord. Oh to be found blameless in the day of the manifestation of our Lord! God grant us this! Do you not see, brethren, how the discipline of the doctrine of grace runs towards the separating of us from sin, and the making us to live unto God?

III. Lastly, and briefly, the text sets forth certain of OUR ENCOURAGEMENTS. I will only briefly hint at them.

In this great battle for right, and truth, and holiness, what could we do, my brethren and sisters, if we were left alone? But our first encouragement is that *grace has come* to our rescue, for in the day when the Lord Jesus Christ appeared among men, He brought for us the grace of God to help us to overcome all iniquity. He that struggles now against inbred sin has the Holy Spirit within him to help him. He that goes forth to fight against evil in other men by preaching the gospel has that same Holy Spirit going with the truth to make it like a fire and like a hammer. I would ground my weapons, and retreat from a fight so hopeless, were it not that the Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge. The grace of God that brings salvation from sin has flashed forth conspicuously like the lightning which is seen from one part of the heaven to the other, and our victory over darkness is insured. However hard the conflict with evil, it is not desperate. We may hope on and hope ever. A certain warrior was found in prayer, and when his king sneered, he answered that he was pleading with his majesty's august ally. I question whether God is the ally of anybody when he goes forth with gun and sword, but in using those weapons which are "not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds," we may truly reckon upon our august ally. Speak the truth, man, for God speaks with you! Work for God, woman, for God works in you to will and to do of His own good pleasure. The appearance of the grace of God in the person of Christ is encouragement enough to those who are under the most difficult circumstances, and have to contend for righteousness against the deadliest odds. Grace has appeared; therefore let us be of good courage!

A second encouragement is that *another appearing is coming*. He who bowed His head in weakness, and died in the moment of victory, is coming in all the glory of His endless life. Do not question it, the world is not going to darken into an eternal night, the morning comes as well as the night, and though sin and corruption abound, and the love of many waxes cold, these are but the tokens of His near advent who said that it would be so before His appearing. The right with the might and the might with the right shall be, as surely as God lives, it shall be so. We are not fighting a losing battle. The Lord must triumph. Oh, if His suffering life and cruel death had been the only appearing, we might have feared, but it is not, it is but the first, and the prefatory part of His manifestation. He comes! He comes! None can hinder His coming! Every moment brings Him nearer, nothing can delay His glory. When the hour shall strike He shall appear in the majesty of God to put an end to the dominion of sin, and bring in endless peace. Satan shall be bruised under our feet shortly, therefore comfort one another with these words, and then prepare for further battle. Grind your swords, and be ready for close fighting! Trust in God, and keep your powder dry. Ever this our war cry, "He must reign." We are looking for the appearing of the great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

Another encouragement is that *we are serving a glorious Master*. The Christ whom we follow is not a dead prophet like Mohamed. Truly we preach Christ crucified, but we also believe in Christ risen from the dead, in Christ gone up on high, in Christ soon to come a second time. He lives, and He lives as the great God and our Savior. If indeed you are soldiers of such a Captain, throw fear to the winds. Can you be cowards when the Lord of hosts leads you? Dare you tremble when at your head is the Wonderful, the Counselor, the mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace? The trumpet is already at the lip of the archangel, who will not play the man? The great drum which makes the universe to throb, summons you to action—

"Stand up, stand up for Jesus,
You soldiers of the cross;
Lift high His royal banner,
It must not suffer loss."

His cross is the old cross still, and none can overthrow it. Hallelujah, hallelujah to the name of Jesus!

Then come the tender thoughts with which I finish; the memories of *what the Lord has done for us* to make us holy, "Who gave Himself for us." Special redemption, redemption with a wondrous price—"who gave Himself for us." Put away that trumpet and that drum, take down the harp and gently touch its sweetest strings. Tell how the Lord Jesus loved us, and gave Himself for us. O sirs, if nothing else can touch our hearts this must, "You are not your own, you are bought with a price."

And He gave Himself for us with these two objectives; first, redemption, that He might redeem us from all iniquity; that He might break the bonds of sin asunder, and cast the cords of depravity far from us. He died—forget not that—died that your sins might die, died that every lust might be dragged into captivity at His chariot wheels. He gave Himself for you that you might give yourselves for Him.

Again, He died that He might purify us—purify us unto Himself. How clean we must be if we are to be clean unto Him. The holy Jesus will only commune with that which He has purified after the manner of His own nature, purified unto Himself. He has purified us to be wholly His, no human hand may use the golden cup; no human incense may burn in the consecrated censer. We are purified unto Himself, as the Hebrew would put it, to be His *segullah,* His peculiar possession. The translation "peculiar people" is unfortunate, because "peculiar" has come to mean odd, strange, singular. The passage really means that believers are Christ's own people, His choice and select portion. Saints are Christ's crown jewels, His box of diamonds, His very, very, very own. He carries His people as lambs in His bosom; He engraves their names on His heart. They are the inheritance to which He is the heir, and He values them more than all the universe beside. He would lose everything else sooner than lose one of them. He desires that you, who are being disciplined by His grace, should know that you are altogether His. You are Christ's men. You are each one to feel, "I do not belong to the world, I do not belong to myself, I belong only to Christ. I am set aside by Him for Himself

only, and His I will be." The silver and the gold are His, and the cattle upon a thousand hills are His, but He makes small account of them, "the Lord's portion is His people."

The apostle finishes up by saying that we are to be a people "zealous of good works." Would to God that all Christian men and women were disciplined by divine grace till they became zealous for good works! In holiness zeal is sobriety. We are not only to approve of good works, and speak for good works, but we are to be red-hot for them. We are to be on fire for everything that is right and true. We may not be content to be quiet and inoffensive, but we are to be zealous of good works. Oh that my Lord's grace would set us on fire in this way! There is plenty of fuel in the church, what is needed is fire. A great many very respectable people are, in their sleepy way, doing as little as they can for any good cause. This will never do. We must wake up. Oh the quantity of ambulance work that Christ's soldiers have to do! One half of Christ's army has to carry the other half. Oh that our brethren could get off the sick-list! Oh that all of us were ardent, fervent, vigorous, zealous! Come, Holy Spirit, and quicken us! We may not go about to get this by our own efforts and energies, but God will work it by His grace. Grace given us in Christ is the fountainhead of all holy impulse. O heavenly grace, come like a flood at this time and bear us right away!

Oh that those of you who have never felt the grace of God may be enabled to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as to His first appearing! Then, trusting in His death upon the cross, you will learn to look for His second coming upon the throne, and you will rejoice therein. Unto His great name be glory forever and ever! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—TITUS 1, 2, 3.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—907, 663, 639.

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

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

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

LOVE ABOUNDING, LOVE COMPLAINING, LOVE ABIDING
NO. 1895

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 11, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"But now 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. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior: I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you. Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable, and I have loved you: therefore will I give men for you, and people for your life."
Isaiah 43:1-4

"But you have not called upon Me, O Jacob; but you have been weary of Me, O Israel. You have not brought Me the small cattle of your burnt offerings; neither have you honored Me with your sacrifices. I have not caused you to serve with an offering, nor wearied you with incense. You have bought Me no sweet cane with money, neither have you filled Me with the fat of your sacrifices: but you have made Me to serve with your sins, you have wearied Me with your iniquities."
Verses 22-24.

"Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for you are My servant: I have formed you; you are My servant: O Israel, you shall not be forgotten of Me. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins: return unto Me; for I have redeemed you. Sing, O you heavens; for the Lord has done it: shout, you lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, you mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord has redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel."
Isaiah 44:21- 23.

WHEN two Christians met together who were sitting under a very lean and starving ministry, one of them comforted his fellow concerning the miserable discourse by saying, "Never mind, my friend, there is not much in the sermon, but the text is a feast by itself." So, this morning, if my words should seem to be very poor and powerless, what fullness there is in these three texts! Here you have a dainty meal of three courses. You ought to be well nourished this morning, for I have set before you in these passages of Scripture quite as much as the largest capacity will be able to mark, learn, and inwardly digest. Here is good pasture for the flock, wherein they may not only feed, but lie down.

Did you say, "Too much text?" Possibly you might, on other occasions, reproach me with having too little of God's Word, and too much of my own, but there can be no fault the other way—the more of the Word of the Lord the better. What is man's word compared with God's word? It is as chaff to the wheat at worst, and as mere gold-leaf to solid bullion at best. Indeed, my word is of no value at all, except as it is made up of the essence of the divine Word. Far better than our best exposition is the Word itself, this is the pure light of the sun, ours is but a poor candle. Of the Scripture itself we cannot have too much. If you derive no other profit from this assembling of yourselves together but to have your earnest attention directed to this precious part of Holy Writ, if the Spirit of God is with you, your meditations will make this a profitable hour.

Notice concerning these three texts, that they are very much alike in this respect—they are each addressed to God's people under the names of Jacob and Israel. The first text begins, "The Lord that created you, O Jacob, and He that formed you, O Israel." And the second is like it, "You have not called upon Me, O Jacob; but you have been weary of Me, O Israel." And so is the third, "Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for you are My servant." The Lord mentions both the natural and the spiritual names of His servants, and this He does out of love to them. As tender parents will lovingly repeat all their children's names, sometimes calling them by one and sometimes by another, as different memories arise in their minds, so the Lord remembers Jacob, the name of His chosen given him at birth, by which he was known as "the supplanter," and then He repeats that higher name of Israel, the prevailing prince, which he won in a great spiritual struggle, when he wrestled with the angel of the Lord and would not let Him go. To make sure that the people should know to whom He spoke, the Lord calls them both Jacob and Israel. We are so apt to set the promise aside for someone else, that it is well to have the full address placed at the head of these heavenly telegrams.

These texts are also like each other, again, from their being each one overflowing with love. Their manner and their matter differ, but their spirit is one. I do not know where the Lord's love is best seen, when He declares it and tells of what He has done and is doing for His people, or when He laments over their lack of love in return, or when He promises to blot out their past sin, and invites them to return to Him and enjoy His restoring grace. I trust that I may be helped so to handle these words that a sweet fragrance of love shall fill this house, as when choice ointment is poured forth. May you believe and feel the love of God to you, and then may there arise out of your own hearts the perfume of another love, born of the first, and like unto it, the love of your renewed hearts towards your God. This love is a spark of the eternal flame of God's love for you, may it never be quenched!

I have to set before you divine love in three postures. The first text represents *love abounding;* the second text, *love lamenting;* and the third text represents *love abiding*—remaining constant to its objective notwithstanding all the provocations which have grieved it.

I. First, we have in our first text, from the first to the fourth verses, LOVE ABOUNDING. Come, you that love the Lord, and dwell upon His love. Concentrate your thoughts upon this wonderful theme, to which I trust you are no strangers, for you live in that love, and it is the joy of your hearts. Oh for the melting power of the Holy Spirit to make us feel it now!

Love abounding, I said, and I said well, for you will notice, first *the time when that love is declared*. The first verse begins, "But now, thus says the Lord." And when was that? It was the very time when He was angry with the nation by reason of their great sins. "Therefore He has poured upon him the fury of His anger and the strength of battle; and it has set him on fire round about, yet he knew not; and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart." It was a time, then, of special sin, and of amazing hardness of heart. "It burned him, yet he laid it not to heart." When a man begins to burn, he generally feels and cries out, He must be far gone in deadly apathy when he is touched with fire and yet lays it not to heart. Yet so the text describes the nation. Notwithstanding this, however, though His people had so provoked Him, and though they were so unfeeling under His chastisement, yet the Lord interposes in tones of grace with a word of infinite compassion. "But now, thus says the Lord." It was a time of love with God, though a time of carelessness with His people. You expect God's mercy words and love words to come to you after your repentance and obedience, and so, indeed, they do, for the Lord has choice rewards of grace for those who walk with Him in holy fellowship. Yet He restrains not His mercy to our good times, but He gives us glints of its sunlight in the midst of the storm, He sends clear shining after rain. Though He may smite us again and again to drive us from our iniquities, yet even then His gracious heart overflows with love, and He lets fall a word of pity for His mourners.

Notice, next, that the Lord shows His abounding love in these verses *by the sweetness of His consolations.* "But now thus says the Lord that created you, O Jacob, and He that formed you, O Israel, Fear not." "Fear not" is a little word measured by space and letters, but it is an abyss of consolation if we remember who it is that says it, and what a wide sweep the comfort takes. Fear has torment, and the Lord would cast it out. Fear keeps us away from Him, and so He would chase it quite away. "Fear not," He says. As much as to say—I smite you, but fear not that I will destroy you. I chasten you for your sin, but fear not that I will disown you, for you are Mine. My countenance is dark with anger against your iniquities, but still fear not, for my wrath against your sin is but a form of My love to you—

"In love I correct you, your gold to refine,
To make you at length in My likeness to shine."

You that are the people of God may at this hour be smarting, and crying, and sighing. But, oh the love of God to you! He hears your cries, and His compassions are moved towards you. Nothing touches Him like the groans of His children. Perhaps you have brought this evil upon yourself

by your own fault, and you know it, but the Lord is ready to put away your sin, and make the bones which He has broken to rejoice.

The consolations of God are small with you because there is some secret wickedness with you, but having revealed to you this wrong, and having subdued your heart by His Spirit, He now speaks to you as to one whom his mother comforts, and He says, "Fear not." Be not broken down with slavish fear, do not imagine that the Lord has changed towards you, do not dream that His promises will fail, or that His mercy is clean gone forever, so that He will be favorable no more. He knows your sin, and He has visited you for it, but still, "Fear not, for even this is a token that He has not given you up to perish in your sins." He has redeemed you, and therefore He will purify you to Himself, but He will never cast you away. Is it not considerate love on the Lord's part that He would not even have His children endure a fear? He not only removes our dangers, but He soothes our fears. He bends over us, and cries, "Let not your hearts be troubled." He sends the Holy Spirit to be the Comforter, and chase all our fears away. There is a wonderful intensity of affection in this passage, spoken as it is by the great God to His people while they are under the rod which they so richly deserve.

Again, notice that the fullness of God's love is to be seen in the way in which *He dwells with evident satisfaction upon His past dealings with His people*. When we love some favored one, we like to think of all our love passages in years gone by, and the Lord so loves His people, that even when they are under His chastening hand, He still delights to remember His former loving-kindnesses. *We* may forget the wonders of His grace, but *He* does not forget. He says, "I remember you, the love of your espousals, when you went after Me in the wilderness." If He remembers our poor love, you may be sure that He does not forget His own! In His heart He stores up the memory of all His works of grace towards His chosen. See how He puts it, "Thus says the Lord that created you, O Jacob, and He that formed you, O Israel." He regards His people as the work of His own hands. He puts it twice over; He claims not only to have created the materials of the nation, but to have formed them into a people. The great potter created our clay, and then fashioned it with infinite skill. Both as to body and soul, we are fearfully and wonderfully made by the Lord our God. The Lord thinks upon you as His dear people, and remembers how He created you, and how He new-created you; how by His infinite grace He made you new creatures in Christ Jesus, and how He has gone on by His Spirit to fashion you, and mold you to His will, so that you are becoming more and more like His dear Son. The Lord mentions this to show His exceeding love, He has respect unto the work of His own hands. He that has made you with so much care will not break you. He will not abhor that which His infinite compassion has fashioned. In His great love He dwells upon His relationship to us as our Maker, and says, "I created you, I formed you." This is as true of our second creation as of the first. The Lord flashed into our soul the first ray of repentance, He created in

us the first look of faith, He worked in us the first dew of love, and because of this grace-work He turns in love to us, and remembers us still.

Then the Lord passes on to speak of His redemption of His people, saying, "I have redeemed you." Oh, the fullness of divine love which led the Lord to redeem His people, and then to speak of that deed with pleasure! He brought them out of Egypt, redeemed by the blood of the Paschal Lamb, and in our case He has brought us out of sin and death, by the blood of the Only Begotten. The Lord does not repent that He paid such a price for such poor worthless things, but He glories in it. "I have redeemed you." Our Lord Jesus remembers the pangs we cost Him. He cannot leave those to perish in their sins, whom He has ransomed with His own life! O poor backslider! The broad arrow of the King is on you, He cannot let His enemy rob Him of His purchase. Shall the prey be taken from the mighty? Shall Jesus fail to see of the travail of His soul? Picture in your mind this morning the Christ of God looking at the print of the nails in His hands and feet, viewing those marks with satisfaction, and then with equal satisfaction looking upon us who are His ransomed ones, a heritage purchased unto Himself. He cannot be weary of us, for He dwells upon what He has done for our redemption. He chose us for His love, and then loved us for His choice, He redeemed us because He loved us, and now He loves us because He redeemed us.

Moreover, he adds, "I have called you by your name." He did so to that nation, but we will dwell rather at this time upon His having personally called us to Himself. Oh the love which shines in our effectual calling, it must burn on forever! There was a day, and we can never forget it, when the gospel of God came to us with a pointed and personal power, such as we never felt before. Like as Mary Magdalene did not know the Savior until He said unto her, "Mary," so we did not know the Lord until He called us by our name. Surely, no love-call with which our mother awakened us in the morning from the happy sleep of childhood was ever more distinct than the call of God's grace to us when He spoke to us, and said, "Seek you My face." Blessed was the day when our heart replied, "Your face, Lord, will I seek." The Lord appeared of old unto us, He knew our name, for He called us by it, and He knew how to reach our hearts by convicting us of secret sin, He sent His servants to describe our character, and to say to us, as Nathan to David, "You are the man." We could not mistake the personal appeal which fastened cords of love about us, and drew us till we ran to Him who called us. As the Lord of old said to little Samuel, "Samuel, Samuel," and he answered, "Here am I," so has God said to some of us, as clearly as if we had heard it with our ears, "Come to Me," and we have come to Him. He is pleased to remember that He has called us by our name, and this shows that He does not repent of having called us.

Observe, also, how He dwells upon His possession of His people, "You are Mine," He says. The Lord God was not ashamed to own His Israel, and now Jesus is not ashamed to call us brethren, the Father is not ashamed to call us children, and the Spirit of God is not ashamed to call

our bodies His temples. "I have called you by your name; you are Mine." Have you forgotten that you are the Lord's? Yet does He not forget that you are His. You may be false to your covenant and steal away from God, but He has set His mark upon you, and you can never obliterate it. He claims you still, notwithstanding all your wandering and your forgetfulness, and He joyfully asserts His property in you. "I have called you by your name; you are Mine." He defies all comers to take from Him those whom He did foreknow by name, and whom He therefore called. Behold the fixity of divine love, and the warmth of heart which causes the Lord to dwell upon His past loving kindnesses! Does not this bring the tears to your eyes?

If you desire to see the overflowing of God's love in another form, notice in the next verse how *He declares what He means to do*. He says, "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you." His love casts its eye upon your future. The Lord does not promise you that you shall never go through the waters, nor pass through the fires. He loves you too well to make your way to heaven free from adversity and tribulation, for these things work your lasting good. You will have to go through fire and through water on your way to glory. But He does promise you this, that, the deepest waters shall not overflow you, and the fiercest torrents shall not drown you, for this one all-sufficient reason, that He will be with you. When you come to the fires, however terrible their flames, they shall not consume you, no; they shall not even kindle upon you. Like the three holy children in the furnace, not even the smell of fire shall pass upon you, because His presence shall preserve you to the end. Oh the love of God, that in the foresight of every grief and every sorrow that can ever befall His children, He pledges Himself never to forsake them! He pledges His word that He will be at their side in every trying hour, and this word He pledges to them even though He has felt bound to chasten them. He says, "Fear not, I am with you; be not dismayed, I am your God." He has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Come life, come death, come temptation, come poverty, come sickness, come assault of Satan, come whatever may, from heaven, or earth, or hell, the Lord has promised that He will bear you through, and preserve you to His kingdom and glory. Oh the perseverance, the omnipresence, the omnipotence of divine love! Who is he that shall measure the length and breadth and depth and height of the love of God? Nothing can separate us from it, and nothing can harm us while we abide under its shadow. O cold hearts, do you not feel the warmth of this marvelous love?

Still this is not all. The overflowing of divine love is seen in *the Lord's avowing Himself still to be His people's God*, "I am Jehovah your God," He says, "the Holy One of Israel, your Savior." God gives Himself to you, beloved. What a gift! He endows us, not merely with heaven and earth, things present, and things to come, nor even with the half of His kingdom, but He gives us *Himself!* He says, "I will be their God." He bids us

call Him "Our Father." All that God is, He gives to His chosen, and lays Himself out for their salvation. "I am Jehovah your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior." Oh, how He must love us, and with what boundless affection must He regard us, when He counts Himself to be none too great a portion to bestow on us!

Though one would think He might have come to a close here, the Lord adds *His valuation of His people;* this was so high that He says, "I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for you." To save Israel, He plagued Egypt, fast and heavy were His blows, until He smote all the first-born of Egypt, the chief of all her strength. Pharaoh and his first-born were nobodies as compared with Jacob's seed. Further on in history, after Isaiah's day, the Lord moved Cyrus to set Israel free from Babylon, and then gave to the son of Cyrus a rich return for liberating the Jews, for He made him conqueror of Egypt and of Ethiopia and of Seba. God will give more than the whole world to save His church, seeing He gave His only begotten Son. He seems to say to each one of you, "I give everything for you: I value you so much, that all things else shall be as nothing to Me so long as I can bless and save you." It has certainly been so with some of us, all providence has lent itself to promote our welfare, the angels of God have been our servants, and the Spirit of God has been our guide and teacher. We cannot avoid seeing how great events have been made subordinate to the good of persons so insignificant, how the Lord has even bowed the heavens that He might come down to our rescue.

Then the Lord adds another note of great love. He says that He has thought so much of His people that *He regarded them as honorable,* "Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable, and I have loved you." *He publishes His love,* not only by His deeds, but by express words. I cannot pronounce these words as God's prophet must have spoken them, much less as God Himself would speak them. What a wealth of grace is here! They were poor Israelites, and they had been very guilty, and so they had dishonored themselves, but the Lord says, "Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable." What an honor the Lord puts upon those who believe in Jesus! "Unto you that believe He is honor." I have known those that have fallen into great sin, and have been made dishonorable thereby, but when grace has renewed them they have been pure and holy and honorable, made fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Blood-washed sinners are heaven's right-honorables. Men and women renewed by God's grace are the courtiers of heaven, the peers of the divine kingdom. What love is that which has made us heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ!

Such is the Lord's love, that even in the time when they were not acting as they should, but grieving Him, *He stands to His love of them,* and sets the same value on them as before, "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." As if He said, "What I have done I will do again. My love is unalterable," I will give the same price for you as

of old, if it is necessary. Remember how it is said of the Lord Jesus, "having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them to the end." Notwithstanding all their ill-manners He was still their Savior. And it is so with Jehovah, the covenant God of Israel, having loved us until now with love so wonderful, He holds to it despite everything which might have turned away His heart. He declares, "You have been honorable, and I have loved you; therefore will I give men for you, and people for your life."

Thus, in a very sorry way, I have skimmed the surface of this great sea of love. I beg you now to follow me while we listen to love as it speaks in quite another tone.

II. Our second text is in the minor key, it is LOVE LAMENTING, "But you have not called upon Me, O Israel" (verse 22). Observe the contrast, for it runs all through, and may be seen in every sentence, I have called you by your name; but you have not called upon Me, O Israel. I have called you Mine; but you have been weary of Me. I have redeemed you with a matchless price; but you have bought Me no sweet cane with money. You can work out the contrast yourself, and you will find it most remarkable; I cannot tarry to go into detail.

Israel rendered *little worship* to God. She gave the Lord little prayer and little praise. Come, brothers and sisters, I will bring no accusations against you, but I will make confession of sin for myself. When we think of God's delight in us, and His love to us, is it not shameful that we should have been so seldom engaged in devotion towards Him? Oh, how slack we have often been in private prayer! How hurried, how superficial! How little of praise have we brought, now and then a hymn, but this only when we were in the public congregation! How little of secret praise and reverent adoration have we rendered! The Lord has done great things for us, and heaped honor upon us, but how seldom has His name been joyously upon our tongue! How little have we spoken of Him or to Him! It takes a world of trouble to drive some of God's children to their Father, they live without Him, and are tolerably comfortable, and even when darkness lowers they are slow to run to Him. Alas! They hasten to some human friend, instead of returning at once to Him who has dealt so bountifully with them. I am not going to dwell upon this, because tender hearts will only need a hint. It we grieve those whom we greatly love, they have only to drop half a word and we see their drift at once, and endeavor to amend. If we have no love in our hearts, what is the use of a lengthened accusation? It will only embitter and harden. Brethren, may not the Lord of infinite mercy justly say to some of us, "But you have not called upon Me, O Jacob"?

Notice, next, that there has been *little fellowship;* for the Lord goes on to say, "You have been weary of Me, O Israel." The Lord has delighted in us, for He joyously recounts His dealings towards us, saying, "I have created you and formed you. I have redeemed you, and called you, and made you Mine." If He had been weary of us we need not have wondered, but we ought to blush and be silent for shame, because we have wearied

of Him. Brothers, are we tired of our God? If not, how is it that we do not walk with Him from day to day? Really spiritual worship is not much cared for in these days, even by professing Christians. Many will go to a place of worship if they can be entertained with fine music, or grand oratory, but if communion with God is the only attraction, they are not drawn thereby. They can spend many an evening where all sorts of levity and nonsense waste the hour, but when do they spend an evening with their God? If some of you had ever done such a thing, it would be marked down in your diaries as a wonder. Can any of you say, "I did once spend a night with God?" Is it not, then, true, "You have been weary of Me"? Alas! Some of my hearers have never spoken with God in all their lives. They are not on speaking terms with Him, they do not know Him. Small wonder is it that you do not believe in Him, he only truly believes in God who has come to know Him. He that lives with God, and walks with God, has no questions or doubts about His existence, he has risen long ago above that wretched state of mind. God grant that any of you who are weary at the very mention of eternal things may be delivered from your earth-bondage, and made to rejoice in the Lord.

We are moved by this passage to confess how *little of spirituality* has been found in the worship which we have rendered. "You have not honored Me with the sacrifices." When we have come to worship in public and in private, we have not honored the Lord by being intense therein. The heart has been cold, the mind has been wandering. Often we have the posture of devotion without devotion, the words of praise without the praise, the language of prayer without supplication, attendance at the Lord's Supper without communion. Ah me! How hosannas languish on our tongues! How nearly our devotion dies! Let us repent and pray for better things.

Again, the Lord mentions that His people have brought Him *little sacrifice*. "You have not brought Me the small cattle of your burnt offerings; you have bought Me no sweet cane with money: neither have you filled Me with the fat of your sacrifices." Everything we have God has given us, and He has given to us far beyond our deserts or even our expectations. What small returns we have made! In the religion of Christ there is no taxation, everything is of love. It spoils our gifts if we give because we must; it is the voluntariness of what we do for Christ that is the excellence of it. Under the old law there was a certain tithe to pay, but the devout who loved their God were not content with this, they of their own accord bought sweet cane with money and gave it for the making of incense to be used upon the altar of the Lord. Saints of those times denied themselves luxuries that they might have the high joy of contributing to the worship of the Lord whom they loved. Some saints do this now, and find great delight in it, even as Mary delighted to pour the very precious ointment from her alabaster box upon the head of the Well-beloved. Alas, how little have some done in this direction! I will not dwell upon it, for, as I have already said, a hint is all that is needed by a loving heart. Yet is it not sadly true that many offer to the Lord only that which costs them

nothing? If it comes to making sacrifices for the truth's sake they will have nothing to do with it.

Once more, it is said that we have been very slack *in our consideration of our God*. The Lord says, "I have not caused you to serve with an offering, nor wearied you with incense; but you have made Me to serve with your sins; you have wearied Me with your iniquities." The Lord is thoughtful of us, but we are not thoughtful towards Him. He considers our feelings, but we treat Him with heartless brutishness. God has made us honorable, but we have not made Him honorable, He has treated us as dear friends, but we have made a servant of Him—made Him to serve with our sins. Many treat the Lord as if it was most fit that He should be forgotten, they profess to believe in Him, and yet live atheistical lives, unmindful of His presence, not regarding His law. Doubtless many come into His courts unwashed and defiled, having forgotten to seek cleansing through the atonement of His dear Son. They dare to stand before a holy God in their willful unholiness. Beloved, is it not so? Have not even those who are His people too often spoiled their praises, their prayers, and their secret devotions by a lack of preparedness of heart, and cleansing of spirit? Let this question go round, and he that has the most renewed mind will be the most likely to accuse himself.

I must not fail to remind you that I commenced by declaring that in each of the three voices of the Lord the tone was always that of love. If the Lord did not love us very much, He would not care so much about our love towards Him. True love alone knows how to burn with jealousy. How greatly God must love me since I see that He desires to have my whole heart! What condescending tenderness that the Lord of glory should complain, "You have bought Me no sweet cane with money!" It is the plaint of love. Remember, the Lord does not need our sweet canes or our money. "The silver and the gold are His, and the cattle upon a thousand hills." He says to His enemy, "If I were hungry I would not tell you." He needs nothing at our hands. But when He chides us for withholding our love-tokens, it is because He values our love, and is grieved when it grows cold. Yonder father does not need anything of his child, and yet when his birthday comes round, and there are whispers all over the house and little contributions, that something may be given to dear father, he is greatly pleased, he is more charmed with the little ones' trifling gifts than with the gold he wins on the Exchange. It is sweet to live in the thoughts of those we love. You that are blessed with happy domestic life, you know that in these matters you do not look for bare duty, but the free suggestions of love bear the palm. It is because the Lord loves us so much that He bemoans our lack of grateful affection, and sadly mourns—"You have not called upon Me, O Jacob; you have been weary of Me, O Israel." What has the Lord done that we should treat Him so? O brothers, let us mend our ways. Surely we have treated everybody better than our God. In Him we live and move and have our being, and yet, by the way we act, one would think we had never heard of Him. He has loved us with an everlasting love, and dealt with us in amazing mercy,

and yet we are ungrateful and cold. Well may we smite upon the breasts which harbor such stony hearts, and pray that the Holy Spirit may inspire us with ardor of love to Him who loved us, and gave Himself for us. God bless these words to you, dear brethren, by His grace!

III. I have now to finish with my third text, which I felt bound to take, lest I should conclude with mourning and lamentation. Our third text exhibits LOVE ABIDING.

Notice, in the twenty-first verse of the forty-fourth chapter, how the Lord *still calls His people by the same name,* "Remember these, O Jacob and Israel." Still are the names of His elect like music in the ears of God. One would have feared that He would have dropped the "Israel," that honorable name, which came of prevailing prayer, since they had not called upon Him. Why call him a prevailing prince who had grown weary of his God? We would not have marveled if the Lord had only called them by their natural and carnal name of Jacob. But no, He harps upon the double title; He loves to think of His beloved as what they were, and what His grace made them. O heir of heaven, God loves you still! God does earnestly remember you still. Jehovah Jesus wears upon His breast-plate the names of His people, and He has not torn one of the gems from its setting, neither has He erased a single name of Reuben, Simeon, Gad, or Levi from its jewel. Your name is still upon the palms of His hands. If nothing has touched you before, this ought to awaken your conscience, and melt your heart. O, child of God, your God remembers you! He calls you still by name, and owns you as His.

Notice in the text how *the Lord claims His servants,* "You are My servant: I have formed you; you are My servant." He has not discharged us, though He has had cause enough for doing so. How often have I prayed, "Dismiss me not from Your service, Lord," when I have seen the faultiness of my obedience! I dwell with supreme pleasure upon that sweet assurance, "You are My servant; you are My servant." He has not turned us out of doors, nor given us our wages and said, "Be packing, I shall never make My money's worth of you." I am sure He will never part with us now, for if He meant to do so, He would have done it long ago. When we grow old and grey-headed He will not send us off, as so many firms have lately done with old servants who had given them their youth and their manhood. No, the Lord will not cast off His people. Even to white hairs He is the same. This should bind us to Him. This should quicken our pace in His service. This should make us eager and earnest to show forth His praise.

Then notice how the Lord assures us in the next line, "O Israel, you shall not be forgotten of Me." *God cannot forget His chosen.* You that have Bibles with margins will find that it is also written there, "O Israel, forget not Me." The Lord longs to be remembered by us. Did not our loving Lord institute the sacred Supper to prevent our forgetting Him! Oh hear Him at that table of fellowship tenderly saying, "Do not forget Me!" Let us each one cry, "We will remember You." Can you, O heir of immortality, forget Him who died for you? Can you forget Him that gives you eternal life?

You who come forth from God's own love, begotten unto a lively hope by the Father's grace, you cannot forget Him by whom you live. Let us think of our Lord's memory of us, and of His desire that we should remember Him, and then let our love flame forth.

Notice with delight the triumph of love, how still *He pardons,* "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and as a cloud, your sins." I have seen the clouds come hurrying up, driven by the wind. They were black as night in the distance, and for a while they spread darkness around us. Soon, drops of rain have fallen, for an April shower has come, and the clouds, where were they? Not a vestige remained. The clouds were blotted out, the sky was blue, and all things glittered in the sunlight as if hung with pearls. Thus our God beholds our sins gathering like clouds. He cannot endure them, He sweeps them away; no trace is left. "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." Child of God, your Lord forgives you. If you are ashamed and confounded for all your shortcomings, He has put them all away. Therefore return unto your God, return to your first love, return to all your former joy, and rise to a still higher joy.

See how our text closes with *the Lord's own precept to be glad,* "Sing, O you heavens; for the Lord has done it: shout, you lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, you mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord has redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel." Out of all dejection, arise! Out of all sorrow soar aloft! There is more cause for gladness than for sorrow. What you have done should cause distress of heart, but what the Lord has done is cause for rapture. Heaven and earth help you to praise! The mountains join in your music! The trees of the wood sing out in harmony with your delight! Infinite love has drowned your sins! Almighty grace restores your wanderings! Eternal mercy establishes your goings. Oh for a well-tuned harp! Oh to be taught some flaming sonnet of pure spirits who are before the throne! Wait a while, and be not weary. Love the Lord here, and so prepare for beholding Him above. Live after the manner which the whole theme suggests. What manner of persons ought we to be who are so supremely loved! To the glorious name of Jehovah, the God of love, be glory forever and ever! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ISAIAH 44.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—175, 735, 733.

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

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

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

THE THREE HOURS OF DARKNESS
NO. 1896

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 18, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour."
Matthew 27:45.

FROM nine till noon the usual degree of light was present, so that there was time enough for our Lord's adversaries to behold and insult His sufferings. There could be no mistake about the fact that He was really nailed to the cross, for He was crucified in broad daylight. We are fully assured that it was Jesus of Nazareth, for both friends and foes were eye-witnesses of His agonies, for three long hours the Jews sat down and watched Him on the cross, making jests of His miseries. I feel thankful for those three hours of light, for otherwise the enemies of our faith would have questioned whether in very deed the blessed body of our Master was nailed to the tree, and would have started fancies as many as the bats and owls which haunt the darkness. Where would have been the witnesses of this solemn scene if the sun had been hidden from morn till night? As three hours of light gave opportunity for inspection and witness-bearing, we see the wisdom which did not allow it to close too soon.

Never forget that this miracle of the closing of the eye of day at high noon was performed by our Lord in His weakness. He had walked the sea, raised the dead, and healed the sick, in the days of His strength, but now He has come to His lowest, the fever is on Him, He is faint and thirsty. He hangs on the borders of dissolution, yet He has power to darken the sun at noon. He is still very God of very God—

"Behold, a purple torrent runs
Down from His hands and head,
The crimson tide puts out the sun;
His groans awake the dead."

If He can do this in His weakness, what is He not able to do in His strength? Fail not to remember that this power was displayed in a sphere in which He did not usually put forth His might. The sphere of Christ is that of goodness and benevolence, and consequently of light. When He enters the sphere of darkness-making, and of working judgement, He engages in what He calls His strange work. Wonders of terror are His left-handed deeds. It is but now and then that He causes the sun to go down at noon, and darkens the earth in the clear day (Amos 8:9). If our Lord can make darkness at will as He dies, what glory may we not expect now that He lives to be the light of the city of God forever? The Lamb is the light, and what a light! The heavens bear the impress of His dying power, and lose their brightness; shall not the new heavens and the new earth

attest the power of the risen Lord? The thick darkness around the dying Christ is the robe of the Omnipotent; He lives again, all power is in His hands, and all that power He will put forth to bless His chosen.

What a call must that mid-day midnight have been to the careless sons of men! They knew not that the Son of God was among them, or that He was working out human redemption. The grandest hour in all history seemed likely to pass by unheeded, when, suddenly, night hastened from her chambers and usurped the day. Everyone asked his companion, "What means this darkness?" Business stood still, the plow stayed in mid-furrow, and the axe paused uplifted. It was the middle of the day, when men are busiest, but they made a general pause. Not only on Calvary, but on every hill, and in every valley, the gloom settled down. There was a halt in the caravan of life. None could move unless they groped their way like the blind. The master of the house called for a light at noon, and his servant tremblingly obeyed the unusual summons. Other lights were twinkling, and Jerusalem was as a city by night, only men were not in their beds. How startled were mankind! Around the great deathbed an appropriate quiet was secured. I doubt not that a shuddering awe came over the masses of the people, and the thoughtful foresaw terrible things. Those who had stood about the cross, and had dared to insult the majesty of Jesus, were paralyzed with fear. They ceased their vulgarity, and with it their cruel exultation. They were cowed though not convinced, even the basest of them, while the better sort "smote their breasts and returned." As many as could do so, no doubt, stumbled to their chambers, and endeavored to hide themselves, for fear of awful judgments which they feared were near. I do not wonder that there should be traditions of strange things that were said during the hush of that darkness. Those whispers of the past may or may not be true, they have been the subject of learned controversy, but the labor of the dispute was energy ill spent. Yet we could not have wondered if one did say as he is reported to have done, "God is suffering, or the world is perishing." Nor should I drive from my beliefs the poetic legend that an Egyptian pilot passing down the river heard among the reed banks a voice out of the rustling rushes, whispering, "The great Pan is dead." Truly, the God of nature was expiring, and things less tender than the reeds by the river might well tremble at the sound thereof.

We are told that this darkness was over all the land, and Luke puts it, "over all the earth." That portion of our globe which was then veiled in natural night was not affected thereby, but to all men awake, and at their employment, it was the advertisement of a great and solemn event. It was strange beyond all experience, and all men marveled, for when the light should have been brightest, all things were obscured for the space of three hours.

There must be great teaching in this darkness, for when we come so near the cross, which is the center of history, every event is full of meaning. Light will come out of this darkness. I love to feel the solemnity of the three hours of death-shade, and to sit down therein and meditate, with no companion but the august sufferer, around whom that darkness lowered. I am going to speak of it in four ways, as the Holy Spirit may help me. First, let us bow our spirits in the presence of *a miracle which*

amazes us. Secondly, let us regard this darkness as *a veil which conceals;* thirdly, as *a symbol which instructs,* and fourthly, as *a display of sympathy,* which forewarns us by the prophecies which it implies.

I. First, let us view this darkness as A MIRACLE WHICH AMAZES US.

It may seem a trite observation that this darkness was altogether out of the natural course of things. Since the world began was it not heard that at high noon there should be darkness over all the land? It was out of the order of nature altogether. Some deny miracles, and if they also deny God, I will not at this time deal with them. But it is very strange that anyone who believes in God should doubt the possibility of miracles. It seems to me that, granted the being of a God, miracle is to be expected as an occasional declaration of His independent and active will. He may make certain rules for His actions, and it may be His wisdom to keep them, but surely He must reserve to Himself the liberty to depart from His own laws, or else He has in a measure laid aside His personal Godhead, deified law, and set it up above Himself. It would not increase our idea of the glory of His Godhead if we could be assured that He had made Himself subject to rule, and tied His own hands from ever acting except in a certain manner. From the self-existence and freedom of will which enter into our very conception of God, we are led to expect that sometimes He should not keep to the methods which He follows as His general rule. This has led to the universal conviction that miracle is a proof of Godhead. The general works of creation and providence are to my mind the best proofs, but the common heart of our race, for some reason or other, looks to miracle as surer evidence, thus proving that miracle is expected of God. Although the Lord makes it His order that there shall be day and night, He in this case with abundant reason interposes three hours of night in the center of a day. Behold the reason. The unusual in lower nature is made to consort with the unusual in the dealings of nature's Lord. Certainly this miracle was most congruous with that greater miracle which was happening in the death of Christ. Was not the Lord Himself departing from all common ways? Was He not doing that which had never been done from the beginning, and would never be done again? That man should die is so common a thing as to be deemed inevitable. We are not startled at the sound of a funeral knell; we have become familiar with the grave. As the companions of our youth die at our side we are not seized with amazement, for death is everywhere about us and within us. But that the Son of God should die, this is beyond all expectation and not only above nature, but contrary thereto. He who is equal with God deigns to hang upon the cross, and die. I know of nothing that seems more out of rule and beyond expectation than this. The sun darkened at noon is a fit accompaniment of the death of Jesus. Is it not so?

Further, this miracle was not only out of the order of nature, but it was one which *would have been pronounced impossible*. It is not possible that there should be an eclipse of the sun at the time of the full moon. The moon at the time when she is in her full is not in a position in which she could possibly cast her shadow upon the earth. The Passover was at the time of the full moon, and therefore it was not possible that the sun should then undergo an eclipse. This darkening of the sun was not

strictly an astronomical eclipse, the darkness was doubtless produced in some other way, yet to those who were present it did seem to be a total eclipse of the sun—a thing impossible. Ah, brothers! When we come to deal with man, and the fall, and sin, and God, and Christ, and the atonement, we are at home with impossibilities. We have now reached a region where prodigies, and marvels, and surprises, are the order of the day, sublimities become commonplace when we come within the circle of eternal love. Yes, more; we have now left the solid land of the possible, and have put out to sea, where we see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep. When we think of impossibilities in other spheres we start back, but the way of the cross is ablaze with the divine, and we soon perceive that "with God all things are possible." See, then, in the death of Jesus, the possibility of the impossible! Behold here how the Son of God can die. We sometimes pause when we meet with an expression in a hymn which implies that God can suffer or die, we think that the poet has used too great a license, yet it behooves us to refrain from hypercriticism, since in Holy Writ there are words like it. We even read (Acts 20:28) of "the church of God which He has purchased with His own blood"—the blood of God! Ah well! I am not careful to defend the language of the Holy Spirit, but in its presence I take liberty to justify the words which we sang just now—

"Well might the sun in darkness hide,
And shut his glories in,
When God, the mighty Maker, died
For man, the creature's sin."

I will not venture to explain the death of the incarnate God. I am content to believe it, and to rest my hope upon it.

How should the Holy One have sin laid upon Him? That also I do not know. A wise man has told us, as if it were an axiom, that the imputation or the non-imputation of sin is an impossibility. Be it so, we have become familiar with such things since we have beheld the cross. Things which men call absurdities have become foundational truths to us. The doctrine of the cross is to them that perish foolishness. We do know that in our Lord was no sin, and yet He His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree. We do not know how the innocent Son of God could be permitted to suffer for sins that were not His own, it amazes us that justice should permit one so perfectly Holy to be forsaken of His God, and to cry out, "Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabachthani?" But it was so, and it was so by the decree of the highest justice, and we rejoice therein. As it was so, that the sun was eclipsed when it was impossible that it should be eclipsed, so has Jesus performed on our behalf, in the agonies of His death, things which, in the ordinary judgment of men, must be set down as utterly impossible. Our faith is at home in wonderland, where the Lord's thoughts are seen to be as high above our thoughts as the heavens are above the earth.

Concerning this miracle, I have also further to remark that *this darkening of the sun surpassed all ordinary and natural eclipses*. It lasted longer than an ordinary eclipse, and it came in a different manner. According to Luke, the darkness all over the land came first, and the sun was darkened afterwards, the darkness did not begin with the sun, but mastered the sun. It was unique and supernatural. Now, among all griefs

no grief is comparable to the grief of Jesus, of all woes none can parallel the woes of our great Substitute. As strongest light casts deepest shade, so has the surprising love of Jesus cost Him a death such as falls not to the common lot of men. Others die, but this man is "obedient unto death." Others drink the fatal draught, yet reckon not of its wormwood and gall, but He "tasted death." "He poured out His soul unto death." Every part of His being was darkened with that extraordinary death-shade, and the natural darkness outside of Him did but shroud a special death which was entirely by itself.

And now, when I come to think of it, *this darkness appears to have been most natural and fitting*. If we had to write out the story of our Lord's death we could not omit the darkness without neglecting a most important item. The darkness seems a part of the natural furniture of that great transaction. Read the story through and you are not at all startled with the darkness, after once familiarizing your mind with the thought that this is the Son of God, and that He stretches His hands to the cruel death of the cross, you do not wonder at the rending of the veil of the temple; you are not astonished at the earthquake or at the rising of certain of the dead. These are proper attendants of our Lord's passion, and so is the darkness. It drops into its place; it seems as if it could not have been otherwise—

"That Sacrifice!—the death of Him—
The high and ever Holy One!
Well may the conscious heaven grow dim,
And blacken the beholding sun."

For a moment think again. Has it not appeared as if the death which that darkness shrouded was also a natural part of the great whole? We have grown at last to feel as if the death of the Christ of God were an integral part of human history. You cannot take it out of man's chronicle, can you? Introduce the Fall, and see Paradise Lost, and you cannot make the poem complete till you have introduced that greater Man who did redeem us, and by His death gave us our Paradise Regained. It is a singular characteristic of all true miracles, that though your wonder never ceases, they never appear to be unnatural, they are marvelous, but never monstrous. The miracles of Christ dovetail into the general run of human history; we cannot see how the Lord could be on earth and Lazarus not be raised from the dead when the grief of Martha and Mary had told its tale. We cannot see how the disciples could have been tempest-tossed on the Lake of Galilee and the Christ not walk on the water to deliver them. Wonders of power are expected parts of the narrative where Jesus is. Everything fits into its place with surrounding facts. A Romish miracle is always monstrous and devoid of harmony with all beside it. What if St. Winifred's head did come up from the well and speak from the coping to the astonished peasant who was about to draw water! I do not care whether it did or did not, it does not alter history a bit, nor even color it; it is tagged on to the record, and is no part of it. But the miracles of Jesus, this of the darkness among them, are essential to human history, and especially is this so in the case of His death and this great darkness which shrouded it. All things in human story converge to the cross, which seems not to be an afterthought or an expedient, but the fit and foreordained channel through which love should run to guilty men.

I cannot say more from lack of voice, though I had many more things to say. Sit down, and let the thick darkness cover you till you cannot even see the cross, and only know that out of reach of mortal eyes your Lord worked out the redemption of His people. He worked in silence a miracle of patience and of love, by which light has come to those who sit in darkness and in the valley of the shadow of death.

II. Secondly, I desire you to regard this darkness as A VEIL WHICH CONCEALS. The Christ is hanging on yonder tree. I see the dreadful cross. I can see the thieves on either side. I look around, and I sorrowfully mark that motley group of citizens from Jerusalem, and scribes, and priests, and strangers from different countries, mingled with Roman soldiers. They turn their eyes on Him, and for the most part gaze with cruel scorn upon the Holy One who is in the center. In truth it is an awful sight. Mark those dogs of the common sort and those bulls of Bashan of more notable rank, which all unite to dishonor the meek and lowly One. I must confess I never read the story of the Master's death, knowing what I do of the pain of crucifixion, without deep anguish; crucifixion was a death worthy to have been invented by devils. The pain which it involved was immeasurable; I will not torture you by describing it. I know dear hearts that cannot read of it without tears, and without lying awake for nights afterwards.

But there was more than anguish upon Calvary; ridicule and contempt embittered all. Those jests, those cruel gibes, those mockeries, those thrusting out of the tongues, what shall we say of these? At times I have felt some little sympathy with the French Prince who cried, "If I had been there with my guards, I would soon have swept those wretches away." It was too terrible a sight; the pain of the victim was grievous enough, but the abominable wickedness of the mockers who could bear? Let us thank God that in the middle of the crime there came down a darkness which rendered it impossible for them to go further with it. Jesus must die, for His pains there must be no alleviation, and from death there must be for Him no deliverance, but the scoffers must be silenced. Most effectually their mouths were closed by the dense darkness which shut them in.

What I see in that veil is, first of all, that it was *a concealment for those guilty enemies*. Did you ever think of that? It is as if God Himself said, "I cannot bear it. I will not see this infamy! Descend, O veil!" Down fell the heavy shades—

> ***"I asked the heavens, 'What foe to God has done***
> ***This unexampled deed?' The heavens exclaim,***
> ***''Twas man; and we in horror snatched the sun***
> ***From such a spectacle of guilt and shame.'"***

Thank God, the cross is a hiding place. It furnishes for guilty men a shelter from the all-seeing eye, so that justice need not see and strike. When God lifts up His Son, and makes Him visible, He hides the sin of men. He says that "the times of their ignorance He winks at." Even the greatness of their sin He casts behind His back, so that He need not see it, but may indulge His long-suffering, and permit His pity to endure their provocations. It must have grieved the heart of the eternal God to see such wanton cruelty of men towards Him who went about doing good, and healing all manner of diseases. It was horrible to see the teachers of the people

rejecting Him with scorn, the seed of Israel, who ought to have accepted Him as their Messiah, casting Him out as a thing despised and abhorred. I therefore feel gratitude to God for bidding that darkness cover all the land, and end that shameful scene. I would say to any guilty ones here: Thank God that the Lord Jesus has made it possible for your sins to be hidden more completely than by thick darkness. Thank God that in Christ He does not see you with that stern eye of justice which would involve your destruction. Had not Jesus interposed, whose death you have despised, you had worked out in your own death the result of your own sin long ago, but for your Lord's sake you are allowed to live as if God did not see you. This long-suffering is meant to bring you to repentance. Will you not come?

But, further, that darkness was *a sacred concealment for the blessed Person of our divine Lord*. So to speak, the angels found for their King a pavilion of thick clouds, in which His Majesty might be sheltered in its hour of misery. It was too much for wicked eyes to gaze so rudely on that immaculate Person. Had not His enemies stripped Him naked, and cast lots for His garments? Therefore it was fit that the holy manhood should at length find suitable concealment. It was not fit that brutal eyes should see the lines made upon that blessed form by the engraving tool of sorrow. It was not fit that revelers should see the contortions of that sacred frame, indwelt with Deity, while He was being broken beneath the iron rod of divine wrath on our behalf. It was fit that God should cover Him, so that none should see all He did and all He bore when He was made sin for us. I bless God devoutly for thus hiding my Lord away; thus was He screened from eyes which were not fit to see the Sun much less to look upon the Sun of Righteousness.

This darkness also warns us, even we who are most reverent. This darkness tells us all that *the Passion is a great mystery, into which we cannot pry*. I try to explain it as substitution, and I feel that where the language of Scripture is explicit, I may and must be explicit too. But yet I feel that the idea of substitution does not cover the whole of the matter, and that no human conception can completely grasp the whole of the dread mystery. It was worked in darkness because the full, far-reaching meaning and result cannot be beheld of finite mind. Tell me the death of the Lord Jesus was a grand example of self-sacrifice—I can see *that* and much more. Tell me it was a wondrous obedience to the will of God—I can see *that* and much more. Tell me it was the bearing of what ought to have been borne by myriads of sinners of the human race, as the chastisement of their sin—I can see *that,* and found my best hope upon it. But do not tell me that this is all that is in the cross. No, great as this would be, there is much more in our Redeemer's death. God only knows the love of God; Christ only knows all that He accomplished when He bowed His head and gave up the ghost. There are common mysteries of nature into which it were irreverence to pry, but this is a divine mystery, before which we put our shoes from off our feet, for the place called Calvary is holy ground. God veiled the cross in darkness, and in darkness much of its deeper meaning lies; not because God would not reveal it, but because we have not capacity enough to discern it all. God was manifest in the flesh, and in that human flesh He put away sin by His

own sacrifice, this we all know, but "without controversy great is the mystery of godliness."

Once again, this veil of darkness also pictures to me the way in which *the powers of darkness will always endeavor to conceal the cross of Christ*. We fight with darkness when we try to preach the cross. "This is your hour, and the power of darkness," said Christ, and I doubt not that the infernal hosts made in that hour a fierce assault upon the spirit of our Lord. Thus much we also know, that if the prince of darkness is anywhere in force, it is sure to be where Christ is lifted up. To becloud the cross is the grand objective of the enemy of souls. Did you ever notice it? These fellows who hate the gospel will let every other doctrine pass muster, but if the atonement is preached, and the truths which grow out of it, straightaway they are awakened. Nothing provokes the devil like the cross. Modern theology has for its main objective the obscuration of the doctrine of the atonement. These modern cuttlefish make the water of life black with their ink. They make out sin to be a trifle, and the punishment of it to be a temporary business, and thus they degrade the remedy by underrating the disease. We are not ignorant of their devices. Expect, my brethren, that the clouds of darkness will gather as to a center around the cross, that they may hide it from the sinner's view. But expect this also, that there darkness shall meet its end. Light springs out of that darkness—the light eternal of the undying Son of God, who having risen from the dead, lives forever to scatter the darkness of evil.

III. Now we pass on to speak of this darkness as A SYMBOL WHICH INSTRUCTS.

The veil falls down and conceals, but at the same time, as an emblem, it reveals. It seems to say, "Attempt not to search within, but learn from the veil itself; it has cherub work upon it." This darkness teaches us what Jesus suffered. It aids us to guess at the griefs which we may not actually see.

The darkness is the symbol of *the wrath of God which fell on those who slew His only begotten Son*. God was angry, and His frown removed the light of day. Well might He be angry, when sin was murdering His only Son, when the Jewish farmers were saying, "This is the heir; come, let us kill Him, and let us seize on His inheritance." This is God's wrath towards all mankind, for practically all men concurred in the death of Jesus. That wrath has brought men into darkness, they are ignorant, blinded, bewildered. They have come to love darkness better than light because their deeds are evil. In that darkness they do not repent, but go on to reject the Christ of God. Into this darkness God cannot look upon them in complacency, but He views them as children of darkness, and heirs of wrath, for who is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.

The symbol also tells us *what our Lord Jesus Christ endured*. The darkness outside of Him was the figure of the darkness that was within Him. In Gethsemane a thick darkness fell upon our Lord's spirit. He was "exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death." His joy was communion with God—that joy was gone, and He was in the dark. His day was the light of His Father's face; that face was hidden and a terrible night gathered around Him. Brothers, I should sin against that veil if I were to pretend that I could tell you what the sorrow was which oppressed the Savior's

soul; only so far can I speak as it has been given me to have fellowship with Him in His sufferings. Have you ever felt a deep and overwhelming horror of sin—your own sin and the sins of others? Have you ever seen sin in the light of God's love? Has it ever darkly hovered over your sensitive conscience? Has an unknown sense of wrath crept over you like midnight gloom, and has it been about you, around you, above you, and within you? Have you felt shut up in your feebleness, and yet shut out from God? Have you looked around and found no help, no comfort even in God—no hope, no peace? In all this you have sipped a little of that salt sea into which our Lord was cast. If, like Abraham, you have felt a horror of great darkness creep over you, then you have had a taste of what your divine Lord suffered when it pleased the Father to bruise Him and to put Him to grief. This it was that made Him sweat great drops of blood falling to the ground, and this it was which, on the cross made Him utter that appalling cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" It was not the crown of thorns, or the scourge, or the cross which made Him cry, but the darkness, the awful darkness of desertion which oppressed His mind and made Him feel like one distraught. All that could comfort Him was withdrawn, and all that could distress Him was piled upon Him. "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?" Our Savior's spirit was wounded, and He cried, "My heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of My heart." Of all natural and spiritual comfort He was bereft, and His distress was utter and entire. The darkness of Calvary did not, like an ordinary night, reveal the stars, but it darkened every lamp of heaven. His strong crying and tears denoted the deep sorrow of His soul. He bore all it was possible for His capacious mind to bear, though enlarged and invigorated by union with the Godhead. He bore the equivalent of hell, no, not that only, but He bore that which stood instead of ten thousand hells so far as the vindication of the law is concerned. Our Lord rendered in His death agony homage to justice far greater than if a world had been doomed to destruction. When I have said that, what more can I say? Well may I tell you that this unutterable darkness, this hiding of the Divine face, expresses more of the woes of Jesus than words can ever tell.

Again, I think I see in that darkness, also *what it was that Jesus was battling with,* for we must never forget that the cross was a battlefield to Him, wherein He triumphed gloriously. He was fighting then with darkness, with the powers of darkness of which Satan is the head, with the darkness of human ignorance, depravity, and falsehood. The battle thus apparent at Golgotha has been raging ever since. Then was the conflict at its height, for the chiefs of the two great armies met in personal conflict. The present battle in which you and I take our little share is as nothing compared with that wherein all the powers of darkness in their dense battalions hurled themselves against the Almighty Son of God. He bore their onset, endured the tremendous shock of their assault, and in the end, with shout of victory, He led captivity captive. He by His power and Godhead turned midnight into day again, and brought back to this world a reign of light which, blessed be God, shall never come to a close. Come to battle again, you hosts of darkness, if you dare! The cross has defeated you; the cross shall defeat you. Hallelujah! The cross is the ensign of

victory; its light is the death of darkness. The cross is the lighthouse which guides poor weather-beaten humanity into the harbor of peace; this is the lamp which shines over the door of the great Father's house to lead His prodigal's home.

Let us not be afraid of all the darkness which besets us on our way home, since Jesus is the light which conquers it all.

The darkness never came to an end till the Lord Jesus broke the silence. All had been still, and the darkness had grown terrible. At last He spoke, and His voice uttered a psalm. It was the twenty-second Psalm. "My God," He said, "My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Each repeated "Eloi" flashed morning upon the scene. By the time He had uttered the cry, "Why have you forsaken Me?" men had begun to see again, and some even ventured to misinterpret His words, more in terror than in ignorance. They said, "He calls Elijah," they may have meant to mock, but I think not. At any rate there was no heart in what they said, or in the reply of their companions. Yet the light had come by which they could see to dip the sponge in vinegar. Brethren, no light will ever come to dark hearts unless Jesus shall speak, and the light will not be clear until we hear the voice of His sorrows on our behalf, as He cries, "Why have you forsaken Me?" His voice of grief must be the end of our griefs, His cry out of the darkness must cheer away our gloom, and bring the heavenly morning to our minds.

You see how much there is in my text. It is a joy to speak on such a theme when one is in good health, and full of vigor, then are we as Naphtali, a hind let loose; then give we goodly words, but this day I am in pain as to my body, and my mind seems frozen. Nevertheless, the Lord can bless my feeble words, and make you see that in this darkness there is meaning deep and wide which none of us should neglect. If God shall help your meditations this darkness will be light about you.

IV. I come to my fourth point, and my closing words will deal with THE SYMPATHY WHICH PROPHESIES. Do you see the sympathy of nature with her Lord—the sympathy of the sun in the heavens with the Sun of Righteousness? It was not possible for Him by whom all things were made to be in darkness, and for nature to remain in the light.

The first sympathetic fact I see is this; *all lights are dim when Christ shines not*. All is dark when He does not shine. In the church, if Jesus is not there, what is there? The sun itself could not yield us light if Jesus were withdrawn. The seven golden lamps are ready to go out unless He walks among them, and trims them with the holy oil. Brethren, you soon grow heavy, and your spirits faint and your hands are weary, if the Christ is not with you. If Jesus Christ is not fully preached, if He is not with us by His Spirit, then everything is in darkness. Obscure the cross and you have obscured all spiritual teachings. You cannot say, "We will be clear in every other point, and clear upon every other doctrine, but we will shun the atonement, since so many quibble with it. No, sirs, if that candle is put under a bushel, the whole house is dark. All theology sympathizes with the cross, and is colored and tinctured by it. Your pious service, your books, your public worship, must all be in sympathy with the cross one way or another. If the cross is in the dark, so will all your work be—

"What do you think of Christ? is the test
To try both your work and your scheme;
You cannot be right in the rest,
Unless you think rightly of Him."

Conjure up your doubts; fabricate your philosophies, and compose your theories, there will be no light in them if the cross is left out. Vain are the sparks of your own making, you shall lie down in sorrow. All our work and travail shall end in vanity unless the work and travail of Christ is our first and sole hope. If you are dark upon that point, which alone is light, how great is your darkness!

Next, *see the dependence of all creation upon Christ,* as evidenced by its darkness when He withdraws. It was not fit that He who made all worlds should die, and yet all worlds should go on just as they had done. If He suffers eclipse, they must suffer eclipse too, if the Sun of Righteousness is made to set in blood, the natural sun must keep touch with Him. I believe, my friends, that there is a much more wonderful sympathy between Christ and the world of nature than any of us have ever dreamed. The whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now, because Christ in the Church is in His travail pangs. Christ in His mystical body is in travail, and so the whole creation must wait for the manifestation of the Son of God. We are waiting for the coming of the Lord from heaven, and there is no hill or dale, there is no mountain or sea, but what is in perfect harmony with the waiting church. Wonder not that there should be earthquakes in many places, blazing volcanoes, terrible tempests, and sore spreading of deadly disease. Marvel not when you hear of dire portents, and things that make one's heart to tremble, for such things must be till the end shall come. Until the great Shepherd shall make His crook into a scepter, and shall begin His unsuffering reign, this poor earth must bleed at every vein. There must be darkness till these days of delay are ended. You that expect placid history till Christ shall come expect you know not what. You that think that generous politics shall create order and contentment, and that the extension of free-trade shall breathe universal peace over the nations, look for the living among the dead. Till the Lord shall come, the word has gone out, "Overturn, overturn, overturn," and overturned all things must be, not only in other kingdoms, but in this also, till Jesus comes. All that can be shaken shall be shaken, and only His immovable throne and truth shall abide. Now is the time of the Lord's battle with darkness, and we may not hope as yet for unbroken light.

Dear friends, the sin which darkened Christ and made Him die in the dark, darkens the whole world. The sin that darkened Christ and made Him hang upon the cross in the dark is darkening you who do not believe in Him, and you will live in the dark and die in the dark unless you get to Him who only is the light of the world, and can give light to you. There is no light for any man except in Christ, and until you believe in Him thick darkness shall blind you, and you shall stumble in it and perish. That is the lesson I would have you learn.

Another practical lesson is this; if we are in the dark at this time, if our spirits are sunk in gloom, let us not despair, for the Lord Christ Himself was there. If I have fallen into misery on account of sin, let me not give up all hope, for the Father's Well-beloved passed through denser

darkness than mine. O believing soul, if you are in the dark you are near the King's cellars, and there are wines on the lees well refined lying there. You have gotten into the pavilion of the Lord, and now may you speak with Him. You will not find Christ in the gaudy tents of pride, nor in the foul haunts of wickedness: you will not find Him where the viol, and the dance, and the flowing bowl inflame the lusts of men, but in the house of mourning you will meet the Man of Sorrows. He is not where Herodias dances, nor where Bernice displays her charms, but He is where the woman of a sorrowful spirit moves her lips in prayer. He is never absent where penitence sits in darkness and bewails her faults—

"Yes, Lord, in hours of gloom,
When shadows fill my room,
When pain breathes forth its groans,
And grief its sighs and moans,
Then You are near."

If you are under a cloud, feel after your Lord, if perhaps you may find Him. Stand still in your black sorrow, and say, "O Lord, the preacher tells me that Your cross once stood in such darkness as this—O Jesus hear me!" He will respond to you; the Lord will look out of the pillar of cloud, and shed a light upon you. "I know their sorrows," He says. He is no stranger to heart-break. Christ also once suffered for sin. Trust Him, and He will cause His light to shine upon you. Lean upon Him, and He will bring you up out of the gloomy wilderness into the land of rest. God help you to do so!

Last Monday I was cheered beyond all I can tell you by a letter from a brother who had been restored to life, light, and liberty by the discourse of last Sabbath morning [Sermon No. 1895, Volume 32—*Love Abounding, Love Complaining, Love Abiding*]. I know no greater joy than to be useful to your souls. For this reason, I have tried to preach this morning, though I am quite unfit for it physically. Oh, I do pray I may hear more news from saved ones! Oh that some spirit that has wandered out into the dark moorland may spy the candle in my window, and find its way home! If you have found my Lord, I charge you never let Him go, but cleave to Him till the day break, and the shadows flee away. God help you so to do for Jesus' sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
MATTHEW 27:26-54.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—306, 279, 280.

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

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

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

HOLDING FAST OUR PROFESSION
NO. 1897

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

"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for He is faithful who promised)."
Hebrews 10:23.

THE apostle is drawing certain inferences from the covenant of grace, upon which he has been enlarging. He shows that God has made a covenant with His people by which they are effectually preserved. "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord, I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." He shows that by this covenant the fear of returning to our old sin is removed, and the guilt of our sin is forever put away. He bids us, therefore, be bold in our approaches to God. As pardoned men, upon whom there is no sin, he bids us exercise the freedom of near access to God, who has accepted us in Christ. Then he tells us that since we are put in such a blessed position—a position which is altogether unique—it becomes us to hold fast to what we have received. Since the glorious gospel has done so much for us, let us never quit it. Since it has brought us into a condition which angels might envy, let us never think of leaving it. Let us not dream of giving up that divine principle which has worked us such blessedness, but "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering."

I pray God the Holy Spirit to bless these words as we shall think them over. May He make this evening's meditation a means of establishment to us, that, while we hold fast the profession of our faith, the blessed truths of that faith may also hold us fast as an anchor holds a ship! Never was there a time in which this was more needful. That exhortation, "Let us hold fast," might well be written on the cover of every Christian's Bible. We live in such a changing age, that we need all to be exhorted to be rooted and grounded, confirmed and established, in the truth.

I shall call your attention, first, to this point—*what we have*. We have faith, and according to the second rendering, which is adopted by the revisers, we have hope. Then, secondly, *what we have done*. We have made a profession of that faith—a confession of that hope. Then, thirdly, *what we are now to do*—to hold fast that profession of faith and hope, and if you ask me, in the fourth place, *why we are to do it?* I shall in closing give you this reason—because "He is faithful that promised." If God is faithful, let us be faithful too. Since until now He has proven Himself most true, let us pray that we may be true also.

I. First, then, dear brothers and sisters, let us think of WHAT WE ALREADY HAVE by the grace of God.

If we read the text according to our present authorized translation, we have *faith*. We have made a public avowal of our faith. We can lay our hands upon our hearts, and say, "Lord, You know all things; You know that we have faith in Jesus Christ Your Son." Yes, we have obtained what the apostle calls "like precious faith;" it is a rare jewel, and he is rich that possesses it.

If we have not this faith in possession, let us pause here and ask for it, and let us confess to God the great sin of unbelief in not believing in such a one as the Son of God, who cannot lie, whose life is so transparently true, that to doubt Him is a superfluity of naughtiness, a willful insult to the majesty of His faithfulness. Yet it would not be true for us to say—some of us—that we do *not* believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, for we do. We have no other confidence. Where could we find any other? He is the rock of our salvation. We could not invent another trust, however hard we were put to it, or however much we wished to do so. If Jesus were to say, "Will you also go away?" we should be compelled to answer, "Lord, to whom should we go? You have the words of eternal life." If the question is whether we have perfect holiness, we must answer it in the negative, to our great sorrow. If the question is whether we are highly advanced in divine grace, we would not dare say that we are. It would be immodest if we put forth such a pretension, but if the inquiry is, "Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ?" then without hesitation we reply, "Lord, we trust You with undivided faith." Trembling though it is, our faith is true, and though it does not always work in us all the fruit we would desire, yet it does operate in a very blessed way upon our walk and conversation. We believe that Jesus is the Christ, and our trust for eternal life is in Him alone.

It is not a matter of question with you, dear friend, is it, as to whether you know Jesus to be the Son of God, very God of very God? It is past all question with you that Jesus bore your sins in His own body on the tree. You have no doubt about His wondrous death and His marvelous resurrection from among the dead. You believe that He has offered a sacrifice once, which once offered has ended the sin of His people, and that He has gone into His glory, and is now sitting at the right hand of God, expecting till His foes are made His footstool. You have no more doubt about that than you have about your own existence. You also believe that He will shortly come to be our Judge—that He will gather the nations before Him, and that He will reign King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Your faith, then, in the Lord Jesus Christ is not a matter of "if" and "but," you stake your salvation on it. I can truly say that if what I preach is not true, I am a lost man. I have invested all that I have in Christ. If this boat sinks I drown, for I cannot swim, and I know no other life-boat. Christ is all in all to me, without Him I can do nothing, I have nothing, I am nothing. Jesus in the matter of salvation is everything from beginning to end for me. And you can say the same, I know.

You have faith, nor does your faith confine itself to the belief in the person and work of Christ, and to a simple trusting of yourself to Him, but you believe all that is revealed in relation to Jesus. All the stars which make up the Southern Cross shine with clear brilliance for you. Every truth which is revealed in Holy Scripture is embraced by your faith, and held tenaciously. To you I know, beloved, it is only sufficient to prove that it is so written in the Bible, and you believe it. A truth may sometimes amaze you because of its greatness, but that does not stagger your faith, for your faith deals with mysteries, and is familiar with sublimities which it never dreams of comprehending. Yes, we openly own that we believe in God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the triune God, and we believe in the election of grace, and we believe in the eternal purposes of God, and in the working out of all those purposes to the praise of the glory of His grace. If God tells us anything, we accept it as sure, unquestionable, infallible Truth. If He veils anything, we desire to leave it veiled, for the limit of revelation is the limit of our faith. We may imagine this or imagine that, but we think nothing of our imaginations. Our faith deals with what God says, not with what learned men think. What the Spirit of God has written in this inspired Book is truth to us, and we allow no human teaching to rank side by side with it. Well, then, we have faith—faith that believes, faith that learns, faith that reclines, faith that trusts herself entirely in the love of God, faith that can say, "Father into Your hands I commit my spirit." We have it, and we know that we have it. If any of you here do not know it, do not rest until you do know it. Unbelief calls God a liar, do not live a moment in such a horrible God-provoking sin. Not to trust Christ is to abide under the wrath of God. "He that believes not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." May we never remain in such a state as that, but come to knowledge of the truth and to a sound faith in that truth, for this is the faith of God's elect.

But another reading—and a very good reading, too—runs thus, *"The confession of our hope."* Oh yes, beloved, if we have faith we have hope. We will take both renderings, for they are both correct in fact if not in the letter. We have a blessed hope, a hope most "sure and steadfast, which enters into that which is within the veil." If I begin to describe our hope, I must begin with what, I think, is always the topmost stone of it—the hope of the second advent of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, for we believe that when He shall appear, we shall also appear with Him in glory. We know that He has gone up into heaven. His apostles saw Him as He ascended from Olivet, and we believe the words which the angels declared soon after His departure to remind us of His coming again, "This same Jesus shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into heaven." We expect Him to descend in person, and we hope ourselves to behold Him in that day. We expect Him to stand in the latter day upon the earth, and in our own flesh risen from the dead, we expect to behold our Savior and our God. This is the glorious hope of the church. This is how she expects to be victorious over the world; the Lord shall come and end her conflict in complete triumph. As His first coming has laid the

foundations of His empire, so His second coming shall bring forth the cornerstone thereof with shouts of "Grace, grace, unto it."

Wrapped up in that hope, we have personal hopes of our own, which hopes are, first, that our spirits, when we depart the body, shall be with Christ. We have been with Him here, and we believe we shall be with Him there. Though in some sense while we are present in the body, we are absent from the Lord, yet in another sense He is with us even now. We expect before long to be absent from the body, and in a fuller sense present with the Lord. Such is our joyful hope and expectation, glory, millennium, heaven, eternity, all lie within the circle of our hope. Ours is not the larger, but *the largest hope*.

We expect that after a while the trumpet shall sound, and our bodies shall be raised from beds of dust and silent clay, and that thus we shall be perfected in our manhood as spirit, soul, and body. The day of our Lord's appearing will be the day of the redemption of the body from the dust with which it mingles. We expect, then, as perfect in Christ Jesus, made in the image of Him who is the Firstborn among many brethren, to live forever and ever in eternal blessedness, enjoying the life of God at His right hand, where there are pleasures forevermore. We have a joyful, glorious, blessed hope, which purifies and comforts, and strengthens, and sustains us, and this hope is in us now.

As the pastor of this church, I can say joyfully of the most of those who are here present, that you have a good hope through grace. That hope gilds the darkness of the present; it is your candle through the long and weary night. You are not always to be sickly, and poor, and suffering. This hope sheds its light upon the future, and reveals glories brighter than imagination could invent. At times when you realize that hope, you almost feel the crown of life settling down upon your brow, and removing your throbbing pain once and for all. In the power of that hope you put on the sandals of light and the garments of immortality, and take your place among the celestial throng. Many a time by faith you walk along those streets which are paved with pure gold, like transparent glass, and as you tread the shining way you converse with the shining ones who dwell in the New Jerusalem. Hope already hears, with her quick ears, the songs of the redeemed and her eye beholds the Lord whom you love enthroned in the highest. Oh, how near does hope bring our Well-beloved, whom, having not seen, we love; in whom, though now we see Him not, yet believing we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory!

We have faith, and we have hope, and we know that we have them. Are we not enriched with the grace of God? Where faith and hope are found, love cannot be far off, for the three divine sisters are seldom separated. Let us love the Lord who has given us the first two.

II. Secondly, we have gone a step further than the silent possession of faith and hope. We have made A PROFESSION OF OUR FAITH AND A CONFESSION OF OUR HOPE. I am not going to say much about this, but to remind you of certain joyously solemn facts.

You remember the time, dear brothers and sisters, when you first made a profession of your faith. It may do many of us good to go back to those early days. We are getting on in years, some of us, but we do not wish to feel old, at least we want to keep as much of the freshness and joy of youth as we well can. Cheerfulness is most becoming in Christian men; we have a life within us of later birth than that which our mothers gave us, we will therefore measure our age from our second rather than our first birth. I like to see the old man grow young when he talks of Christ, let him on that point become enthusiastic, even as in his boyhood. When he speaks of the loving-kindness of the Lord to him, he should show the mellowness of years and the energy of youth in happy combination. Perhaps some of you remember the place, the spot of ground, where Jesus met with you. If you do not, at least you recollect when you first whispered to your own heart with trembling hope, "I think I know the Lord." You were almost startled at the echo of your own words. You were afraid that you had been presumptuous. There was great tenderness of conscience upon you then, and you would not have professed what was not true for all the world. You said within yourself, "I half said that I was a believer, but I do not think I dare say it again." Yet within a short time it oozed out again, when you were in company and felt forced to defend your Savior. It was true of you in a blessed sense, "Your speech betrays you. You also were with Jesus of Nazareth." At last it grew so warm round about you that you thought you might as well come out for Jesus and derive help from the confession. The adversaries were ferreting you out, and you thought you had better come out and say, boldly, once and for all, "It is even so." Well do I recollect going to speak to the minister, and telling him that I hoped I had found the Savior, and begging him to ask e such questions as he thought fit to test me. The true pilgrim never wishes to enter the house Beautiful if he has not a right to be there, he is afraid that he may be guilty of intrusion, and he therefore hopes the porter at the gate will only admit him when he feels quite sure that he is a pilgrim such as the Lord of the way would permit to enter His house. It was a day of great trembling, but of great joy, when first we avowed our faith in Jesus! What we said we meant. We salted our words with our tears, but oh, we felt it such an honor to be numbered with the people of God! If we had been promised a seat on the floor, or had been allowed only to hear the gospel in the draftiest corner of the building, we should then have been fully content. We sang and meant it—

"Might I enjoy the meanest place
Within Your house, O God of grace!
Not tents of ease, nor thrones of power,
Should tempt my feet to leave Your door."

We want soft cushions now, we cannot stand to hear a sermon now, nor yet travel very far, especially in damp weather. It is very strange that we should have become so delicate, but it is so. How many miles we could walk when first we knew the Lord; the miles have grown much longer lately or else our love has grown much shorter! Those were blessed days—changeful, showery, with little more that the dusk of dawn about

them, but still there was a morning freshness about them upon which we look back with supreme delight, and somewhat of regret. Then it was a time of love, a season of buds and flowers, and songbirds, and overflowing life and hope.

Thus early in my discourse I would most earnestly say to you: Hold fast the profession of your faith. By the memories of the day when you made that profession, be firm in it to the end. If you were not false then, if you were not deceivers then, hold fast the confession of your hope without wavering, for "He is faithful who promised." To me it is a solemn memory that I professed my faith openly in baptism. Vividly I do recall the scene. It was the third of May, and the weather was cold because of a keen wind. I see the broad river, and the crowds which lined the banks, and the company upon the ferry-boat. The word of the Lord was preached by a man of God who is now gone home, and when he had done so, he went down into the water, and we followed him, and he baptized us. I remember how, after being the slave of timidity, I rose from the liquid grave quickened into holy courage by that one act of decision, consecrated henceforth to bear a life-long testimony. It was by burial with Christ in baptism that I confessed my faith in His death, burial, and resurrection. By an avowed death to the world I professed my desire henceforth to live with Jesus, for Jesus, and like Jesus. Oh that I had been more faithful to that profession! But there it was, and I am not ashamed of it, nor wishful to run back from it. Ah no! I bear in my body that watermark, that fulfillment of the Holy Scriptures, which says, "Having your hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and your bodies washed with pure water."—

"High heaven that heard the solemn vow,
That vow renewed shall daily hear,
Till in life's latest time I bow,
And bless in death a bond so dear."

Let us remember also the many times in which we have repeated that profession of faith, that confession of hope, for instead of retracting it, we have gone on to repeat it. We have been marked anew with the King's name. If you ask how you have renewed your vows, I reply; you have done it many a time at the table of communion. You have sat there and feasted with your Lord, and you have not been ashamed of being there, I am sure, no, you have often feared that it was too good to be true that such a one as you should be eating bread with the children, when not long ago you begged for the crumbs which fell from their table. You have sat at the banquet of bread and wine, and in so doing you have borne witness to the death of Christ until He comes. Thus you have in frequent feasts of love confessed your joyful hope.

And beside that, in many a prayer meeting you have been present, and by your very presence have expressed your belief that it is not a vain thing to wait upon God. You have also joined in the prayer, and this is no mean profession of faith. In many a service, when Christ has been preached, you have been there, not merely to assist by your presence, but because you have agreed with it all. Your heart has at times so burned within you, that you have thought it proper to say, "Amen." You

longed to cry, "Hallelujah," and it was almost a pity you did not do so, for the outburst would have done no hurt to anybody. Perhaps, sometimes, you have done it, and you have startled yourself and many others, by such an exclamation you have renewed your profession of your faith.

You have repeated your profession in the shop, and in the market, and in the place of business, and among your friends, and in your family, and to the partner of your life. Those around you know you to be professedly an heir of heaven, a child of God; it is well that they should. Why should not the children of light be as well-known as the children of darkness? Why should you conceal yourselves?

As for me, and such of us as stand prominently out to preach the word of God, how many times have we made a profession? I hope our preaching has not been done "professionally," but certainly we can neither preach, nor lead the devotions of a congregation without professing our faith and declaring our hope.

I again break in upon the latter part of my discourse by saying—after all these times in which we have worn our Master's livery, shall we desert Him? After those many occasions in which we have borne His mark upon our foreheads, can we think of becoming apostates? Christ has been confessed by us in the most solemn forms over and over again—shall we be doubly forsworn? Shall we become sevenfold traitors? No, by His rich and sovereign grace, I would say to you, believing that the Holy Spirit will help you to keep the command, "Hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering; for He is faithful who promised."

We have considered how we began this profession, and we have also seen how often we have made it since. Let us think for a minute *what it has cost us*. Has it been worthwhile to be on the Lord's side? Religion has cost many of its disciples somewhat dear, but it has cost nothing compared with its worth. What bashfulness it cost you to make the first confession of your faith! What a struggle it then appeared! You were weeks, some of you, before you dared to come and see such an awful person as the minister, to speak of your conversion to him. It had taken you weeks even to tell it to your wife, or your husband. The dear soul, for once, seemed to grow into a very dragon when you wanted to tell him that you had found the Lord. I have known parents terribly afraid to let their children know of their conversion. They were never half so afraid of sinning as they became afraid of being charged with repenting. You surmounted that difficulty did you not? You cried to God about it and you obtained courage, and now you wonder how you could have been so foolishly timid. Do not in the future fall back into the same fears.

But perhaps some of you lost the friendship of many by becoming disciples of the Lord Jesus. I know one who became a member of this church, she had moved in high and fashionable circles, but she said to me, "They have left me—every one of them." I said, "I am very thankful, for it will save you the trouble of quitting *them*. They will do you no good if they profess to be your friends, and they will do you less harm by giving you the cold shoulder." It is about the best thing that happens to a Christian man when worldlings cut his acquaintance. "Come you out

from among them," is to many a severe command, but all difficulty is removed when the world turns out from us, and casts out our name as evil. Still, it has cost many a tear and many a sigh for the first believer in certain families to take up his cross, and come right out and follow Christ. "Sanctimonious hypocrite," "Sniveling pretender"—such titles, and worse, they are quick to throw at us. It is but natural that the world we leave should give us a parting kick. We, of course, are everything that is bad, as soon as we forsake the ways of the world to follow Christ. It is the old fashion, after this manner they dealt with our fathers. I do not suppose that any true man after a while counts it at all a hardship, or mourns as though some strange thing had happened to him. Did they not swim through seas of blood in the old times? Did they not fight with beasts at Ephesus, and reach to heaven by the way of the stake? We suffer so little compared with the persecutions of our forerunners, that it is hardly worth a thought, but yet to some very tender hearts it is a costly business to make a profession of faith, and I say to them—Have you suffered these many things in vain? Will you now go back? Will you turn again to the beggarly elements of the world, after having confronted persecution, and borne the enmity of men? No, by the grace of God you will "hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering."

"But what good does our profession do?" asks one. I do not know that we need ask that question, or answer it either. If a course of action is commanded of God, it is ours to obey, whether we can see any use in it or not. It is put continually in the word of God, "He that with his heart believes, and with his mouth makes confession of Him, shall be saved," or in other words, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Faith in the truth and an open profession of that faith are constantly put together in the Scriptures. There must be the confession of Christ outwardly, as well as the believing in Christ inwardly, and the Lord Jesus Himself has said, "Except a man shall take up his cross and follow Me, he cannot be My disciple." It is not the Lord's will that we should go in the dark to heaven along some private road of our own. We are to come out and follow Him in this evil generation, or else He will be ashamed of us when He comes in the glory of His Father. If the question is asked again, "What is the good of an open profession?" I would say, "Much every way. It is in itself a grand thing for his manliness for a man to boldly say, 'I am a Christian.'" It is good for a soldier of the cross to draw the sword and throw away the scabbard by being openly known to be a Christian. The world then ceases to urge its coarser temptations. The enemies know whereabouts you are, and do not raise that question again. Your profession becomes a confirmation of your purpose to lead a better life. You say, "I have lifted up my hand unto the Lord, and how can I go back? How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? The vows of the Lord are upon me," all this is a protection to you in the hour of trial. To show your colors may not appear to be a great thing, but to many it is half the battle.

Besides, the open confession of our faith has a good influence upon others. How could there be a Christian church at all if every Christian

man concealed his faith in his own bosom? Without the Christian church as an organization, how would all the good work that has to be done in the reclaiming of sinners be attended to? Where would be our public proclamation of the gospel? Where our missions and ministers? If you love your Lord and have faith and hope in Him, do not delay to come forward and own His name and cause. Say boldly, "Where are His people? I will join with them. Do they meet with any reproach for obedience to Him? I will share that reproach. Have they any work for Christ on hand? I will take my share of that work. Yours am I, You Son of David, and all that I have, and I give myself to You to be Yours forever and ever."

It will be to your lasting honor and enduring joy to be found wearing the livery of the Prince of Peace, marching in the ranks of the saints, contending earnestly for the truth and advancing the kingdom of your God.

Thus I have spoken upon the profession of our faith and hope.

III. The third point is to be, WHAT ARE WE NOW TO DO? I have entrenched upon it already, and I have done so intentionally. The answer is—*we are called upon to hold fast the profession of our faith*.

Of course this includes *the holding fast of your faith*. The things which you have believed continue to believe. There may be an advance—there ought to be an advance—in politics, because the basis to begin with was wrong, and as you advance you only approximate a little more nearly to that which is perfectly just, and honest, and righteous. It is a far cry from feudalism to a righteous commonwealth. But there can be no advance in true religion. If it is true at the first, the same things are true still, and must be true forever and ever. We feel that there can be no progress in the foundational-truth of Christianity when we remember such a text as this, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever." Revelation comes from the mind of God, like Minerva is fabled to have sprung from the brain of Jove, full grown, full armed. Nothing may be taken from it; nothing may be added to it. I, for one, am perfectly satisfied with an apostolic faith. It anyone can go beyond the apostles, let him go, I shall not attempt to do so. I am satisfied to believe what Paul believed. Oh that I were worthy to unloose the laces of his shoes! Though Paul is not my Lord and Master, yet I reverence the Holy Spirit as He speaks through Paul's epistles. I am perfectly satisfied with what Jesus revealed by His own teaching, and by the teaching of His apostles, and going beyond that seems to me to imply that the revelation is imperfect. But imperfect it is not. It is plain, clear, and finished, and they that add to it, or take from it, will incur the plagues with which the Book is closed and guarded. God shall take away from such their names out of the book of life, and out of the holy city. Hold fast to the old truth. The ships in yonder port are swinging with the tide just now. Please God they will swing back to the same place when the tide turns. They have done so before. There came a day when our dissenting churches almost all went round to Socinianism, and then their chapels were empty, and their day of power was gone. Earnest men rose up and preached the old gospel again and there was a grand revival. Now they are going off again, turning every man to his own error, except that the Lord has a faithful company that hold fast the

faith, and will not let it go, and these will live to see a great revulsion of feeling yet. If they do not, that is a small matter to them, to be faithful to their God is their first and their last business.

Hold next to your hope. Hope in Christ, and in His coming, and in the victory of the truth. If the storms lower, believe that there is fair weather ahead, and if the night darkens into a seven-fold blackness, believe that the morning comes despite the darkening glooms. Have you faith and trust in Him that lives, and was dead, and is alive forevermore? Let your hope begin to hear the hallelujahs, which proclaim the reign of the Lord God omnipotent, for reign He must, and the victory shall be unto Him and to His truth. Hold fast your faith. Hold fast your hope.

But that is not the text. It is *hold fast your profession of faith*, *your confession of hope,* that is to say, stand to what you have done by way of open avowment of these things. Constantly keep up your confession. You made it once. Renew it. Often and often say—

"I'm not ashamed to acknowledge my Lord,
Nor to defend His cause;
Maintain the honor of His Word,
The glory of His cross."

You are Christians, not for time, but for eternity. Your new birth is not into a dying existence, but into life everlasting. You are born again of a living and incorruptible seed, that lives and abides forever. Therefore, quit yourselves like men and be strong. Stand fast, "Be steadfast, unmovable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord." Continue your confession, and never conceal it. There are times when you will be inclined to put your flag away into the canvas case, and hide your coat of arms in the cellar. Then you may fitly judge that the devil is getting an advantage over you, and that it is time that you ceased to be beguiled by his sorceries. Tear up the wrappings, throw the bag away, and nail your flag aloft where every eye can see it. Whenever you feel inclined to be ashamed of Christ do not deliberate, but say, "This is wrong. There is coming over me something that I must not endure. If I were in a right state of mind I should never feel like this." Never yield to shameful cowardice, scorn such detestable meanness. Out with it, man! Out with it! If you might have gone on peaceably, and said nothing about your religion, yet whenever you feel at all afraid to do it; then say, "Now I *must* do it. I cannot allow my principles to remain in question. I will in some way make a demonstration of the faith that is in me, lest I prove a coward and a castaway after all." Perhaps you may have to go into a certain company where you do not want to have it known that you are a Christian. It is imperative that you break through that snare, and put the case beyond debate. If I were you I would make my profession known in that very company, because the idea that you must not be known to be a Christian will be very dangerous to you. I cannot exactly tell in what way it may endanger you, but it will surely do so, and therefore whenever the thought of concealment crops up, down with it, and come out clear and straight for Jesus. Only when you are out-and-out for Jesus can you be in a right condition. Anything short of this is full of evil. Since Satan

tempts you to hide your faith, feel that he seeks your harm, and therefore come out all the more decidedly.

Beloved friends, may God help us never to do anything contrary to the confession of our faith. I have heard of such a thing as a Christian man making a confession of his faith by paying sixpence in the pound in the Bankruptcy Court. They say that he is making a good thing out of his failure. He is making his own damnation sure if he is robbing his creditors and yet professing to be a Christian. Here is a man making a confession of his faith. He is a very good Christian man in his own esteem, but he also knows a good glass of wine, and is most fluent when he is getting far into the bottle. Have drunks any hope of eternal life? Look at yonder professor, he is going across to the public house to stand at the counter and drink with those who blaspheme. That is his way of confessing his faith, I suppose. It is not mine. Have I not seen Christian women become noisily angry, and say harsh things to their servants? That is showing your Christianity, is it? I do not want to be sarcastic, but I want you not to tempt me to be so. If you love the Lord, live as if you loved Him. Let us all try to do so, and let us watch that we never undo with our hands what we say with our tongues. I heard in Lancashire of some people who preached with their feet. It is the best way of preaching in the world. By your walk and conversation you will preach twice as well as by your talk. Your tongue is too soft a thing to influence dull minds; you must influence such by your lives.

When we come to die we will gather up our feet in the bed, and bear another and more solemn testimony to the Lord our God. We will set up one Ebenezer more on Jordan's brink, and bear one more witness for Him that loved us, and that washed us from our sins in His blood. I recollect what Whitefield said of himself. Someone said, "Dear Mr. Whitefield, I should like to be present with you when you come to die. What a testimony you will bear in your parting moments." "No," said that eminent servant of God, "I do not think I shall bear any testimony in death, because I have borne so many testimonies in my life that my Lord will not want any from me when I die." So it came to pass. He stood at the top of the stairs the night before he died and preached his last sermon, and then turned in and went to heaven. Perhaps that is how some of us will write the *finis* to our lifework. At any rate, let us bear our testimonies while we can. Let us speak up for our Master while we may, and by and by we shall see Him whom our soul loves, and rejoice in Him forever.

IV. I may not detain you many more moments, and therefore let me answer the question WHY ARE WE TO DO THIS? We are to hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, because *He is faithful that has promised*.

Have you found Him faithful? Has the Lord failed you? Has the Lord been untrue in His promises to you? If He has, then do not hold fast your profession. If, after all, it has been a mistake and a delusion, then give it up. But if He is faithful that has promised—if He has kept His word to you, helped you in your trouble, sustained your heart under burdens, comforted you in the dark hour of trial—if till this moment you have

proven the power of prayer, the wisdom of providence, and the truth of the sacred word, then deal with my Lord as He has dealt with you. Be not faithless to the Crucified. Oh! Be not Judas to Him who is Jesus to you. He gave His heart for you, and even after death it poured out blood and water for you; give your whole heart to Him. If it is so that these truths are firmly established, and that God keeps His covenant, then let us come at once to the feet of the blessed Lord, and say, "Lord, we do not regret that we entered Your service, on the contrary, we are ready to begin again." If we had our lives to live over again, we that began to be Christians as lads would begin earlier. We that have served the Lord desire no better Master, and no better service, but we would wish Him to find in each one of us a better servant. Lord, we have been happy with You. When we have been unhappy, it has been our own fault, not Yours. We would return to You and say, "Permit us still to serve You. We would be Your servants forever." I have heard of a husband and wife who felt their love for each other to be so strong, that they almost wished to go through the wedding ceremony again, to show how content they were to bear the easy yoke of married love. Many of us could say the same. We would also be joined anew to our Lord. Let us afresh take upon us His yoke. Let us put our shoulder down to the cross again, and commence again to serve the Lord Jesus with the love of our espousals and the freshness of our earliest days. May the Lord bless us to that end. While we are doing this, hope that others who never did love Him before will now say, "We will come with you and begin a new life from this good hour." It will be a happy, happy circumstance if this should be the case. God grant it may be so with many, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—HEBREWS 10.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—766, 271, 668.

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

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

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

MOUTH AND HEART
NO. 1898

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, APRIL 25, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"That if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved." Romans 10:9.

PAUL'S great work was saving souls. Whatever else he might be doing, he never forgot "by all means to save some." Whatever else he aimed at in his epistles, he always took care so to write that men might, by his teaching, be led to the Lord Jesus. He sought so to speak so that troubled consciences might come to peace, through Jesus Christ his Lord, whom he loved so well. This is one of the reasons why he so often gives us weighty condensations of the gospel, packing the truth together very closely. He knew that these are very useful, and so he prepared them for his brethren, as one provides for travelers portable meats or condensed milk. When the reader finds a compact sentence of this sort, he has met with a little Bible, a miniature Body of Divinity. Behold the whole story of redeeming love told out in a line or two, easy to be understood, likely to be remembered, calculated to impress. He who composes short and striking summaries of gospel truth may be working as effectively for the salvation of men as another who delivers earnest, pleading discourses. In this chapter Paul several times puts the gospel in a remarkably plain, simple, and brief manner. He is the master of condensation, and our text is a specimen of his power. He here gives the plan of salvation in a line or so—"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."

I wish to preach in the same spirit in which Paul wrote, aiming from my first word to my last at the conversion of any of you who have not yet known the Lord. I pray that we may all mean business at this time, and may get at it in downright earnest. May you be determined to come to the point, and no longer hesitate! How glad I should be if any would say to themselves, "I will run in the way, if I can but see it. I will lay hold of that which is put before me, if I may but grasp it. I will hesitate and trifle no longer, but I will deal solemnly with solemn matters, so that this day I may find peace with God!"

I am not going to enter into any profound exposition of the deep things of God, but I shall keep to those simple matters through which salvation

comes to plain men and women. Oh that the Spirit of God may bless my words to the immediate conversion of my hearers!

I. I shall want you to notice in our text, first, that the gospel as Paul here sets it forth, is a gospel of faith, and THIS GOSPEL OF FAITH IS EVIDENTLY INTENDED FOR LOST MEN. Observe, he says, "If you shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, *you shall be saved."* When Moses wrote the law, he spoke upon obedience to the command as securing *life,* for he says, "This do, and you shall live." It was presupposed by the law that those to whom the law came already possessed life, and the fulfilling of the law did but preserve them in the life which they already possessed. We read in the fifth verse of this chapter, "For Moses describes the righteousness which is of the law, that the man who does those things shall *live* by them." You see, the law continues life to those who have already life enough to do good works. The gospel comes to us under quite another aspect; it does not regard us as having life, but as needing that life. The gospel comes to us not as to servants who need to be told how they are to continue to live, but as to dead sinners who need to be made to live, and then to be kept alive and preserved in happy and holy being. The gospel says not only that we shall live by it, but that we shall be *saved* by it, which promise goes much lower and further. When it is said that we shall *"be saved,"* it implies that we have fallen into a lost, ruined, and undone condition, and out of this the gospel is to rescue us.

It is well to start fairly in preaching the gospel, by declaring plainly to whom this gospel is sent. It is sent to you that need it, it is sent, therefore, to you who are lost, because, if you are not lost, you do not want saving. If you have not fallen you do not need restoring; if you have not sinned you do not need forgiving; if you are not far off from God you do not require to be brought nigh by the blood of Christ. The gospel of salvation is sent to those who are under the curse of the law and condemned to pay its penalties. What a joyous note this is! Hear it, you brokenhearted, and be encouraged. To you we proclaim the free gift of God.

Some fancy that we are to preach to you a milder kind of law, a more easy way of works, an amended dispensation, but, on the contrary, we preach to you not demands but gifts, not law but love. Our gospel is in very deed good news. We are come to tell men not what *they* are to do for God, but what God has done for them. We speak not of what men are to bring to Jesus, but of, what Jesus has brought to them, and has freely and graciously put forward for their acceptance. Listen, then, you who need saving, this Book is for you; the Christ whom this Book reveals is for you, the Spirit of God who bears witness to Christ is for you. Ah, you guilty, you self-condemned, you utterly disheartened, it is to such as you that the risen Savior is preached today!

Jesus comes to bring *salvation.* What a great word is that! The text says the believer shall "be saved," saved is a little word for letters, but it is a great word for meanings. What is it to be saved? It means to be saved from *the punishment* of all your sins, saved from going down into the pit, saved from the blackness of darkness forever, saved from the everlasting

wrath of the Most High, saved from the second death whose terror is the hell of hell. Whosoever confesses the Lord Jesus and believes that God has raised Him from the dead, shall be saved from the penal consequences of his guilt.

Better still, you shall be saved from *sin itself*. The criminality and guilt of it shall be removed, from its stain you shall be washed whiter than snow. The sin itself, that black cloud, as well as the tempest with which it is charged, shall be removed, even as it is written, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and as a cloud, your sins." We preach not only deliverance from the punishment, but deliverance from the crime itself—deliverance from the charge and accusation which otherwise would lie against the transgressor. The sin shall be blotted out in the case of the believer, and he shall be forgiven and justified—justified from all things from which the law could never clear him. Righteousness shall be imputed to him, even the righteousness of the Lord Jesus, who is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes. If you confess with the mouth and believe with the heart, the Lord Jesus shall be made of God unto you wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. The confessing believer shall be delivered from the guilt of his sin, and he shall stand accepted before the judgement seat of God.

What is more still, you shall not only be delivered from the punishment of sin and the guilt of sin, but from *the power* of sin. Oh, to be saved from sinning! This is our chief desire. It the guilt of sin could possibly be put away and we could still be left as much the slaves of sin as before, very little would have been done for us. It would be a doubtful blessing. If the children of Israel in Egypt had been screened from serving with rigor, and had been fed to the full, and made content in their slavery, would it have been a real blessing to them? Would it not have riveted the chains of their bondage? The Lord did not send them relief in the form of bread, and meat, and garments, with which to be comfortable in Egypt, but He brought them out of Egypt with a high hand and an outstretched arm. To be made happy in sin would be dangerous to us and unworthy of God, but the Lord Jesus Christ has come to save His people from their sins, to break the chains of evil habit, to subdue sinful influences which now dominate us, and to put within us a new heart and a right spirit. He, by the infusion of a new life makes us sigh and pant after holiness; He answers to that sighing, and works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. He subdues our iniquities, and makes the power of evil in us to wax weaker and weaker while grace grows stronger and stronger. At last He will present us faultless before His presence with exceeding great joy. We preach emancipation for the slaves of sin. You that are worried and wearied with temptation shall be saved from yielding to it. You that cry out by reason of indwelling sin shall receive salvation from the power of evil. The living and holy seed within you cannot sin because it is born of God, and its growing force shall at last hold your every thought in captivity to Christ. It is a blessed salvation, an all-round salvation for the past, for the present, and for the future. This is what we are sent to testify, we could not have a more full or a more divine mes-

sage; we could not have a grander blessing to present to the sons of men than that of being saved. In the grand completeness of it, it comprehends heaven itself and all its bliss. "You shall be saved" reaches from the hell-gate to God's own throne, and lifts the sinner up from between the jaws of death to the white-robed orchestra of the New Jerusalem. Though now an heir of wrath even as others, the believing sinner shall be made like unto the First-born, even to the Lord Jesus Christ, who is bringing many sons unto glory.

I begin, then, with the proclamation of salvation for the lost. Hear it, you unworthy ones! Hear it, you who cannot say a good word on your own account! Hear it and catch at this hope. If God the Spirit will bless the word, according to His gracious way, you mourning and heavy laden ones will joyfully cry, "There is a message for us in this text!" Then you will lean forward lest you should lose a word of the discourse, and your minds will lean forward as well as your bodies. Your hearts will lie open like plowed land ready for the seed, ready for the shower. You will be responsive to the voice of mercy, even as the echo to the horn. By repentance and faith you will answer to the call of divine love.

II. I now advance to my second point, which is this, that SAVING FAITH CONCERNS ITSELF ONLY ABOUT JESUS HIMSELF. I will read to you the connection of my text. "But the righteousness which is of faith speaks on this wise, Say not in your heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead). But what says it? The word is nigh you, even in your mouth, and in your heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved." True faith, the faith which saves, concerns itself wholly about the glorious person and gracious work of Him whom God raised from the dead. Within the compass of Bethlehem, Gethsemane, and the right hand of the Father lies the sphere of the sinner's faith. Faith is where Jesus is, and she asks no wider range. Unbelief is speculative, but faith deals with facts. Unbelief says, "Who shall ascend into heaven? Who shall descend into the abyss?" Unbelief is always starting questions; she is so dissatisfied with the simple gospel of Jesus Christ that she demands another Savior, or no Savior, or fifty Saviors. She does not know what she wants, her cry is, "Who will show us any good; who in the heavens, who in the depths, who anywhere?" Unbelief has a very attentive ear to every new notion. This man has a novel doctrine, another has just ferreted out a fresh idea, and unbelief goes helter-skelter this way and that. She hears voices crying, "Lo here, and lo there!" and like a silly bird she is lured and snared. She flies away to the hills, or plunges into the abyss to find the promised good. At one time she is aloft in delusion, at another she is beneath in despair; pessimism, or optimism, or some other "ism," will charm her, but she will not keep to the truth.

Faith is of another mind, she takes her stand where Christ is, and she says, "If salvation is anywhere it is in Him. Is it not written, 'Look unto

Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else'?" She bows before Jesus at Bethlehem, and sees hope in His incarnation. She traverses the fields of Judea with Jesus, and sees hope in the holy, tender-hearted lover of souls. She goes with Him to Gethsemane, and views Him covered with the bloody sweat, and begins to read her pardon there. She sees Him die upon the accursed tree, and she says, "My life is here, if ever I am saved, I must be saved here." She sees Jesus in the tomb, she watches and beholds Him rise again, and as He rises she claps her hands with delight, for she sees hope and immortality in Him. She looks up yonder to the throne of the Most High, she sees Jesus interceding for transgressors that the Lord God may dwell among them, she understands that He is carrying on a noble enterprise which will soon be brought forth to victory, and she glories in her Lord—her all—

"All our immortal hopes are laid
In You, our Surety and our Head!
Your cross, Your cradle, and Your throne,
Are big with glories yet unknown."

Faith's resolve is to look only to Jesus her God, for she is persuaded that beside Him there is none else. You are saved, my dear friend, when you come to that point. When Jesus is all your salvation and all your desire the work of grace has begun in you. Jesus is your Boaz, and you have come to the right conclusion about Him when you are resolved never to glean in any other field. You will be satisfied now that you have determined to drink waters only from His fountain, and to be satisfied only from His table.

The faith which saves is not dreamy. Do you not notice how unbelief here dreams of skies and seas, and all immeasurable things? "Who shall ascend into heaven?" What a picture! Imagination is at work, she beholds her mighty merits scaling the everlasting ramparts—she dotes upon her dream. If she hears a discourse she only cares for the oratory of it. "What a sermon that man preached! How full of poetry!" She must have something high and lofty, nothing common will suit her. At another time, when she is heavy, her dream is of a wretched diver into the deep seas of anguish, plunging down into the abyss to find the pearl of peace. Imagination raises in the soul despondency, despair, frenzy, and madness, and many foolish ones hope in these to find a ransom. Faith has done with these Arabian nights, for she has done with Sinai. She dreams no more, for perfectly healthy men have done with dreams. With open eyes faith reads facts. She dwells on what Jesus did and suffered. She reflects that He died; He rose again, and is gone into glory. Facts, not fiction, are her solace. She accepts matters of history, not figments of imagination. Something actually done, something really accomplished, faith requires and accepts. The weight of sin is not to be borne by theories; the enormous load of human guilt is not to be sustained by speculations. Only actual transactions can meet our dire necessity, and these we find in Jesus Christ the revelation of God.

I know that I am talking to some of you who are as full of fancies as an egg is full of meat, and I wish I could get you out of them. All sorts of

whims and notions please your idle brains. You have followed after them as a dog follows a false scent, but you have come upon nothing yet, and you never will come upon anything till you accept those sure, well-witnessed facts which make up the life of the Lord Jesus, especially His resurrection, which is the best assured fact in human history. We this day, in the name of God Most High, the Spirit of God being with us, proclaim salvation by a risen Savior, and we beseech you to believe the truth of what we say that you may live thereby.

Unbelief really puts a sad slur upon Christ. She talks about going up to heaven, but suppose it were needed that somebody should ascend to heaven, that would imply that Jesus had never come down from there to reveal the Father. She talks of descending into the abyss, as if Christ had never come up from the dead. The fact is, all that can be done has been done. Why do you want to do what is already done? All that can be felt has been felt, why do *you* want to feel it? "It is finished," said Christ, why do you strive to do it over again? Look how that fable of the church of Rome concerning her unbloody sacrifice of the mass insults the one great sacrifice of Calvary, and sets it on one side, and even so, all those works, feelings, preparations, and so forth which you would add to the finished work of Christ really push Christ out. You want to feel; are not His feelings enough? You want to work; are not His workings enough? Trust in self is a disloyal attempt upon the crown rights of the Redeemer. All those doings, and willings, and feelings are a setting up of self salvation. It is all a mistake. Oh that you would give up those mistakes, and hear that your soul may live, believing what you hear, and accepting it in your very soul! I will not, however, stay longer to describe this faith by contrast, but we will penetrate a stage further into the center of the text.

III. The third point of our discourse is, that SAVING FAITH HAS A CONFESSION TO MAKE, "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." Observe here, that *this confession is put first*. I suppose it is because Paul was quoting from the thirtieth chapter of the Book of Deuteronomy, and he had, of course, to place the words as Moses arranged them in the passage quoted. Yet there must be other reasons. Possibly the confession of the Lord Jesus unto salvation is put first here because it is most likely to be forgotten. We have plenty of preaching of "Believe and live," and I do not condemn it, but still, strictly speaking, it is incomplete. When our Lord bade His servants go forth and preach, He said, "He that believes *and is baptized* shall be saved." Now, baptism is the confession of our faith. Constantly in Scripture the faith to which salvation is promised is a faith which makes a confession of itself. It is never a mute faith; it is a faith that speaks, a faith which owns its existence, yes, a faith which owns the Lord in the teeth of adversaries. We must confess Christ before men, or we may not believe that we have the faith of God's elect. The apostle mentions it first here because it is so often put into the background, and this is a great cause of stumbling. He mentions it first also, because *it is first* as far as our fellow creatures are concerned. How can I know what you believe in your heart? I must first

hear what you confess with your mouth. An inquirer comes to me to join the church or to be acknowledged as a Christian, I cannot begin with his heart; I have no means of reading his thoughts. I say to him, "Speak, that I may see you." If he confesses with his mouth the Lord Jesus Christ, he has done what, in the order of practical religion, must lead the way towards friend and foe.

Let me add that, in a certain sense, confession with the mouth is actually first in the man. Many persons never receive in their hearts the comfort of Christ's resurrection because they have never with their mouth confessed the Lord Jesus as their Savior and Master. The Lord will not give to you the warmth of faith which cheers the heart unless you are willing to yield to Him the obedience of faith by taking up your cross and coming out and confessing Him! There are numbers of Christians—Christians I mean in the judgment of charity—who never enter into the joy of their Lord because they have never obeyed His rule, nor owned His name before men. The Spirit of God, as a Comforter, has not borne His witness with their spirit that they are the children of God, because they have never borne their witness to the Lord Jesus. The comfort of believing with the heart is hindered by the absence of confession with the mouth. Will you listen to this, some of you who cry, "We desire to be saved?" I dare not preach to you a backstairs gospel for cowards, a secret green-lane of salvation, which winds about through the woods, so that you can travel it without being seen. No, at my Lord's bidding, I preach to you an open King's highway, along which the fearful and the unbelieving refuse to go. And yet there is only this one way to the kingdom. We must not attempt to be moonlighters. Let us follow Jesus in broad daylight. Jesus says, "He that confesses Me before men, him will I confess before My Father which is in heaven; but he that denies Me"—which in that connection means, he that does not confess Him—"he that denies Me before men, him will I deny before My Father which is in heaven." Hear, I pray you, the text, "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."

Notice *what it is that is to be confessed,* "The Lord Jesus." By which I gather, that it is essential to salvation that a man confess the Deity of Christ. I would not be uncharitable to anybody, but I never can, as a believer in the Word of God, expect to see a man saved who denies the Godhead of his Savior. He puts himself out of court; He rejects that part of the Redeemer's character which is essential to His being a Savior. If any man would be saved he must believe that Jesus Christ is both Lord and God.

Again, you must confess that Jesus Christ is Lord; that is, Ruler and Master. You must cheerfully become His disciple, follower, and servant. You must confess—"He is my Master, He is my Lord, I intend to be a soldier under Him, He shall be to me Leader and Commander, God has made Him such, and I accept Him as such."

We are to confess the Lord *Jesus,* too. That means the Savior, who has come to save His people from their sins. If you would be saved by Him,

you must own Him as the Messiah, sent of God, to lead His people out of their ruin into eternal salvation. The Lord commands you to confess Him in that character, and promises to such a believing confessor that he shall be saved. Without such open confession there is no promise.

Note how very definite is the confession. Somebody says, "Well, I will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and I will try and act up to my faith." Do so, by all means, but this will not fulfill the demand of the text. It is true your life is a confession, and the more pure it is the more excellent it is as a profession. Still, the doing of one duty does not exempt us from another. The confession required by the text is expressly said to be *"with your mouth."* I dare not alter the Scripture. Do not blame me, I did not write the words. There they are, "If you shall *with your mouth* confess the Lord Jesus." You are vocally to own Jesus, you are definitely and distinctly to say with your tongue, your mouth, your lips, that He is your Lord and Savior. It is not to be an inference drawn in silence from your life, but a declared statement of the mouth. What other meaning can my text have but that? If the apostle meant that we were to obey the Lord Jesus Christ, and might render no other confession, he would have said so. Why did he say, "With your mouth," if he did not require a spoken confession? The mode of confession to which the promise of salvation is given is clearly set forth in these words—"you shall confess with your mouth."

"Why is this?" says one. Well, first because I believe that confession with the mouth is a sort of breaking away from the world. When a man says with his mouth, "I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ," it is as good as saying to the world, "I have done with you." Those round about will conclude that the man has broken loose from his old habits, and has come right away from the unbelieving world. When the man with the withered arm was in the synagogue, our Lord did not take him into the corner and heal him, but He said, "Stand forth." He stood right out in the middle of the congregation, and when he stood forth, then the Lord said, "Stretch forth your hand," and he did so. Dear seeker, you must stand out. You must come away from your old companions and sinful connections, and say, "I am for Christ. He is my Savior, and I am His follower." He requires this confession of you that you may thus be cut loose from the world which lies in the wicked one.

This confession is also a way of forming a visible union with the Lord Jesus. When a man with his mouth confesses Christ he does, as it were, take sides with Jesus and His cause on the earth, and this is a very important thing. Besides, this confession is of much use to the outside world as a witness reproving their ungodliness, and inviting them to a better mind. The confessions of the saved are often the means of saving others. We are not fully saved till we earnestly wish to save others. If any man says, "If I can get to heaven all by myself I shall be satisfied," he has not taken the first step to heaven, assuredly he has not the germ of heaven within him. The first thing that must be slain within us, if we are to dwell with God, is our selfishness. Even our concern for our own salvation must yet be overridden by a concern for the spread of the Re-

deemer's kingdom, and a desire for the salvation of others. No man is truly sanctified till it is so. Therefore you must confess your Lord with your mouth, to prove your sacrifice of self.

Ah, my friends! This is a hard saying to some of you. You have good points about you, but you do not let your light shine before men, as your Lord commands you. Your candle is under a bushel, it cannot burn well in so confined a space; it is apt to make smoke and blackness. Bring it out at once! If it is God's own fire, and you put it under a bed to hide it, it will soon set the bed on a blaze. Mischief comes of suppressed truth. It can never be right to hide away the light of God. Come out, you cowards! Come out, you tremblers! My Master bids me act as enlisting sergeant. I set up the banner, and invite you to rally to it. If you love Christ, confess Him. If you would have the salvation of Christ, take up the cross of Christ, and follow Him wheresoever He goes. Have I gone an inch beyond my text? I am sure I have not.

IV. Time would fail me if I were to dwell longer on this point, important as it is. Let us now notice, in the fourth place, that FAITH HAS A GREAT COMFORT TO ENJOY. She has truth of which she must speak with her mouth, but she has also facts which she ponders in her heart. The text says, "With your heart believe that God has raised Him from the dead." This does not only mean that you believe the fact that the Lord Jesus has been raised from the dead—I suppose everybody here believes in our Lord's resurrection—but we must so believe it that it warms and comforts our heart.

Why, my dear brethren, is salvation promised here especially to a belief with the heart that God has raised Christ from the dead? Is not our faith to be fixed upon the death of Christ rather than upon the resurrection of Christ? I answer, it is probably here stated because *in the resurrection of our Lord all the rest of His history is implied and included*. If He was raised from the dead, then He must have died. If He died, then He must have been a man, and have been born into the world. In mentioning that God raised our Lord from the dead, the apostle has really mentioned all the great redeeming work of Jesus, since all the other items are involved therein.

Moreover, the raising from the dead is not only inclusive of the rest, but *confirmatory of the whole*. By raising Him from the dead the Father gave confirmation of the mission of His Son. He set His seal upon His person as divine, upon His office as commissioned of God to be the Messiah, upon His life as well-pleasing, and upon His death as being accepted of God for full atonement. Therefore the Most High raised Him from the dead that He might be declared to be the Son of God with power and that in and through Him believers might be justified. We should not have had firm ground for our faith in Jesus if the seal of resurrection had not been set to His work, but now, when we believe in the seal, we believe also in that which is sealed. His resurrection is the seal of all that our Lord is and does, and believing in this with our heart, we believe in that which brings salvation.

Moreover, the resurrection of Christ from the dead is one of the chief of those truths which are to be believed in the heart, because *it is the source of the heart's best comfort*. "Look," says the believer, "I am by nature a poor lost sinner, but I shall not be destroyed forever, for Jesus my Savior and Surety has been raised from the dead. My salvation lies in Him. I am delivered from the dead in Him. I see my justification in His resurrection. Because Jesus lives I have an unfailing friend, to whom I fly, because God raised Him from the dead, and so bore witness that He accepted Him, therefore I know that I am accepted in Him. If I lay hold upon that righteousness which God has accepted, I am accepted in it." O dear friends, when a sinner knows that his salvation does not lie in himself at all, but wholly in Christ, then he discovers the great secret. The point is to see Jesus dying for our sins, and to see ourselves dead in Him; to see Jesus risen from the grave, and ourselves risen in Him; to see Jesus accepted of God, and ourselves therefore accepted in Him. The Lord Jesus is the object of our trust, and not ourselves. We are in Him, and as He is so are we. We shall rise to glory because He rose to glory, and we shall dwell in heaven because He dwells in heaven. Union to Christ is the foundation of hope. Oh, to live in Christ! The difficulty is to wrench you away from yourselves; this needs a miracle of grace. I know where you are, you are saying, "I do not feel; I cannot do," etc. Sirs, this is not the point in hand, the ground of salvation is in Jesus, and not in the sinner. To see salvation, we must mark what Christ accomplished, and especially we must mark in our heart that the Lord Jesus was raised from the dead, and then we shall be comforted, because the resurrection of the Savior is the assurance of the completion of His atoning work. He who would have sure hope must fix his faith upon Jesus living, Jesus crucified, Jesus risen, Jesus ascended, Jesus soon to come! If we believe and trust in these facts, we shall be saved, so says the text. Put the two things together—you confess Jesus to be Lord and Christ, and you do also with all your heart trust in Jesus as risen from the dead, well, then, you shall be saved.

How this ought to cheer those of you who are near despair! How it should encourage those who lie at death's door! You groan out, "I never can be saved." Why not? If Christ died and rose again, what then? If this is the ground of salvation, and you believe it to be the fact, hold on to it, and never let it go. Never let your heart doubt the well-witnessed fact that God has raised Jesus from the dead. Plead the promise of our text in life, and in the dying hour, and cry, "O Lord, You have said that if with my mouth I confess the Lord Jesus, and with my heart believe that You have raised Him from the dead, I shall be saved. Lord, I make the confession, and my heart also believes, I beseech You, therefore, to do as You have said, and save me." This plea can never fail.

V. So now I finish with the truth that FAITH HAS A SURE PROMISE TO REST UPON. "If you believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved."

"YOU"—Who is that? This is yourself. It is the man who with his mouth confesses, and with his heart believes. Dear friend, it means *you*.

John, Thomas, Sarah, Jane, where are you? Did I hear you cry, "I have no merits of my own, I have no good feelings, I have nothing of my own that I can rejoice in, I feel myself to be utterly lost"? Listen! "If *you* shall with your mouth confess the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, *you* shall be saved." The singular pronoun, "you," sets its mark upon *you*. Put your ear to this telephone, a voice speaks to you. God out of heaven is speaking straight down the telephone into your ear—*"you shall be saved."*

"But I am almost damned." If you confess and believe, *"you* shall be saved." "Alas! I must give up in despair." Yet the promise is to the contrary. "But I am the blackest sinner out of hell." Still the promise is to you, "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." I cannot come down from my pulpit and run round to all the pews, but, oh, I wish I could look each one of you in the face, and press your hand, and say, "Dear friend, the text says, *'you.'"* Brother, sister, it speaks to you. Youth, child, or grey-headed old man, whoever you may be, the text says that if you believe *"you* shall be saved."

Observe the total absence of "ifs" and "buts." It is not "you *may* be saved," but "you *shall* be saved." When God the Holy Spirit says "shall," there is solidity in it. But you say, "I am afraid." Afraid of what? Dare you question the truthfulness of God? When God says "shall," what can you be afraid of? If I were to say "shall," you would receive it as a proof of my fixed intent, but you would know that there is only my poor puny arm to carry it out. But when God says "shall," omnipotence is engaged. He that made heaven and earth, and shakes them with His nod, He who creates and destroys, He says, "shall," and who can stand against His will? Devils in hell go howling back to their dens when they hear even the whisper of a "shall" from God.

There is a sort of passiveness about the expression "be saved." The text does not speak about what you are going to do, but about something that is to be done for you and done in you, "You shall *be* saved." "I cannot save myself"—who said you could? Who asked you to do so? You can with your mouth confess the Lord Jesus—do that straight away. You can believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead. If you are the man I am looking after, you are doing so now. You say, "Oh yes, I believe it with all my heart; my hope lies in Jesus." Then you shall be saved. The power that is wanted to deliver you from your sinfulness, the grace that is wanted to wash you from your guilt, the blood that is needed to cleanse you from your filthiness is all ready, and out of glory the Lord Jesus declares, "you shall be saved."

There never was, and there never will be, a man that with his mouth confessed the Lord Jesus, and with his heart believed that God raised Him from the dead, that was not saved. Among all the multitudes that sink to hell, there is no confessing believer, and no believing confessor. I dare not part the confession and the faith, for God has joined them together. The mouth and the heart are equally needful to a living body and a living soul. Open confession and secret belief—these together make up

the casting of yourself upon the Lord Jesus—the full surrender to the Savior—that is the great saving act. Do you cast yourself, sink or swim, on what Jesus has done? Then you shall be saved, otherwise I am a liar unto you, and what is far worse, this holy Book is a liar too, and the Spirit of God has borne false witness. This can never be. I have no hope this morning but what is compassed in this verse. With my mouth I do again confess the Lord Jesus, for I believe Him to be very God of very God, my Master, my all. Moreover, in my heart I do verily and assuredly believe that God raised Him from the dead, and I am glad of it, it comforts and joys me—

"He lives, the great Redeemer lives;
What joy the blessed assurance gives!"

I shall be saved, I know I shall, I dare not doubt it, because God's word plainly says so. I have the same confidence concerning the poorest old woman in this house as I have about myself, if she confesses and believes, she is saved as I am. The wickedest ruffians and most wanton harlots, if they will do as the text directs, shall also be saved. This gospel is not denied to the vilest of the vile. O my friend, it is not denied to you. This is the ship which has carried thousands to heaven. We who go on board shall get to heaven by it. If it could go down, we should all sink together, but as it floats safely, we will all sail together to the Fair Havens. There is no second vessel on this line, and there is no other line. This one chartered boat of salvation by a confessing faith now lies at the wharf. Come on board! Come on board at once! God help you to come on board at this very moment, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ACTS 13:14-49.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—909, 309, 313.

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

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

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

ZEALOUS, BUT WRONG
NO. 1899

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

"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." Romans 10:1, 2, 3.

WE ought to have an intense longing for the salvation of all sorts of men, and especially for those, if there are any that treat us badly. We should never wish them ill, not for a moment, but in proportion to their malice should be our intense desire for their good. Israel had persecuted Paul everywhere with the bitterest imaginable hate. When he addressed them in their synagogues, they rushed upon him in their fury. When he left them alone, and preached quietly to the Gentiles, they made a mob, dragged him before the magistrates, and charged him with causing a tumult and either stoned him, or beat him with rods. He was "an Israelite indeed," but his people regarded him as a turncoat indeed, because he had become a Christian. Mad as they were against all Christians, they had a special spite and fury against the apostate Pharisee. Paul's only reply to all their infuriated malice is this gentle assertion, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved."

Brethren, let us pray for men that they may be saved. Simple as the statement is, I feel sure that we shall see more conversions when more people pray for conversions. If, as we went about the street, we made a rule that, whenever we heard a man swear, we would pray that he might be saved, might we not hope to see a great many more saved? If, whenever we saw a case of special sin, or read of it in the newspaper, we were to make it a habit always to offer our heart's desire and prayer for such offenders that they might be saved, I cannot tell what countless blessings would come from God's right hand.

I would bring before you one peculiar class of persons whose conversion some of us should very earnestly pray for. They are the kind of people who are here described by the apostle; Israelites, religious people, intensely religious in their way, although that way is not the way of truth. They have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. They are righteous people, *self*-righteous people, people that have done no ill, but, on the contrary, have labored to do a great deal of good. They are running, and running well, but they are not running on the right road. They are laboring, and laboring hard, but they are not laboring in the right style,

and so they will miss their reward. Many of these people are around us, and very admirable people they are in many ways, but their condition causes us the utmost anxiety. There are a few such persons in this present congregation, and though they are not as numerous among us as in many other quarters, yet they have a peculiar place in our affectionate regard. We esteem them so highly that we would be shocked and grieved that one single person of their character should perish. I say most solemnly, "My heart's desire and prayer for such is that they might be saved; for I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge."

Bear with me at this time while I talk about these people. If *you* do not belong to this order of minds yourselves, I am glad of it. Pray for them if you yourselves are saved. If you know any such, keep on mentioning them to God in prayer, while I am preaching. Use the next half-hour as a time of quiet pleading with God, about individuals of whom you will be reminded while I am talking. Say, "Lord, bless her," or, "Lord, bless him." If you are not one of those at whom I shall be especially aiming, then help me with your prayers that this sermon may be clothed with power by the Holy Spirit.

I. And first, why ARE WE ESPECIALLY CONCERNED FOR THESE PEOPLE? The answer is, "Because *they are so zealous."* They have a zeal of God. I feel right glad to meet with a zealous man nowadays, for zeal for God has become a rare quality in our land. You see plenty of zeal where politics are concerned. Fashion, and art, and society, and literature, each one evokes zeal of a certain kind, but we are not overdone with those who are zealous in the matter of religion. We seem to be pretty nearly gone to sleep as to essentials of creed and worship. Who is zealous? Who burns with holy ardor? Who is consumed with sacred enthusiasm? If anybody comes to be a little zealous above others, he is straightway condemned. The man of fervent spirit is laughed at as "a hot gospeller," he is called fanatical, and great efforts are made to put him down. I fear that both the wise and the foolish virgins are going to sleep at this present time. There is a dullness in the religious world, as if we had passed into a dull, thick, autumn fog. We want a great and general revival. Meanwhile, when we do meet with people who are zealous, we take an interest in them. Zealous at church, zealous in their ceremonies, zealous in their belief of what they believe—however mistaken their zeal may be, there is something interesting about it. We like to associate with people who have hearts—not dry leather bottles, out of which all the juice has gone, but those who have heart, and soul, and life, and fire, and go. I love to meet with those who believe in something, and who work under the pressure of their belief, and give their strength to the carrying out of what they believe to be the will of God. It does seem a very great pity that any zeal should be wasted, and that anyone full of zeal should yet miss his way. We fear that there are some who will do so. If you want to go to York you may ride very fast south, but you will not get to York with all your speed. Unless you turn your rein towards the north, you may ride a thousand horses to death, and never see the gates of the old city. It is of no use to

be zealous if you are zealous in a wrong cause, but when we meet with any who are such, I say that they become peculiarly the object of a Christian's prayers. Pray for the zealous with all your hearts, for it is such a pity that one of them should go astray.

Again, they should be especially the subject of our prayers, because *they may go so very wrong, and may do so much mischief to others*. Those who have no life or energy may easily ruin themselves, but they are not likely to harm others, whereas a mistaken zealot is like a madman with a firebrand in his hand. Persons who are zealous, and are under a mistake, may do such a deal of mischief! What did those Scribes and Pharisees in Christ's day? They were very zealous, and under the pressure of their zeal they crucified the Lord of glory. What did Saul do in his time? He was very zealous, and under the influence of his zeal he dragged men and women to prison, and compelled them to blaspheme, and when they were put to death he gave his voice against them. I do not doubt that many who burned the martyrs were quite as sincere in their faith as those whom they burned. In fact, it must have taken an awful amount of sincerity in the case of some to have been able to believe that the cruelties which they practiced were really pleasing to God. We cannot doubt that they had such sincerity. Did not our Lord Himself say, "Yes, the time comes, that whosoever kills you will think that he does God service"? Documents, written by men who stained their hands with the blood of Protestants, prove that some of them had a right heart towards God. In their mistaken zeal for God, and truth, and church unity, they believed that they were crushing out a very deadly error, and that the persons whom they sent to prison and to death were criminals that ought to be exterminated, because they were destroyers of the souls of men.

Take heed that none of you fall into a persecuting spirit through your zeal for the gospel. A good woman may be intensely zealous, and for that reason she may say, "I will not have a servant in my house that does not go to my place of worship." I have known landlords, wonderfully zealous for the faith, who have therefore turned every Dissenter out of their cottages, and have refused to let one of their farms to a Nonconformist. I do not wonder at their conduct, if they are zealous, and at the same time blind, they will naturally take to exterminating the children of God. Of course, in their zeal they feel as if they must root out error and schism. They will not have Nonconformity near them, and so they get to work, and in their zeal they hack right and left. They say strong things and bitter things, and then proceed to do cruel things—very cruel things—verily believing that, in all that they do, they are doing God service, not thinking that they are violating the crown rights of God, who alone is Lord of the consciences of men. They would not oppose the will of God if they knew it, and yet they are doing so. They would not willingly grieve the hearts of those whom God loves, and yet they do so when they are browbeating the humble cottager for his faith. They look upon the poor people who differ a little from them as being atrociously wrong, and they consider it to be their duty to set their faces against them, and so, under the influence of the zeal that moves them, which, in itself, is a good thing, they

are led to do that which is sinful and unjust. Hence the apostle, after he had felt the weight of the stones from the hands of the Jews, prayed that they might be saved, for if they were not saved, their zeal for God would continue to make murderers of them.

Another reason why we long to see the zealous converted is this—because *they would be so useful*. The man that is desperately earnest in a wrong way, if you can but show him his wrong, and teach him what is right, will be just as earnest in the right way. Oh, what splendid Christians some would make who are now such devotees of superstition! Despite their superstition, I look upon many High Churchmen with admiration. Up in the morning early, or at night late, ready to practice all kinds of mortifications, to give their very bodies to be burned, and all their substance in alms, ready to offer prayers without number, and to be obedient to rites without end—what more could external religion demand of mortal men? Oh, if we could get these to sit at Jesus' feet, and leave the phylacteries and the broad-bordered garments, and worship God in spirit, and have no confidence in the flesh, what grand people they would make!

See what Paul himself was, when, counting all he had valued so dear to be but dung, he quit it, and began to preach salvation by grace alone. While he flew over the world like a lightning flash, and preached the gospel as with a peal of thunder, he loved, he lived, he died for the Nazarene, whom once in his zeal, he had counted to be an impostor. Brethren, pray with all your might for zealous but mistaken persons, who have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.

Once more, we are bound to make these people the subject of especially earnest prayer because *it is so difficult to convert them*. It requires the power of God to convert anybody really, but there seems to be a double manifestation of power in the conversion of a downright bigot when his bigotry is associated with dense ignorance and gross error. "Oh," he says, "I do that which is right. I am strict in my religion. My righteousness will save me." You cannot get him out of that. It is easier to get a sinner out of his sin than a self-righteous man out of his self-righteousness. Conceit, of our own righteousness, sticks to us as the skin to the flesh. Sooner may the leopard lose his spots than the proud man his self-righteousness. Oh, that righteousness of ours! We are so fond of it. Our pride hugs it. We do so like to think that we are good, that we are upright, that we are true, that we are right in the sight of God by nature, and though we are beaten out of it with many stripes, yet our tendency is always to return to it. Self-righteousness is bound up in the heart of a man as folly in the heart of a child. Though you grind a fool into a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet his self-righteous folly will not depart from him. He will still stick to it that, after all, he is a good fellow, and deserves to be saved. We must, therefore, in a very special manner pray for such, seeing that self-righteousness is a deep ditch, and it is hard to draw him out who has once fallen into it. Prejudice, of all other opponents, is one of the worst to overcome. The door is locked. You may knock as long as you like, but the man will not open it. He cannot. It is

locked, and he has thrown away the key. You may tell him, "You are wrong, good friend," but he is so comfortably assured that he is right, that all your telling will only make him more angry at you for attempting to disturb his peace. O God! who but You can draw a man out of this miry clay of self-righteousness? Therefore do we cry to You, of Your great grace, to do it. For these and many other reasons those who have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge, must have a chief place in our persistent prayers.

II. And secondly, WHAT IS IT THAT THESE PEOPLE ARE ACCORDING TO OUR TEXT? These people will not like the text, nor yet like me for honestly explaining it. According to our text, it is very clear that these good people are *ignorant*. "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, go about to establish their own righteousness." Ah! you may be brought up under the shadow of a church, you may sit all your life in a meeting house, you may hear the gospel till you know every term and phrase by heart, and yet you may be ignorant of the righteousness of God. This is not a very complimentary statement, but as it is made upon inspiration, it behooves us to give earnest heed thereto.

Listen! There are many who are quite ignorant as to the natural righteousness of God's character. They do not know how intensely He hates sin, how His anger burns against injustice and untruth. They have never conceived an idea of how pure He is, how infinitely holy. They have never been in sympathy with the angel's adoration so as to know what is meant by the celestial chant, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth." "You think," says God, "that I am altogether such a one as yourself—that if you are pleased with your righteousness, I must be pleased with it too, and if your poor pride and stupefied conscience is satisfied, therefore your God must be satisfied also." Those who are satisfied with their own holiness are ignorant of God's attribute of righteousness.

Again, they are ignorant of the righteousness of the law. Indeed, there is awful ignorance about that. You may hear the Ten Commandments read every Sabbath day, and I think that it is a good thing to have them read, and a good thing to have them posted up where they can be read, but you will not know anything about them by merely reading them. There is a depth of meaning in those commandments, of which self-righteous persons are ignorant. For instance, when they read, "You shall not commit adultery," does it strike most men's minds that even a lascivious look breaks that commandment? Do they reflect that not only acts of fornication and uncleanness, but indecent words, thoughts, and looks are forbidden by that command? A man reads, "You shall not kill," and he thinks to himself, "I never committed a murder. I can shake hands with that commandment, and sing a merry song under the gallows." But Christ says, "He that is angry with his brother, without a cause, is a murderer," and ill-will is murder at bottom. Murder is but hate ripened into deed, and therefore the least degree of hate is a violation of the command, "You shall not kill." Who among us has ever measured the full compass of the great law of God? Let me stretch out the line before you for a moment. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and

with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." Who among us has ever done that? The man who says, "I have kept the law" is simply ignorant of the righteousness which the law of God sets before us as the divine requirement. Could we behold the law in all its full-orbed majesty, we should as soon expect to hold the sun in the hollow of our right hand as to fulfill the law in all its length and breadth.

Further than this, dear friends, a man that is self-righteous, and hopes to get to heaven by his works and his religion, is ignorant of God's righteous requirements with regard to his own heart. God requires not only that you should do that which is right, but that you should think that which is right, that you should love that which is right, yes, and that you should be that which is right. He desires truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part He would have us to know wisdom. If I could govern my tongue entirely, yet might I be guilty before God, even with that tongue, for there is such a thing as idle silence as well as idle speech. If it were possible to keep the hands right in all things, yet the heart might all the while be willing and anxious to move the hands amiss, and after all it is the way of the heart which is the true gauge of the man's life. Unless you are clean through and through in your very inwards, in the core and center of your being, you have not reached to the righteous requirements of God. What do you say to this? Are not many grossly ignorant of this?

And then, again, all persons who are self-righteous must surely be ignorant of God's righteousness in another sense, namely, they are ignorant that God has prepared a better righteousness for us. The Lord God has prepared for man a perfect and divine righteousness, by which He justifies the ungodly. He has sent His own Son into the world, pure in heart and pure in life, to work out that righteousness. That Son of His has kept the law in every point, and what is more, He has honored the law by His death, whereby He vindicated its tarnished honor, and gave glory to the Law-giver. Now God says, "Sinner, I can make you righteous through Christ—righteous by imputation. I will impute to you what Jesus did for you. I will accept you on account of what He is, and of what He did. He shall be your righteousness. He shall be made of God unto you your righteousness." Now surely, if you say, "No, but I will have a righteousness of my own," why, man, you must be ignorant of God's righteousness. Would God have taken the trouble to make another righteousness if you could have made one of your own? Is not Calvary, with all its griefs, a superfluity of naughtiness if men could be saved without it! The death of Christ upon the tree was an extravagance—a needless extravagance, if men can be saved without it, and if any man can be saved without Christ, saved by his own works, and saved by the principle of the law, then for him is Christ dead in vain. There was no need, in the first place, that Christ should have died for such a man, and to such a man Christ has died for nothing. If you are righteous, you have nothing to do with Christ, for He is a Savior of sinners. If you have a righteousness of your own, you are a rival to Christ. You are holding up your two-penny

garment of rags, and saying, "This is as good as the divine robe of Christ's righteousness." Man, you are stitching together your poor fig leaves, and you are saying, "This is garment enough for me. I want not to wear the livery of God, the garment of Christ." But those leaves will wither before the sun goes down, and leave you naked to your shame. You are in opposition to Christ, you are an Antichrist, and your sin in setting up such righteousness is, perhaps, greater than if you had lived in open sin. You are, at any rate, casting as much dishonor upon Christ, and doing as much displeasure to God by this vain-glorious attempt to set up your own righteousness, as if you had gone about, like Pharaoh, to ask, "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?" It is only another form of the same pride. In the Egyptian king it takes one shape, and in you it takes another. Therefore, beware!

Brothers and sisters, are you praying for these zealous but ignorant and vain-glorious people? Go on with your prayers. Now in silence cry, "Lord, of Your great mercy, be pleased to deliver them from their headstrong zeal! Give them light, that they may quit their ignorance, and be no longer enemies to the cross, and grace, of our Lord Jesus Christ!"

III. That brings me to my third point, which is this; I have shown you why they should be prayed for. I have shown you that they are ignorant. Now I am going to show you WHAT THEY DO. According to the text they are going about to establish their own righteousness. I do not know whether I can give you the idea which this language suggests to my mind, but it is this; here is a kind of stuffed image, or, if you like, a statue, and they have set it up, and they want it to stand, but it is so badly constructed that it tumbles down. So they set it up again, and over it goes, in other words, they use all manner of plots and schemes to set up their righteousness upon its legs, but it repeatedly topples over. Another figure which may illustrate the expression is this; they have bad foundations for a house, and bad materials, and bad mortar, and they themselves are by no means good workmen. They have built up quite a height of wall to make a shelter for themselves, but it tumbles down. Never mind, they are very industrious, and so they set to work to put it up again. They are perseveringly determined, somehow or other, to build up a righteousness of their own. That is the meaning of this text. They go about to set up, to establish—to make to stand—their own righteousness, and it is such a crazy thing that it falls down of its own weight, and whenever it tumbles down they set it up again. They go about to do it, that is, they invent all sorts of ways; they go to the ends of the earth to find another bit of stone that will just wedge in and help to settle the cornerstone. All their industry is spent in trying to set up this thing, which is not worth a button when it is set up. Alas, that folly should be so desperately entrenched in the heart of man, that he will spend his whole life in a persevering attempt to insult his Maker by preparing a righteousness of his own, when his Maker has already worked out, and brought in, a righteousness perfect in every respect!

While I am preaching about this I am thinking of myself, and smiling and yet mourning to think how, in the days of my ignorance, I myself

tried this ridiculous pastime. The pictures which I shall paint will be drawn from my own personal experience. At first the man says, "I shall be saved, for I have kept the law. What do I lack yet?" Now a very small hole will let enough light into the man's heart to force him to see that this pretence will not answer. No one of us has kept the law. What says the Scripture? "They are all gone out of the way. They are together become unprofitable; there is none that does good, no not one." You have only to read the law over by the light of conscience, and you must say to yourself, "I see that I cannot be saved by the perfect keeping of the law, since I have broken that law already." When driven from this foolish hope, the man readily sets up another. If he cannot work, then a man tries to feel—and I know I tried to feel. Or else he cries, "I must join a bit of religion to my pure morals. I do not quite understand how the combination is to be made, but we have to maintain a reputation for righteousness, and we must do it by hook or by crook. It is true that I have not kept the law. Well, then, I will pray every morning and pray every night very regularly, and take a good long time over it too, when I do not go to sleep, or when I do not wake up too late! And I will read so much of the Bible every day; a grand thing that! And if I can get through the Bible in a certain time, that will score one, will it not? Then I shall attend regularly a place of worship, and then, I think—well, I must be baptized, perhaps, or at any rate confirmed, or I must go to the sacrament, and when I have done all this, do you not think it will come pretty square?" If a man's conscience is awake, it will not come square, or, to go back to the old figure, the image will not stand upright, it will tumble over. After appearing to stand firm for a while, our poor wretched righteousness grows top-heavy again, and over it goes. The man says, "No, I do not feel righteous after all! There is something amiss."

Conscience begins to call out, "It will not do." Perhaps, the man is taken ill. He thinks that he is going to die, and he says, "Alas, I could not die with so poor a hope as this! This boat would never carry me across the river Jordan. I can see that it leaks very terribly. There are a hundred points in which my hope utterly fails me. What shall I do?" Well, then, he must keep his wretched presence afloat somehow, and so he cries, "At length I must go in for something thunderingly good. I will give a lot of money away." If he is a rich man, he says, "I will endow an almshouse. You see I need not give the money till I die. That will do very well. I had better keep it while I am alive, and then leave it when I cannot keep it. Won't it be a splendid thing? And if I put a painted window in a church, surely that will go a long way, or I will give a lump sum to a hospital." To build a bridge, or mend the common roads, used to be the way in which a man who wanted to bid high for heaven made his offers in olden times, or else the monks and friars promised to sing him into glory for the small consideration of ten thousand a year. And so men go into that line, and seek salvation by purchase. And they hear about saints who fast. Well, then, they say, "Oh, I shall fast!" Then they say, "I have not prayed long enough. I must pray twice as long."

According to the church to which he belongs, the zealous person becomes a determined partisan of his sect. Remember how Mr. Bunyan said that, when he was a godless man, he could have kissed the earth on which the clergy walked, and he thought that every nail in the church door was sacred? Among Dissenters, the man who is trying to save himself usually thinks that every practice of the little community with which he is united is infallibly correct. He has no real love to Christ, and has no trust in Christ's righteousness, but how he will work at his favorite self-salvation! And you will have to work at it, sirs, if you are going to heaven by your works! To work your fingers to the bones is nothing. You might as well try to climb to the stars on a treadmill as to get to heaven by your good works, and certainly, you might more easily sail from Liverpool to America on a dried leaf than ever get to heaven by works and doings of your own. There is more wanted than will ever come of yourself. You want a Savior. You must be born again from above. You want a salvation that shall be a gift of infinite charity, a blessing of the boundless mercy of the eternal God, and nothing else will save you.

But, oh, men will go about to set up their own righteousness, and I will tell you what some of them will do tonight! "Ah!" they will say, "quite right, Mr. Spurgeon. Quite right. I cannot bear that work-mongering and self-justification, but I hope that I shall be saved because I feel so deeply my sinnership and I groan so heavily under a sense of guilt." You trust to that, do you? It is only another form of trusting to your own works. I must rout you out of your feelings, as well as out of your works. You may just as well trust in the one thing that comes of you, as in the other thing that comes of you. Your salvation lies absolutely outside of yourself, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and not in what you do, but in what He is. If you add to that foundation stick or stone of your own—thought, feeling, or work of your own—by way of trusting in it, you have spoiled the salvation of Christ. It shall never be "Christ and Company." Hence be sure that if Jesus is to save you, you must let Him do it, and you must stand out of the way. "What! Am I not to work?" Oh, yes! Work as hard as ever you like if He has saved you, but as to the salvation itself, that is with Him. "But we are to work out our own salvation." Certainly you are, after He has worked it in you to will and to do of His own good pleasure. But you cannot work out of yourself what is not in yourself, and you cannot put it into yourself, the Lord Jesus must put it there for you, and then you must with diligence work it out in your life and conversation. The inner and spiritual work is all His doing, from first to last.

I know that you do not like this doctrine, sir. You are sitting very uneasily, and looking towards the door; I thought I saw you seize your cane just now. Have patience a few minutes longer. Suppose that you were to get to heaven in your way, what would happen? I am afraid that sacred place would become more than a little mixed. Whenever I get to heaven, I will sing to the praise of the glory of His grace to which I shall owe it all. When you get there, you cannot sing with me. You must have a new tune. You will throw up your cap, and say, "I have managed it after all!" This will lead to a very speedy contest and quarrel. You will glorify your-

self, and depend upon it; sinners saved by grace will glorify Christ. Our jealousy for His glory will not allow us to tolerate you in the realms of the blessed. Our Lord is not going to have any discord in heaven; you shall all sing His praises there, or never sing at all. There will be no divided praise, but the strain shall be set to the tune of *Salvation all of grace*. "Salvation to our God, that sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, forever and ever."

IV. Lastly, dear people of God, are you praying about these zealous, mistaken people all this while? Let me entreat you to renew your supplications. Shall we stop a minute while you do? Remember that you also were once in the dark, and that you foolishly hoped to be saved in the same proud and selfish manner which has such charms for them. Pray about them that the Lord will fetch them out of their self-righteousness—"O Lord, of Your infinite mercy, bring to Yourself and to Your dear Son, those earnest persons who have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge! O You, who does great marvels, enlighten the darkness of those who are prejudiced against the day!"

The fourth thing is, WHAT THEY WILL NOT DO. "Going about to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."

"They have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." Why, there are some that have not submitted even to *hear it!* Possibly, I address tonight one who never came here before, and has always said, "No, I should not think of going to such a place." You are only one of a numerous band of people of that character. Our law does not judge any man before it hears him, but these people both judge and condemn the gospel without giving it an hour's attention. If you speak to them about it, they are wrapped up in an idea of their own righteous perfectness, and they really cannot endure to hear themselves talked to as if they were common sinners. Are they not good enough of themselves? What can you tell them better than they already know? They do not want to hear the gospel. I think that I would recommend them, at any rate, to hear what it is, because the next time they speak against it, they will speak with more knowledge. It is always a pity not to know even that which we most despise. Even contempt should have a rational foundation. It will not hurt you, friend, to know. And yet there is such prejudice in the mind of some that they refuse to acquaint themselves with the truths which God has revealed. "Sinners saved by grace!" they say, "Salvation by faith! It is all very well for the commonalty, but it does not do for ladies and gentlemen like us. We were always so good." Very well, then, if that is really the case, you know there is a heaven for the commonalty, and it is highly probable that you ladies and gentlemen are too good to go there. Where will you go? There is but one way to heaven, and that way is closed against the proud, and if you choose to be so proud, you will close it against yourself, and we cannot help you. But we will pray—pray God that prejudice may yield, and that tonight, and at other times, those who have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge, may, at least, be willing to hear what the gospel is. How many have been brought to Christ

in the old times by reading Martin Luther upon the Galatians! That is a book in a rough enough style. What sledge-hammer words Martin uses! Only the other day I met a man who came to me like one of the old Puritans, and he said to me that he had traversed the line of the two covenants. He began to converse with me in that antique, majestic style which comes of Puritanic theology. I thought—Bless the man! He has risen from the dead. He is one of Oliver Cromwell's grey Ironsides. He will be able to tell me of Naseby and Marston Moor. So I said to him, "Covenant and law, where did you pick that up, friend?" "Not at any church or chapel," he said. "There are none round about where I live who know anything at all about it. They are all in the dark together—mute dogs that cannot bark." "How did you stumble on the true light?" I asked. The man replied, "In the good providence of God, I met with Master Martin Luther on the Galatians. I bought it for six-pence out of a box in front of a bookseller's shop." Oh, it was a good find for that man! Six pennyworth of salvation, according to the judgment of men; but infinite riches, according to the judgment of God: he had indeed found a jewel when he learned the truth of Salvation by grace through faith. I recommend persons, whether they will read Martin Luther or any other author, to be especially careful to read the Epistle to the Galatians itself. Paul hammers there against all hope of salvation by the law, and puts salvation on the basis of grace, and grace alone, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. Still there are many who will not incline their ear, and come to Christ; they will not even hear that their souls may live. Do not they deserve to die who are too proud to hearken to the way of life?

And then there are others who, when they hear it, will not admit that they need it. "What, sir! Must I go down on my knees? Must I confess that I am a sinner, a real sinner? Must I come before God as if I had been a criminal? Must I stand in the dock, and plead guilty?" Yes, you must, or else you will never be saved. "They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick." Off with that helmet of obstinacy! Down with the plumes of pride! You must come to God on your bended knees, with a rope about your neck, as one who is only fit to die, and be cast into hell, for He will never save you on any other terms. He must extend to you the scepter of His absolutely sovereign grace, and save you as an undeserving, ill-deserving, hell-deserving sinner, or else you can never be saved at all. What do you say to this? Do you reply, "I will never submit to such a humiliation"? God will never alter His terms to please you. Some will not submit to accept salvation. It is freely offered, without money and without price, but men would like to pay for it at least with something, and they turn upon their heel. They will not have it as a free gift.

Again, there are others who will not submit to the spirit of it—to the influence of it, for you must know that the spirit of free grace is this—if God saves me for nothing, then I belong to Him forever and ever. If He forgives me every sin simply because I believe in Jesus, then I will hate every sin, and flee from it. If He grants me forgiveness on no ground but that of His own absolute mercy and good pleasure, as He has put it, "I

will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion," then I will love Him with all my heart, and soul, and strength, till time shall be no more. Now, for the love I bear Him, I will lead a holy life. I will serve Him with every power of my being. The virtue I aimed at before, in my own strength, I will now ask for from His Holy Spirit. The goodness that I thought I had, but never had, I will seek to have as a gift of His grace worked in me, and I, because of His great goodness to me, will live to Him, and will not henceforth serve myself or serve sin, but will serve Him who has bought me with His precious blood. Many will not submit to that, yet they can never be saved from sin unless they yield themselves as the blood-bought servants of Christ. Christ comes to save His people from their sins, and from their sins He will save them; they shall no longer be in bondage to the powers of evil. The Lord Jesus accomplishes this salvation by freely forgiving them, and then moving their hearts to such a love of Him that they become in love with everything that is pure and holy, and are filled with hatred of everything that is unjust, and wrong, and wicked, and their life becomes totally changed. What the principle of law talked about doing, but never did, the principle of grace actually does. It puts a new mainspring into the man, and when the works within are right, then the hands without soon move according to right rules. I most earnestly pray that many of you may submit to the righteousness of Christ. Yield yourselves up; trust in Christ; believe in Him who died for sinners; take Him to be your Savior tonight. Do not go to sleep till this is done, lest you wake up in the bottomless pit.

With my whole soul I offer the prayer of my text this night, and do you also, dear friends, keep on praying. I ask all of you Christian people to insert a special petition into all your prayers, and to keep it there—"O Lord, save by Your grace those who have a zeal for You, which is not according to knowledge! Grant that they may not go about to establish their own righteousness, but may submit themselves unto the righteousness of God!" Amen and Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PHILIPPIANS 3.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—563, 684, 554.

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

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

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

REJOICE EVERMORE
NO. 1900

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 23, 1886,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Rejoice evermore."
1 Thessalonians 5:16.

THIS is a sunny precept. When we read it we feel that the time of the singing of birds has come. That joy should be made a duty is a sure token of the blessedness of the New Covenant. Because Jesus has suffered, we are encouraged, commanded, and enabled to rejoice. Only the Man of Sorrows and His chosen apostles can teach for a precept such a word as this—*"Rejoice evermore."* Happy people who can be thus exhorted! We ought to rejoice that there is a command to rejoice. Glory be unto the God of happiness who bids His children be happy. While musing on this text, I seem carried in spirit to the green woods, and their bowers. As in a dell all blue with bell-flowers, where the sun smiles down upon me through the half-born oak leaves, I sit down, and hear the blessed birds of the air piping out their love-notes, their music says only this—*"Rejoice evermore."* All that I see, and hear, and feel, surrounds me with garlands of delight, while the fairest of all the shepherds of Sharon sings to me this delicious pastoral—*"Rejoice evermore."* The very words have breathed spring into my soul, and set my heart blossoming. Thus I am also made to be as a daffodil which long has hidden away among the clods, but now at last ventures to lift up her yellow lily, and ring out her golden bell. Who can be sad, or silent, when the voice of the Beloved says, *"Rejoice evermore"?*

Our apostle speaks of rejoicing as a personal, present, permanent duty to be always carried out by the people of God. The Lord has not left it to our own option whether we will sorrow or rejoice, but He has pinned us down to it by positive injunction—"Rejoice evermore." He will have this cloth of gold spread over the whole field of life. He has laid down as first and last, beginning, middle and end—"Rejoice *evermore."* Some things are to be done at one time, some at another, but rejoicing is for all times, forever, and forevermore, which, I suppose, is more than ever, if more can be. Fill life's sea with joy up to the high water mark. Spare not, stint not, when rejoicing is the order of the day. Run out to your full tether; sweep your largest circle when you use the golden compasses of joy.

Some things being once done are done with, and you need not further meddle with them, but you have never done with rejoicing. "Rejoice evermore."

Our text is set in the midst of many precepts. Notice how from the fourteenth verse the apostle packs together a number of duties of Christian ministers and church members one towards another. "We exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men." All these things are to be done in turn, according as occasion requires, but, *"rejoice evermore."* You have plenty to do, but this thing you have always to do. You shall never be able to fold your hands for lack of some holy task or other, but be not worried, be not fretted by what you have to do, on the contrary, take up the sacred duties with alacrity, welcoming each one of them, and entering upon them with delight. Rejoice in each one, because you "rejoice evermore." You will have to warn the unruly, and their rebellious tempers will, perhaps, irritate you, or, if in patience you possess your soul, yet you may grow sad at having so melancholy a duty to perform, but be not too much troubled, even by the grief of injured love. Warn the unruly, but *"rejoice evermore."* Do not pause in the blessed service of rejoicing when you are called upon to comfort the feeble-minded. There is a danger that the feeble-minded may rob you of your comfort, but let it not be so. In attempting to lift them out of the waters you may, perhaps, be almost drowned, yourself; your deliverance will lie in the sweet word, *"Rejoice evermore."* You will lose your power both to warn the unruly and to comfort the feeble-minded, if you lose your joy. The joy of the Lord will be your strength in all these matters, therefore, "rejoice evermore." Close at your hand will lie the weak who need supporting, and you may be half saying to yourselves, "We wish that all God's people were strong, that we might unitedly spend all our strength against the foe, instead of having to use it at home for supporting our own weak soldiers." But be not dejected on that account; while you are supporting the weak, still "rejoice evermore." Your rejoicing will be a great support to the faint, your ceasing to rejoice will be a terrible confirmation of their sorrow. Lend the feeble a hand, but do not stop your own singing. Does not a mother carry her baby, and sing at the same time?

As you turn about, you find all men gathering to hinder you, to grieve you, to slander you, or to make use of you for their base purposes. But be not grieved, put up with your poor fellow creatures since the Lord puts up with you, but do not leave off rejoicing. As you are patient towards all men, let your patience have a flavor of joy in it; however great the provocations that you endure, still *"rejoice evermore."* As it is written, "With all your sacrifices you shall offer salt," so let it be your settled purpose with every other duty to offer rejoicing. I am sure, brethren, that we make a very great mistake if we get like Martha—cumbered with much serving, for that cumbering prevents our serving our Master well. He loves to see those who serve in His house of a cheerful countenance. He wants not slaves to grace His throne. He would have His children wait upon Him with a light in their faces which is the reflection of His own. He would have His joy fulfilled in them, that their joy may be full. It is His royal pleasure that His service should be delight, His worship heaven, His presence glory. Let your hearts be sanctified, but let not your hearts be troubled. Amidst a thousand duties give not way to a single anxiety. While you are desirous to honor God in everything, yet be not overbur-

dened even with the cares of His cause and service, lest you put forth the hand of Uzzah to stay the ark of the Lord. The Lord forbade His priests to wear garments that caused sweat, and He will not have any one of us fret and worry about His cause so as to lose our rest in His own self. Wrestle for a blessing, but still *"rejoice evermore."*

The command to rejoice is set in the midst of duties; it is put there to teach us how to perform them all.

Also notice that *our text comes after just a flavoring of trouble and bitterness.* Read verse fifteen, "See that none render evil for evil unto any man." Children of God are apt to have evil rendered to them. They may have slanderous reports spread about them; they may be accused of things they never dreamed of, they may be cut to the heart by the ingratitude of those who ought to have been their friends, but still they are bidden *"rejoice evermore."* Even rejoice in the persecution and in the slander. "Blessed are you, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." So says our Lord. "Rejoice you," He says, "and be exceedingly glad." There is an expression in the Greek that never has been rendered into English, and never will be—αγαλλιασθε. Old Trapp half puns upon the *agalliasthe* as he says, "dance a galliard." I do not know what a "galliard" was, but I suppose that it was some very joyous kind of dance. Certainly we know of no better way of translating our Lord's word than by—exult, or leap for joy. Even when your good name shall be tarnished by the malice of the wicked, then you are to leap. When are you to be wretched? Surely despondency is excluded. If slander is to make us dance, when are we to fret? Suppose some other kind of trial should come upon you, you are still to rejoice in the Lord always. The dearest friend is dead, "rejoice evermore." The sweet babe is sickening, the darling of your household will be taken away, *"rejoice evermore."* Trade is ebbing out, prosperity is disappearing from you, you may even be brought to poverty, but, "rejoice evermore." Your health is affected, your lungs are weak, your heart does not beat with regularity, very soon you may be sick unto death, but, *"rejoice evermore."* Shortly you must put off this tabernacle altogether! Tokens warn you that you must soon close your eyes in death, but, "rejoice evermore." There is no limit to the exhortation. It is ever in season. Through fire and through water, through life and through death, *"rejoice evermore."*

Now and then a commentator says that the command of our text must mean that we are to be in the habit of rejoicing, for there must necessarily be intervals in which we do not rejoice. It is to be "constant but intermittent," so one good man says. I do not know how that can be, though I know what he means. He means that it ought to be the general tenor of our life that we rejoice, yet he evidently feels that there must be black clouds now and then to vary the abiding sunshine. He warns us that there will be broken bits of road where as yet the steam roller has not forced in the granite. But that will not do as an interpretation of the text, for the apostle expressly says, "Rejoice evermore," that is, rejoice straight on, and never leave off rejoicing. Whatever happens, rejoice. Come what may, rejoice. If the worst darkens to the worst—if the night lowers into a

sevenfold midnight, yet *"rejoice evermore."* This carillon of celestial bells is to keep on ringing through the night as well as through the day. "Rejoice, rejoice, you saints of God at every time, in every place, and under every circumstance. Joy, joy, forever. Rejoice evermore. In the midst of a thousand duties, amid the surges of ten thousand trials, still rejoice." There is to be about the Christian a constancy of joy.

I am bound to mention that among the curiosities of the churches, that, I have known many deeply spiritual Christian people who have been afraid to rejoice. Much genuine religion has been "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought!" Some take such a view of religion that it is to them a sacred duty to be gloomy. They believe in the holiness of discontent, the sanctity of repining, but they recoil from grateful joy as if it were the devil in the form of an angel of light. One of the commandments of the saints of misery is, "Draw down the blinds on Sunday." Another is, "Never smile during a sermon, it is wicked." A third precept is, "Never rest yourself, and be sure that you never let anybody else rest for an instant. Why should anybody be allowed a moment's quiet in a world so full of sin? Go through the world and impress people with the idea that it is an awful thing to live." I have known some very good people spoiled for practical usefulness, and spoiled as to being like the Lord Jesus Christ, by their deeply laid conviction that it was wicked to be glad. Well do I remember an earnest Christian woman who saw me when I was first converted, full of the joy of the Lord, and joyfully assured of my salvation in Christ Jesus. She seemed distressed at the sight of so much joy. She shook her head. She looked at me with that heavenly-minded pity which these good people usually lay by in store. It seemed to her a dreadful thing that so young a Christian should dare to know whom he had believed. If you had been a Christian a hundred years you might perhaps begin to think it possible that you were saved, but to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ right straight away like a little child, and at once to rejoice in His salvation, seemed to this dear old Christian woman to be an act of such shocking temerity that she could only shake her dear head and prognosticate all sorts of horrible things. Since then I have found a great many like her, and when I have seen them shake their heads they have not shaken me half so much as she shook my heart on that first occasion. I know them now, and I know that there is nothing in that shake of the head after all. The fact is that they ought to shake their heads about themselves for getting into so sad a state while this text stands on the sacred page, *"Rejoice evermore."* It cannot be a wise and prudent thing to neglect this plain precept of the word. It cannot be an unsafe thing to do what we are commanded to do. It cannot be a wrong thing for a believer to abide in that state of mind which is recommended by the Holy Spirit in words so plain and so unguarded, *"Rejoice evermore."*

Oh, dear friends, you may rejoice. God has laid no embargo upon rejoicing; He puts no restriction upon happiness. Do believe it that you are permitted to be happy. Do believe that there is no ordinance of God commanding you to be miserable. Turn this Book over and see if there is any precept that the Lord has given you in which He has said, "Groan in the Lord always and again I say groan." You may groan if you like. You have Christian liberty for that, but, at the same time, do believe that you

have larger liberty to rejoice, for so it is put before you. He bids you rejoice, and yet again He says "rejoice." Some of God's sheep dare not go into the Lord's own pasture. It is dark and thick with rich and luscious food, and into that field their Shepherd has already led them. Yet they dream that there is a gate, and that gate is shut, and across it is written this word, "Presumption." They are afraid to feed where God has made the best grass to grow for them because they are afraid of being presumptuous. The fear is groundless, but painfully common. Oh that I could deliver the true believer from this evil influence! If you are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, everything that there is in Christ is yours. If you are resting in Jesus Christ, though you have only lately begun to trust in Him, the whole covenant of grace with all its infinite supplies belongs to you, and you have the right to partake of that which grace has provided. Jesus invites you to eat and drink abundantly. Beloved in the Lord, the only sin that you can commit at the banquet of love will be to limit yourselves. The feast is spread by a royal hand, and royal bounty bids you come; hold not back through shame or fear. Come and saturate your souls with goodness. "Eat you that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness," for so God permits you to do.

But I go a step farther and that is, that *it is a sin not to rejoice*. I will not say it harshly; I should like to say it as softly and tenderly as it could be put, but it must be said, and I must not take away from the force of it by my tenderness. If it is a command, "Rejoice evermore," then it is a breach of the command not to rejoice evermore. And what is a breach of a command? What is a neglect to obey a precept? Is it not a sin—a sin of shortcoming, though not of transgression? Beloved, why do your faces wear those gloomy colors? Why do you distrust? Why do you mourn? Why are you continually suspicious of the faithfulness of God? Why are you not rejoicing when there is God's word for it, first permitting, and then commanding you? Come, you unhappy and sorrowful professors, question yourselves rather than others. O you forlorn one, cease to judge those whose eyes flash with exultation. Next time that you meet with a rejoicing Christian, do not begin to chide him, but quietly chide yourself because you do not rejoice. As for you who are swift of foot, I hope that you will not say an unkind word of poor Mephibosheth, who is lame in both his feet, for he is dear to David, and he shall sit at David's table. But, on the other hand, Mephibosheth in his lameness must not grow bitter and censorious, and find fault with Asahel, who is fleet of foot as a young roe, or otherwise it may seem almost too ridiculous. No, no, Heavy-heart, chide not the glad. Glad-heart, deal not roughly with the sorrowful. Bear one another's burdens, and share one another's joys. If there is any chiding, let it be the chiding of Little-Faith, sorrowfully bemoaning his own weakness of grace. Oh that God would help us to be faithful to our own experiences; then we shall not criticize others, but judge ourselves.

All this by way of introduction.

I. And now, just for a minute or two, I desire to speak upon THE QUALITY OF THIS REJOICING which is commanded in our text. May the Holy Spirit enable me to set before you the select taste and special quality of a believer's life-long joy! "Rejoice evermore."

Brethren, *this is not carnal rejoicing*. If it were, it would be impossible to keep it up evermore. There is a joy of harvest, but where shall we find it in winter? There is a joy of wealth, but where is this joy when riches take to themselves wings, and fly away? There is a joy of health, but that is not with us evermore, for the evil days come and the years of weakness and sorrow. There is a joy in having your children round about you, sweet are domestic joys, but these last not forever. At the house of the happiest, knocks the hand of death. No, if your joys spring from earthly fountains, those fountains may be dried up, and then your joys are gone. If the foundation of a man's joy is anywhere on earth it will be shaken, for there is a day coming when the whole earth shall shake, and even now it is far from being a stable thing. Build not on the floods; and what are outward circumstances but as waves of the changeful sea? No, beloved, it cannot be carnal joy which is here commanded, since carnal joy in the nature of things cannot be forevermore. I know not that carnal joy is commanded anywhere. Men are permitted to rejoice in the things of this life, but that is the most that we can say. They are forbidden to rejoice too much in these things, for they are as honey, of which a man may soon eat till he is sickened. The joy which God commands, is a joy in which it is impossible to go too far. It is a heavenly joy, based upon things which will last forever, or else we could not be bidden to "rejoice evermore."

Again, as this joy is not carnal; so I feel quite sure that *it is not presumptuous*. Some persons ought not to rejoice. Did not the prophet Hosea say, "Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy, as other people, for you have departed from your God"? There are some persons who rejoice, and it would be well if a faithful hand were to dash the cup from their lips. They have never fled to Christ for refuge—they have never been born again—they have never submitted themselves to the righteousness of God, and yet they are at ease in Zion. Ah, wretched ease! Many are ignorant of their ruin, strangers to the remedy of grace, strangers to the blood that bought redemption, and yet they rejoice in their own righteousness. They have a joy that has been accumulated through years of false profession, hypocritical formality, and vain pretence. Such as these, are not told to "rejoice evermore." There must be sound reasons for rejoicing now, or there can be no reason for rejoicing evermore. If your joy will not bear looking at, have done with it. If, when you run with the footmen of common self-examinations in time of health, they weary you, what will you do when you contend with the black horsemen of dark thought in the hour of death? The joy that will abide forever is the joy to be sought after, but joy which a man cannot justify, never ought to be thought of as enduring for "evermore." Is your hope fixed on what Jesus did for sinners on the tree? Are you really a partaker of the life that is in Him? Have you been begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead? If so, it is safe for you to rejoice at once, and it will be equally safe for you to "rejoice evermore." Is it not clear that the rejoicing commanded in our text is not a presumptuous joy, or a carnal joy?

Again, dear friends, I feel bound to add that *it must not be a fanatical joy*. Certain religious people are of a restless, excitable turn, and never feel good till they are half out of their minds. You would not wonder if

their hair should stand bolt upright, like the quills of the fretful porcupine. They are in such a state of mind that they cry "hallelujah" at anything or nothing, for they feel ready to cry, or shout, or jump, or dance. I do not condemn their delirium, but I am anxious to know what goes with it. Come here, friend, let us have a talk. What do you know? What? Is it possible that I offend you the moment I seek a reason for the hope that is in you? Is it so, that you do not know anything of the doctrines of grace? You were never taught anything; the object of the institution which enlisted you is not to teach you, but only to excite you. It pours boiling water into you, but it does not feed you with milk. That is a miserable business. We like excitement of a proper kind, and we covet earnestly a high and holy joy, but if our rejoicing does not come out of a clear understanding of the things of God, and if there is no truth at the bottom of it, what does it profit us? Those who rejoice without knowing why can be driven to despair without knowing why, and such persons are likely to be found in a lunatic asylum before long. The religion of Jesus Christ acts upon truthful, reasonable, logical principles; it is sanctified common sense. A Christian man should only exhibit a joy which he can justify, and of which he can say, "There is reason for it." I pray you, take care that you have joy which you may expect to endure forever, because there is a good solid reason at the back of it. The excitement of animal enthusiasm will die out like the crackling of thorns under a pot; we desire to have a flame burning on the hearth of our souls which is fed with the fuel of eternal truth, and will therefore burn on forevermore.

I go a little farther, and I say that I believe that this joy which is commanded here, "Rejoice evermore," is *not even that high and divine exhilaration which Christians feel upon special occasions*. We could tell of rapturous ecstasies and sublime joys which, if they are not heaven itself, are so near akin to it, that we would not change them for the place that Gabriel fills when nearest to his Master's throne. Oh, there are times when God's Elijah, having brought down the fire from heaven, girds up his loins and runs before Ahab's chariot with a divine enthusiasm which onlookers cannot understand. There are moments on the top of the mountain when Peter is no fool for saying, "Let us build three tabernacles." It is so good to be there that we would willingly stay on that mountain and never come down again to the bustle, and turmoil, and sin of a guilty world. Now, you are not commanded in the text to be always in such a high, exalted, rapturous state of mind as that. "Rejoice evermore," but you cannot always rejoice at that rate. I have said that you cannot, and I mean it literally. There is a physical impossibility in it. The strain upon the mind would be much too great. We could not live in such a condition of excitement and tension. Sometimes we can swim in the deep waters, but who can always swim? We can take to ourselves the wings of eagles, and soar beyond the stars, but we are not condors, and cannot always fly; we are more like the sparrows which find a house near the altar of God. When we cannot mount as on wings, we think it quite sufficient if we can run without weariness, and walk without fainting. The ordinary joy of the Christian is that which is commanded here, it is not the joy of Jubilee but of every year, not the joy of harvest but of all the months. *"Rejoice evermore."* No, Miriam, no, not always the timbrel. Not every day,

"Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously." There is other work for you. No, Moses, not every day, "Your right hand, O Lord, has dashed in pieces the enemy." No, you have other work to do among these rebels, quite as honoring to your God and quite as useful as writing Israel's triumphal hymn. No, James and John and Peter, not always on the top of Tabor. Sometimes in the house of death with your Master where the young girl is raised, and sometimes in Gethsemane to keep watch, if you can, while He sweats great drops of blood. You are to "rejoice evermore," but you are not always to be clashing the high-sounding cymbals; sometimes the softer psaltery must satisfy your hand. All days are not holidays; there was a day when Job lost his cattle and his children, and yet blessed the name of the Lord. All days are not wedding days; there was a day wherein Jacob cried, "All these things are against me." All days are not as the days of heaven upon earth, and until the day breaks and the shadows flee away we shall have to bear about a joy that is rather a lamp in the night than a sun in the day—a joy that gladdens us when we are cast down, rather than lifts us up to ecstasy.

I hope that you catch my thought, though I am afraid that I do but dimly put it. This shows you what kind of joy could not be with us always. The joy that can be with us evermore is a part of ourselves, a power of the new nature which God works in us by His own Spirit. It consists in the great cheerfulness of the new-born disposition; a full conviction that whatever God does is right; a sweet agreement with the providence of God, let it ordain what it will; an intense delight in God Himself and in the person of His dear Son, and consequently a quietness, a calm, a stillness of soul, "the peace of God which passes all understanding." This holy rejoicing is a drop of the essence of heaven. You have heard of "songs without words," such is the joy of the Lord in the soul; a sort of silent song forever sung within the spirit; a quiet making of music with every pulse of the heart; a living psalmody before God with every heaving of the lungs. I hope that you know what it means, or that if you do not, you may soon learn. This is a joy that has no wear and tear about it. You can keep from year to year the even tenor of this way, for this is the pace for which men's minds were made. *"Rejoice evermore."* You can live to be as old as Methuselah in this frame, for this rejoicing will never tear you to pieces. It will conserve you, and act as the salt of your physical, mental, and spiritual man.

Thus much upon the quality of this joy.

II. Suffer a few words upon THE OBJECT OF THE REJOICING, in order to help you, dear friends, to indulge it. *"Rejoice evermore."* With what can we keep this feast? What are the objects of such a joy as this?

God helping us, we can always rejoice *in God*. What a God we have! "God, my exceeding joy," said the Psalmist. "Delight yourself also in the Lord." Every attribute of God, every characteristic of God, is an inexhaustible gold mine of precious joy to every man who is reconciled to God. Delight yourself in God the Father, and His electing love, and His unchanging grace, and His illimitable power, and His transcending glory, and in your being His child, and in that providence with which He orders all things for you. Delight yourself in your Father God. Delight yourself also in the Son, who is "God with us." God with us before the earth was,

in the covenant council when He became our surety and our representative. God with us when His delights were with the sons of men. Delight in Him as man suffering, sympathizing with you. Delight in Him as God putting forth infinite wisdom and power for you. I should need a month in which to give a bare outline of the various points of our Lord's divine and human character which furnish us with objects of joy. Do but think of Him. Do but for a moment consider His love, and if you are at all right in heart it must bring unspeakable pleasure to you—

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

Then think of the Holy Spirit, and rejoice in Him as dwelling in you, quickening you, comforting you, illuminating you, and abiding with you forever. Think of the triune God, and be blessed.

Then muse upon the covenant of grace; think of redemption by blood; think of divine sovereignty and all that has come of it in the form of grace to men. Think of your effectual calling, your justification, and your acceptance in the Beloved. Think of your final perseverance. Think of your union with the glorious person of the Well-beloved, and of all the life and all the glory that is wrapped up in that surpassing truth. "Rejoice evermore." With such a God you have always a source of joy.

I believe, dear friends, that if we are right-minded every doctrine of the gospel will make us glad, every promise of the gospel will make us glad, and every precept of the gospel will make us glad. If you were to go over a list of all the privileges that belong to the people of God, you might pause over each one, and say, "I could rejoice evermore in this if I had nothing else." If ever you fail to rejoice, permit me to exhort you to awaken each one of the graces of the Spirit to its most active exercise. Begin with the first of them—faith. Believe, and as you believe this and that out of the ten thousand blessings which God has promised, joy will spring up in your soul. Have you exercised faith? Then lead out the sister grace of hope. Begin hoping for the resurrection, hoping for the second coming, hoping for the glory which is then to be revealed. What sources of joy are these! When you have indulged hope, then go on to love, and let this fairest of the heavenly sisters point you to the way of joy. Go on to love God more and more, and to love His people, and to love poor sinners, and as you love, you will not fail to rejoice, for joy is born of love! Love has on her left hand sorrow for the griefs of those she loves, but at her right hand a holy joy in the very fact of loving her fellows, for he that loves does a joyful thing. If you cannot get joy either out of hope, or faith, or love, then go on to patience. I believe that one of the sweetest joys under heaven comes out of the severest suffering when patience is brought into play. "Sweet," says Toplady, "to lie passive in Your hand, and know no will but Yours." And it is so sweet, so inexpressibly sweet, that to my experience the joy that comes of perfect patience is, under certain aspects, the most divine of all the joys that Christians know this side of heaven. The abyss of agony has a pearl in it which is not to be found upon the mountain of delight. Put patience to her perfect work and she will bring you the power to rejoice evermore.

I will suppose that you have gone through all this, and that you still say, "I cannot rejoice as I would." Then arise, dear brother, and gird

yourself for holy exercise. Begin with prayer. Prayer will make the darkening cloud remove, and then you will rejoice. If supplication is over, and you are not rejoicing, then sing a psalm. "Bring hither the minstrel." Often does holy music set the prophet going. Let us sing a song unto the Lord, and if we have no joy in our hearts already, we shall not have sung very many verses before rejoicing will drop on us like the dew which soaks the dry and dusky tents of the Arabians. If neither prayer nor praise will do it, then read the Word. Sit still and meditate on what the Lord has spoken. Go up to the Communion Table, gather with the people of God in sweet mutual converse, or go out and preach to sinners. Go to the Sunday school class, and tell the dear children about Christ. In Christian labor you will joy in the Lord as you would not have rejoiced in Him if you had been at home idle.

At any rate, when you do not rejoice, say to yourself, "Come, heart, this will not do. Why are you cast down, O my soul?" I have heard of a mother that whenever her children began to cry, and grow fretty, she said, "They must have medicine." She was sure that they were not well. Whenever you begin to fret and worry, say to yourself, "I must take heavenly medicine, for I am not right. The leaves of the Scriptures are for my healing; I will use them for my soul's good. If my heart were right I should rejoice in the Lord, and as I am not rejoicing I must resort to the great Physician."

Brethren, we must rejoice. Why should we not rejoice, since all things are ours? Heaven is ours in the future, and earth is ours in the present. With the past and all its sins blotted out, the future and all its wants provided for by the bounty of an unchanging God, why should we be disquieted? If we are not glad, the stars may rebuke us as they twinkle amid the darkness; the sun may rebuke us for refusing to shine in the light of God. Come, brethren, let us obey the Word that says, *"Rejoice evermore."*

III. Lastly, somebody will say, "But why should we rejoice?" What are THE REASONS FOR THIS REJOICING? We ought not to want arguments to persuade us to be happy. The worldling says that "he counts it one of the wisest things to drive dull care away." The child of God may count it the wisest thing to cast his care upon his God. You do not want an argument for rejoicing, but if you did, it is found in the command of your Lord, who says to you, "Rejoice evermore."

Rejoicing wards off temptation. The Christian may be tempted, but little impression is made upon him by the pleasurable bait if he is happy in the Lord. There is a passage in Paul—I forget just now where it is—where he speaks of putting on the armor of light. It is fine poetry as well as solid fact that we wear the armor of light, and part of the meaning is that we are so surrounded with seraphic joy that nothing can tempt us. The joy which we wear is far superior to any which the evil one can offer us, and so his temptation has lost its power. What can the devil offer the joyous Christian? Why, if he were to say to him, "I will give you all the kingdoms of the world and the glory thereof, if you will fall down and worship me," the believer would reply to him, "Fiend, I have more than that. I have perfect contentment; I have absolute delight in God. My soul swims in a deep sea of bliss as I think of God." The devil will speedily quit such a

man as that, for the joy of the Lord is an armor through which he cannot send the dagger of his temptation.

This joy of the Lord will shut out worldly mirth from the heart. The rejoicing Christian is not the kind of man that wants to spend his evenings in a theater. "Pooh!" he says, "what can I do there?" You say to the man who has once eaten bread, "I will take you to such a grand feast. I will show you a company of swine all feeding upon husks. Look upon them, see how they enjoy themselves! You shall have as much as you like, and be as happy as they are." He says, "But you do not know me; you do not understand me. I have none of the qualities that link me with swine. I cannot enjoy the things which they enjoy." He that is once happy in God pours contempt upon the most sublime happiness that a worldling can know. It is altogether out of his line. He does not know their mirth, even as they do not know his rejoicing. I suppose that the fish of the sea have joys suitable to their natures. I do not envy them; I am not inclined to dive into their element. It is so with the children of God; they are not inclined to go after worldly things when they are happy in the Lord. But your miserable professors who simply go to a place of worship because they ought to go, and who are very good because they dare not be anything else, they have no joy in the Lord. They go to the devil for their joy; they openly confess that they must have a bit of pleasure sometimes, and therefore they go to questionable amusements. No wonder that they are found in Satan's courts, looking up to him for delights, since they find no rejoicing in the ways of the Lord.

He that rejoices in the Lord always will be *a great encouragement to his fellow Christians*. He comes into the room; you like the very look of his face. It is a half-holiday to look at him, and as soon as ever he speaks he drops a sweet word of encouragement for the weak and afflicted. We have some brethren round about us whose faces always refresh me before preaching. Their words are cheering and strengthening. Those who rejoice in the Lord evermore cannot help perfuming the room where they are with the aroma of their joy. Others catch the blessed contagion of their contentment, and become happy too.

This is the kind of thing that attracts sinners. They used in the old times to catch pigeons and send them out with sweet salves on their wings; other pigeons followed them into the dovecote for the sake of their perfume, and so were captured. I would that every one of us had the heavenly anointing on our wings, the divine perfumes of peace, and joy, and rest, for then others would be fascinated to Jesus, allured to heaven.

God grant that it may be so, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
1 THESSALONIANS 5.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—23 (VERSION 1), 764, 778.

The following letter from Mr. Spurgeon was read at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, on Lord's-day, May 16, 1866—

Westwood, Beulah Hill, Upper Norwood,
May16, 1866

"DEAR FRIENDS—In answer to many prayers, I was permitted three times to attend the College Conference; but possibly this great privilege, though it gave me much joy, also helped to prolong my affliction. Nevertheless, I cannot feel too grateful for such special favor; for it gladdened me to be among the brethren. Pray for a blessing on the Conference. Ask the Lord to make our ministers sound in the faith, and to keep them so.

"This last week has been one of great pain. One of its worst trials has been my inability to hold a pen. When I woke this morning and found that my right hand had become smaller, and that I could write, I felt ready to cry for joy. My first thought was to get up at once, and write to you a word of sincere affection.

"God bless you, one and all, out of the eternal treasury of His love. Oh that my affliction may make me a more profitable preacher to you! I would gladly suffer anything if I might more fully glorify God, and benefit His people, and save sinners.

"I pray you to have patience with me under my many infirmities, and when I am once again among you, which I hope will be very soon, *do hear me all you can* while I am to be heard. I can truly say, that when I can preach, I throw my whole soul into it, and I feel anxious that as many as possible may hear what the Lord may speak through me. May the Holy Spirit make such hearing to be effectual unto salvation!

"I shall this week issue my *nineteen hundredth sermon*. What a privilege! I have been thinking of "REJOICE EVERMORE" as a fit text. Brethren, let us rejoice; let us keep on rejoicing; let us never leave off rejoicing.

"Hoping to be with you next Sabbath day,

"I am, your suffering servant for Christ's sake,
"C. H. SPURGEON."

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

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

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

MYSTERIOUS MEAT
NO. 1901

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 23, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"In the mean while His disciples prayed Him, saying, Master, eat. But He said to them, I have meat to eat that you know not of. Therefore said the disciples to one another, Has anyone brought Him anything to eat? Jesus said unto them, My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work. Do you not say, There are yet four months, and then comes harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look at the fields, for they are white already to harvest. And he that reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life: that both he that sows and he that reaps may rejoice together. For in this the saying is true, One sows, and another reaps. I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored: others have labored, and you have entered into their labors."
John 4:31-38.

THE disciples had gone away into the city to buy meat, and for this they cannot be censured. It was necessary that food should be provided, and it naturally fell to their lot to perform that duty. Do not say that they were carnal or unspiritual because of this, for the most spiritual people must eat to live. When they came back from making their purchases, they found their Master sitting by the well, as they had left Him. They naturally expected that He would be as ready to partake of the provision as they were to offer it to Him, but He made no movement in that direction. His mind was evidently far away from the idea of food. He was absorbed in something else, and therefore His disciples sought to call Him back to a sense of His need. I do not suppose that they had themselves eaten, it was hardly like them to do so while their Lord was not with them. They therefore wished to eat, and they were all the more struck with the fact that He had no care for refreshment. Knowing how weary He had been when they left Him—so weary that He bade them go alone into the city—they were perplexed at His indifference to food, and perhaps judged that He was over-fatigued, and therefore they prayed Him to eat. Persistently, one after another said, "Good Master, it is long since You have eaten; the way has been weary, the day is hot, You seem very faint, we pray You, eat a little that You may be revived. The woman to whom You spoke has gone, Your good work for a while is over, let us eat together."

Again I confess that I do not agree with those who blame these disciples. If it is true that there is nothing very elevated in providing food, there is certainly nothing unworthy in the act. I admire their care for their Master; I praise them for so lovingly pressing upon Him the supply

of His necessities. It is right for the spiritual man to forget his hunger, but it is equally right for his true friends to remind him that he ought to eat for his health's sake. It is commendable for the worker to forget his weakness and press forward in holy service, but it is proper for the humane and thoughtful to interpose with a word of caution, and to remind the ardent spirit that his frame is but dust. I think the disciples did well to say, "Master, eat." What is more, I will hold them up to your imitation. Jesus has gone from you now in actual person, but His mystical body is still with you, and if you meet with any part of His body in need make it your earnest care. Still pray Him, saying, "Master, eat." If you know any of His people in poverty, ask them to partake of your abundance, lest your Lord should say to you at the last, "I was hungry, and you gave Me no meat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me no drink." Our Lord's spirituality is not of that visionary sort which despises the feeding of hungry bodies. Look after His poor and needy ones. How can you be truly spiritual if you do not so? "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." There is much in the commonplace attentions of charity; Jesus commands our consideration of the weaknesses and needs of others, and therefore I say again I commend the disciples that they prayed Him saying, "Master, eat."

Having done this justice to the twelve, let us do higher honor to the divine One about whom they gathered. His mind was at that time absorbed in spiritual objectives, and being so, He wished to lead them into that higher field wherein He Himself was so much at home, and therefore He transfigured their common words by giving them a higher meaning. "You pray Me to eat," He said, but "I have meat to eat that you know not of." They did not comprehend what He meant; as the Samaritan woman did not understand Him when He spoke of water, neither did His disciples when He spoke of meat. But you see the Lord endeavored to use the lower expression as a ladder to something higher and more spiritual. This was the Master's way from the beginning to the end, always to be making similitudes of things seen to set forth the things unseen, always to take the thing which men had grasped and use it as the means of helping them to lay hold on some great truth which as yet was out of their reach. Inasmuch as refreshments were spoken of, and His disciples saw the need of those refreshments, the Master turns that thought into a deeper channel, and tells them of other refreshments which He Himself enjoyed and wished them to share with Him. In effect our Lord's reply to the request, "Master, eat," is this, "I have eaten in the best sense, and I wish you also to eat with Me." He would have them enter into that service which had yielded so intense a satisfaction to Himself; He would have them know His joy in it.

This morning the run of my subject will be just this; first, *there are refreshments for our hearts which are but little known*—"I have meat to eat that you know not of." Secondly, *these refreshments satisfied our Lord*—so satisfied Him that He forgot to eat bread, and thirdly, and a very practical thirdly I hope it will be, *let us seek these refreshments at once, that*

we, too, may forget our earthly needs in a heavenly enthusiasm. O blessed Spirit of all grace, give us secret, sacred food this morning while meditating upon this theme!

I. First, THERE ARE REFRESHMENTS WHICH ARE LITTLE KNOWN. Generally men know enough about refreshments of the body. Those questions—What shall we eat, and what shall we drink?—have been long and carefully studied. It seems obvious to all men that if we are to be restored and lifted above fatigue or weakness it must be by corporeal food. Yet there is in the Word of God intimation of another principle; as we read, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God shall man live." The Lord has been pleased to make it generally necessary that the body should be sustained with food, but that is only because the body is to be destroyed, for it is written, "Meats for the body, and the body for meats, but God shall destroy both it and them." That new body, which will never be destroyed, will probably need no meats. If God so willed it, this frame might be sustained without visible food. There is no absolute necessity that the order of nature or of providence should be just as it is. Even now we know that there are many ways by which waste can be suspended, and the need of food greatly lessened, and there are conditions under which life has been sustained upon an almost incredibly small portion of food. If God willed it, He could secretly infuse strength into the system, keeping the lamp of life burning by means of a subtle, invisible oil. We are not so absolutely dependent upon the bread we eat as at first sight seems; food is but the vehicle of sustenance; God could sustain us without it.

Now, brethren, our Lord Jesus Christ found for Himself sustenance other than that of food, a food superior to the ordinary meat of men. But these refreshments were not known to His disciples. The common throng of mankind have no idea of spiritual food, but the disciples were not of the common throng, they were chosen out of the world, and they had been with their Lord for some little time, and yet they had not grasped the idea of a man being fed and strengthened by an influence upon his spiritual nature which could raise him above the dragging down of his bodily needs. They could not yet enter into their Lord's secret; He had a meat to eat which even they knew not of.

The reason for His knowing what they knew not was in part the fact that *this nourishment was enjoyed upon a higher plane than these servants of Christ had yet reached.* They were spiritual men in some degree, but they were not highly spiritual, they were mere babes in grace, though men in physical development. They had not yet reached to the height of letting their spirits rule the rest of their nature, nor had they yet learned the proper occupation of their spirits. They could not yet enjoy spiritual meat to the full because they were so little spiritual. Our Savior was full of the Holy Spirit, and in His inmost nature He was deeply and intensely spiritual, and lived in constant communion with invisible things, and hence it was that He perceived that "meat to eat" which they knew not of. Oh, that we may not miss the delicacies of heaven from lack of a purified

taste! It is a sad ignorance which comes of lack of spirituality. The Lord lift us out of it.

Further, these refreshments were unknown to the apostles as yet, because *they implied a greater sinking of self* than they as yet knew. "My meat," said Jesus, "is to do the will of Him that sent Me." How condescendingly does our Lord sink Himself in this expression! He does not even say, "My meat is to do My Father's will." He takes a lower position than that of sonship, and dwells chiefly upon His mission, its service, and the absorption in the will of God which it involved. He finds His refreshment in being the commissioned officer of God, and in carrying out that commission. In being a servant, obeying the will, and doing the work of another, He feels Himself so much at home that it revives Him to think of it. Others have been refreshed by gaining honor for themselves; our Lord is refreshed by laying that honor aside. The carnal mind finds its meat and drink in self-will, but Christ in doing the will of God. Doing his own work, and carrying out his own purpose, is the meat and drink of the natural man, the very opposite was the joy of our Lord Jesus. Is it so with you, my hearer, that you will have your own way, and be your own lord and master? You feed upon wind. Very emptiness you seek after, and in the end your hunger shall devour you. But oh, believer, have you ever tried your Lord's plan? Have you taken your Lord's yoke upon you, and learned of Him? Thus it is that you shall find rest unto your soul. Not in self, but in self-surrender, is there fullness for the heart. You are no longer to live unto yourself, for you are not your own, but you are the servant of Him who has bought you with a price; you will find peace in taking up your proper place. Your lifework is henceforth not to be one of your own selecting, but the work which your great Lord and Master has chosen for you. Servants lay their wills aside, and do what they are bidden. When a man gets fully into this condition, I bear witness that he will be refreshed by it. If I felt that my calling were of my own choosing, and that my message were of my own inventing, I should have no rest, the responsibility would crush me, but now that I feel that I am doing the will of Him that sent me, and know that I am committed wholly to the work of the Lord, I pluck up courage, and put my shoulder to the wheel without misgiving. In the name of Him who has sent me to do this work I find a fountain of fresh strength. But, brothers, we must get low down, we must come right away from the idea of being original and inventing something and carrying out a novel purpose of our own, we must act only upon commission, we must say only our Lord's words, and do only His work, and then we shall eat of that same loaf on which Jesus fed when He had food to eat which even the twelve knew not of. When we get to know that we are sent of the Most High there is nourishment in that very fact. We need to feel that as the Father has sent Christ into the world, even so has Christ sent us into the world, and if we do not so feel, we shall miss a choice form of spiritual meat.

Further, our Lord not only lived on a higher plane, and felt a greater sinking of self, but *He was in fuller harmony with God than His disciples*. He says. "My meat is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His

work." God's will was His will, not only passively, but actively, so that He wished to do it, God's work was His work completely, so that He wished to finish it. He longed to go all the length of God's eternal purpose, and carry it out as far as that purpose concerned Himself. Now, when a man feels, "My one desire is that I may do God's will, I have no other will but His will, my own will has fallen into God's will as a brook falls into a river"—then he is at peace. It is a blessed thing to rejoice in being crossed in our own purpose, in order that the purpose of the Lord may be more completely fulfilled. When a man wants to do God's work, and to get through with it whatever it may cost, he is sure to feel strength in his heart. He who will glorify God, whatever it may cost him, is a happy man. He that serves God in body, soul, and spirit, to the utmost of his power, finds new power given to him hour by hour, for God opens to him fresh springs. Perhaps you do not see this truth, but if you have ever experienced what it is to lay your whole soul on the altar, and feel that for Christ you live and for Christ you would die, why then you will know by experience that I speak the truth. If your heart's desires were as ravenous as that of the young lions when they howl for their prey, they would be abundantly satisfied by your soul's being tamed into complete submission to the will of God. When your will is God's will, you will have your will, when your will rings out in harmony with the will of God, there must be sweetest music all around your steps. Our chief sorrows spring from the roots of our selfishness. Hang up self before the face of the sun, as Joshua hung up the Canaanite kings, and your soul will no longer be consumed with the hunger and thirst of discontent. When you are tuned to perfect harmony with God you begin your heaven upon earth, even though your lot is cast in the hut of poverty, or on the bed of sickness. I know by experience that the way to renew your strength for suffering or for service is to become more and more at one with the will and the purpose of the Most High. As God's glory becomes the one objective of life, we find in Him our all in all.

Once more; our dear Savior was sustained by these secret refreshments, because *He understood the art of seeing much in little*. Our Master had been feasting. He had partaken of a more than royal banquet. How? He had been made a blessing to a woman—an ill-famed, much sinning woman. He had led her up to the point at which she could perceive that He was the Messiah; this was to Him a festival. Some would have thought it a trifle, but as a wise man sees a forest in an acorn, so did Jesus see grand results in this little incident. Many a man would say, "I could easily forget hunger and a thousand other inconveniences if called to preach to a vast congregation like that which assembles in the Tabernacle. It ought to inspirit a man to see so many faces." But note well that it inspirited your Master to see only one face, and that the common-place face of a villager of mournful character, who had come forth from Sychar with her water pot upon her head. It was not an oration that He delivered, He had not even preached a sermon which would command admiration as a masterpiece of eloquence, and yet His whole soul was absorbed in what He had done! It was only a talk such as a city missionary

would have at any door, or such as would naturally fall from a Bible-woman in her calls from room to room; yet our divine Exemplar saw so much in one soul, and so much valued one opportunity of enlightening it, that He felt a sacred satisfaction in His simple conversation. He saw in the woman the seed-corn of a harvest, and therefore drew large refreshment from her conversion. We do not usually measure things rightly; I am persuaded that our weights and scales are out of order. We think we are doing a great deal when we get into a big controversy, or write an article that is read all over the nation, or create a sensation which startles thousands. But, indeed, it is not so. The Lord is not in the wind, nor in the tempest; we must go on with the still small voice of loving instruction and persuasion. You must go on talking with your little children in your classes; you must go on speaking to the few sick persons you are able to visit; you must try and preach Jesus Christ in little rooms, or to dozens and scores in the street corner or on the village green. It is the old-fashioned, quiet personal work which is effectual. If we get to think that everything must be big to be good, we shall get into a sorry state of mind. In the little bit of work thoroughly done God is glorified much more than in the great scheme that is skimped. That word *skimped* gives a true description of very much Christian work nowadays. A huge piece of moral architecture is carried out by jerry-builders, to whom appearance is everything, and reality is nothing. It tumbles down before long, and then its authors begin again in the same wretched manner, with the same flourish of trumpets, and bragging of what is going to be done. It is worthwhile to spend a year upon the conversion of a single woman, yes, worthwhile to spend a lifetime on the conversion of a single child, if it is soundly done, and there might more come of the true conversion of that woman or child than of all your noise and shouting over a hundred suppositious conversions, forced by excitement like mushrooms in a hotbed. We want real work, not noisy work, work done in the center of the soul of man, such as Jesus did upon the well. This sort of work will bring refreshment to our spirit, and any other will end in bitter disappointment. I am sure if we are content to do little things in the power of the great God, we shall find our meat therein. Someone here gets up and says, "I see, I see. I always thought that ministers and other workers who are always before the public would have most joy, but now I see that there is a reward for the obscure and hidden worker." The Lord Jesus Christ was satisfied to sit by a well and talk to one; be you satisfied henceforth to keep on with your mother's meeting, or your tract district, or your Bible class, or your family of little ones. Plod away, for infinite possibilities lie concealed within the least work done for Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit by a sincere heart. Perfume, which may fill the halls of princes, lies asleep within a tiny rosebud. Despise no little service, but be grateful for permission to render it.

Thus the Master found satisfying meat—meat little known even by His disciples, and therefore He said, "I have meat to eat that you know not of."

II. Advance with me, dear friends, to our second theme, THESE SECRET REFRESHMENTS SATISFIED OUR LORD. I bring this forward to remind you that where He found refreshment we also should find it. Why did it satisfy our Lord to be doing the will of Him that sent Him, and to be finishing His work?

Well, first, because *He had so long hungered to be at it.* For thousands of years the Christ had longed to be here among men. He said, "My delights were with the sons of men." Before He actually appeared in human flesh and blood, our Lord made many appearances in different forms, because He was eager to be at His work, and when He was born, while He was yet a boy, He said, "Know you not that I must be about My Father's business?" This was the spirit of Him all His life long. "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it is accomplished." He longed to be at work saving men; He hungered to perform His chosen deeds of mercy. Read in the second chapter of John at the seventeenth verse. He went into the temple and He purged it, and then we read "His disciples remembered that it was written of Him, the zeal of Your house has eaten Me up." That was before He had told them that it was His meat to do the will of Him that sent Him. Our Lord was full of such zeal to be serving God and blessing men that when He did get at it, He was so joyful that everything else fell into the background as if it were not worth a thought. If you and I felt our Lord's anxiety to be serving God and winning souls, we should find refreshment in the service itself, even as He did.

When our Lord did get at His work He gave Himself wholly up to it, He went in for soul-winning heart and soul. There was a wonderful concentration of purpose about our Savior. His face was always steadfastly set to His work, He was instant and constant in it, He is all there and always there. Time was—and I hope the time has gone forever—when there were professed ministers of Jesus Christ whose hearts were in the hunting field. Do you wonder that their ministry was a scandal? Others have been naturalists first, and divines afterwards. Do you wonder that their ministry proved to be a failure? Time was, and time is, I am sorry to say, when many professed ministers of Christ have their hearts more set upon criticizing the gospel than preaching it; they are more at home in scattering doubts than in promoting faith. They preach what they are not sure of, and what they have no interest in. It is not their meat to do the Lord's will, for He never sent them. They get their meat by preaching, but it is not their meat to preach. Surely it must be misery to them to have to tell out an old tale which in their souls they despise. Wretches that they are! I cannot call them better. It seems an awful thing to me that a man should profess to be a servant of Christ and not put his heart into the Redeemer's service. You may go and sell your calicoes, and your teas and your sugars, if you like, half-heartedly, it will not spoil your calicoes or your teas, but if you preach the gospel half-heartedly, that is another business. You will spoil every bit of what you preach. What good can come of half-hearted preaching?

And you, good friends, who teach in the school or do any work for Jesus, remember you spoil with that touch of yours all the work you do if your hand is numbed with a cold indifference. If your soul is not in what you do you had better leave it undone; you will do mischief rather than service unless your heart is in it. When Jesus talks with that woman, He is every bit of Him there. He avails Himself of every opportunity, and catches up every chance. He converses like a master of the art of teaching, because teaching is the master passion of His soul. Now, brethren, when we get to work like that we shall be refreshed by it. If you do what you do not like to do it will be weariness to you; but if your work is the joy of your heart, you will find in the doing of it that you have meat to eat that idlers know nothing of.

Our Lord found great joy in the work itself. I believe it was an intense delight to Him to be telling about that living water to a thirsty soul. It was a high pleasure to Him to be liberating a spirit which had so long been shut up in prison; to be creating new thoughts in a mind which had long groveled in the mire of sin. How pleased He was to hear the woman say to Him, "Why, then, have You that living water?" What a host of thoughts it stirred up in His own soul! The woman had given Him to drink, though she had not let her water pot down into the well. It was such glad, such happy work to Him to be doing good that it was its own reward.

I think the Lord forgot to eat bread that day partly because of *the enthusiasm which filled Him in the pursuit of that soul*. The chamois hunter quits his couch long before the sun is up, and climbs the mountains. He watches from the first gray light for the creature which is the object of his pursuit. Ask him how it is when he returns late in the evening that he has had nothing to eat all day long. He answers, "I never thought of it, I saw a chamois on a distant crag and I hastened after it. I leaped the ravines, I climbed the steep faces of the rocks, I sprang down again; I was almost on my prey, but it was gone. I crept up within range again, holding my breath lest my scent should alarm the watchful chamois. I thought of nothing but my sport, and I never knew what hunger meant until my bullet found its mark in the heart of my prey, and I had drawn out my hunting knife. It was not until I began to lift the game to my shoulder that I thought that I had neither eaten nor drunk that day." You understand what this enthusiasm means, and how it refreshes the hunter. Some of you have been salmon fishing in the Scot rivers. You have fished on and on until you have hooked a huge fish, and by the time you have landed him, on taking out your watch, you discover that it is long past your dinner hour, and you are surprised that you had not noticed that you were almost faint. Your excitement kept you going, only when it was over did you begin to hunger. Thus the Master was so taken up with soul-saving that He had meat to eat that others knew not of. I hope we sometimes get into this state of entire absorption under the influence of a burning desire to bring sinners away from sin to their Savior, and lead them to put their trust in Him who is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. I see the riddle all solved. They

said, “Master, eat,” but I see that He had meat to eat that they knew not of, for the enthusiasm of soul-winning was strong upon Him.

Moreover, the Master had not only felt the enthusiasm of pursuit, but *He was moved greatly by the sympathy of pity*. The man that hunts the chamois has no sympathy with his prey, the man who would take his salmon has no pity for the creature, but he that labors to bless souls is full of tenderness. Many noble women love nursing the sick. Their hearts are at home at the bedside of the suffering. They do not sleep at night while pain needs relief, and cold sweat needs to be wiped away. Their tender pity gives them a more than ordinary power of endurance. They watch and wait hour after hour. Exhaustion comes at last to them, and then they begin to inquire of themselves, “How was it I held out so long?” Generous sympathy conquered fatigue. How mothers can and do endure with sick children! They feel that they cannot sleep while the dear one tosses to and fro in fever, or moans in pain. They have lost all care for eating while they guard the brittle thread which threatens so soon to snap. Real sympathy seems as if it swallowed up everything else, as Aaron’s rod swallowed up all the other rods. Sometimes you have seen suffering which you could not help, and you have come away forgetful of all else but the dreadful scene. You loathed the sight of food, you were sick at heart, the sorrow had become your own. You started in your sleep weeks afterwards, for the person wounded in the accident had come before you. Thus was our Savior carried away with pity for lost souls, He knew the danger of that Samaritan city, and that thought caused Him to forget to eat.

More than that, it was not only sympathy; *He felt great joy in present success*. He delighted to see that He had led a soul into life and light. He had the bliss of seeing a sinful woman believe in the Messiah, and of knowing that her heart and life would thus be purified. I do not know anything that can make a man forget his pain and weariness like grasping the hand of a sinner saved. “Oh,” says the saved one, “God Almighty bless you! You have brought me to Jesus.” This nerves us to new effort. I speak here from experience, for yesterday evening, when I was thinking of this subject, I was myself somewhat dull through pain and weakness, and as God would have it I took up the Report of the Baptist Missionary Society, which will be issued to you on the 1st of June, and as I glanced over it, I saw my own name. It seems that our missionary in San Domingo has had a discouraging year, but it was lighted up with one most pleasing incident. A man had come down from the interior of Haiti to ask for baptism. Finding him to be a most intelligent Christian, well instructed in the gospel, the missionary asked how he came to know anything about it. In reply he told him that he had fallen in with a sermon translated into the French language which was preached by Mr. Spurgeon. Oh friends, I was dull no longer. I had meat to eat. Had an angel stood in the study, I could not have felt more delighted with his visit than I did when I read of a sinner saved. Here was a sermon translated into French, which was carried far away to Haiti, I do not know how, and there was read by a Romanist, who found by it salvation. God bless him! You cannot faint

after such a success, can you? As for myself, despite my sickness, I resolve to go on again, preach with all my might, and print more sermons, and send them out to the ends of the earth. Brethren, never say die. Never dream of giving up. Let God's blessing on your work refresh you.

To complete the list, the blessed Master had something else which made Him forget hunger; it was that *He saw the prospect of better things*. Inquirers were coming out of the city, that one female missionary had gone back and told her story, and the men were coming to hear what Jesus had to say. Our Lord also with prescient eye beheld the day when Philip the Evangelist would go down to Samaria, and when many Samaritans would be brought to the knowledge of the truth. O friends, let us open our eyes and find refreshment in what God is about to do! Let us have bright views of the future. The gospel which has saved twenty can save twenty thousand. The same kind of preaching which has blessed this one congregation can bless all congregations. We have only to exercise more faith in it, and proclaim it with greater confidence, and make it more our lifework to proclaim it, and the world shall yet come to Jesus' feet, and the old, old gospel now despised shall yet again be had in honor. Let us be of good cheer. If we do but serve God as Jesus served Him we shall have meat to eat that will fully satisfy us, as it did our Lord.

III. Thirdly, LET US AT ONCE SEEK THIS REFRESHMENT. That is our practical business. If there is meat to eat that we know not of, let us try to know of it at once. I am speaking, of course, only to you who are converted, and are thus saved by faith in Jesus Christ. You who are not yet believers cannot eat of this secret meat, for you are not alive unto God; you need to be quickened by the Spirit of our God, you must be born again before you can eat the bread of heaven. May the Lord lead you to saving faith in Jesus Christ at once! But I speak to you that know the Lord, you who labor for Him, and need to be refreshed this day. Look you to the right place for nourishment. Are we weary? Then let us seek refreshment by following out the directions of our Lord in the text before us.

First, *let us remember that we are sent of God*. Do not forget that. Say with your Lord, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me." Each redeemed one is sent forth by his Redeemer. I do not know what the Lord has sent *you* to do. I hope you know that each man for himself, but when you know what work you are called to do, do not be held back by anyone; wait for no man's consent, patronage, or help. Strengthen your soul upon the persuasion that God has sent you, and then go forward. If God has sent you, who can stand against you? A Queen's messenger claims that we clear the road for him. An officer who bears the Queen's authority is authorized to lay all persons under orders to speed him. He who rides on royal business has precedence over all others. Get to feel, Christian friend, that Jesus has sent you, and herein will lie food for your courage. Know that you have a mission, and go at it, and let it be unsafe for anyone to stand in your way. Let opposers know that somebody will have to clear out, for if God sent you, in that sending, there is a force and an energy which nothing can safely resist. Do not make a noise. Forbear all

blustering, but quietly set yourself to work. If God has sent you, you will be like the greater Sent One, of whom we read, "He shall not strive, nor cry, nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets," but at the same time "He shall not fail, nor be discouraged."

Next, if we desire to be refreshed, let us *find joy at once in God's work and will*. You have been trying to find joy and refreshment in your own work and your own will, and you have failed; come, then, and sail in another direction. But upon this I have already spoken. If all the work you and I have to do can be made to be God's work, if we will do all things to His glory, whether it be mending of shoes, or making garments, or preaching sermons, or plowing of fields, then shall we be happy in God, and our souls shall be fed upon the finest of the wheat. No drudgery remains when the lowliest labor is seen to be part of a priestly service. When the meanest work glows with the glory of a divine call there is refreshment in it. I am sure I am directing you in the right way to find sweet morsels for your heart when I urge you to have joy in God's work rather than in your own.

Next, *let us get to work*. The Master says to His apostles, "Do you not say, There are yet four months, and then comes harvest"? This was a common saying among the lazy. The time for work was never come, they always found reason for delay; the harvest was always four months off. Many are going to do a lot of work one of these days. Just now they take things easy, but in four months they will let you see how they can labor. We have too many Christian people around us who find no joyful satisfaction in divine things because they do not at once spend themselves for Christ. One inquires, "What is the best way to do good?" Our answer is, *do it.* I cannot give you any better recommendation. The best way to serve Christ is to serve Him. A man who was hungry, when he was asked what the best way to dine was, said, "Give me a knife and fork, and give me a chance, and I will soon show you." When asked how you can serve God, reply by seizing the first opportunity and doing it. For our joy and comfort be it remembered that opportunities are many and present. "Do you not say, There are yet four months, and then comes harvest? Lift up your eyes, and look at the fields, for they are already ripe for harvest."

Further, if we want to have joy and refreshment in our own Christian life, *let us leap into our place at once*. These disciples were not to be sowers, but reapers. Many others are not to be reapers, but sowers. You must get to work in the place into which the Lord puts you, there must be no picking of positions; you must jump into the saddle and be off. It may be that you say, "I should like to begin an altogether new work," but if the Lord appoints you to go on with the work that someone else has carried on for years, do not hesitate. Perhaps you say, "I should like to labor where the first rough work is done," but if your Lord directs you to commence on the uncleared forest, do not raise an objection. It may be you wish to carry up the last load of bricks to put on the chimney, but if the house has not reached that condition yet, be quite as willing to dig out the cellar. We must be willing to hook on anywhere. Be leader or shaft-horse. Be first or last. Be sower or reaper, as the Lord ordains.

Dear friends, you will never get refreshment in Christ's service if you bring a dainty self-will into the field and set it to make a selection, for this is contrary to the true spirit of service. Have no choice, and then you will find satisfaction.

If we are to get refreshment for our souls we may also *anticipate the wages*. There is to be a time when workers together with Christ are to receive wages. The text says, "He that reaps receives wages." In our own country agricultural laborers have been paid so little that we could hardly call it receiving wages; but when harvest time comes then the reaper is paid and truly receives wages. The hardest-fisted miser must pay for reaping, must he not? Even the most grudging miser must pay his reapers. There must be special money for mower and reaper. Let us work on, for our Master speaks to us of wages, and He always pays liberally. Your reward is not what you get at present; but it lies in the glorious future. When the Lord Jesus comes He will reward all His stewards and servants. No truth is plainer in the four gospels than this fact, that when Jesus returns to this earth He will distribute recompense in proportion to work done. Herein is meat for us to eat which may well sustain us under the burden and heat of the day.

Then comes the end. If any of you wish to be refreshed, remember the end. What is the end of sowing and the end of reaping? Is it not the completed harvest? See you not the last wagon loaded with grain? See the children on the top there! Listen how the countrymen shout their joy as they bring in the precious fruits of the earth! And there is a supper at night. The master has been killing his fatlings, and he invites all his laborers to supper. How they feast with him! Sow on; work on; reap on, for there will come a day when heaven and earth shall be moved with joyous acclamations, because the Lord's purpose is accomplished, and His work is finished. Then shall we sit down at the supper of the Lamb and rejoice together, as many of us as have had a hand in the blessed work and service in which our Master laid down His life. Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end. Be encouraged and refreshed this morning. Feed upon the eternal dainties which are provided for you by your Lord and be glad in His name.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 4.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—103, 162, 377.

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

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

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

THE HAPPY DUTY OF DAILY PRAISE
NO. 1902

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORDS-DAY MORNING, MAY 30, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I will extol You, my God, O King; and I will bless Your name forever and ever. Every day will I bless You; and I will praise Your name forever and ever." Psalm 114:1, 2.

IF I were to put to you the question, "Do you pray?" the answer would be very quickly given by every Christian person, "Of course I do." Suppose I then added, "And do you pray every day?" the prompt reply would be, "Yes, many times in the day. I could not live without prayer." This is no more than I expect, and I will not put the question. But let me change the inquiry, and say, "Do you bless God every day? Is praise as certain and constant a practice with you as prayer?" I am not sure that the answer would be quite so certain, so general, or so prompt. You would have to stop a little while before you gave the reply, and I fear, in some cases, when the reply did come, it would be, "I am afraid I have been negligent in praise." Well, then, dear friend, have you not been wrong? Should we omit praise anymore than we omit prayer? And should not praise come daily and as many times in the day, as prayer does? It strikes me that to fail in praise is as unjustifiable as to fail in prayer. I shall leave it with your own heart and conscience, when you have asked and answered the question, to see to it in the future that far more of the sweet frankincense of praise is mingled with your daily oblation of devotion.

Praise is certainly not at all as common in family prayer as other forms of worship. We cannot all of us praise God in the family by joining in song, because we are not all able to raise a tune, but it would be well if we could. I agree with Matthew Henry when he says, "They that pray in the family do well; they that pray and read the Scriptures do better; but they that pray, and read, and sing do best of all." There is a completeness in that kind of family worship which is much to be desired.

Whether in the family or not, yet personally and privately, let us endeavor to be filled with God's praise and with His honor all the day. Be this our resolve—"I will extol You, my God, O King; and I will bless Your name forever and ever. Every day will I bless You; and I will praise Your name forever and ever."

Brethren, praise cannot be a second-class business, for it is evidently due to God, and that in a very high degree. A sense of justice ought to make us praise the Lord, it is the least we can do, and in some senses it is the most that we can do, in return for the multiplied benefits which He

bestows upon us. What, no harvest of praise for Him who has sent the sunshine of His love and the rain of His grace upon us! What, no revenue of praise for Him who is our gracious Lord and King! He does not exact from us any servile labor, but simply says, "Whosoever offers praise glorifies Me." Praise is good, and pleasant and delightful. Let us rank it among those debts which we would not wish to forget, but are eager to pay at once.

Praise is an act which is pre-eminently characteristic of the true child of God. The man who does but pretend to piety will fast twice in the week, and stand in the temple and offer something like prayer, but to praise God with all the heart, this is the mark of true adoption, this is the sign and token of a heart received by divine grace. We lack one of the surest evidences of pure love to God if we live without presenting praise to His ever-blessed name.

Praising God is singularly beneficial to ourselves. If we had more of it we should be greatly blessed. What would lift us so much above the trials of life; what would help us to bear the burden and heat of the day, so well as songs of praise unto the Most High? The soldier marches without weariness when the band is playing inspiriting strains; the sailor, as he pulls the rope or lifts the anchor, utters a cheery cry to aid his toil; let us try the animating power of hymns of praise. Nothing would oil the wheels of the chariot of life so well as more of the praising of God. Praise would end murmuring, and nurse contentment. If our mouths were filled with the praises of God, there would be no room for grumbling. Praise would throw a halo of glory around the head of toil and thought. In its sunlight the most common duties of life would be transfigured. Sanctified by prayer and praise, each duty would be raised into a hallowed worship, akin to that of heaven. It would make us happier, more holy, and more heavenly, if we would say, "I will extol You, my God, O King."

Besides, brethren, unless we praise God here, are we preparing for our eternal home? There all is praise, how can we hope to enter there if we are strangers to that exercise? This life is a preparatory school and in it we are preparing for the high engagements of the perfected. Are you not eager to rehearse the everlasting hallelujahs?—

"I would begin the music here,
And so my soul should rise:
Oh, for some heavenly notes to bear
My passions to the skies!"

Learn the essential elements of heavenly praise by the practice of joyful thanksgiving, adoring reverence, and wondering love, so that, when you step into heaven, you may take your place among the singers, and say, "I have been practicing these songs for years. I have praised God while I was in a world of sin and suffering, and when I was weighed down by a feeble body, and now that I am set free from earth and sin, and the bondage of the flesh, I take up the same strain to sing more sweetly to the same Lord and God."

I wish I knew how to speak so as to stir up every child of God to praise. As for you that are not His children—oh, that you were such! You must be born again; you cannot praise God aright till you are. "Unto the

wicked, God says, What have you to do to declare My statutes, or that you should take My covenant in your mouth?" You can offer Him no real praise while your hearts are at enmity to Him. Be you reconciled to God by the death of His Son, and then you will praise Him. Let no one that has tasted that the Lord is gracious; let no one that has ever been delivered from sin by the atonement of Christ, ever fail to pay unto the Lord his daily tribute of thanksgiving!

To help us in this joyful duty of praise we will turn to our text, and keep to it. May the Holy Spirit instruct us by it!

I. In our text we have first of all THE RESOLVE OF PERSONAL LOYALTY—"I will extol You, my God, O King." David personally comes before his God and King, and utters this deliberate resolution that he will praise the divine majesty forever.

Note here, first, that *he pays homage to God as his King*. There is no praising God aright if we do not see Him upon the throne, reigning with unquestioned sway. Disobedient subjects cannot praise their sovereign. You must take up the Lord's yoke—it is easy, and His burden, which is light. You must come and touch His silver scepter and receive His mercy, and own Him to be your rightful Monarch, Lawgiver, and Ruler. Where Jesus comes, He comes to reign; where God is truly known, He is always known as supreme. Over the united kingdom of our body, soul, and spirit the Lord must reign with undisputed authority. What a joy it is to have such a King! "O King," says David, and it seems to have been a sweet morsel in his mouth. He was himself a king after the earthly fashion, but to him God alone was King. Our King is no tyrant, no maker of cruel laws. He demands no crushing tribute or forced service; His ways are ways of pleasantness, and all His paths are peace. His laws are just and good, and in the keeping of them there is great reward. Let others exult that they are their own masters; our joy is that God is our King. Let others yield to this or that passion, or desire, as for us, we find our freedom in complete subjection to our heavenly King. Let us, then, praise God by loyally accepting Him as our King; let us repeat with exultation the hymn we just now sang—

"Crown Him, crown Him,
King of kings, and Lord of lords."

Let us not be satisfied that He should reign over us alone, but let us long that the whole earth should be filled with His glory. Be this our daily prayer—"Your Kingdom come. Your will be done, in earth as it is in heaven." Let this be our constant ascription of praise—"For Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen."

Note that the Psalmist, also, in this first sentence, *praises the Lord by a present personal appropriation of God to himself by faith,* "I will extol You, my God." That word "my" is a drop of honey, no, it is like Jonathan's woods, full of honey, it seems to drip from every bough, and he that comes into it stands knee-deep in sweetness. "My God" is as high a note as an angel can reach. What is another man's god to me? He must be my God or I shall not extol Him. Say, dear heart, have you ever taken God to be your God? Can you say with David in another place, "This God

is our God forever and ever; He shall be our guide even unto death"? Blessed was Thomas when he bowed down, and put his finger into the print of his Master's wounds, and cried, "My Lord and my God." That double-handed grip of appropriation marked the death of his painful unbelief. Can you say, "Jehovah is my God?" To us there are Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but these are one God, and this one God is our own God. Let others worship whom they will, this God our soul adores and loves, yes, claims to be her personal possession. O Beloved, if you can say, "My God," you will be bound to exalt Him! If He has given Himself to you so that you can say, "My Beloved is mine," you will give yourself to Him, and you will add, "And I am His." Those two sentences, like two silken covers of a book, shut in within them the full score of the music of heaven.

Observe that David is *firmly resolved to praise God*. My text has four "I wills" in it. Frequently it is foolish for us poor mortals to say, "I will," because our will is so feeble and fickle, but when we resolve upon the praise of God, we may say, "I will," and "I will," and "I will," and "I will," till we make a solid square of determinations. Let me tell you you will have need to say "I will" a great many times, for many obstacles will hinder your resolve. There will come depression of spirit and then you must say, "I will extol You, my God, O King." Poverty, sickness, losses, and crosses may assail you, and then you must say, "I will praise Your name forever and ever." The devil will come and tell you that you have no interest in Christ, but you must say, "Every day will I bless You." Death will come, and perhaps you will be under the fear of it, then it will be incumbent upon you to cry, "And I will praise Your name forever and ever."—

"Sing, though sense and carnal reason
Fain would stop the joyful song:
Sing, and count it highest treason
For a saint to hold his tongue."

A bold man took this motto—"While I live I'll crow," but our motto is, "While I live I'll praise." An old motto was, *"Dum spiro spero,"* but the saint improves upon it, and cries, *"Dum expiro spero."* Not only while I live I will hope, but when I die I will hope, and he even gets beyond all that, and determines—"Whether I live or die I will praise my God." "O God, my heart is fixed, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise."

While David is thus resolute, I want you to notice that *the resolution is strictly personal*. He says, *"I* will extol You." Whatever others do, my own mind is made up. David was very glad when others praised God, he delighted to join with the great congregation that kept holy day, but still he was attentive to his own heart and his own praise. There is no selfishness in looking well to your own personal state and condition before the Lord. He cannot be called a selfish citizen who is very careful to render his own personal suit and service to his king. A company of persons praising God would be nothing unless each individual was sincere and earnest in the worship. The praise of the great congregation is precious in proportion as each individual, with all his heart, is saying, "I will extol You, my God, O King." Come, my soul, I will not sit silent, because so many others are singing; however many songsters there may be, they cannot sing for me; they cannot pay my private debt of praise, therefore

awake, my heart, and extol your God and King. What if others refuse to sing, what if a shameful silence is observed in reference to the praises of God, then, my heart, I must bestir you all the more to a double diligence, that you may with even greater zeal extol your God and King! I will sing a solo if I cannot find a choir in which I may take my part. Anyhow, my God, I will extol You. At this hour men go off to other lords, and they set up this and that new-made god, but as for me, my ear is bored to Jehovah's doorpost, I will not go out from His service forever. Bind the sacrifice with cords, even with cords to the horns of the altar. Whatever happens, I will extol You, my God, O King.

Now brothers and sisters, have you been losing your own personality in the multitude. As members of a great church, have you thought, "Things will go on very well without me"? Correct that mistake, each individuality must have its own note to bring to God. Let Him not have to say to you, *"You* have bought Me no sweet cane with money, neither have *you* filled Me with the fat of *your* sacrifices." Let us not be slow in His praise, since He has been so swift in His grace.

Once more upon this head, while David is thus loyally resolving to praise God, you will observe that *he is doing it all the time*. For the resolution to praise can only come from the man who is already praising God. When he says, "I will extol You," he is already extolling. We go from praise to praise. The heart resolves, and so plants the seed, and then the life is affected, and the harvest springs up and ripens. O brethren, do not let us say, "I will extol You tomorrow," or, "I will hope to praise You when I grow old, or when I have less business on hand." No, no, you are this day in debt, this day own your obligation. We cannot praise God too soon. Our very first breath is a gift from God, and it should be spent to the Creator's praise. The early morning hour should be dedicated to praise; do not the birds set us the example? In this matter he gives twice who gives quickly. Let your praise follow quickly upon the benefit you do receive, lest even during the delay you be found guilty of ingratitude. As soon as a mercy touches our coasts, we should welcome it with acclamation. Let us copy the little chick, which, as it drinks, lifts up its head, as if to give thanks. Our thanksgiving should echo the voice of divine loving-kindness. Before the Lord our King, let us continually rejoice as we bless Him, and speak well of His name.

Thus, then, I have set before you the resolve of a loyal spirit. Are you loyal to your God and King? Then I charge you to glorify His name. Lift up your hearts in His praise, and in all manner of ways, make His name great. Praise Him with your lips, praise Him with your lives, praise Him with your substance; praise Him with every faculty and capacity. Be inventive in methods of praise, "sing unto the Lord a new song." Bring forth the long-stored and costly alabaster box, break it, and pour the sweet nard upon your Redeemer's head and feet. With penitents and martyrs extol Him! With prophets and apostles extol Him! With saints and angels extol Him! Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised.

II. And now I must conduct you to the second clause of the text, which is equally full and instructive. We have in the second part of it

THE CONCLUSION OF AN INTELLIGENT APPRECIATION, "And I will bless Your name forever and ever." Blind praise is not fit for the all-seeing God. God forbade of old the bringing of blind sacrifices to His altar. Our praise ought to have a brain as well as a tongue. We ought to know who the God is whom we praise, therefore David says, "I will bless *Your name,"* by which he means—Your character, Your deeds, Your revealed attributes.

First, observe that *he presents the worship of inward admiration,* he knows, and therefore he blesses the divine name. What is this act of blessing? Sometimes "bless" would appear to be used interchangeably with "praise," yet there is a difference, for it is written, "All your works shall praise You, O Lord; and Your saints shall bless You." You can praise a man, and yet you may never bless him. A great artist, for instance, you may *praise* him, but he may be so ungenerous to you and others that it may never occur to you to *bless* him. Blessing has something in it of love and delight. It is a nearer, dearer, heartier thing than *praise*. "I will bless Your name," that is to say—"I will take an intense delight in Your name, I will lovingly rejoice in it."

The very thought is that God is a source of happiness to our hearts, and the more we muse upon His character the more joyous we become. The Lord's name is love. He is merciful and gracious, tender and pitiful. Moreover, He is a just God, and righteous, faithful, and true, and holy. He is a mighty God, and wise and unchanging. He is a prayer-hearing God, and He keeps His promise evermore. We would not have Him other than He is. We have a sweet contentment in God as He is revealed in Holy Scripture. It is not everybody that can say this, for a great many professors nowadays desire a god of their own making and shaping. If they find anything in Scripture concerning God which grates upon their tender susceptibilities, they cannot abide it. The God that casts the wicked from His presence forever—they cannot believe in Him, they therefore make unto themselves a false deity, who is indifferent to sin. All that is revealed concerning God is to me abundantly satisfactory, if I do not comprehend its full meaning, I bow before its mystery. If I hear anything of my God which does not yield me delight, I feel that therein I must be out of order with Him, either through sin or ignorance, and I say, "What I know not, teach me O God." I doubt not that perfectly holy and completely instructed beings are fully content with everything that God does, and are ready to praise Him for all. Do not our souls even now bless the Lord our God, who chose us, redeemed us, and called us by His grace? Whether we view Him as Maker, Provider, Savior, King, or Father, we find in Him an unfathomable sea of joy. He is God, our exceeding joy. Therefore we sit down in holy quiet, and feel our soul saying, "Bless the Lord! Bless the Lord!" He is what we would have Him to be. He is better than we could have supposed or imagined. He is the crown of delight, the climax of goodness, the sum of all perfection. As often as we see the light, or feel the sun, we would bless the name of the Lord.

I think when David said, "I will bless Your name," he meant that *he wished well to the Lord.* To bless a person means to do that person good.

By blessing us what untold benefits the Lord bestows! We cannot bless God in such a sense as that in which He blesses us, but we would if we could. If we cannot give anything to God, we can desire that He may be known, loved, and obeyed by all our fellow men. We can wish well to His kingdom and cause in the world. We can bless Him by blessing His people, by working for the fulfillment of His purposes, by obeying His precepts, and by taking delight in His ordinances. We can bless Him by submission to His chastening hand, and by gratitude for His daily benefits. Sometimes we say with the Psalmist, "O my soul, you have said unto the Lord, You are my Lord: my goodness extends not to You; but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight." Oh, that I could wash Jesus Christ's feet! Is there a believer here, man or woman, but would aspire to that office? It is not denied you, you can wash His feet by caring for His poor people, and relieving their wants. You cannot feast your Redeemer, He is not hungry, but some of His people are; feed them! He is not thirsty, but some of His disciples are. Give them a cup of cold water in the Master's name, and He will accept it as given to Himself. Do you not feel today, you that love Him, as if you wanted to do something for Him? Arise, and do it, and so bless Him. It is one of the instincts of a true Christian to wish to do something for his God and King, who has done everything for him. He loved me, and gave Himself for me, should I not give myself for Him? Oh, for perfect consecration! Oh, to bless God by laying our all upon His altar, and spending our lives in His service!

It seems, then, dear friends, that David *studied the character and doings of God,* and thus praised Him. Knowledge should lead our song. The more we know of God the more acceptably shall we bless Him through Jesus Christ. I exhort you, therefore, to acquaint yourselves with God. Study His holy Book. As in a mirror you may here see the glory of the Lord reflected, especially in the person of the Lord Jesus, who is in truth the Word, the very name of the Lord. It would be a pity that we should spoil our praises by ignorance, they that know the name of the Lord will trust Him and will praise Him.

It appears from this text that David *discovered nothing after a long study of God which would be an exception to this rule*. He does not say, "I will bless Your name in all but one thing. I have seen some point of terror in what You have revealed of Yourself, and in that thing I cannot bless You." No, without any exception he reverently adores and joyfully blesses God. All his heart is contented with all of God that is revealed. Is it so with us, Beloved? I earnestly hope it is.

I beg you to notice *how intense he grows over this*—"I will bless Your name forever and ever." You have heard the quaint saying of "forever and a day"? Here you have an advance upon it; it is "forever," and then another "forever." He says, "I will bless your name forever." Is not that long enough? No, he adds, "and ever." Are there two forevers, two eternities? Brethren, if there were fifty eternities we would spend them all in blessing the name of the Lord our God. "I will bless Your name forever and ev-

er." It would be absurd to explain this hyperbolical expression. It runs parallel with the words of Addison, when he says—

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

Somebody quibbled at that verse the other day. He said, "Eternity cannot be too short." Ah, my dear friend, you are not a poet, I can see, but if you could get just a spark of poetry into your soul, literalism would vanish. Truly, in poetry and in praise the letter kills. Language is a poor vehicle of expression when the soul is on fire, words are good enough things for our cool judgement, but when thoughts are full of praise they break the back of words. How often have I stood here and felt that if I could throw my tongue away, and let my heart speak without these syllables and arbitrary sounds, then I might express myself! David speaks as if he scorned to be limited by language. He must leap over even time and possibility to get room for his heart. "I will bless Your name forever and ever." How I enjoy these enthusiastic expressions! It shows that when David blessed the Lord he did it heartily. While he was musing the fire burned. He felt like dancing before the ark. He was in much the same frame of mind as Dr. Watts when he sang—

"From You, my God, my joys shall rise
And run eternal rounds,
Beyond the limits of the skies,
And all created bounds."

III. But time will fail me unless I pass on at once to the third sentence of our text, which is, THE PLEDGE OF DAILY REMEMBRANCE. Upon this I would dwell with very great earnestness. If you forget my discourse, I would like you to remember this part of the text. "Every day will I bless You." I will not do it now and have done with it; I will not take a week of the year in which to praise You, and then leave the other fifty-one weeks silent, but "every day will I bless You." All the year round will I extol my God. Why should it be so?

The greatness of the gifts we have already received demands it. We can never fully express our gratitude for saving grace, and therefore we must keep on at it. A few years ago we were lost and dead, but we are found and made alive again. We must praise God every day for this. We were black as night with sin, but now we are washed whiter than snow; when can we leave off praising our Lord for this? He loved me and gave Himself for me; when can the day come that I shall cease to praise Him for this? Gethsemane and the bloody sweat, Calvary and the precious blood, when shall we ever have done with praising our dear Lord for all He suffered when He bought us with His own heart's blood? No, if it were only the first mercies, the mercy of election, the mercy of redemption, the mercy of effectual calling, the mercy of adoption, we have had enough to begin with to make us sing unto the Lord every day of our lives. The light which has risen upon us warms all our days with gladness; it shall also light them up with praise.

Today it becomes us to sing of the mercy of yesterday. The waves of love as well as of time have washed us up upon the shore of today, and the beach is strewn with love. Here I find myself on a Sunday morning exulting because another six days work is done, and strength has been given for it. Some of us have experienced a world of loving-kindness between one Sabbath and another. If we had never had anything else from God but what we have received during the last week, we have overwhelming reason for extolling Him today. If there is any day in which we would leave off praising God, it must not be the Lord's Day, for—

"This is the day the Lord has made,
He calls the hours His own;
Let heaven rejoice, let earth be glad,
And praise surround the throne."

Oh, let us magnify the Lord on the day of which it can be said—

"Today He rose and left the dead,
And Satan's empire fell;
Today the saints His triumphs spread,
And all His wonders tell."

When we reach tomorrow shall we not praise God for the blessing of the Sabbath? Surely you cannot have forgotten the Lord as soon as Monday! Before you go out into the world, wash your face in the clear crystal of praise. Bury each yesterday in the fine linen and spices of thankfulness.

Each day has its mercy and should render its praise. When Monday is over, you will have something to praise God for on Tuesday. He that watches for God's hand will never be long without seeing it. If you will only spy out God's mercies, with half an eye you will see them every day of the year. Fresh are the dews of each morning, and equally fresh are its blessings. "Fresh trouble," says one. Praise God for the trouble, for it is a richer form of blessing. "Fresh care," says one. Cast all your care on Him who cares for you, and that act will in itself bless you. "Fresh labor," says another. Yes, but fresh strength, too.

There is never a night but what there comes a day after it, never an affliction without its consolation. Every day you must utter the memory of His great goodness.

If we cannot praise God on any one day for what we have had that day, *let us praise Him for tomorrow*. "It is better on before." Let us learn that quaint verse—

"And a new song is in my mouth,
To long-lived music set—
Glory to You for all the grace
I have not tasted yet."

Let us forestall our future, and draw upon the promises. What if today I am down; tomorrow I shall be up! What if to-day I cast ashes on my head; tomorrow the Lord shall crown me with loving-kindness! What if today my pains trouble me, they will soon be gone! It will be all the same a hundred years hence, at any rate, and so let me praise God for what is within measurable distance. In a few years I shall be with the angels, and be with my Lord Himself. Blessed be His name! Begin to enjoy your heaven now. What says the apostle? "For our citizenship is in heaven"—not is to be, but is. We belong to heaven now, our names are enrolled among its

citizens, and the privileges of the New Jerusalem belong to us at this present moment. Christ is ours, and God is ours!—

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

Therefore let us rejoice and be exceedingly glad, and praise the name of God this very day.

"Every day," he says, "will I bless You." *There is seasonableness about the praising of God every day*. Praise is in season every month. You awoke, the sunlight streamed into the windows, and touched your eyelids, and you said, "Bless God. Here is a charming summer's day." Birds were singing, and flowers were pouring out their perfume; you could not help praising God. But another day it was dark at the time of your rising, you struck a match, and lit your candle. A thick fog hung like a blanket over all. If you were a wise man, you said, "Come, I shall not get through the day if I do not make up my mind to praise God. This is the kind of weather in which I must bless God, or else go down in despair." So you woke yourself up, and began to adore the Lord. One morning you awoke after a refreshing night's rest, and you praised God for it, but on another occasion you had tossed about through a sleepless night, and then you thanked God that the weary night was over. You smile, dear friends, but there is always some reason for praising God. Certain fruits and meats are in season at special times, but the praise of God is always in season. It is good to praise the Lord in the daytime; how charming is the lark's song as it carols up to heaven's gate! It is good to bless God at night—how delicious are the liquid notes of the nightingale as it thrills the night with its music! I do therefore say to you right heartily, "Come, let us together praise the Lord, in all sorts of weather, and in all sorts of places." Sometimes I have said to myself, "During this last week I have been so full of pain that I am afraid I have forgotten to praise God as much as I should have done, and therefore I will have a double draught of it now. I will get alone, and have a special time of thankful thought. I would make up some of my old arrears, and magnify the Lord above measure. I do not like feeling that there can ever be a day in which I have not praised Him. That day would surely be a blank in my life. Surely the sweetest praise that ever ascends to God is that which is poured forth by saints from beds of languishing. Praise in sad times is praise indeed. When your dog loves you because it is dinnertime, you are not sure of him, but when somebody else tempts him with a bone, and he will not leave you, though just now you struck him, then you feel that he is truly attached to you. We may learn from dogs that true affection is not dependent upon what it is just now receiving. Let us not have a cupboard love for God because of His kind providence, but let us love Him and praise Him for what He is, and what He has done. Let us follow hard after Him when He seems to forsake us, and praise Him when He deals hardly with us, for this is true praise. For my part, though I am not long without affliction, I have no faults to find with my Lord, but I desire to praise Him, and praise Him, and only to praise Him. Oh, that I knew how to do it worthily! Here is my

resolve—"I will extol You, my God, O King; and I will bless Your name forever and ever. Every day will I bless You."

IV. The last sentence of the text sets forth, THE HOPE OF ETERNAL ADORATION. David here exclaims, "And I will praise Your name forever and ever."

I am quite sure when David said that, *he believed that God was unchangeable,* for if God can change, how can I be sure that He will always be worthy of my praise? David knew that what God had been, He was, and what He was then He would always be. He had not heard the sentence, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever," nor yet that other, "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed," but he knew the truth contained in both these texts, and therefore he said, "I will praise Your name forever and ever." As long as God is, He will be worthy to be praised.

Another point is also clear; *David believed in the immortality of the soul*. He says, "I will praise Your name forever and ever." That truth was very dimly revealed in the Old Testament; but David knew it, right well. He did not expect to sleep in oblivion, but to go on praising, and therefore he said, "I will praise Your name forever and ever." No cold hand fell upon him, and no killing voice said to him, "You shall die, and never praise the Lord again." Oh, no, he looked to live forever and ever, and praise forever and ever! Brethren, such is our hope, and we will never give it up. We feel eternal life within our souls. We challenge the cold hand of death to quench the immortal flame of our love, or to silence the ceaseless song of our praise. The dead cannot praise God, and God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. Among the living we are numbered through the grace of God, and we know that we shall live because Jesus lives. When death shall come, it shall bring no destruction to us, though it shall change the conditions of our existence, it shall not change the object of our existence. Our tongue may be silenced for a little while, but our spirit, unaffected by the disease of the body, shall go on praising God in its own fashion, and then, by and by, in the resurrection, even this poor tongue shall be revived, and body, soul, and spirit shall together praise the God of resurrection and eternal glory. "I will praise Your name forever and ever." We shall never grow weary of this hallowed exercise forever and ever. It will always be new, fresh, delightful. In heaven they never require any change beyond those blessed variations of song, those new melodies which make up the everlasting harmony. On and on, forever telling the tale which never will be fully told, the saints will praise the name of the Lord forever and ever.

Of course, dear friends, David's resolve was that, *as long as he was here below* he would never cease to praise God, and this is ours also. Brethren, we may have to leave off some cherished engagements, but this we will never cease from. At a certain period of life a man may have to leave off preaching to a large congregation. Good old John Newton declared that he would never leave off preaching while he had breath in his body, and I admire his holy perseverance, but it was a pity that he did not leave off preaching at St. Mary Woolnoth, for he often wearied the

people, and forgot the thread of his discourse. He might have done better in another place. Ah, well, we may leave off preaching, but we shall never leave off praising! The day will come when you, my dear friend, cannot go to Sunday school; I hope you will go as long as you can toddle there, but it may be you will not be able to interest the children, your memory will begin to fail, but even then you can go on praising the Lord. And you will. I have known old people almost forget their own names, and forget their own children, but I have known them still remember their Lord and Master. I have heard of one, who lay dying, and his friends tried to make him remember certain things, but he shook his head. At last one said, "Do you remember the Lord Jesus?" Then the mind came into full play, the eyes brightened, and the old man eloquently praised his Savior. Our last gasp shall be given to the praise of the Lord.

When once we have passed through the iron gate, and forded the dividing river, then we will begin to praise God in a manner more satisfactory than we can reach at present. After a nobler sort we will sing and adore. What soaring we will attempt upon the eagle wings of love! What plunges we will take into the crystal stream of praise! I think, for a while, when we first behold the throne, we shall do no more than cast our crowns at the feet of Him that loved us, and then bow down under a weight of speechless praise. We shall be overwhelmed with wonder and thankfulness. When we rise to our feet again, we will join in the strain of our brethren redeemed by blood, and only drop out of the song when again we feel overpowered with joyful adoration, and are constrained again in holy silence to shrink to nothing before the infinite, unchanging God of love. Oh, to be there! To be there soon! We may be much nearer than we think. I cannot tell what I shall do, but I know this, I want no other heaven than to praise God perfectly and eternally. Is it not so with you? A heart full of praise is heaven in the bud, perfect praise is heaven full-blown. Let us close this discourse by asking grace from God that, if we have been deficient in praise, we may now mend our ways, and put on the garments of holy adoration. This day and onward be our watchword "Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!"

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 114.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—
100 (PART 2), 333, 148 (SONG 1).

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

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

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

WHO FOUND IT OUT?
NO. 1903

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 6, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Now there were four leprous men at the entrance of the gate; and they said to one another, Why are we sitting here until we die? If we say, 'We will enter into the city,' the famine is in the city, and we shall die there. And if we sit here, we die also. Now therefore, come, let us surrender to the army of the Syrians. If they keep us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall only die. And they rose at twilight to go to the camp of the Syrians; and when they had come to the outskirts of the Syrian camp, to their surprise no one was there. For the Lord had caused the army of the Syrians to hear the noise of chariots and the noise of horses—the noise of a great army; so they said to one another, Look, the king of Israel has hired against us the kings of the Hittites and the kings of the Egyptians, to attack us! Therefore they arose and fled at twilight, and left the camp in tact—their tents, their horses, and their donkeys—and they fled for their lives."
2 Kings 7:3-7.

THE story of four leprous men inserted in the Book of the Kings of Israel, is it not amazing? No, it is not singular for the Bible. If you were to take out of the Scriptures all the stories that have to do with poor, afflicted men and women, what a very small book the Bible would become, especially if together with the stories you removed all the psalms of the sorrowful, all the promises for the distressed, and all the passages which belong to the children of grief! This Book, indeed, for the most part is made up of the annals of the poor and despised. Think for a minute what a space is occupied with the life of the man who was separated from his brethren, sold for a slave, and put in prison in Egypt! What a large part of the Bible is occupied by the writings of one who was a babe exposed on the Nile, and afterwards kept a flock for forty years in the wilderness! We could not part with the account of the man who lost all his property and children in one day, and sat among the ashes, covered with sore boils. We could not spare the story of the two widows who came together empty-handed from the land of Moab, one of whom went to glean in the fields of Boaz; nor the history of that woman of a sorrowful spirit, and her little boy, around whom the hope of Israel gathered in the dark days of Eli's feeble rule. Page after page of holy writ is enriched with the experience of that youth who was taken from tending the flock to become the champion of his country, and was afterwards hunted like a partridge upon the mountain by the envious king. We could not give up the history of the prophet of sorrow, nor of the fugitive who was cast into the sea, nor even the minor incidents of the widow of Sarepta, and her barrel of meal, and the prophet's widow whose creditor was about to seize her children for her husband's debts. Nor do lepers fall behind; we have two stories of

lepers close together—Naaman the Syrian, and the four in our text at Samaria's gate. They were wisely put forth from Israel, but they were not put forth from Israel's God.

It is clear enough that the poor and the needy are not only observed by our great King, but the pen of the Holy Spirit has been much occupied in recording their affairs. You that are poor and needy, you that are sick and sorrowful, you whose lives are spent in mourning, listen to this discourse, and may the Lord comfort your hearts! On a future day, when the great books of history, which, as yet, are only known to the recording angel, shall be read of all men, your story will appear, and maybe it will be as memorable as that of Hannah or Joseph, and God will get as much glory out of what He has done for you as from any of the deeds of His love recorded in the inspired page. Remember that the New Testament runs in the same strain. Under the economy of grace our Lord Jesus Christ is seen living among fishermen and peasants, and calling the poor to be His disciples. "God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen; yes, and things which are not, to bring to nothing things that are." It is worthwhile to be among the poor, the despised, and the sad, to have your record on high, and to magnify the condescension of the Lord. It is in the hope that some disconsolate ones may be cheered that I speak at this time. Oh, that some leprous ones may go forth today, and make a grand discovery! I desire to preach, praying in the Holy Spirit that the Holy Spirit may bless the word, and move many to rise out of their despair, and say, "Why sit we here until we die?"

I. First, I call your attention to A GREAT WORK OF GOD, WHICH WAS ENTIRELY UNKNOWN. The city of Samaria had been shut up for some time by the Syrian army; famine had fallen upon the people, and driven them to horrible straits. One can hardly bear to read of mothers devouring their own babies through stress of hunger. God sent His servant Elisha to tell them that the next day there should be a superabundance of food in the gates of Samaria, but the message was received with open ridicule. No sooner was the promise given than the Lord began to carry it out. It is the way with Him, to be true to His word. However great the promise, it is as sure as it is great. And so, before the sun went down, the Lord had caused Israel's enemies to flee away, and had opened magazines of food for hungry Samaria. Without human aid Jehovah had accomplished His promise, and much more.

The siege was raised from around Samaria. Armed men had stood in their places and kept the way, so that none could go in or out, but they are all gone, not one of them is left. The troopers had fled on foot, and left their steeds tethered in rows; captains and common soldiers had alike taken to their heels in hot haste, flying helter-skelter, like frightened sheep. No host threatened the city; it sat on its hill in the twilight, lonely and free. Yet in the city of Samaria they thought themselves cooped up, and set their warders on the wall because of fear in the night. Everybody who went to bed that night felt that he was still in that horrible den where grim death seemed actually present in the skeleton forms

of the hunger-bitten. They were as free as the harts of the wilderness had they known it, but their ignorance held them in vile durance.

The Lord had also defeated all their enemies. They had run for their lives, they had fled because of a noise in their ears as of horses and of chariots. He that could first get across the Jordan, and interpose that stream between him and his supposed pursuers was the happiest man. Without aid from Hittite or Ethiopian, the God of Israel had driven the whole host of Syria like chaff before the wind. Israel had not now this side of the Jordan a single foe to attack her, and yet she knew not that the Lord's right hand and His holy arm had gotten Him the victory. They set guards to protect them from a foe which was no longer present, and the sentinels paced up and down the walls, and spoke to each other in the hoarse voice of starving men, guarding the walls against an imaginary foe. O Samaria, had you known the gift of God, your silent streets would have rung with shouts of joy, your children, instead of cowering down in hunger upon wretched pallets, would have kindled torches, and lit up the night as they hastened to feast upon the plenty which their enemies had bequeathed them! God works, and man perceives it not, therefore is man unhappy, and God is not praised as He should be.

God had provided plenty for them. The wretched Samaritans drew the hunger-belt more closely about them, and each man hoped that he might sleep for many an hour, and forget his bitter pangs, yet within a stone's throw there was more fine flour and barley than they could possibly consume. They were starving in the midst of plenty, pining, when they might have been feasting. They believed not God, and looked not for relief.

Was not that a strange thing? A city besieged, and not besieged; girt with enemies, as they thought, and yet not an enemy left; starving, and yet near to a feast! See, dear friends, what unbelief can do. They had been promised plenty right speedily by God's own prophet, but they did not believe the promise, nor look out for its fulfillment. Had they been upon the watch, they might have seen the unusual movement in the Syrian camp, and noticed the absolute stillness which succeeded it.

I know a sad parallel to this. The Lord Jesus Christ has come into the world, and has put away the sin of His people, and yet many of them are complaining that their sin can never be put away. The Lord Jesus Christ has routed all the enemies of His people, and yet they are afraid of innumerable evils. None is left to harm them, but they do not remember that the Lord reigns, they are afraid of this, and afraid of that, and yet in one tremendous battle the Champion of the cross has routed all their foes. They are no longer shut up as prisoners, the Lord has brought them liberty, but they are not aware of it by reason of their unbelief. The Word of God has revealed all this very plainly, and the ministers of Christ proclaim it from day to day, but through unbelief they are still sorrowful, desponding and despairing, in bondage and woe. They will not believe, and therefore they cannot he happy. How sad is this unbelief which renders even truth itself untrue to us, and darkens our sun at midday! Our unbelief is our worst enemy.

It is said that drowning men catch at straws, would you not have thought that famishing men might have caught at the word of Elisha? I grant you the promise did seem too great to be true; that lord who

scoffed at it was not the only one who judged it to be impossible of fulfillment, and yet when men are brought so very low, they are apt to catch at any hope. How hardened was the unbelief which refused Jehovah's word! Out of the whole population of Samaria there was not one who had such faith in Elisha's promise as to drop over the wall from a window, and go out to see whether the Lord was fulfilling His word. It was solemnly promised, it was grievously needed, and yet not a soul believed it. Another dreary night is closing in, Samaria is in her pangs, and yet, did she know it, her citizens might dance for joy. I do not know whether I have given you any idea of the scene which rises so vividly before me, but it seems to me to be a very wonderful sight—a multitude in the last stage of emaciation, perishing with hunger, absolutely dropping dead as they tried to pace the streets, and yet food within sight and reach. They believed themselves to be prisoners, yet no birds could be more free, they regarded themselves as surrounded by deadly enemies, yet never was the land more clear of invaders. Even thus are we constantly seeing the Lord's elect and redeemed ones counting themselves rejected, and fearing that they shall perish. I see those for whom Christ has shed His blood still refusing to rest in His finished work, and rejoice in His glorious victory. Still do I see those for whom there is laid up a crown of life that fades not away, and who are inheritors of all covenant blessings, wringing their hands in the destitution of unbelief, and pining away in wretched fear where no fear is. Their soul refuses to be comforted, and yet all comfort is theirs. Alas, the case is common!

II. When you have realized the picture of the city abiding in sorrow though its deliverance had already come, I want, in the second place, to remark upon a VERY SINGULAR BAND OF DISCOVERERS. A choice quaternion at last found out what the Lord had done, proved it for themselves, and made it known to their fellow townsmen. Is it not remarkable that these discoverers were lepers? These were the first to discover that Jehovah had gotten the victory, and scattered the armies of Syria, and brought help to His people. These poor diseased beings were compelled to live in shanties outside the city gate, and to keep themselves apart from all others. Fed from day to day with food passed over the wall, so long as there was any to pass over, they rotted away in horrible loathsomeness. What a wretched sight! I will not ask you to step into their hut. There are four living skeletons, or what of flesh remains to them is foul with the hideous marks of leprosy. Their bodies are corrupting in life. They move about, poor sick things as they are, more than half dead. They have had no food sent to them of late, and they must not go for relief. No man cares for them, the best thing that could possibly happen to them would be to die, and yet they have a clinging to life. They were outcasts, off casts, Israel had thrust them outside her gates, their own friends and families were obliged to be separated from them. *These were the discoverers of what God had done!* It is a wonderful thing that those who are most conscious of sin, most despised of men, and least likely to be favored, are often those upon whom Jehovah has fixed the eye of His electing love. The chariot of His grace passes by the towers of haughty kings, but it stops at the hovel of poverty, and even at the prison gate of despair. The Lord looks on the chief of sinners, and says, "Here will I display

My grace, here shall the wonders of My love be seen." Lepers are not the only ones whom men cast out, nor are they the only persons whom God full often stoops to bless. Some who feel loathsome, and vile, and self-abhorred may be before me now, dreaming that it is impossible for God to bless them; yet these are the characters whom He delights to save. Ah, grace! It is your habit to dwell in most unlikely places! You would have supposed that surely the king would have gone forth to see, or that yonder great lord who had ridiculed the prophet might have relented, and gone forth to observe. But no, there are last that shall be first, and the Lord in His providence and grace pitched upon lepers to be the discoverers of His marvelous miracle. Even thus the keenest observers of grace are those who have the deepest sense of sin. I always like to address myself to the most hopeless grade of experience, to those who are most desponding and despairing, for these are the people who will welcome free grace, since they feel their need of it. Talk of charity to the rich, and they will spurn you, talk of it to the destitute, and they will welcome you. Speak of free grace and dying love to self-righteous persons, and they are deaf to you, but those who are guilty, and know it, welcome the promise of free pardon. I have to tell this morning of pure, rich, free, undeserved favor, which God displays to the guiltiest of the guilty. Those who are in their own esteem at the lowest ebb are ever the first to understand the wonders of grace.

These men could not hope for a welcome from the Syrians, poor objects that they were, they would be hated as Israelites, and abhorred as lepers, yet they went, and in that camp they found all that they wanted, and much more than they expected. Am I not speaking to some who are saying, "For me to go to Christ would be all in vain; I can suppose His blessing my brother, or my friend, but He never will receive one so altogether unworthy as I am"? That was my imagination once. I believed in the salvation of everybody except myself. It seemed to me as if a special plague and a peculiar curse had lighted upon my nature, and withered my heart. It was not so, as I soon proved when once I went to Jesus. But how could I expect to be accepted? I, who had sinned against light and knowledge, and spurned the grace of God when it came to me so lovingly! I speak to those of you who feel that you have no right to mercy; you are the very men who may come boldly for it, since it is not of right, but altogether of favor. You that have no claim to the mercy of God, you are the very people to come to Him through Jesus Christ, for where there is the least of anything that is good and meritorious, there, there is the most room for generous gifts and gracious pardons. Remember, the Lord Jesus did not come to sell salvation; He asks neither money nor price, but He came Himself as the gift of God and His own free gift is eternal life. Joseph Hart says rightly—

"Who rightly would his alms dispose
Must give them to the poor."

Are you poor? Then the Lord has an alms for you. If you feel that you are the last person that deserves to be received, you shall be received at once, the deeper your sense of your unworthiness the better. Even if you lament that you have not a proper sense of need, this only proves your deeper poverty, and shows that you are without claim of any kind. You

are neither able to plead law nor gospel in your favor, and must cast yourself on sovereign grace. Do so and live. O poor soul! I wish I could take you by the hand, and go myself with you again to my dear Lord as I went to Him at first. I went to Him in the most despairing fashion. You have heard the story of the English king who was angry with the citizens of Calais, and declared that he would hang six of them. They came to him with ropes about their necks, submitting to their doom. That is the way in which I came to Jesus. I accepted my punishment, pleaded guilty, and begged for pardon. Put your rope on your neck, confess that you deserve to die, and come to Jesus. Put no honeyed words into your mouth, turn out that nonsense of self-righteousness from your heart, and cry, "Save, Lord, or I perish!" If thus you plead you shall never perish. You are the kind of man for whom Christ died—the sort of man whom He never did spurn, and never will spurn while the world stands.

Another thing to be noticed about these discoverers of the Lord's work is that they were a people who dared not have joined themselves to God's people. They were not allowed inside the city walls; their wretched hospital was without the gate. They were recognized in some sort of way as belonging to the congregation of Israel, for their place was near the city gates, still, Israel would have none of them; they must not enter one of her houses to take a meal. Some of you have been attending the Tabernacle for years, I know, but you dare not join the church; you would not venture to baptism, or to the Lord's Supper, because you feel so unworthy. You hang on to us after a sort, you would not like to quite give up all connection with the people of God, but yet you would not dare to say that you belong to them. In your secret hearts your bitter cry is that of the leper, "Unclean, unclean, unclean." Before God you cast ashes on your head, and cover your lips, and sometimes wish that you had never been born; but still you cannot leave the gate of the Lord's people, nor cease altogether from their company. These poor creatures Israel would not own, and yet they were the first to find out what the Lord had done for His people. How often does it happen that those who are rejected of men are accepted of God! Did I hear one ask—"Do you really mean it?" I do mean it. I mean that some of you who deem that you are destined to be lost, and yet cannot give up hearing the gospel, are sure to find out the gospel yet. I hear you say, "The gospel is not for me, and yet I must hear it. I can never give up my Bible though I only read my own condemnation in its pages." You are the sort of people to whom the word of salvation is sent, and you are the most likely persons to discover what a Christ there is, what a salvation there is, what deliverance there is in the grace of God. You are the men that shall yet tell to the king's household the victories of eternal love, and assure those dull, cold Israelites inside the walls that after all there is bread enough and to spare, and treasure to be had if they will but come out and have it.

To describe these discoverers yet more fully, they were men who at last were driven to give themselves up. They said, "We will fall unto the Syrians, and if they kill us we shall but die." Blessed is that man who has given himself up, not to the Syrians, but to the Lord! As long as we can do something, we keep on doing that something to our ruin, but when it is all over with us, and we can do no more, then man's extremity

is God's opportunity. The man who struggles as he sinks is hard to be rescued, but when the drowning man has gone down twice, and is just going down for the third time—now is the opportunity for the strong swimmer, who comes in and grasp him firmly, and swims with him to shore. You that are going down a third time, you lost ones, listen to this, "The Son of man is come to save that which was lost." "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." O you self-righteous people, how can *you* talk about being saved? What saving do *you* want? You are as full of good works as you can be, and your pride shines on your brows, how can you be saved? They that shall be saved by Jesus are those that are in themselves lost, ruined, and undone. Until you know your ruin, and confess your sin, it is not likely you will ever accept a Savior. While you feel that you can save yourselves, you will attempt it; but when you can do no more then you will fall into the arms of your Savior, and a blessed fall that will be.

These discoverers I would liken to Columbus, four times repeated, for they found out a new world for Samaria. These four lepers went to the Syrian camp, and saw for themselves; lepers as they were, they came, they saw, they conquered. I think I can see them in the dim twilight, stealing along until they come to the first tent, expecting to be challenged by a picket, and wondering that they are not. They hear no sound of human voice. The horses and mules were heard to stamp, and draw their chains up and down, but their riders were gone, and no noise of human foot was heard. "There are no men about," cried one of them, "nor signs of men. Let us go into this tent." They step in. A supper was ready. He who had spread that table will never taste it again. The hungry men needed no persuasion, but immediately began to carve for themselves. They took possession of the spoils of war left on the field. After they had feasted they said, "To who does this gold and silver belong? The prey belongs to us, for our enemies have left the treasure behind them." They took as many of the valuables as they could carry, then went into another tent; still no living soul was seen. Where lately a host had rioted, not a soldier remained. There was no sound of revelry that night, or tramp of guard, nor talk around the watch fire. The lepers tasted more of the forsaken dainties, drained other goblets, and took more gold and silver. "There is more than we shall know what to do with," they said; so they dug a hole, and banked their gains after the Oriental fashion. Who can conceive the delirious joy of those four lepers in the midst of such abundance?

Do you see what these men did? First, they went and saw for themselves, and then they took possession for themselves. The whole four of them did not own a penny before, and now they are rich beyond a miser's dream. They have enjoyed the feast, and they are filled to the full. They are fully qualified to go and tell the starving city of their discovery, because they are clear that they have made no mistake. They have satisfied their own hunger, gratified their own desire, and tasted and handled for themselves, and so they can speak as men who know and are sure.

Dear friends, he knows the grace of God best who, in all his leprosy and defilement, in all his hunger, and faintness, and weariness, has come to Christ, and fed on the bread of heaven, and drank the water of

life, and taken the blessings of the covenant, and made himself rich with hidden treasure. Such a man will speak convincingly, because he will bear a personal witness. This man has no doubts upon the vital points, for Christ is his life, he does not argue, but testifies, he is not a special pleader, but a witness. The leper, fed and enriched, stands outside the city gate, and calls to the porter, and wakes him up at the dead of night, for he has news worth telling. The experienced believer speaks with the accent of conviction, and therein imitates his Master, who spoke with authority. "Why," says the porter, "I used to speak to you over the city wall; are you the leper to whom I said that there was no more food for you? I have thrown you nothing for a week, and thought you were dead—are you the man?" He answers, "I am. I do not want your wretched rations now; I am filled, and where I have fed there is enough for you all. Come out, and feast yourselves." "I should not know you," says the porter. All four join in saying, "No, you would not know us, we are new men since we have been to the camp. Believe the story, and tell it to all in the city, for it is true. There is enough and to spare, if they will but come out and have it." The Lord made a good choice when he selected these lepers to be discoverers of His great work. He does wisely when He takes those who are saddest, and fills their mouths with laughter, and their tongues with singing, for these will command attention. These poor wretches could not have made up so amazing a story, nor feigned such joy; sorrowing castaways could not have invented the story of free grace. It must be true. Oh, that men would believe it!

How much I wish that through my poor words some gleam of hope would fall upon weary and heavy-laden souls to whom this sermon comes! You say, "Where are they?" I do not know. I know that such persons do come under my ministry in extraordinary numbers. I shall know that they are here before next Sunday, for I shall hear from some of them—"I thank God I was there on Sunday morning; it just suited me, I was diseased with sin, my soul was starving and dying, but I went to Jesus as I was, and I discovered what I never dreamed could be true; He has done for me exceeding abundantly, above all that I asked or even thought."

III. So far we have come by the Lord's help. I now wish to spend a minute or two in noticing HOW THEY CAME TO MAKE THIS DISCOVERY. These four lepers, how did they come to find out the flight of Syria? First, I suppose, they made the discovery rather than anybody else because the famine was sorest with them. You see they were lepers outside the gate. In good times they received a daily portion from the town, but you may be pretty sure that the townsmen did not deny themselves on their account. If anybody has to go short, it will probably be those who are dependent upon charity. Nobody in the east is excessively eager to feed lepers in times of famine. Probably the Samaritans thought, and even said, "They are best dead; they are no good to anybody; they are suffering, they cannot earn anything, let them die." Besides, when the supplies within the city were exhausted, you could hardly blame the citizens if they sent nothing to the lepers, for those who were themselves without food, had nothing to give. Yet the people within the walls could do something or other to palliate their hunger, they could even resort to horrible

cannibalism, but these four lepers were cut off from such desperate resources, they had nobody to kill and eat, and they must therefore die. Then it was that they woke up. Truly, necessity is the mother of invention, and the mother of that blessed invention which finds the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished salvation is the awful necessity of a perishing soul. Let but some men feel the burden of sin, and they will never rest till they come to Jesus. John Bunyan says that he once thought hardly of Christ, but at last he came to such a pitch of misery that he felt he must come to Jesus anyhow, and he says that he verily believed that, if the Lord Jesus had stood before him with a drawn sword in His hand, he would have rushed upon the point of His sword rather than stay away from Him. I understand that right well. I would to God that some of you were reduced to so great a necessity that you were driven to the only One who can succor you. Oh, that you were utterly bankrupt! Not a kind wish, you say? Yes, it is. Our complete emptiness constrains us to seek the divine fullness. Look at the prodigal son, so long as he had anything left he did not go home to his Father, but when he had spent all his substance, and had become so hungry that he envied the very hogs he fed, then he said, "I will arise, and go to my Father." Spiritual necessity is that which nerves the soul with courage to cast itself upon sovereign grace in Jesus Christ.

These lepers were driven to go to make the discovery because they felt that they could not be any worse than they were. They said, "If we sit here we shall die; and if the Syrians kill us, we shall but die." That feeling has often driven souls to Christ—

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

They could but die, and they were sure to die if they sat where they were. Poor soul! Are you within reach of my voice? Is your case desperate? Well, then, *try faith*. You cannot be any worse, and you may be better. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. If He should reject you, you cannot be any worse, but then, He cannot reject you, for He says, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." I would pray for mercy if I were you. Suppose you are not heard; you cannot be the worse for praying. I would cast myself on Jesus if I were you; you could not be the worse for doing so. Every day I say to myself—

"What though my eye of faith is dim,
I'll hold on Jesus, sink or swim."

I cannot be blamed for trusting to one who has saved so many. O my hearer, there is no risk in the matter; you must be infinitely better for coming to the appointed Savior! Come and try Him. Come at this moment.

Again, these people saw that there was no reason why they should not go, for they said one to the other—"Why sit we here until we die?" They could not find a justification for inaction. They could not say, "We sit here because the king commands us to stop where we are." You cannot say my dear hearer, that you remain ungodly and unbelieving because the Lord bids you do so. Far from it. He bids you forsake your way and your thoughts, and turn unto Him and live. He promises that He will re-

ceive you, and therefore He cries, "Turn you, turn you, why will you die?" The lepers could not say that they sat there because they were chained, or locked in, and so were compelled to starve in their hut. They could move to the Syrian camp, and this was their one liberty. You also are not compelled to be as you are. Is there any reason why you should not pray? Is there any barrier to your trusting the Lord except in your own heart? You are not compelled to remain ungodly, thoughtless, prayerless, faithless. You are not compelled to be lost; there is no compulsion put upon you to force you away from Jesus and eternal life. Oh, that you would pluck up heart and say, "Why should we sit here until we die?" I hope there is no deadly despair upon you yet; certainly there should not be. These men did not feel that it was certain that they would die if they went to the Syrian camp; they had a little hope, and on that hope they acted, like sensible men. You remember how the people of Nineveh humbled themselves before God with nothing to encourage them, but "Who can tell?" Jonah said, "Forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown," and they could get no more comfort than the question, "Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not?" Oh, poor troubled heart, *who can tell?* There may be mercy for you, and not a little mercy, either. The full, rich, eternal mercy of the Lord may be enjoyed by you before the sun goes down. That head of yours will yet wear the starry crown; about your naked loins there shall yet be girt the fair linen of Christ's righteousness. Do not believe the devil if he says you must die. You need not die. Have confidence and venture now to Christ, and you shall find relief. I speak what I know, and know what I speak.

These lepers went to the camp of the Syrians because they were shut up to that one course—"If we say, we will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there; and if we sit still here, we die also." Only one road was open. I am always glad when I am in that condition. If many courses are open to me I may make a mistake, but when I see only one road I know which way to go. It is a blessed thing to be shut up to faith in Christ—to be compelled to look to grace alone. I spoke to a friend this week that is sorely sick, and I said, "You are resting in Christ, my brother." He replied, "I have nothing else to rest in." I said, "Your hope is in the atoning sacrifice of Christ," and he answered, "What other hope could I have?" While we have fifty ways of salvation we shall be lost, but when we see that "other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, even Jesus Christ the righteous," then we shall build upon it and be safe.

These lepers were not the men to theorize, they were in such a plight that they must come to prompt action. Many ladies and gentlemen treat religion as a science, and therefore they never know its real powers. Many professors and learned doctors speculate upon theology as if it were part of a liberal education, but by no means a practical matter. People, who have no sin to wash away, and no great spiritual trouble to bear, play at religion, but those who are ready to perish look on matters in another light. We are not chemists analyzing the bread of life, we are fainting men and women who feed on it with eagerness. Our resolve is—

"I'll go to Jesus, though my sin

Has like a mountain rose;
I know His courts, I'll enter in,
Whatever may oppose.
Perhaps He will admit my plea;
Perhaps will hear my prayer;
But if I perish, I will pray
And perish only there."

These lepers discovered what the Lord had done because they did not give themselves up to dreams and guesses, but came to downright matters of fact. May God drive every unconverted sinner into a corner, and so compel him to yield to grace! May He bring you to act in earnest; may He drive you by the extreme necessities of your case to seek and to find, to search and to discover!

IV. I ask your patience for a minute while I say, in the fourth place—MAY NOT SOME SAD HEARTS IMITATE THESE LEPERS and make the same discovery? "I am afraid to believe in Christ," says one, "for my sins, my many sins, prevent me." Look at the lepers, and see how much better the Lord was to them than their fears. It is twilight, and they steal into the camp trembling. One cries, "Softly there, Simeon! Your heavy tread will bring the guard upon us." Eleazar gently whispers to the other, "Make no noise. If they sleep, let us not awaken them." They might tread as heavily as they pleased, and talk as loudly as they wished, for there was no man there. Do you know it? If you believe in the Lord Jesus, your sins, which are many, are all forgiven—there is no sin left to accuse you. You are afraid they will ruin you? They have ceased to be; the depths have covered them, there is not one of them left. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." Your sins were numbered on the scapegoat's head of old. Jesus bore your sins in His own body on the tree. If you come to Christ, confessing and believing, no sin shall destroy you, for it is blotted out!

Perhaps these men feared when they were going into the tent—"A Syrian will meet us at the tent door, and cry, 'Back, what business have you here? Lepers, be gone! Back to your dens and die.'" They entered into tent after tent; nobody forbade them, they had the entry of every pavilion. They were also possessors of all they saw. When I came to Christ, I could not believe that I might take the promises, but I did, and nobody said to me no. I have gone on appropriating promises ever since—exceedingly great and precious promises and nobody has said to me no. I find I can make myself most free in Christ's house, and the more free I am, the better He is pleased. His rule is—ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you. The Lord gives us full liberty to come into his secret place, even to His throne of grace. Oh, that some poor heart would come at this moment! Instead of being repulsed, you shall find a hearty welcome, even into the most holy places.

Perhaps the leper felt some little question when he saw a golden cup, or a silver flagon, or a well-fashioned cruet. What have lepers to do with golden cups? But he overcame his scruples. No law could hinder his sharing the leavings of a runaway enemy. Nobody was there to stop him, and the valuables were set before him, and therefore he took what was provided for him. The lepers grew more and more bold, till they carried off as much of the booty as they were able to hide away. I take up my

parable, and without scruple invite you to deal thus with salvation. When I came to Jesus, I hardly dared to appropriate a promise, it looked like stealing. I did not, could not believe, that I had a right to any of the good things provided for the Lord's people, but I took gospel leave, and enjoyed them. I find it written, "No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly," and therefore I feel that nothing is withheld from me. I venture to take what grace has put in my way. I take possession of everything that I can find in Christ. I have never yet found either conscience, or the Word of God, or the Lord Himself upbraid me for appropriating the precious things laid up in the covenant for believers; therefore I grow bolder, and yet more bold. One of these days I, who am the least of all saints, expect to stand among the bright ones near the throne, and sing "Hallelujah to God and the Lamb." I do not think that I shall be ashamed to stand there. I am ashamed of myself for ten thousand reasons, but I shall not be ashamed at the Lord's coming—

"Bold shall I stand in that great day."

You poor lepers, you poor lost and ruined ones, come to my Lord Jesus! Believe it, the whole land is before you; the land that flows with milk and honey is for you. This world is yours, and worlds to come. Christ is yours, yes, God Himself is yours. Everything is to be had for nothing. Heaven and all its joys are to be had upon believing. God make you the discoverers this day of His wondrous grace, and to Him shall be praise forever and ever! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
PSALM 134; 2 KINGS 7.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—
84 (SONG 3), 544, 546 (VERSES 1 AND 2).

If this sermon comforts you, circulate it—C.H.S.

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

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

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

THE PERSONAL PENTECOST AND THE GLORIOUS HOPE
NO. 1904

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 13, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And hope makes not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us." Romans 5:5.

PENTECOST is repeated in the heart of every believer. Let me give you a little bit of *historical analogy* to illustrate the text. The Lord's disciples were made to sorrow at His cross. Sore was the tribulation which came upon them as they thought upon His death, and His burial in Joseph's sepulcher. But after a little patience and experience, their hope revived; for their Lord rose from the dead, and they beheld Him ascending into heaven. Their hopes were bright concerning their Lord, who had gone into glory and had left them a promise to come again, and to make them partakers of His victory. After that hope had been begotten in them, they were in due time made partakers of the Holy Spirit, whose divine influence was shed abroad upon them, so that they were filled with His power. Then were they made bold. They were not ashamed of their hope, but proclaimed it by the preaching of Peter and the rest of them. The Holy Spirit had visited them, and therefore they fearlessly proclaimed to the world the Lord Jesus, their hope of glory.

Truly, history repeats itself. The history of our Lord is the foreshadowing of the experience of all His people that which happens to the Firstborn befalls in measure to all the brethren. We have before us in our text an admirable example. First comes our tribulation, our agony, our cross-bearing. Out of our patience and experience there arises in due season a blessed hope; we are quickened by our Lord's resurrection life, and come forth from our sorrow. He raises us up from the grave of our woe. Then comes the divine visitation of the Holy Spirit, and we enjoy our Pentecost, "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us." I trust we know what this means, and are now enjoying it. Consequent upon that visitation our hope becomes clear and assured, and we are led to make a full outspoken testimony concerning our hope, and that blessed One who is the substance of it. I hope that many of us have already proved that we are not ashamed, and that others of you will yet do so. Our God has visited us in mercy, and endowed us with the Holy Spirit, who is His choice gift to His children. The Holy Spirit dwelling in us has caused us to know and feel the love of God, and now we cannot

but speak and tell forth to others of what the Lord has made known to us. Thus on a small scale have we rehearsed a portion of early church history in our own personal story. You shall find that not only in this case, but in all cases, the life of the believer is in miniature the life of Christ. He who originally said, "Let Us make man in our image," still in the new creation follows the model of Christ in the new-making of chosen men.

Now let me give you a little passage of *experimental mystery*. You have it here spread before you in a little map of the inner life, "Tribulation works patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope makes not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us." This passage can only be fully understood by those people of God who have had it written in capital letters on their own hearts. "Tribulation works patience," says the apostle. Naturally it is not so. Tribulation works impatience, and impatience misses the fruit of experience, and sours into hopelessness. Ask many who have buried a dear child, or have lost their wealth, or have suffered pain of body, and they will tell you that the natural result of affliction is to produce irritation against providence, rebellion against God, questioning, unbelief, petulance, and all sorts of evils. But what a wonderful alteration takes place when the heart is renewed by the Holy Spirit! Then, but not till then, tribulation works patience He that is never troubled cannot exercise patience. Angels cannot personally exhibit patience, since they are not capable of suffering. It is necessary to the possession and exercise of patience that we should be tried, and a great degree of patience can only come by a great degree of trial. You have heard of the patience of Job, did he learn it among his flocks, or with his camels, or with his children when they were feasting? No, verily, he learned it when he sat among the ashes, and scraped himself with a potsherd, and his heart was heavy because of the death of his children. Patience is a pearl which is only found in the deep seas of affliction, and only grace can find it there, bring it to the surface, and adorn the neck of faith therewith.

It comes to pass that this patience works in us experience, that is to say, the more we endure, the more we test the faithfulness of God, the more we prove His love, and the more we perceive His wisdom. He that has never endured may believe in the sustaining power of grace, but he has never had experience of it. You must put to sea to know the skill of the divine Pilot, and you must be buffeted with tempest before you can know His power over winds and waves. How can we see Jesus in His full power unless there is a storm for Him to turn into a calm? Our patience works in us an experiential acquaintance with the truth, the faithfulness, the love, and the power of our God. We bow in patience, and then we rise in happy experience of heavenly support. What better wealth can a man have than to be rich in experience? Experience teaches. This is the real High School for God's children. I scarcely think we learn anything thoroughly without the rod of affliction. Certainly we know best that which has been a matter of personal experience. We need that truth should be

burned into us with the hot iron of affliction before we know it effectively, after that no man may trouble us, for our heart bears the brand of the Lord Jesus. Thus patience works experience.

It is rather singular that it should then be said, "and experience works hope"—not singular in the sense of being questionable, for there is no hope so bright as that of the man who knows by experience the faithfulness and love of God. But does it not seem singular that this heavy tribulation, this grievous affliction, this painful chastisement should nevertheless bring forth for us this bright particular light, this morning star of hope, this herald of the everlasting day of glory? Brethren, how wonderfully does divine alchemy fetch fine gold out of metal which we thought to be worthless! The Lord in His grace spreads a couch for His own upon the threshing floor of tribulation, and there, like Boaz, we take our rest. He sets to music the roar of the floods of trouble. Out of the foam of the sea of sorrow He causes to arise the bright spirit of "hope that makes not ashamed."

This passage from which we have taken our text is a choice extract from the inner life of a spiritual man. It is a fragment of the believer's riddle; let him read it that has understanding.

Before I plunge into my subject, let me point out to you that this text is none other than the house of God, and the gate of heaven. Behold a temple for the worship of the Divine Trinity in my text. Read the fifth and sixth verses together—"The love of God *(the Father)* is shed abroad in our hearts by *the Holy Spirit* which is given unto us. For when we were yet without strength, in due time *Christ* died for the ungodly." Behold the blessed Three in One! It needs the Trinity to make a Christian, it needs the Trinity to cheer a Christian, it needs the Trinity to complete a Christian; it needs the Trinity to create in a Christian the hope of glory. I always like these passages which bring us so near to the Trinity. Let us pause a while and adore, "Glory be unto the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end! Amen." It is most sweet to be called upon to offer special worship unto the one God in the Trinity of His divine Persons, and to feel your heart readily inclined thereto, as we do at this hour. By faith we bow with the hosts of the redeemed before the all-glorious throne, and worship Him that lives forever. How heartily may we do this when we think of the unity of the Sacred Three in our salvation! We have divine love bestowed by the Father, made manifest in the death of the Son, and shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Oh, to feel at this moment communion with the Triune God! Let us bow before the sacred majesty of Jehovah, and then by the teaching of the Holy Spirit let us enter the temple of our text.

The text runs thus: "Hope makes not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us." The apostle had worked up the subject till he came to the hope of glory. When he had reached that height he could not help saying somewhat concerning it. Turning away from his main subject, as is often his

custom, he makes a diversion, and gives us a few glowing sentences upon the believer's hope.

Our first head will be *the confidence of our hope*—the hope makes not ashamed. Secondly, *the reason of this confidence,* which I hope we are enjoying today, for we are confident about our hope that we shall never be disappointed in it, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us. Thirdly, we shall have a word or two to say upon *the result of this confidence of hope,* since, for this cause we bear testimony to the world, and declare that we are not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.

I. First then, consider THE CONFIDENCE OF OUR HOPE. *We are not ashamed of our hope*. Some persons have no hope, or only one of which they might justly be ashamed. Ask many who deny the Scriptures what is their hope for the future. "I shall die like a dog," says one. "When I am dead there's an end of me." If I had such a wretched hope as that, I certainly would not go about the world proclaiming it. I should not think of gathering a large congregation like this, and saying to you, "Brethren, rejoice with me, for we are all to die like cats and dogs." It would never strike me as being a matter to be gloried in. The Agnostic knows nothing, and therefore I suppose he hopes nothing. Here, also, I do not see much to stir enthusiasm. If I had no more hope than that, I would be ashamed. The Romanist's best hope when he dies is that he may come right in the end, but that in the meantime he will have to undergo the purging fires of purgatory. I do not know much about that place, for I cannot find mention of it in Holy Scripture, but those who know it well, because they invented it, and keep its keys, describe it as a dreary region, to which even great bishops and cardinals must go. I have seen, personally seen, invitations to the faithful to pray for the repose of the soul of a late eminent cardinal, and if such is the lot of the princes of the church, where must ordinary people go? There is no great excellence in this hope. I do not think I should call you all together in order to say to you, "Rejoice with me, for when we die we shall all go to purgatory." You would fail to see the special ground of rejoicing. I do not think I should say much about it, and when anybody questioned me thereon, I should endeavor to evade the point, and declare that it was a deep mystery, which had better be left to the clergy. But we are not ashamed of our hope, we Christian people, who believe that those believers who are absent from the body are present with the Lord. We look for a city which has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God. We are not ashamed to hope for glory, immortality, and eternal life.

We are not ashamed of the object of our hope. We do not believe in gross carnal delights as making up our heaven. We do not believe in a Muslim paradise of sensual delights, or we might very well be ashamed of our hope. Whatever imagery we may use, we intend thereby pure, holy, spiritual, and refined happiness, such as the False Prophet would not have regarded as sufficient bait for his followers. Our hope is this; that our Lord will come a second time, and all His holy angels with Him, then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

We believe that if we fall asleep before that time we shall sleep in Jesus, and shall be blessed with Him. "Today shall you be with Me in paradise," is not for the thief only, but for all of us who have trusted our souls with the crucified Savior. At His coming we expect a glorious resurrection. When He shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the trumpet of the archangel, and the voice of God, then shall our souls be restored to our bodies, and our complete manhood shall live with Christ. We believe, and are sure, that from that day we shall be forever with Him. He will give us to be partakers of His throne, and of His crown, and of His heaven, and that forever and ever. The more we talk about the promised bliss, the more we feel that we could not be ashamed of the hope of glory. The ultimate reward of faith, the ultimate reward of a life of righteousness, is such that we joy and rejoice in prospect of it. Our glorious hope contains within it purity and perfection, freedom from all sin, and the possession of every virtue. Our hope is that we shall be like our perfect Lord, and shall be with Jesus where He is, that we may behold His glory. Our hope is fulfilled in that promise, "Because I live, you shall live also." We shall not merely exist, but *live,* which is another and a higher matter. Our life shall be the life of God in our spirits forever and ever. We are not ashamed of this hope, but we press forward to the attaining of it.

Furthermore, *we are not ashamed of the ground of our hope*. Our hope rests upon the solemn promises of God, which He has made to us by His prophets and apostles, and confirmed in the person and work of His dear Son. Inasmuch as Jesus Christ died and rose from the dead, we that are one with Him by faith are sure that we shall rise again from the dead, and live with Him. The fact of Christ's resurrection is the assurance of our resurrection, and His entrance into glory is the pledge of our glorification, because we are made one with Him by the purpose and grace of God. As we fell in Adam by virtue of our being in him, so we rise and reign with Jesus because we are in Him. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living, yet is He the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, and therefore these men are yet alive. Even thus we do believe concerning all who die in the faith that they have not ceased to be, but they all live unto Him. Our hope is founded, not upon reasoning, which, possibly, may dimly prove the immortality of the soul and the future reward of the righteous, but upon Revelation, which states it clearly and plainly, and leaves no room for question. If this Book is a lie, our hope must be given up, but inasmuch as we have not followed cunningly devised fables, but have received the testimony of faithful eyewitnesses of our Lord's resurrection and ascension, we believe the holy record, and are not ashamed of our hope. What God has promised is sure, and what God has done fully confirms the same, and therefore we have no fear.

And brethren, *we are not ashamed of our personal appropriation of this hope*. Somebody may sneeringly say to us, "You expect to be in glory, do you?" Yes, we do, and we are not ashamed to own the soft impeachment, for our confidence is well grounded. Our expectation is not based upon any proud claim of personal deserving, but upon the promise of a faithful God. He has said, "He that believes in Him has everlasting life." We do

believe in Him, and therefore we know that we have eternal life. He has declared in His Word that, "whom He justified, them He also glorified," and we are justified by faith, therefore we shall be glorified. Our hope is not based on mere feeling, but on the fact that God has promised everlasting life to them that believe in His Son Jesus. We have heard our Lord pray, "Father, I will that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory." We believe that the Father gave us to Jesus because we have been led to put our trust in Him, and faith is the sure sign and token of divine election. Therefore, being Christ's, we expect to be with Him where He is. Reading in the Word of the Lord the word, "that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life," we hold on to that promise, and know that we have everlasting life. This seems to us to be strictly logical argument; unless it is a mistake, and God has not said that the believer shall live forever, then we are under no delusion in expecting so to live. God's Word is the surest thing that can be, and we are not ashamed to hold on to any claim which truthfully arises out of it. We dare believe that God will keep His word to us and to all other believers.

Brethren, *we are not ashamed as to the absolute certainty that our hope will be realized*. We believe that if indeed we are justified by faith, and have peace with God, we have a hope of glory which will not fail us in the end, nor on the way to the end. We do not expect to be deserted, and to be left to fall from grace, for "He has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you." We do not expect to be left to ourselves, which would mean our sore and certain ruin, but we expect that He that has begun a good work in us will perfect it unto the day of Christ, we are certain that He that has worked this hope in us will justify that hope by fulfilling it in due time. He will preserve us through long life if we are to live long; will maintain a living hope in us when we come to die, and will remember even our dust and ashes when these are hidden in the tomb. "Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" It is written, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." And so it shall be. He shall not perish from the way, or in the way. Has He not said, "I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me?" He keeps the feet of His saints. "I give unto My sheep," He says, "eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." Never shall we be deceived in our trust in Jesus. No man shall say, "I trusted the Lord Christ to keep me, and He has not kept me, I rested in Jesus to preserve me, in spiritual life, and He has not preserved me." Never. We shall not be ashamed of our hope.

II. As I have introduced to you that confidence which makes believers—especially tried and experienced believers—full of hope which makes not ashamed, my second objective is to dwell upon THE REASON OF THIS CONFIDENCE. Why is it that men who possess the good hope are so far from being ashamed of it that they rejoice in it?

My answer, is first, because *that hope has for one of its main supports the love of God* . I expect one day to sit among the angels, and to behold the face of my Best-beloved, but I do not expect this because of anything

in me, or anything which may ever be done by me, but simply because of the infinite love of God. I trust not to my love of God, but to God's love to me. We trust Him because He loves us. We are sure that He will fulfill our hope because He is too loving to fail us. It is from the love of God that all our hopes begin, and it is upon the love of God that all our hopes depend. If it were not for the Father's love, there had never been a covenant of grace; if it were not for His infinite love, no atoning sacrifice had been provided; if it were not for His active love, no Holy Spirit would have quickened and renewed us; if it were not for His unchanging love, all that is good in us would soon pass away; if it were not for love almighty, love immutable, love unbounded, we should never hope to see the face of the King in His beauty in the land that is very far off. He loves us, and therefore He leads us, and feeds us, and keeps us evermore. Do not your hearts confess this? If that love could be suspended for a moment, if its power were for an instant to cease, where would we be? We fall back upon the love of God as the final reason of our hope in Him.

Observe, dear brethren, the actual cause of our confidence is that *the love of God has been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit*. Let me try and explain what this means. The Holy Spirit is in the heart of every believer, and He is occupied in many gracious acts. Among other things He sheds abroad the love of God in the heart in which He resides. The figure is taken from a box of precious perfume being poured out in a chamber. There lies the slumbering scent within the alabaster box, it is a very choice thing, but no one has yet perceived its odor. The love of God brought within the soul is that rare fragrance, but till it is shed abroad it is not enjoyed. Now the Holy Spirit takes that box and opens it and the sweet savor of divine love streams forth, and fills all the capacity of the believer. This love penetrates, and permeates, enters, and *occupies the entire being*. A delightful perfume streams through the entire room when the odor of roses is poured out, and even so when the love of God is thought upon by the devout heart, and the Holy Spirit helps its meditations, the theme fills the mind, the memory, the imagination, the reason and the affections. It is an engrossing subject, and is not to be confined to any one faculty any more than you could keep the aroma of spices within a certain narrow space.

Moreover, as perfume gives delight to the nostrils, so does the love of God, when shed abroad in the power of the Holy Spirit, *imparts a singular sweetness to our emotions*. All the garments of the Lord of love smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia. Where can such sweetness be as in the love of God? That the eternal and the infinite One should really love men, and love them at such a rate as He has done, is a truth at once surprising and gladsome. It is a root from which springs the lily of perfect joy. This is an ivory palace wherein every dweller is made glad. You may meditate upon that love till you are ravished, and carried away by it, and your soul, before you are aware, becomes like the chariots of Amminadib.

Yet again, wherever perfume comes, it not only spreads itself abroad, and gives delight to all who are in the place, but *it abides there*. Take the ointment away if you will, but the sweet odor remains for many an hour

in the room which was once filled with it. Some scent appears to abide forever. You went to your drawer the other day, and there was a delicious flavor of lavender, yet there had been no lavender there since last summer, fragrance lingers. A few drops of the true oil will perfume a wide space, and remain long after the vase from which it was poured has been taken away. The love of God when it comes into the heart, and is shed abroad by the Holy Spirit, who is the great Master of the art of diffusing love, abides in the heart world without end. All other things may cease, but love abides. For a moment we may seem to forget the love of God amidst the business of the world, but no sooner is the pressure removed than we return unto our rest. The sweet perfume of divine love overcomes the rankness of the odor of sin, and never quits the heart that has once known its exceeding deliciousness. If I change the figure, I may say that the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit like one of yonder rain clouds, black with exceeding blessing, which pours forth a shower of innumerable silver drops, fertilizing every place on which it falls, making the drooping herbs to lift up their heads and rejoice in the heaven-sent revival After a while, from that spot where fell the rain, there rises a gentle steam, which ascends to heaven and forms fresh clouds; thus is the love of God poured upon our heart, and shed abroad in our nature till our spirit drinks it in, and its new life is made to put forth its flowers of joy and fruits of holiness, and by and by grateful praise ascends like the incense which in the temple smoked upon Jehovah's altar. Love is shed abroad in us, and it works upon our heart to love in return.

To leave the figures; the shedding abroad of the love of God in the heart by the Holy Spirit means this—He imparts to us an *intense appreciation* and sense of that love. We have heard of it, believed in it, and meditated upon it, and at last we are overpowered by its greatness! "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son." We cannot measure such love. We become affected by it; we are filled with wonder and admiration. Its greatness, its singularity, its specialty, its infinity—all these amaze us. It is shed abroad in our hearts. Then there comes *an appropriation* of it. We cry, "He loved *me,* and gave Himself for *me."* We begin to feel that God's love was not only love to men in general, but love to ourselves in particular, and we are now fairly carried off our feet. In a belief of this special love to us we are ready to dance for joy. Faith perceives that it is even so, and then we praise the Lord upon the high-sounding cymbals. Then follows, as a matter of course, that *return of love* which the human heart must feel; we love Him because He first loved us. We doubted His love once, we cannot doubt it now. If we were asked three times, "Do you love Me?" we should answer humbly, but most emphatically, "Lord, You know all things, you know that I love You. I could not live without loving You. I would rather a thousand times that I had never been born than be without love to You; and though I do not love You as I ought, and my heart craves after a far greater love, yet I do love You in deed and in truth. You know that I do; and I should be false to my own consciousness if I denied it." This is to have the love of God shed

abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit which is given to us; to know it, enjoy it, appropriate it, rejoice in it, and come under its divine influence. May this bundle of myrrh never be removed from the chamber of my soul!

But I want you to notice *the special sweetness which struck our apostle* as being so amazingly noteworthy. He goes on to tell us what most affected him. He says, "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." That is the first point to be dwelt upon; that God should give His Son to die *for the ungodly*. That God should love those who love Him; that God should love His renewed people who are striving after holiness, is indeed delightful; but the most overpowering thought of all is that He loved us when there was nothing good in us whatever. He loved us from before the foundation of the world. Regarding us as being fallen and lost, His love resolved to send His Son to die for us. Jesus came not because we were good, but because we were evil; He gave Himself not for our righteousness, but for our sins. The moving cause of love in God was not excellence in the creature then existing or foreseen to exist, but simply the good pleasure of the God of Love. Love was born of God Himself. It was so great in the heart of God that—

"He saw us ruined in the fall,
Yet loved us notwithstanding all."

He loved us when we hated Him; He loved us when we opposed Him, when we cursed Him, when we persecuted His people, and blasphemed His ways. Marvelous fact! Oh, that the Holy Spirit would bring home that truth to our hearts and make us feel its energy! I cannot put the thought fitly before you, much less shed it abroad within you, but the Holy Spirit can do it, and then how charmed you will be, how humbled and yet how full of praise to the Most High God!

The apostle is not content with bringing that point before us; he would not have us forget that Christ *died for us*. Brethren, that Christ should love us in heaven were a great thing; that He should then come down to earth and be born in Bethlehem was a greater thing. That He should live a life of obedience for our sakes was a wonderful thing, but that He should die, this is the climax of love's sacrifice; the summit of the Alp of love. Some sights in the world astonish us once or twice, and then grow commonplace, but the cross of Christ grows upon us; the more we know of it the more it surpasses knowledge. To a saint who has been saved two thousand years, the sacrifice of Calvary is even more a marvel than when first he saw it. That God Himself should take our nature, and that in that nature He should die a death like that of a felon upon a gallows to save us who were His enemies, is a thing which could not be believed if it had been told us on less authority than the divine. It is altogether miraculous; and if you let it take possession of your soul until it is shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit, you will feel that there is nothing worth knowing, believing, or admiring when compared with this. Nothing can ever rival in interest the cross of Christ. Let us study what books we may, the knowledge of a crucified Savior will still remain the most sublime of all the sciences.

Furthermore, the apostle then goes on to say that *the Lord must ever love us now that we are reconciled*. He puts it thus—If God loved us when we were enemies, He will surely continue to love us now that we are friends. If Jesus died for us when we were rebels, He will refuse us nothing now that He has reconciled us. If He reconciled us by His death, surely He can and will save us by His life. If He died to reconcile enemies, surely He will preserve the reconciled. Do you see the whole argument? It is very full of reasons for the upholding of our hope of glory, and causing us not to be ashamed of it. When the great God makes us feel the exceeding greatness of His love, we banish all doubt and dread. We infer from the character of His love as seen in the past that He cannot possibly cast us away in the future. What, die for us, and then leave us! What, pour out His heart's blood for our redemption, and yet permit us to be lost! Will He manifest Himself to us as He does not to the world, robed in the crimson of His own atonement through death, and then will He after all say to us, "Depart, you cursed"? Impossible! He changes not. Our hope has for the keystone of its arch the unchanging love of Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever. The Holy Spirit has so shed abroad the love of God in Christ Jesus in our hearts that we feel quite sure that none can separate us from it, and so long as we are not divided from it our hope of glory is sure as the throne of the Eternal.

Once more; the apostle reminds us in the eleventh verse that *"we have now received the atonement."* We already feel that we are at one with God. Through the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus we are at peace with God. We love Him; our quarrel with Him is ended; we delight in Him, we long to glorify Him. Now this delightful sense of reconciliation is a satisfactory assurance of grace and glory. The hope of glory burns in the golden lamp of a heart reconciled to God by Jesus Christ. Inasmuch as we are now in perfect accord with God, longing only to be and to do just what He would have us to be and to do, we have the beginnings of heaven within us, the dawn of the perfect day. Grace is glory in the bud. Agreement with God is the seed-corn of perfect holiness and perfect happiness. If we are under the dominion of holiness, if there is no wish in our soul but what we would take back if we knew it to be contrary to the mind of our holy Lord, then are we assured that He has accepted us, and that we have His life in us, and shall finally come to His glory. He that has brought His enemies to be His hearty friends will not permit this gracious work to be undone, or His holy purpose to fail. In our present delight in God we have the earnest of our endless joy in Him. Therefore we are not ashamed of our hope.

One word more on this point; note well that the apostle not only mentions the love of God and its being shed abroad in our hearts, but he mentions *the divine Person by whom this has been done*. The shedding abroad of God's love in the heart has been worked by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. Only by the Holy Spirit could this have been done. Would you ever have been charmed with the love of God through the influence of the devil? Would you ever have been overpowered and filled with excessive joy in the love of God through the power of your own fallen

human nature? You judge! They that have felt the love of God shed abroad in their heart can say without a doubt, "This is the finger of God; the Holy Spirit has worked this in me." Nothing short of the Holy Spirit can affect it. "Thank God," says one, "I sat under an earnest ministry!" So you might, and yet have never felt the love of God within your heart. We can shed that love abroad by preaching, but we cannot shed it abroad *in the heart*. A higher influence than that of human orator must deal with the inner nature. Perhaps you were alone in your chamber, or walking by the roadside, when the sweet savor of love stole into your soul. Oh the love of God! The amazing, immeasurable, incomprehensible love of the Father! Oh, to feel this till our very souls are inflamed with it and our unloving nature is all on fire with love to the great Lover of the souls of men! Who can do this but the Holy Spirit? And how come we to have the Holy Spirit but by the free gift of God, whose gifts and calling "are without repentance"? God does not give and take, but His gifts are ours forever. If the Holy Spirit has been given to you, is He not the pledge of God's love? Does not the New Testament describe Him as the earnest of the inheritance? Is not an earnest the security for all the rest? Does the Holy Spirit set His seal to a document which, after all, is so faulty that it will not achieve its purpose? Never. If the Holy Spirit dwells in you, He is the guarantee of everlasting joy. Where grace is given by His divine indwelling, glory must follow it. The Holy Spirit, when He comes into the soul, comes that there He may take up His dwelling place, and there He will abide till we shall be caught up to the higher realms, to behold our Lord's face forever.

III. Lastly, let us hint at THE RESULT OF THIS CONFIDENT HOPE. Let the context instruct us.

First, this confident hope breeds *inward joy*. The man that knows that his hope of glory will never fail him because of the great love of God, of which he has tasted, that man will hear music at midnight; the mountains and the hills will break forth before him into singing wherever he goes. Especially in times of tribulation he will be found "rejoicing in hope of the glory of God." His most profound comfort will often be enjoyed in his deepest affliction, because then the love of God will especially be revealed in his heart by the Holy Spirit, whose name is "the Comforter." Then he will perceive that the rod is dipped in mercy, that his losses are sent in fatherly love, and that his aches and pains are all measured out with gracious design. In our affliction God is doing nothing to us which we should not wish for ourselves if we were as wise and loving as God is. O friends! You do not need gold to make you glad, you do not even need health to make you glad, only get to know and feel divine love, and the fountains of delight are unsealed to you—you are introduced to the banquets of happiness.

This brings with it the grace of *holy boldness* in the avowal of our hope. Christian people do not often enough show worldlings the joy of their hope. We do not wear our best liveries, nor say enough of the joy of being in the Lord's service, nor speak enough of the wages which our Lord will pay at the end of the day. We are as silent as if we were

ashamed of our hope. We even go mourning, although we have reason to be the happiest men on God's earth. I fear we have not enough experience of divine love shed abroad in our hearts. If the perfume were within, it would be perceived by those who are around us. You pass a factory of perfume, and at once perceive that sweetness steals abroad. Let us make worldlings know the fragrance of our joyous hope; especially let us tell those who seem most likely to laugh at us, for we have learned by experience that some of these are most likely to be impressed. Often has a new convert written to a worldly friend to tell him of his great change and of his new joy, and that worldly friend has put the letter aside with a sneer or a jest, but after a while he has thought it over, and he has said to himself, "There may be something in it. I am a stranger to this joy of which my friend speaks, and I certainly need all the joy I can get, for I am dull enough." Let me tell you that all worldlings are not such fools as some would take them for; they are aware of an unrest within their bosoms, and they hunger after something better than this vain world can give them, so that it frequently happens that as soon as they learn where the good is, they accept it. Even if they do not hunger, I do not know any better way of making a man long for food than yourself to eat. The looker-on feels his mouth water; all of a sudden his appetite arrives. In the parable of the prodigal son the servants were ordered to bring forth the best robe and put it on him, and to put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, but the father did not tell them to take the son and make him eat. What he said was, "Let *us* eat and be merry." He knew that at the sight of others feasting his hungry son would fall to. When you, who belong to the divine family, eat and drink in happy fellowship, and are merry with the Lord in feasting upon love divine, the poor hungry brother will desire to join you, and he will be encouraged to do so.

Come, then, you that have a hope of glory, let all men see that you are not ashamed of it. Act as decoys to others, let the sweet notes of your happy life charm them to Jesus! May the Lord cause you to spread abroad what He has shed abroad, and may that which perfumes your heart also perfume your house, your business, your conversation, and your whole life! May we so enjoy true godliness that we may never bring shame upon it, nor feel shame concerning it!

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
ROMANS 5:1-11, PSALM 121.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—457, 782, 250.**

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

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

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

HEALING AND PARDON
NO. 1905

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 20, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity."
Isaiah 33:24.

THIS whole chapter was a gracious message from God to a people who were *in extremis*. They were made to drink the foulest dregs of sorrow through the invasion of the Assyrians. The highways were waste, the wayfarer ceased, the earth mourned and languished, Lebanon was ashamed and hewn down, Sharon was like a wilderness, and Bashan and Carmel shook off their fruits. Then did God arise. When the worst had come to the worst, He laid bare His arm and brought deliverance for His people. Is not this a general rule with God? Is it not a truth fraught with comfort to any of you whose day has darkened down into a sevenfold midnight? When nothing else is left you God remains and God appears. When all your own strength fails you your strength shall be to sit still while God arises and becomes your arm every morning, your salvation in the time of trouble. I would encourage all who are in spiritual distress to gather hope from this chapter, since it is addressed to Zion in her sore affliction. If it is really so, that the joys and blessings which are described in the passage before us come to a people who are driven to the last extremity, why should not such blessings come to you? We have often noted how the Lord delights to look upon the poor and needy, and comes with succor to those who are in distress. It is the way of the Lord to look in pity upon those who are cast down. Lift up your heart to Him, and cry unto Him out of the depth. Let your prayer rise to His throne out of the low dungeon. Expect that He will be very pitiful, and will have compassion upon you in your misery. Jerusalem was on the brink of destruction when the Lord answered the prayer of Hezekiah, and smote the vast host of Assyria. The peril of Jerusalem serves as a dark background to bring out the brightness of my text. The city might have been destroyed by pestilence through its sins, but the Lord says, "The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell in it shall be forgiven their iniquity."

The great result of God's gracious dealings with His afflicted people is that they glorify His holy name. Observe how in this chapter God is spoken of as being "exalted, for He dwells on high." He is called, "the glorious Lord." Truly our Lord never appears more glorious than in the eyes of those who are brought low and humbled in their own esteem. Their

distresses, out of which they are graciously delivered, call upon them to exalt their Savior. They hear a voice saying, "Oh that man would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! For, He has broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder." Our God gets little praise in this fair world, which is a masterpiece of His skill, for man, refuses to adore. Creation ought to make our voices ring out perpetual psalms, for it is full of wonders, providence ought also to keep us always making music upon an instrument of ten strings, but, alas! We yield our praises to inferior workers. We are ever backward and slow in the praises of the Lord. Will a man rob God? Yet we rob Him of His glory. And so He brings us into straits, that He may display the majesty of His grace and the infinity of His power in rescuing us. Then are we moved to astonishment and adoration; then we burst forth into a song as we abundantly utter the memory of His great goodness. At sight of His amazing love we magnify the Lord, and ask others to magnify Him with us, that we may exalt His name together. This is as it should be; let it be so now. Oh, you that have tasted of the Lord's rich grace in the hour of trouble praise Him at this good hour; let the hallelujahs of your soul go up to Him in the courts of the Lord's house. If you cannot speak out your praise, let it wait for God in Zion, and unto Him let the vow be performed. Let your expressive silence mean the praise which you cannot sound forth with your tongue. The Holy Spirit who makes intercession in us with groans that cannot be uttered, will also put into us praises inexpressible by words.

As we saw in the reading of this chapter, the prophet seems to take wing as he proceeds; he rises from note to note, as if like David he said, "Selah," lift up the strain. He makes each note higher, sweeter, and louder than those which preceded it, for he sings unto Him that does great things for His people. The climax is in this verse, "The people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." One of the highest notes of praise which we can ever raise unto God is that which tells of pardoning love. Note the opening of the one hundred and third Psalms—"Bless the Lord, O my soul; who has forgiven all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases." Our text is another form of that verse, "The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell in it shall be forgiven their iniquity." Healing and forgiveness are placed in happy conjunction, and both bestowed on the Lord's people when they looked not for them.

I shall speak upon our text thus, if the Holy Spirit will help me. First, *there is such a thing as present forgiveness*—"The people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." Secondly, *with this forgiveness there comes the removal of the consequences of sin*—"The inhabitant shall not say I am sick." And thirdly, *this makes a remarkable change in the language of the favored people*—"The inhabitant shall not *say* I am sick." They shall be so greatly blessed that their language shall lose its complaining tone, they shall no longer sigh and lament; they shall now have other things to talk about than their own infirmities and sufferings. "The inhabitant shall not *say,* I am sick, the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity."

I. First, then, beloved, I introduce to you a topic upon which I am sure you have no question, but still it may do you good to be confirmed in the acknowledged truth. THERE IS SUCH A THING AS THE PRESENT FORGIVENESS OF SIN. "The people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity."

There must be a present conscious enjoyable pardon of sin; *otherwise there would be no joy in the world for thoughtful minds*. To the thoughtless and careless there might be a flash in the pan, a noisy mirth as the crackling of thorns under a pot, but to the penitent, to the serious, to the careful, where could there be a spark of joy if sin were unforgiven? When we once begin to feel what sin is, to discern its true nature, and to understand the just punishment which must follow upon it, we cannot rest under its condemnation. Though God should give us dainties from day to day, and clothe us in scarlet and fine linen, and set us among the princes of the earth, we should be restless, we should be wretched as long as sin preyed upon our heart. Sin! This casts darkness upon the sun, eclipsing its meridian light. Sin is the blast which withers all the flowers of life. Sin is the gall of bitterness, a drop of it would turn an ocean of pleasure into wormwood. Sin would again blight Paradise, could it be restored, yes, it would turn heaven into hell could it enter there. Sin is a burden which an awakened conscience cannot bear; it crushes the spirit into the dust, and threatens further to bear it down, even to the lowest hell. But when sin is pardoned, then our hymn which we have just now been singing leaps joyfully to our lips—

"Now, oh joy! My sins are pardoned."

Is not this a necessary ingredient in that overflowing cup which the Lord puts to the lips of His redeemed ones? "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord," but without that justification there can be no peace, and no enjoyment of life. Believers are spoken of as a blessed people who joy in God; they are bid to rejoice evermore, the apostle says, "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice." Such rejoicing would be impossible if sin were not pardoned, and therefore we conclude that sin may be pardoned, that it may be pardoned now, and that we may know it. If forgiveness is essential to a state of mind which we are exhorted to exhibit, then forgiveness may be enjoyed at this present hour.

Further, dear brethren, there must be forgiveness of sin, *otherwise the main motive and fountain of love* would be dried up. Forgiveness begets gratitude, gratitude creates love, and love brings forth holiness. She, which washed the Savior's feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head, would she have done it if she had not loved much because she felt that much had been forgiven her? The motive power of action to a believing man lies hard by the realization that God for Christ's sake has forgiven his iniquities. When I see my Lord, His own self, bearing my sins in His own body on the tree and blotting out my faults forever by His death, then my spirit glows with love, my eyes stream with tears, my heart dedicates itself wholly to Jesus, and my life begins to show the effect of my inward emotion. Sin forgiven leads to sin forsaken. Is it not so? Doubt whether you are forgiven, and what can you do? Can you preach a

gospel which has not brought you pardon? Can you go into the Sunday school to try and bring little children to a Christ who has not forgiven you your sins? But understand that through the one great sacrifice your iniquities are forever pardoned, and then you must love the great Sacrifice, and you must praise the Lord who gave Him to die for your sins. Is not this the song of the perfected, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, unto Him be glory forever and ever"? There must be a consciousness of forgiveness, or our lives will be limp, weak, purposeless.

It must be so, that sin can be pardoned and that we can know it; *otherwise we would be always in bondage through fear of death*. In what jeopardy would we stand every hour, since we might at once sink into hell! The prospect of death, how terrible would it be to us if sin still accused us unto God! Many of us now contemplate the approach of death with a calm, quiet patience of hope. As our years advance, we are not distressed with the thought that the time of our departure draws daily nearer. This world is not our rest, and we do not desire to live always. We anticipate the hour when we shall—

"Our body with our charge lay down,
And cease at once to work and live."

But how could this be if we enjoyed no sense of pardoned sin? It has been my intense delight to be with many members of this church in the hour of their departure, and I have invariably found them rejoicing in hope. I have sometimes heard them sing, and I have joined in their holy hymn, more often I have heard their steady calm avowal of their joy in the prospect of being "forever with the Lord," but how could this have been if sin had not been pardoned? Is not this true which we sing—

"If sin is pardoned, I'm secure;
Death has no sting beside:
The law gives sin its damning power;
But Christ, my ransom, died"?

"The sting of death is sin," and you cannot take away the sting of death if sin is not taken away. There could be no looking forward with expectancy, if there were no acceptance in Christ. It would be impossible to be in a strait, as Paul was, when he said, "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better." To be willing to be offered up, and joyfully to say, "The time of my departure is at hand," would be utterly impossible if believers did not know, and know of a certainty, that their sins are all forgiven. Once we cried, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow," we were not in error in that prayer, and now, that we have been washed, and have heard our Master say, "You are clean every whit," we are not deluded. "We have joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement." We say at this hour, "O Lord, I will praise You: though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comforted me." Has not the Lord declared, "I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins"? Yes, great Lord, it is even so! "There is forgiveness with You that You may be feared." There is a city whose inhabitants are forgiven their iniquities. Blessed be the Lord who passes by the trespasses of His people.

Once more; there must be forgiveness, for *otherwise the whole system of grace would be a dead letter,* and its glorious privileges would be mere shells without a kernel. Where would be salvation itself without pardon? How could we be saved from our sins if not forgiven? What glorious gospel could there be if sin could not be cancelled? We read of our Lord Jesus Christ, that "to as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." But how can we be sons under condemnation? How shall I reckon myself to be a beloved child if my Father is still my judge, and holds over me the sword of Justice? "Your sins which are many are forgiven you," is necessary before the spirit of adoption can enter, to make us cry, "Abba, Father." There is certainly no possibility of acceptance or justification while sin is unforgiven. I have already shown you that there is no motive to seek sanctification if we are hopelessly condemned for sin. What is even the gift of Christ Himself if He does not put away our sin? The whole of the blessings of the gospel seem to me to have lost their charm unless, first of all, there is cleansing from all iniquity.

Let us now bend our thoughts to a consideration of this great blessing as it is treated of in this chapter. *It is plainly promised* in the text, "The people that dwell in it shall be forgiven their iniquity." Nor is this a lone word; the same is often declared. I will not occupy your time by quoting the many passages of Scripture in which the pardon of sin is expressly promised. Is it not in the covenant, "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more"? "He that believes is justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses." Pardon is a promised blessing. It is God's prerogative to forgive, and He delights to exercise it. He says expressly, "I will pardon them whom I reserve." He has pardoned, He does pardon, He will pardon. So stands the covenant of love.

If we wish to obtain this free pardon *it will be granted in answer to prayer*. Read the second verse, "O Lord, be gracious unto us." This is short, but full. There is sound doctrine in that cry. "The people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity" is a suitable answer to that petition. If you want pardon of Him who is waiting to be gracious, seek it. It is to be had without money and without price by the man who will stretch out his empty hand to take it. It is all of grace. If you will have it God is ready to grant it in answer to your humble cry. "Where sin abounded, grace does much more abound." The Lord Jesus is exalted on high "to give repentance and remission of sins." "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." Go to your knees, and see if the Lord will not be gracious to you.

Pardon is given in connection with the exaltation of God. Read the fifth verse, "The Lord is exalted." He does not grant this forgiveness until we begin to recognize that He is a great God and a Savior. We must see that He is great in justice, and we must bow in penitence, and honor that justice, and then we must get some thought of the greatness of His love in giving His Son to die that He might justly forgive us. The greatness of our Lord's compassion in passing by iniquity, transgression, and sin must be confessed, or we shall never find pardon. Friend, you will never get mercy

for your great sin from a little God. He must be a great God to you, or you will never receive the great mercy you need. You must learn to say of Him, "Who is a God like unto You, that pardons iniquity, and passes by transgression?" Low thoughts of God create doubts of pardon, and doubt holds us in bondage under sin, but high thoughts of God beget hope in the soul, and hope leads to confidence, and confidence brings assurance of forgiveness.

God grants pardon when men are humbled. See the seventh verse, "Their valiant ones shall cry without: the ambassadors of peace shall weep bitterly." Crying and weeping are good preparations for pardon. In the dust of self-abasement is the place for hope. Jeremiah says of the afflicted, "He puts his mouth in the dust; if so there may be hope." God never pardons the proud, He knows them "afar off," and has enough of them at a distance. With the humble and contrite He dwells, delighting to hear them honor His law by bemoaning their breaches of it. When you say, "God be merciful to me a sinner," though you dare not lift up your eyes to heaven, the eyes of heaven look down on you. You shall go to your house justified, if in God's house you have confessed yourself to be condemned.

God grants this pardon also when the heart is searched. Read the fourteenth verse, "The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness has surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire?" When we begin to examine ourselves, to fear because of sin, and to turn from all hypocrisy, then the Lord will accept us. There must be a laying aside of all insincerity, a dealing with God in truth, before the gracious God can put away our iniquity. Sincerity is indispensable to mercy. How can the Lord be other than a devouring fire to hypocrites?

God will also pardon us when He is acknowledged to be our Ruler and Lord. Look at the twenty-second verse, "The Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king." Will you have God to reign over you? If so, He will forgive you, but if you will continue to rebel, His wrath shall abide upon you. How can you receive the kiss of love if you do not give the kiss of allegiance? "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry." Accept His rule, and He will accept your prayer. We must love His law, or we cannot be discharged from its curse. Be willing to obey, and He is ready to forgive.

He will also forgive us when we put our trust in Him. Read the last clause of the twenty-second verse, "He will save us." Faith must look for salvation from the Lord alone, and then salvation will come to it. Oh, how I wish that some poor heart here present would cry this morning, "He will save me; I will take Him to be my King and my Lawgiver, and I will believe for myself that He will have *me!"* It is that touch of personal faith which brings peace to the soul. If you will not trust God, neither shall you have peace, but if you will come now just as you are, and believe that He is able to forgive you, and trust Him to do so, then you shall have this promise verified in your experience—"The people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity."

Is not this a large promise? One might descant upon it by the week together, and indeed, one might rejoice in it to all eternity. I leave it to your quiet musings. If the prophet says, "Your heart shall meditate terror,"

viewing it as past and gone, how much more may you muse on mercy world without end, viewing it as forever your own?

II. Now, with extreme brevity, I want, in the second place, to say that WHEN SIN IS PARDONED, THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN ARE ALSO REMOVED. Sin had made these people sick, as Isaiah says in his first chapter—"The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint." But, when iniquity is forgiven, then, "the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick." Special chastisement is usually removed when any peculiar sin is forgiven. God, under a former age, very manifestly visited sin with chastisement in this life, and when He forgave it, He removed the weight of His hand from the offender. Read the history of Israel, and see a host of instances. There are still instances in which personal chastisement does follow personal sin in this life, especially among believers, and especially among believers in church fellowship. We read of the Corinthians, when they misbehaved themselves, "For this cause some are sickly among you, and many sleep." Within the chosen family there are chastisements unknown to the outside world. But when we go with our confession, and find pardon of the Lord, the temporal chastisement is usually removed, or else it is so changed in its purpose as to become quite another thing. Oftentimes, also, great sinners who have by their gross misconduct brought themselves into grievous trouble have found no way of escape from it till their evil ways have been forsaken. The valley of Achor has been their door of hope. Where they have bewailed their fault they have received deliverance. When the root of bitterness is taken away, the evil which grows out of it has been removed also. When Nineveh repented, its threatened destruction was averted.

But, further, when I speak of the consequences of sin being taken away, this is very apparent in respect of certain sins. A man being a drunk brings himself to poverty, he asks forgiveness for the drunkenness, and he ceases from it, by honest industry his abject poverty is soon ended. Within a few weeks you see a difference in the very aspect of the man. Oftentimes when by some sin of impurity a sinner weakens his body and injures his health, his cure is much helped by his repenting and forsaking his uncleanness. It may not be so with some great transgressions, for they may leave scars which cannot be healed in this life, but true repentance will turn even these into a means of humiliation, and make them serve as safeguards against any return to folly. When sins are frankly confessed and forsaken, then the gracious message comes—"The Lord has put away your sin; you shall not die."

Further, in the case of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, if some of the temporal results of sin do not cease, yet it is only in appearance that they remain, or rather they remain for other purposes, benign and useful, and not as wrathful inflictions. If by past sin one has brought himself into a state of sickness, or poverty, or depression, these may leave their traces upon me, but from the day in which I finds pardon, these will not be punishments inflicted by a judge, but chastisements lovingly appointed by a Father. A father may chasten his child very severely, but this is not all the same as pain inflicted by the sentence of a judge. It is one thing for a parent to shut his child in a room because he has done

wrong, but it is quite another thing for a magistrate to send him to prison for a crime. The act may seem the same, but the feeling of the authority commanding the chastisement is very different. Believers do not escape the sorrows of this life, but then, no sorrow that comes to a Christian is sent as a penal infliction. It is not sent as a vindication of law, but as a tender parental discipline. Vast is the difference between the chastisement of love and the infliction of justice. To the forgiven man "all things work together for good," yes, even those things which naturally follow upon the sin which is now forgiven. The curse is turned into a blessing, the poison acts as a medicine; that which kills the impenitent helps the cure of a believer. Yes, look at death itself. Do Christians die as a punishment for sin? God forbid. God lays no punishment on those who have accepted Jesus as their substitute, for He has borne the whole of their punishment, and it is not possible that God should exact punishment twice—first at the hands of their Surety, and then again at their own. Death is no punishment to the believer; it is the gate of endless joy. It is not death to die, now that Jesus has died, yes, rather, has risen and gone into glory, on our behalf. We thank God that the bitterness of death is past. Death itself is mentioned in the list of our possessions, "All things are yours, whether life or death." Maybe we shall not die at all, for our Lord may come all of a sudden, and if He comes while we are alive and remain, we shall not sleep, though we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. Rest you assured, believer, that seeing God has forgiven your sins, He has dried up the well of bitterness, and you shall drink no more of it, or, if it seems to come to your lips, it shall be so changed in its character that it shall be a healing draught.

Believe, once more, that all the eternal penal consequences are gone from the forgiven man. For him there can be no condemnation at the day of judgement, for him there can be no "Depart, you cursed," for him there is no blackness of darkness forever; for him, no worm that dies not, no fire that never can be quenched. In Christ Jesus he stands before God as if he had never sinned, yes, he wears the perfect righteousness of Christ, and arrayed in that robe, he can face the terrors of the last tremendous day without alarm. "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." Sin gone, the root of all evil is gone. "Comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God. Speak you comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she has received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins."

III. The specialty of what I want to say lies in my last point—that THE LORD EVEN CHANGES THE TONE OF HIS PEOPLE'S SPEECH. "The inhabitant shall not *say,* I am sick," there is the point. Why shall they not say, "I am sick"?

First, *they have no need to say it* when the Lord comes and dwells with them, for the Sun of Righteousness has risen upon them with healing in His wings. When Jesus healed the sick of the palsy, He said to him, "Son,

be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you." Pardon and healing were one. Spiritually the pardoned one shall not need to say, "I am sick," because his soul diseases then receive a healing medicine.

All spiritual disease receives its deathblow when sin is forgiven. Sin is crucified by the same cross which brings atonement. You may have to struggle with it, for the corruption of the flesh still remains, but "sin shall not have dominion over you; for you are not under the law, but under grace." The Lord's name to the forgiven one is Jehovah-Rophi—"The Lord that heals you." Albeit, you may feel full of distempers, any one of which might be fatal to you if left alone, yet in the reception of pardon there comes to you a new life which will conquer all those distempers. "Whoever is born of God, sins not." The new nature sins not. John says, "Whoever is born of God does not commit sin," that is to say he cannot sin as others do; it is not the rule and drift of his life. There is a change worked in the believer of the most wonderful kind, as it is written, "A new heart also, will I give them, and a right spirit will I put within them. I will put My fear in their heart, and they shall not depart from Me." Now though we can say that the old nature is sick, and sick to death, so that the sooner it is utterly destroyed the better, yet speaking of ourselves as renewed by the Holy Spirit we delight in the law of God after the inward man. God has made us to be holy in our desires and aspirations, and has renewed the image of His own perfect self within us, so that we have no longer need to say, "I am sick."

Here also is a very wonderful point in the passage before us concerning danger averted, for you know that when a city is besieged one of the most certain consequences in old times was the plague. The inhabitants could not get out to receive fresh air, they were denied necessary provisions, and so they became faint, and ready to be preyed upon by pestilence. Yet the Lord promised that when He worked deliverance for the cooped up inhabitants of Jerusalem they should not say, as other besieged citizens do, "I am sick." I will take up my parable and show the spiritual parallel to this. God will avert the pestilence of sin from pardoned men; they shall be preserved from those moral pests which slay their thousands. You were once the victim of every fever of sin, but now your sin is forgiven. You pass unharmed through the temptations which surround you. God will preserve the true believer from the malaria of corruption which is in the world through lust; He shall be "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." You shall not be obliged to say, "I am sick," because others are so, for the Lord shall keep you from the pestilence that walks in darkness, even from insidious and deceitful errors and sins. Remember that marvelous promise, "The Lord shall preserve you from all evil: He shall preserve your soul." The Lord shall preserve your going out and your coming in. In answer to your morning prayer, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil," you shall be preserved in purity and uprightness, and from all the devices of the devil, for "that evil one touches you not."

Here again is another point. The inhabitant could not say, "I am sick," and yet the Assyrians died in a single night. They laid themselves down to slumber in their tents, expecting speedily to divide the spoil—

"But the angel of death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed;
And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill,
And their hearts but once heaved, and forever grew still."

The Lord in this case put a difference between His people and their enemies. Multitudes died outside, but inside the city, where you might have expected things to be much worse, the inhabitant did not say, "I am sick." Today we live in an age when sin abounds; a moral pestilence is slaying its thousands. I dare not describe what is going on in the camp beyond, into which we have no desire to enter, but the Lord is a wall of fire around His people. If your sin is forgiven, the plague of deadly sin shall not come near your dwelling. Even to the end shall the Lord watch over you, so that preserved in moral sanity, you shall not have need to say, "I am sick." On the contrary, you shall sing, "He restores my soul: He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake."

Next, *they shall have no thought of saying, "I am sick."* He that feels the joy of pardoned sin forgets all his pains and griefs. In my own person I know what it is to be vexed with sore pains and yet to feel such rest of heart that I have felt no desire to complain. When we rejoice in divine love we make small account of our bodily condition! If deaf, blind, or otherwise full of infirmities of the flesh, we make small reckoning of the whole when we know the joy of pardoned sin. The inhabitant shall not say, "I am sick," because he says, "I am forgiven." The Lord gives to His people at times such peace and joy in believing that though they are poor, they do not say, "I am poor," but sing, "I am forgiven, I am forgiven." A brother had grievously offended, and had been put out from church fellowship for his sin, and he so behaved that his pastor thought of him with pain, and was glad to avoid an interview with him, for it only produced a sad attempt at self-justification. At length the Lord brought him to a better mind. He sought his pastor, and said, with tears, "Will you shake hands with me?" The pastor replied, "Right gladly. I rejoice to feel that the past is all forgiven. How are you?" The repentant one made this reply, "I am quite well now that you restore me to your esteem." The poor man was extremely ill, but the joy of being once more in his old place in his friend's thoughts made him refuse to say, "I am sick." The news of victory has made lame men leap. How much more shall it be so when the Lord Jesus manifests His power to save, and the Holy Spirit assures the heart of blood-bought pardon; then, indeed, "The inhabitant shall not *say,* I am sick."

Many a child of God, when weary, has renewed his strength at the remembrance of pardoning mercy. Though almost spent, the assured believer has gone on preaching, or visiting the sick, or conducting his Bible class, because he has felt under such obligations to his Lord that he could go on till he dropped. When a torrent of joy streams through the soul it bears it right over all hindrances caused by weakness or weariness. Since Jesus has saved us, we ask no discharge from His service because we are sick; our love to Him acts as a tonic, and strengthens us. We keep our name on the muster-roll, take our place in the ranks, and feel that till we die we will not ask to be excused so long as we can creep out at our Master's call.

I find some read this sentence in the past tense, "The inhabitant shall not say, I have been sick." The joy of pardon makes us ignore the sorrow of the past. "You shall not remember the reproach of your widowhood any more." Since their enemies were all gone, the citizens of Jerusalem rejoiced in their safety, and said nothing about what they had suffered. Many of the sick quit their couches, crowded the battlements, and looked out with pleasure towards the quarter where the foe had been. The Assyrian power was broken; the great king had fled; the men of Jerusalem forgot they had been half-starved, and that the plague had been among them. The inhabitant did not say, "I am sick." Their misery was swallowed up in victory. Glory be to God for such mercy as this. When God changes our estate from condemnation to acceptance, then is our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing, because "the Lord has done great things for us, whereof we are glad."

Again, these people did not say they were sick, *since they had a motive for not saying so.* You remember a late sermon upon the four lepers who went out and divided the spoil? [Sermon #1908, *Who Found It Out?*] They did not say, "We are lepers;" that was forgotten, and they entered tents as if they had been in health. They went into one pavilion and ate and drank, and then they went into another. Men free from leprosy could not have made themselves more at home. They took away gold and silver and hid it, though they were lepers. So when the Lord pardons our sin there is a prey to be taken; riches of grace are at our disposal. Notice the verse that comes before the text, "The lame take the prey." Doubtless, this was literally true; numbers of persons in Jerusalem were scarcely able to get about, for some had rheumatism, and others had broken bones, so that they could hardly limp along the public way, but when it was announced that the rich camp of the Assyrians was to be spoiled, the lame made a shift to be there. Old women quite decrepit, and men who had long kept their beds, suddenly rose to activity, and none of them said, "I am sick." They had a motive for getting well directly, for great wealth was to be had by the gatherer. From a pardoning God there are such mercies and such blessings to be received that we who have little faith, and are weak in heart, suddenly find our spirits revive, and we gather our share of divine gifts. A sense of pardon strengthens the weak hands and confirms the feeble knees, and we become mighty to lay hold upon the benefits of the covenant.

The inhabitant did not say, "I am sick," for the time was come for glorifying the God of Israel. Everybody was shouting, "Hallelujah!" up and down the streets of Jerusalem, who could say, "I am sick"? Children were singing, and young men and maidens were dancing because Judah was free from her foe, and even the sick folk merged their sighs and groans in songs and psalms. Jehovah had triumphed; His people were free, and it seemed to be with the people of Jerusalem as it was with Israel in Egypt—"there was not one feeble person in all their tribes." When the Lord pardons our sin, the weakest, the feeblest, the most despondent, the most despairing among us will not say, "We are sick," but our soul shall magnify the Lord. Pardon impels us to duty, and stimulates us to

praise. We no longer mourn and murmur, but we sing because the might of the enemy has melted like snow in the glance of the Lord.

Yet once again, and I have done. Pardoned people shall not say they are sick, for *by a little anticipation they shall declare the very contrary*. In a little time—how little a time none of us can tell—we shall be where the inhabitant shall never be sick again. The Lord has begun to heal us, and the healing virtue which His grace has infused into us will work us health and cure till we shall be without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. His salvation will also perfectly heal our bodies. Today the body is dead because of sin, though the spirit is life because of righteousness. The regeneration of the body takes place at the resurrection, and when we shall rise again it will be in the image of the Lord Jesus. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. We shall not rise with dim eyes, and dull ears, deformed limbs, and feeble frames. Having eaten the leaves of the tree of life, we shall be healed of all that ailed us here below. We are on our way to eternal health; we have the life within us which is to be perfect forever and ever. Why should we then say, "I am sick"? If a man should be quite sure that he would be in perfect health tomorrow, he would say little about the sickness of an hour. A blind man, who will see tomorrow, hardly numbers himself with the blind. Before another Sabbath comes round some of you may be with the angels, yes, before tomorrow's sun shall rise you may be where they "need no candle, neither light of the sun." Happy men to be so nearly well—so nearly home! Happy beings who shall so soon be—

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

Then shall you realize the fullest meaning of these words, "The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity."

Who comes this way? Who comes this way? Welcome, brother, to pardon and healing through our Lord Jesus. Who is going the other way? Let such a sad wanderer consider his way, retrace his steps, and seek his God, who in Christ Jesus can heal him. O you who are now sick unto death, ask to be forgiven, and healing will come from the pardoning hand. God bless you! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ISAIAH 33.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—406, 547, 566.

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

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

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

HOW TO BECOME FISHERS OF MEN
NO. 1906

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

"And Jesus said to them, Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." Matthew 4:19.

WHEN Christ calls us by His grace we ought not only to remember what we are, but we ought also to *think of what He can make us*. It is, "Follow Me, and *I will make you*." We should repent of what we have been, but rejoice in what we may be. It is not "Follow Me, because of what you are already." It is not "Follow Me, because you may make something of yourselves," but, "Follow Me, because of what I will make you." Verily, I might say of each one of us as soon as we are converted, "It does not yet appear what we shall be." It did not seem a likely thing that lowly fishermen would develop into apostles; that men so handy with the net would be quite as much at home in preaching sermons and in instructing converts. One would have said, "How can these things be? You cannot make founders of churches out of peasants of Galilee." That is exactly what Christ did, and when we are brought low in the sight of God by a sense of our own unworthiness, we may feel encouraged to follow Jesus because of what He can make us. What said the woman of a sorrowful spirit when she lifted up her song? "He raises up the poor out of the dust, and lifts up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes." We cannot tell what God may make of us in the new creation, since it would have been quite impossible to have foretold what He made of chaos in the old creation. Who could have imagined all the beautiful things that came forth from darkness and disorder by that one fiat, "Let there be light"? And who can tell what lovely displays of everything that is divinely fair may yet appear in a man's formerly dark life, when God's grace has said to him, "Let there be light"? O you, who see in yourselves at present nothing that is desirable, come and follow Christ for the sake of what He can make out of you. Do you not hear His sweet voice calling to you, and saying, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men"?

Note, next, that *we are not made all that we shall be,* nor all that we ought to desire to be, when we are ourselves fished for and caught. This is what the grace of God does for us at first, but it is not all. We are like the fishes, making sin to be our element, and the good Lord comes, and with the gospel net He takes us, and delivers us from the life and love of sin. But He has not worked for us all that He can do, nor all that we should wish Him to do, when He has done this, for it is another and a higher miracle to make us who were fish to become fishers—to make the saved ones saviors—to make the convert into a converter—the receiver of

the gospel into an imparter of that same gospel to other people. I think I may say to every person whom I am addressing—if you are saved yourself, the work is but half done until you are employed to bring others to Christ. You are as yet but half formed in the image of your Lord. You have not attained to the full development of the Christ-life in you unless you have commenced in some feeble way to tell others of the grace of God, and I trust that you will find no rest for the sole of your foot till you have been the means of leading many to that blessed Savior who is your confidence and your hope. His word is—Follow Me, not merely that you may be saved, nor even that you may be sanctified, but, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." Be following Christ with that intent and aim, and fear that you are not perfectly following Him unless in some degree He is making use of you to be fishers of men. The fact is that every one of us must take to the business of a man-catcher. If Christ has caught us, we must catch others. If we have been apprehended of Him, we must be His constables, to apprehend rebels for Him. Let us ask Him to give us grace to go fishing, and so to cast our nets that we may take a great multitude of fishes. Oh that the Holy Spirit may raise up from among us some master fishers, who shall sail their boats in many a sea, and surround great shoals of fish!

My teaching at this time will be very simple, but I hope it will be eminently practical, for my longing is that not one of you that love the Lord may be backward in His service. What does the Song of Solomon say concerning certain sheep that come up from the washing? It says, "Every one bears twins, and none is barren among them." May that be so with all the members of this church and all the Christian people that hear or read this sermon! The fact is, the day is very dark. The heavens are lowering with heavy thunderclouds. Men little dream of what tempests may soon shake this city, and the whole social fabric of this land, even to a general breaking up of society. So dark may the night become that the stars may seem to fall like blighted fruit from the trees. The times are evil. Now, if never before, every glow-worm must, show its spark. You with the tiniest farthing candle must take it from under the bushel, and set it on a candlestick. There is need of you all. Lot was a poor creature. He was a very, very wretched kind of believer, but still, he might have been a great blessing to Sodom had he but pleaded for it as he should have done. And poor, poor Christians, as I fear many are, one begins to value every truly converted soul in these evil days, and to pray that each one may glorify the Lord. I pray that every righteous man, vexed as he is with the conversation of the wicked, may be more persistent in prayer than he has ever been, and return to his God, and get more spiritual life, that he may be a blessing to the perishing people around him. I address you, therefore, at this time first of all upon this thought. Oh that the Spirit of God may make each one of you feel his personal responsibility!

Here is for believers in Christ, in order to their usefulness, *something for them to do*. "Follow Me." But, secondly, here is *something to be done by their great Lord and Master,* "Follow Me and *I* will make you fishers of men." You will not grow into fishermen by yourselves, but this is what

Jesus will do for you if you will but follow Him. And then, lastly, here is *a good illustration,* used according to our great Master's custom, for scarcely without a parable did He speak unto the people. He presents us with an illustration of what Christian men should be—*fishers of men*. We may get some useful hints out of it, and I pray the Holy Spirit to bless them to us.

I. First, then, I will take it for granted that every believer here wants to be useful. If he does not, I take leave to question whether he can be a true believer in Christ. Well, then, if you want to be really useful, here is SOMETHING FOR YOU TO DO TO THAT END, *"Follow Me,* and I will make you fishers of men."

What is the way to become an efficient preacher? "Young man," says one, "go to college." "Young man," says Christ, *"follow Me,* and I will make you a fisher of men." How is a person to be useful? "Attend a training class," says one. Quite right, but there is a surer answer than that—Follow Jesus, and He will make you fishers of men. The great training school for Christian workers has Christ at its head, not only as a tutor, but as a leader, we are not only to learn of Him in study, but to follow Him in action. "*Follow Me*, and I will make you fishers of men." The direction is very distinct and plain, and I believe that it is exclusive, so that no man can become a fisherman by any other process. This process may appear to be very simple, but assuredly it is most efficient. The Lord Jesus Christ, who knew all about fishing for men, was Himself the Dictator of the rule, "Follow Me, if you want to be fishers of men. If you would be useful, keep in My track."

I understand this, first, in this sense, *be separate unto Christ*. These men were to leave their pursuits, they were to leave their companions, they were, in fact, to quit the world, that their one business might be, in their Master's name, to be fishers of men. *We* are not all called to leave our daily business, or to quit our families. That might be rather running away from the fishery than working at it in God's name. But we are called most distinctly to come out from among the ungodly, and to be separate, and not to touch the unclean thing. We cannot be fishers of men if we remain among men in the same element with them. Fish will not be fishers. The sinner will not convert the sinner. The ungodly man will not convert the ungodly man, and what is more to the point, the worldly Christian will not convert the world. If you are of the world, no doubt the world will love its own, but you cannot save the world. If you are dark, and belong to the kingdom of darkness, you cannot remove the darkness. If you march with the armies of the wicked one, you cannot defeat them. I believe that one reason why the church of God at this present moment has so little influence over the world is because the world has so much influence over the church. Nowadays we hear Nonconformists pleading that they may do this and they may do that—things which their Puritan forefathers would rather have died at the stake than have tolerated. They plead that they may live like worldlings, and my sad answer to them, when they crave for this liberty is, "Do it if you dare. It may not do *you* much hurt, for you are so bad already. Your cravings show

how rotten your hearts are. If you have a hungering after such dog's meat, go, dogs, and eat the garbage. Worldly amusements are fit food for mere pretenders and hypocrites. If you were God's children you would loathe the very thought of the world's evil joys, and your question would not be, 'How far may we be like the world?' but your one cry would be, 'How far can we get away from the world? How much can we come out from it?'" Your temptation would be rather to become sternly severe, and ultra-Puritanical in your separation from sin, in such a time as this, than to ask, "How can I make myself like other men and act as they do?" Brethren, the use of the church in the world is that it should be like salt in the midst of putrefaction, but if the salt has lost its savor, what is the good of it? If it were possible for salt itself to putrefy, it could but be an increase and a heightening of the general putridity. The worst day the world ever saw was when the sons of God were joined with the daughters of men. Then came the flood, for the only barrier against a flood of vengeance on this world is the separation of the saint from the sinner. Your duty as a Christian is to stand fast in your own place and stand out for God, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh, resolving like one of old that, let others do as they will, as for you and your house, you will serve the Lord.

Come, children of God, you must stand out with your Lord outside the camp. Jesus calls to you today, and says, "Follow Me." Was Jesus found at the theater? Did He frequent the sports of the racecourse? Was Jesus seen, do you think, in any of the amusements of the Herodian court? Not He. He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." In one sense no one mixed with sinners as completely as He did when, like a physician, He went among them healing his patients, but in another sense there was a gulf fixed between the men of the world and the Savior which He never essayed to cross, and which they could not cross to defile Him. The first lesson which the church has to learn is this, follow Jesus into the separated state, and He will make you fishers of men. Unless you take up your cross and protest against an ungodly world, you cannot hope that the holy Jesus will make you fishers of men.

A second meaning of our text is very obviously this, *abide with Christ,* and then you will be made fishers of men. These disciples whom Christ called were to come and live with Him. They were every day to be associated with Him. They were to hear Him publicly teach the everlasting gospel, and in addition they were to receive choice explanations in private of the word which He had spoken. They were to be His body servants and His familiar friends. They were to see His miracles and hear His prayers, and better still, they were to be with Him, and become one with Him in His holy labor. It was given to them to sit at the table with Him, and even to have their feet washed by Him. Many of them fulfilled that word, "Where you dwell I will dwell," they were with Him in His afflictions and persecutions. They witnessed His secret agonies, they saw His many tears, they marked the passion and the compassion of His soul, and thus, after their measure, they caught His spirit, and so they learned to be fishers of men.

At Jesus' feet we must learn the art and mystery of soul-winning, to live with Christ is the best education for usefulness. It is a great gift to any man to be associated with a Christian minister whose heart is on fire. The best training for a young man is that which the Vaudois pastors were known to give, when each old man had a young man with him who walked with him whenever he went up the mountainside to preach, and lived in the house with him, and marked his prayers and saw his daily piety. This was a fine instruction. Was it not? But it does not compare with that of the apostles who lived with Jesus Himself, and were His daily companions. Matchless was the training of the twelve. No wonder that they became what they were with such a heavenly tutor to saturate them with His own spirit! And now today His bodily presence is not among us, but His spiritual power is perhaps more fully known to us than it was to those apostles in those two or three years of the Lord's corporeal presence. There are some of us to whom He is intimately near. We know more about Him than we do about our dearest earthly friend. We have never been able quite to read our friend's heart in all its twists and turns, but we know the heart of the Well-Beloved. We have leaned our head upon His bosom, and have enjoyed fellowship with Him such as we could not have with any of our own kith and kin. This is the surest method of learning how to do good. Live with Jesus, follow Jesus and He will make you fishers of men. See how He does the work, and so learn how to do it yourself. A Christian man should be bound apprentice to Jesus to learn the trade of a savior. We can never save men by offering a redemption, for we have none to present, but we can learn how to save men by warning them to flee from the wrath to come, and setting before them the one great effectual remedy. See how Jesus saves, and you will learn how the thing is done, there is no learning it anyway else. Live in fellowship with Christ, and there shall be about you an air and a manner as of one who has been made in heart and mind apt to teach, and wise to win souls.

A third meaning, however, must be given to this, "Follow Me," and it is this; *"Obey Me,* and then you shall know what to do to save men." We must not talk about our fellowship with Christ, or our being separated from the world unto Him, unless we make Him our Master and Lord in everything. Some public teachers are not true in all points to their convictions, and how can they look for a blessing? A Christian man anxious to be useful ought to be very particular as to every point of obedience to his Master. I have no doubt whatever that God blesses our churches even when they are very faulty, for His mercy endures forever. When there is a measure of error in the teaching, and a measure of mistake in the practice, He may still vouchsafe to use the ministry, for He is very gracious. But a large measure of blessing must necessarily be withheld from all teaching which is knowingly or glaringly faulty. God can set His seal upon the truth that is in it, but He cannot set His seal upon the error that is in it. Out of mistakes about Christian ordinances and other things, especially errors in heart and spirit, there may come evils which we never looked for. Such evils may even now be telling upon the present age, and may work worse mischief upon future generations. If we desire

as fishers of men to be largely used of God we must copy our Lord Jesus in everything, and obey Him in every point. Failure in obedience may lead to failure in success. Each one of us, if he would wish to see his child saved, or his Sunday school class blessed, or his congregation converted, must take care that, bearing the vessels of the Lord, he is himself clean. Anything we do that grieves the Spirit must take away from us some part of our power for good. The Lord is very gracious and full of pity, but He is a jealous God. He is sometimes sternly jealous towards His people who are living in neglects of known duty, or in associations which are not clean in His sight. He will wither their work, weaken their strength, and humble them until at last they say, "My Lord, I will take Your way after all. I will do what You bid me to do, for otherwise You will not accept me." The Lord said to His disciples, "Go you into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature: he that believes and is baptized shall be saved," and He promised them that signs should follow, and so they did follow them, and so they will. But we must get back to apostolic practice and to apostolic teaching, we must lay aside the commandments of men and the whims of our own brains, and we must do what Christ tells us, as Christ tells us, and because Christ tells us. Definitely and distinctly, we must take the place of servants, and if we will not do that, we cannot expect our Lord to work with us or by us. Let us be determined that, as true as the needle is to the pole, so true will we be, as far as our light goes, to the command of our Lord and Master. Jesus says—"Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." By this teaching He seems to say—"Go beyond Me, or fall back behind Me, and you may cast the net; but it shall be night with you, and that night you shall take nothing. When you shall do as I bid you, you shall cast your net on the right side of the ship, and you shall find."

Again, I think that there is a great lesson in my text to those who preach their own thoughts instead of preaching the thoughts of Christ. These disciples were to follow Christ that they might listen to Him, hear what He had to say, drink in His teaching, and then *go and teach what He had taught them*. Their Lord says, "What I tell you in darkness, speak you in light: and what you hear in the ear, that preach you upon the housetops." If they will be faithful reporters of Christ's message, He will make them "fishers of men." But you know the boastful method nowadays is this, "I am not going to preach this old, old gospel, this musty Puritan doctrine. I will sit down in my study, burn the midnight oil, and invent a new theory; then I will come out with my brand new thought, and blaze away with it." Many are not following Christ, but following themselves, and of them the Lord may well say, "You shall see whose word shall stand, Mine or theirs." Others are wickedly prudent, and judge that certain truths which are evidently God's word had better be kept back. You must not be rough, but must prophesy smooth things. To talk about the punishment of sin, to speak of eternal punishment, why, these are unfashionable doctrines. It may be that they are taught in the Word of God, but they do not suit the genius of the age. We must pare them down. Brothers in Christ, I will have no share in this. Will you? O my

soul, come not into their secret! Certain things not taught in the Bible our enlightened age has discovered. Evolution may be clean contrary to the teaching of Genesis, but that does not matter. We are not going to be believers of Scripture, but original thinkers. This is the vain-glorious ambition of the period. Mark you, in proportion as the modern theology is preached the vice of this generation increases. To a great degree I attribute the looseness of the age to the laxity of the doctrine preached by its teachers. From the pulpit they have taught the people that sin is a trifle. From the pulpit these traitors to God and to His Christ have taught the people that there is no hell to be feared. A little, little hell, perhaps, there may be, but just punishment for sin is made nothing of. The precious atoning sacrifice of Christ has been derided and misrepresented by those who were pledged to preach it. They have given the people the name of the gospel, but the gospel itself has evaporated in their hands. From hundreds of pulpits the gospel is as clean gone as the dodo from its old haunts, and still the preachers take the position and name of Christ's ministers. Well, and what comes of it? Why, their congregations grow thinner and thinner, and so it must be. Jesus says, "Follow *Me,* I will make you fishers of men," but if you go in your own way, with your own net, you will make nothing of it, and the Lord promises you no help in it. The Lord's directions make Himself our leader and example. It is, "Follow *Me,* follow *Me.* Preach *My* gospel. Preach what I preached. Teach what I taught, and keep to that." With that blessed servility which becomes one whose ambition it is to be a copyist, and never to be an original, copy Christ even in jots and tittles. Do this, and He will make you fishers of men, but if you do not do this, you shall fish in vain.

I close this head of discourse by saying that we shall not be fishers of men unless we follow Christ in one other respect, and that is, by endeavoring, in all points, to *imitate His holiness.* Holiness is the most real power that can be possessed by men or women. We may preach orthodoxy, but we must also live orthodoxy. God forbid that we should preach anything else, but it will be all in vain, unless there is a life at the back of the testimony. An unholy preacher may even render the truth contemptible. In proportion as any of us draw back from a living and zealous sanctification we shall draw back from the place of power. Our power lies in this word, "Follow Me." Be Jesus-like. In all things endeavor to think, and speak, and act as Jesus did and He will make you fishers of men. This will require self-denial. We must daily take up the cross. This may require willingness to give up our reputation—readiness to be thought, fools, idiots, and the like, as men are apt to call those who are keeping close to their Master. There must be the cheerful resigning of everything that looks like honor and personal glory, in order that we may be wholly Christ's, and glorify His name. We must live His life and be ready to die His death, if need be. O brothers, sisters, if we do this and follow Jesus, putting our feet into the footprints of His pierced feet, He will make us fishers of men. If it should so please Him that we should even die without having gathered many souls to the cross, we shall speak from our graves. In some way or other the Lord will make a holy life to be an influential

life. It is not possible that a life which can be described as a following of Christ should be an unsuccessful one in the sight of the Most High. "Follow Me," and there is an "I will" such as God can never draw back from, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."

Thus much on the first point. There is something for us to do; we are graciously called to follow Jesus. Holy Spirit, lead us to do it.

II. But secondly, and briefly, there is SOMETHING FOR THE LORD TO DO. When His dear servants are following Him, He says, "I will make you fishers of men," and be it never forgotten that *it is He that makes us follow Him,* so that if the following of Him is the step to being made a fisher of men, yet this He gives us. 'Tis all of His Spirit. I have talked about catching His spirit, and abiding in Him, and obeying Him, and listening to Him, and copying Him, but none of these things are we capable of apart from His working them all in us. "From Me is your fruit found," is a text, which we must not for a moment forget. So, then, if we do follow Him, it is He that makes us follow Him, and so He makes us fishers of men.

But, further, if we follow Christ He will make us fishers of men *by all our experience*. I am sure that the man who is really consecrated to bless others will be helped in this by all that he feels, especially by his afflictions. I often feel very grateful to God that I have undergone fearful depression of spirits. I know the borders of despair, and the horrible brink of that gulf of darkness into which my feet have almost gone, but hundreds of times I have been able to give a helpful grip to brethren and sisters who have come into that same condition, which grip I could never have given if I had not known their deep despondency. So I believe that the darkest and most dreadful experience of a child of God will help him to be a fisher of men if he will but follow Christ. Keep close to your Lord and He will make every step a blessing to you. If God in providence should make you rich, He will fit you to speak to those ignorant and wicked rich who so much abound in this city, and so often are the cause of its worst sin. And if the Lord is pleased to let you be very poor you can go down and talk to those wicked and ignorant poor people who so often are the cause of sin in this city, and so greatly need the gospel. The winds of providence will waft you where you can fish for men. The wheels of providence are full of eyes, and all those eyes will look this way to help us to be winners of souls. You will often be surprised to find how God has been in a house that you visit, before you get there, His hand has been at work in its chambers. When you wish to speak to some particular individual, God's providence has been dealing with that individual to make him ready for just that word which you could say, but which nobody else but you could say. Oh, follow Christ, and you will find that He will, by every experience through which you are passing, make you fishers of men.

Further than that, if you will follow Him He will make you fishers of men *by distinct monitions in your own heart*. There are many monitions from God's Spirit which are not noticed by Christians when they are in a callous condition, but when the heart is right with God and living in

communion with God, we feel a sacred sensitiveness, so that we do not need the Lord to shout, but His faintest whisper is heard. No, He need not even whisper. "You shall guide me with Your eye." Oh, how many mulish Christians there are who must be held in with bit and bridle, and receive a cut of the whip every now and then! But the Christian who follows his Lord shall be tenderly guided. I do not say that the Spirit of God will say to you, "Go and join yourself to this chariot," or that you will hear a word in your ear, but yet in your soul, as distinctly as the Spirit said to Philip, "Go and join yourself to this chariot," you shall hear the Lord's will. As soon as you see an individual, the thought shall cross your mind, "Go and speak to that person." Every opportunity of usefulness shall be a call to you. If you are ready, the door shall open before you, and you shall hear a voice behind you saying, "This is the way; walk you in it." If you have the grace to run in the right way you shall never be long without an intimation as to what the right way is. That right way shall lead you to river or sea, where you can cast your net, and be a fisher of men.

Then, too, I believe that the Lord meant by this that *He would give His followers the Holy Spirit*. They were to follow Him, and then, when they had seen Him ascend into the holy place of the Most High, they were to tarry at Jerusalem for a little while, and the Spirit would come upon them and clothe them with a mysterious power. This word was spoken to Peter and Andrew, and you know how it was fulfilled to Peter. What a host of fish he brought to land the first time he cast the net in the power of the Holy Spirit! "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."

Brethren, we have no conception of what God could do by this company of believers gathered in the Tabernacle tonight. If now we were to be filled with the Holy Spirit there are enough of us to evangelize London. There are enough here to be the means of the salvation of the world. God saves not by many or by few. Let us seek a benediction, and if we seek it let us hear this directing voice, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." You men and women that sit before me, you are by the shore of a great sea of human life swarming with the souls of men. You live in the midst of millions, but if you will follow Jesus, and be faithful to Him, and true to Him, and do what He bids you, He will make you fishers of men. Do not say, "Who shall save this city?" The weakest shall be strong enough. Gideon's barley cake shall smite the tent, and make it lay along. Samson, with the jawbone, taken up from the earth where it was lying bleaching in the sun, shall smite the Philistines. Fear not, neither be dismayed! Let your responsibilities drive you closer to your Master. Let horror of prevailing sin make you look into His dear face that long ago wept over Jerusalem, and now weeps over London. Clasp Him, and never let go your hold. By the strong and mighty impulses of the divine life within you, quickened and brought to maturity by the Spirit of God, learn this lesson from your Lord's own mouth, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." You are not fit for it, but He will make you fit. You cannot do it of yourselves, but He will make you do it. You do not

know how to spread nets and draw shoals of fish to shore, but He will teach you. Only follow Him, and He will make you fishers of men.

I wish that I could somehow say this as with a voice of thunder, that the whole church of God might hear it. I wish I could write it in stars across the sky, "Jesus says, Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." If you forget the precept, the promise shall never be yours. If you follow some other track, or imitate some other leader, you shall fish in vain. God grant us to believe fully that Jesus can do great things in us, and then do great things by us for the good of our fellows!

III. The last point you might work out in full for yourselves in your private meditations with much profit. We have here A FIGURE FULL OF INSTRUCTION. I will give you but two or three thoughts which you can use. "I will make you *fishers of men."* You have been fishers of fish, if you follow Me, I will make you fishers of men.

A fisher is a person who is *very dependent, and needs to be trustful.* He cannot see the fish. One who fishes in the sea must go and cast in a net, as it were, at an uncertainty. Fishing is an act of faith. I have often seen in the Mediterranean men go with their boats and enclose acres of sea with vast nets, and yet, when they have drawn the net to shore, they have not had as much result as I could put in my hand. A few wretched silvery nothings have made up the whole take. Yet they have gone again and cast the great net several times a day, hopefully expecting something to come of it. Nobody is as dependent upon God as the minister of God. Oh, this fishing from the Tabernacle pulpit! What a work of faith! I cannot tell that a soul will be brought to God by it. I cannot tell whether my sermon will be suitable to the persons who are here, except that I do believe that God will guide me in the casting of the net. I expect Him to work salvation, and I depend upon Him for it. I love this complete dependence, and if I could be offered a certain amount of preaching power, by which I could save sinners, which should be entirely at my own disposal, I would beg the Lord not to let me have it, for it is far more delightful to be entirely dependent upon Him at all times. It is good to be a fool when Christ is made wisdom unto you. It is a blessed thing to be weak if Christ becomes more fully your strength. Go to work, you who would be fishers of men, and yet feel your insufficiency. You that have no strength, attempt this divine work. Your Master's strength will be seen when your own has all gone. A fisherman is a dependent person, he must look up for success every time he puts the net down, but still he is a trustful person, and therefore he casts in the net joyfully.

A fisherman who gets his living by it is *a diligent and persevering man.* The fishers are up at dawn. At daybreak our fishermen off the Dogger Bank are fishing, and they continue fishing till late in the afternoon. As long as hands can work men will fish. May the Lord Jesus make us hard-working, persevering, unwearied fishers of men! "In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening withhold not your hand, for you know not whether shall prosper, either this or that."

The fisherman in his own craft is *intelligent and watchful.* It looks very easy, I dare say, to be a fisherman, but you would find that it was no

child's play if you were to take a real part in it. There is an art in it, from the mending of the net right on to the pulling it to shore. How diligent the fisherman is to prevent the fish leaping out of the net! I heard a great noise one night in the sea, as if some huge drum were being beaten by a giant, and I looked out, and I saw that the fishermen of Mentone were beating the water to drive the fish into the net, or to keep them from leaping out when they had once encompassed them with it. Ah, yes! And you and I will often have to be watching the corners of the gospel net lest sinners who are almost caught should make their escape. They are very crafty, these fish, and they use this craftiness in endeavoring to avoid salvation. We shall have to be always at our business, and to exercise all our wits, and more than our own wits, if we are to be successful fishers of men.

The fisherman is *a very laborious person*. It is not at all an easy calling. He does not sit in an armchair and catch fish. He has to go out in rough weathers. If he that regards the clouds will not sow, I am sure that he that regards the clouds will never fish. If we never do any work for Christ except when we feel up to the mark, we shall not do much. If we feel that we will not pray because we cannot pray, we shall never pray, and if we say, "I will not preach today because I do not feel that I could preach," we shall never preach any preaching that is worth the preaching. We must be always at it, until we wear ourselves out, throwing our whole soul into the work in all weathers, for Christ's sake.

The fisherman is *a daring man*. He tempts the boisterous sea. A little brine in his face does not hurt him, he has been wet through a thousand times; it is nothing to him. He never expected when he became a deep-sea fisherman that he was going to sleep in the lap of ease. So the true minister of Christ who fishes for souls will never mind a little risk. He will be bound to do or say many a thing that is very unpopular, and some Christian people may even judge his utterances to be too severe. He must do and say that which is for the good of souls. It is not his to entertain a question as to what others will think of his doctrine, or of him, but in the name of the Almighty God he must feel, "If the sea roars and the fullness thereof, still at my Master's command I will let down the net."

Now, in the last place, the man whom Christ makes a fisher of men *is successful*. "But," says one, "I have always heard, that Christ's ministers are to be faithful, but that they cannot be sure of being successful." Yes, I have heard that saying, and one way I know it is true, but another way I have my doubts about it. He that is faithful is, in God's way and in God's judgment, successful, more or less. For instance, here is a brother who says that he is faithful. Of course, I must believe him, yet I never heard of a sinner being saved under him. Indeed, I should think that the safest place for a person to be in if he did not want to be saved would be under this gentleman's ministry, because he does not preach anything that is likely to awaken, impress, or convict anybody. This brother is "faithful," so he says. Well, if any person in the world said to you, "I am a fisherman, but I have never caught anything," you would wonder how he could be called a fisherman. A farmer who never grew any wheat, or any

other crop—is he a farmer? When Jesus Christ says, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men," He means that you shall really catch men—that you really shall save some, for He that never did get any fish is not a fisherman. He that never saved a sinner after years of work is not a minister of Christ. If the result of his lifework is *nil,* he made a mistake when he undertook it. Go with the fire of God in your hand and fling it among the stubble and the stubble will burn. You can be sure of that. Go and scatter the good seed, it may not all fall in fruitful places, but some of it will. You can be sure of that. Do but shine, and some eye or other will be lightened thereby. You must, you shall succeed. But remember this is the Lord's word—"Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." Keep close to Jesus, and do as Jesus did, in His Holy Spirit, and He will make you fishers of men.

Perhaps I speak to an attentive hearer who is not converted at all. Friend, I have the same thing to say to you. You also may follow Christ, and then He can use you, even you. I do not know but that He has brought you to this place that you may be saved, and that in later years He may make you speak for His name and glory. Remember how He called Saul of Tarsus, and made him the apostle of the Gentiles. Reclaimed poachers make the best gamekeepers, and saved sinners make the ablest preachers. Oh, that you would run away from your old master tonight, without giving him a minute's notice, for if you give him any notice, he will hold you. Hasten to Jesus, and say, "Here is a poor runaway slave! My Lord, I bear the fetters still upon my wrists. Will You set me free, and make me Your own?" Remember, it is written, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." Never runaway slave came to Christ in the middle of the night without His taking him in, and He never gave one up to his old master. If Jesus makes you free you shall be free indeed. Flee away to Jesus, then, suddenly. May His good Spirit help you, and He will by and by make you a winner of others to His praise! God bless you. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—MATTHEW 4:12.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—45, 12, 262.

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

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

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

"THE TENDER MERCY OF OUR GOD"
NO. 1907

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 27, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"To give knowledge of salvation unto His people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high has visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace." Luke 1:77-79.

OBSERVE how Zacharias, in this his joyful song, extolled the remission of sins, as one of the most extraordinary proofs of the tender mercy of our God. He had been mute for a season, as a chastisement for his unbelief, and therefore he used his recovered speech to sing of pardoning mercy. No salvation is possible without forgiveness, and so Zacharias says, "To give knowledge of salvation unto His people by the remission of their sins." The Lord could not forgive them on the ground of justice, and therefore He did so because of His tender mercy—the tender mercy of our God, who has made Himself "our God" by the covenant of grace. He passes by the transgression of His people because He delights in mercy. At the very outset I want any soul here that is burdened with sin to believe in the forgiveness of sins, and to believe in it because God is love, and has a great tenderness towards the work of His hands. He is so full of pity that He loves to not condemn the guilty, and looks with anxious care upon them to see how He can turn away His wrath and restore them to favor. For this reason alone there is remission of sins. Forgiveness comes not to us through any merit of ours, present or foreseen, but only through the tender mercy of our God, and the marvelous visit of love which came of it. If He is gracious enough to forgive our sins, it can be done, for every arrangement is already made to accomplish it. The Lord is gracious enough for this—for anything. Behold Him in Christ Jesus, and there we see Him as full of compassion. We sang just now and sang most truly—

"His heart is made of tenderness,
His bowels melt with love."

The main point of this morning's sermon will be to bring into prominence those few words, *"the tender mercy of our God."* To me they gleam with kindly light, I see in them a soft radiance, as of those matchless pearls whereof the gates of heaven are made. There is an exceeding melody to my ear as well as to my heart in that word "tender." "Mercy" is music, and "tender mercy" is the most exquisite form of it, especially to a broken heart. To one who is despondent and despairing, this word is life

from the dead. A great sinner, much bruised by the lashes of conscience, will bend his ear this way, and cry, "Let me hear again the dulcet sound of these words, *'tender mercy.'"* If you think of this tenderness in connection with God, it will strike you with wonder, for an instant, that one so great should be so tender, for we are apt to impute to Omnipotence a crushing energy, which can scarcely take account of little, and feeble, and suffering things. Yet if we think again, the surprise will disappear, and we shall see, with a new wonder of admiration, that it must be so. He that is truly great among men is tender because He is great in heart as well as in brain and hand. The truly great spirit is always gentle, and because God is so infinitely great, He is, therefore, tender. We read of His gentleness and of His tenderness towards the children of men, and we see them displayed to their full in the gospel of our salvation. Very conspicuous is this "tender mercy of our God."

Now, the original word is, "The mercy of the heart of our God." The evangelists, though they wrote in Greek, carried with them into that language the idioms of the Hebrew tongue, so that they do not use an adjective, as it would seem from our translation—"tender mercy," but they say, mercy of the bowels, or of the inwards, or of the heart of God. "The mercy of the heart of God" is to be seen in the remission of sin and in the visitation of His love when He comes to us as "the dayspring from on high." Great is the tenderness of divine mercy.

But I call your attention to the original reading because it seems to me not only to mean tenderness, but much more. The mercy of the heart of God is, of course, the mercy of His great tenderness, the mercy of His infinite gentleness and consideration, but other thoughts also come forth from the expression, like bees from a hive. It means the mercy of God's very soul. The heart is the seat and center of life and mercy is to God as His own life. "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, says the Lord God." God is love; not only is He loving, but He is love itself. Mercy is of the divine essence; there is no God apart from His heart, and mercy lies in the heart of God. He has bound up His mercy with His existence; as surely as God lives, He will grant remission of sins to those who turn unto Him.

Nor is this all—the mercy of God's heart means His hearty mercy, His cordial delight in mercy. Remission of sins is a business into which the Lord throws His heart. He forgives with an intensity of will, and readiness of soul. God made heaven and earth with His fingers, but He gave His Son with His heart in order that He might save sinners. The Eternal God has thrown His whole soul into the business of redeeming men. If you desire to see God most Godlike, it is in the pardon of sin, and the saving of men. If you desire to read the character of God written out in capital letters, you must study the visitation of His love in the person of His dear Son, and all the wonderful works of infinite grace which spring therefrom. It is a grand sight to behold God in earnest when He says, "Now will I arise." With awe we watch Him as He lays bare His arm, but this full energy of power is best seen when His work is grace. When He stirs up His strength to come and save us, and brings the essence of His being

into intense action to bless us, we are favored indeed. It is this watching to do us good, this eagerness to bless us, which is meant by the mercy of His heart. It is not only tenderness, but intensity, heartiness, eagerness, delight, and concentration of power. All this is to be seen in the dealing of God with guilty men when He visits them to grant them the remission of their sins.

Just as the leader of our psalmody sometimes sounds his tuning-fork at the commencement of our song, so have I done in these opening remarks. "Tender mercy" is the keynote of my discourse; I want you to keep it still in your ears. Whatever else of melody there may come from the text, yet this is to be the chief note; the tender, hearty, intense mercy of God, which He has shown us.

I. In the first place, I invite you to observe that He shows this tender mercy in that HE DEIGNS TO VISIT US. "Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high *has visited us."*

Observe that God has not merely pitied us from a distance, and sent us relief by way of the ladder which Jacob saw, but He has Himself *visited us*. It needs no studied language to preach from this text, the expressions themselves are full of holy thought. A *visit* from God, what must it be! "Lord, what is man, that You are mindful of him? And the son of man, that You visit him?" A visit from the Queen would be remembered by most of you all your lives; you would feel yourselves half ennobled. But a visit from God, what shall I say of it?—that He should stoop to leave His high abode, and the majesty wherein He reigns, to visit insignificant beings like ourselves? This Bible is a letter from Him, and we prize it beyond the finest gold, but an actual visit from God Himself, what shall we say of such a favor?

In what ways has the Lord shown His tender mercy in deigning to visit us?

I answer; first, God's great visit to us is *the incarnation of our blessed Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*. Many visits of God to men had been paid before that—read your Bibles, and see, but the most wonderful visit of all was when He came to tarry here, some thirty years and more, to work out our salvation. What but "tender mercy," hearty mercy, intense mercy, could bring the great God to visit us so closely that He actually assumed our nature? Kings may visit their subjects, but they do not think of taking upon themselves their poverty, sickness, or sorrow; they could not if they would, and would not if they could; this were more than we could expect from them. But our divine Lord, when He came here, came in our flesh. He veiled His Godhead in a robe of our inferior clay.

O children! The Lord so visited you as to become a baby, and then a child, who dwelt with His parents, and was subject to them, and grew in stature, as you must do. O working men! The Lord so visited you as to become the carpenter's son, and to know all about your toil, and your weariness, yes, even to hunger and faintness. O sons of men! Jesus Christ has visited you so as to be tempted in all points like you are, though without sin. He really assumed our nature, and thus paid to us a very close visit. He took our sickness, and bore our infirmities. This was

a kind of visit such as none could have thought of granting save the infinitely tender and merciful God. The man is our next kinsman, a brother born for adversity; in all our affliction He is afflicted; He is tenderness itself.

Remember that He not only took our nature, but He dwelt among us in this world of sin and sorrow. This great Prince entered our abode—what if I call it this hut and hovel?—wherein our poor humanity finds its home for a season. This little planet of ours was made to burn with a superior light among its sister stars while the Creator sojourned here in human form. He trod the acres of Samaria, and traversed the hills of Judea. "He went about doing good." He mingled among men with scarcely any reservation, being, through His purity, separate from sinners as to His character, yet He was the visitor of all men. He was found eating bread with a Pharisee, which perhaps is a more wonderful thing than when He received sinners, and ate with them. A fallen woman was not too far gone for Him to sit on the edge of the well, and talk to her; nor was any of the poor and ignorant too lowly for Him to care for them. He was bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, and His visit to us was therefore of the most intimate kind. He disdained no man's lowliness; He turned aside from no man's sin.

But remember that He visited us not merely to look upon us, and to talk with us, and to teach us, and set us a high and divine example, which, as I have said, were incomparably gracious, if it went no further, but He so visited us that He went down into our condemnation, that He might deliver us from it. He was made a curse for us, as it is written, "Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree." He took our debts upon Him that He might pay them, minting His own heart to create the coinage. He gave Himself for us, which is more than if I said, "He gave His blood and His life," He gave Himself. So He did visit us that He took away with Him our ill and left all good behind. He did not come into our nature, and yet keep Himself reserved from all the consequences of our sin, nor come into our world, and yet maintain a status superior to the usual denizens of it, but He came to be a man among men, and to bear all that train of woes which had fallen upon human nature through its departure from the ways of God. Surely He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows, because the Lord has laid upon Him the iniquity of us all. Our Lord so visited us as to become our surety and our ransom. This was a wonderful piece of tender mercy indeed. I feel at this moment as if I could not talk about it, for it excels all conception and speech. Even if I were not full of pain, the subject would master me. If for the first time you had heard of the visit of the Incarnate God to this world, you would be struck with a wonder which would last throughout all eternity that God Himself should really condescend to such a deed as this. This is the heart of the gospel—the incomparable fact of the incarnation of the Son of God, His dwelling upon the earth, and His presentation of Himself as a sacrifice unto God. You need no flourish of words, do but hear the bare statement of the fact and leap for joy because of it. Since God has visited us, not in form of vengeance, nor as a cherub with a flaming sword, but in the gen-

tle person of that lowliest of the lowly, who said, "Suffer little children to come to Me," we are herein made to see the tender mercy of our God. Nothing could be tenderer than the divine appearance of the Man of Sorrows.

But I do not think we ought to insist upon this as the only visit of God's tender mercy, since the text is in the Revised Version rendered in the future, "The tender mercy of our God, whereby the dayspring from on high shall visit us." To this day we are visited of God in other respects, but with equal mercy. *The proclamation of the gospel* in a nation, or to any individual, is a visit of God's mercy. Whenever you come and hear the gospel, you can be sure of this, whether you receive it or not, the kingdom of God has come near to you. Even if you stop your ears, and will have none of it, yet God has visited you in tender mercy, in that by the gospel He tells you that there is a way of salvation, that there is a plan for the remission of sin. It is a monstrosity—what if I say a miracle—of iniquity, that men having sinned, and God having done so much to work out a way of remission of those sins, men should refuse to accept God's pardoning love. Oh, my hearers, why are you so foolish? Why do you hate your own souls? Surely, the devils themselves would at the first have scarcely believed it; that there could exist a race of creatures so hardened as to refuse the love which visits them in grace. This is what devils never did. Men sin not only against God, but against their own interest, when they turn aside from the wooing of selfless goodness, and refuse salvation through Him who loved us even to the death. That which God has so tenderly and heartily worked out in the gift of His dear Son to die for us ought to be received with eagerness. Will not *you* receive it? My dear hearers, you shall not go out of this place this morning without knowing that God in great tender mercy has visited you by the blessed fact of your having heard the good tidings of free grace. Jesus seeks you, will you not seek Him?

But, blessed be His name, He has visited some of us in a more remarkable manner still, for *by the Holy Spirit He has entered into our hearts,* and changed the current of our lives. He has turned our affections towards that which is right by enlightening our judgments. He has led us to the confession of sin, He has brought us to the acceptance of His mercy through the atoning blood, and so He has truly saved us. What a visit is this! This visit of the Holy Spirit, when He comes to dwell in us, is surpassingly condescending. I have often said that I never know which to admire most, the incarnation of the Son of God, or the indwelling of the Spirit of God. This last is a wonderful condescension, for the Holy Spirit does not take a pure body of His own, but He makes our bodies to be His temples, He dwells not only in one of these, but in tens of thousands, and that not only by the space of thirty years, but throughout the whole life of the believer. He dwells in us notwithstanding all our provocations and rebellions. Mark the word, not only with us, but *in* us, and that evermore. Oh, this tender mercy! Who can describe it? Sweet Spirit, gentle Spirit, how can You abide with me? O heavenly Dove, how can You find rest in such a soul as mine? Yet without You, we are un-

done, and therefore we adore the tender mercy which makes You bear with us so long, and work in us so graciously till You have conformed us to the image of the First-born. We are melted by the love of the Spirit—the communion of the Holy Spirit, by which the Lord has visited us.

Often and often, since our first visitation by the Lord, I trust *we have had special visits from Him*, bringing with them rapturous joys, singular deliverances, and countless blessings. "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us." The Lord has visited us in the night, He has drawn near unto our spirit, and so He has preserved us. We have enjoyed near and dear communion with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. Have we not? This has often happened when we have been in great trouble. When we were depressed in spirit, when we were burdened with unusual cares, or weeping over heart-breaking bereavements, the mercy of our God has made the dayspring from on high to visit us at just such times, and therein we have seen His tenderness. Our life is bright with these visits as the sky with stars. I cannot enlarge upon this charming theme, but I leave it to your thoughts, O you whose experience will be the best sermon on the text! The visits of God to His own children are proofs of the heartiness, the intensity, the tenderness of His mercy. Talk of it, you who have had most enjoyment of such visits!

II. I call your attention now to a second point. There is so much sea room here that one scarcely knows which way to steer. Secondly, He shows His tender mercy in that HE VISITS US AS THE DAYSPRING FROM ON HIGH. This means the dawning in the east, the rising of the sun at break of day. He does not come to us in Christ, or by His Spirit, as a tempest, as when He came from Paran, with ten thousand of His holy ones, in all the pomp of His fiery law, but He has visited us as smiling morn, which in gentle glory floods the world with joy.

While this gospel visitation is thus apparently less in splendor than that of the law, yet it is not deficient in efficacy or in true glory. God has not visited us as a candle, which might suffice to cheer our darkness, but could not change it into day. David rejoiced, saying, "The Lord will light my candle," but in this we go far beyond him, we need no candle, for the Lord has visited us with the dawn of day.

He has come, moreover, not as a blaze which will soon die down, but as a light which will last our day, yes, last forever. After the long dark and cold night of our misery, the Lord comes in the fittest and most effectual manner, neither as lightning, nor candle, nor flaming meteor, but as the sun which begins the day.

The visitation of the Lord to us is as the dayspring, because *it suits our eye*. Observe how the eye is suited to the light, and the light to the eye, in the economy of nature, and it is even so in the realm of grace. Day, when it first breaks in the east, has not the blaze of burning noon about it, but it peeps forth as a gray light, which gradually increases to the perfect day. So did the Lord Jesus Christ come, dimly as it were, at first, at Bethlehem, but, by and by He will appear in all the glory of the Father. So does the Spirit of God come to us in gradual progress. There is sweet

suitableness in the grace of God to the heart, and in the renewed heart to the grace of God. He has abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence. The revelation of God to each individual is made in form and manner tenderly agreeable to the condition and capacity of the favored one. I sometimes think the gospel was made exactly to meet my case. Do you not think the same of it yourselves? The morning light suits your eye as exactly as if there were no other creature to behold it, and so in divine tenderness the Lord has made His visits suitable to our sorrow, and even to our weakness. He shows us just so much of Himself as to delight us without utterly overwhelming us with the excess of brightness. He might have come in the majesty of His grace to us at the first, as He does to us afterwards, but then we would not be able to bear it, and so He forbore. We are now more ready to sup with Him upon strong meat, and so He puts us upon men's fare, whereas before He gave us milk, which is more convenient for babes. All the visits of God to us are merciful, but in those of the dawn of grace we see tenderness as well as mercy.

The visits of God are like the dayspring, because they *end our darkness*. The dayspring banishes the night. Without noise or effort, it removes the ebon blackness, and sows the earth with orient pearl. Night stretches her bat's wings, and is gone, she flies before the arrows of the advancing sun, and the coming of Jesus to us, when He does really come into our hearts, takes away the darkness of ignorance, sorrow, carelessness, fear, and despair. Our night is ended once and for all when we behold God visiting us in Christ Jesus. Our day may cloud over, but night will not return. O, you that are in the blackest midnight, if you can but get a view of Christ, morning will have come to you! There is no light for you elsewhere, believe us in this, but if Jesus is seen by faith, you shall need no candles of human confidence, nor sparks of feelings and impressions, the beholding of Christ shall be the ending of all night for you. "They looked unto Him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed."

I like to think of Christ as coming into the world as the morning light, because He comes *with such a largeness of present blessing*—blessing immeasurable, unlimited. Some are always for measuring out Christ, they can never do without estimates of how much, and how far. Truly our Lord comes to save His elect, that I do verily believe, but hence certain friends would allot so many beams of light to so many eyes, and limit the light by the number of those who rejoice in it. Not so, beloved, Jesus is the light of the world, He comes from on high to shed light over the whole universe, even as the sun goes forth from one end of heaven to the other, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof. He appears as the light which lightens every man that comes into the world, there is no other light. Whosoever is willing to receive that light is free to do so, yes, He shines on blind eyes. This light comes even to those who hate it, and thus they are left without excuse, "the light shines in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not," and "this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil." When the Lord comes to men, His blessings

are infinite. You might as well take your three feet rule, and begin to measure the length and breadth of the sunlight as measure the length and breadth of the tender mercy of our God in the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

When the Lord visits us, it is as the dayspring, because *He brings us hope of greater glory yet to come*. The first coming of Christ has not at once manifested everything, the dayspring is not the noon, but it is the sure guarantee of it, and so is the First Advent, the pledge of the glory to be revealed. The sun never rises in error to set suddenly, he rises to complete his course, as the strong man comes out of his chamber to fulfill his race. When we receive a visit from the Lord, it may be in the way of rebuke, or of feeble hope, but let us be patient, for the dawn shall grow with constant increase of light, and there is no fear of its dying down into the old sinful darkness. "Sacred, high, eternal noon" is the destiny of all those, whose eyes have beheld the Christ, so as to rejoice in His light.

Now all this seems to me to be a wonderful instance of the tenderness of divine mercy. Do you not think so? This coming of the Lord, and of His light, so gradually, and yet so lavishly; so fittingly, and yet so effectually; does it not fill you with gratitude? Every little bird rejoices in the rising of the sun; God has made that great orb to rise so graciously that not even a sparrow trembles at it, but chirps with confidence its happy praises. Not even a little flower trembles because the great sun is about to flood the heavens, but God has so made the sun to rise that every tiny cup of every flower that blooms opens to drink in the golden light, and is refreshed thereby. The coming of Christ is just such to us, even to the least and feeblest of us. It is not a stupendous blessing, crushing us by its enormous weight, it is not a mysterious revelation, confounding us by its profundity; but it is simplicity itself, gentleness itself; none the less, but all the more grand and sublime because it is so simple and so tender. Let us bless God this morning, then, that He visits us, and that when He visits us, it is as the dayspring from on high.

III. Thirdly, there is another instance of great tenderness in this, in that THE LORD VISITS US IN OUR VERY LOWEST ESTATE. Permit me to read the text to you—"To give knowledge of salvation unto His people by the remission of their sins," from which it appears that *God comes to visit us when we are in our sins*. If the plan of salvation were that we were to get out of our sins, and then God would come to us, it might be full of mercy, but it would not be tender mercy. Let it never be forgotten that "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." "God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." I feel always at home when I get upon this blessed topic of the visits of God to undeserving, ill-deserving, hell-deserving sinners. His saving visits spring from grace, pure grace, altogether unmixed with any merit or claim on our part. God comes to us as the morning, which does not wait for man, nor tarry for the sons of men. I cannot bear the spirit which I see spreading among us in reference to almsgiving. It should not be indiscriminate, but it should be bounteous. Many cry, "We shall give help only to the deserving." If God were to adopt

that rule, where would you and I be? It has even been muttered in an undertone that, with regard to hospitals, no doubt they are used by persons who ought to provide for themselves, and so help to support struggling medical men. It may be so, but I do not like the hard and miserly spirit which suggests such criticisms. Talk not so, this is fit chatter for barbarians. Those who know the tender mercy of God will recollect that, when we ourselves had no good about us whatsoever, His tender mercy visited us, even as the sun arises upon the just and upon the unjust. He gives with gladness to those who have no deserving of any kind. He will not mar the magnificence of His goodness by asking our pitiful pence of merit as a payment for it, but He gives freely, according to the riches of His grace. As He makes His rain to water the fields of the miser and of the brute, as well as those of the kind and the generous, so He does give His bounty to the worst of men. Let us learn this, and imitate it, for thus we shall know the tender mercy of God. To copy the divine example will be the surest method of coming to an understanding of it.

Furthermore, *our God visits us when we are in darkness,* when we are in such darkness as to know nothing, see nothing, believe nothing, hope nothing, even then the Lord's mercy comes to us. Is not this tenderness? "Educate a man up to a certain point," says one, "and then we may hope that God's grace will visit him." Educate him by all means, but have hope that God may visit even those who have no education of any sort. "Follow the advance of civilization," cries one, "and do not risk your missionaries among barbarians." Not so, our marching orders are, "Preach the gospel to every creature." The gospel is to precede and produce civilization. To them that sit in darkness, the Lord is pleased to send the dayspring from on high. To send light where there is light is superfluous. Have we not a proverb about sending coals to Newcastle? God sends not grace to us because we have already something which may be viewed as anticipatory and preparatory, but the anticipatory and the preparatory are of His grace, and He comes in love to bring these with Him, to those who as yet know nothing of His light and life. They are in the dark and He creates their day.

Did you notice that it is said "to those that *sit* in darkness"? This is more than being in the dark. The man who *sits* in darkness does so because he feels that his case is hopeless, and therefore he forbears all further action. A poor unenlightened traveler has wandered this way and that to find a road, but it is so dark that he cannot perceive his road, and so at last he embraces the rock for want of a shelter, crouching to the earth in despair. It is a part of the tender mercy of our God that He visits those who despond and are motionless in a dread inactivity. Those who have lost hope are lost indeed, and such the Savior has come to save.

Then it is added, *"and in the shadow of death."* Did you ever feel that shadow? It has a horrible influence. Chill and cold, it freezes the marrow of the bones, and stops the genial current of life in the veins. Death stands over the man, and if his hand does not smite, yet his shadow darkens joy, and chills hope, benumbing the heart, and making life itself a mode of death. The shadow of death is confusion of mind, depression of

spirit, dread of the unknown, horror at the past, and terror of the future. Are any of you at this time bowing down under the shadow of death? Has hell gaped wide, and opened her jaws for you? Have you in your despair made a league with death, and a covenant with hell? Thus says the Lord, "Your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand," for the Lord has come forth, and visited you in the person of His dear Son to deliver the captive, and save those who are appointed unto death. Knowing your guilt, the Lord visits you this morning, and bids you look up. "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." Look and live; look and be delivered at once, even from the horrible death shadow which now broods over you. I do delight to think of this tender mercy of God to those who are lost. There are lost that shall be found, and last that shall be first. You seem forgotten of God, left out of the register of hope, but yet to you has Jesus come—"to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death." Is not this *tender* mercy? If He had not come to shine on such I would never have been saved. A gospel for the cheerful would never have met my case; I needed a gospel for the despairing. I know some here who would have perished if the gospel had only been suitable to those who are of good character, and have the beginnings of natural religion within them. Only a sinner's Savior could have suited some of you, or, indeed, any of us. As the good Samaritan did to the wounded man, "he came where he was," so did Jesus come to us in our ruin. The benefactor of the wounded did not stand and say to him, "Come here, and get on my beast, and he shall carry you to the inn." But he went to him when he was lying half dead, and therefore helpless, and he poured the oil and wine into his wounds while the poor wretch could not move an inch, nor stir hand or foot. He bound up his wounds, and then set him on his own beast, and took him to the inn. This is tender mercy, and in this fashion Jesus deals with us. He does everything for us from the very beginning. He is Alpha, even as He must be Omega. Does not this show the tender mercy of our God that He does comes to us in the darkness, and under the grim shadow of death, and there and then reveals His love to us?

IV. Both time and strength fail me, so now I must finish with a fourth reflection from the text—Our God shows His tender mercy in that HE VISITS US WITH SUCH WONDERFUL AND JOYFUL RESULTS—"To give light to them that sit in darkness, to guide our feet into the way of peace." One sketch must suffice. Help me as I make an outline. Imagine a caravan in the desert, which has long lost its way, and is famishing. The sun has long gone down, and the darkness has caused every one's heart to droop. All around them is a waste of sand, and an Egyptian darkness. There they must remain and die unless they can find the track. They feel themselves to be in a fearful case, for, hungry and thirsty, their soul faints in them. They cannot even sleep for fear. Heavier and heavier the night comes down, and the dampness is on the tents chilling the souls of the travelers. What is to be done? How they watch! Alas, no star comforts them! At last the watchmen cry, "The morning comes." It breaks over the sea of sand and what is better, it reveals a

heap which had been set up as a way mark, and the travelers have found the track. The dayspring has saved them from swift destruction by discovering the way of peace.

Our point is this, that when the Lord Jesus Christ visits us, He actually brings light to our darkness; really leads into the way, and makes that way a way of peace to us. Put all together, and remember what the Lord has done for you. You did not know the way once, and all the preaching in the world would not have made you know it, if Jesus had not by His Spirit visited you as the dayspring. When you did know the way, you could not reach it of yourself; you saw it as from a distance, and could not enter upon it, but when Jesus came near, He actually guided your feet into that way. He put your feet upon a rock, and established your goings. That way, good as it was, would have been to you a way of doubt, and fear, and hesitation, if the Lord had not so sweetly shone upon you that your road became a way of perfect peace. Peace in our text means prosperity, plenty, rest, joy. I ask you, friends, whether you have not found it so. Since the Lord has visited you, have you not gone forth with joy, and been led forth with peace?

Well, now, the conclusion of all this is a practical matter. If the tender mercy of God has visited us, and done so much more for us than I can tell, or than you can hear, let us ourselves exhibit tender mercy in our dealings with our fellow men. It is a wretched business for a man to call himself a Christian, and have a soul which never peeps out from between his own ribs. It is horrible to be living to be saved, living to get to heaven, living to enjoy religion, and yet never to live to bless others, and ease the misery of a moaning world. Do you not know that it is all nonsense to regard religion as a selfish spiritual trade by which we save our own souls? It is useless to hope for peace till you know how to love. From where, comes wars and fights but from a want of love? Unless your religion tears you away from yourself, and makes you live for something nobler than even your own spiritual good, you have not passed out of the darkness into the light of God. Only the way of unselfishness is the way of peace. I ask you, therefore, today to think very tenderly of all poor people. These are hard times; let those who have more than they actually need be ready always to relieve distress, which is very urgent just now.

The call this morning is for liberal help to our hospitals. These are called in France "houses of God," truly they are Godlike in their design. There is not a man here but may be in a hospital tomorrow. Do you reply that you are a wealthy man? Yet you may be run over in the street, or fall in a fit, and the hospital's door is open to you. It is not merely for the beggar, but for the noble, that this is a refuge. Many a time men of immense wealth have had to be carried to the hospital from injury inflicted by fire or water, accident, or sudden sickness. I appeal to your selfishness, and to your honor: pay your proportion towards a common protection.

But I appeal to you on higher grounds. I forget just now how many thousands of cases of accident have gone into the hospital during the past year, but it is very surprising. They never ask who they are, or

where they come from, but receive all the wounded. Every great accident involves a huge expense upon the hospital which is near the spot. This is not sufficiently thought of, or there would be special contributions on each sad occasion. Few consider how these noble institutions are supported. "Oh, the rich people give to them!" Alas, the rich people often forget them! "Oh, but these general collections will do the work!" No such thing! It is such a pitiful contribution which usually makes up a collection that the hospitals are little aided thereby. These institutions are left to run into debt, or spend their capital, or keep their beds empty. I could not too strongly put the case of hospitals just now. I have half wished that the Government would undertake them, only I am not sure that they would be so well conducted in that case as when they are left to private management by hearts that feel for men. Something must be done. We must give a great deal more; the collections ought to be at least twice as much in all our churches and chapels as they have ever been. If you were present when a man was run over, and you heard his bones break, you would put your hand into your pocket, or do anything else in your power to help him. I wish I could make you feel in the presence of such a calamity for a minute, so as to touch your hearts and your hands. Diseases are always abroad and driving thousands to seek hospital help. I would like to take you down a ward, and cause you to listen to the stories told from half-a-dozen beds. What sickness! What poverty caused by sickness! What pains poor bodies are capable of enduring! Oh, come, let us help them! Let us give to the support of those who nurse them, and for the help of those who exercise their best skill for their relief. Who can withhold? By the tender mercy of our God, I charge you to give freely to this excellent cause. As the box goes round, remember that this is not the time for three-penny pieces. You who are wealthy must write checks or give notes, and you may send them to our treasurer if you prefer it. All must be generous for the sake of that tender mercy which is the day-spring of our hope and life.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
MATTHEW 8:1-18.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—912, 328, 195.

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

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

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

WASHED TO GREATER FOULNESS
NO. 1908

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

"If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean; yet shall You plunge me in the ditch, and my own clothes shall abhor me." Job 9:30, 31.

I FEEL certain that I am sent on a special errand at this time. Before my mind's eye I see a soul whose awful reflections are hurrying him to despair. He refuses counsel, and will not listen to direction, for dread has made him desperate. I would have a word in the ear of that worried and wearied one. Can not you see the man? He has battled long against a dark temptation, but at last he is beaten. He feels that he can hold out no longer. He can scarcely take a breath, the air grows hot and stifling around him, as he faces the question—what next? Accustomed as I am to look down on these crowded aisles and up at these closely-packed galleries, I feel a strange curiosity as I gaze into the mass, for I know that there is one man among all of you to whom I have a private message. I carry dispatches from the King of kings to one who is grievously troubled, and is become as a woman forsaken and despised. My Lord and Master described Himself in parable as leaving the ninety-nine to seek for one lost sheep; I must now copy His example. You will not grudge me for this service, I am sure. I quit the throng that I may find the bewildered one, and bring him safe and sound to the fold.

Turning to my text, let me say, that as one is startled by a shriek, or saddened by a groan, so these sharp utterances of Job astonish us at first, and then awake our pity. How much are we troubled with brotherly compassion as we read the words—"If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean; yet shall You plunge me in the ditch, and my own clothes will abhor me!" The sense of misery couched in this passage baffles description. Yet this is but one of a series, in which sentence after sentence reveals a fresh chamber of horrors. The similitudes of grief are here piled up in heaps, with what an old author has spoken of as the "rhetoric of sorrow." Physical sufferings had produced a strain on Job's mind, and he sought relief by expressing his anguish. Like some solitary prisoner in the gloomy keep of an old castle, he engraves on the walls, pictures of the abject despondencies which haunt him. His afflictions are aggravated by vain efforts to alleviate them; he wounds his hands with the rough hammer and nail with which he is engraving his griefs. Of such tortures many of us have had a taste.

From my experience, as a patient, myself, smitten down with soul-sickness, and from my observation as a pastor, into whose ears the woes of awakened sinners are constantly poured, I have somewhat learned to understand the imagery of Job. The sufferer is in double straits. While he is tossed about by Satan, his friends are discharging their arrows at him, and the Almighty troubles him. To help such a sufferer we must be careful to distinguish between the causes of his sorrow, and divide between his affliction, itself, and the further sorrows which he has brought upon himself by his unwise efforts to escape from it.

Such then, is the line of thought we will pursue. I shall make four divisions. Three of them are to be found in the text, and the fourth will follow on, as an important consequence. First, we shall notice that *a quickened soul becomes conscious of guilt.* Secondly, *the soul that is quickened makes ineffectual attempts to rid itself of the stain of guilt.* Thirdly, to deter His people from self-righteousness, *it pleases God to plunge deeper into the mire those who attempt to cleanse themselves.* The fourth point is, that *only by severe training are men led to look alone to God for salvation*—it needs omnipotence to teach us that salvation is of the Lord.

I. At the outset, then, we observe that QUICKENED SOULS ARE CONSCIOUS OF GUILT. They see it, they know it, they feel it, and they blush to find that they are without excuse for it. All men are sinners; to most men, however, sin appears to be a fashion of the times, a necessity of nature, a folly of youth, or an infirmity of age, which a slight apology will suffice to remove. You will scarcely meet with an Englishman who will not acknowledge that he is a sinner. Is it not the General Confession stereotyped in the Book of Common Prayer? But it is one thing to call yourself a sinner, and quite another thing to feel it. I have heard of a lady who owned to her minister that she was a great sinner. He questioned her kindly as to which of the Ten Commandments she had broken. Beginning with the first, he asked her, "Did you ever break this?" To which inquiry she indignantly answered, "No." In like manner he dealt with the second, and right through the whole ten. She professed in detail to have observed each one, and yet pretended to confess that she had broken them all. By such equivocations multitudes of men and women deceive themselves, and it is unhappily the custom of many a preacher to address his congregation as if they were all good people, and every one of them knew the Lord, from the least even to the greatest. This is pleasing to the flesh and clattering to pride, but it is most pernicious. How many are being deceived by this lack of marking a difference where a vital difference exists!

Not till men are quickened by divine grace do they truly know that they are sinners. How is this? Some diseases are so insidious that the sufferers fancy that they are getting better, while in very truth they are hastening to the grave. After such manner does sin deceive the sons of men; they think they are saved when they are still unrenewed. How often I have seen a poor girl, whose pale face, sunken eyes, shadowy hand, and languid step have clearly betokened that she was on the brink of death, yet she mistook the flush of consumption for the ruddiness of health. Slowly she waned, but within a day of her departure she planned cheerful projects

which proved that she looked for life. Consumption is not, however, as deceitful as sin. Where it has full power over the soul, "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" If sin were not so deceitful it would not be half as destructive as it is.

How is this, you ask again? Few give themselves the trouble to think about these matters at all. Ours is an age in which men's thoughts are keen upon politics and merchandize, practical science and economic inventions, financial schemes, and Home Rule, and I know not what beside, but sound doctrine and sincere piety are out of vogue. Few people trouble themselves to think about their souls' everlasting welfare. Men die at the same rate as of yore, but the mortality is reckoned by a percentage, and as for the life hereafter it is ignored. Friend, have *you* ever dedicated ten minutes of your time to a consideration of your destiny? Days to your ledger, hours to your amusements, years to your commercial engagements, would it not be wise to reserve some moments for your soul's outlook beyond the grave? You have made your last will and testament for the world that is fading away, but have you laid up no treasure for the world to come? Is this consistent with your usual prudence? I should have good hope for some of you if I could make you sit for one hour alone, and think of nothing but your souls, your God, and the final judgment. Alas! Alas! As the horse rushes to the battle, so men rush to the heated competition of the hour. They cannot be persuaded to consider. Poor mortals! They concern themselves about everything that does not concern them, but they persistently neglect everything that is needful to their eternal well-being.

"How is this?" we inquire once more. To natural ignorance we may attribute much of the ordinary indifference of men to their own sinfulness. They live in an unenlightened age. In vain you boast the enlightenment of this nineteenth century; the nineteenth century is not one whit more enlightened as to the depravity of human nature than the first century. Men are as ignorant of the plague of their own hearts today as they were when Paul addressed them. I know that almost every man you meet with, talks as if he were qualified to set up for a doctor of divinity, but is not this the confidence of ignorance? "Vain man would be wise"—or read it, if you please, "vain man is void of understanding—though man is born like a wild ass's colt." Until God the Holy Spirit takes him in hand, no spiritual light enters the man's soul. Preaching is an effective means of instructing the mind, awakening the conscience, and impressing the hearts of the people, and faithful preachers are scattered up and down the country within measurable reach of most of your homes. Why, then, is the doctrine of human sinfulness so little understood, and so seldom accepted as an undeniable fact? Many persons seem startled, and try to think that they misunderstand us when we say plainly that in the very best man in the world there is no virtue or grace that can be pleasing to God, unless he has been made a new creature in Christ Jesus. Let me put the truth before you as plainly as I can by speaking of your body in order to describe your soul. You probably imagine that your physical constitution is sound and healthy. I grant you all that you ask on that score, yet you are

but flesh and blood, like the rest of our mortal race, and therefore you are exposed to every disease which waylays your fellow creatures. Even so, your deceitful heart is capable of as desperate crimes as the vilest of sinners ever committed. The evil propensity lurks within; it needs only the contagion of society, or the temptation of Satan to bring it out. Does not this alarm you? It ought to do so.

Hardly a glimmer of the humbling truth of our natural depravity dawns on the dull apprehension of the worldly-wise, though souls taught from above know it and are appalled by it. In manifold ways the discovery comes to those whom the Lord ordains to save. Sometimes a preacher sent of God lets in the dreadful light. Many men, like the false prophet Mokanna, hide their deformity. You may remember the story. Mokanna wore a silver veil upon his forehead, should he ever remove it the brightness of his countenance would blind the astonished world. In truth a foul disease had cankered his brow. God's faithful servants are sent to tear off these veils, and expose men to themselves. This duty demands courage. Men veil black villainy with self-flattery! Like Jezebel, they paint their eyebrows, and adorn their heads till they think themselves beautiful. It is ours, like Jehu, to cry, "Throw her down." What have they to do with peace who, are the servants of sin? How dare they pretend to comeliness whose hearts are not right with God?

How does it come to pass, then, that the best of saints on earth are prone to account themselves the chief of sinners? Their sincerity is unquestionable. This discovery is due to the Holy Spirit. He it is who convinces men of sin. By His mysterious but most blessed agency on the hearts of men, a sense of utter ruin is worked in the chosen, and this prepares them to accept the full redemption provided by the sacrifice of the Redeemer. We cannot explain to you the mystery of the Spirit's operation. "The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell from where it comes, and where it goes: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." But this we do know—the Holy Spirit withers all merely human hope and righteousness, and thus makes room for trust in the work of our Lord Jesus. Man by nature is blindly proud, and proudly blind. The moment the Spirit of God comes into a man, the scales fall from his eyes, and he sees himself in quite a different light. To each saved soul it seems a strange miracle. I have heard the story from simple lips full many a time. The new self, talks of the old self with a kind of vacant wonderment. Yesterday our friend was on good terms with himself as a virtuous citizen, an honest trader, a sound churchman, in moral worth all that his neighbors could wish. Today he is vile in his own sight, his hands are filthy, his heart is foul, and his thoughts are loathsome. He perceives that he has been walking in a vain show, and therefore he writes himself down a hypocrite. No name is too base by which to surname himself.

Have I found you out, my friend? Wandering among the motley throng, I am in quest of a soul that seeks the mercy of the Lord. Am I not upon your track?

Perhaps I am at this moment addressing a person who has been the subject of a mysterious gloom for which he sees no reason whatever. I am

right happy to have found him, for I trust I have met with a recruit for the army of the truth. But why, you may inquire, do I make such a remark? I will tell you in a moment. There is a vital connection between soul-distress and sound doctrine. Sovereign grace is dear to those who have groaned deeply because they see what grievous sinners they are. Witness Joseph Hart and John Newton, whose hymns you have often sung, or David Brainerd and Jonathan Edwards, whose biographies many of you have read. You seldom hear much of God's everlasting covenant in these modern times, for few men feel that thorough conviction of sin, which comes directly from the teaching of the Holy Spirit. In the economy of redemption the effectual operation of the Spirit in enlightening the heart concerning its own sinfulness is sure evidence of the Father's personal love to His chosen people, and of the special atonement that the Son of God made for their transgressions—

"Never had you felt the guilt of sin,
Or sweets of pardoning love,
Unless your worthless names had been
Enrolled to life above."

You may walk through a dark cellar without discerning by the eye that anything noisome is there concealed. Let the shutters be thrown open! Bid the light of day stream in! You soon perceive frogs upon the cold clammy pavement, filthy cobwebs hanging on the walls in long festoons, foul vermin creeping about everywhere. Startled, alarmed, horrified, who would not wish to flee away, and find a healthier atmosphere? The rays of the sun are, however, but a faint image of that light divine shed by the Holy Spirit, which penetrates the thickest shades of human folly and infatuation, and exposes the treachery of the inmost heart. Then the soul cries out in agony, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" When brought to feel this, we think our doom is sealed, and everlasting destruction is close upon us. But it is not so. *This is the way of hope*. Through death to life every saved soul must pass. Ask us not to paint the sensations, nor blame us if we usually describe that experience which is most distinct. Sharp conviction, fainting heart, struggling hope, fear that haunts, terror that appalls—an awful fight of fiercely strange emotions! This is the extreme measure of the life-change. In milder form, with one decisive pang the true heart is born again. The Slough of Despond lies across every pilgrim's pathway. The years or hours it takes to wade through it must be left an open question. Sudden death is an occasional fact, but more frequently the saints are peacefully welcomed to the realms above; so in the church on earth, sudden conversions happen, but as a rule men pass gradually into the kingdom of God. Between the sensual and the spiritual there is a great gulf, and it must be passed. Of the wind or weather in which you make the passage it is not for me to speak; the voyage may be long or short, but in some sort the gulf must be traversed. Conviction of sin is of the first importance; it cannot be dispensed with.

You will say, "Why?" Well, we might suggest many reasons. It will make mercy the more precious, it will excite horror of sin in the future—burnt children dread the fire, it will teach you patience, for no future trial will be

so severe as this, and it will tend to keep you persevering in holiness. But be the reasons what they may, you can be sure of this, that no soul is saved without being made conscious of its own sinfulness.

II. We pass on to notice that it often happens, that AWAKENED SOULS USE MANY INEFFECTUAL MEANS TO OBTAIN CLEANSING. Job describes himself as washing in snow water, and making his hands never so clean. His expressions remind me of my own labor in vain. By how many experiments I tried to purify my own soul! Like all my fellows, I was always foiled in every attempt. See a squirrel in a cage; the poor thing is working away, trying to mount, yet he never rises one inch higher. In like case is the sinner who seeks to save himself by his own good works, or by any other means; he toils without result. It is astonishing what pains men will take in this useless drudgery. They prevent the dawn of day in their anxiety to attend matins or observe mass, they are austere in their fasting; they say prayers without stint and do penance to the full. We should be sorry to impugn their sincerity. With what exemplary zeal many in the Anglican Church go about to establish their own righteousness! They practice ceremonies, with a claim to catholicity which no Catholic will allow. Untiring is their diligence in one department or another of amateur office, they hope for a reward for doing what God never commanded. Without a Scriptural proof of being right in anything, they would gladly be righteous overmuch in everything. The labor of the foolish in spinning a righteousness of their own, which is neither accredited by the divine law nor by the holy gospel, is almost incredible; they would rather give their bodies to be burned and their goods to feed the poor, than submit to salvation by grace, though it is the only possible salvation.

In seeking to obtain absolution of their sins, to establish a righteousness of their own, and to secure peace of mind, men tax their ingenuity to the utmost. Job talks of washing himself *with snow water*. The imagery is, no doubt, meant to be instructive. Why is snow water selected? The reason probably was, first, because *it was hard to get*. Far easier, generally, to procure water from the running brooks than from melted snow. Men set a high value on that which is difficult to procure. From where comes it that the great majority of the so-called Christian world prefer worship conducted with gorgeous rituals and stately ceremonies? Is it not the rarity of the thing which creates a sense of value? Enter a Popish cathedral, and try, if you can, to understand the services. What are all these persons doing dressed in red and white, or those other persons in more somber color? Manipulations, genuflections, prostrations, waving of censers, and elevating of hosts—an array of symbolism which it took ages to conglomerate. What is the value of it all, unless it lies in its complications and expenses? Our Protestant friends have their milder predilections. Organs and orchestras serve them for snow water. In measured accents let me speak of music. For psalms and spiritual songs you all know I have an ardent passion. My spirit wings its way to the very portals of heaven in the words and tunes of our hymns. But for your instrumental melodies I have no mind, when you substitute mere sound for heartfelt prayer and praise. The obvious simplicity of the gospel is the only outward voucher I know of

for its inward sincerity. Praise is none the better because of the difficulty of the music, say rather that the more simple and congregational it is the better by far. Forms of worship which are expensive and difficult are greatly affected by many, as snow water was thought in Job's day to be a bath for kings, but, after all, it is an idle fashion, likely to mislead.

Besides, *snow water enjoyed a reputation for purity.* If you would have natural filtered water, gather the newly-fallen snow and melt it. The figure represents the religiousness which is of the most rigid kind—the cream of the cream. Specimens yet remain among us, of piety more than possible to men, religiousness above the range of mortals; which piety is, however, not of God's grace, and consequently is a vain show. Though we should use the purest ceremonies, multiply the best of good works, and add thereto the costliest of gifts, yet we should be unable to make ourselves clean before God. You may wash yourself till *you* deny the existence of a spot, and yet you may be unclean. You may make rigid rules, and find much content in keeping them, and yet remain in nature's filthiness. With all your shrewdness you have but practiced a human device, and in refusing to trust in the Lord Jesus you have failed to observe a divine ordinance, and therefore you will fail. Once again, this snow water is probably extolled because *it descends from the clouds of heaven,* instead of bubbling up from the clods of earth. Religiousness which can color itself with an appearance of the supernatural is very taking with many. Some folks are fond of apostolic succession; it professes to come from heaven. No doubt the notion originated in cloudland. Others are fascinated by Popery. His holiness the Pope is accounted to be a great cistern, full of grace, which is distilled in streams, and runs through capacious pipes called cardinals, and then through smaller tubes, styled bishops. At length by the still smaller pipes of the priests it comes to the people. No pretext was ever more paltry than this, and yet many are deceived by it. There is no peace in it for thoughtful minds. For such your snow water has no solace, because they see no connection between outward acts and the purifying of the heart—

"Not all the outward forms on earth,
Nor rites that God has given,
Nor will of man, nor blood, nor birth,
Can raise a soul to heaven."

If I *"make my hands never so clean,"* is an expression peculiarly racy in the original. The Hebrew word has an allusion to soap or niter. Such was the ordinary and obvious method anyone would take to whiten his hands when they were grimy. Tradition tells that certain stains of blood cleave to the floor. The idea is that human blood, shed in murder, can never be scrubbed or scraped off the boards. Thus is it most certainly with the dye of sin. The blood of souls is in your skirts, is the terrible language of Jeremiah (2:34). When you think that baptism can begin, that confirmation can further, and that other sacraments can complete your purification, you are mere dupes of your own folly. "Though I wash myself in snow water, and make myself never so clean; yet You will plunge me in the ditch, and my own clothes will abhor me." There it stands, it is the testimony of one man, but yet it is true; the Almighty attests it, and all human experi-

ence affirms it. These worthless experiments to cleanse yourselves would be ended once for all if you would have regard to the great truth of the gospel, "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." God alone can remove sin, and He does so by the blood of Jesus.

III. But AS SURE AS EVER QUICKENED SOULS TRY TO GET PURITY IN THE WRONG WAY, GOD WILL THRUST THEM DOWN INTO THE DITCH. This is a terrible predicament. I find, on looking at the passage closely, that it means "head over ears in the ditch." It is not merely some filthy puddle in which a man treads till he is splashed all over; it is a slough of despond into which he sinks. His eyes, his ears, and his mouth, are filled with pollution, and his very clothes are so foul that he utterly abhors himself. Old Master Caryl, a rare expositor of the Book of Job, says that the original can only be equaled in English by the expression—"we would not touch such a one with a pair of tongs."

Often it happens with those who try to get better by their own good works that their conscience is awakened by the effort, and they are more conscious of sin than ever. If a chosen man strives to save himself from his sins by his own righteousness the Lord permits him to see his own heart and he ceases from all glorying. The word here rendered "ditch" is elsewhere translated "corruption." So in the sixteenth Psalm, "Neither will you suffer your Holy One to see corruption." Language cannot paint abasement, reproach, or ignominy in stronger terms. "YOU shall plunge me in the ditch." Is it not as though God Himself would undertake the business of causing His people to know that by their vain ablutions they were making themselves yet viler in His eyes? We read, in the second chapter of Jeremiah, of God's remonstrance with Judah, "Though you wash with niter, and take much soap, yet your iniquity is marked before Me, says the Lord God. How can you say, I am not polluted?"

May we not regard this as the discipline of our Heavenly Father's love, albeit when passing through the trial we do not perceive it to be so? Thus, in the apocalyptic epistle to the church at Laodicea, expostulation more severe or more tender it would be hard to imagine—"Because you say, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and know not that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel you to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that you may be rich; and white raiment that you may be clothed, and that the shame of your nakedness does not appear; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see." Mark the gentle words, "I counsel you," addressed to a people whose lukewarmness excited nausea! Then follows a sentence of encouragement so sweet and enchanting that it almost sounds like an apology for the fierceness of the former censure, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent." A revelation of wretched sinfulness ends in a declaration of love and a visit of grace, for the Lord goes on to say, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock." Anyhow, the Lord will end the conceit which is the source of the lukewarmness; He cannot permit His chosen to remain in self-righteous pride, for *that* His soul hates.

Perhaps, my friend, the experience I am trying to describe will come to you through the preaching of the Word. This sermon may dishearten and distract you. Your hope was thriving like a plant. This sermon shrivels every leaf, and though, at the scent of water, the branch of self-righteousness will bud again, the next sermon you hear may wither even the stem of your confidence. If another sermon soon afterwards cuts it down to the very root, the ministry will be profitable to you, for the root of pride must be cut up. Believe me, this is mild treatment; I trust you may not be left to more severe methods.

Frequently our great Lord leaves a poor wayward soul to eat the fruits of its own ways, and this is the severest form of plunging in the ditch. While striving after righteousness in a wrong way, the man stumbles into the very sin against which he struggled. The young man, of whom I am now thinking, resolved, by the help of God, that he would be different henceforth from what he ever had been. His vows kept pace with his devotions. He started them at early morn—

"And felt, good, easy man, full surely
His goodness was a-ripening."

To the shop he went, as was his custom, but his thoughts were no longer set on earthly things, he stood, as he supposed, on heavenly ground. Because he had taken snow water and had washed his hands, he began to think that he was singularly clean. Towards evening a temptation suddenly crossed his path. At first he resisted, but it proved a feeble fight. The argument of another young man, that it was policy to yield, availed to break the covenant he had made with his own conscience. So he was led astray to a place of amusement, where the light of God's countenance never shines. The wretchedness of his reflections on the morrow could not easily be told. He felt that his feet were fast in the miry clay, and his garments foully soiled. His empty conceit might not have been dislodged from its secret lurking place in his depraved nature without some such perilous downfall.

Perhaps there sits out yonder a good sister who has grown familiar with spiritual straits. Did you ever happen to hear of Mary Huntington, wife of William Huntington, S.S., the famous Calvinistic preacher? When he prayed for her, which he did with much affection, he confessed before God—"O Lord, I beseech You, hear me on her behalf. You know how warmly attached she has always been to MOSES, and what narrow and vain searches she has made in order to find out *his grave,* which You, in infinite wisdom and mercy, have thought fit to conceal." That prayer, which was published about a century ago, is worth preserving in your memory. For that "Mary," like many worthy housewives of these days, was rather fond of collecting the rags and relics of self. If it had been possible, she would have worn at least an apron of the linsey-woolsey of self-righteousness. The Lord will not have His handmaids thus arranged; they must be quit of self altogether.

Our lives through various scenes are drawn and vexed with petty provocations. Paltry annoyances are the bane of our peace. Some of you, dear sisters, spend your years and your thoughts in a narrow circle, and I

deeply sympathize with you therein. Without a wish to be great, or to enlarge your coast, you intensely desire to be good. To do your duty to the best of your ability, is your aim, and therein you are worthy of all honor. The lot of many of you is to pass much of your time in loneliness; your temptations are therefore peculiar. For many a quiet hour, you have been busy with domestic employments, distracted by no acute anxiety, but cheered by much quiet meditation. At such seasons you are apt to get on good terms with yourselves. Presently the shades of evening begin to fall. Evening! Of which Cowper sweetly sings—

"Come, evening, once again, season of peace,
Return, sweet evening, and continue long!"

You are prepared to welcome home the husband, brother, son, who will look for his repast, and seek his well-earned repose. Possibly, my sisters, this is your season of temptation. His rough word, his needless complaint, his vacant look, when you pine for sympathy, puts you about. A sense of injustice stings you. It may be very natural, but all the same it is very fatal to your sense of superior goodness. What more treacherous than one's temper? In a sudden gust of passion, you utter words of anger. How gladly would you recall them! But they are registered. Down into the ditch of despondency you sink. For days to come you feel that you cannot forgive yourself. Your rich mantle of righteousness after this tumble in the ditch looks lowly enough to provoke your own ridicule.

Thus we do, in our different spheres, fly from this to that, and from that to the other. Some hope to cleanse away sin by a supreme effort of self-denial, or of miraculous faith. Men dream of being clean without the blood of Jesus, they even boast of it, and yet their sin remains. The eye of the judgment may be deceived till we half think we are clean, but no sooner does the scale grow thin, or the light grow strong, than the conscience perceives its error and learns the lesson that no human endeavor can wash out the accursed spot. Let us not play at purification, nor vainly hope to satisfy conscience with that which renders no satisfaction to God.

Persons of sensitive disposition, and sedentary habits, are prone to seek a righteousness of inward feeling. Let me describe these good folks to you. They aim at a righteousness that renounces every fault, and they cultivate such graces as are naturally lovely, watching from moment to moment their own feelings of joy or grief. Yet these are they who get to know, with the keenest anguish, the plague of their own hearts. How it happens is sufficiently clear. They try to live by their feelings and frames of mind, and what can be more deceitful than these sensations? Treacherous as the sea on which you sail so smoothly on sunny days, but which, at other times, wrecks your boat without mercy, your frames and feelings are not in the least to be depended on. One day you are all aglow, the flush of fervor is on your face, the next day you feel so dead and cold that prayer would freeze upon your lips. Your evidences are dark. You think you have none, and seized with despondency, you lament that "there is no hope." Ah, me! The sin-sick soul, given to watch its own symptoms, is brought into perilous straits, trying one nostrum after another, sometimes feeling a little better, and soon feeling itself much worse. Oh, that it could

turn from feeling to faith, and look steadily out of inward sensation to the work finished once for all by the Lord Jesus!

Poor Job was smitten with sore boils from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head. No doubt he sent for the doctor—though we are not actually told that he did so. It is likely enough that snow water was prescribed to him for a relief. His hands may not have seemed very sightly when he used it, there may, at least, have been some connection between his physician's prescription and his poetry, when he said, "If I wash myself with snow water and make *my hands* never so clean." Perfection in any one part of conduct would not secure cleanness for the rest. Washed hands would be a small matter if the boils remained over the rest of the body. This is another aspect of the same unsatisfactory expedient that I want to point out to you. You are under bad treatment until you walk by faith in Jesus. Anything short of grace will prove a mere mockery of your malady. Asa, King of Judah, was diseased in his feet. He sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians. Asa never recovered, but the Lord restored Job to perfect health. The gratuitous advice which the patriarch received in the time of his sore sickness was not worth his gratitude. Of his three friends, he said, "You are all physicians of no value." Then comes back the metaphor which I have repeated so often, "Yet shall You plunge me in the ditch, and my own clothes shall abhor me." After all is said and done by the wisest of men the poor sinner is worse off than when they undertook his case. All is vanity till God comes in.

Let us not forget that the man who thus described his own case "was perfect and upright, one that feared God and eschewed evil." Such a case is a puzzle to those who are not enlightened by the Holy Spirit. Although Job was renowned for righteousness in his generation, a gleam from God's countenance exposed the faultiness of his soul. Does this prove him to have been a hypocrite? By no means. His friends supposed him to be so, though they had no ground whatever for the suspicion, it was their rough way of solving a hard problem. If the Patriarch's integrity had not been so firm, if his refinement had not been so tender, if his piety towards God had not been so invariably accompanied by his pity for his brother men, if, in a word, his character had not been so complete, his trial and his deliverance could not have exhibited the extraordinary lesson which has interested and instructed every succeeding generation. He appears before us at first in the vigor of health, in the height of prosperity, and in the charm of good repute. But oh, the vanity of man! At a touch of God's finger, his flesh develops a festering mass of corruption; at a glance of God's eye, which searched him through and through, the total depravity of human nature at its best estate becomes apparent. "He abhors himself in dust and ashes." What next? Utter ruin? No, friend, *it is full redemption.*

IV. By such severe training THE AWAKENED ONE IS LED TO LOOK ALONE TO GOD FOR SALVATION, and to find the salvation he looks for. This is my last point, and I have no time left to enlarge upon it. What I want is that the truth may flash across your mind in a moment. There sits the man who is menaced with despair because every effort to extricate himself from the tangled web of his own strange experience has left him

worse than before. Did I attempt to comfort him he would repel my kindest expressions. And why? He knows that it is God who condemns him. In a British court of justice, when the judge sums up against the prisoner, small cheer can he get from the honeyed words of his counsel. But hark—"It is God that justifies." Whom does He justify? The ungodly. He first condemns them in their own consciences, and then He justifies them according to His grace. If I receive the sentence of death in myself it is the earnest of deliverance in my Redeemer. My brother, has light beamed on your soul? I hope I have found you, and that the Lord has visited you with His salvation.

I want you to notice a simple fact which seems to me to have escaped your observation. When the Almighty justified Job He commended him, and pronounced a high tribute on his conduct. Whatever mistakes he made about himself or his circumstances, in one matter he was clear as a bell, *"He has spoken right of Me*, says the Lord" (Job 42:7). Eliphaz and his friends transgressed in this respect. Listen to me, you that follow after righteousness, you that seek it in yourselves, you are all on the wrong track. You begin below with *the whole duty of man,* and try to work upward; you are sure to fail. You should begin up yonder, with *the righteousness of God,* and then you could work downward to righteousness of daily life. God give you knowledge of salvation by grace, to the glory of His own name, and to your sanctification, for Christ's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOB 9.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—556,476,602.

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

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

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

A SEASONABLE EXHORTATION
NO. 1909

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 11, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." 1 Peter 1:13.

TO read the whole chapter is most helpful to the understanding of our text. If we have studied it carefully we must have said to ourselves, "How full of their Lord were the minds of these holy writers!" Peter can scarcely write a verse without an allusion to the Lord Jesus Christ. He was not only "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ," but you can see that his heart was steeped and saturated in memories of his Master, he could hardly get through a sentence without some allusion to the death, the resurrection, or the second coming of his beloved Lord. Oh that my ministry might always be of the same sort, dripping with the holy anointing of the Savior's name! Brethren, may your conversations and your lives be full of the Lord Jesus Christ, that men may take knowledge of you, that you have been with Jesus and have learned of Him.

A second thought will have occurred to you: How ardently these men expected the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ! Peter was continually speaking of it, and so was his beloved brother Paul. They hoped that Christ might come while they were yet alive; they evidently looked upon His advent as very near. They were not mistaken in this last belief. It *is* very near. A long time has passed, you say? I answer, "By no manner of means: two thousand years is not a long time in the count of God, nor in reference to so grand a business." If a thousand years is with God as one day, if the Lord does not come for the next twenty thousand years, we shall not be able truthfully to say that He delays His coming, for with a history, of which the chief fact is the death of Christ, there may well be due pause and ample margin for working out its infinite problems. We are dealing with eternal things, and what are ages? Let us patiently wait. "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise as some men count slackness," let us persevere in the same belief which filled the minds of the early believers, that Jesus will come, that He may come at any time, and that He will surely come quickly. Brethren, before the word which now proceeds from my lips shall have reached your ear the Lord may come in His glory. Be you as men that look for His coming at any moment.

It is equally noticeable that while apostolic men looked for the coming of Christ, they looked for it with no idea of dread, but, on the contrary, with the utmost joy. In this chapter, Peter sets forth the glorious advent of our Lord as an event to be hoped for with eagerness. He speaks of "the

grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." It was to him, therefore, not a day of terror, and of thunders, and of overwhelming confusion, but a day of the consummation of the work of grace, a period in which glory should crown the grace received through the first manifestation of the Lord. It was all joy to the early believers to think of the Lord's appearing. The falling stars, the darkened sun, the blood-red moon, the quivering earth, the skies rolled up like an outworn vesture—all these things had no horror for them since Jesus was thus coming. Though all creation should be on a blaze, and the elements should melt with fervent heat, yet Jesus was coming, and that was enough for them, the Bridegroom of their souls was on His way, and this was rapture to their expectant spirits.

Observe also, once more, how constantly they were urging this as a motive! Peter never holds it out as a mere matter of speculation, nor exclusively as a ground of comfort, but he is constantly using the Lord's glorious appearing as the grand motive for action, for holiness, for watchfulness. Our text is a case in point, "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." My brethren, let us not set aside a truth which is evidently meant for our stimulus, our strength, and our sanctification, but let us receive it into our hearts, and pray that God may bless it to our practical profiting in all time to come.

I intend to handle the text with special view to the present time. It seems to me that there never was a text more appropriate for any day than this one for the time now passing. It begins, as you notice, with *girding up the loins of your mind*. These are days of great looseness, everywhere I see great laxity of doctrinal belief, and gross carelessness in religious practice. Christian people are doing today what their forefathers would have loathed. Multitudes of professors are but very little different from worldlings. Men's religion seems to hang loosely about them, as if it did not fit them; the wonder is that it does not drop off them. Men are so little braced up as to conscientious conviction and vigorous resolve that they easily go to pieces if assailed by error or temptation. The teaching necessary for today is this, "Gird up the loins of your mind," brace yourselves up, pull yourselves together, be firm, compact, consistent, determined. Do not be like quicksilver, which keeps on dissolving and running into fractions, do not fritter away life upon trifles, but live to purpose, with undivided heart, and decided resolution.

These are equally days in which it is necessary to say *"be sober."* We are always having some new fad or another brought out to infatuate the unstable. Very good but very weak-minded people are apt to make marvelous discoveries, and to cry them up as if they had found the philosopher's stone. In my short time I have heard, "Lo here!" and I have listened, and "Lo there!" and I have listened, the call has come from a third, fourth, fifth, sixth quarter in quick succession, and after all there was nothing worth a thought. The whole world was going to be enlightened by some new light which Peter and Paul never saw, something far superior to anything known by any of the saints or sages of the church, but the grand illumination has not yet come off. "Be sober," keep your feet, possess your souls, do not be carried away with every wind of doctrine, do

not be little babies, to believe everything that is told you, whether it is a ghost story or a fairy tale. Be sober; quit yourselves like men that have their wits about them. A very necessary word this, in times when everybody seems excited and some are so bewildered that they do not know their head from their heels. Crowds are prepared to follow any kind of foolery, whatever it may be, as long as it is advocated by clever men, and is made to tickle their fancy. Do but shout loudly enough and many will answer; do but set open the door and beckon, and they will rush in, whatever the entertainment may be. Brethren, "be sober," and judge for yourselves.

Nor is the third exhortation at all unnecessary, *"Hope to the end."* Certain of us have to confess that the outlook appears to us very dark and dismal. Our surroundings seem full of fear, and we are apt to grow despondent, if not almost despairing; wisely, then, does bold Peter say to us, "Hope to the end." You who love the truth, do not despair of its success; you who hold to the good old ways, do not dream that everybody will desert them, do not give way to distrust as to the issues of the conflict. Be so hopeful as to be "calm mid the bewildering cry, confident of victory."

Put these three exhortations into one, pull yourselves together, be steady, and be hopeful. There you have the practical run of the text. I desire earnestly that, by God's Spirit, we may carry it into practice henceforth and ever.

In asking your attention to the text, I notice, first, *an argument*—"Wherefore." Secondly, *an exhortation*—"Gird up the loins of your mind; be sober, and hope to the end," and thirdly, *an expectation*—"hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

I. First, then, here is AN ARGUMENT, indicated by "wherefore." True religion is not unreasonable, it is common sense set to heavenly music. Albeit that true religion may be above reason, it is never contrary to reason, but if we had the reason of God, our reason would teach us what His Holy Spirit has revealed. Pure religion is pure truth; God help us to be sure of this! Holiness is also a direct logical inference from revelation. I like to notice the epistles with their "therefores" and "wherefores." If you read the First Epistle of Peter, you have in this verse "wherefore," and in the eighteenth verse "forasmuch," and in the twenty-second verse "seeing then." The second chapter begins with "wherefore," the sixth verse has its "wherefore;" the seventh its "therefore," and the rest of the chapter is studded with the argumentative word "for." Peter might seem to be too impetuous to be argumentative, but it is clear that to him godliness was a matter of argument, that he saw a distinct connection between the doctrine of grace and a holy life. Here in our text he says, *"Wherefore* gird up the loins of your mind."

Will you kindly follow me while I run over his argument? I shall have to give you only an outline of it. Here it is.

He begins by saying, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." See, brethren, you are elected to a very high privilege, you are chosen of God from before the foundation of

the world, out of His free favor, that you should be a sanctified, obedient, and cleansed people; wherefore, since God has chosen you to this, do not give way to the world, but gird up your loins to contend with it; be not carried away with every novelty, be sober; do not be downcast and dispirited, but bravely hope. Shall the elect of God be timorous? Shall those who are chosen of the Most High give way to despair? God forbid! There is an argument, then, in the first and second verses, forcibly supporting the precepts of the text. If we had time to elaborate it, we should see that it well behooves the elect of God to choose his service resolutely, to abide in it steadfastly, and hope for its reward with supreme confidence.

But next, Peter declares that, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has "begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." O you begotten of God, see that you live as such! You are twice-born men, live not the low life of the merely natural man. You are of the blood royal, you are descended from the King of kings, degrade not your descent! You are born, not to death, as you were at your first birth, but unto life. Though you pass through the grave, you shall not remain there. The morgue is no home for your body; you shall come up out of the grave, for you are begotten again unto a hope most full of life by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Wherefore, gird up your loins. If it is so that there is this new life in you, a life eternal as the life of God, then be not cast down, pull your belt close about you, keep yourself free from the oppressive cares and temptations of the world, and stand with holy hope, expecting the coming of your Lord from heaven. That is a good argument, is it not? Your election and your regeneration call you to holy living.

Further, the apostle goes on to say that you are heirs of "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven for you." For you the harp of gold, for you the starry crown, the endless victory, the sight of the King in His beauty, for you the sitting upon the throne of Jesus, even as He has overcome, and has sat down with His Father upon His throne. Courage, then, brethren, if this is your destiny, if within a month you may be in heaven, if within a brief period you shall be exalted to share the rest of your Redeemer, do not be cast down, nor overwhelmed with trouble, nor dismayed by the abounding of sin, nor even by your own personal temptations. "Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end," for your end must be glorious! Good argument, is it not?

Then he goes on to say that you are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." God Himself surrounds you as with a wall of fire. Until omnipotence can be vanquished, until immutability can be changed, until the immortal God can die, not one of His chosen people shall be destroyed. "Kept by the power of God," what power can destroy us? Wherefore, brethren, be brave and confident. Shall such a man as I flee? Kept by the power of God, shall I tremble? If the power of God keeps me, shall I "reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man?" If the power of God keeps me, shall I be hopeless? Shall I speak like one that has no hereafter to rejoice in? It cannot be so; if God keeps us we will keep our hope even to the end. Is not that a good argument?

Further, the apostle goes on to say that we may be passing through needful trial, but it is only for a little while. "Wherein you greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it is tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." See, beloved, the apostle declares that you must be tried even as gold must be put into the furnace, you have faith, and faith must be tested, it is according to its nature and divine purpose. The faith of Abraham was sharply tried, and so must the faith of all believers be. That your religion may be really solid metal, and not an imitation of it, or a mere gilded bauble, you must be tried. Your Master was tried, not without fighting did He win His crown; not without labor did He enter into His reward. There is a necessity for our present affliction. God has a design in it—that He may have praise and glory and honor at the appearing of His dear Son, a praise, and glory, and honor in which we shall share. Come, then, brethren, if this fire is to be passed through, let us gird up our loins to dash through it. Let us not fear, for the Lord has said, "When you pass through the fire I will be with you, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you." My brethren, if for a little time we must be tried, let us set our faces like flints to bear the trial. Let us not be intoxicated with sorrow or fear. Since God has a grand design in it, let us bow ourselves to His divine will, and only ask that His holy design may be fully answered. Let us hope to be sustained in the trial, and sanctified as the result of it, and let no unbelieving fear cast a cloud over our sky. Is not this a good argument?

Nor is this all. He tells us that even while we are in trial we are still full of joy. Read the eighth verse concerning "Jesus Christ, whom having not seen, you love; in whom, though now you see Him not, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Beloved, we who love the Lord have our joy even in our present adversity. We have two heavens, a heaven here and a heaven hereafter. Jesus is with us, and this is heaven, we are soon to be with Jesus, and that is another heaven. Though sometimes cast down, we are glad at heart—

"I would not change my blessed estate
For all that earth calls good or great."

Give me but the company of the sweet Lord Jesus and I ask no greater happiness. Yes, let me go back to my bed and my pain if I may have Jesus there. Better to lie in a dungeon, and pine on bread and water with Christ's company, than to sit in a parliament of kings, and be yourself their emperor and be without the Lord. Saints find everything in Christ when they have nothing else, and they equally find everything in Him when earthly comforts are multiplied: Beloved, if it is so, then let us gird up the loins of our mind, and be sober, and hope to the end. He that is with us now and makes all our sorrows work for good will be with us even to the end. Come life, come death, our Lord's presence provides us with an all-sufficiency. If His presence shall go with us, and He will give us peace, we need not stipulate as to the road. Wherefore let us not be dismayed, nor even think of doubting. Is not this a good argument?

Once more, the apostle goes on to say that the gospel which we believe, and which we teach, and for which we are ready to suffer, and even to die, is a gospel that comes to us with the sanction of the prophets. The Holy Spirit moved upon those choice spirits, so that they spoke to us concerning the sufferings of Christ, and the glory which should follow. It seems to me, brethren, that with such men as Moses and David, Isaiah and Jeremiah, to support our faith, we need not be ashamed of our company, nor tremble at the criticisms of the moderns. We ought rather to gird up the loins of our mind, and give our whole soul to the proclamation of a gospel which is rendered venerable by the testimony of inspired men of all ages. Be sober and steadfast in the belief of the old faith, never be moved by anything that modern rationalism or ancient unbelief may have to say. For not only do the prophets assure us that we follow no cunningly-devised fable, but the angels stand gazing into it with strong desire to know more of it. The daily study of cherubim and seraphim is the revelation of God in Christ. I tell you, sirs, that the gospel which today is hacked in pieces by the wise men of this world, who tell us that they have found out something more in harmony with growing enlightenment, is still the admiration of every holy one who walks yon golden streets, or waits before the burning throne. Still angels and principalities and powers do admire the mystery of the Incarnate God, and the substitutionary atonement made for men by the crucified Lord. They never cease to wonder and adore concerning the glorious gospel of the blessed God. Standing, then, side by side with prophets, looking with intent gaze to the same object which fixes the attention of angels, we are not abashed by ridicule, nor disquieted by opposition. We stand fast, as upon a rock, girding up the loins of our mind, and hoping to the end. There again is a right good argument. Is it not so?

II. I beg you, dear friends, to follow me to the next head of discourse, namely, THE EXHORTATION. The exhortation is a triplet, "Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end."

The first exhortation, *"Gird up the loins of your mind,"* sounds very sweet in my ears. I do not know whether it raises in your minds, echoes, as it does in mine. I fancy that Peter had a noticeable habit of pulling his garments together. I read of him that he "girt his fisher's coat unto him, for he was stripped." Almost everybody has some personal peculiarity and mannerism, and it may have been the way of Peter to be often tightening his belt. Hence the Savior—and here is the music of the text to me—said to him by the sea, after He had said, "Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?"—"When you were young you girded yourself, and walked where you would, but when you shall be old, you shall stretch forth your hands, and another shall gird you, and carry you where you would not. This spoke he, signifying by what death he should glorify God." That word "gird," while it had something to do with Peter's old habit, is now sanctified by that blessed word which his Master had given him. Turning to the Lord's people, whom he desires to feed, he says to them, "Gird up the loins of your mind." "My Master talked of my girding my loins, and of my being girt. I say now to you, 'Gird up the loins of your mind.'" Do you not think he borrowed the expression from the Lord Jesus? I think he did.

Moreover, he was writing to Hebrew strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia. May he not have had ringing in his ears for these Hebrews the words of Moses to their fathers when they were strangers in Egypt? They were to eat the Passover with their loins girded and their staves in their hands. Thus Peter would have his brother "strangers" live in expectation of their complete deliverance and home-going, which was drawing near. I detect an echo of Egypt and the Paschal supper in this word.

Or did Peter wish them to be ready to rejoice in the great blessing which was soon to come to them? Were they to be ready to leap and run for joy? We read of Elijah, that when he heard the sound of an abundance of rain, he girded himself and ran before Ahab's chariot, and so when we hear of the grace that is to be revealed at the coming of our Lord, we are ready to run without weariness and walk without fainting. Oh that every servant of God would gird up his loins to run and meet his Master's chariot, for the King is on His way! He comes! He comes! Go forth to meet Him. Meeting Him, it is but fit that you should be found as servants prepared to do His bidding and run on His errands.

The exact meaning of the metaphor, "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind," is to be found in the form of Oriental dress, which requires the use of a girdle, and the girding of it tightly, lest the garments should entangle the feet of the traveler, or otherwise hinder his action.

"Gird up the loins of your mind." My brethren, that certainly teaches us, in the first place, *earnestness*. A man going to work tucks up his sleeves, and tightens his robes. He has something to do which demands all his strength, and therefore, he cannot afford to have anything hanging loosely about him to hinder him. We brace ourselves for a supreme effort, and the Christian life is always such. We must always be in earnest if we would be disciples of our earnest Lord.

Does it not also mean *preparedness?* When a man has girt his garments about him, he is ready for his work. A true believer should be ready for suffering or service—ready, indeed, for anything. A servant standing with his loins girt signifies that whatever the message may be from his Master, he is ready to deliver it; whatever the errand, he is ready to run upon it. He only needs the word, and he will not hesitate, but will obey at once. This is the position which Christian people should always occupy, you should be earnestly prepared for the will of the Lord, let it be what it may. The future is to you unknown, but you are in a fit condition to meet it, whatever form it may assume.

But the figure means more than this, does it not? It means *determination,* and hearty resolution. The man who girds himself up for a work means that he is resolved to do it at once. He has made up his mind, no shilly-shallying remains with him, no hesitancy, no questioning, no holding back; he is set upon his course and is not to be moved from it. You will never get to heaven, any of you, by playing at religion. There will be no climbing the hill of the Lord without effort, no going to glory without the violence of faith. I believe that the ascent to heaven is still as Bunyan described it—a staircase, every step of which will have to be fought for. He heard sweet singers on the roof of the palace singing—

"Come in! Come in!

Eternal glory you shall win."

Many had a mind to enter the palace and win that eternal glory, but then at the doorway stood a band of warlike men, with drawn swords, to wound and kill every man that ventured to enter. Therefore many who would have liked to have walked on the top of the palace did not care for so dangerous an enterprise; they desired the end but not the way to it. At last there came one with a determined countenance, and he said to the writer with the inkhorn by his side, "Set down my name, sir," and when his name was duly recorded, he drew his sword and rushed upon the armed men with all his might. It was a fierce conflict, but he meant to conquer or die, and he did conquer; he cut a lane through his enemies, and by and by, he, too, was heard singing with the rest—

"Come in! Come in!
Eternal glory you shall win."

By conflict throughout a whole life we come to our rest, and there is no other way. You cannot go round to a back door, and enter into heaven by stealth. You must fight if you would reign. Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind.

Once more, the figure teaches us that our life must be *concentrated*. "Gird up the loins of your mind." We have no strength to spare; we cannot afford to let part of our force leak away. We need to bring all our faculties to bear upon one point, and exert them all to one end. Much can be done by concentration. The rays of the sun are warm, but if you collect them into a focus, by a magnifying glass, you produce a fire which otherwise you could not find in them. Concentrate your faculties upon faith in Jesus! Concentrate your emotions upon the love of Jesus! Concentrate your whole being upon the glory of Jesus! You will accomplish marvels if you do this. A man who is all over the place is nowhere, but he whose life is one and indivisible is strong, and his influence will be felt in the service of his Master.

I cannot stay long upon one point, though there is so much to be said. The second exhortation is—*"Be sober."* And does not that mean, first, moderation in all things? Do not be so excited with joy, as to become childish. Do not grow intoxicated and delirious with worldly gain or honor. On the other hand, do not be too much depressed with passing troubles. There are some who are so far from sobriety that, if a little goes wrong with them, they are ready to cry, "Let me die." No, no.

"Be sober." Keep the middle way, hold to the golden mean. There are many persons to whom this exhortation is most needful. Are there not men around us who blow hot today and cold tomorrow?—their heat is torrid, their cold, arctic. You would think they were angels from the way they talk one day, but you might think them angels of another sort from the manner in which they act at other times. They are so high up, or so low down, that in each case they are extreme. Today they are carried away with this, and the next carried away with that. I knew a Christian man right well to whom I was accustomed to use one salutation whenever I saw him. He was a good man, but changeable. I said to him, "Good morning friend! What are you now?" He was once a valiant Arminian, setting young people right as to the errors of my Calvinistic teaching. A short time after, he became exceedingly Calvinistic himself, and wanted

to screw me up several degrees; but I declined to yield. Soon he became a Baptist, and agreed with me on all points, so far as I know. This was not good enough, and therefore he became a Plymouth Brother, and after that he went to the church from which he originally set out. When I next met him I said, "Good morning, brother, what are you now?" He replied, "That is too bad, Mr. Spurgeon, you asked me the same question last time." I replied, "Did I? But what are you now? Will the same answer do?" I knew it would not. I would earnestly say to all such brethren, "Be sober. Be sober." It cannot be wise to stagger all over the road in this fashion. Make sure of your footing when you stand, make doubly sure of it before you shift.

To be sober means to have a calm, clear head, to judge things after the rule of right, and not according to the rule of mob. Be not influenced by those who cry loudest in the street, or by those who beat the biggest drum; judge for yourselves as men of understanding; judge as in the sight of God with calm deliberation.

"Be sober," that is, be clear-headed. The man who drinks, and thus destroys the sobriety of his body, is befogged, and muddled, and has lost his way. Ceasing to be sober, he makes a fool of himself. Do not commit this sin spiritually. Be especially clear-headed and calm as to the things of God. Ask that the grace of God may so rule in your heart that you may be peaceful and serene, and not troubled with idle fear on one side or with foolish hope on the other.

"Be sober," says the apostle. You know the word translated "be sober," sometimes means "be watchful," and indeed, there is a great kinship between the two things. Live with your eyes open; do not go about the world half asleep. Many Christians are asleep. Whole congregations are asleep. The minister snores theology, and the people in the pews nod in chorus. Much sacred work is done in a sleepy style. You can have a Sunday school, and teachers and children can be asleep. You can have a tract-distributing society, with visitors going round to the doors all asleep, you can do everything in a dreamy way if so it pleases you. But says the apostle—be watchful, be alive, brethren, look alive, be so awakened by these grand arguments with which we have plied you already, that you shall brace yourselves up, and throw your whole strength into the service of your Lord and Master.

Finally, let us *"hope to the end."* Never despair; never even doubt. Hope when things look hopeless. A sick and suffering brother rebuked me the other day for being cast down. He said to me, "We ought never to show the white feather, but I think you do sometimes." I asked him what he meant, and he replied, "You sometimes seem to grow desponding and low. Now I am near to die, but I have no clouds and no fears." I rejoiced to see him so joyous and I answered, "That is right, my brother, blame me as much as you please for my unbelief, I richly deserve it." "Why," he said, "you are the father of many of us. Did you not bring me and my friend over yonder to Christ? If you get low in spirit after so much blessing, you ought to be ashamed of yourself." I could say no other than, "I am ashamed of myself, and I desire to be more confident in the future." Brethren, we must hope, and not fear. Be strong in holy confidence in God's word, and be sure that His cause will live and prosper. Hope, says

the apostle; hope to the end; go right through with it, if the worst comes to the worst, hope still. Hope as much as ever a man can hope, for when your hope is in God you cannot hope too much.

But let your hope be all in grace. Do not hope in yourself or in your works, but "hope in the grace," for so the text may be read. Hope, moreover, in the grace which you have not yet received, in "the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Bless God for the grace that you have not yet obtained, for He has it in store for you, yes, He has put it on the road, and it is coming to you. When for the moment you seem to be slack in present grace, say, "Glory to God for all the grace I have not tasted yet." Hope for the grace which is to come with your coming Lord.

III. This has brought me to my last head, in which there is much sweetness. I ask your patience while I dwell upon it. The third point is EXPECTATION, "Hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." What you have got to hope for, brethren, is more grace. God will always give you grace. He will never deal with you upon the ground of merit, that door is shut, He has begun with you in grace, and He will go on with you in grace, therefore "hope to the end for the grace."

Next, it is grace that is on the way to you. The Greek should be rendered, "Hope to the end for the grace that is being brought to you," or, "the grace that is a-bringing to you." Grace is coming to you with all speed. Jesus Christ is coming; He is on the way to earth, look for Him soon to appear,

The grace you are to look for is grace linked with your Lord Jesus Christ, you never received any grace apart from Him, and you never will.

The grace you are to hope for is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. He has been revealed once, at His first advent, hence the grace you have. He is to be revealed very soon in His second advent, hence the grace that is a-coming to you. Think of the grace that is a-coming. "My ship is coming home," says the child. So also is mine, Jesus is coming, and that means all things to me. The golden chariot of my Lord is a coming loaded down with unutterable love, and infinite joy, and eternal delight. Rejoice this morning for the grace that is a-coming, grace that is linked with Jesus Christ.

But what can this grace be that will be received at His coming? Justification? No, we have that already, by His resurrection. Sanctification? No, we have that already, by being made partakers of His life. What is the grace that is to be revealed at His coming? Just look at the chapter and you will read in the fifth verse, "Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." *Perfect salvation* is one part of the grace which is to be brought in the last time when Christ comes. When He comes there will be perfection for our souls and salvation for our bodies. Perhaps, we may be alive when He comes, if so, we shall be changed in the twinkling of an eye into perfection, for "this corruption must put on incorruption." Perhaps, we may die before He comes, if so, it does not matter, though corruption, earth, and worms may have devoured this flesh, yet at His coming, our body shall rise in the image of Christ's glorious body. We look for perfect salvation

at the coming of Christ. This is the grace that is a-bringing to us, and is on the road now.

And that is not all. The second grace that Christ will bring with Him when He comes is the *perfect vindication* of our faith, "that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it is tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." Today they sneer at our faith, but they will not do so when Jesus comes, today we ourselves tremble for the ark of the Lord, but we shall not do so when He comes. The coming of Christ in all the glory of the Father will be a vindication of our faith. Then shall all men say that believers were wise, prudent, and philosophical. Those who believe in Jesus may be called fools today, but men will think otherwise when they see them shine forth as the sun in the Father's kingdom. Wait a wee bit, all will be cleared soon. Copernicus declared the truth that the earth and the planets revolve around the sun. His opponents replied that this could not be true, for if the planet Venus revolved around the sun, she must present the same phases as the moon. This was very true. Copernicus looked up to Venus, but he could not see those phases, nor could anyone else, nevertheless he stuck to his statement, and said, "I have no reply to give, but in due time God will be so good that an answer will be found." Copernicus died, and his teaching had not yet been justified, but soon after Galileo came forward with his telescope, and on looking at Venus he saw that she did pass through exactly the same changes as the moon. Thus wisdom is justified of her children. Truth may not prevail today or tomorrow, but her ultimate victory is sure. Today they say that the doctrines of grace are antiquated, obsolete, and even injurious. We are at no trouble to answer the charge. We can wait, and we do not doubt that public thought will alter its tone. I hear the sneering word, "You orthodox are fools, for you hold to exploded notions." Truly, sir, we do believe that which you please to say is exploded, but we shall be found to be right when your new systems have come and gone, like vapors which appear for a little time, and then vanish away. He is coming who will justify all who believe in Him, and award praise, and glory, and honor to their faith. If our gospel is a lie, it will prove to be a lie at His coming, but it is so true that we are not troubled at the prospect of the last great judgement. The mysteries which now perplex us will be solved when the mists are rolled away. Wherefore hope on for the Grace that is to be revealed.

Once more, when Christ comes there will be a revelation of *perfect Glory*. Read the eleventh verse, "Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." Now this is the grace which is to come to us when Christ appears. "Grace!" you say, "You mean glory." I do. Yet what is glory but grace come to perfection? Grace is glory in the bud, and glory is grace in the full flower. You believe in Jesus Christ, but as yet you do not see the glory that awaits you. Wait a little while. "It does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

I have brought you back to the second coming of Christ. I told you it was a practical doctrine. I want to leave that impression upon your minds that you may go back to your daily work and constant struggle with the world. "Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end"—because there is wondrous grace to be revealed to you by and by. I should like you to act as the American—Colonel Davenport—did upon a certain occasion. One day, many years back, a thick darkness came over the United States. Now and then in London we have dreadfully dark days for which we can scarcely account, but this was quite a new experience for the New Englanders, and caused a terrible sensation. So exceedingly black was it that the barn-door fowls went to roost in the middle of the day. The darkness grew worse, and people trembled in their houses, declaring that the end of the world was coming. They were all excited and alarmed. One of the houses of legislature adjourned under the belief that the Day of Judgment was come. The other house was sitting, and the blackness was so intense that everybody was awed. A motion was made that they should break up, as the end of the world had certainly arrived. Colonel Davenport objected, saying, "The Judgment is either approaching, or it is not. If it is not, there is no cause for adjourning, and if it is, I choose to be found doing my duty. I wish, therefore, that candles may be brought." Brethren, it is dark, but whatever is going to happen, or whatever is not going to happen, let us be found girded, sober, and hopeful. In these dark political times, these dark religious times, I call for candles, for we mean to go on working. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 PETER 1.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—909, 678, 356.

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

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

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

THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL
NO. 1910

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 18, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be reconciled to God. For He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." 2 Corinthians 5:20, 21.

THE heart of the gospel is redemption, and the essence of redemption is the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ. They who preach this truth preach the gospel in whatever else they may be mistaken, but they who preach not the atonement, whatever else they declare, have missed the soul and substance of the divine message. In these days I feel bound to go over and over again the elementary truths of the gospel. In peaceful times we may feel free to make excursions into interesting districts of truth which lie far afield, but now we must stay at home, and guard the hearths and homes of the church by defending the first principles of the faith. In this age there have risen up in the church itself men who speak perverse things. There are many, that trouble us with their philosophies, and novel interpretations, whereby they deny the doctrines they profess to teach, and undermine the faith they are pledged to maintain. It is well that some of us, who know what we believe, and have no secret meanings for our words, should just put our foot down and maintain our standing, holding forth the word of life, and plainly declaring the foundational truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Let me give you a parable. In the days of Nero there was great shortness of food in the city of Rome, although there was abundance of corn to be purchased at Alexandria. A certain man who owned a vessel went down to the sea coast, and there he noticed many hungry people straining their eyes toward the sea, watching for the vessels that were to come from Egypt with corn. When these vessels came to the shore, one by one, the poor people wrung their hands in bitter disappointment, for on board the galleys there was nothing but sand which the tyrant emperor had compelled them to bring for use in the arena. It was infamous cruelty, when men were dying of hunger to command trading vessels to go to and fro and bring nothing else but sand for gladiatorial shows, when wheat was so greatly needed. Then the merchant whose vessel was moored by the wharf said to his shipmaster, "Take you good heed that you bring nothing back with you from Alexandria but corn, and whereas, before you have brought in the vessel a measure or two of sand, bring you not

so much as would lie upon a penny this time. Bring nothing else I say, but corn, for these people are dying, and now we must keep our vessels for this one business of bringing food for them." Alas! I have seen certain mighty galleys of late loaded with nothing but mere sand of philosophy and speculation, and I have said within myself, "No, but I will bear nothing in my ship but the revealed truth of God, the bread of life so greatly needed by the people." God grant us this day that our ship may have nothing on board it that may merely gratify the curiosity, or please the taste, but that there may be necessary truths for the salvation of souls. I would have each one of you say, "Well, it was just the old, old story of Jesus and His love, and nothing else." I have no desire to be famous for anything but preaching the old gospel. There are plenty who can fiddle to you the new music, it is for me to have no music at any time but that which is heard in heaven—"Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, to Him be glory forever and ever!"

I intend, dear friends, to begin my discourse with the second part of my text, in which the doctrine of Substitution is set forth in these words—"He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." This is the basis and power of those appeals which it is our duty to make to the consciences of men.

I have found, my brethren, by long experience that nothing touches the heart like the cross of Christ, and when the heart is touched and wounded by the two-edged sword of the law, nothing heals its wounds like the balm which flows from the pierced heart of Jesus. The cross is life to the spiritually dead. There is an old legend which can have no literal truth in it, but if it is regarded as a parable it is then most instructive. They say that when the Empress Helena was searching for the true cross they dug deep at Jerusalem and found the three crosses of Calvary buried in the soil. Which out of the three crosses was the veritable cross upon which Jesus died they could not tell, except by certain tests. So they brought a corpse and laid it on one of the crosses, but there was neither life nor motion. When the same dead body touched another of the crosses it lived, and then they said, "This is the true cross." When we see men quickened, converted, and sanctified by the doctrine of the substitutionary sacrifice, we may justly conclude that it is the true doctrine of atonement. I have not known men made to live unto God and holiness except by the doctrine of the death of Christ on man's behalf. Hearts of stone that never beat with life before have been turned to flesh through the Holy Spirit causing them to know this truth. A sacred tenderness has visited the obstinate when they have heard of Jesus crucified for them. Those who have lain at hell's dark door, wrapped about with a sevenfold death-shade, even upon them has a great light shined. The story of the great Lover of the souls of men who gave Himself for their salvation is still in the hand of the Holy Spirit the greatest of all forces in the realm of mind.

So this morning I am going to handle, first, *the great doctrine,* and then afterwards, and secondly, as God shall help me, we shall come to

the great argument which is contained in the 20th verse, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be reconciled to God."

I. First, then, with as much brevity as possible I will speak upon THE GREAT DOCTRINE. *The* great doctrine, the greatest of all, is this, that God, seeing men to be lost by reason of their sin, has taken that sin of theirs and laid it upon His only begotten Son, making Him to be sin for us, even Him who knew no sin, and that in consequence of this transference of sin he that believes in Christ Jesus is made just and righteous, yes, is made to be the righteousness of God in Christ. Christ was made sin that sinners might be made righteousness. That is the doctrine of the substitution of our Lord Jesus Christ on the behalf of guilty men.

Now consider, first, *who was made sin for us?* The description of our great Surety here given is upon one point only, and it may more than suffice us for our present meditation. Our substitute was spotless, innocent, and pure. "He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin," Christ Jesus, the Son of God, became incarnate, and was made flesh, and dwelt here among men, but though He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, He knew no sin; though upon Him sin was laid, yet not so as to make Him guilty. He was not, He could not be a sinner; He had no personal knowledge of sin. Throughout the whole of His life He never committed an offense against the great law of truth and right. The law was in His heart, it was His nature to be holy. He could say to all the world, "Which of you convicts Me of sin?" Even His vacillating judge inquired, "Why, what evil has He done?" When all Jerusalem was challenged and bribed to bear witness against Him, no witnesses could be found. It was necessary to misquote and twist His words before a charge could be trumped up against Him by His bitterest enemies. His life brought Him in contact with both the tables of the law, but no single command had He transgressed. As the Jews examined the Paschal lamb before they slew it, so did scribes and Pharisees, and doctors of the law, and rulers and princes, examine the Lord Jesus, without finding offense in Him. He was the Lamb of God, without blemish and without spot.

As there was no sin of commission, so was there about our Lord no fault of omission. Probably, dear brethren, we that are believers have been enabled by divine grace to escape most sins of commission, but I for one have to mourn daily over sins of omission. If we have spiritual graces, yet they do not reach the point required of us. If we do that which is right in itself, yet we usually mar our work upon the wheel, either in the motive, or in the manner of doing it, or by the self-satisfaction with which we view it when it is done. We come short of the glory of God in some respect or other. We forget to do what we ought to do, or, doing it, we are guilty of lukewarmness, self-reliance, unbelief, or some other grievous error. It was not so with our divine Redeemer. You cannot say that there was any feature deficient in His perfect beauty. He was complete in heart, in purpose, in thought, in word, in deed, in spirit. You could not add anything to the life of Christ without its being manifestly an excrescence. He was emphatically an all-round man, as we say in

these days. His life is a perfect circle, a complete epitome of virtue. No pearl has dropped from the silver string of His character. No one virtue has overshadowed and dwarfed the rest, all perfections combine in perfect harmony to make in Him one surpassing perfection.

Neither did our Lord know a sin of thought. His mind never produced an evil wish or desire. There never was in the heart of our blessed Lord a wish for any evil pleasure, nor a desire to escape any suffering or shame which was involved in His service. When He said, "Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me," He never desired to escape the bitter potion at the expense of His perfect lifework. The, "if it is possible," meant, "if it is consistent with full obedience to the Father, and the accomplishment of the divine purpose." We see the weakness of His nature shrinking, and the holiness of His nature resolving and conquering, as He adds, "nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will." He took upon Him the likeness of sinful flesh, but though that flesh often caused Him weariness of body, it never produced in Him the weakness of sin. He took our infirmities, but He never exhibited an infirmity which had the least of blameworthiness attached to it. Never fell there an evil glance from those blessed eyes, never did His lips let drop a hasty word, never did those feet go on an evil errand, nor those hands move towards a sinful deed; because His heart was filled with holiness and love. Within as well as without, our Lord was unblemished. His desires were as perfect as His actions. Searched by the eyes of Omniscience, no shadow of fault could be found in Him.

Yes, more, there were no tendencies about our Substitute towards evil in any form. In us there are always those tendencies, for the taint of original sin is upon us. We have to govern ourselves and hold ourselves under stern restraint, or we would rush headlong to destruction. Our carnal nature lusts to evil, and needs to be held in as with bit and bridle. Happy is that man who can master himself. But with regard to our Lord, it was His nature to be pure, and right, and loving. All His sweet wills were towards goodness. His unconstrained life was holiness itself; He was "the holy child Jesus." The prince of this world found in Him no fuel for the flame which he desired to kindle. Not only did no sin flow from Him, but there was no sin in Him, or inclination, nor tendency in that direction. Watch Him in secret, and you find Him in prayer, look into His soul, and you find Him eager to do and suffer the Father's will. Oh, the blessed character of Christ! If I had the tongues of men and of angels I could not worthily set forth His absolute perfection. Justly may the Father be well pleased with Him! Well may heaven adore Him!

Beloved, it was absolutely necessary that any one who should be able to suffer in our stead should himself be spotless. A sinner obnoxious to punishment by reason of his own offenses, what can he do but bear the wrath which is due to his own sin? Our Lord Jesus Christ as man was made under the law, but He owed nothing to that law, for He perfectly fulfilled it in all respects. He was capable of standing in the room, place, and stead of others, because He was under no obligations of His own. He was only under obligations towards God because He had voluntarily undertaken to be the surety and sacrifice for those whom the Father gave

Him. He was clear Himself, or else He could not have entered into bonds for guilty men.

Oh, how I admire Him, that being such as He was, spotless and thrice holy, so that even the heavens were not pure in His sight, and He charged His angels with folly, yet He condescended to be made sin for us! How could He endure to be numbered with the transgressor and bear the sin of many? It may be no misery for a sinful man to live with sinful men, but it would be a heavy sorrow for the pure-minded to dwell with a company of abandoned and licentious wretches. What an overwhelming sorrow it must have been to the pure and perfect Christ to tabernacle among the hypocritical, the selfish, and the profane! How much worse that He Himself should have to take upon Himself the sins of those guilty men. His sensitive and delicate nature must have shrunk from even the shadow of sin, and yet read the words and be astonished, "He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin." Our perfect Lord and Master bore our sins in His own body on the tree. He, before whom the sun itself is dim and the pure azure of heaven is defilement, was made sin. I need not put this in fine words; the fact is itself too grand to need any magnifying by human language. To gild refined gold, or paint the lily, were absurd, but much more absurd would it be to try to overlay with flowers of speech the matchless beauties of the cross. It suffices in simple rhyme to say—

"Oh, hear that piercing cry!
What can its meaning be?
'My God! My God! Oh! Why have You
In wrath forsaken Me?'
Oh 'twas because our sins
On Him by God were laid;
He who Himself had never sinned,
For sinners, sin was made."

This leads me on to the second point of the text, which is, *what was done with Him who knew no sin?* He was "made sin." It is a wonderful expression, the more you weigh it the more you will marvel at its singular strength. Only the Holy Spirit might originate such language. It was wise for the divine Teacher to use very strong expressions, for otherwise the thought might not have entered human minds. Even now, despite the emphasis, clearness, and distinctness of the language used here and elsewhere in Scripture there are found men daring enough to deny that substitution is taught in Scripture. With such subtle wits it is useless to argue. It is clear that language has no meaning for them. To read the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, and to accept it as relating to the Messiah, and then to deny His substitutionary sacrifice is simply wickedness. It would be vain to reason with such beings, they are so blind that if they were transported to the sun they could not see. In the church and out of the church there is a deadly animosity to this truth. Modern thought labors to get away from what is obviously the meaning of the Holy Spirit, that sin was lifted from the guilty and laid upon the innocent. It is written, "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." This is as plain language as can

be used, but if any plainer was required, here it is—"He has made Him to be sin for us."

The Lord God laid upon Jesus, who voluntarily undertook it, all the weight of human sin. Instead of its resting on the sinner, who did committed it, it was made to rest upon Christ, who did not commit it, while the righteousness which Jesus worked out was placed to the account of the guilty, who had not worked it out, so that the guilty are treated as righteous. Those who by nature are guilty, are regarded as righteous, while He who by nature knew no sin whatever, was treated as guilty. I think I must have read in scores of books that such transference is impossible, but the statement has had no effect upon my mind. I do not care whether it is impossible or not with learned unbelievers, it is evidently possible with God, for He has done it. But they say it is contrary to reason. I do not care about that, either; it may be contrary to the reason of those unbelievers, but it is not contrary to mine, and if I am to be guided by reason, I prefer to follow my own. The atonement is a miracle, and miracles are rather to be accepted by faith than measured by calculation. A fact is the best of arguments. It is a fact that the Lord has laid on Jesus the iniquity of us all. God's revelation proves the fact, and our faith defies human questioning! God says it and I believe it, and believing it, I find life and comfort in it. Shall I not preach it? Assuredly I will—

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

Christ was not guilty, and could not be made guilty, but He was treated as if He were guilty, because He willed to stand in the place of the guilty. Yes, He was not only treated as a sinner, but He was treated as if He had been sin itself in the abstract. This is an amazing utterance. The sinless one was made to be sin.

Sin pressed our great Substitute very sorely. He felt the weight of it in the Garden of Gethsemane, where He "sweat as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground." The full pressure of it came upon Him when He was nailed to the accursed tree. There in the hours of darkness He bore infinitely more than we can tell. We know that He bore condemnation from the mouth of man, so that it is written, "He was numbered with the transgressors." We know that He bore shame for our sakes. Did not your hearts tremble last Sunday evening when our text was, "Then did they spit in His face"? It was a cruel scorn that exhausted itself upon His blessed person. This, I say, we know. We know that He bore pains innumerable of body and of mind; He thirsted, He cried out in the agony of desertion, He bled, He died. We know that He poured out His soul unto death, and yielded up the ghost. But there was at the back, and beyond all this, an immeasurable abyss of suffering. The Greek Liturgy fitly speaks of "Your unknown sufferings," probably to us they are *unknowable* sufferings. He was God as well as man, and the Godhead lent an omnipotent power to the manhood, so that there was compressed within His soul, and endured by it, an amount of anguish of which we can form no conception. I will say no more, it is wise to veil what it is impossible to

depict. This text both veils and discovers His sorrow, as it says, "He made Him to be sin." Look into the words. Perceive their meaning, if you can. The angels desire to look into it. Gaze into this terrible crystal. Let your eyes search deep into this opal, within whose jeweled depth there are flames of fire. The Lord made the perfectly innocent one to be sin for us; that means more of humiliation, darkness, agony, and death than you can conceive. It brought a kind of distraction and well-near destruction to the tender and gentle spirit of our Lord. I do not say that our substitute endured a hell that is unwarrantable. I will not say that He endured either the exact punishment for sin, or an equivalent for it, but I do say that what He endured rendered to the justice of God a vindication of His law clearer and more effectual than would have been rendered to it by the damnation of the sinners for whom He died. The cross is under many aspects a more full revelation of the wrath of God against human sin than even Tophet, and the smoke of torment which goes up forever and ever. Who would know God's hate of sin must see the Only Begotten bleeding in body and bleeding in soul even unto death, He must, in fact, spell out each word of my text, and read its innermost meaning. There, my brethren, I am ashamed of the poverty of my explanation, and I will therefore only repeat the full and sublime language of the apostle—"He has made Him to be sin for us." It is more than "He has put Him to grief;" it is more than "God has forsaken Him;" it is more than "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him;" it is the most suggestive of all descriptions—"He has made Him to be sin for us." Oh depth of terror, and yet height of love!

So I pass on to notice in the third place, *who did it?* The text says, *"He* has made Him to be sin for us." That is, God Himself it was who appointed His dear Son to be made sin for guilty men. The wise ones tell us that this substitution cannot be just. Who made them judges of what is right and just? I ask them whether they believe that Jesus suffered and died at all. If they believe that He did, how do they account for the fact? Do they say that He died as an example? Then I ask, is it just for God to allow a sinless being to die as an example? The fact of our Lord's death is sure, and it has to be accounted for. Ours is the fullest and truest explanation.

In the appointment of the Lord Jesus Christ to be made sin for us, there was first of all a display of the Divine Sovereignty. God here did what none but He could have done. It would not have been possible for all of us together to have laid sin upon Christ, but it was possible for the great Judge of all, who gives no account of His matters, to determine that so it should be. He is the fountain of rectitude, and the exercise of His divine prerogative is always unquestionable righteousness. That the Lord Jesus, who offered Himself as a willing surety and substitute, should be accepted as surety and substitute for guilty man was in the power of the great Supreme. In His Divine Sovereignty He accepted Him, and before that sovereignty we bow. If any question it, our only answer is, "No but, O man, who are you that replies against God?"

The death of our Lord also displayed divine justice. It pleased God as the Judge of all, that sin should not be forgiven without the exaction of the punishment which had been so righteously threatened to it, or such other display of justice as might vindicate the law. They say that this is not the God of Love. I answer; it is the God of love, pre-eminently so. If you had upon the bench today a judge whose nature was kindness itself, it would behoove him as a judge to execute justice, and if he did not, he would make his kindness ridiculous. Indeed, his kindness to the criminal would be unkindness to society at large. Whatever the judge may be personally, he is officially compelled to do justice. And "shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" You speak of the Fatherhood of God. Enlarge as you please upon that theme, even till you make a heresy of it; but still God is the great moral Governor of the universe, and it behooves Him to deal with sin in such a way that it is seen to be an evil and a bitter thing. God cannot wink at wickedness. I bless His holy name, and adore Him that He is not unjust in order to be merciful, that He does not spare the guilty in order to indulge His gentleness. Every transgression and disobedience has its just recompense of reward. But through the sacrifice of Christ, He is able to justly pardon. I bless His holy name that to vindicate His justice He determined that, while a free pardon should be provided for believers, it should be grounded upon an atonement which satisfied all the requirements of the law.

Admire also in the substitutionary sacrifice the great grace of God. Never forget that He whom God made to be sin for us was His own Son, yes, I go further, it was in some sense His own self, for the Son is one with the Father. You may not confound the persons, but you cannot divide the substance of the blessed Trinity in Unity. You may not so divide the Son of God from the Father as to forget that God was in Him reconciling the world unto Himself. It is the Father's other self who on the cross in human form does bleed and die. "Light of light, very God of very God;" it is this Light that was eclipsed, that Godhead which purchased the church with His own blood. Herein is infinite love! You tell me that God might have pardoned without atonement. I answer, that finite and fallible love might have done so, and thus have wounded itself by killing justice, but the love which both required and provided the atonement is indeed infinite. God Himself provided the atonement by freely and fully giving up Himself in the person of His Son to suffer in consequence of human sin.

What I want you to notice here is this, if ever your mind should be troubled about the propriety or rightness of a substitutionary sacrifice, you may at once settle the matter by remembering that God, Himself "has made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin." If God did it, it is well done. I am not careful to defend an act of God, let the man who dares accuse his Maker think what he is doing. If God Himself provided the sacrifice, you can be sure that He has accepted it. There can be no question ever raised about it, since Jehovah made to meet on Him our iniquities. He that made Christ to be sin for us knew what He did and it is not for us to begin to say, "Is this right, or is this not right?" The thrice Holy God

has done this, and it must be right. That which satisfies God may well satisfy us. If God is pleased with the sacrifice of Christ, shall not we be much more than pleased? Shall we not be delighted, entranced, enraptured, to be saved by such a sacrifice as God Himself appoints, provides, and accepts? "He has made Him to be sin for us."

The last point is; *what happens to us in consequence?* "That we might be made the righteousness of God in Him": Oh this weighty text! No man living can exhaust it. No theologian lived, even in the palmiest days of theology that could ever get to the bottom of this statement.

Every man that believes in Jesus is through Christ having taken his sin made to be righteous before God. We are righteous through faith in Christ Jesus, "justified by faith." More than this, we are made not only to have the character of "righteous," but to become the substance called "righteousness." I cannot explain this, but it is no small matter. It means no inconsiderable thing when we are said to be "made righteousness." What is more, we are not only made righteousness, but we are made "the righteousness of God." Herein is a great mystery. The righteousness which Adam had in the garden was perfect, but it was the righteousness of man; ours is the righteousness of God. Human righteousness failed, but the believer has a divine righteousness which can never fail. He not only has it, but he is it, he is "made the righteousness of God in Christ." We can now sing—

"With my Savior's vesture on,
Holy as the Holy One."

How acceptable with God must those be who are made by God Himself to be "the righteousness of God in Him!" I cannot conceive of anything more complete.

As Christ was made sin, and yet never sinned, so are we made righteousness, though we cannot claim to have been righteous in and of ourselves. Sinners though we are, and forced to confess it with grief, yet the Lord covers us so completely with the righteousness of Christ, that only His righteousness is seen, and we are made the righteousness of God in Him. This is true of all the saints, even of as many as believe on His name. Oh, the splendor of this doctrine! Can you see it, my friend? Sinner though you are, and in yourself defiled, deformed, and debased, yet if you will accept the great Substitute which God provides for you in the person of His dear Son, your sins are gone from you, and righteousness has come to you. Your sins were laid on Jesus, the scapegoat, they are yours no longer, He has put them away. I may say that His righteousness is imputed unto you, but I go further, and say with the text, "You are made the righteousness of God in Him." No doctrine can be more sweet than this to those who feel the weight of sin and the burden of its curse.

II. So now, gathering all up, I have to close with the second part of the text, which is not teaching, but the application of teaching—A GREAT ARGUMENT. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be reconciled to God."

Oh, that these lips had language, or that this heart could speak without them! Then would I plead with every unconverted, unbelieving soul within this place, and plead as for my life. Friend, you are at enmity with God, and God is angry with you, but on His part there is every readiness for reconciliation. He has made a way by which you can become His friend—a very costly way to Himself, but free to you. He could not give up His justice, and so destroy the honor of His own character, but He did give up His Son, His Only-Begotten, and His Well-Beloved, and that Son of His has been made sin for us, though He knew no sin. See how God meets you! See how willing, how anxious He is that there should be reconciliation between Himself and guilty men. O, sirs, if you are not saved it is not because God will not or cannot save you; it is because you refuse to accept His mercy in Christ. If there is any difference between you and God today it is not from want of kindness on His part, it is from want of willingness on yours. The burden of your ruin must lie at your own door; your blood must be on your own garments.

Now observe; what we have to say to you today is this; we are anxious that you should be at peace with God, and therefore we act as ambassadors for Christ. I am not going to lay any stress upon the office of ambassador as honorable or authoritative, for I do not feel that this would have weight with you, but I lay all the stress upon the peace to which we would bring you. God has reconciled me to Himself, and I would gladly have you reconciled also. I once knew Him not; neither did I care for Him. I lived well enough without Him, and sported with the trifles of the day, so as to forget Him. He brought me to seek His face, and seeking His face I found Him. He has blotted out my sins and removed my enmity. I know that I am His servant, and that He is my Friend, my Father, my All. And now I cannot help trying in my poor way to be an ambassador for Him with you. I do not like that any of you should live at enmity with my Father who made you, and that you should be wantonly provoking Him by preferring evil to good. Why should you not be at peace with one who so much wants to be at peace with you? Why should you not love the God of love, and delight in Him who is so kind to you? What He has done for me He is quite willing to do for you, He is a God ready to pardon. I have preached His gospel now for many years, but I never met with a sinner yet that Christ refused to cleanse when he came to Him. I never knew a single case of a man who trusted Jesus, and asked to be forgiven, confessing his sin and forsaking it, that was cast out. I say I never met with one man whom Jesus refused, nor shall I ever do so. I have spoken with harlots whom He has restored to purity and drunks whom He has delivered from their evil habit, and with men guilty of foul sins who have become pure and chaste through the grace of our Lord Jesus. They have always told me the same story—"I sought the Lord, and He heard me; He has washed me in His blood, and I am whiter than snow." Why should you not be saved as well as these?

Dear friend, perhaps you have never thought of this matter, and this morning you did not come here with any idea of thinking of it, but why should you not begin? You came just to hear a well-known preacher. I

pray you forget the preacher, and think only of yourself, your God and your Savior. It must be wrong for you to live without a thought of your Maker. To forget Him is to despise Him. It must be wrong for you to refuse the great atonement; you do refuse it if you do not accept it at once. It must be wrong for you to stand out against your God, and you do stand out against Him if you will not be reconciled to Him. Therefore I humbly play the part of an ambassador for Christ, and I beseech you believe in Him and live.

Notice how the text puts it, "We are ambassadors for Christ, *as though God did beseech you by us."* This thought staggers me. As I came along this morning I felt as if I could bury my head in my hands and weep as I thought of God beseeching anybody. He speaks, and it is done, myriads of angels count themselves happy to fly at His command, and yet man has so become God's enemy that he will not be reconciled to Him. God would make him His friend, and spends the blood of His dear Son to cement that friendship, but man will not have it. See the great God turns to beseeching His obstinate creature! His foolish creature! In this I feel a reverent compassion for God. Must He beseech a rebel to be forgiven? Do you hear it? Angels, do you hear it? He who is the King of kings veils His sovereignty, and stoops to, beseeching His creature to be reconciled to Him! I wonder not that some of my brethren start back from such an idea, and cannot believe that it could be so; it seems so derogatory to the glorious God. Yet my text says it, and it must be true—"As though God did beseech you by us." This makes it awful work to preach, does it not? I ought to beseech you as though God spoke to you through me, looking at you through these eyes, and stretching out His hands through these hands. He says, "All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." He speaks softly, and tenderly, and with paternal affection through these poor lips of mine, "as though God did beseech you by us."

Furthermore notice that next line, which if possible has even more force in it, *"We pray you in Christ's stead."* Since Jesus died in our stead we, His redeemed ones, are to pray others in His stead, and as He poured out His heart for sinners in their stead, we must in another way pour out our hearts for sinners in His stead. "We pray you in Christ's stead." Now if my Lord were here this morning would He pray you to come to Him? I wish, my Master, I were more fit to stand in Your place at this time. Forgive me that I am so incapable. Help me to break my heart, to think that it does not break as it ought to do, for these men and women who are determined to destroy themselves, and therefore, pass You by, my Lord, as though You were but a common felon, hanging on a gallows! O men, how can you think so little of the death of the Son of God? It is the wonder of time, the admiration of eternity. O souls, why will you refuse eternal life? Why will you die? Why will you despise Him by whom alone you can live? There is but one gate of life, that gate is the open side of Christ, why will you not enter and live? "Come unto Me," He says, "come unto Me." I think I hear Him say it, "Come unto Me, all you who 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." I think I see Him on that last day, that great day of the feast, standing and crying, "If any man thirst let Him come unto Me, and drink." I hear Him sweetly declare, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." I am not fit to pray you in Christ's stead, but I do pray you with all my heart. You that hear my voice from Sunday to Sunday, do come and accept the great sacrifice, and be reconciled to God. You that hear me but this once, I would like you to go away with this ringing in your ears, "Be you reconciled to God." I have nothing pretty to say to you, I have only to declare that God has prepared a propitiation, and that now He entreats sinners to come to Jesus, that through Him they may be reconciled to God.

We do not exhort you to some impossible effort. We do not bid you do some great thing, we do not ask you for money or price, neither do we demand of you years of miserable feeling, but only this—*be you reconciled*. It is not so much reconcile yourselves as, "be reconciled." Yield yourselves to Him who round you now the bands of a man would cast, drawing you with cords of love because He was given for you. His spirit strives with you, yield to His striving. With Jacob you know there wrestled a man till the breaking of the day, let that man, that God-man, overcome you. Submit yourselves. Yield to the grasp of those hands which were nailed to the cross for you. Will you not yield to your best friend? He that does embrace you now presses you to a heart that was pierced with the spear on your behalf. Oh, yield! Yield, you man! Do you not feel some softness stealing over you? Steel not your heart against it. He says, with a tone most still and sweet, "Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." Believe and live! Quit the arch-enemy who has held you in his grip. Escape for your life, look not behind you, stay not in all the plain, but flee where you see the open door of the great Father's house. At the gate the bleeding Savior is waiting to receive you, and to say, "I was made sin for you, and you are made the righteousness of God in Me." Father, draw them! Father, draw them! Eternal Spirit, draw them, for Jesus Christ Your Son's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
2 CORINTHIANS 4 AND 5.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—917, 404, 284.

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

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

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

HIDEOUS DISCOVERY
NO. 1911

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 25, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And He said, That which comes out of the man, that defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man."
Mark 7:20-23.

HOW weary the Savior must have been of the idle prattle of the scribes and Pharisees! They are forever talking about washing hands before meals, and washing pots and cups, and He is all the while occupied with the great griefs and sins of men, and how He can save them from the wrath to come. He must have felt as some true physician feels that looks upon a patient, marks the serious nature of the sickness, and plans a remedy, while some quack is boasting his nostrums or performing ridiculous signs and passes over the dying man. To serious compassion imposture is provoking, and sincere truthfulness is grieved by the mockeries of pretense. The dear Savior, knowing the truth about the whole thing, and solemnly concerned about it, is pained with the talk of these pretenders to learning and religion, who, knowing nothing at all about the real mischief, professed to purge away defilement by the washing of water, and outward ceremonies. Truly, I think every spiritual man must have a feeling of disgust every now and then as in these days he reads dissertations upon the cut of a priestly garment, or the position of an altar. Have you ever read what is to be done if a little wine is spilt upon the cloth of the holy table, or how the cup used in the mass is to be rinsed again and again, and carefully drained by the person ministering? Have you ever heard of arguments concerning the fate of a mouse which was so irreverent as to eat the holy wafer? What trifling it all seems—this serious discussion of garments and vessels with strange names, this exact directory as to when to bow and when to kneel, when to put on a robe and when to take it off! What a waste of time, of learning and of thought! What exaltation of trifles and forgetfulness of serious realities! Men are diseased to the heart with sin and ready to die and pass before the judgment seat to receive the condemnation which must lie upon those who continue in sin, and meanwhile, the teachers of the people are either busy with vain ceremonies or dreaming over equally vain philosophies, Behold, a pretender to profound thought informs us that Moses was in error, and Paul scarcely knew what he wrote about. These philosophic amenders of the gospel are as arrant triflers as the superstitious posture makers at whom they sneer. The Savior makes short work of human traditions and au-

thorities. Your meats and your drinks, your fasting thrice in the week, your paying of the tithe of mint, anise, and cumin, your broad phylacteries and fringes, He waves them all away with one motion of His hand, and He comes straight to the real point at issue. He deals with the heart and with the sins which come out of it. He draws up a diagnosis of the disease with fearless truthfulness, and declares that meats do not defile men, that true religion is not a matter of observation or non-observation of washings and outward rites, but that the whole matter is spiritual, and has to do with man's inmost self, with the understanding, the will, the emotions, the conscience, and all else which makes up the heart of man. He tells us that defilement is caused by that which comes out of the man, not by that which goes into him. Defilement is of the heart, and not of the hands.

To this teaching our Savior calls particular attention. Observe that He spoke it to the whole of the people, and not to the scribes and Pharisees only. It is needful for every man to know this truth, and to lay it to heart. When He spoke, He added these words—"Hearken unto Me, every one of you, and understand," and then He said more—"If any man has ears to hear let him hear." If a man fails to understand more deep and mysterious truths, yet let him understand this, for an error here is an error upon a vital point, and may lead to most serious damage, if not to eternal ruin. We are all of us called upon therefore to hear and to understand this day what the Savior says in the words of the text. Let me read them again, that they may sink into your minds. "And He said, That which comes out of the man, that defiles the man; for from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man."

I. First, this morning, think, dear brethren, with deep self-abasement, of THE SWARM OF SINS. I seem to have broken open a wasp's nest, and the stinging creatures fly out, in number numberless! Here are thirteen words, each one of them teeming with all manner of evils. Matthew, when he condenses the Savior's utterances, mentions seven of these horrible things, one of which is omitted here, but Mark is fuller in this instance, and mentions thirteen items of abomination. I am struck with the legion of foul spirits which are here set free, as if the door of the bottomless pit had been opened. As armies of locusts, or as swarms of the flies of Egypt, so are sins. As the wilderness was full of fiery serpents and scorpions, so is this world full of iniquities. The very names of them are a pain to the ear. Let us bow our heads in sorrow as we read the muster-roll of this legion of terror, "Evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, thefts, murders, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness."

Now, notice first, that this awful catalog, this horrible list of the unclean birds that find a cage within the human heart, *begins with things that are lightly regarded among men*—"evil thoughts." "We shall not be hanged for our thoughts," cries one. I wish that such idle talkers would remember that they will be damned for their thoughts, and that instead of evil thoughts being less sinful than evil acts, it may sometimes happen

that in the thought the man may be worse than in the deed. He may not be able to carry out all the mischief that lurks within his designs, and yet in forming the design he may incur all the guilt. Thoughts are the eggs of words and actions, and within the thoughts lie compacted and condensed all the villainy of actual transgressions. If men did but more carefully watch their thoughts, they would not so readily fall into evil habits, but men first indulge the thought of evil, and then the imagination of evil, nor does the process stay there. Picturing it before their mind's eye, they excite their own desires after it; these grow into a thirst and kindle into a passion. Then the deed is speedily forthcoming, it was long in the hatching, but in a moment it comes forth to curse a whole lifetime. Instead of fancying that evil thoughts are mere trifles, let us regard them as the root of bitterness, the still in which the poisonous spirit is manufactured. Our Savior here puts evil thoughts first in the catalog of evil things, and He knew well their true nature. If we would be lost we have only to indulge these, if we would be saved we must conquer these. Let us make a conscience of our thoughts, he that does not so will not long make a conscience of his words or deeds. Let us pray God to purge us in the inward parts, lest perhaps, by entertaining vain thoughts as lodgers within our hearts, they take up their residence, become masters of our lives, and drive us onward to the outward sins which shall utterly pollute and defile us in the eyes of our fellow men.

Since this indictment begins with evil thoughts, who among us can plead guiltless? Since evil thoughts are the first of sins, we had better meet the charge with immediate repentance and an instant faith in the only Savior. These thoughts come into our minds in the house of God, they intrude into our prayers, they defile our psalms, and they disturb our meditations. Is there a sacred hill so high; is there a quiet valley so deep, that therein we may be quite clear from these "evil thoughts"? Who can deliver us from this plague but the Lord our God? We need to humble ourselves at the first reading of this list, and cry unto the Lord for mercy.

Carefully notice *the range which this catalog takes*. It is a very singular one, for it begins with thoughts, and then it runs on until it lands us in utter want of thought, or foolishness. Matthew Henry says, "Ill-thinking is put first, and unthinking is put last." Sin begins with "evil thoughts," but ends in foolishness. The word rendered "evil thoughts," may be translated evil disputes, evil dialog. Now this is thought by some to be almost a virtue, certainly a manly exercise. To be able to dispute, to be a questioner, a quibbler, a perpetual and professional doubter, that, I say, is highly esteemed among men. What is modern thought but evil thought? David says, "I hate vain thoughts," and all thoughts which run counter to the revelation of God are vain. In this instance I may quote the Psalmist, "The Lord knows the thoughts of men, that they are vanity." Thoughts which are devout and reverent towards the sacred oracles are to be cultivated, but the thoughts which quibble at revealed truth, and would improve upon the infallible declarations of Jehovah, are evil and vain thoughts. All manner of mischief may come out of thinking in opposition to God, hence it is said, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts." Thinking contrary to God's mind, and

disputing with the clear statements of God's own word, may be the first step in a descent which shall end in everlasting destruction.

Rising in evil thought, sin flows through a black country full of varying immoralities, until it falls into the Dead Sea of "foolishness." How often have I heard it said of a vicious life, when it has ripened into horror, "The man must have been mad! He was not only wicked, but what a fool he must have been! The devil himself seems to have forsaken him. He acted craftily enough at one time, but afterwards he went against his own interests, and insured his own destruction." Yes, men begin with the thought that they know better than their Maker, and at last they reach utter thoughtlessness, stolidity of conscience, and stupidity of mind. In the end they refuse to think at all, and nothing can save them from reckless defiance of common prudence. They are given over to judicial senselessness. Though God Himself should speak, they have no ears for Him; their sin has brought on them the punishment of utter hardness of heart. They have made themselves to be as the adder, which will not hear the voice of the charmer, charm he ever so wisely. This is the way of sin—to begin with fancied wisdom, and end with foolishness. The man who thought himself more than a man, at last ends as a brute beast devoid of reason. What a range, my brethren, there is between these two points! Read the words again, and see what a terrible zigzag path lies between wrong thought and no thought at all.

In this list you have *an extraordinary variety of sins*. The list is not complete, and was not intended to be. It would be very difficult in words to compose a full roll, though it were written within and without, which would comprise all kinds of evils. But you have here "deceit" which seems to dread the judgment of men, and therefore would delude it, and then you have "pride," which defies all mortal condemnation, and lifts itself above its fellows. You have here different forms of the lust which seeks after pleasure, at any expense, in the form of "fornications" and "adulteries," and then you have the "covetousness" which clings to its gold, and will consent to no outlay which it can avoid. Sin is a contradictory thing which blows hot and cold, it hurries men, like fitful winds, this way and that, yet never in the right direction. "We have turned everyone to his own way," but all to the wrong way. Virtue is one, as truth is one, and holiness is one, but vice is abnormal and monstrous. Sin is ten thousand evils conglomerated in dread confusion. God keep us from ever navigating the dangerous sea of iniquity where currents run one way, and undercurrents another, and where oftentimes sensual desires develop into whirlpools of abominable passions, which suck men down into the depths of infamy and perdition!

In this list you will notice *certain sins which may be regarded as somewhat singular*. It is remarkable that "evil thoughts" should be placed so near to atrocious acts of crime. It is singular also to find "an evil eye" mentioned just in this connection. What can it mean? May the very use of the eye become a sin worthy to be ranked with theft and murder? Yes, when that evil eye means envy, it proceeds to a high degree of wickedness and borders upon the worst of wrongs. When we look upon another man and regard him with malignity, when his prosperity makes us grieve, when in his very sorrows we take an inhuman delight, and gloat

over his misery, his sin, his degradation, we then sin most heinously, and are prepared for any horror. This sin of envy, and that other of blasphemy, would appear to be a wanton superfluity of evil, ministering no appearance of benefit to men. Some sins have a winning witchery with them, but there are old hags of sins which ought to attract no man in his senses, and yet they hold men enslaved. Among these sins I rank envy, blasphemy, and pride. This last I mention because it reads like a grim sarcasm, that sinners should be proud. What have such creatures to be proud of? What! Adulteries, murders, thefts, and yet pride? One would have said that such sins would have forbidden pride. What a misalliance! A being infamous, and yet puffed up. Alas! The worse a man becomes the more is he filled with a sort of vainglory, by the force of which he justifies his own iniquities, and refuses to see his own vileness. This enables men to set darkness for light, and light for darkness; bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. What an assemblage of banditti of every nationality range themselves under the banner of evil! Lord, save us from them!

Note, also, that of sins *there are many, of each sort*. Especially in the original it is observable that the first seven of these evil things are all in the plural. It is not "evil thought," but "evil thoughts." Not, "adultery," but "adulteries," fornications, murders, thefts, the translation should also be of covetousness' and wickedness'; these are all in the plural, for in any one sin there lurks a multitude of sins. One crime is built up of many; in any one form of sin there is a tangle and conglomerate of many evils. There are myriads of evil thoughts. In the crime of uncleanness there are stages, the thought, the word, the deed, all these are varieties of the same species, but they are all sins, and they are each one worthy of the generic name, though they do not take the same form. If the varieties of each sin are so many, and if all sins must be spoken of as a plurality under each variety, how innumerable must be the sins of men! O Lord, You alone know our iniquities! Who could set them in order before us but Your own omniscient self? What must they appear to Your perfect vision! Brethren, if we were once to see sin in its true colors, and were then to see it in its innumerable hosts, we would sink into despair if any sort of conscience remained in us. "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse You me from secret faults." "All these evil things," said our Lord, as He summed them up in that one solemn phrase. As we read that word it sounds the knell of all human glorying. I hear it yet again. "All these evil things." How like the Old Testament declaration—"The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek God. They are all gone aside; they are all together become filthy: there is none that does good; no, not one!"

How evil, my brethren, each one of these sins may be it is not possible for us to know, but *there is not one of them that are defensible*. They are each one of them vile before God, and some of them are mischievous towards men. Evil thoughts mainly blacken the man's own mind, but when he expresses them in disputations they destroy the love of the truth in others, adulteries, as violations of the marriage vow, shake the very foundations of family life; fornications, which today are winked at as though they were scarcely offenses, defile two persons at once in body and in soul. Actual murders follow frequently upon unbridled passion,

but forget not that the command, "You shall not kill," may be broken by anger, hate, malice, and the desire for revenge. Many a murderer in heart may be among us this day, being angry at his brother without a cause. He that conceives and hides malice in his soul is a murderer before God. This form of evil breeds all manner of harm to society. Thefts in all their shapes are also injurious to the commonwealth. By this we mean not only robberies, but all taking from others unjustly, such as the oppression of the poor in their wages, the taking of undue advantage in trading, the incurring of debts without hope of being able to pay, and the like—these are varied forms of dishonesty, and are full of injury to others. Covetousness—the greed to get, and the greed to keep, the adding field to field until the man seems eager to be left alone on the earth; the grasping of excessive riches, and the creation of poverty in others by crushing their humbler enterprises, all this is evil, though some applaud it as business sharpness.

Need I mention the evils which come of wickedness, deceit, and lasciviousness? These are poisons in the air deadly to all who breathe them. I sicken as I think how man has plagued his fellow men by his sins. But I will not go through the list, nor need I; the devil has preached upon this text this week, and few have been able to escape the horrible exposition. A foul exhalation has entered into every house in this great city, polluting the very atmosphere, and spreading moral infection. Oh for a hurricane to sweep away the pestilent vapor! Within a narrow space a multitude of iniquities have gathered like vultures upon a mass of carrion. What a collection of sins may meet in a single story! How soon does one transgression call to its fellows, till "a little one has become a thousand and a small one a strong nation!" Alas, alas for the multitudes of sins!

II. Now, secondly, I want to indicate THE NEST FROM WHICH THEY COME. Now that we have seen these evil beasts, we will go and look at their den. Let us make a journey there. No, you need not feel for your money to pay your fare, I am not going to take you very far, I do not ask you to quit your homes, or even your pews. There is not even need for you to stretch out your hand to feel for this foul nest of unclean birds, you can keep your hand upon your bosom, and it will not be far off from the lair wherein these evil things are lurking, ready to leap forth whenever occasion offers. Our Lord Jesus Christ says, "All these evil things come from within." "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts." The source from which these rivers of pollution proceed is the natural heart of man. Sin is not a splash of mud upon man's exterior, it is a filth generated within himself.

Now this is a very different story from that which we sometimes hear from thoughtless people. "Oh, yes, he used to swear, he was unkind to his wife and family, no doubt he took too much drink, but he was a good-hearted fellow." What an awful lie! His heart could have been no better than that which came out of it. Yet how common it is to say, when a man dies, "Well, poor man, he is gone! There was no fear of God or man about him, he was a passionate, drunken man, and so full of vice that no one was safe near him, but he was good at bottom." A likely story, is it not? The water which came up in the bucket was black and putrid, but no doubt at the bottom of the well it is clear as crystal! Do you believe it? If

men bring to market baskets of fruit which upon the top are rotten, they will not be believed if they say that they are "good at bottom." If the goods in the window are worthless, the stock in the warehouse is not much better. You can only judge of a tree by its fruits, and if I gather sour crabapples from a tree I shall not believe that it is a golden pippin. If grapes when fully ripe are sour, we cannot believe that the vine which bears them is a sweet one. Our Savior makes short work of the lie that the life may be impure, and yet the heart is good.

Another fine theory of modern times is disproved by our text. According to this evolution doctrine, as applied to theology, the new birth is a development of that which is naturally within the heart. I hope we may be spared such births and evolutions. According to this theory we have had some fine specimens of regenerate people of late, for we have heard of evolutions or developments which have brought out from within evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, and wickednesses of more than average proportions. God save us from all development of the sin which dwells in man! Philosophically the dogma of evolution is a dream, a theory without a vestige of proof. Within fifty years children in school will read of extraordinary popular delusions, and this will be mentioned as one of the most absurd of them. Many a merry jest will be uttered bearing upon the follies of science in the nineteenth century. In its bearing upon religion this vain notion is however, no theme for mirth; for it is not only deceptive, but it threatens to be mischievous in a high degree. There is not a hair of truth upon this dog from its head to its tail, but it rends and tears the simple ones. In all its bearings upon scriptural truth the evolution theory is in direct opposition to it. If God's Word is true, evolution is a lie. I will not mince the matter; this is not the time for soft speaking.

Regeneration is much more than reformation, or the development of natural goodness. It is described in Scripture as a new creation, and as a resurrection from the dead. It is not the cleansing of the carnal mind, but the implantation of a spiritual nature. It is not a shaping, and feeding, and washing, and purging of what is already in fallen man; it is a putting into us a life which was never there before. It is a supernatural work of God the Holy Spirit; it is a miracle of grace, a work of God alone. Out of the heart, if the volcano is permitted to pour forth its lava, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, and such like. The Savior compels us to see how bad the natural heart must be in itself, since that which comes out of it is so vile. Who could bring such unclean things out of a clean heart? The source must be foul if the streams are so filthy. These evils must be within, or else they could not come from within.

Our Savior is not speaking of a single man, or a certain set of men, but of man generally, of man as a race. We are all very much alike by nature; "As in water face answers to face, so the heart of man to man." Friend, you are of the same race as those whose sins you censure. Though out of your heart there may never proceed actual fornications and adulteries—God grant they may not!—yet the seeds of such evils are there, and you will be foolish if you think that they can never grow into acts. If any man says that no such evil lurks in his heart, I lay to his charge the two last sins in the list, namely, pride and foolishness. No

man should dare to think that he is incapable of a sin into which another man has fallen. We may never have suffered from fever, or cholera, or diphtheria, but we may not, therefore, conclude that we are not liable to such diseases, nor may an unregenerate man, however excellent or moral he may be, conclude that he is invulnerable to the arrows of moral disease. Put the man in certain circumstances; tempt him in certain ways, and there is a terrible possibility that he will fall into those very actions which he now so righteously denounces in others. I am a man, and therefore liable to all the faults of human nature. Self-righteousness may induce us to say with Hazael, "Is your servant a dog, that he should do this thing?" But we shall be wise to forego so proud a question, for we may rest assured that we are dog enough for anything if the grace of God is withdrawn from us. It is certainly true that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders," and so forth.

But what is meant here, do you think, by "the heart?" Is it not intended to indicate the man himself—the man's most real self? Sin is sin for the most part because it is of the heart and the will. If the man's heart had nothing to do with it, I do not see how it would be sin. If a man had no will in the matter, where would his responsibility be? It is because we willingly do evil that we sin. The essence of the sin lies in the will to do it, and the full consent of the heart therein. The heart is the center of life, the core of being, the place where manhood maintains its throne, and what a terrible statement this is, that out of the very center of life there proceeds from man "evil thoughts, wickedness, blasphemy," and the like!

The heart is the spring of action, the heart suggests, resolves, designs and sets the whole train of life in motion, the heart gives the impulse and the force, and yet out of the heart thus initiating and working proceeds all this mischief of sin. By the heart is meant mainly the affections, but it often includes the understanding and the will, it is, in fact, the man's vital self. Sin is not *ab extra* that comes to us and afflicts us like robbers, breaking into our house at night, but it is a tenant of the soul, dwelling within us as in its own house. This evil worm has penetrated into the kernel of our being, and there it abides. Sin has intertwisted itself with the warp and woof of our nature, and none can remove it but the Lord God Himself. As long as the heart remains unchanged, out of it will proceed that which is sinful. "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually."

If it is so, that the nest in which sin is born and nurtured is the heart itself, we always carry about with us by nature that which will surely be the cause of sin unless we look well to it, and cry daily for grace to conquer it. This evil nature of ours is an always present danger; it is a powder magazine which at any moment may explode. Oh for grace to keep our hearts with all diligence!

How clearly sin comes from within, and not from without! How truly it is born in the heart! Oftentimes we see men commit sins against conscience, they know they are doing wrong, for they will lie and even swear hard in order to conceal their folly. A man must know that he does wrong, for he labors to deny it when it is charged against him. Now, if a

man sins against light and conscience, it shows that his heart must be radically bad.

Sin must be within us naturally, since the best training does not prevent it. Children secluded from the sight or hearing of evil, kept as it were within a glass case, yet run to it when the restraint is removed. As the young duck which has been reared in a dry place yet takes to the water as soon as it sees a pond, so many do hasten to evil at the first opportunity. How often it happens that those young persons who have been most shut out from the world have become the readiest victims of temptation when the time has come for them to quit the parental roof! It must be in them, or it could not thus come out of them. In many cases evil cannot be the result of mistaken education nor of ill example, and yet there it is, the seed is in the soil, and needs no sowing.

Again, we frequently find men falling into sins towards which they would seem to have had no temptation. A man is rich, and yet covetous. He has enough to content him if his heart were not evil. Men, who have the enjoyment of almost every desirable pleasure, yet too often crave after indulgences altogether unnatural. Does not this show how evil the heart is? Is not this especially striking when you see how men invent new sins, of which ordinary people would never have dreamed?

Moreover, put a man where you may, and seclude him as you please, sin will still break out from him, and therefore the sin must be somewhere within, hidden away. Do we not know this? When we are in associations of the best kind we find evil thoughts and imaginations springing up within our minds. Shut yourself up in a narrow cell, but there will be room in it for troops of sins. Hasten away and dwell alone as a hermit where rumor of pollution and iniquity can never reach you from abroad and still you will find the cauldron within boiling and bubbling up with evil. A door must be well sealed if it is to shut out temptation. No, shut the door and hermetically seal it, and sin has already entered with yourself, for it is within you. Until you are delivered from that evil man, yourself, you are not delivered from tendencies to wickedness. The heart of man is the seed plot of iniquity, and the nursery of transgression. As the multitudes streamed forth from the hundred gates of Thebes, so do sins proceed from the heart. O Lord, have mercy upon us, and give us new hearts and right spirits!

III. Thirdly, and briefly, let us notice for a minute THE DEFILEMENT WHICH IS CAUSED BY THE COMING OUT OF THESE EVIL THINGS. While they lie within us asleep they are bad enough, but when at last they pour forth into our lives, and buzz abroad in our acts, then they cause grievous defilement, and make us unclean. In some cases they cause a defilement which our fellow men see, and seeing, begin to cry out against us, and even to banish us from their society. Where that is not the case, sin always causes defilement to the man himself. He goes from bad to worse, from worse to worst. Sin is like a ladder. Few reach the height of iniquity at once, the most of men climb from one evil to another, and then to a third and a fourth. Sin hardens men to further sin. He who is a moral monster was not always such. By sinning much he learned to sin more. The door of his heart was at first a little ajar, but outgoing sin opened it to its full width. A man is not capable at first of

the sins which afterwards are habitual to him. Step by step men descend into the abyss of infamy if their feet are not hindered by restraint, or stopped by almighty grace. Every sin produces a fresh degree of callousness in the heart. Even if sin is speedily repented of, its damage is not readily repaired, if its writing is erased you can see where it used to be. Even the passage of a momentary thought over the mind will leave a stain. See, then, the defiling power of sin.

Here is the main point—the man out of whose heart these evil things proceed is *defiled before God*. I know that many will not think much of this, but that indifference only proves the hardening nature of sin. Only think of it, the sinful man is common and unclean before God. He is not fit to enter the sanctuary of God, or to come into His holy presence. Sinful man cannot commune with a holy God. You do not mind that, you say. Ah me! How alienated from God are your hearts! If it were not so, we would judge that the most horrible thing in the world is for a man no longer to be able to speak with his Maker, nor his Maker to look favorably upon him. A breach of communion between the creature and the Creator is a kind of hell, a blight, a curse, a death. God cannot comfortably commune with us while our hearts are fountains of defilement, from which iniquity proceeds. By this defilement we become incapable of doing God any service. A defiled priest of old could not offer sacrifice. He that is defiled in heart and life can do nothing for God. God does not accept his person, and therefore He cannot accept anything at his hands. All that a defiled person touches becomes defiled by that very fact, his hymns are defiled, sing them as sweetly as he may; his prayers are defiled, though he may offer them accurately as to their words; his very thoughts are defiled. By and by it comes to this, that God cannot bear this defiled one anywhere in His universe, among holy beings, any more than men can bear lepers in common society. The just God is driven to find a place where the willfully unclean may be placed apart "where their worm dies not, and their fire is not quenched." At last the great High Priest will look upon the defiled one, and looking at him, and seeing his leprosy of sin still upon him, that priest will say, "Depart! Depart!" Oh the terror of that final word! I dare not dwell upon this awful result of choosing sin and refusing mercy. I the more readily cease from this theme because my last point is that upon which I would dwell as long as possible.

IV. Hear me, then, while I speak of THE ONLY CURE FOR THIS EVIL. O sirs, your hearts must be cured of sin! Not merely the outcome of your heart, but the heart itself must be purged from defilement, for as long as sin comes forth from your heart it shows that the heart is still sinful. The heart must be changed, or you can never meet God with acceptance, nor be found among the glorious throng who behold His face and find a heaven in the sight. You must be renewed in the spirit of your minds, or you cannot dwell forever with God. How is this to be done? I answer; it is impossible—impossible with man. All that we can do towards it must fall short of the mark—

"Madness by nature reigns within,
The passions burn and rage;
Till God's own Son, with skill divine,
The inward fire assuage."

You may take a thistle and water it carefully, but it will produce no figs, and you may cultivate a thorn through life, but it will yield no grapes. The cub taken from its mother and tamed, will be a leopard still, and the young serpent will still go upon its belly, teach it as you may. It is beyond and above all power of mortal man to change his own heart.

How, then, can we be made fit to dwell with God? Must we despair? Must we die utterly broken-hearted? Listen, for all the defilement that has fallen upon anyone here, even though all the defilement of my text should have met upon one single individual, there is cleansing. With God there is plenteous redemption and measureless mercy. For adultery, for murder, for blasphemy, for all manner of sin, there is forgiveness. The Lord rejoices to blot out the transgressions of repenting sinners, for He delights in mercy.

Last Sabbath morning, it was my privilege to preach of Him who knew no sin, but was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him [**THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL**, Sermon #1910, Volume 32]. The glorious doctrine of the atoning sacrifice offered upon the cross of Calvary is most charming to those who feel that they are defiled with sin. Upon that blessed truth I could dilate without weariness by the month together, and this terrible theme of this morning, which sinks my heart into the dust, I have only brought forward that I may say afterwards, that the Lord Jesus is able to deliver us from all iniquity, and cleanse us from all sin. Oh, you who are defiled, whoever you may be, come and wash and be clean. He that believes in Jesus is justified from all sin, whatever his transgressions may be. The Lord delights in mercy through the great sacrifice of Christ. He is able to say, "Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." Oh, that man would seek pardon through Jesus Christ, who is exalted on high to give repentance and remission!

"Yes," you say, "but pardon is not all we want." Most true, it is not all we need. We need to have the inward source of sin taken away. This is also provided. Do you not know that in the blessed covenant of grace it is written, "A new heart also I will give you, and a right spirit I will put within you. I will take away the heart of stone out of their flesh, and I will give them a heart of flesh"? Our divine Savior turns lions into lambs, and ravens into doves. "With men it is impossible, but with God all things are possible." There also lives among us One who came down to earth when Jesus went up to heaven, abiding among us evermore. The Holy Spirit is here to set us free from the bondage of sin. He comes into the heart where evil dwells as a strong man armed, and being mightier than the evil, He drives out the foul spirit that held possession, and He dwells there Himself, changing the nature, and creating faith and purity. He makes us love the holiness which before we neglected, and loathe the sin in which we once indulged. It *is* possible for us to be born again, glory be to God for that. It is written, "Sin shall not have dominion over you." I do not think we have ever praised God enough for this possibility. To be washed in the blood is a precious thing, but, oh, to be cleansed with the water which flowed with the blood from that dear pierced side is an equal blessing! To be made holy is a heavenly gift. To be sanctified is as great a

favor as to be justified. Purity of heart is to be had by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, is not this good news? Those who receive Jesus receive power to become sons of God, and this means holiness. Those who become children of God are made like the First-born, and they grow up into Him in all things. Grace reigns in them through righteousness unto eternal life.

Brethren, it may be well to make laws to restrain fornication, theft, and blasphemy, but the only sure cure for all sin is the grace of God in the heart. Are they going to stop dogs from going mad by muzzling them? Dogs will go mad with their muzzles on, and so will men sin despite the restraints of law. So long as hearts are evil, evils will proceed from them. The only physician for sin is the Lord Jesus, and His heavenly surgery lies in the renewing of the heart by grace through the Holy Spirit who works by the gospel. My brethren, keep to the old gospel, keep to the one remedy which has healed so many. No new theories for us, we accept the old and tried everlasting gospel of the blessed God. The truth of God will live and flourish when all the evil thoughts of men have proven their foolishness and are cast to the moles and to the bats, as images of deception, without life or power. Pray for a blessing upon this burden of the Lord which with a heavy heart I have delivered to you.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
MARK 7:1-23; PSALM 51.**

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—92, 461, 51.

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

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

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

THE HOLY ROAD
NO. 1912

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 1, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And a highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein."
Isaiah 35:8.

TWICE Israel has come back from captivity, once when the tribes came out of Egypt, and the Lord led them through the wilderness, and again when they returned from banishment in Babylon, and the Lord restored them to their land. A third return some of us believe still awaits the chosen people. In the day when the grace of God shall change the heart of Israel, the seed of Abraham shall again return into the land which God gave to their fathers by a covenant of salt. I think our text looks forward to a future age when the reproach shall be rolled away from Palestine, and her deserts shall be made to blossom as the rose. Of these future glories we say but little, for little is known by the most of us. The prophecy is, however, sufficiently clear to make us expect that the Lord will make a way for the return of His ancient people, and will restore unto them the joy of His salvation. I avoid all theories of prophecy just now, for I feel it more than ever necessary in this evil time to keep close to the simplicities of the gospel, following for the present distress the beaten road of the first principles of the faith. I shall not use the telescope to look into the starry future, but rather the chart and compass, with which to direct our present way. I shall regard the text as having received one fulfillment in the way of salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ. If this is not the literal fulfillment of the prophecy, yet certainly it is its spiritual fulfillment, and for the moment this is the most vital matter to us. As the Savior spoke at Nazareth, so say I now, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." Hear it, and discern its divine teaching.

As the Holy Spirit shall help me, I shall speak at this time upon *the way* to the heavenly Zion, and *our duty with regard to that way*.

I. First, then, THE WAY to the heavenly Zion, to the dwelling place of God. Zion of old was the place of the one altar of sacrifice and the one mercy seat where the Lord in manifest glory communed with His covenant people. There the tribes went up to offer their national prayer and praise to Jehovah, the God of Israel. Pilgrimage to the holy place was an important part of Israel's religious life. During the invasions of the land, and especially during the captivity, the solemn festivals were neglected, and there seemed to be no way up to the house of God. Then godly men

sighed for the tabernacles of God, saying, "When shall I come and appear before God?" As they could not go there in body they sent their hearts and their eyes in that direction, as, like Daniel, they prayed with their windows open towards Jerusalem. How much they longed for a highway by which they could march to Zion! We, my brethren, speak of another Jerusalem which is above, and of the throne of God the Most High, to which we are wending our way. Our desire is for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Who will bring us there? Who will point out the road?

It is with great joy that we learn from Holy Scripture the great truth set forth in the text, *that there is a way to God and heaven*. "And a highway shall be there, and a way." This way from the City of Destruction to the Celestial City is still open, and still traversed by companies of pilgrims.

It is noteworthy that this road is one, a highway and a way—not two highways, nor two ways. Many roads lead to ruin, but only one to salvation. So many men, so many minds, but if we are men of God all our minds are one as to the one way which leads to God. We trust in the same Savior, and are quickened by the same Spirit, and as a consequence, our experience has a vital unity in it. Years ago, at the University of Utrecht, several Christian students met together from various nations, and on one occasion it was agreed that four persons, representing Europe, Asia, Africa, and America, should describe the work of grace upon their hearts. The earnest brother from New England, the friend from the Cape of Good Hope, and the missionary student from India, all found that their stories agreed with that of a young nobleman of Holland. Scenes and circumstances widely differed, but the joys and sorrows, the struggles and the victories of each, were the same, and one hope filled every heart. It was a delightful occasion, and left upon the minds of those present a very vivid impression of the unity of the divine way, truth, and life, as these are seen in believers. We differ in the pace with which we traverse the way, but the way itself is one. Today if believers in this audience were to rise one by one, although we are a singularly mixed assembly, our religious testimony would be one, in each case Christ would be all and in all. John Newton tells us of a meeting which he had with one Occam, an Indian preacher, who could not have borrowed his story from books, but yet, when Newton and he compared notes concerning sin and the Savior, they were the counterparts of each other. There is but one right way. Let us not be deceived about it, there are no two roads to heaven. If any tell you that there are two gospels, you may remind them of Paul's words—"another gospel, which is not another; but there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ."

What that "way" is we learn from John 14, which we have just now read in your hearing. Jesus says, "I am the way. No man comes unto the Father but by Me." Believing in Jesus, we enter upon the way; receiving His Spirit into our hearts we stand in the way; following our Redeemer's footsteps we walk in the way, and holding fast to His leadership we reach the end of the way. When we find Jesus, we find the way of truth, the way of life, the way of peace, and the way of holiness. He is not only the

way but the end to all those who put their trust in Him. The only way of salvation is by the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, and all the discoveries of modern thought upon this matter are sheer delusion. "There is a way which seems right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." If any take you off from the old paths, they take you off from safety. What says the Scripture?—"Stand you in the way and see, and ask for the old path, which is the good way, and walk therein, and you shall find rest for your souls." Go wherever you may, though men or angels lead you, they do but deceive you with vain words. There is but one Christ, and therefore but one way of salvation. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and those who pretend that He changes with the centuries talk as idle dreamers, knowing nothing of the matter. God has given us a way to Himself in the person of His Son Jesus Christ, why should He give us another? What other can there be?

This way, you will note, is made through the wilderness, "a highway shall be *there"*—through the deserts, where the sand is always shifting, where if the traveler once loses his bearings he is doomed to certain death, with the vulture's maw as his only sepulcher. Brethren, a way is made for us through the deserts of sin, and the wildernesses of sorrow, over hills of doubt and mountains of fear. That way runs close at your feet, poor wanderer! Though you are now lost amid the habitation of the dragons of despair. The King's highway is made through the wilderness, every valley is exalted, and every mountain and hill is laid low. Oh, you who are so faint that you lie down to die in despair lift up your eyes and see the door of hope. You think it not possible that there can be an open road for you to travel to God, and peace, and heaven, but there is such a road, for our text says "a highway shall be there." I am comforted concerning those who have wandered furthest into error, and vice, and hardness of heart, or into the gloomy valley of despondency, for even there this highway runs in a straight line. God, who makes rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of deserts, has built up a royal road by which the Lord's banished may return to Him. From death's dark door up to heaven's pearly gate the line is unbroken, for Jesus Christ our Savior has borne our death, and brought us life and immortality.

We might gather from our text that this way was cast up at great expense, for road-making over a long and rugged country is a costly business. It might be read, "a causeway shall be there"—it is a way thrown up and raised by art. Engineering has done much to tunnel through mountains, and bridge abysses, but the greatest triumph of engineering is that which made a way from sin to holiness, from death to life, from condemnation to perfection. Who could make a road over the mountains of our iniquities but Almighty God? None but the Lord of love would have wished it, none but the God of wisdom could have devised it; none but the God of power could have carried it out. It cost the great God the Jewel of heaven; He emptied out the treasury of His own heart, for He spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all. In the life and death of the Well-beloved, infinite wisdom laid a firm foundation for the road by which sinners in all ages may journey home to God. The highway of our God is such a masterpiece that even those who travel it every day

often stand and wonder and ask how such a way could have been planned and constructed. Verily that prophecy is fulfilled to the letter, "I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. The beast of the field shall honor Me, the dragons and the owls."

This road has lasted now these thousands of years; it is still in good traveling condition, neither will it ever be closed till all the chosen wayfarers shall have reached the many mansions of the Father's House. Conspicuous to all beholders the everlasting causeway remains unbroken and unaltered, and fresh caravans of pilgrims continually traverse it.

This way, being made by divine power, is appointed by divine authority to be the King's highway. Whoever travels by this road is under the protection of the King of kings. Be sure it leads to the right end and runs in the best direction, for the Lord never made an error, and never failed in what He attempted. This is no roundabout way, nor broken route, nor blind alley. Let your faith abide in it, and it shall receive its reward. When I preach Jesus Christ as the way of life I always feel that I take no responsibility upon myself at all, I am only publishing a proclamation for which the King Himself is responsible. We deliver a royal message when we teach the doctrine of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, for it is He "whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood." When we tell of the way of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ, we are not planning a track, or making a road, but pointing you to one which has long been used. If it were a highway of our own making you might criticize it, but as it is a way of God's making, you are commanded to walk in it. To quit this road for another is to despise the wisdom and grace of God in Christ Jesus, and to prefer the idle inventions of man; this cannot lead to any good, either in this life or the next.

This highway has conducted many already to God. It is said to be "a highway and a way;" it is not only a highway by appointment, but it is a way by use and traffic. It is trodden hard by ten thousand times ten thousand feet, which have joyfully and safely traversed it from end to end. Behold the cloud of witnesses in glory who will all tell you that Jesus was their way to victory, their one and only way to life eternal. Thousands of us are still on the road, and we can speak well of it, yes, we can sing in the ways of the Lord. Though we at times faint in the way, we find no fault with the road. "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." It is our joy and our delight to walk where our Savior led the way, and where prophets and apostles are our fellow-travelers. We delight to look forward to its end, how glorious the prospect! But we are not ashamed to look backward, and admire the path of grace in the years which are past. We glory in the fact that we are on our way to God, and shall soon behold Him whom not having seen we love, and in whom believing, we even now rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.

This, then, is the sum of what I have spoken; there is a way to God, and to heaven. Even for you who as yet have not trodden the path of peace, the way yet lies open. Will you not enter upon it at once? Let the glad tidings be reported everywhere; there is a way to God. Let no one say, "I cannot possibly reach a home with God in heaven." Wherever you may be, "a highway shall be there," even where you now are a way is

made by which you may at once proceed to reconciliation, peace, purity, salvation. Oh that you may at once ask the way to Zion with your faces toward that place!

But now, secondly, *our text also tells us the name of this way,* "It shall be called the way of holiness." The way to God by Jesus Christ is the *Via Sacra,* the Holy Road. The way of faith is not contrary to holiness, but it is the way of holiness. There is no way to heaven but by holiness. We have need to insist much upon this in these days, for together with laxity of thought and dubiousness of doctrinal teaching, there has come into vogue great looseness of morals. I say nothing as to the outside world, but I dread this declension in the church. Professing Christians are becoming less and less strict as to their amusements. We hear of Christian ministers doing that which those who formerly occupied their pulpits never dreamed of doing themselves, nor countenancing in others. Is there to be an open door from the pulpit to the theater? Are men to go from exercising the sacred ministry to the playhouse? Time was when this would have seemed utterly incredible. God help His church when the leaders of religion come to this! As Paul says of another matter, so say we of this, "We have no such custom, neither the churches of God." I fear that this is not a singular fault, though it is a glaring one, everywhere I see professing Christians doing what our Nonconformist ancestors would have viewed with holy indignation. In doctrine many are hastening to Socinianism, and in conduct towards worldliness, and worse. God have mercy upon us if this thing is to go much further!

The way to heaven, if it is anything, is a way of holiness, and if the way we follow is not a holy way, and a separated way, it is not God's way. If we follow not the way of distinction from the world, we are not following Christ. He that is not holy on the way will not come to that holy end where the thrice holy God reveals Himself in His glory. Brethren, if you are ever in a doubt about which is the right path, remember those words of the Savior, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, and few there are that find it. "Prefer strictness to laxity. Do not mistake me, I wish to be understood, even if I am charged with censoriousness and bigotry. We need to pull up every now and then, and say to ourselves, "Which out of these two courses is the right?" for in these times exceedingly clever men are crying up new roads and extolling them after some such fashion as this, "Here you have a road worthy of the period. None of your narrow ways; be liberal, be broad; this is the road for the cultured and advanced." Your Savior lifts His warning hand as He cries, "Broad is the way which leads to destruction, and many there are that go in there at." Be it yours and mine, even if charged with bigotry and illiberality, still to select that way which the saints of old have chosen, unpleasing to the flesh, but pleasing to God, the straight and narrow road which leads to life eternal.

God's way is the way of holiness, for He has founded it upon holy truth. He is not unholy in the saving of any sinner. No sinner is saved without justice being executed to the full in the great expiation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Eternal principles forbade a righteous God to wink at sin, and He has not done so. Justice is as much vindicated by the re-

demption of Christ as if it had poured all its vials of wrath upon the sinner.

Those who follow that road do so by a holy trust. If we would be saved we must have a holy faith in a holy Savior, from whom we look for holy blessings. We must not believe that Christ will save us *in* our sins—that would be unholy faith, but we must look to Him to save us *from* our sins, for that is holy faith. We must trust in Him that He will cast the evil out of us, and that He will purify us to Himself, to be a people zealous of good works. We preach no faith without works, for that is a dead faith. Although we speak the word "grace," and never stammer as we speak it, yet we also assert that the grace which does not lead to holiness is not the grace of God at all, nor do they that receive it prove themselves to be God's elect. The way of those who are saved is the way of holy trust.

It is also the way of holy living. The man who really believes in Jesus Christ will be found purging himself from the ways of sinners; he will be holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners; he will pant and aspire after perfect holiness, and if he does not immediately attain it, he will still groan towards it, still longing to be made like Christ. The Way to heaven is not only a holy way, but according to the text it is to be called so by those who speak of it. The way which God has marked out for His people to follow is a conspicuously holy and Godlike way. Let us keep to it.

Thirdly, passing on, and further dwelling on our text, *this way is a select way*. It is written, "The unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for those." The unclean are excluded. Literally this may mean, "The uncircumcised and the unclean." These were excluded from the house of the Lord, and here they are excluded from the sacred way of Israel; of this the spiritual meaning is that unless we are washed in the blood of Christ, and renewed in the spirit of our minds by the Holy Spirit, we are not in the way of God. "Alas!" says one, "I am unclean, and therefore the text shuts me out of the way of holiness." This is true, but it does not therefore exclude you from the possibility of salvation, for there are ways by which the unclean can be made pure. You cannot enter on this way of life except by being cleansed by the atonement, and then renewed by the Holy Spirit. By the way of atonement you can pass into this way, for the Lord waits to be gracious to you, and to wash you clean. Pardon and regeneration are freely given to all who desire them, and you must have both of them, or you cannot tread the sacred way, for the unclean shall not pass over it.

It is a select way, for it is reserved for a select people—"it shall be for those." "Those"—who are they? Well, look backward, and you will read of some who make the wilderness and the solitary place to be glad, you read of some whose blind eyes were opened, whose deaf ears were unstopped. You read of the lame men who were made to leap as a hart, and of mute men who began to sing. This highway is reserved for those upon whom a miracle of grace has been performed, for those on whom the Messiah has laid His healing hand, for those who love and delight in holy things. Though often of a fearful heart they are bold to hold on in the sa-

cred way, and they shall never be driven from it. The pure in heart shall see God, and travel the way to God, "it shall be for those."

Especially, at the end of our text we read that this way is for the ransomed, "the redeemed of the Lord shall walk there." If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ you have been redeemed with His precious blood, and the way of grace is yours. Is the blood-mark on you? Do you look alone to Him who poured out His soul unto death on your behalf? If so, beloved, you are in the way, and you may walk there without any fear of ever being driven out of it. He that once comes into this way Christ will in no wise cast him out, and He is Lord of the way. You shall walk therein till you shall see His face with joy. This way, though open to all who come with willing hearts, is a select way which no impenitent soul can walk in.

Another fact makes it very select. You that can look in the margin of your Revised Old Testaments, or indeed in the margins of the old Bibles, will find that this clause may be read thus—"He shall be with them," that is, God shall be with them. This way of holiness is a way in which God walks with His people, revealing Himself to them, drawing them nearer and nearer to Himself, and keeping them in happy union with Himself. It is a blessed thing to think of heaven at the end, but it is an almost equally blessed thing to think of God with us on the way. Do we Christian people often enough consider the blessedness of the way to heaven? Even to be on the way there is a marvel of grace. Such stores of covenant blessings are provided and distributed by the way that even as pilgrims we are a blessed people. The presence of God with us on our journey is our choicest joy. If, after all, there should be no hereafter, my present life has been rendered happy by walking in the way of faith and obedience to God. Godliness has the promise of the life that now is, and that promise never fails. We have such joy and peace in walking with God, that we can bear witness that in keeping God's commandments there is great reward.

I must pass on, for time flies so swiftly, to notice one more matter about this way, and that is, that *the way which God has appointed is a plain way*. We are bound to be thankful for a way which is suitable for common and unlearned people. You would think from some people's talk, that religion is a very difficult thing, only to be understood by the cultured few. You must be a learned scientist, or a scholarly critic, before you can understand the modern gospel. It is not so with the gospel of Jesus. Oftentimes learned men miss this way altogether, while simple people perceive it and walk in it. I remember the story of a Swedish king in years gone by who, when he was ill, was greatly concerned about his eternal state. There chanced to come to the palace an old farmer, known to his majesty for his piety; the king called him to his bedside and said, "Tell me, what the faith that saves the soul is?" The peasant explained it out of his heart in plain language, much to the king's comfort. The king remained ill for months, and again fell into doubt and fear. Those about him urged him to send for the Archbishop of Upsala, as a learned prelate who could allay his fears. The bishop came to the royal couch, and gave his majesty a logical and theological definition of faith in most proper terms. When he was gone the king said, "It was very learned, no doubt, and very ingenious, but there was no comfort in it for me; the peasant's

faith is the faith that can save my soul." It is so. Simple truth is needful for dying men and women. I do not wonder that Dr. Guthrie, when he was nearing death, asked to have "a bairn's hymn" sung to him. The gospel which suits little children is that which saves souls, the gospel of the common people is the only gospel. The most educated must find their wisdom in the cross or die fools. In times of trial men cannot endure speculations, mystifications, and refining; they need the sure and plain truth to build their hopes upon. The taste of the present period is all for that which is novel, singular, original, and pretended profound. Give me my daily bread, and who will, may have the junkets. Give me bread such as Jesus divided among the men and women and children, and I will leave the stones of philosophy to those who care to try their teeth on them. Good Mr. Romaine, when he used to preach over yonder at St. Ann's, Blackfriars, was asked by certain of his educated hearers to introduce a little more learning into his discourses. Hearing their request, he promised to fulfill it. So on the following Sunday he read the text in Hebrew, and when he had read it he said, "I suppose very few of you now understand it, perhaps I had better quote it from the Septuagint in Greek." When he had read the Greek, he said, "Even now I fear that no great number can understand the text, it is a pity but what more should be able to receive the word, and so I will give it to you in Latin." When the Vulgate version had been heard he saw them smile, and he said, "Even now I fear that hardly a score of you are much edified, and I think you all agree that, after all, we may as well drop our learning, and give you the words from our own English Bible." Brethren, had we been there we would have seen the point of the whole business, and we would have agreed with the congregation that not the most learned, but the plainest, is the best.

The gospel of God needs no wisdom of words to commend it, and therefore our apostle says, "We use great plainness of speech." The true gospel is as plain as a walking stick. What says the text; "Wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." Nobody will err about the way to God if he really resolves to follow that way. The Spirit of God will guide those whose hearts are set upon coming to God. It is the wayfaring man who does not err, your critic will be sure to err, your trifler cannot help erring, but the true pilgrim, the wayfaring man who is actually traveling, he shall not err. If you want to go to heaven, the way is laid down in the Scriptures, so that little children may find it, but if you only want to talk about the road, and about the stumbles of travelers in it, why then the way is difficult indeed. If you choose to puzzle yourselves about His gospel God will give you over to be puzzled. He who must be wiser than God shall end in being more brutish than any man. If you wish to find the way to heaven, there it is, "Behold the Lamb of God." Believe in Jesus and be saved. That Jesus is the way to peace and holiness is as plain in Scripture as the nose on your face. What more teaching do you want? What more assurance do you require? If your heart is inclined to see, there is light enough, and the cross is clear enough; look and live. Those who will to see shall see, but those who shut their eyes do but prove the truth of the old proverb—"There are none as blind as those who do not

wish to see." He who says, "I will arise and go unto my Father," shall not miss the way. He who has from the Lord received the will shall by the Lord perceive the way. "The wayfaring man shall not err."

That wayfaring man may be a great fool in other matters, but he shall be no fool upon this matter. He may be very stupid about science, and politics, and business, but if the Lord has made him willing to be a wayfaring man, with his face to Zion, he shall not mistake in his journey along the holy way. God will instruct him in vital points. The main thing is to know the most necessary truth and practice it. Our Lord said, "One thing is needful." A gentleman riding on the box seat of a coach that was going to Bath in the old times asked the driver, "Who lived at yonder mansion?" The answer was short, if not sweet. "I don't know, sir." The gentleman traveled on a little further, and then inquired, "Where does that canal run to?" "Don't know, sir." Again the passenger sought information, and asked, "Where does Squire So-and-So live?" "I don't know, sir." "Why, good man," said the gentleman, "what do you know?" The reply was final—"I know how to drive you to Bath, sir." Surely, that was the principal business of a coachman. Even thus with regard to spiritual things, the chief thing is to know how sin is pardoned, how a sinner is justified and sanctified. There are a thousand things which a man may not know, and he may not be much the worse for not knowing them, but not to know the Lord Jesus is to be ignorant of the path of life. If a man knows the Lord Christ he knows the way to eternal happiness, and he may bless God all the day for such knowledge. Let every man gain all the instruction he can, but let him not think that mere knowledge will be of great value to him in heavenly things, for the tree of knowledge of good and evil worked no good to our race. How often have I wished that I could forget many things which once I thought it necessary to know! I would resolve with Paul to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. There, let the bubbles burst and the scum be blown away. Let fire consume the gilt and tinsel. What are these when weighed with one ingot of the real gold of the knowledge of Him that loved us and gave Himself for us? Let us choose the right way. Let us look up to God, and say, "You will show me the path of life," then let us despise the pedantry of the age, and take to that path wherein "wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err."

The last word of our text teaches us that it is a safe way. Of this I will speak more fully another time. "No lion shall be there." Plenty of lions prowl up and down the side of the road, but they cannot "go up thereon." He who keeps the crown of the causeway, though he may hear the lion roar, shall not meet it in the way. No ravenous beasts shall be found there, for the way is not to their mind. Reptiles cannot live in Ireland, or lions on the holy way. There is one lion which those who make Jesus their way need never be afraid of, that is the lion of unpardoned sin. If you believe in Jesus Christ, your iniquities are forgiven you for His name's sake. Another lion also roars upon us, but cannot devour us, namely, temptation; you shall not be tempted above what you are able to bear. We read of some who followed their own way, that the Lord sent lions among them, but He drives away the lions from those who keep the

right way. Lions are afraid of fire, and the Lord is a wall of fire round about His people. As for that grim lion of death of which some speak, it does not exist. This is a fabulous monster; death to a believer is rather an angel than a lion. The valley through which we are to pass is not the valley of death, but of the shadow of death. For the believer there is no substance in death, it is only a shadow. Brethren, you shall soon pass from under that temporary shade, and no ill shall come of it. The shadow of a dog cannot bite, the shadow of a sword cannot wound, and the shadow of death cannot destroy. Go onward without fearing any evil, for the Lord is with you; His rod and His staff are your comfort. No ravenous beast can harm you, for it is written, "There shall no evil befall you." Walk with God, and "you shall tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shall you trample under feet." To be safe we must be holy; to be holy we must trust in Christ Jesus the Lord.

II. Only two or three minutes remain, in which I will speak of OUR DUTY IN CONNECTION WITH THIS WAY OF HOLINESS. If there is such a road, let us not neglect it, lest we perish from the way when the king's wrath is kindled but a little.

The first thing is *carefully to discriminate* in these days between road and road. Beware of false prophets. "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God." Put on your considering caps, and when you see a road which looks broad, smooth, pleasant, and well bordered with flowers, say to yourself, "There are many ways, but since only one of them leads to eternal life, I must be careful. I will pray, 'Lord, be my guide, even unto death.'" Then make the inquiry, "Is this the way of holiness; for if it is not the holy way, it is not the road which I dare to follow." O my dear hearers, believe the truth, and follow the truth. Do not believe that sincerity is enough; you need the truth as well. "If we are sincere in our religion," says one, "it will be all right with us, whatever that religion may be." Nonsense. You know better. If you sincerely mistake the road and go northward, you will not get to Brighton. If you sincerely drink poison, it will kill you; if you sincerely cut your throat, you will die. If you sincerely believe a lie, you will suffer the consequences. You must not only be sincere, but you must be right. Therefore, submit your judgment to the Word of the Lord. This infallible Book is given to you, and the infallible Spirit waits to instruct you as to its meaning. Cry unto the Wise One for wisdom. Yield your minds to the teaching of Him who is the way, the truth, and the life; so shall you not be deceived, but shall attain unto holiness and bliss.

The next thing is that when you know the road, you should *scrupulously stay in it,* for many ways branch from it. Let no man draw you aside from it. It is one straight line. Keep to it, even as the stars keep in their courses. Gird up the loins of your mind; be sober and hope to the end. May the Holy Spirit so rest upon you that you may have no wish to leave the straight and narrow way; no desire to start aside from it, even for a moment. He that endures to the end, the same shall be saved. Temporizers who begin for a little season and run well, and then are hindered, what shall become of them? Why this; that it were better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than to turn from it after

they have known it. To the end! To the end, man! Hold on and hold out, or your faith will prove to be a thing of nothing.

Once more; are we in the way? Then let us *be very earnest in telling other people of it*. Traveling the other day by a country road the traveler wished to know the way to a certain spot. He inquired of one who sat by the roadside, but all the answer he got from him was a vacant stare, and a shake of the head. A little time later he found that the poor man was deaf and mute. I am afraid there are many such Christians nowadays, they are spiritually deaf to the woes of others, and mute as to giving them either instruction or encouragement. All they seem to do is to shake their wise heads, as if they knew a great deal more than they meant to tell. "Oh," you say, "we are not deaf and mute." Then why do you not talk of Jesus, the way? Why do you not tell others the way to heaven? Why do you not hear the cry that is going up to God everywhere for spiritual instruction? How is it that so many Christians are content to occupy their pews, but never go forth to declare what they have found in Jesus? I'll tell you why; I fear that some professors cannot tell the way because they do not know it. I asked a person, the other day, the road to a certain place, and in the politest possible manner he answered, "I beg your pardon, but I am quite a stranger in these parts." That was a very sufficient reason for not directing me. He could not tell what he did not know. If any of you do not know the way, and are strangers in these parts, do not tell anybody, but let this mournful reflection go home to your consciences, "I cannot tell another the way to heaven because I am a stranger in these parts." God grant that we may never stretch the arm of our testimony beyond the sleeve of our experience! It shall be well for any minister if it may be written upon his tombstone, "He never preached what he did not practice." May you Christian people who are busy at Mission Rooms, and Sabbath schools, and so forth, so live what you teach that you may teach what you live! It is a horrible thing to stand like a signpost by the way, to point to the road, but never to run in that road yourself. It would be well if we were always ready to tell the way to heaven to everybody, whether they want to know it or not. Possibly the men we are most likely to bless are those who at this present do not desire to know the gospel. If we point out the way to them, God may ordain that our describing the path may be an effectual influence for leading them into it. There are two occasions in which we ought to point out the way to all around, namely, in season and out of season. We shall be clear of the blood of men if we show them the way, and entreat them to walk in it. If we do not they may perish for want of knowing the road, and then their blood may be required at our hands.

Finally, what ought we to do in connection with this way? I would say, beloved friend, if you are not in the road, may the Lord help you to *get into it this morning*. "What is to be done to reach the heavenly city?" asks one. A notable divine once gave this direction, "The way to heaven is, turn to the right, and keep straight on." I would add, turn when you come to the cross, only one turn is needed, but that must be a thorough turn, and one in which you persevere. Keep straight on till you come to glory. Trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you have eternal life.

"But," says one, "I have begun to trust Christ, but I am always afraid of myself, lest I should go back after all." This is by no means an unhealthy fear when you consider the matter in reference to your own strength, but there is another light in which to regard it. Trust in the Lord for final perseverance, and He will give it to you. One thing I would earnestly recommend to you who are afraid of backsliding and apostasy, say to yourself, "Whether or not, whether I get to Canaan or not, I will never go back to Egypt. I will die with my face toward God and holiness." The soul that can keep this solemn resolve never to return to the country from where he came out will surely reach the promised rest. Your carcass will not fall in the wilderness if your face is towards the Lord Jesus, His promise, and His throne. No, never will we love this evil world, nor bow before its idols; we have lifted our hand to the Lord, and we cannot go back. If God has brought you only a little out of your sins, I pray that you may press forward, but if He has clean delivered you, you must do so. Lord God, if I am cast away, if You do never give me joy again, yet I will never cease to look to Your mercy in Christ Jesus, for there only have I hope. By Your grace I will die with my face to the cross. Did you ever hear of anybody who perished in that posture? No, it shall never be reported in heaven above, nor in hell beneath, that a soul died in the way—Christ being that way. No soul can perish whose eyes look towards the five wounds of Jesus crucified. He is the way, the living way, the only way, the sure way; follow Him. O poor sinner! Do as the blind man did who followed Jesus in the way; rise this morning, for He calls you. Before you leave your pew, look to Jesus! Flee along this road of refuge, this way of grace. May God the Holy Spirit help you to take to the way at once, without delay! Unto you shall be salvation, and unto the Lord of the way shall be glory forever and ever. Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
ISAIAH 35; JOHN 14:1-14.**

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—916, 408, 409.

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

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

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

CONFIDENCE AND CONCERN
NO. 1913

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, AUGUST 8, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For this reason I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day. Hold fast the form of sound words, which you have heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto you keep by the Holy Spirit which dwells in us." 2 Timothy 1:12-14.

OUR apostle was in prison. If he was confined in the Mamertine, those of us who have shivered in that dark underground dungeon may well pity him, and if he was confined in the prison of the Praetorian Guards, he fared no better, for the near company of such rough and cruel soldiers would involve much suffering. The apostle was not only a prisoner, chained by his right hand to a soldier both day and night, but he was, to his intense sorrow, forsaken by his friends. The encouragements of Christian communion are exceedingly great, and the loss of them is very bitter. Those who ought to have gloried in the apostle for his fervor, his self-sacrifice, his courage, and his zeal, had turned against him; he writes to Timothy, "This you know, that all they which are in Asia have turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes." It would seem that these two notable persons were ashamed of Paul's chain, and to their endless disgrace turned against him.

Deserted in his utmost need, deprived of his liberty, and treated as a breaker of the laws, we could not have marveled if the apostle had been somewhat dispirited. Active spirits are apt to fret in confinement, and tender hearts bleed under desertion. Beside that, the man of God was in daily danger of execution by the tyrant's sword. He was not likely to be spared by the monster who occupied the Roman throne, and already he had the sentence of death in himself. Any morning he might be awakened by a rough summons to come forth and die. See him then—such a one as Paul the aged! Wearing his chain, he sits in his cell, expecting soon to die a cruel death, but instead of being personally discouraged, he has encouragement to spare for others. He is thinking of young Timothy, and not of himself. As for himself, he says, "Nevertheless, I am not ashamed," and then he charges his young brother not to be disheartened nor shaken in faith, but bravely to carry on the great work committed to his charge. It is grand to see how calmly this man bore himself! In his case it was indeed true that "stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage." Paul ranged the world with his free missionary spirit, and

he reigned more royally in his prison than Caesar in his palace. No one envies Nero, but many have felt that Paul's sufferings might readily be embraced for the sake of his exalted life.

What was the cause of the cool courage of the apostle? On what foundation was his peace built? How was his confidence sustained? He tells us in our text how his fears were removed, and he also informs us as to a matter which pressed upon his mind. Our discourse this morning will be an attempt to show at once Paul's *confidence* and his *concern*. I pray God to bring our minds into a parallel line with that of the apostle, so that we may enjoy the most serene peace, as Paul did, and may at the same moment feel a noble concern for higher interests than those which begin and end with ourselves. The honored apostle had committed all his own matters into the hands of God, and so was at perfect peace about them, but he experienced deep anxiety for another treasure, which was committed to him, which he handed over to Timothy with an earnest entreaty that he would guard it by the Holy Spirit. The blending of deep peace and holy zeal will give us a condition of heart of a most desirable kind.

Our subject opens up to us under four divisions. First, we shall notice *what Paul had done.* Then, secondly, *what Paul knew*. Thirdly, *what Paul was persuaded of,* and lastly, *what he was concerned about*.

I. First, observe carefully WHAT PAUL HAD DONE. I will speak but briefly here.

He had trusted a person—"I know whom I have believed." He had trusted that person with full, clear knowledge of Him, so trusted that he did not alter his trust as years rolled by, but, as he grew in the knowledge of that person he was also confirmed in his confidence in Him, "I know whom I have believed."

He does not say, "I know *what* I have believed," though that would have been true; he does not say, "I know *when* I believed," though that would have been correct; nor does he say, "I know *how much* I have believed," although he had well weighed his faith. He does not even say, "I know *in whom* I have believed," but he goes closer still. He says expressly, "I know *whom* I have believed," as much as to say, "I know the person into whose hand I have committed my present condition, and my eternal destiny. I know who He is, and I therefore, without any hesitation, leave myself in His hands." Brethren, it is the beginning of spiritual life to believe Jesus Christ. Is not this the one word that we preach to you continually? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." "He that believes on Him is not condemned." Many are the Scriptural assurances to the same effect. Paul had not ventured upon a fancy, but he had trusted in a well-known friend. He had not done this in ignorance, nor in fanaticism, nor in desperation, but with cool, clear, deliberate judgement, knowing whom he had trusted. Ignorance is a wretched foundation, but sure knowledge is like a rock.

Paul had gone further, and had practically carried out his confidence, for *he had deposited everything with this person*. He had unreservedly committed his body, soul, spirit, character, life, and immortality to the guardian care of that person whom he knew and loved so well. I may be-

lieve in a person, and yet I may never have committed anything to his charge, he might not wish that I would do so, nor be willing to accept any trust at my hands, but we must go that length with the Lord Jesus. While we are bound to believe in the Lord Jesus as faithful and true and able to save, this belief is not enough in itself to work salvation, we must in consequence of this belief actually and definitely convey out of our own keeping all our eternal interests, and put them into His keeping. We must make the Lord Jesus Christ the depository of all our anxieties and hopes. He must be to us the banker who has the custody of all our valuables, and bonds, and title-deeds, yes we must leave with Him ourselves also. All that we are, all that we have, all that we expect to have, we must confide with Jesus. A poor idiot, who had been instructed by an earnest Christian man, somewhat alarmed him by a strange remark, for he feared that all his teaching had been in vain. He said to this poor creature, "You know that you have a soul, John?" "No," said he, "I have no soul." "No soul!" thought the teacher, "this is dreadful ignorance." All his fears were rolled away when his half-witted pupil added, "I had a soul once, and I lost it, but Jesus found it, and so I have let Him keep it." How could he better have expressed his faith? Is not that exactly what the apostle meant; he passed his soul out of his own keeping into the care of Jesus, his Lord? As a man leaves his estate with a trustee, or as the patient entrusts his life to his physician, even so had the apostle Paul committed himself into the hands of that glorious Person, whom having not seen he loved.

I pause here to ask whether we have all done the same. This is a vital question. If you, my friend, are keeping your own soul, you have a poor keeper. You will lose your soul as surely as you attempt to be your own savior. Have you once for all transferred salvation work from yourself to Jesus? Are you looking out of yourself, and looking to Jesus only? Are you leaning upon the Beloved? Are you living in Him? If so, your safety is secure. In the hand of Jesus a soul must be safe. In the keeping of Jesus nothing shall hurt you either night or day. In Him you dwell in a fortress and high tower, and no enemy shall molest you. Through time and eternity you are secure. Death shall leave you sleeping on His bosom, resurrection shall awaken you in His likeness, and endless ages shall display your security in Him forever and ever.

What Paul did is summed up in these words, "I know whom I have believed," "I have committed everything to Him."

II. The next thing is, WHAT DID PAUL KNOW? He tells us plainly, "I know whom I have believed." We are to understand by this that Paul looked steadily at the object of his confidence, and *knew that he relied upon God in Christ Jesus*. He did not rest in a vague hope that he would be saved, nor in an indefinite reliance upon the Christian religion, nor in a sanguine expectation that all things would, somehow, turn out right at the end. He did not hold the theory of our modern divines, that our Lord Jesus Christ did something or other, which, in one way or another, is more or less remotely connected with the forgiveness of sin, but he knew the Lord Jesus Christ as a person, and he deliberately placed himself in His keeping, knowing Him to be the Savior. His countrymen did not

know Jesus, or they would not have crucified the Lord of glory, but Paul knew Him. Those around the apostle were strangers to the Lord Jesus, and could not sympathize with Paul, yet he knew Him. Some of them curiously asked, "Who is this Christos of whom you sing?" Others asked, "Who is this crucified One, of whom you make so much?" Paul answers by avowing his own faith—"I know whom I have believed." He had no phantom Savior, no mythical Savior, no unknown Savior, no Savior sharing salvation with two or three others. Paul knew no company of saints and virgins, nor even a church to which he trusted his soul, but he says, "I know whom I have believed." Jesus was a distinct person to the apostle, so real as to be known to him as a man knows a friend. Paul knew nobody else as well as he knew his Lord.

By faith he knew Jesus as He was born at Bethlehem, partaker of our humanity, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh—a brother born for adversity. He knew Him as He died on Calvary, bearing our sins in His own body on the tree. He knew Him as dead, and buried in the tomb of Joseph, and as risen from the dead for our justification. He knew Him as gone up into the glory, and sitting at the right hand of God, clothed with honor and majesty. Because of all this, the apostle trusted his Lord. On what better ground could he have gone? What could be more reasonable than that he should entrust his all with One so fitted to preserve him till he day of His appearing?

Dear friends, do you really know Christ Jesus as a real person? Do you trust in Him as now living? I beseech you do not trust the weight of your salvation upon a doctrine. A statement, an abstraction cannot save you, you need the active interference of a person. Do not trust in a form of faith, or in a code of rules. What are they? Trust in the living person of Him who, though He was dead, rose again, and ever lives to make intercession for us at the right hand of God, even the Father. I trust that you have no hesitation as to faith in Him, but that you can sing with me—

"Jesus, my God, I know His name,
His name is all my trust,
Nor will He put my soul to shame,
Nor let my hope be lost."

Paul also knew the character of Jesus whom he trusted. His perfect character abundantly justified the apostle's implicit trust. Paul could have said, "I know that I trust in one who is no mere man, but very God of very God. I have not put my soul into the keeping of a priest, like unto the sons of Aaron, who must die, but I have rested myself in one whose priesthood is according to the law of an endless life—a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. He upon whom I confide is He without whom was not anything made that was made, who sustains all things by the word of His power, and who at His coming shall shake both the heavens and the earth, for all fullness of divine energy dwells in Him." Paul knew that his Christ was God as well as man, and so he felt safe in relying upon Him.

He knew also that this blessed person was pre-eminently satisfactory to the heart of the eternal God. What manner of perfection must concentrate itself in Him in whom the Father Himself delights? Think of Him as the great sacrifice for sin, which has made a complete, absolute, and ev-

erlasting atonement, to which, nothing can be added, from which nothing shall ever be taken away. Think of Him in whom the justice of God is vindicated, and the love of God is displayed. When my own eye dart a glance to Calvary, and I picture the Lord of glory dying there for my sake, I cannot allow a doubt to live; I feel compelled to trust. I cannot but rest in perfect peace when I see that great sacrifice, which has forever put away all the sins of believers.

Beloved, Paul knew whom he had believed as being divine in His person and complete in His sacrifice, but more than that, Paul knew that the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom he trusted his soul, was now adorned with all the glory of heaven, and clothed with all the omnipotence of the mighty God. He knew that, if *he* was bound, Jesus was not bound, and that, if *he* must die, yet Jesus could not die. He knew that the Lord shall reign forever and ever, and his expectant ear caught the hallelujahs of eternity when the Crucified shall be acknowledged Lord of all. "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth," said Jesus, "Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them." Paul felt that such power was worthy of boundless confidence, and therefore he said—"I know whom I have believed." Jesus was to Paul's faith no longer the despised and rejected Nazarene, no longer the condemned and crucified Man of sorrows, but He was the acknowledged King of kings, and Lord of lords. He knew Him in His risen glory. Happy, happy, happy heart which has such knowledge of Jesus, and such confidence in Him!

Now, brethren, I think I have shown you why Paul should have much faith in Jesus. How could he do otherwise than trust in one of whom he knew such wonderful things? But *how did Paul come to know Christ?* I suppose he knew Him in great part by the Word of God. Every page of Scripture, as the apostle perused it, revealed Jesus to him. These Scriptures are the swathing-bands of the Holy Child Jesus, unroll them, and there He is. This Book is a royal pavilion, within which the Prince of peace is to be met with by believers who look for Him. In this celestial mirror Jesus is reflected. This is a sure testimony, more to be trusted than the sight of the eyes, or the hearing of the ears. Do you know Christ by seeing Him in His word?

Paul also knew Jesus in another way than this. He had personal acquaintance with Him, he knew Him as "the Lord Jesus, who appeared unto him in the way." When he was going to Damascus to persecute the saints of God, this same Jesus spoke out of the excellent glory, and said to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" Brethren, have we any personal acquaintance with Christ? If not, our witness will not run parallel with Paul's utterance in our text, "I know whom I have believed." Did Jesus ever call you to Himself, and have you answered His call? Has He so spoken as to change the whole current of your life? Does He still speak to you? Do you remember a sacred place, a consecrated spot where Jesus has met you? Have you a chamber where He keeps tryst with you, and manifests Himself to you as He does not to the world? If so, you can well trust Him whose love is shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit, you can well trust Him, for He is no stranger, but your

near kinsman, who is mindful of you, and visits you. Cannot you join with our poet, and softly sing—

"Yes, though I have not seen, and still
Must rest in faith alone,
I love You, dearest Lord, and will,
Unseen, but not unknown."

There are other gates of the soul beside eyes and ears, other touches than those of the hand, and other feelings than those of the flesh. Our inner spirit when it would commune with the spiritual world disdains to use the gross and inefficient instruments of this poor body; she cannot with these have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. By its own inner hand our spirit has touched Him; with her own inner mouth she has kissed the Well-beloved; with other than a material eye she has beheld her unseen spouse. Our eyes do not see; *we* see through our eyes even these temporal things, but we see eternal things without the need of eyes. Our spirit needs no intervening medium, but she sees in her pure spirit the pure spirit of Jesus face to face. More than the senses could convey to the soul she perceives without them. This is a divine and blessed knowledge, and the apostle could, with all his heart, declare that it was his own. Though he had once known Christ after the flesh, he declared that after the flesh he knew Him no more, but he knew Him so well and so truly after the spirit that he said, without reserve, "I know whom I have believed."

He knew the Lord also by practical experience and trial of Him. Paul had tested Jesus amidst furious mobs, when stones fell about him, and in prison, when the dampness of death chilled him to the bone. He had known Christ far out at sea, when Euroclydon drove him up and down in the Adriatic, and he had known Christ when the rough blasts of unbrotherly suspicion had beaten upon him on the land. All that he knew increased his confidence. He knew the Lord Jesus because He had delivered him out of the mouth of the lion. "I know," he said; he was past the age of speculation and theory. Look at his hoary locks and his scarred face, he is no fair-weather sailor, he has sailed with his Lord upon the great deeps, and has suffered many things for His sake, and now after all his experience he does not say that he hopes, supposes, or thinks, but he writes, *"I know."* Glorious dogmatist, we are not ashamed to follow in your track! Where is there any comfort or stimulus, except in truth assuredly believed? To doubt is to be downcast and feeble; only in solemn assurance is there courage and strength. Come on, you who quibble and criticize. Paul meets you with "I know." You demand that he shall maintain his thesis with logic? He answers, "I know." What he knew of his Lord was as sure to him as his own consciousness. He had no reserve in his mind for future alterations of creed, for he had reached certainty. "I know whom I have believed." He could not doubt Him, nor distrust Him, nor stir an inch from the absolutely unlimited confidence which he reposed in Him. Beloved, I trust we know as much of Jesus as leads us to a living faith in our living Lord. Some people do not know much else, but they are well educated if they know this. Others are skillful in classics, and mathematics, and applied sciences, but if they do not know Jesus, in whom the saints believe, they are in the worst of ignorance. I pray God

to send such untaught persons to His infant school, for it is written, "Except you are converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." May we be taught of God to know Jesus by that practical acquaintance which engenders trust in Him!

III. Thirdly, let us inquire—WHAT WAS THE APOSTLE PERSUADED OF? If one should say to a Christian man, "Pray, sir, what are your opinions?" he might answer, "I have no opinions, but I know whom I have believed." If the inquirer then said, "But what is your persuasion?" he might answer, "I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him." This method of treating matters is far better than forming mere opinions for ourselves, or borrowing persuasions from others.

Implicitly Paul declares his faith in our Lord's willingness and faithfulness. He does not mention these in words, but sometimes there is great instruction in omissions; things not said may perhaps be more conspicuous by their absence than things which are spoken. Silence is often more emphatic than speech. Paul does not raise the question whether the Savior was willing or faithful to keep what he had committed to Him—he takes that for granted. He will not even assert his knowledge of the truth and grace of his Redeemer; he leaves these among the things which could not be questioned for a moment. Dear heart, if you have given yourself to Christ, Christ has given Himself to you, do not doubt His readiness to receive you! If you are leaning upon the Beloved, He is willing to be leaned upon, and He will never fail you. If in very truth His word is your trust, the Lord will never run back from His promise. Has He not said it, and will He not do it? Take this for granted. Receive it as an acknowledged principle which none may question.

But *the point which the apostle expressly mentions is the power of Christ*—"I am persuaded that He is able." He had a solemn conviction of the ability of the Lord Jesus, who is able to save unto the uttermost. Let us hope that no believer here has any doubt about the power of Christ, if he has, the doubt is most absurd. He that goes to the sea for salt water cannot rationally fear that he will be forced to come back with an empty bucket. He that lifts up his face to the sun can have no doubt but that his features will be bright with the light. So he that turns to Christ may be persuaded that there is no lack of sufficiency or ability in Him. "Oh," one says, "I do not doubt the ability of Christ to save me." May I ask you, then, what you do doubt? "Oh, I doubt my own merit, my own ability, and so forth." What have any of these things to do with the matter in hand, which is the power of Jesus? These things are out of the circle altogether. All the salvation of a man depends upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and if *He* is able to save you, why are you full of fears? If you have committed your money to the banker, and you say, "I am afraid it is not safe," the only justifiable reason for such suspicion must be because the bank is not solvent. Would you say, "I doubt about my money, because I have a headache?" Would that be rational? Would you say, "I am afraid my money is unsafe because my eyesight is failing me?" Does that influence the safety of your deposit at the bank? Nothing can affect that matter but lack of stability in the bank itself. If you have committed yourself

to the care of the Lord Jesus Christ, I cannot listen to those miserable "ifs" and "buts"; they are unreasonable and irrelevant. I blow them away as so much chaff. If Jesus is able to save, and you trust Him, there is no room for distrust. Can you doubt the Lord's ability? Have we not believed in His Godhead, and in the almighty power with which the Father has girt Him as the God-Man, the Mediator, now that He has gone up into His everlasting reward? If these are facts, how can it be difficult to trust such a one? Trust my soul with Christ! Why, if I had all your souls within my body, I could trust them all to Him, and if every sin that man has done, in thought, and word, and deed, since worlds were made, or time began, could meet upon my one guilty head—I dare say it—the precious blood of Jesus could wash them all away. Trust Him with one soul! Yes, indeed, it seems too little a thing. He that goes on board a great Atlantic liner does not say, "I venture the weight of my body upon this vessel. I trust it to bear my ponderous frame." Yet your body is more of a load to the vessel than your soul is to the Lord Jesus. Did you ever hear of the gnat on the horn of the ox which feared that it might be an inconvenience to the huge creature? O friend, you are but a gnat in comparison with the Lord Jesus, no, you are not as heavy to the ascended Savior as the gnat to the ox. You were a weight to Him once, but having borne that load once for all, your salvation is no burden to Him now. Well may you say, "I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him."

What was this which Paul had committed to Christ? He committed to Him everything that he had for time and for eternity, his body, his soul, his spirit; all fears, cares, dangers, sins, doubts, hopes, joys; he just made a clean removal of his all from himself to his Lord. "I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him." See how the eyes of the apostle light up as he tells his assistant to write down, "He is able to keep my deposit *against that day."* If he had little joy and rejoicing in his waiting time, he would nevertheless look to have his full of it in that day of days, that day in which his Lord would appear. He left everything with Jesus with a view to the Advent, the Judgment, and the eternal glory. Then would he look for his divine Keeper to produce the deposit entrusted to Him. There will be no need in that day to ask, "My Lord, is it all right?" Yet we may picture Him as coming in all His glory and majesty to be admired in all them that believe. He sits upon the throne of His glory, and there are you among the countless multitudes. Suppose you could say, "My Lord, I trusted You with my soul, am I safe? I trusted You with my eternal interests, are they all secure?" How sweet will be His reply, as He says to His Father, "Of them which You gave Me have I lost none," and to us, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you!" If any inquire of us in glory, "How did you get here?" we will answer, *"He* brought us here." If they say, "How is it that you are on His right hand?" we will reply, "Because His own right hand brought us there." "But how is it that you are so bright in your apparel?" "We have washed our robes, and made them white in His blood." "How is it that after you were converted you did not turn back?" "He kept us in the way and preserved our lives, for He said, 'Because I live, you shall

live also.'" "How is it that you have escaped the power of the enemy since you were only a sheep, and a wolf was after you?" "It is because He said, 'I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.'" When the Lord shall make up His last account of His jewels in that great day, we shall be found in Christ, even as gems are found in a golden chest. In the Lord Jesus Christ all His elect, all His blood-bought, all His called, all His justified, all His believing people shall be found in that day. None of His redeemed shall be absent in the day when the sheep shall pass again under the hand of Him that tells them. All who were marked with the blood-mark here below shall be folded in the pastures of glory. "I know whom I have believed," says Paul, "and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

Those of you who are acquainted with the original will follow me while I forge a link between my third division and my fourth. If I were to read the text thus it would be quite correct—"I am persuaded that He is able to keep my deposit against that day." Here we have a glimpse of a second meaning. If you have the Revised Version, you will find in the margin, "that which He has committed to me," and the original allows us to read the verse whichever way we choose—"He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him"—or "that which He has committed unto me." This last expression, though I could not endorse it as giving the full sense of the text, does seem to me to be a part of its meaning. It is noteworthy that, in the fourteenth verse, the original has the same phrase as in this verse. It runs thus—"that good deposit guarded by the Holy Spirit which dwells in us." Inasmuch as the words are the same—the apostle speaking of "my deposit" in the twelfth verse, and in the fourteenth verse speaking of "that good deposit"—I cannot help thinking that one thought dominated his mind. His soul and the gospel were so united as to be in his thought but one deposit, and this he believed that Jesus was able to keep. He seemed to say, "I have preached the gospel which was committed to my trust, and now, for having preached it, I am put in prison, and am likely to die, but the gospel is safe in better hands than mine." The demon of distrust might have whispered to him, "Paul, you are now silenced, and your gospel will be silenced with you; the church will die out; truth will become extinct." "No, no," says Paul, "I am not ashamed, for I know that He is able to guard my deposit against that day." I cannot tell you what heart-cheer it often brings to my soul, in these evil days, to join in the confidence of this text. At the present moment, it seems as if parts of the church had almost forgotten the gospel of the grace of God. We hear on all hands, "another gospel, which is not another; but there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ." We hear the noise of archers at every place of drawing of water, and the wayfaring man almost ceases from the highways of Zion. Worldliness is growing over the church, she is overgrown with it. The visible church is honeycombed through and through with a baptized infidelity. Unholy living is following upon unbelieving thinking. They boast that they have nearly extirpated Puritanism; some of us are described as the last of the race. Have they quenched our coal? Far from it. The light of the doctrines of

grace shall yet again shine forth as the sun. Elijah was known to say, "As the Lord lives, before whom I stand," and this also is my confidence; truth lives because God lives. Though truth were dead and buried, it would rise again. The day is not far distant when the old, old gospel shall again command the scholarship of the age, and shall direct the thoughts of men. Even if it were not so, it would be a small matter, for it signifies little except to themselves what *men* think, since God is true, and with truth there is power. The fight is not over yet; the brunt of the battle is yet to come. They dreamed that the old gospel was dead more than a hundred years ago, but they dug its grave too soon. Conformists and Nonconformists had alike gone over to a cold Socinianism, and in the old sanctuaries, where holy men once preached with power, modern dreamers droned out their wretched philosophies. All was decorous and dead, but God would not have it so. All of a sudden, a voice was heard from Oxford, where the Wesleys and their companions had found a living Savior, and were bound to tell of His love. From an inn in Gloucester there came a youth, who began to preach the everlasting gospel with trumpet tongue. A new era dawned. Two schools of Methodists with fiery energy proclaimed the living word. All England was awakened. A new springtide arrived; the time of the singing of birds had come; life rejoiced where once death withered all things. It will be so again. The Lord lives and the gospel lives too. Our charioteers are driving as fast as they can in the direction of Unitarianism and spiritual death, but the Lord will lay His hand upon the bridles of the horses, though Jehu himself drives them, and He shall turn them back again by the way they came. "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep my deposit against that day."

IV. This leads me on to this fourth point—WHAT THE APOSTLE WAS CONCERNED ABOUT. The matter about which he was concerned was this deposit of his—this everlasting gospel of the blessed God. He expresses his concern in the following words—"Hold fast the form of sound words, which you have heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto you, keep by the Holy Spirit which dwells in us."

First, *he is concerned for the steadfastness of Timothy,* and as I think for that of all young Christians, and especially of all young preachers. What does he say? "Hold fast the form of sound words." I hear an objector murmur, "There is not much in *words,* surely." Sometimes there is very much in words. Vital truth may hinge upon a single word. The whole church of Christ once fought a tremendous battle over a syllable, but it was necessary to fight it for the conservation of the truth. Only the unorthodox ridicule words, and with them it is an affectation, for were they not impressed with the importance of words they would not be so eager to alter them. "Surely we may change our terms." I have no objection if I know that your intentions are honest. "Surely we may change the form of a creed, however sound it may be." Do so if you like. I will not contend for words to no profit. But as for some of you who ask for these changes, I shrewdly suspect that you would get rid of a phrase that you might be rid of that which the phrase means. You gentlemen who say, "Surely you

will not stick out for a word," are, after all, neither so innocent nor as liberal as you appear to be. Brethren, it is not a word they would amend, but a truth they would efface. I intend calling a rose a rose, even though I admit that by another name it might smell as sweet, for I perceive that there is intent to inflict upon me a rank smelling weed which is no rose at all. When people rail at creeds as having no vitality, I suppose that I hear one say that there is no life in eggshells. Just so; there is no life in egg shells, they are just so much lime, void of sensation. "Pray, my dear sir, do not put yourself out to defend a mere shell." Truly, good friend, I am no trifler, nor so litigious as to fight for a mere shell. But listen! I have discovered that when you break eggshells you spoil eggs, and I have learned that eggs do not hatch and produce life when shells are cracked. I have come to be rather tender about shells now that I find that certain rogues are depriving me of chickens by cracking my eggshells. At certain periods when everybody is sound and right at heart, it may be wise to revise expressions, but we will have none of it when the very air is tainted with unbelief. If you walk round certain continental towns, you will see bright lawns and garden where once there stood grim walls. In times of peace we are glad to see fortifications demolished, but, mark you, when the Prussians are around Paris, no Frenchman will tolerate the proposition to throw down the forts! This is our case today, and therefore we hold fast the form of sound words. "We hate your narrowness; your nasty narrowness! You are shut in within your walls of creeds and beliefs!" Yes, gentlemen, we are so, and we mean to remain so, since we see how you hate the gospel. If everything were in peace, and we believed in you, we might perhaps think about turning bulwarks into boulevards, but at the present moment we will do nothing of the kind, but rather hear the voice of our old captain from his prison at Rome, crying, "Hold fast the pattern of wholesome words which you have heard from me." Brethren, do not change your posture nor shift your position. Stand fast on immutable truth, trusting and loving your Lord. Hold the old faith, and hold it in the old fashion too. We are crossing the stream, and can make no change of horses. Brethren, why should we change? Do these tempting novelties offer any real improvement on the old? Do they offer us anything to die upon? Can these new teachings afford us comfort in poverty, in sickness, in depression of spirit, or in prospect of the Day of Judgment? They are pretty flowers for the children of this world to play with; they suit well with minds that love frivolities, but they are not for men whose life is warfare against sin. The eternal truths revealed within this Book, and grasped by the hands of our inner life—these are everything to us; therefore we shall stand by them even to the last with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

The Apostle was anxious, not only that the men should stand, but that the everlasting gospel itself should be guarded. "That good thing which was committed unto you, keep by the Holy Spirit which dwells in us." O friends, it is better for us that the sun was quenched than that the gospel were gone! I believe that the moralities, the liberties, and perhaps the very existence of a nation depend upon the proclamation of the gospel in its midst. Have you not noticed that where the gospel has been given up,

and various forms of infidelity have ruled, foul pollution has also boiled up from below! The very idea of morality seems to have departed from some men by whom belief in God has been rejected. The Lord save us from the general spread of this mischief! Let the sea itself cease to ebb and flow sooner than the gospel fail to be preached among the sons of men. If the whole church were to die for the defense of the gospel, it is a cheap price to pay for the maintenance of it. I speak solemnly when I say that our main care in life should be to preserve this gospel intact, and hand it down to our descendants. God grant that future ages may not have to curse us for having been undecided or cowardly in the hour of conflict!

How are we to keep the faith? There is only one way. It is of little use trying to guard the gospel by writing it down in a trust-deed; it is of small service to ask men to subscribe to a creed; we must go to work in a more effectual way. How is the gospel to be guarded? "By the Holy Spirit which dwells in us." If, my dear brothers and sisters, the Holy Spirit dwells in you, and you obey His monitions, are molded by His influences, and exhibit the result of His work in the holiness of your lives, then the faith will be kept. A holy people are the true bodyguard of the gospel. A living people, in whom the Holy Spirit is the soul of their soul, and the spirit of their spirit, are alone able to keep the truth living and influential in the world. Let the power of the gospel be missing where it may, it must be present where the Holy Spirit abides, for He makes the word of God to be a living and incorruptible seed, which lives and abides forever. God send us, more and more, the Holy Spirit! May He be in us as rivers of living water! Oh for His heavenly presence in this day of blasphemy and rebuke! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
2 TIMOTHY 1; 2:1-13.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—911, 670, 674.

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

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

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

SECRET DRAWINGS GRACIOUSLY EXPLAINED
NO. 1914

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 15, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you." Jeremiah 31:3.

THE dread of divine justice has often driven men to seek mercy. Many have been caught in the whirlwind of wrath, and in their dismay they have fled for refuge to that Man who is a covert from the tempest. Hence the Lord does not decline to work upon the minds of the guilty by motives drawn from fear. Notice the twenty-third and twenty-fourth verses of the previous chapter—"Behold, the whirlwind of the Lord goes forth with fury, a continuing whirlwind: it shall fall with pain upon the head of the wicked. The fierce anger of the Lord shall not return, until He has done it, and until He has performed the intents of His heart." This is by no means a solitary passage. Holy Scripture is strewn with solemn admonitions to flee from the wrath to come. Our dear Redeemer, whose lips are as lilies dropping sweet-smelling myrrh, in great tenderness of heart warned men of the sure result of their sins, and none used stronger or more alarming language than He did concerning the future of ungodly men. He knew nothing of that pretended sympathy which will rather let men perish than warn them against perishing. Such tenderness is merely selfishness excusing itself from a distasteful duty. Our Savior spoke as the true and earnest lover of men, and therefore uttered words which, having first wounded His own heart, and brought the tears to His own eyes, went home with tremendous force to the minds of others. He spoke of weeping and gnashing of teeth, of a worm which dies not, and of a fire which is not quenched. Weeping, He reminded them how often He would have gathered them together as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but they would not, and warned them that therefore nothing could come of it but desolation and destruction. Brethren, like our Lord, we do not hesitate to warn men of judgment to come. "Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." We dare not quit this solemn duty lest it cost us our own souls; we dare not cease to sound the trumpet of alarm lest the enemy destroy our people, and their blood be required at our hands.

Still, the master magnet of the gospel is not fear, but love. Penitents are drawn to Christ rather than driven. The most frequent impulse which leads men to Jesus is hope that in Him they may find salvation. Truly,

even then they are moved by fear of the evil which they would escape, but their feet are led to fly towards Him by hope in His gentleness, His goodness, His readiness to receive sinners. Hope in that mercy of God which endures forever is the great cord which draws men to repentance. Consequently, after the Lord had sounded the clarion note of warning which we have just heard, He touched the harp strings of grace, and brought forth from them notes both soft and sweet, cheering the sad, and encouraging the despondent; these notes He knew would be heard where even the trumpet sounded not. Love wins the day. One hair from the head of love will draw more than the cable of fear. Let but love speak a single word out of her heart, and let it reach the hearts of men, and it will accomplish greater marvels than all the prolonged discourses and threats of wrath. I am glad, therefore, that I have to speak to God's people this morning, and set forth God's love as the reason why they should love Him in return. "We love Him because He first loved us" is the great law of the Christian life. In proportion as we recognize the love of God, and know somewhat of its height, and depth, and length, and breadth, our heart will be graciously affected by it. When the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit which is given to us, then we love our Lord with all our might. I want you this morning to pray that you may realize the things which I speak to you, so that when we discourse upon the love of God you may feel it glowing in your own souls. Oh, that His love, like coals of juniper, may burn in our hearts! With their vehement flame may they consume our hearts with a heavenly passion, till all our nature ascends to heaven like clouds of incense from the golden altar! May our God and Father speak within each one of us, and say, "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you!"

I. Our first observation will run on this wise—GOD'S DEALINGS WITH US ARE NEVER UNDERSTOOD TILL HE HIMSELF APPEARS TO US. He must speak, or we cannot interpret His acts. "The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you." The Lord had been drawing these people, but they did not know it. God had been loving them with an everlasting love, but they did not recognize it. Nor could they know or recognize His loving-kindness till the Lord Himself visited them in person, and removed the scales from their eyes. God is His own interpreter. His providence and grace reveal Him, but still more does He Himself explain and reveal His providence and grace. Though all things in the field and the garden show what the sun does, yet none of these "fruits put forth by the sun" can be perceived till the sun himself reveals them.

For first, *man is not in a condition to perceive God till God reveals Himself to him.* By nature, brethren, we are blind Godward; yes, deaf, and in all ways *insensible* towards the great Spirit. By nature we are dead to the presence of the Lord. Naturally man is an atheist. When the "Essays and Reviews" made a great deal of stir, an experienced preacher said concerning them, "'Essays and Reviews' do not trouble me, nor any of the nostrums of modern doubt, for my heart is a deviser of worse things than 'Essays and Reviews,' my evil heart is a fountain of atheism." Brethren,

worse difficulties have occurred to us than any that have ever been penned by the most notorious infidels. By nature we are as the fool who said in his heart, "There is no God." Our carnal mind is enmity against God, and consequently it would be rid of Him if it could. We have need to pray, and we do pray, "Save me from an atheistic heart, which hates the Trinity." Man, therefore, living in alienation from God, does not trace the inward drawings of divine love up to their source; he regards them as common things, and treads them out as sparks from an earthly fire. Though God may be sweetly influencing the man to something better, and higher, and nobler than sin, and self, and the world, yet he does not perceive the divine working. The Lord said of Cyrus, "I girded you, though you have not known Me," and even so may He say of many an unconverted man, "I warned you, and awakened you, and drew you when you were not aware of Me."

Besides this, my brethren, we are so *selfish* that, when God is drawing us to Himself, we are too much absorbed in our own things to notice the hand which is at work upon us. We crave the world, we sigh for human approval, we seek ease and comfort, we desire above all things to indulge our pride with the vain notion of self-righteousness, and therefore, we look not after God. Rather do we cry with Pharaoh "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice?" God may draw long before we will budge an inch away from those gods which our own selfishness has set up. Young Samuel answered to the call of Jehovah at midnight, but with us there is neither hearing nor answering. How can we see God while our eyes are blinded with self?

While we are *carnal,* sold under sin, our heart is dead to the movements of God's grace. Only a spiritual mind can discern spiritual things, and as we are not spiritual, we remain insensible to the divine drawing. I know this was the case with me, and I speak therefore with a humbling experience clear in my memory, for many a day the Lord drew me, but I did not know Him; the Lord worked upon my heart, but I did not perceive Him. Alas for the insensibility which even gospel influences cannot remove! The Lord must appear to each one of us, or we shall remain ignorant of His ways.

Moreover, dear friends, God must explain His dealings to us by revealing Himself to us, because *those ways are in themselves frequently mysterious*. Take Israel, for instance. The Lord moved Pharaoh to treat Israel with great severity, and to make them serve with rigor. They made bricks without straw, and the tally of bricks was doubled, till they cried by reason of their taskmasters. How was Israel to perceive that Jehovah was at the back of all this? Yet the Lord was thus accomplishing His design of bringing His chosen out of Egypt. The most difficult thing was not for Pharaoh to be compelled to let Israel go, but to bring the people into such a state that they would be willing to quit the fertile land. They lived in plenty in the land of Goshen, and did eat of the leeks, and the garlic, and the onions of Egypt, and had they been let alone, they would have had no wish to go forth to Canaan. They would have been satisfied to become Egyptians had they always been treated as they were treated at the first. How were the Israelites to understand, till God explained it, that this

rough usage on the part of Pharaoh was to wean them from Egypt, and make them willing to go out even into a desert that they might escape from the tyrant? When Pharaoh began to kill their first-born, when he refused to let them go for a few days to offer sacrifice, and oppressed them more and more, how were they to know that this was a part of the plan of Jehovah who had loved them with an everlasting love? Even after He had smitten Pharaoh with all His plagues, and Egypt was glad when they departed, how could they comprehend why God led them down to the brink of the Red Sea? Between Migdol and the sea, over against Baalzephon, the host was made to encamp, even in a place from which there was no escape from their cruel foes, whose chariots they heard rattling behind them. How were they to know that the Lord had His way in the sea, and His path in the mighty waters? How could they guess that He meant to bring Egypt down into the depth of the sea, and there to crush the dragon with so heavy a blow that, through the forty years of Israel's sojourn in the wilderness, upon the Egyptian border, the nation should never be troubled by its old taskmaster? With a high hand, and an outstretched arm, the Lord brought forth His people, but they understood not His wonders in Egypt till He appeared to them, and said, "I am the Lord your God, which has brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." God's dealings with His chosen are often so mysterious that they cannot know them till they know Himself.

So it is when the Lord works eternal life in the soul. He does not usually begin by giving the man light, and peace, and comfort. No, but He sorely plagues him with "darkness that might be felt." He makes sweet sin to become bitter; He pours gall into the fountains of his carnal life till the man begins to be weary of the things which once contented him. Full often the Lord fits the arrows of conviction to the string, and shoots again, and again, and again, till the soul is wounded in a thousand places, and is ready to bleed to death. The Lord kills before He makes alive. Is this the Lord's way of dealing with men? It is even so; it is the way of His loving-kindness and tender mercy. But I say again, how could we expect unspiritual men to see the hand of the Lord in all this? The awakened man sees more of anger than of loving-kindness in his griefs, and the idea of everlasting love never enters his imagination. That God is drawing him with bands of love, and cords of a man, is a truth of which he has no inkling. God must reveal Himself to the man, or else he will not discover the hand of the Lord in the anguish of his spirit.

This appearance of the Lord must be personal. "The Lord has appeared of old unto *me."* I do not think any man knows the Lord by merely reading Scripture, nor by being convinced in his judgment of the truth of the gospel. There is a special manifestation of the Lord unto the conscience, and the heart, and the soul of every man who is indeed taught of God. A personal revelation by the Holy Spirit is needed to bring home to us the revelation of the Book. The result of it is conversion, or the new birth, and this is always effected by the Spirit of God. True knowledge of God is always a divine operation, not worked at second-hand by instrumentality, but worked by the right hand of the Lord Himself. "No man can come to Me," says Christ, "except the Father which has sent Me draw him,"

and no man understands those drawings except the same Father shall come to him, and manifest Himself to him. I do not ask the children of God whether they understand this, for I know they do. You can, many of you, say, "The Lord has appeared unto me." Not that you have heard a voice, nor seen a great light, as Saul did on the way to Damascus, but as vividly to your inward eye has God appeared as the great light appeared to Saul's outward eye, and as potently to your secret ear has God spoken as that voice spoke to Saul's outward ear. God has drawn near to us, and His visitations have new-created us. Till we know the Lord by personal revelation, we cannot read His handwriting upon our hearts, or discern His dealings with us.

This appearance needs to be repeated. The text may be read as a complaint on the part of Israel. Israel says, "The Lord has appeared *of old* unto me"—as much as to say, "He has not appeared to me lately." Of old he was seen by brook, and bush, and sea, and rock; when Jacob met Him at Jabbok, and Moses in the wilderness at the burning bush, but now His visits are few and far between. "The Lord has appeared of old unto me." Oh, that He would appear now! I pray at this time that those of you who are mourning after that fashion may be able to rise out of it. It is not the Lord's desire that He should be as a stranger in the land, or as a wayfaring man that tarries but for a night. He is willing to abide with us. His delights are with the sons of men. Let us not forget the time when He did of old appear to us—I mean for the first time. It must be more than thirty-six years since the Lord first appeared unto me, and I beheld Him by the eye of faith. How vile was I in my own sight, and how glorious was He in my eyes! How my heart melted when I saw Him bleeding on the tree for me! How all my passions burned and glowed with heavenly ardor as I understood that He loved me, and gave Himself for me! Then His name, His word, His day, His people, was all precious in my sight. That was of old, but I do earnestly remember it still. It is very sweet to look back upon the time of our espousals, but it will become a bitter retrospect if we do not again and again behold our Lord. It is woe to have seen the sun if one is now shut up in a dark dungeon. O brothers, do not let us be satisfied with old appearances; let us cry to our Beloved, "O Lord, manifest Yourself anew to me! O You that hides Yourself, appear unto me! Look through the lattices, and let Your face be seen again!" He that condescended to show Himself to you of old will again reveal His love. What Jesus has done, He will still do. Once you walked by the way, and your heart burned within you because Jesus spoke with you; He has said, "I will come again." Do you not recollect how, in the very pew in which you are now sitting, you felt as if you could hardly keep your seat, you wanted to cry, "Hallelujah!" for joy of heart. Recall those happy periods, but only recall them with this resolve, "I will behold my Lord again. I will again delight myself in Him." Do not let the text be the epitaph of a long-ago appearance, but let it be the dawning of a new day whose sun shall no more go down.

This appearance is ever an act of mighty grace. The text might be read, "The Lord appeared *from afar* to me." So He did at first. What a great way off we were from God, but behold the Beloved came, like a roe or a young

hart, leaping over the mountains, skipping upon the hills! He came to us in boundless love when we lay at death's dark door, the fast-bound slaves of hell. Brethren, He can and will come again. If He came to us from far, He will surely come again now that He has made us near. Expect Him to come to you all of a sudden. While I am yet speaking, pray that, before you are aware, your soul may be like the chariots of Amminadib. Pray for the immediate revelation of God Himself to your spirit in a way of joy and transport that shall set your soul in rapid motion towards the Lord. Should the Lord return to you in gracious manifestation, take care that you do not lose Him again. If the bridegroom deigns to visit you, hold Him fast. If you once see the splendor of His love, do not close your eyes to it again, but gaze on till you behold Him face to face in glory. Be this your prayer, "Abide with me." Be not satisfied till, like Enoch, you always walk with God. But to this end God must appear to His people.

II. Secondly, when the Lord does so appear, WE THEN PERCEIVE THAT HE HAS BEEN DEALING WITH US. "The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love: *therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you*." What exceeding love the Lord showed to us before we knew Him! Let us now look back and remember the love of *long-suffering,* which spared us when we delighted in sin. The Lord did not cut us off in our unbelief; therein is love. Some read this text, "therefore in loving-kindness have I respited you," or "therefore have I drawn out My loving-kindness unto you," as if God stretched His loving-kindness while we were stretching out our sinfulness, and continued, year after year, to bear with us though we continued in wanton rebellion against Him—

"Determined to save, He watched over my path
When, Satan's blind slave, I sported with death."

Think of sparing mercy now that you are able to see it because the Lord has appeared unto you.

The next admirable discovery is the Lord's *restraining grace*. We now see that the Lord held us back from plunging into the deepest abysses of sin. He would not let us commit crimes by which we might have ended our lives before conversion. He kept us back from sins which might have linked us in sad connections, and led us into such circumstances that we never might have been brought to hear His word, or seek His face at all. Since the Lord has appeared to me, He has made me see His restraining hand where once I saw nothing but the cruel disappointment of my hopes. Blessed be God for those crooks in my lot which kept me from poisonous pleasures!

So, too, we now see the *preparations of grace*, the plowing of our hearts by sorrow, the sowing of them by discipline, the harrowing of them by pain, the watering of them by the rain of favor, the breaking up of them by the frosts of adversity. These were not actually grace, but they opened the door for grace. We now see how in a thousand ways the Lord was drawing us when we knew Him not.

The text chiefly dwells upon *drawings*. I beg you to refresh your memories by recollecting the drawings of the Lord towards you while you were yet ungodly. They began very early with some of us, even as little chil-

dren we had great tenderness of conscience, and many movements of the Spirit which would not let us sin as others did. Often when we had done wrong, we went to our little beds, and cried ourselves to sleep under a sense of sin, a fear of punishment, and a longing for mercy. Those drawings were continuous with some of us; we can hardly remember when we were without holy impulses, though we did not yield to them. When we left the parental roof, those drawings followed us to our first employment. Do you remember them? Before you knew the Lord Jesus, His Holy Spirit strove with you. You went into great sin, some of you, but the Lord continued to follow you. Even in your dreams He did not leave you. They were a way which the Lord had of getting at you, you hardened yourself against Him when you were awake, but when you fell asleep He scared you with visions, and made you think of judgment to come.

Often these were very gentle drawings, they were not such forces as would move an ox or a donkey, but such as were meant for tender spirits, yet sometimes they tugged at you very hard, and almost overcame you. Drawing supposes a kind of resistance, or, at any rate, inertness, and truly, we did not stir of ourselves, but needed to be persuaded and entreated. Some of you will recollect how the Holy Spirit drew you many times before you came to Him. Remember those thundering sermons which sent you home to your knees, those deep impressions which you could not shake off for a week or two, those depressions of spirit and horrors of darkness out of which you could not readily rise. The Lord surrounded you as a fish is surrounded with a net, and though you labored to escape you could not, but were drawn more and more within the meshes of mercy.

There are times with men, before conversion, when a sort of softness steals over them, when they feel as if they could not hold out much longer against appeals so reasonable and so gracious. A mother's prayers come up, perhaps her dying words are heard again, or the death of a little child touches the parent's heart as nothing else has done. The man is under holy influences, he knows not how; there are angels in the air around him, though there are devils in the heart within him. The man cannot be at peace in sin, he is restless till he finds rest in Jesus. It is the Lord drawing all the while, and after the Lord has appeared to us we see it to be so.

Do you remember when at last the Holy Spirit drew you over the line, when at last, without violating your free will He conquered it by forces proper to the mind? Blessed day! You were made a willing captive to your Lord, led in silken fetters at His chariot wheels, a glad prisoner to almighty love, set free from sin and Satan, made to be unto your Lord a life long servant. He drew you. You did not know much about it then, but you see it now.

After I had found grace and salvation a little time elapsed before I had surveyed the work of the Lord upon me, and when I did so, I learned much. Sitting down one day, I meditated upon where I was, and what I was. I said to myself, "I have believed in Jesus Christ, and I have passed from death unto life. To God be praise!" Then my train of thought ran thus, "How have I come to be in this condition? Did I make this change

in myself? No. Must I praise my own free will? No. Was there originally in me some betterness which led me to Christ, while my companions have not come?" I dared not say so and therefore I perceived that the difference was made by the sovereign grace of God. I do not know whereabouts in theology I might have wandered otherwise, but those reflections made me a Calvinist, that is to say, one who traces salvation to the Lord alone. I saw that my salvation was of the Lord from first to last, and I have never had a doubt about the matter since. It is no wish of mine to preach salvation by the will of man, or by the will of the flesh, but salvation all of grace, from beginning to end, according to the eternal purpose which the Lord purposed in Christ Jesus before the world was. It did not need any intricate reasoning to land me on the rock of free grace doctrine. If the Lord saved me, then He intended to save me; He did not do so by accident or inadvertence. Then if He once intended to save me, there could be no reason why that intention should begin at any one moment; He must have purposed to save me from all eternity. God has His plan and purpose, and what He actually does must have been known to Him, and purposed by Him from of old. Then I saw, as in a glass, the ways of God towards me, but it was not till the Lord Himself had appeared unto me that I had this conception of His ways. He Himself, by His Spirit, expounded to me the whole system after this fashion, "I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you." We understand the drawings of the Lord after we have seen the Lord Himself, but not till then.

III. Then we proceed a step further, and WE PERCEIVE THAT LOVING-KINDNESS WAS THE DRAWING FORCE, "therefore *with loving-kindness* have I drawn you." At first we think God has dealt sternly with us, but in His light we see light, and we perceive that the drawing power, which has brought us to receive mercy, is the divine loving-kindness. Love is the attractive force.

What multitudes of persons have been drawn to the Lord first by His loving-kindness in *the gift of His dear Son!* Perhaps there is no greater soul-saving text in the Bible than this, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." I must have conversed with more than a hundred persons who have found the Lord through this blessed verse. I am speaking very moderately, for I think I might say that I have known several hundreds who have been guided into liberty by this polestar text. What a drawing there is in the fact that God gave His Son to redeem the guilty! Jesus died for the lost world, and men believing in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. This is the master magnet, "I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." The loving-kindness of God as seen in the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus draws men from sin, from self, from Satan, from despair, and from the world.

Next, *the hope of pardon,* free and full, attracts sinners to God. "Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you," makes a man run after Christ. Oh, what a draw there is in that word "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, for He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abun-

dantly pardon!" How one is drawn by the declaration "all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men!" The blotting out of sin is a glorious phase of the divine loving-kindness, and many are allured by it to confess their sins. Is not the promise of remission the cord with which the Lord draws men to Himself? "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Yes, there is such a thing as the entire blotting out of a life spent in iniquity. Jesus can wipe out the record of sin as a boy wipes the writing from his slate with a sponge. Sin is carried away by Jesus, even as the scapegoat bore away the sin of Israel. "They shall not be mentioned against you any more forever." "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and as a cloud, your sins." Thus does loving-kindness draw us.

I have known others drawn to the Lord by another view of His loving-kindness, namely, *His willingness to make new creatures of us*. The prayer of many has been, "Create in me a clean heart, O God," and they have been charmed by hearing that whosoever believes in Jesus is born again, to start a new life, ruled by a new principle, and endowed with a new nature, sustained by the Holy Spirit. Many who desire purity of life and nature, and wish to be right with God, are won by the blessed prospect of being created anew in Christ Jesus.

It may seem somewhat strange to you, but that form of loving-kindness which mainly drew me to the Lord was this—I saw a good deal of the instability of character in young men who began life with bright prospects and fair promises, and I trembled for my own future. I read in the New Testament that he that believes in Jesus has everlasting life. I saw in the language of Christ Himself these words—"I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hands." Oh, how I longed to be one of these sheep, in the hands of Jesus! I had known school fellows who were held up as patterns to me, who acted very disappointingly after they left home, and I thought within myself, "Oh, for a spiritual life insurance! Oh, for a way of putting my soul into secure keeping, so that I shall not become the prey of sin, but shall be kept by the grace of God even to the end!" The belief that I should find this *permanence of grace* in Christ Jesus drew me more than anything else to Jesus. What a blessing to obtain "eternal salvation and good hope through grace!" What a favor to receive within the heart a well of living water, springing up into everlasting life! Let me live till my hair is all white with age, He will not suffer me to turn again unto folly, for it is written, "I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me." I clutched at that promise from the beginning, and thus with loving-kindness the Lord drew me to Himself. I see it now, and bless His name for using such a magnet.

Brethren, since we have known the Lord, has it not been His loving-kindness that has always drawn us? Can you tell me how much loving-kindness you have enjoyed? Begin the calculation. Yes, you may take out a paper and pencil if you like, and write away during the rest of my sermon, and when I have finished, I will ask you whether you have finished, and you will answer, "Sir, I have not quite begun yet." Oh, the loving-

kindness of the Lord! You may measure heaven, you may fathom the sea, you may plunge into the abyss, and tell its depth, but the loving-kindness of the Lord is beyond you. Here is an infinite expanse. It is immeasurable, even as God Himself is beyond conception. It is everywhere about us, behind, before, beneath, above, within, without. Every day the Lord loads us with benefits. He binds us with so many loving-kindnesses that He draws us now not with one cord, but with many, and each one draws omnipotently. His mercies are more than the hairs of our head, by day and by night He is drawing, drawing, drawing with those bands of love, and one of these days our whole body, soul, and spirit will so yield to the sweet compulsion of almighty love that the whole man will remove to be with Him where He is, and still to feel His loving-kindness as we behold His glory. All this was always true, but we could not see it till the Lord appeared to us, and declared the gracious fact that with loving-kindness He had drawn us. The fact is precious, and the knowledge of it is exceedingly joyful.

IV. Lastly, I believe the appearing of the Lord to a man is the great means of teaching him divine truth. THEN WE LEARN THAT THE GREAT MOTIVE OF THE DIVINE DRAWINGS IS EVERLASTING LOVE. I do not want to preach any longer, but I want you to think. Description is not needed as much as meditation and realization. Think, you hear the voice which with a word made heaven and earth! Think, you hear it as a still small voice, whispering in your ear, "I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you." Perhaps the less I talk about this the better, for words cannot express the inexpressible. Let your spirit lie soaking in this divine assurance—"I have loved you with an everlasting love." Take it up into yourself as Gideon's fleece absorbed the dew.

Notice, the Lord *has done it*. It is an actual fact, the Lord is loving you. Put those two pronouns together, *"I"* and *"you."* "I," the Infinite, the inconceivably glorious—"you," a poor, lost, undeserving, ill-deserving, hell-deserving sinner: See the link between the two! See the diamond rivet which joins the two together for eternity "I *have loved* you." It is not, "I have pitied you," nor "I have thought about you," but "I have *loved* you!" God is in love with you. I think Aristotle said that it was impossible for one to be assured of another's love without feeling some love in return. I am not sure about that, but I think it is quite impossible to enjoy a sense of God's love without returning it in a measure. Soul, do you return it?

"I have loved you." Not "I will do so," but "I *have* loved you." Poor "you!"—do you not reply, "Lord, if I might say it, You know all things, You know that I love You. I cannot say that I love You even as You love me, for I am such a feeble, finite creature, still I do love You assuredly, and I dare say no other"? O beloved, what more can I add? The bare fact that the Lord loves us is heaven below if it is once thoroughly grasped by the soul.

See the antiquity of this love—"I have loved you with an *everlasting* love." I loved you when I died for you upon the cross, yes, I loved you long before, and therefore did I die. I loved you when I made the heavens and the earth, with a view to your abode therein; yes, I loved you before I

had made sea or shore. When this great world, the sun, the moon, and the stars slept in the mind of God, like unborn forests in an acorn cup, He loved His people. He saw them in the glass of the future with prescient eye, ages before ages had begun, and then He loved them with an everlasting love. There is a beginning for the world, but there is no beginning for the love of God to His people.

Nor does that exhaust the meaning of "everlasting love." There has never been a moment when the Lord has not loved His people. There has been no pause, nor ebb, nor break in the love of God to His own. That love knows no variableness, neither shadow of turning. When we were babes, and could not know Him, He loved us. When we were foolish youths, running riot in iniquity, He loved us. When we became men, hard and callous, resisting divine grace, He drew us, though we did not run after Him, for He loved us then. He loves us this day as much as ever, even though He may be chastening us. His love is a river, always flowing and overflowing, it will never diminish, and it cannot increase, for it is infinite already—

"Mine is an unchanging love,
Higher than the heights above;
Deeper than the depths beneath,
Free and faithful, strong as death."

"I have loved you with an everlasting love." You may take a leap into the future, and find that love still with you. Everlasting evidently lasts forever. Certain divines have tried to cut the heart out of that word "everlasting," and to make it out that it means a terminable period, but it is idle to argue with men to whom words are mere shuttlecocks to play with. Most plainly that which is everlasting lasts forever. You and I may live till we grow old and decrepit, but the Lord will not leave us, for it is written, "I have loved you with an everlasting love." We shall come to die, and this shall be a downy pillow for our deathbed, "I have loved you with an everlasting love." When we wake up in that dread world to which we are surely hastening, we shall find infinite happiness in "everlasting love." When the judgment is proclaimed, and the sight of the great white throne makes all hearts tremble, and the trumpet sounds exceedingly loud and long, and our poor dust wakes up from its silent grave, we shall rejoice in this divine assurance, "I have loved you with an everlasting love." Roll on, you ages, but everlasting love abides! Die out, sun and moon, and you, O time, be buried in eternity, we need no other heaven than this, "I have loved you with an everlasting love!" Brethren, the Lord's appearing to us has taught us great things in teaching us everlasting love.

I want the child of God to receive this assurance thoroughly into his soul, that God loves him with an everlasting love. Why, it makes my pulses beat more quickly, it makes me so full of delight that I can scarcely contain myself! A divine delight thrills me. I, a poor sinner, even I, am the object of everlasting love. What then? Why, I must love my Lord. How can I help it? Do you not feel that you must wake up, from this time forth, to serve your loving Lord at a sevenfold pace? Will you not consecrate yourselves to Him, to spend and to be spent for Him? What is there too precious to lay at His feet? Out with your alabaster box now if ever in

your lives! What is there too heavy for you to bear? What is there too hard for you to undertake for one who has loved you so faithfully, without beginning, without change, without measure, without end?

Alas for you, poor heart, to whom this text does not belong! There stands the golden chalice. Oh, that you were thirsty, for then you might drink of it! You have not seen the Lord, for you have not sought Him. You know not that you are drawn, for you have never come to Christ, nor have you believed in His great sacrifice. If there were no hell hereafter, it would be hell enough to me not to enjoy everlasting love. I count that man a wretch undone who has never heard the sweet, full music of this text. What! Do you live without God? Do you despise His love? If there were no hereafter, it is unhappiness enough, to be lost to the infinite delight of knowing the love of God. Oh, that you would now believe in Jesus, and find peace through His blood!

But O you that have this cup of blessing drink of it to the full! Live upon this assurance! Go away singing because of it! Let not trouble disturb you—why should it? Let nothing vex you—why should it? Let no ill deed done to you by another provoke you, be ready to forgive because you see that the Lord has loved you, and therefore you can love the most unlovable. None are too vile to share in our love, since God has loved us. My heart sings, "He loved me and gave Himself for me," and I am now prepared to love my enemies, if I have any.

O Lord, appear to each one of us now! Appear to us, and say, "I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you." Grant it, Lord! Grant it for Your sweet love's sake! Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
JEREMIAH 30:22-24; 31:1-14.**

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—231, 230, 463.

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

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

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

THE EVER-LIVING PRIEST
NO. 1915

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 22, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And they truly were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing. But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost them who come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them." Hebrews 7:23-25 (NKJV).

THE apostle Paul is very much at home with his theme whenever he is extolling his Master. When handling the Jewish types and figures, with which he was so familiar, he was charmed to point out how far superior the Lord Jesus Christ is to any and all the priests of the Old Testament dispensation. In this case he is dwelling upon the special honor of our Lord, because His priesthood is without end, seeing He Himself is not put forth from the priesthood by reason of death. A common priest served from thirty to fifty years of age, and then his work was done, priests of the house of Aaron, who became high priests, held their office through life. Sometimes a high priest would continue in his office, therefore, for a considerable length of time, but in many cases he was cut off as other men are by premature death, hence there was priest after priest of the order of Aaron to go within the veil for the people. Our Lord is of another race, being a priest according to the order of Melchisedec, "having neither beginning of days nor end of life." He was made a priest not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. He continues to make intercession for the people of God by virtue of His eternal life and perpetual priesthood. In this respect the true Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, rises above all former priests; they were indeed but types and shadows of Himself.

This superiority of our Lord Jesus Christ is a topic which will not interest everybody. To many persons it will seem a piece of devotional rapture, if not an idle tale. Yet there will ever be a remnant according to the election of grace to who this meditation will be inexpressibly sweet. Who are the people that will be interested in this theme? They are indicated in the text, they that come unto God by Jesus Christ. The people who are in the habit of using Christ as their way of access to God are those who will value Him beyond all price, and such persons will delight to hear Him extolled in the highest terms.

We will begin our discourse, then, by the inquiry: Do we come unto God by Jesus Christ? Listen and answer for yourselves. Do we come unto God at all? Do we recognize the Lord our God as a person who should be approached? Are we now approaching Him? Are we among those who are

always coming to God, to whom at the last the great Judge shall say, "You have been coming, continue to come? Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you"? Or are we departing from God by forgetting Him, or rebelling against Him, so that we shall be among that number to whom the Judge shall say, "You have long been departing, continue to do so. Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire in hell, prepared for the devil and his angels"?

Are we coming to God?—that is the question. Is the direction of our lives towards God? We are either going to God or from God, and by this we may forecast our everlasting destiny. The direction in which the arrow is flying prophesies the target in which it will be fixed, the way the tree is inclining, that way foretells the place of its fall, and where the tree falls there it will lie. So let us judge ourselves this day, which way are we drifting? Have we ever come to God by sincere repentance of our wanderings? Have we come to Him by faith, and are we reconciled to Him? Do we come to Him in prayer? Do we come to Him day by day, speaking with Him and desiring to walk with Him? Do we come to God by communion with Him, having fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ? Do we, in fact, know the meaning of what it is to draw near to God? It is ill with us if we either have no God, or if He seems to be very far off, an almost unrecognizable phantom, an idea never fully realized, much less approached! Blessed are they that know the name of the Lord and that walk with Him, rejoicing in the light of His countenance. It is to such that Jesus is precious as their way of access to the Father.

In the description there is a little word of distinction, for the people who are said to be saved by the great Intercessor are those who come unto God *by Him*. Certain persons talk of coming to God as Creator, and Ruler, and even as Father, but they do not think of His dear Son as their way of approach. They forget or else deny the declaration of our Lord Jesus—"No man comes unto the Father, but by Me." Yet this saying is true. There is no true way of approach to God except through Jesus Christ, the one Mediator between God and man. A deep abyss divides us from God, and only that ladder which Jacob saw can bridge the gulf. Our Lord Jesus, being God and man in one person, reaches from side to side of the chasm. Coming near to us, this ladder stands at our feet in the human nature of our Lord, and it reaches right up to the infinite Majesty by reason of the divine nature of our Redeemer. God and man in one person, unites God and man in one league of love. We come unto God by Jesus Christ. Prayers in which Christ is forgotten are insults to the God of revelation; faith in which Jesus is not the foundation of our hope is mere delusion. God cannot accept us if we will not accept His Son. O sinner, one door has God opened in heaven, if you will not go in by that door you shall never enter within the walls of the New Jerusalem. God bids you come to Him by one in whom He is well pleased, and if you will not be pleased with Jesus you can not come to the Father. O you who are daily users of this royal way to God, you will forgive me if I hide myself behind my Lord this day, and seek to do nothing more than, in all simplicity, to set forth His unchangeable priesthood and endless life. Pray the Lord to

help me to extol the great high priest of our profession, and also to help you all to join in the praise of Jesus in the power of His Holy Spirit.

In the text there are four subjects for your consideration; they are joined together as links of a golden chain, and they are all full of encouragement for you. Here is a great Savior with *an endless life,* secondly, with *an endless priesthood,* thirdly, with *an endless intercession,* and fourthly, with *an endless salvation.* "He is able to save them to the uttermost that, come to God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them."

I. First, we have in our Lord Jesus Christ a priest with AN ENDLESS LIFE. I want you to think earnestly upon this very simple theme; it is in the simplicities that we find our greatest consolations. Our Lord Jesus is not as Aaron, who had to be stripped of his garments on the top of Mount Hor, and to die in the mountain, neither is He like any of the sons of Aaron who in due time suffered the infirmities of age, and at last bowed their heads to inevitable death. He died once, but death has no more dominion over Him, it is witnessed of Him that He lives.

We clearly perceive that our Lord Jesus possesses endless life *as God,* for how shall the Godhead expire? It is not possible for the Godhead to cease or to suspend its existence. Our Lord is "God over all, blessed forever," and in this respect, He is necessarily everlasting as to His life.

But our Lord ever lives also in respect to *His manhood*. Though He died unto sin once, He soon rose again from the dead, His body never having seen corruption. He died *in* His priesthood and *for* His priesthood, but never *from* His priesthood. By His resurrection His manhood was fully restored to a life which dies no more. We speak of Him, as "He that lives, and was dead, and is alive forevermore." This is a very sweet truth to those who are in Christ Jesus. The Lord Jesus Christ had lived one life as a man, why did He not end that life as a man when He died on the cross? It shows His deep attachment to our manhood, that He retained the human nature after His great sacrifice had been presented and accepted. The fact that He again appeared, as a man among men and carried human nature into His glorified estate, is clear evidence of His deep attachment to our humanity. If some glorious spirit from on high, angel or archangel, had loved a race of ants, and had condescended for the salvation of these tiny creatures to assume their nature, and if in that nature he had died for them, you would naturally expect that at the conclusion of his labors and sufferings he would lay aside the form of his humiliation and return to the greatness of his former estate. But our Lord Jesus Christ, whose stoop of condescension when He assumed our nature was greater than any archangel could have achieved, having taken our human nature, and having bled and died in it, continued to wear it after He had said, "It is finished," after He had risen from the dead, and after He had taken His seat at the divine right hand! He has become so wedded to us, so truly one flesh with us, that He will not be divided from us in nature. He sits upon the throne of God, not in His pure Godhead, but as one that has been slain, clothed in a body like our own. What manner of love is this! What bliss to know that my kinsman lives! Truly many waters could not quench His love to manhood, nor could death it-

self destroy it. The Son of God is still the Son of man. He whom angels worship is not ashamed to call us brethren, for as partaker of our nature He lives, and will live forever.

He ever lives, then, as God and as man, and I prolong the blended thoughts by saying that He ever lives *in His relationship to us*. This you have already seen to be the case, because He lives in our nature, but now I beg you to note that He lives as God and man *for us*. I love to read these words—"He ever lives to make intercession for them." This is the one great objective for which He lives. To make intercession for those that come unto God by Him is the business of His life. Is not this wonderful? If some influential and powerful person should say to you, "I live to promote your interest; wherever I go and whatever I do, whatever I seek and whatever I obtain, I live for you"—it would show great friendship, and excite in us great expectations. Would it not? Yet here is the Lord Jesus declaring that He lives for us, for us He appears in the presence of God, for us He has gone to the many mansions of the Father's house, for us He constantly intercedes with God. Oh, the deep debt of gratitude we owe to this glorious One, who having died for us, now lives for us!

It is more than if a brother should say, "I live my whole life for you," for remember, this might be said to be the second life which our Lord gives to us. He lived for us here below a whole lifetime! He laid down that life for us, and now He lives again for us. I know not how to speak what I feel concerning the surpassing greatness of His love. He could not be content to give His life once for us, but He must take it again and then give it over again for us. See how He loves us; He died for us! See how He loves us; He lives again for us! He lives for sinners, for He lives to intercede, and for whom is intercession but for those who need an advocate? "If any man sin we have an advocate." May I say that Jesus lives two lives for us?

Yet more, it is said, "He ever lives to make intercession for us," so that the whole life of Christ throughout eternity—His boundless, endless, glorified existence is still for His people. He glorifies the Father, and makes glad the hosts of heaven, but still this is the set purpose of His heart, to live for us. "He loved me, and gave Himself for me" is true, but we may read it in the present tense if we like, and it is still true; "He loves me, and He gives Himself for me." Christ loved His church, and gave Himself *for* it, and now He loves His church and gives Himself *to* it. What inspiration lies in the endless life of Christ for us! Let our lives be lived wholly for Him since He lives wholly for us.

This truth of the living Christ should be remembered in our greatest need. Dear friends, there is an almighty and divine One in heaven who always lives for our highest benefit. Let us adore Him most lovingly. This should show us how great our need is, that we always need a living Savior to interpose for us. A dying Savior was not enough; we still require every moment of our lives a living Savior engrossed with the care of our spirits, interposing on our behalf in all manner of ways, and delivering us from all evil. Our hour of necessity is ever present, for Jesus is always guarding us, and His work is never a superfluity. Herein should lie our great comfort; we should fall back upon this truth whenever our burden

presses too sorely upon our shoulders. Jesus lives; my great Redeemer lives for me, lives in all fullness of power and glory, and devotes that life, with all that pertains to it, to the preservation of my soul from every ill. Can I not rest in this? With such a keeper why should I be afraid? Must I not be safe when One so vigilant and so vigorous devotes His life to my protection? What innumerable blessings must come to those for whom Jesus spends the strength of His endless life!

II. Secondly, I must carry you on to another and kindred subject; ENDLESS PRIESTHOOD. Our Lord is ordained unto an unchangeable priesthood, or rather, as the margin has it, to a priesthood "which passes not from one to another." His office cannot be taken up by a successor, it is not transferable, but belongs to Him alone, seeing He ever lives to carry it out in His own person. We have only one priest, and that one priest we have forever.

In this we are *not like Israel of old,* for, as we have already seen, a high priest would die. I can conceive that to many Jewish believers the death of a priest was a great affliction. I could imagine an Israelite saying, "And so he is dead, that good man, that tender-spirited minister, that gentle and affectionate shepherd. I have told him all my heart, and now he is taken from me. I went to him in my youth in deep distress of conscience; he offered a sacrifice for me when I was unclean, and brought me near to the holy place. Since then I have gone to him when I have needed guidance, he has consulted the oracle on my behalf, and my way has been made plain. He knows the secrets of my family; he knows those delicate griefs which I have never dared to tell to anybody else. Alas! He is dead, and half my heart has perished. What a gap is made in my life by his decease!" The mourner would be told that his son had become his successor, but I think I hear him say, "Yes, I am aware of it, but the young man does not know what his father knew about me, and I could never again lay bare my heart. The son can never be in entire sympathy with all my sorrows as his good old father was. No doubt he is a good man, but he is not the same person; I reverenced every hair in the grey beard of the old high priest. I have grown up with him, and he has helped me so many, many times, it is so sad that I shall see his face no more." There would always be the feeling in some minds that the next high priest might not be quite so acceptable with God, or as tender towards the congregation, as he who had passed away. He might be a man superior in education, but inferior in affection, he might be more austere and less tender, he might have greater gifts and less fatherliness. At any rate, it would seem like having to begin again when one went for the first time to the new priest; it would be a break in the continuity of one's comfort. The quiet flow of life would be marred, as when a river comes to its rapids, and an impassable fall causes a break in the navigation, and a necessary unloading of the vessel and a laborious *portage* instead of an easy passage down a gently flowing stream. "Oh," says one good Israelite, "the venerable high priest who has just fallen asleep was my friend; we took sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in company. He was in my house when my beloved child died; he was with me when the partner of my bosom, the light of my eyes, was taken away from me at a stroke.

His long experience he used for my instruction and comfort, but, alas! It is all gone, for the saint of God is dead." Beloved, here is our comfort; we have only *one* priest, and He ever lives. He had no predecessor and He will have no successor, because He ever lives personally to exercise the office of high priest on our behalf. My soul reposes in the faith of His one sacrifice, offered once and no more. There is but one presenter of that one sacrifice, and never can there be another, since the One is all-sufficient, and He never dies. Jesus reads my heart, and has always read it since it began to beat; He knows my griefs and has carried my sorrows from of old, and He will bear both them and me when old age shall shrivel up my strength. When I shall fall asleep in death He will not die, but will be ready to receive me into His own undying blessedness. Brethren, our Lord in glory—

"Looks like a lamb that has been slain,
And wears His priesthood still."

Do we not rejoice in the unbroken continuity and everlasting perpetuity of the priesthood of Christ?

Again, we are *not as Israel is at this moment*. Alas, poor Israel! After all her privileges of the past, where is she now? She is without a high priest; she does not dare even to think of anointing one of her Cohens to that office. She is without an altar or a sacrifice. Once a year on the Day of Atonement she has something which bears the shadow of sacrifice, but it is a worship of her own devising and not after the law of Moses or the ordinances of God. She is left without priest, altar, temple, or sacrifice, and the outlook of her sons and daughters as to the future life is for the most part exceedingly dark and dismal. I am assured that nothing is more unwelcome to a Jew than the thought of death, and it may well be so. Beloved, we are not without a priest. Our faith beholds Jesus passed into the heavens and abiding there in the glory of His once-offered sacrifice, ever living to intercede for us. Jesus is to my soul at this moment as living a person as I am myself, and even more so. I have come to look on friends and dear ones as passing shadows; I see written across their brows the word "mortal," but Jesus is the one friend who only has immortality, and therefore can never be lost to me. His sacrifice is forever effectual, and His priesthood is forever in exercise. Christ's priesthood remains without end. What bliss it is to be a believer in Jesus, and thus to have one priest, and never to desire another!

We are *not as the votaries of Rome*. That Babylon has many priests within her borders. Some say that these priests are substitutes for Christ. If so, the assertion is a flat blasphemy against Him who is a priest forever, and needs no substitute. Others say they are the vicars of Christ, carrying on His work now that He is gone, by presenting the unbloody sacrifice of the mass. This also is clean contrary to the teaching of the apostle in this passage, wherein he proves that this man, because He continues forever, has a priesthood which cannot be passed from one to another. In this he shows that our Lord is different from the Aaronic priests who had their office taken up by those who followed them, whereas Jesus, like Melchisedec, has no successor, but exercises His office in His own proper person according to the power of an endless life. We

know no priests on earth now, save that in a secondary sense the Lord Jesus has made all believers to be kings and priests unto God. We have now no special order of persons set apart to represent their fellows before God. Under the Mosaic dispensation there were many priests not allowed to continue by reason of death, but under the Christian dispensation we have only one priest who continues ever in an untransferable priesthood; this is the apostle's argument. But this is not true if bishops and presbyters are priests in the sense in which they now claim to be so. I count the very thought of our having other sacrificing priests than the Lord Jesus to be derogatory to the one unique, completely-accomplished sacrifice of our Great High Priest who abides alone in His personal office forever and ever. Wherefore, brethren, despise in your very souls the pretensions of a human priesthood either in the Church of England or in the Church of Rome. If any man calls himself a priest otherwise than as all the people of God are priests, we rate him at no higher value than Korah, Dathan and Abiram, to whom Moses said, "You take too much upon you, you sons of Levi." They claimed a priesthood which did not belong to them, as all men do who intrude into the priesthood in these days. Our Lord Jesus walks in that supreme, solitary majesty which was foreshadowed in Melchisedec—and in that spirit He fulfils a priesthood which renders all other priests a superfluity and a mockery. What have we to do with more sacrifices when the one sacrifice is offered once for all? Brethren, hold fast this precious truth and rejoice in it.

III. Now I conduct you, thirdly, to the fact of ENDLESS INTERCESSION—"Seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them."

If I were to read this passage, "Seeing He ever lives to interpose for them," it would not be an incorrect reading. The Lord Jesus Christ in His perpetual priesthood lives on purpose to be the advocate, defender, patron, mediator, and interposer for His people. You that come to God by Him will highly esteem this constant service rendered to you by your Lord. Whereas Christ by His death provided all that was necessary for your salvation, He, by His life, applies that provision which He made in His death. He lives on purpose to see brought home to you, and enjoyed by you, all those blessed gifts and privileges which He purchased upon the tree, when He died in your place and stead. Had He not lived for you, His death for you would have miscarried. He would then have begun the work, and provided all the materials for its completion, but there would have been none to render those materials available, and to complete the building whose foundation had been laid in so costly a manner. We are pardoned by the death of Christ, but we are justified by His resurrection. We are saved because He died, but that salvation is brought home and secured to us because He sits at the right hand of God, and continually makes intercession for us. I want you today to think as much of a living Christ as you have ever thought of a dead Christ. You have sat down at the foot of Calvary, your eyes suffused with tears, and you have said, "How delightful it is to behold His love written out in crimson characters in yonder streams of blood, which His very heart pours out for our redemption!" I want you now to sit at the foot of His throne, and as far as your dim eyes will permit, behold His splendor, and see how He spends

His glory-life in perpetual intercession for you. He is as much ours on the throne as on the tree. He is ever living to apply to us with His own hands what He purchased by the nailing of those hands and the piercing of His heart upon the cross of our redemption.

Why is it so needful, that Jesus ever-living, should always be interceding for us? I answer first; it is most becoming *God-ward*. The great principle which God would teach to men is this—that sin is so hateful to Him that the sinner can only approach His justice through a Mediator. This truth is most clearly set forth in the fact, that even now that we are washed in the blood of the Lamb, there is no approach unto God except through the intercession of Christ. Does not this teach the grand principle of the evil of sin, and teach it in the plainest manner? The distance which sin puts between the sinner and God, and the necessity of mediation in order that a just God may commune with the imperfect—are not these fully taught by the institution of the perpetual intercession of the Son of God? This is as much a declaration of the righteousness of God as was the substitutionary death on Calvary.

Moreover, the intercession of Christ is needful God-ward to illustrate the union, co-operation, and inter-communion of the divine Trinity in the work of our salvation. The Son of God intercedes in heaven, and the Holy Spirit intercedes on earth. If Jesus intercedes, it is of necessity that the Father be there with whom He may intercede. The Son pleads and the Father hears and answers, and in consequence conveys to us by the Holy Spirit the blessings purchased by His Son. Thus, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are brought before our minds as all concurring in the believer's salvation. A mediator, who is not only man, but also one person of the blessed Trinity, continues to intercede for us, and thus we see how God remembers us.

Once again, our own communion with God is openly declared, while there sits on the throne of God a man who is also God, pleading with the Godhead. Man is always standing in glory in connection with God. The perpetual intercession of Christ is a perpetual recognition of the communion which now exists between God and once fallen, but now restored, manhood. We ought to look upon Christ pleading in glory as the sign, token, and evidence, that man is reconciled to God, that man speaks with God, that God speaks with man, and that once again the old dominion is restored to man, for we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor.

The perpetual intercession is necessary God-ward. But it is even more necessary *man-ward*. Think, brethren and sisters, though we have been forgiven through the precious blood, yet we in many things offend, and therefore we need every day a fresh application of the blood of sprinkling. Conscience accuses us for daily flaws and faults, and it is therefore well for us that it is written, "He makes intercession for the transgressors." Where would our hope be of continual preservation from the weaknesses and sins of our nature did not Jesus constantly plead for us? The way is rough, the world is sinful, our wanderings are many, our wants are incessant, and therefore we need the eternal intercession. We are never out

of danger, and therefore always need the guardian prayer; we are never above weakness and folly, and therefore require the perpetual patronage of our protector. What man is there among you that is not full of wants? What woman is there among you that does not need to come to the mercy seat many times a day? Jesus is always there, waiting to present our petitions, ever making our persons, our petitions, and our praise acceptable with God. Brethren, we are daily pressed, either with conflict with inbred sin or suffering in the body, with service of our Lord or sympathy for our brethren, and for all these we need help from the holy place, help which can only come by way of the throne of the heavenly grace. We need an interposer, at whose feet we may lay down our burdens, into whose ears we may tell our sorrows; therefore Jesus ever lives to make intercession for us.

Our great Intercessor also obtains for us those precious gifts and graces which are needful for our growth and usefulness. His is the hand which leads us onward to those attainments of the spiritual life which are needful for our serviceableness in this world, and for our fitness for the life to come. The higher virtues would be beyond our reach if His prayers did not bring us more and more of the Spirit of God to make us perfect in every good work to do His will.

Have you forgotten also that there is an enemy who is always alive and always full of malice? He acts as the accuser of the brethren, who accuses them day and night before God, and was it not for our glorious Advocate, who for Zion's sake does never hold His peace, what would become of us? This accuser is also a tempter, who subtly contrives plots for our overthrow. It is at times true of us as it was of Peter—"Simon, Simon, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you." How often are we hidden from evil by the prayers of Jesus! We do not know, my brethren, how many poisoned arrows are caught upon the shield of our Lord's intercession. The intercession of Christ as with ten thousand hands is always scattering benedictions. Job asks, "Have you entered into the springs of the sea?" Surely our Lord's intercession is the source of an ocean of blessedness. If we but had eyes enlightened of the Holy Spirit we should see the mountain full of horses of fire, and chariots of fire round about the people of God. Who guides those horses? Who directs those chariots? Who is the captain of the hosts of spirits that encompass the camp of God? Who, but the Prince Immanuel, who by His all-powerful intercession, rules all things for us.

The Lord Jesus by His unceasing pleas keeps all the powers of darkness in check, and moves all the powers of light for our rescue. His prayers form an atmosphere of blessing in which we live and move. We do not know, we cannot begin to calculate, the depths of our obligation to the ceaseless care of our unwearied Intercessor. Even when time shall be no more, and all the saints shall be saved, their continuance in bliss will be due to His endless intercession.

Think of it—Jesus always praying, never ceasing! His very appearance in heaven is a plea. The memory of His finished work is a plea. His constant thought of us is a pleading with God. Not with tears and cries will He pray, as He did in the days of His flesh; nor perhaps even with words

will He plead, for His spirit speaks to the spirit of God without such vocal instrumentality as creatures require. This much we know, He is always praying, always prevailing, and consequently always showering down upon us blessings beyond all count, the most of which we scarcely recognize, and yet if they were withheld we should perish miserably. Lord Jesus, Your dying blood is well matched by Your living pleas, and our hearts rejoice in this because of these two sure proofs of Your love and grace.

IV. That brings me to my fourth point, which is—For this cause, therefore, there is ENDLESS SALVATION in the power of Jesus. "He is able to save without end, or to the uttermost, them that come unto God by Him." That word "uttermost" includes within it *a reference to time*. Because our Lord Jesus never dies, He is endlessly able to save. At all times His power to save remains. He was able to save some of you forty years ago, but you would not come to Him that you might have life; He is able to save you now though you have passed your fourscore years in impenitence. If you come to God by Him, He will save you however multiplied your sins. Beloved, many years ago, as boys and girls, some of us put our trust in the Redeemer, and He forgave us our trespasses. Happy day! Happy day! We are much further advanced in life at this time, and our strength grows less as the shadows lengthen, but Jesus is evermore the same, and is still able to save to the full. No diminution has taken place as to His ability to save. He that helped us in the seven struggles of our youth, and the seventy burdens of our manhood, will help us to seventy times seven, if need be. We need not fear old age or death, seeing He always has the dew of His youth, and is always our friend, laying out His life for us, even as once He laid it down for us.

He is abundantly able to save; *from the uttermost of evil to the uttermost of good He can save us*. As He ever lives in the fullness of life, so He can save to the fullness of salvation. His name is Jesus—the Savior, and as Jesus, the Savior, He lives. He has not renounced His office, nor allowed any part of His life to run to another purpose; He lives to save.

The Lord Jesus Christ is now, "seeing He ever lives," able to save to the uttermost *in point of our sin*. Whatever the sin of anyone here may be, if he comes to God by Jesus Christ, it shall be forgiven him. God forbid I should try to make a list of human crimes; what purpose would it serve? The reading of the details of vice is very defiling; I will not therefore attempt a catalog of crimes into which mortals sink. Sorry scoundrels come here at times, there may be dreadful characters at this moment mingled with this vast congregation, and truly I am not sorry that they are hearing the gospel, but whoever you may be, the text draws a circle of hope around, you as it says—"He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him." Whatever your offense, if you will now come to God, and confess it, and ask mercy through the name of Jesus, He is able to save you to the extreme limit of your need. If you have gone as far in sin as is possible, and are forced to own that if you could have gone further you would have done so, yet there is forgiveness. O my hearer, though your hand were even red with murder, yet the blood of Christ could wash it clean. "All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiv-

en unto men." Yes, let the silver trumpet sound it out! You chief of sinners, hear the news! The Savior lives that to the uttermost He may save such as you. Come, then, to your living Lord, you that groan under the load of deadly guilt, for He can take it all away.

So, too, He saves to *the uttermost of our need and misery*. One old divine says if we were to climb a great hill from which we could see wide fields of spiritual distress and poverty, and if all this represented our experience, yet the Lord is able to spread salvation all round the far-off horizon, and encompass all our wants. Come, poor trembler, climb the mountain, and look far over this terrible wilderness. As far as ever you can see, or foresee, of dreaded need in years to come, so far and much further can the salvation of Jesus reach. As far as with the telescope of apprehension you can spy out trials in life and woes in death, so far is Jesus able to save you. The uttermost will never be reached by you, but it has long ago been provided for by Him. All your capacious emptiness can ever need to fill it, He has provided. Though your heart should like a horseleech cry, "Give, give," Jesus can satisfy its hunger. Though like the sea that swallows up a navy and is not full, your soul should never cease its cravings, yet Jesus can content you. All that you can require He can surely give you, since He ever lives by the power of an endless life to be the fullness of every emptied soul.

Jesus can save you *to the uttermost of your desires*. I want you to think of all you would like to be in righteousness and true holiness; for all that will Jesus do unto you before He has done with you. I asked a young convert the other day "Are you perfect yet?" "Oh dear, sir," she said, "No." I asked, "Would you not like to be?" Her eyes twinkled, as well they might, and she said, "That is what I long for." It will be heaven to be perfect. Jesus is able to make us perfect, and He has resolved to do it; as it is written, "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Your likeness." In that likeness He will cause us to awake if we come unto God through Him. Jesus will save us to the highest degree.

The Lord Jesus Christ will also save us *entirely;* He will work out the salvation of the whole man, body, soul, and spirit. He ever lives to save His people to the utmost, that is to say, all His people, and all of every one of His people. Nothing essential to manhood shall be left to perish in the case of those whom He redeems. All that, which the first Adam ruined the second Adam shall restore. The Canaan of manhood from Dan to Beersheba shall be conquered by our Joshua. As yet the body is dead because of sin, though the spirit is life because of righteousness, but the day comes when the body shall also be delivered from the bondage which sin has brought upon it. Not a bone or a piece of a bone, of a redeemed one shall be left in the hands of the enemy. God's deliverances are always complete. When the Lord sent His angel to bring Peter out of prison, he said to the slumbering apostle, "Cast your garment about you, and follow me." That garment might be only a fisherman's cloak, but it must not be left in Herod's hands. He said also, "Bind on your sandals," for when the angel of the Lord sets a man free, he will not leave even a pair of old shoes behind him. The redemption of Christ is perfect; it reaches to the uttermost. He seems to say to sin, and Satan, and death, as the Lord

said to Pharaoh, "Not a hoof shall be left behind." All that He has redeemed by price He will also redeem by power, and to that end He makes ceaseless intercession before God.

"To the uttermost," from all our doubts and fears, and follies, and failures, Jesus will bring us by His endless intercession. "To the uttermost," from every consequence of the fall, and personal sin, and actual death, Jesus by His intercession will save us. "To the uttermost." Oh, think of it! To the resurrection life, to clearance at the judgment seat, and to the highest glories of heaven, and to boundless bliss throughout the ages He will save us. Right on while you endure, O eternity, the pleading of the High Priest shall save the chosen company, who forever rising into something higher and yet higher, shall prove more and more the heights and depths of everlasting bliss! Because He lives we shall live also, and because He ever intercedes we shall forever be glorified.

There I leave my subject, only coming back to the one inquiry, *Do you come unto God by Jesus Christ?* If so, the text speaks comfortably to you. It speaks not only of the church as a whole, but also of each individual believer; Jesus intercedes for each one of those who "come unto God by Him." You, dear friend, though unknown to fame are known to Jesus. You, dear sister, hidden away in obscurity, are not hidden from the all-seeing eye of the divine Mediator. His breastplate bears your name, yes, He has engraved it upon the palms of His hands, and He will never forget those whose memorials are thus perpetually with Him. May the living blessing of the ever-living Savior be with you today and forever! Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
PSALM 110; HEBREWS 7.**

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—395, 326, 327.

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

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

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

THE GREAT SIN OF DOING NOTHING
NO. 1916

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 5, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"But if you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against the Lord: and be sure your sin will find you out."
Numbers 32:23.

THERE are many dear friends engaged in business who can only reach the Tabernacle in time for the middle of the service, and therefore they lose the reading of the Scriptures and the exposition, which make up a whole with the sermon. This is a great loss to them, but as it is not their fault we must not let them suffer for it, so far as we can remedy the evil. With this design let me explain to them that, according to the chapter which we have read and expounded, the Israelites had conquered the country possessed by Og, king of Bashan, and Sihon, king of the Amorites, and the tribes of Reuben and Gad, having great quantities of cattle, thought that so rich a pasture country would be eminently suitable for them and for their flocks. They were no bad judges, for the country was specially fitted for sheep farming. They therefore asked of Moses that they might have that country to be theirs. But Moses objected. Did they mean to sit still and enjoy that country, and then leave the rest of the tribes to cross the Jordan, and to fight for their possessions? If so, he declared that it was a very evil course to take—that they were selfish in seeking their own ease, and that they would be discouraging God's people, and doing all sorts of mischief. He therefore proposed to them that, if they were to have that conquered country for their own, they should at least cross the river with their brethren, and fight and continue fighting until the land on the other side of the Jordan had been cleared of its old inhabitants, and the whole of Israel could take the whole of the country, and each tribe could possess its portion. He put it to them as a matter of honor, and as a matter of right, that they ought to help in conquering the rest of the land. Why should they receive their lot without fighting, and leave the other tribes to bear the toil and danger of war? Had not God bid them all to go up and drive out the condemned Canaanites? How could they evade their duty without great sin? He would have them take their full share in the war, and on that condition they might have the rich meadows of Bashan, but not otherwise. This was clearly just and equitable, and commended itself to those concerned. They at once agreed to the proposal, and Moses, to enforce the agreement, told them in the words of the text that, if they did not keep their covenant, and give all due aid to

their brethren, then they would sin against God, and they might be sure that their sin would find them out.

I remarked in reading the chapter that Moses spoke very wisely, very forcibly, very honestly, and the people were very pliant. They yielded to his persuasions, and the difficulty which threatened to divide the nation was readily got over. It is well to have a wise leader. It is well for him when he leads a reasonable people. Oh, that I may be able tonight to speak a word in season, and may your ears be ready to hear it! May the Lord bring as gracious an issue out of this service as He did out of the discourse of His servant Moses! To His Holy Spirit shall be all the praise.

We shall speak at this time, first, *of what was this sin?* Secondly, *what would be the chief sin of that sin?* "If you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against the Lord." This would be the peculiar atrocity of their sin, that it would be leveled at God Himself. And then there is a third point: *What would be the consequence of such sin?* "Be sure your sin will find you out." They would be guilty, and would not long go unpunished.

I. First, then, WHAT WAS THIS SIN? What is this sin about which the Spirit of God says by Moses, "Be sure your sin will find you out?" A learned divine has delivered a sermon upon the sin of murder from this text, another upon theft, another upon falsehood. Now they are very good sermons, but they have nothing to do with this text, if it is read as Moses uttered it. If you take the text as it stands, there is nothing in it about murder, or theft, or anything of the kind. In fact, it is not about what men do, but it is about *what men do not do*. The iniquity of doing nothing is a sin which is not as often spoken of as it should be. A sin of omission is clearly aimed at in this warning—"If you will not do so, be sure your sin will find you out."

What, then, was this sin? Remember that it is the sin of God's own people. It is not the sin of Egyptians and Philistines, but the sin of God's chosen nation, and therefore this text is for you that belong to any of the tribes of Israel—you to whom God has given a portion among His beloved ones. It is to you, professed Christians and church members, that the text comes, "Be sure your sin will find you out." And what is that sin? Very sadly common it is among professed Christians, and needs to be dealt with, it is the sin which leads any to forget their share in the holy war which is to be carried out for God and for His church. A great many wrongs are tangled together in this crime, and we must try to separate them, and set them in order before your eyes.

First, it was *the sin of idleness and of self-indulgence*. "We have cattle: here is a land that yields much pasture: let us have this for our cattle, and we will build folds for our sheep with the abundant stones that lie about, and we will repair these cities of the Amorites, and we will dwell in them. They are nearly ready for us, and there shall our little ones dwell in comfort. We do not care about fighting: we have seen enough of it already in the wars with Sihon and Og. Reuben would rather abide by the sheepfolds. Gad has more delight in the bleating of the sheep and in the folding of the lambs in his bosom than in going forth to battle." Alas, the tribe of Reuben is not dead, and the tribe of Gad has not passed away!

Many who are of the household of faith are equally indisposed to exertion, equally fond of ease. Hear them say, "Thank God we are safe! We have passed from death unto life. We have named the name of Christ, we are washed in His precious blood, and therefore we are secure." Then, with a strange inconsistency, they permit the evil of the flesh to crave carnal ease, and they cry, "Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years, take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Spiritual self-indulgence is a monstrous evil, yet we see it all around. On Sunday these loafers must be well fed. They look out for such sermons as will feed their souls. The thought does not occur to these people that there is something else to be done besides feeding. Soul-saving is pushed into the background. The crowds are perishing at their gates, the multitudes with their sins defile the air, the age is getting worse and worse, and man, by a process of evolution, is evolving a devil, and yet these people want pleasant things preached to them. They eat the fat and drink the sweet, and they crowd to the feast of fat things full of marrow, and of wines on the lees well refined—spiritual festivals are their delight; sermons, conferences, Bible readings, and so forth, are sought after, but regular service in ordinary ways is neglected. Not a hand's turn will they do. They gird on no armor, they grasp no sword, they wield no sling, and they throw no stone. No, they have gotten their possession, they know they have, and they sit down in carnal security, satisfied to do nothing. They neither work for life, nor from life: they are absolute sluggards, as lazy as they are long. Nowhere are they at home except where they can enjoy themselves, and take things easy. They love their beds, but the Lord's fields they will neither plow nor reap. This is the sin pointed out in the text—"If you do not go forth to the battles of the Lord, and contend for the Lord God and for His people, you do sin against the Lord: and be sure your sin will find you out." The sin of doing nothing is about the biggest of all sins, for it involves most of the others. The sin of sitting still while your brethren go forth to war breaks both tables of the law, and has in it a huge idolatry of self, which neither allows love to God or man. Horrible idleness! God save us from it!

This sin may be viewed under another aspect, as *selfishness and unbrotherliness*. Gad and Reuben ask to have their inheritance at once, and to make themselves comfortable in Bashan, on this side Jordan. What about Judah, Levi, Simeon, Benjamin, and all the rest of the tribes? How are they to get their inheritance? They do not care, but it is evident that Bashan is suitable for them with their multitude of cattle. Some of them reply, "You see, they must look to themselves, as the proverb has it, 'Every man for himself, and God for us all.'" Did I not hear someone in the company say, "Am I my brother's keeper?" I know that gentleman. I heard his voice years ago. His name is Cain, and I have this to say to him; it is true that he is not his brother's keeper, but he is his brother's killer. Every man is either the keeper of his brother, or the destroyer of his brother. Soul-murder can be worked without an act or even a will, it can be, and is constantly, accomplished by neglect. Yonder perishing heathen—does not the Lord inquire, "Who slew all these?" The millions of

this city unevangelized—who is guilty of their blood? Are not idle Christians starving the multitude by refusing to hand out the bread of life? Is not this a grievous sin?

"But oh," says another, "They can conquer the land themselves. God is with them, and He can do His own work, and therefore I do not see that I need trouble myself about other people." That is selfishness, and selfishness is never worse than when it puts on the garb of religion. The boy at school, who selfishly feeds himself upon his luxuries, and gives nothing to his young companions, is generally their ridicule. He is the greedy boy whom all despise. A man with large stores, who, in time of famine, would feed himself, but never think of the poor, is despised among men. But what shall I say of the man who, concerning the things of the soul—concerning heaven, and hell, and Christ, and eternity—is so selfish that, being saved himself, he cares not one jot for others? He is so unbrotherly that I am half afraid he is no brother. He is so inhuman that I can scarcely think a touch of the life of Christ can ever have quickened him. How is he a Christian who is not like Christ, but who just feels, "Well, I am all right, and if I look to myself other people must look to themselves. God will see to them all, no doubt! I have nothing to do with it"? Now, unless we shake off that horrible selfishness, and feel that the very essence of our religion lies in love, and that one of the first fruits of it is to make us care about the salvation of our fellow men—unless, I say, we shake that off and go forth to fight the Lord's battles—then this text threatens us very solemnly—"If you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against the Lord: and be sure your sin will find you out." O my brothers, hear this text, and let it operate with salutary influence to produce in you constant effort for the salvation of those around you!

But with this there was mingled *ingratitude* of a very dark order. These children of Gad and Reuben would appropriate to themselves lands for which all the Israelites had labored. God had led them forth to battle, and they had conquered Sihon and Og, and now these men would take possession of what others have struggled for, but they are not to fight themselves. This is vile ingratitude, and I fear it is common among us at this very day. How came we to be Christians at all? Instrumentally, it is through those holy missionaries who won our fathers from the cruel worship of the Druids, and afterwards from the fierce dominion of Woden and Thor. We must also trace our gospel light to those stakes at Smithfield, where men of God counted not their lives dear to them, but willingly gave up all they had, and their lives also by a painful death, that they might keep truth alive in the land. Some of you came to be Christian men through the earnest labors of men who preached by the roadside, or by the loving entreaties of tender mothers who wept you to the Savior, or by the faithful ministry of some brother from the pulpit, or the equally faithful teaching of an earnest Sunday school teacher. We owe under God much to past ages, and much to present laborers. There is no man among us but stands immensely indebted to the church of God. Though God is our Father, yet the church is our mother, and through her various agencies we have been born to God. Do we acknowledge all this debt, and

are we not going to pay it? Are we to receive all, and then give out nothing at all? Are we to be like candles burning under bushels? Are we to waste our life by much receiving and little distributing? This will never do. This will not be life, but death. I do not charge this home upon anybody personally, but if this cap fits anybody, pray let him wear it. If any man must acknowledge his obligation to the church of God, and yet he is not repaying it, let him cover his face for very shame. Will you not hand on the light you have received? Verily you deserve to perish in darkness. Are you fed, and will you not break your bread to the hungry, or pass a cup of cold water to the thirsty? What are you doing, strange ingrate! That you should simply be a stagnant reservoir into which streams of mercy fall never to run out of you again, but to stand and putrefy in selfishness? Remember the Dead Sea, and tremble lest you be like it, a pool accursed and cursing all around you! O God, have mercy upon the great mass of Your professing people to whom this must be solemnly applied, that they do receive, but give back to You and to Your cause so little either of time, substance, talent, prayer, or anything else!

The text, when spiritually interpreted, says concerning our personal service in the conquest of the world for Christ—"if you do not so, behold, you have sinned against the Lord: and be sure your sin will find you out."

Again, we may view this from another point of view. It is the sin of *untruthfulness*. These people pledged themselves that they would go forth with the other tribes, and that they would not return to their own homes until the whole of the campaign was ended. Now, if after that they did not go to war, and did not fight to the close of it, then they would be guilty of a barefaced lie. It is a wretched thing for a man to be a covenant-breaker. It is sacrilege for any man to lie, not only unto man, but unto God. I would speak very tenderly, but if any man has been converted from the error of his ways, by that very conversion he is bound to serve the Lord. If he has been baptized as a believer, by that baptism he declared that he was dead to the world, and buried to it, that henceforth he might live in newness of life. Now, if he lives only to make money and hoard it and he does nothing for God's church and for poor sinners, is not his baptism a lie? Such a baptized person was buried, but he was never dead; is not this to turn baptism into a farce? He gave himself up to the church of God, he became a member of it, and by that act and deed he pledged himself to do all he could for its growth and its prosperity, and if he does nothing, he is a deceiver. If his joining a church meant anything, it meant that he would take part in the common service of God. A do-nothing professor is a merely nominal member, and a nominal member is a real hindrance. He neither contributes, nor prays, nor works, nor agonizes for souls, nor takes any part in Christian service, and yet he partakes in all the privileges of the church. Is this fair? What is the use of him? He sits and hears, and sometimes sleeps under the sermon. That is all. Is not his union with the church a practical falsehood? I will not say so, but I will ask the question. It does seem to me that if I belong to the Israelites, and they are sent by God to conquer a country, and I do not go

forth to the war with them, and take my part in the conflict, I am not a true Israelite. I am unworthy of my nation, I am disloyal to the standard; I am false to my fellow soldiers. I think it is so, don't you? Having entered the Christian ministry, if I did nothing in it, I should feel that I disgraced it. If I simply tried to enjoy religion without an effort to spread it, I ought to be drummed out of the army of preachers. If there are any in the church who have talent that they do not use for God or money which they do not lay out for Christ, or time which they do not use for holy purposes, they are sinning, and their sin will find them out. Your buried talent, will it not rust, and rusting, will it not create within your spirits a most horrible disease, and be a peril to you? Must it not be so? Are they not guilty of an acted lie before high heaven that call themselves servants of God, and yet do not serve Him? You often sing—

"'Tis done! The great transaction's done;
I am my Lord's, and He is mine:
He drew me, and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice divine.
High heaven, that heard the solemn vow,
That vow renewed shall daily hear:
Till in life's latest hour I bow,
And bless in death a bond so dear."

Is that hymn true? Do you mean those verses, or do you mock God? You have all sung the hymn many times, and made "Happy day! Happy day!" the chorus, but is your singing true or false? If any man or woman among you shall after such a song sink back into himself, and do nothing for his Lord, what truth is there in him? God save us from using our lips to mock His holy name! It can be little short of blasphemy to sing such words and yet live a selfish, indolent life. Will a man thus insult his God? O sirs, I beseech you make such language true, or else have done with it, lest the record of it destroy your souls!

Once more, and I will have done with this painful subject. What would their sin be? According to Moses *it would be a grave injury to others*. Do you not notice how he put it to them? "Moses said unto the children of Gad and to the children of Reuben, Shall your brethren go to war, and shall you sit here?" What an example to set! If one Christian man is right in never joining a Christian church, then all other Christian men would be right in not doing so, and there would be no visible Christian church. Do you not see you non-professing believers, that your example is destructive of all church life? What are you doing? If one Christian man, with the talent to preach, is right in not preaching, then other Christian men have a right to trifle in the same way, and then there would be no ministry left. An idler is a great waster, and makes others wasters too, his example is likely to make all around him as indolent as himself. I notice in our churches that a few earnest men and women lead the way, and others are sweetly drawn to follow them. How precious are the earnest few in a Christian community. David knew the value of the first three in his band. But if the leading spirits are dead, cold, indifferent, what happens? Why, lethargy spreads over the whole. I am sorry to say that I hear of instances in which a minister laments, "I labor with all my

might, but I am persuaded that nothing will ever be done while Mr. So-and-So is there." He is often a cold-blooded deacon, or a purse-proud member. When you come to know him, you feel, "While there is such a great big iceberg floating close to the shore, the garden by the sea must be frostbitten, nothing can grow." It is a pity that any of us should freeze others. God save us from it! "Oh," says one, "nobody knows me, and therefore I cannot have much influence either for good or for evil." Not over your own child—your daughter, your son? That influence which you have over even one or two little ones may spread far further than you imagine. We cannot calculate the range of moral influence, it is immeasurable. I suppose that there is not a single moving atom of matter which does not influence in some measure the entire universe. One atom impinges upon another and that upon another, and so it reaches the remotest star. Whether we do or do not do, what we do or do not do, will have an influence upon all that are round us, perhaps to all eternity. Perhaps the word I speak tonight shall thrill when yonder sun has burned out like a coal, and the moon has become black as sackcloth of hair. I am not sure but that our thoughts upon our bed may throb throughout the ages in their incessant results. "None of us lives to himself, and no man dies to himself;" for good or for evil we are yoked with the universe, and there is no possibility of severance. There is much influence for evil in an idle example, possibly such an example would not be set by certain persons if they would but think of the consequences. To such consideration of consequences I invite all whose gravest fault is forbearing to do good. O barren tree, do not excuse yourself because you do not drip with poison like the upas! It is crime enough that you cumber the ground!

Moses goes on to remark that if these people did not go forth to war they would *discourage all the rest*. "Wherefore discourage you the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the Lord has given them?" It is no slight sin to discourage holy zeal and perseverance in others. May we never be guilty of killing holy desires even in children! How often has a burning desire in a boy's heart been quenched by his own father, who has thought him too impulsive, or too ardent! How frequently the conversation of a friend, so called, has dried up the springs of holy desire in the person with whom he has conversed! Let it not be so. Yet without cold words our chill neglects may freeze. I know a terrace where the shutting up of one or two shops has a deadening effect upon the trade of the other shops. Somehow, the closed shutters give a gloomy look to the place, and customers are repelled. Does not the same thing happen to groups of workers when one grows idle? Does not the one dull brother deaden the rest? We cannot neglect our own gardens without injuring our neighbors. Do you live anywhere near a house that is not let, which has a back garden left to run to waste? All manner of seeds are blown over upon your ground, and though you keep the hoe going, yet the weeds baffle you, for there is such a nursery for them just over the wall. One mechanic coming late among a set of workmen may throw the whole company out of order for the day. One railway truck off the rails

may block the entire system. Depend upon it; if we are not serving the Lord our God, we are committing the sin of discouraging our fellow men. They are more likely to imitate our lethargy than our energy. Why should we wish to hinder others from being earnest? How dare we rob God of the services of others by our own neglect? O God, deliver us from this sin!

If I had preached a sermon about murder or theft, you would all have escaped the lash, but few of us will be without rebuke now that I have kept the text in the setting in which God originally put it, and in which He meant it to be presented for our rebuke and exhortation.

II. Secondly, let us carefully notice WHAT WAS THE CHIEF SIN IN THIS SIN? Of course, if the Reubenites did not keep their solemn agreement to go over the Jordan, and help their brethren, they would sin against their brethren, but this is not the offense which rises first to the mind of Moses. Moses overlooks the lesser, because he knows it to be comprehended in the greater, and he says, "Behold, you have sinned against the Lord." In this he anticipated the confession of David, "Against You, You only have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight." To refuse to help their brethren would be disobedience to the Lord. Did He not command all Israel to drive out the Canaanites? In like manner, neglect of holy work is positive sin against the Lord. It is *disobedience* against the Lord not to be preaching His truth if we are able to do so. Did not our Lord say, "Go you into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature?" This command was not confined to a dozen or so, but was meant for all His people, as they have opportunity and ability. We who hear the gospel are bidden to proclaim it, for it is written, "Let him that hears say, Come." The hearer of the gospel is bound to be a repeater of the gospel. We are all called upon, as we know the Lord, to tell others what the Lord has told us, and if we do not so, we are guilty of disobedience to a great gospel precept.

We are certainly guilty, dear friends, of *ingratitude,* if, as I have already said, we owe so much to other men, and yet do not seek to bless mankind; but chiefly we owe everything to the grace of God, and if God has given us grace in our own hearts, and saved us with the precious blood of the Only-Begotten, how can we sit still, and allow others to perish? As we value salvation we are under bonds to make it known. We rejoice to be in the kingdom of God—should we not spend and be spent for the growth of that kingdom? He that does not bear arms in this war is a traitor to his sovereign Lord.

There would be sin against God in the conduct of these people, if they did not aid in the conquest of Canaan, for they would be *dividing God's Israel.* Shall the Lord's heritage be torn in two? God meant them all to stay together. They all came out of Egypt together, they all marched through the wilderness together, and now He meant them to fight His battles together. Were these to take their inheritance, and abide among the sheepcotes, and leave the other ten and a half tribes to go over Jordan and wage the war alone? This would be scattering the family of God. Can it be that any of us are dividing the church of God; that is, dividing it into drones and workers? This would be a terrible division, but I fear

that it exists already. It is apparent to those who are able to observe, and it is mourned over by those who are jealous for the God of Israel. Half the schisms in churches arise out of the real division which exists between idlers and workers. Mind this. Be not sowers of division by being busybodies, working not at all.

If you are not serving the Lord, you are sinning against the sacred Trinity. You sin against our Father, who would have you do good, and be imitators of Him as dear children. You sin against the Son of God, who has bought you with a price that you might be zealous for His glory. You sin against the Holy Spirit, whose impulses are not to sleep and idleness, but to quickening and to holiness. May we no longer sin against the Lord by refusing to perform His will!

III. We have now reached the last point, and the point that is most serious; WHAT WILL COME OF THIS SIN OF DOING NOTHING? What will come of it? *"Be sure your sin will find you out."* Now, as the time is nearly gone, I will not do more than show that these Gadites and Reubenites would be sure to be found out by their own neglect. Their sin would find them out to their shame and sorrow if they did not lend all their strength to their brethren according to their promise.

It would find them out thus; they would be *ill at ease*. One of these days their sin would leap upon their consciences as a lion on its prey. They would wake up and say, "We were wrong. We were bound to have taken our share in that war," and every man among them that was good for anything would be troubled in heart because he had failed to do his duty in the hour of need. He would feel uneasy, he would not want anybody to point him out with the finger, but he would point himself out and he would say to himself, "I failed in that case. I know I did. I acted very wrongly. I ought to have been with Joshua chasing out those Canaanites, I received my own portion of the land, and I ought therefore to have helped others to win their portions."

When conscience was thus awakened, they would also feel themselves to be *mean and despicable*. As king after king was conquered, and the notes of victory were heard all over Canaan, they would think themselves mice rather than men to have shunned so glorious a conflict. They would feel disgraced by their own inaction. Their manhood would be held cheap by the other tribes; in fact, they would become a by-word and a proverb, as men do who are notoriously greedy and selfish. Surely it is an intolerable disgrace to anyone to profess to be a man of God, and to have no care about the souls of others, while they are perishing by millions.

More than that, the tribes who went not to the war would be *enfeebled* by their own inaction. God would have His people learn war, but if these men did not go to the fight they would not be soldierly, and they would not be able to take care of themselves when their land was invaded. How much of sacred education we miss when we turn away from the service of God! I believe that no man understands salvation as well as the man who, having tasted it for himself, has also preached it to those about him. If you want to know the evil of the human heart, try to do good to the unconverted, and endeavor to guide the unbeliever to Jesus. Get a

dozen girls around you, my sister, and watch the workings of their hearts as you seek to lead them to Christ, and you will learn much more than you knew before. My dear brother; gather a number of youths about you, and observe their feeling and conduct while you seek their conversion. You will soon know the depravity of human nature if you watch for souls for a little season, and if you get souls converted, and act as a spiritual father to them, you will soon see how much they need the Holy Spirit to keep them, and how much you need Him to keep you also, for your patience will be tried. You will learn both the sweet and the bitter of the things of God by being engaged in Christ's service. Jesus says, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me"; service is a yoke we must bear in order to learn of Christ. The only way to learn to swim is to get into the water. To be a soldier and never know the smell of gunpowder is impossible, at least, such soldiers are little to be relied on in case of war. No, no; our sin, if we do nothing, will find us out in our being enfeebled, in our being disgraced, in our feeling that we are lowly, and in the accusation of our conscience. Let us find this sin out, and shake ourselves free from it before it finds us out.

Their sin would also have found them out, had they fallen into it, because they would have been *divided from the rest of God's Israel*. If they had not gone across the Jordan to fight, the ten and a half tribes would have always said, "What have we to do with you? The Jordan rolls between us, and so let it do. We do not want any connection with those who acted so basely to us in our hour of need." They would practically have cut themselves off from union with the Israel of God, and they would have secured to themselves the loss of all fellowship with earnest men. Those who are non-workers lose much by not keeping pace with those who are running the heavenly race. The active are happy; the hand of the diligent makes rich in a spiritual sense. There is that which withholds more than is fit, and it tends to poverty; I am sure it is so in a spiritual sense.

To come more practically home, brethren beloved, if you and I are not serving the Lord, our sin will find us out. It will find us out perhaps in this way. There will be many added to the church, and God will prosper it, and we shall hear of it, but *we shall feel no joy therein*. We had no finger in the work, and we shall find no comfort in the result. We did not point out the way to troubled consciences; we never went to early morning prayer meetings, nor to any prayer meetings, to pray for a blessing, we never spoke a word or even gave a tract away, and therefore we shall see the blessing with our eyes, but we shall not eat thereof. While God's people lift up their loud hallelujahs of joy we shall only mourn, "My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me!" It is no joy to see a harvest reaped from fields which we refused to plow.

It may be that you will begin to lose all the sweetness of public services. By doing nothing you *lose your appetite*. Many a person who has no appetite needs a wise doctor to say to him, "Of course you cannot eat, for you do not work. Exercise yourself, and your appetite will return." He that earns his breakfast enjoys his breakfast, and he who labors for

Christ finds that the services of the sanctuary are exceedingly sweet to him. I know some dear brethren here who cannot get to a Sunday sermon because they have something to do for their Lord throughout the Sabbath; therefore they drop in to this Thursday evening sermon. Thus they gain a Sabbath in the middle of the week, which is exceedingly sweet to them. They can only attend one service on the Sunday, but that is doubly refreshing to them. They are engaged at the ragged school, or at the corner of the street, where they are accustomed to preach, and the Lord makes up to them their lost opportunities. Believe me, when they do get a meal they heartily appreciate it, for they come with an appetite which they have gathered in the service of their Master. If you do not work, your sin will find you out in the loss of enjoyment when present at the means of grace.

I have known this sin find people out *in their families*. There is a Christian man; we honor and love him, but he has a son that is a drunk. Did his good father ever bear any protest against strong drink in all his life? No, he did not like the blue ribbon, of course. I will not dispute about total abstinence, but I do not feel much astonished at a boy drinking much when he sees his godly father drink a little regularly. Every man should labor by precept and example to put down intemperance, and he who does not do so may be sure that his sin will find him out.

Here is another. His children have all grown up thoughtless, careless; giddy. He took them to his place of worship, and he now inquires, "Why are they not converted?" Did he ever take them one by one and pray with them? Did he ever speak earnestly to each boy and each girl, and labor for the conversion of each one? I am afraid that in many cases nothing of the sort has been attempted. Certain mistaken individuals almost think it wrong to seek the conversion of their children while they are children, and their sin finds them out when they see them growing up in ungodliness.

Besides, if we do not look after God's children, it may be that He will not look after ours. "No," says God, "there were other people's children in the streets, and you had no concern about them, why should your children fare better? You never opened a ragged school for the poor, why should I bless you? There were men in your employment by whom you gained your living, but you never spoke to them about their souls, nor cared whether they were saved or damned, and I am not going to look after your family when you have no concern for Mine." "Be sure your sin will find you out."

I do not know how this warning may come home to any brother or sister here who has been idling, but it is better that my warning should find him out than that his sin should find him out. I do not know whether there are any idlers here, though I have a pretty shrewd guess that there are. Friends, neglect of the Lord's work will come home to you, and I will tell you when it will come to you, if it does not do so before. When you are sick and ill, your faith in Christ will bring you great comfort, but you will be sorrowful if you have to say to yourself, "Oh, that I had served God while I was young!" A friend said to me not long ago, "My dear sir,

you are often laid aside, and no doubt the reason is the imprudent manner in which you worked away in your youth. You preached ten times in a week almost all the year round, year after year, and of course you wore yourself out." "Oh, yes," I said, "it may be so, but I do not regret it in the least. Thank God, I preached with all my might all over the land when I could do so, and I would again if I could only get renewed strength!" If I cannot work so much as in earlier days, I have not the misery of saying, "I wasted my opportunities, and spent my best days in ease." I do say to myself, "Would God I had done more, or had done it better, but I am thankful to be able to exonerate myself from all charge of sloth." If those of us who do much have to whip ourselves a bit, what should those do who practically do nothing at all, and discourage others? What can idlers do but fear that their sin will find them out?

Thus far have I spoken to God's people, and if you think that this is rather rough upon them, what shall I say to you who do not love the Lord at all? O sirs, if the fan that is in Christ's hand purges His own floor in this stern way, what will that fan do with you who are as chaff to the wheat! If He sits here as a refiner, and purifies the sons of Levi, and puts even the gold into the fire, what will become of the dross? "If the righteous scarcely are saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" If the language of God is sharp even to His own beloved, because He says, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent," what will His language be to those who are not His children, but are living in open rebellion against Him? Tremble, you that forget God. Hear His own words, they are none of mine, "Now consider this, you that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." God help you to flee from the sin of doing nothing! The Lord Jesus Christ Himself, lead you into the Father's service! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—NUMBERS 32.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—968, 660, 34 (VERSION 1).

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

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

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

IN CHRIST NO CONDEMNATION
NO. 1917

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 29, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."
Romans 8:1.

YOU are well aware, dear friends, that the division into chapters has only been made for convenience sake, and is not a matter of inspired arrangement. I may add that it has been clumsily made, and not with careful thoughtfulness, but as roughly as if a woodman had taken an axe and chopped the book to pieces in a hurry. It was a very unfortunate thing that the axe dropped down just here, so as to divide a passage which ought to have been kept entire. We once heard a friend say, "I have got out of the seventh of Romans into the eighth." Nonsense! There is no getting out of one into the other, for they are one. The field is not divided by hedge or ditch. I thank God with all my heart that since my conversion I have never known what it is to be out of the seventh of Romans, nor out of the eighth of Romans either; the whole passage has been solid truth to my experience. I have struggled against inward sin, and rejoiced in complete justification at the same time.

Our apostle, after having said, "So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin," goes on to say, without any break, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." The fact is, that believers are in a state of conflict, but not in a state of condemnation, and that at the very time when the conflict is hottest the believer is still justified. When the believer has to do his utmost even to hold his ground, when he feels that he cannot advance an inch without fighting for it, when he has to cry out in the agony of his spirit because of the vehemence of temptation, he may still lay his hand upon the word of God, and say, "And yet there is no condemnation to me, for I am in Christ Jesus." The man who never strives against the sin which dwells in him, who indeed is not conscious of any sin to strive against, that is the man who may begin to question whether he knows anything at all about the spiritual life. He who has no inward pain may well suspect that he is abiding in death, abiding therefore under constant condemnation; but that man who feels a daily striving after deliverance from evil, who is panting, and pining, and longing, and agonizing to become holy even as God is holy, he is the justified man. The man to whom every sin is a misery, to whom even the thought of iniquity is intolerable, he is the man who may with confidence declare, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus." Souls that sigh for

holiness are not condemned to eternal death, for their sighing proves that they are in Christ Jesus.

Observe that the text is written in the present tense. You will lose much of its force and beauty if you leave out that word "now," or regard it as a mere term of argument. This "now" shows how distinctly the statement of non-condemnation is consistent with that mingled experience of the seventh chapter, which certain good people do not appear to understand. The passage describes a conflict which the unregenerate cannot feel, for they neither delight in God after the inward man, nor do they agonize to be set free from the presence of sin. Every child of God must know this conflict if he knows himself. If it had not been for the fierce debates of former ages this passage would have been accepted as an accurate picture of the inner life of the struggling believer, and it would have been held up to admiration as a sure proof of the divine inspiration of the epistle, that with such singular accuracy it records the secret experiences of a soul struggling after purity, an experience which often puzzles the very people who are the subjects of it. Reading my text in that connection, with an emphasis upon the "now," my heart sings for joy. With all my watching, and warring—yes, with all my fears and trembling—yet will I rejoice in the Lord even now, for "there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus."

I would have you carefully observe our apostle's change of expression. When he is speaking about the inward contention he writes in the first person, and speaks of himself, "I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me." That which might seem humiliating and derogatory he imputes to himself most distinctly, crying out; "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But when he comes to write upon the privileges of the children of God, he does not write in the first person, but he speaks of *them* in general terms—"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." His deep humility thus displayed itself. His very self-remembrance is a self-annihilation, he uses himself as lead with which to sink his nets, but his brethren he puts into the place of honor and esteem. His is the confession, and theirs is the confidence, he extols the glorious company of believers, but he lowers himself. This is the style of his language, and the style often reveals the man. He might have said, "There is therefore now no condemnation to me, for I am in Christ Jesus," and it would have been true, but it would not have been after the manner of the lowly apostle.

After these wanderings upon the shores of the text, let us now plunge into its depths, and may the Holy Spirit from whom it proceeded bless it to our hearts!

I. I would say, first of all, that this verse contains A REFUTATION OF THE OLD SERPENT'S GOSPEL. "The serpent's gospel," you say, "what is that?" It is another name for the gospel of modern thought—that gospel which casts a doubt upon the threats of the law, and even denies them altogether. Quote the first few words of the text, and stop there, and this false gospel is before you—"There is therefore now no condemnation." The serpent promulgated this gospel in the Garden of Eden when he said, "You shall not surely die." With what greediness our first parents

received that highly advanced teaching which contradicted the declaration of God—"You shall surely die!" The doctrine of no punishment for any man is popular at this day, and threatens to have even greater sway in the future. Generally it comes in the serpent's favorite form of "honest doubt"—"Yes, has God said?" Can it be so? Is He not far too merciful? Is it possible that a God of love should condemn and punish His creatures?"

The denial of the penalty attached to sin comes out in different ways, but when put into a nutshell it amounts to this—"There is therefore now no condemnation to any man, however he may live." Some teach that you may live in sin, and die impenitent, but it will not matter, for at death that is the end of you, the soul is not immortal, men are only cooking animals. Others tell us that if you die unforgiven it will be a pity, but you will come round in due time, after a purgatorial period; you may take a little longer road, but you will come to the same end in the course of time. In short, it does not matter how you live, or what you do, you will become perfectly happy in the long run; therefore trouble not yourselves with the exploded notion that there is a heaven to be lost or a hell to be feared. The wrath of God and the judgment to come are mere bugaboos, according to the teaching of our new apostles. This is the gospel according to Satan, a gospel which has already ruined thousands of souls, and is now sealing up millions in a stony-hearted unbelief which enables them to sin without fear. Though these evil doctrines have done incalculable mischief in many places so as to almost paralyze the energies of the church, yet some professed Christians, boastful of their "culture," would move heaven and earth to spread these delusions.

Here is Paul's refutation of this doctrine of a general amnesty—"There is therefore *now* no condemnation *to them which are in Christ Jesus."* They would be condemned, every one of them, if it had not been that they are in Christ Jesus, and there is *now* no condemnation to them, solely because they are in Christ Jesus. Their being in Christ Jesus is the great method by which alone they have escaped condemnation. If Paul had only stopped when he had got as far as "there is now no condemnation," every drunkard and swearer and whoremonger would have cried, "Bravo, apostle that is the gospel for us! Now you speak like a man of thought. You have broken loose from the horrible old doctrine of Jesus of Nazareth, and have found for us a 'larger hope.' Hurrah for Paul! He is in advance of his age; he is the man for the times!" But Paul was too honest to court popularity by pandering to man's desire of immunity in sin. He believed the terrible truth that the impenitent sinner is under condemnation, and believing that truth, he spoke it plainly. He did not deal out comfort rashly, catch it who can; but he put it thus—"There is therefore now no condemnation *to them which are in Christ Jesus."*

It is a work of almighty and sovereign grace, to put men into Christ Jesus; by this method they escape condemnation, but by no other. I understand Paul tacitly to tell us that those who are not in Christ Jesus are under condemnation, and this is a terrible truth. "He that believes not shall be damned" is as much the declaration of our Lord Jesus as that other divine sentence, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." As many as believe not in Christ Jesus, and repent not of sin, have be-

fore them at this moment "a fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation."

It is no pleasant task to us to have to speak of this matter, but who are we that we should ask for pleasant tasks? What God has witnessed in Scripture is the sum and substance of what the Lord's servants are to testify to the people. If you are not in Christ Jesus, and are walking after the flesh, you have not escaped from condemnation.

One alarming fact I must not fail to mention here—the word "now" is as applicable to these condemned ones as to those who are freed from condemnation. It would be true if I were to say, "There is therefore *now* condemnation to all them, that are not in Christ Jesus." Hear these words, they are the words of John the tender, who leaned his head on the gentle bosom of his Master—"He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed upon the Son of God." We are said by common talk to be in a state of *probation,* but that is not true; we are all of us in a state of present condemnation, if we are not in Christ Jesus. If you felt the true force of words some of you would start from off your seats at the sound of that sentence, "He that believes not is condemned already." The sentence has gone out against you if you have not believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. *"Condemned already."* Think of it, I pray you. You have made God a liar because you have not believed His testimony concerning His Son, and He, on the other hand, has already judged you and condemned you; and this is the most conclusive of all evidence as to the blackness of your hearts, that you have not believed upon the Son of God. There is condemnation for unbelievers, and that condemnation is now.

I must also add that to as many as believe not in the Lord Jesus Christ, who walk after the flesh and not after the Spirit, there is nothing but condemnation so long as they remain in that state. It is written, "He that believes not shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." That is a terrible text. It is not as though wrath flashed upon you now and then, with the glare of momentary lightning, but a black cloud charged with destruction and tempest continues over your guilty heads till you fly away to Christ. O sirs, I *must* tell you these things. It is as much as my soul is worth to be silent about them. If you think that I find any pleasure in them you misjudge me. I appeal to those who know me—am I morose? Am I without tenderness? No, it is because I love you that I warn you. You shall not perish through any flattering words of mine. I will be clear of your blood. It is idle for me to sew without a needle. There are many new sewing machines, but none that can dispense with the needle. You cannot take silk and sew with that alone, you must have a sharp needle to pierce the fabric, so that the soft silk may follow afterwards. These words of warning are meant to be my needle. May God the Holy Spirit use them as such—to go right through your hearts with the sharp prick of conviction, and so prepare you for the thread of the gospel! "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," but if sin is not forgiven, you are under its condemnation, and if you die in your sins, you will die forever that death which brings with it everlasting woe. If you are not reconciled to God by the death of His Son, you are His enemies, and to be at enmity with God is to be miserable, it cannot be

otherwise. How I wish you would feel this truth, and be led by it to escape from the wrath to come before yonder sun shall again go down! God grant you may. I entreat those of you who know the Lord to pray at this moment silently in your hearts that God will awaken the careless, so that under a sense of well-deserved condemnation they may fly to Jesus, and be reconciled to God.

So much for Paul's refutation of the serpent's gospel.

II. And now, secondly, we have in the text A DESCRIPTION OF THE BELIEVER'S POSITION—*he is "in Christ Jesus."* What does that mean?

I am not going into any deep theological disquisitions; I speak very simply and with a view to practical results. He that believes in the Lord Jesus Christ is in Christ. *By an act of simple dependence* upon Jesus he realizes his position as being in Christ. By nature I am in myself, and in sin, and I am, therefore, condemned, but when the grace of God awakens me up to know my ruined state, then I fly to Christ. I trust alone in His blood and righteousness, and He becomes to me the cleft of the rock, wherein I hide myself from the storm of vengeance justly due to me for my many offenses. The Lord Jesus is typified by the city of refuge. You and I are like the manslayer that was pursued by the avenger, and we are never safe till we pass through the gate of the city of refuge—I mean, till we are completely enclosed by the Lord Jesus. Inside the walls of the city the manslayer was secure, and within our Savior's wounds we are safe. By a humble, simple, undivided dependence upon Him we are placed where we are covered by His merits, and so saved. Noah's dove out yonder, flying over the waste of waters is outside the ark; she will never rest the sole of her foot till Noah puts out his hand and pulls her in unto him; then is she secure, and restful, but not till then. Judge, then, my hearer whether you are in Christ. Do you stand before God on your own footing, or do you rest upon Christ, and find your all in Him? This is not an abstruse problem, but a plain question. Say, is your righteousness one which you have worked out yourself, or is the righteousness of Christ imputed to you? Do you look for salvation by self, or for salvation by Christ? If you can truly say, "I hide in Christ," then this text warbles sweeter music than ever fell from angel lips—"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Inasmuch as you have believed in Him, you are in Him. "He that believes on Him has everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation;" these are our Lord's own dear words; treasure them up in your spirits, and rejoice in them forevermore.

Let us go a little deeper. That which faith thus realizes by coming unto Christ for shelter was true before, in a blessed sense. I understand my text, when it says, *"therefore,"* to refer to all that the apostle had argued before in the previous part of his epistle, but even if I did not think so, I could understand his *therefore,* for I believe that the text carries its own argument within itself. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Why "therefore"? Because they are in Christ Jesus. Therefore there is no condemnation to them because they are in Him who can never be condemned. Though it is quite correct to fetch your argument from the preceding part of the epistle, yet it seems to me

it is a self-contained verse, and carries its argument within itself. If you are in Christ, there is for that very reason no condemnation in you.

Still, there are other arguments near at hand. Will you at home kindly read the fifth chapter, and you will perceive that believers are in Christ *as their federal head*. By one transgression Adam introduced death into the race, "and so death passed upon all men, for that all had sinned," but Jesus came to bring life by His obedience. "As by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." By Christ's righteous life and substitutionary death, justification has come upon all who are in Him. As you were in Adam you sinned, and therefore you fell, and were condemned, and as you were in Christ through the divine covenant of grace, and Christ fulfilled the law for you, you are justified in Him. His righteousness and sacrifice have availed for you; "There is therefore now no condemnation." Because we are viewed by divine justice as under the headship of the perfect Man, who, on our behalf, has magnified the law and made it honorable, therefore we are well-pleasing unto God. We are accepted in the Beloved. It is written, "By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous," and we enjoy the fulfillment of that promise. Will the Lord condemn those whom He has made righteous? Will He do despite to the righteousness of His own Son wherewith we are covered?

But Paul goes on to show in the sixth chapter that the saints of God are united to Christ *by a living and vital union*. He says of us, "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. For, if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection." We are actually one with Christ by living experience. Beloved, if it is so, that we died in Christ, then we shall not be put to death again for the sin for which we have already died in Him. If we have received a new life in Christ's resurrection, then that promise is true, "Because I live, you shall live also," and for that reason we cannot be condemned, for condemnation involves death. We, beloved, who are in Christ, are justified because Christ is justified by His rising from the dead, and by His taking the position of honor and glory at the right hand of God. He is our representative, and we are one with Him, and what He is that are we. Our union is inseparable, and therefore our condemnation is impossible.

In the seventh chapter the apostle mentions our *mystical union* with Christ under the figure of a marriage union—"Wherefore, my brethren, you also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that you should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." Shall the spouse of Christ be condemned with the world? "Christ loved His church, and gave Himself for it," shall she be condemned despite His death? This union with Christ is often mentioned in Scripture under the form of a marriage, but it is also described under other symbols: we are one with Christ as a branch is one with the vine, as a stone is one with the foundation, and especially as a member of the body is one with the head. Now it is not possible if I am a member of Christ that I should be under condemnation until He is

condemned. Is my head acquitted? Then my hand is acquitted. So long as a man's head is above water you cannot drown his feet, and as long as Christ, the Head of the mystical body, rises above the torrent of condemnation, there is no condemning even the least and feeblest member of His body.

It has been my joy to preach to you for many years the blessed doctrine of *substitution*. Now, if Jesus became our Surety and our Substitute, and suffered in our stead, it is an inevitable consequence that we cannot suffer punishment, and that the sin laid upon our surety cannot now be laid upon us. If our debt was paid, it was paid, and there is an end of it; a second payment cannot be demanded. You know the story; the very excellent story, which I think was first told by Mr. Moody, of the man who in the French war was drawn for a soldier, but a friend stepped in, and was accepted as his substitute. That substitute served in the war till he was slain in battle. The man for whom he served was drawn a second time, but he declined to serve. He appeared before the court, and pleaded that he had been drawn once, had served in the war by his substitute, and must now be regarded as dead, because his representative had been killed. He pleaded that his substitute's service was practically his service, and it is said that the law allowed his plea. Assuredly it is according to divine equity even if it is not according to human law. No criminal can be hanged a second time, one death is all the law requires; believers died in Christ unto sin once, and now they penally die no more. Our condemnation has spent itself upon our gracious representative. The full vials of divine wrath against sin have been poured upon the head of the great Shepherd that His sheep might go free, and therein is our joy, our comfort, our security. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Bow your heads in worship, you that are in Him. Render an ascription of blessing and praise and glory unto Him who took you unto Himself, and then bore your sins in His own body on the tree, so that you might be delivered from condemnation through His sufferings and death.

Thus, by faith we are in Christ Jesus, and the assurance of our safety is enlarged by a consideration of His federal headship, our vital oneness with Him, our mystical marriage to Him, and His finished work on our behalf.

III. Now we come to the third point, upon which we shall speak briefly, because this part of my text is not a true portion of Holy Scripture. We have before us in this verse A DESCRIPTION OF THE BELIEVER'S WALK—*"who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."* You who have the Revised New Testament will kindly look at it. Do you see this sentence there? To your surprise it is omitted, and very rightly so. The most learned men assure us that it is no part of the original text. I cannot just now go into the reasons for this conclusion, but they are very good and solid. The oldest copies are without it, the versions do not sustain it, and the fathers who quoted abundance of Scripture do not quote this sentence. We must admit that it is a gloss inserted in later copies by some penman that was wise enough in his own conceit to think that he could mend the Bible.

Do you ask me, "How did it get into the text?" Remember that there always have been many divines who have been afraid of the doctrine of free justification. They have been half afraid that sinners should get comfort by faith, and should not see the necessity of a change of life. They have questioned the wisdom of ascribing salvation wholly to a man's being in Christ, and so they have guarded the more open passages whenever they have seen a chance of so doing. In so doing they stated truth, but they stated it out of season, and from motives which were unsound. Probably the sentence now before us was put in and allowed to remain, by general consent, in order that the great truth of the non-condemnation of those who are in Christ Jesus might be guarded from that Antinomian tendency which would separate faith from good works. But the fear was groundless, and the tampering with Scripture was unjustifiable. We are greatly obliged to our revisers for leaving out the sentence, since it should not be there, and without it the doctrine of justification in Christ is made clearer than in the Authorized Version. In the last chapter of the Book of Revelation, service of the same kind is most properly rendered, for instead of, "Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life," the Revisers have given us a more accurate text, "Blessed are they that wash their robes." In these two cases we have proof that the more nearly the text of Scripture is restored to its original purity, the more clearly will the doctrines of grace be set forth in it. The more we get back to true Scripture, the more shall we escape all interference with the complete and perfect salvation which comes of our being in Christ. We are not justified by the manner of our walk, but by our being in Christ Jesus.

Again, you ask me, "Where did the man who made the gloss get his words from? The words are so good and true that they read like inspiration." Just so. The words are borrowed from the fourth verse. The Holy Spirit meant to say this very thing a little further on, in its proper place, but the good men who felt it right to tamper a little with the document must necessarily make Him say it sooner, and therefore they copied the last sentence of the fourth verse and placed it here—"who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Truly, there was not much hurt done, for the words are true, but no man has a right to add to Holy Scripture or take from it, and I fear that many may have been brought into needless bondage by this sentence being inserted where the Holy Spirit did not place it. Beloved, when you desire to know your state, be content with this question—"Am I in Christ?" And if you can answer it from your heart, let it satisfy you, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Others may better judge your walk than you can judge it yourself, but your union with Christ is best known to yourself.

Still, the interpolated sentence is true; the man who is in Christ Jesus does not walk after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Suppose me to be now preaching upon verse four.

We notice that such a man in Christ has received the Holy Spirit, for he walks according to His guidance. All honor and worship be unto the third most blessed Person of the Divine Trinity, that He should deign to

dwell in our poor hearts and sanctify our spirits to Himself. Every believer has the Holy Spirit.

Secondly, every believer has been quickened into the possession of a new nature called *the spirit*. He has a right spirit within him, a new spirit, a holy spirit—the spirit of life in Christ Jesus. He is a new creature; he is no longer in the flesh, but in the spirit, and so he has become a spiritual man.

Observe carefully that the flesh is there; he does not walk after it, but it is there. It is there, striving and warring, vexing and grieving, and it will be there till he is taken up into heaven. It is there as an alien and detested force, and not there so as to have dominion over him. He does not walk after it, nor practically obey it. He does not accept it as his guide, nor allow it to drive him into rebellion. The man who is in Christ Jesus commits himself to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

What a wonderful power is that which dwells in every believer, checking him when he would do wrong, encouraging him to do right, leading him in the paths of righteousness for Christ's name's sake! Happy men to have such a Conductor!

Judge you yourselves in which way you are walking. Are you walking according to the flesh? Do you do whatever you like to do? Do you believe whatever you like to believe? Do you say to yourself, "I am not going to be limited by Scripture, nor by rules of holiness; these are too old-fashioned and strait-laced for me"? Then, you walk after the flesh; you are your own guide, your own wisdom and righteousness, and vain desires conduct you where they will. You are blind, and your guide is blind, and you will soon fall into the ditch. You think not so, but time will prove my words.

Blessed is that man who no longer follows the devices and desires of his own heart, and no longer trusts to his own understanding. Blessed is he who bows his mind to the mind of God. My own desire is not to believe what I may imagine, or invent, or think out, but I would believe what the Lord God has taught us in the inspired Scriptures. I submit myself to the guidance of the Spirit of God in connection with the written word. This is safe walking.

Combine the two descriptive clauses of my text. On the one hand look to Christ alone, and abide in Him, and then, on the other hand, look for the guidance of the Holy Spirit who is to be in you. By faith we are in Christ, and the Holy Spirit is in us. All who can go with me in this are delivered from condemnation, for how shall he be condemned that is in Christ? And how shall he be condemned that has the Holy Spirit within him? "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

IV. And so I come, in closing, to notice THE ABSOLUTION OF THE BELIEVER, "There is therefore now *no condemnation* to them which are in Christ Jesus." What a grand sentence! I call upon you to notice it. You may have seen a well-painted picture called "Waiting for the Verdict." What interest is displayed on every face! What fear and trembling upon the countenance of the prisoner! In his wife and the friends around him what anxiety is seen! "Waiting for the Verdict" is a sad picture, but what another might be drawn of, "The Favorable Verdict Received." The pris-

oner is acquitted! Oh what joy! It is not possible to bring in a verdict of "Not Guilty" for you and for me, for we are undoubtedly guilty, but yet it is possible by the processes of substitution and divine grace to bring in a just verdict by which it is witnessed that "There is now no condemnation."

Notice, first, that this is *a bold speech*. "There is no condemnation." "But you said just now that the thing you would not that you did." Yes, but there is no condemnation. The same lips which made such a humble confession and revealed such a troublesome experience now assert positively and joyfully "There is no condemnation." Free grace makes men speak bravely when their faith has a clear view of Jesus.

Though it is a bold assertion, *it is proven*. Whenever a man has a "therefore" at the back of what he has to say, he may say it without stammering. "There is *therefore* now no condemnation." Paul is always a reasoner and a great logician. Here he seems to declare his certainty. "What I say I can prove. There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, and I can prove it to a demonstration." Brethren, the demonstrations of mathematics are not more clear and certain than the inference that if we are in Christ, and Christ died in our stead, there can be no condemnation for us. Cool calculation may be used here. This is no raving of fanaticism, but the unquestionable deduction of fair argument—if Jesus was condemned in my stead, there can be no condemnation for me.

What *a broad assertion* it is!—"There is *no* condemnation."—No condemnation on account of original sin, though the believer was an heir of wrath even as others. No condemnation for actual sin, though he greatly transgressed and came far short of the glory of God. He is in Christ, and there is no condemnation of any sort possible to him. No condemnation, no, though he humbles himself and weeps and groans before God because in thought and word and deed he still offends. No condemnation, though he feels that he has not yet attained to the excellence which he labors after.

The devil says there is condemnation, and therefore he accuses us day and night. He was a liar from the beginning, and the father of lies! Conscience sometimes censures us, for even conscience itself needs to be enlightened and to be purged from dead works. But when conscience understands the plan of free grace and sees things in the light of truth, it also bears witness, and the Spirit of God bears witness with it, that we are the children of God. "No," says the apostle, "there is no condemnation." What a broad sweep these words take! If you read to the end of the chapter you see how unreserved Paul was in his statement, for there he mounts the high horse, and cries, "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." Paul makes all heaven and earth and hell to ring with his daring challenge, "Who is he that condemns?" In the broadest imaginable terms he declares that there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. Where there is no condemnation there is no wrath, no guilt, no punishment. On the contrary, there is acceptance, favor, and bliss.

This, beloved, is *an abiding statement,* a standing assertion. It was true of me thirty years ago as a believer, and it is just as true of me now. It was true in Paul's day, and though centuries have passed away, it is just as true at this moment. If you are in Christ Jesus there is *now* no condemnation. That living *now* goes singing down the centuries; in life, in death, in time, in eternity, there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.

What *a joyful statement* it is! It makes one laugh for joy of heart. If you have ever been burdened with a sense of sin you will know the sweetness of the text. You that are not sinners, you good respectable people who are sailing to heaven in your own ship, there is nothing in it for you. Gospel assurances are not for you; you would not prize them, and therefore you have neither part nor lot in them. For, Jesus Christ came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. But you that have been whipped of the devil and dragged at the heels of your sins, you that have been broken and crushed as in a mortar, with a pestle, till you are ground fine under the hand of conviction, you are the people that will leap for joy as you hear the silver trumpet ring out the note of "no condemnation." Come, let us be glad. Let us rejoice together because there is now no condemnation to us. When Giant Despair's head was cut off, Mr. Bunyan says that the pilgrims danced, and well they might. Mr. Despondency and Miss Much-Afraid took a turn, and even Ready-to-Halt with his crutches must necessarily join in. I guarantee you he footed it well. When he saw the monster's head upon the pole he could not help being merry. This text sticks the giant's head up on the pole for us. "There is therefore now no condemnation." Oh for the loud sounding cymbals! Now for the maidens and their timbrels. Let us have holy merriment over this. Poor prodigal sinners have fled to Jesus and hidden in Him, and there is now no condemnation to them. Poverty? Yes, but no condemnation. Depression of spirit? Yes, sometimes, but no condemnation. Infirmities and weaknesses, and things to grieve over? Yes, plenty of them, but no condemnation. "O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!"

"All very well," says one, "but we would like something practical." Practical! This is *the most practical thing that ever was,* because the moment a man receives this assurance into his soul his heart is won to his loving Lord, and the neck of his sinfulness is broken with a blow. There never was, yes, never can be, a man that has realized by the witness of the Holy Spirit that he is free from condemnation who will ever go to love sin and live in it. While I am condemned I say, "Well, if I am to be sent to hell for my sin I may as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb, and therefore I will continue in sin, and get what pleasure I can out of it." Do you not know how the guilty man often feels, that since there is no hope for him, he may as well harden his heart, and enjoy himself? A mouse was caught in a trap, the other day, by its tail, and the poor creature went on eating the cheese. Many men are doing the same; they know that they are guilty, and they dread their punishment, but they go on nibbling at their beloved sins. They remind me of the soldier in the old classic story. The army marched through a certain country, and the commander-in-chief ordered that there should be no plundering, not a man must touch a

bunch of grapes in going through the vineyards, or he should die for his disobedience. One soldier, tempted by a bunch of grapes, plucked it, and began to eat it. He was brought before the captain, who declared that the law must be carried out, and the thief must die. He was taken out to die, and though he knew his head would be cut off, he went on eating the grapes as he walked along. A comrade wondered that he should do this, but the condemned man answered that no one ought to grudge him his grapes, for they cost him dear enough.

Such are the bravados of sinners. The breasts of wicked men are steeled rather than softened by a sense of condemnation, but once let the Holy Spirit remove the burden of their guilt, and they will be dissolved by love. Free pardon is a great conqueror. The love of Jesus soon makes men turn from sin with burning hatred. Forgiving love is a main instrument in transforming men from rebels into friends. You may preach the demands of the law as long as you like, and tell men that they must merit salvation, and you will only make them worse and worse. But go and proclaim the dying love of Jesus; tell them that free grace reigns, and that undeserved mercy saves the sinner through faith in Christ, and that the moment he believes in Jesus there is no condemnation to him, and you shall see miracles accomplished. In the experience of free grace you have something to work upon, you have put a new affection into the man, and it will drive out his base affections. A life force is communicated to him, which will cause him to forsake his old ways and turn unto the Lord. "How do you know?" says one. I know by experience and by observation. I could point you out many specimens of the power of divine grace in this assembly, but I will not do so. If I were to say, "Brothers and sisters, you who once lived in sin but have escaped from it through free grace and dying love, stand up!" What an exceedingly great army would start to their feet! Yes, we know it is true, for the lips of many witnesses declare it; they say, "Jesus saved us from the worst of sins, and made us His friends by His free grace, and now we rejoice to love and serve Him." So shall it be with you, dear hearer, if you also believe in Jesus. The text shall be true of you also—"There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." God bless you! Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
ROMANS 7:14-25; 8:1-18.**

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—917, 329, 397.

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

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

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

THE ABIDING OF THE SPIRIT THE GLORY OF THE CHURCH
NO. 1918

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 5, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, says the Lord; and be strong, O Joshua, Son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all you people of the land, says the Lord, and work: for I am with you, says the Lord of hosts: according to the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so My spirit remains among you: fear you not."
Haggai 2:4, 5.

SATAN is always doing his utmost to stop the work of God. He hindered these Jews from building the temple, and today he endeavors to hinder the people of God from spreading the gospel. A spiritual temple is to be built for the Most High, and if by any means the evil one can delay its uprising he will stop at nothing; if he can take us off from working with faith and courage for the glory of God he will be sure to do it. He is very cunning, and knows how to change his argument and yet keep to his design; he little cares how he works, so long as he can hurt the cause of God. In the case of the Jewish people on their return from captivity he sought to prevent the building of the temple by making them selfish and worldly, so that every man was eager to build his own house, and cared nothing for the house of the Lord. Each family pleaded its own urgent needs. In returning to a long-deserted and neglected land, much had to be done to make up for lost time and to provide suitably for itself every family needed all its exertions. They carried this thrift and self-providing to a great extreme, and secured for themselves luxuries, while the foundations of the temple which had been laid years before remained as they were, or became still more thickly covered up with rubbish. The people could not be made to bestir themselves to build a house of God, for they answered to every exhortation, "The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built." A more convenient season was always looming in the future, but it never came. Just now it was too hot, further on it was too cold, at one time the wet season was just setting in, and it was of no use to begin, and soon after the fair weather required that they should be in their own fields. Like some in our day, they saw to themselves first, and God's turn was very long in coming, hence the prophet cried, "Is it time for you, O you, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?"

By the mouth of His servant, Haggai stern rebukes were uttered, and the whole people were awakened. We read in verse twelve of the first chapter, "Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of

Josedech, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the Lord their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the Lord their God had sent him, and the people did fear before the Lord." All hands were put to the work; course after course of stone began to rise, and then another stumbling block was thrown in the way of the workers. The older folks remarked that this was a very small affair compared with the temple of Solomon, of which their fathers had told them, in fact, their rising building was nothing at all, and not worthy to be called a temple. The prophet describes the feeling in the verse which precedes our text. "Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? And how do you see it now? Is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?" Feeling that their work would be very poor and insignificant, the people had little heart to go on. Being discouraged by the humiliating contrast, they began to be slack, and as they were quite willing to accept any excuse, and here was an excuse ready-made for them, they would soon have been at a standstill had not the prophet met the wiles of the arch-enemy with another word from the Lord. Nothing so confounds the evil one as the voice of the Eternal. Our Lord Himself defeated Satan by the word of the Lord, and the prophet Haggai did the same. The subtle craft of the enemy is defeated by the wisdom of the Most High, which reveals itself in plain words of honest statement. The Lord cuts the knots which bind His people, and sets them at liberty to do His will. He did this by assuring them that He was with them. Twice the voice was heard—*"I am with you, says the Lord of hosts."* They were also assured that what they built was accepted, and that the Lord meant to fill the new house with glory; yes, He meant to light it up with a glory greater than that which honored the temple of Solomon. They were not spending their strength for nothing, but were laboring with divine help and favor. Thus they were encouraged to put their shoulders to the work; the walls rose in due order, and God was glorified in the building up of His Zion.

The present times are, in many respects, similar to those of Haggai. History certainly repeats itself within the church of God as well as outside of it, and therefore the messages of God need to be repeated also. The words of some almost-forgotten prophet may be re-delivered by the watchman of the Lord in these present days, and be a timely word for the present emergency. We are not free from the worldliness which puts self first and God nowhere, otherwise our various enterprises would be more abundantly supplied with the silver and the gold which are the Lord's, but which even professing Christians reserve for themselves. When this selfish greed is conquered then comes in a timorous depression. Among those who have escaped from worldliness there is apt to be too much despondency, and men labor feebly as for a cause which is doomed to failure. This last evil must be cured. I pray that our text may this morning flame from the Lord's own mouth with all the fire which once blazed about it. May faint hearts be encouraged and drowsy spirits be awakened, as we hear the Lord say, *"My Spirit remains among you: fear you not."*

I shall enter fully upon the subject, by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, by calling your attention to *discouragement forbidden.* Then I shall speak of *encouragement imparted,* and having done so, I shall linger with

this blessed text, which overflows with comfort, and shall speak, in the third place, of *encouragement further applied*. Oh that our Lord, who knows how to speak a word in season to him that is weary, may cheer the hearts of seekers by what shall be spoken under this last head of discourse!

I. To begin with, here is DISCOURAGEMENT FORBIDDEN. Discouragement comes readily enough to us poor mortals who are occupied in the work of God, seeing it is a work of faith, a work of difficulty, a work above our capacity, and a work much opposed.

Discouragement is very natural; it is a native of the soil of manhood. To believe is supernatural; faith is the work of the Spirit of God; to doubt is natural to fallen men, for we have within us an evil heart of unbelief. It is abominably wicked, I grant you, but still it is natural, because of the downward tendency of our depraved hearts. Discouragement towards good things is a weed that grows without sowing. To be faint-hearted and downcast happens to some of us when we are half drowned in this heavy atmosphere, and it also visits us on the wings of the east wind. It takes little to make some hands hang down, a word or a look will do it. I do not, therefore, excuse it, but rather I condemn myself for having a nature prone to such evil.

Discouragement may come and does come to us, as it did to these people, from a consideration of the great things which God deserves at our hands, and the small things which we are able to render. When in Haggai's days the people thought of Jehovah and of a temple for Him, and then looked upon the narrow space which had been enclosed, and the common stones which had been laid for foundations, they were ashamed. Where were those hewn stones and costly stones which, of old, Solomon brought from afar? They said within themselves, "This house is unworthy of Jehovah, what do we by laboring thus?" Have you not felt the depressing weight of what is so surely true? Brethren, all that we do is little for our God, far too little for Him that loved us and gave Himself for us. For Him, that poured out His soul unto death on our behalf the most splendid service, the most heroic self-denial, are all too little; and we feel it is so. Alabaster boxes of precious ointment are too lowly a gift. It does not occur to our fervent spirit to imagine that there can be any waste when our best boxes are broken and the perfume is poured out lavishly for Him. What we do fear is that our alabaster boxes are too few, and that our ointment is not precious enough. When we have done our utmost in declaring the glory of Jesus, we have felt that words are too poor and mean to set forth our adorable Lord. When we have prayed for His kingdom we have been disgusted with our own prayers, and all the efforts we have put forth in connection with any part of His service have seemed too few, too feeble for us to hope for acceptance. Thus have we been discouraged. The enemy has worked upon us by this means, yet he has made us argue very wrongly. Because we could not do much, we have half resolved to do nothing! Because what we did was so poor, we were inclined to quit the work altogether! This is evidently absurd and wicked. The enemy can use humility for his purpose as well as pride. Whether he makes us think too much or too little of our work, it is all the same to him so long as he can get us off from it.

It is significant that the man with one talent went and hid his Lord's money in the earth. He knew that it was but one, and for that reason he was the less afraid to bury it. Perhaps he argued that the interest on one talent could never come to much, and would never be noticed side by side with the result of five or ten talents, and he might as well bring nothing at all to his Lord as bring so little. Perhaps he might not have wrapped it up if it had not been so small that a napkin could cover it. The smallness of our gifts may be a temptation to us. We are consciously so weak and so insignificant, compared with the great God and His great cause, that we are discouraged, and think it vain to attempt anything.

Moreover, the enemy contrasts our work with that of others, and with that of those who have gone before us. We are doing so little as compared with other people, therefore let us give up. We cannot build like Solomon; therefore let us not build at all. Yet, brethren, there is a falsehood in all this, for in truth, nothing is worthy of God. The great works of others and even the amazing productions of Solomon, all fell short of His glory. What house could man build for God? What are cedar, and marble, and gold as compared with the glory of the Most High? Though the house was "exceedingly magnificent," yet the Lord God had of old dwelt within curtains, and never was His worship more glorious than within the tent of badgers' skins, indeed, as soon as the great house was built, true religion declined. What of all human work can be worthy of the Lord? Our little labors do but share the insignificance of greater things, and therefore we ought not to withhold them, yet here is the temptation from which we must pray to be delivered.

The tendency to depreciate the present because of the glories of the past is also injurious. The old people looked back to the days of the former temple, even as we are apt to look upon the times of the great preachers of the past. What work was done in those past days! What Sabbaths were enjoyed then! What converts were added to the church! What days of refreshing were then vouchsafed! Everything has declined, decreased, degenerated! As for the former days, they beheld a race of giants, who are now succeeded by pigmies. We look at one of these great men, and cry—

"Why, man, he does bestride the narrow world
Like a Colossus; and we petty men
Walk under his huge legs, and peep about
To find ourselves dishonorable graves."

But, brethren, we must not allow this sense of littleness to hamper us, for God can bless our littleness, and use it for His glory. I notice that the great men of the past thought of themselves even as we think of ourselves. Certainly they were not more self-confident than we are. I find in the story of the brave days of old the same confessions and the same lamentations which we utter now. It is true that in spiritual strength we are not what our fathers were; I fear that Puritan holiness and truthfulness of doctrine are dying out, while adherence to principle is far from common, but our fathers had also faults and follies to mourn over, and they did mourn over them most sincerely. Instead of being discouraged because what we do is unworthy of God, and insignificant compared with what was done by others, let us gather up our strength to reform our er-

rors, and reach to higher attainments. Let us throw our heart and soul into the work of the Lord, and yet do something more nearly in accordance with our highest ideal of what our God deserves of us. Let us excel our ancestors. Let us aspire to be even godlier, more conscientious, and sounder in the faith than they were, for the Spirit of God remains with us.

Brethren, it is clear that discouragement can be produced by these reasons, and yet they are a mere sample of a host of arguments which work in the same direction, therefore *discouragement is very common*. Haggai was sent to speak to Zerubbabel, the governor, and to Joshua, the high priest, and to all the remnant of the people. The great man may become discouraged, he that leads the van has his fainting fits, even Elijah cries, "Let me die!" The consecrated servant of God whose life is a priesthood is apt to grow discouraged, too; standing at God's altar, he sometimes trembles for the ark of the Lord. The multitudes of the people are all too apt to suffer from panic, and to flee at the sight of the enemy. How many are they who say, "The old truth cannot succeed, the cause of orthodoxy is desperate, we had better yield to the modern spirit"! This faint-heartedness is so common that it has been the plague of Israel from her first day until now. They were discouraged at the Red Sea, at the mere rattling of Pharaoh's chariots; they were discouraged when they found no water; they were discouraged when they had eaten up the bread which they brought out of Egypt; they were discouraged when they heard of the giants, and of the cities walled to heaven. I need not lengthen the wretched catalog. What has cowardice not done? The fearful and unbelieving have brought terrible disasters upon our camps. Discouragement is the national epidemic of our Israel. "Being armed and carrying bows" we turn back in the day of battle. This is as common among Christians as consumption among the inhabitants of this foggy island. Oh that God would save us all from distrust, and cause us to quit ourselves like men!

Wherever discouragement comes in it is dreadfully weakening. I am sure it is weakening, because the prophet was bidden to say three times to the governor, high priest, and people, "Be strong." This proves that they had become weak. Being discouraged, their hands hung down, and their knees were feeble. Faith girds us with omnipotence, but unbelief makes everything hang loose and limp about us. Distrust and you will fail in everything; believe, and according to your faith so shall it be unto you. To lead a discouraged people to the Holy War is as difficult as for Xerxes' commanders to conduct the Persian troops to battle against the Greeks. The vassals of the great king were driven to the conflict by whips and sticks, for they were afraid to fight; do you wonder that they were defeated? A church that needs constant exhorting and compelling accomplishes nothing. The Greeks had no need of blows and threats, for each man was a lion, and courted the encounter, however great the odds against him. Each Spartan fought *con amore;* he was never more at home than when contending for the altars and the hearths of his country. We want Christian men of this same sort, who have faith in their principles, faith in the doctrines of grace, faith in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, and who therefore contend earnestly for the faith in

these days when piety is mocked from the pulpit, and the gospel is sneered at by professional preachers. We need men who love the truth, to whom it is dear as their lives, men into whose hearts the old doctrine is burned by the hand of God's Spirit through a deep experience of its necessity and of its power. We need no more of those who will parrot what they are taught, but we want men who will speak what they know. Oh, for a troop of men like John Knox, heroes of the martyr and covenanter stock! Then would Jehovah of hosts have a people to serve Him who would be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

Discouragement not only weakens men, but *it takes them off from the service of God*. It is significant that the prophet said to them, "Be strong, all you people of the land, says the Lord, *and work."* They had ceased to build, they had begun to talk and argue, but they had laid down the trowel. They were extremely wise in their observations, and criticisms, and prophecies, but the walls did not rise. One person knew exactly how big the former temple was, another declared that their present architect was not up to the mark, and that the structure was not built in a scientific manner; one objected to this, and another to that, but everybody was wiser than all the rest, and sneered at old-fashioned ways. It is always so when we are discouraged; we cease from the work of the Lord, and waste time in talk and nonsensical refinements. May the Lord take away discouragement from any of you who now suffer from it! I suppose some of you do feel it, for at times it creeps over my heart and makes me go with heaviness to my work. I believe that God's truth will come to the front yet, but it has many adversaries today. All sorts of unbeliefs are being hatched out from under the wings of "modern thought." The gospel seems to be regarded as a nose of wax, to be altered and shaped by every man who wishes to show his superior skill. Nor is it in doctrine alone, but in practice also, that the times are out of joint. Separateness from the world, and holy living, are to give place to gaiety and theater-going. To follow Christ fully has gone out of fashion with many of those from whom we once hoped better things. Yet are there some who waver not, some who are willing to be in the right with two or three. For my own part, even should I find none around me of the same mind, I shall not budge an inch from the old truth, nor sweat a hair for fear of its overthrow, but I shall abide confident that the eternal God, whose truth we know and hold, will vindicate Himself before long, and turn the wisdom of the world into babble, and its boasting into confusion. Blessed is the man who shall be able to stand fast by his God in these evil days. Let us not in any wise be discouraged. "Be strong; be strong; be strong," sounds as a threefold voice from the triune God. "Fear not" comes as a sweet cordial to the faint, therefore let no man's heart fail him. Thus much about the discouragement.

II. Secondly, here is THE ENCOURAGEMENT IMPARTED, which is the grand part of our text. "According to the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so My spirit remains among you: fear you not." God remembers His covenant and stands to His ancient promises. When the people came out of Egypt the Lord was with them by His Spirit, hence He spoke to them by Moses, and through Moses He guided, and judged, and taught them. He was with them also by His Spirit in inspir-

ing Bezaleel and Aholiab, as to the works of art which adorned the tabernacle. God always finds workmen for His work, and by His Spirit fits them for it. The Spirit of God rested upon the elders who were ordained to relieve Moses of his great burden. The Lord was also with His people in the fiery cloudy pillar which was conspicuous in the midst of the camp. His presence was their glory and their defense. This is a type of the presence of the Spirit with the church. At the present day, if we hold the truth of God, if we live in obedience to His holy commands, if we are spiritually minded, if we cry unto God in believing prayer, if we have faith in His covenant and in His Son, the Holy Spirit abides among us. The Holy Spirit descended upon the church at Pentecost, and He has never gone back again; there is no record of the Spirit's return to heaven. He will abide with the true church forevermore. This is our hope for the present struggle. The Spirit of God remains with us.

To what end, my brethren, is this Spirit with us? Let us think of this, that we may be encouraged at this time. The Spirit of God remains among you *to aid and assist the ministry which He has already given.* Oh, that the prayers of God's people would always go up for God's ministers that they may speak with a divine power and influence which none shall be able to deny! We look too much for clever men, we seek out fluent and flowery speakers, we sigh for men cultured and trained in all the knowledge of the heathen, no, but if we sought more for anointing, for divine authority, and for that power which does hedge about the man of God, how much wiser would we be! Oh, that all of us who profess to preach the gospel would learn to speak in entire dependence upon the direction of the Holy Spirit, not daring to utter our own words, but even trembling lest we should do so, and committing ourselves to that secret influence without which nothing will be powerful upon the conscience or converting to the heart. Know you not the difference between the power that comes of human oratory, and that which comes by the divine energy which speaks so to the heart that men cannot resist it? We have forgotten this too much. It is better to speak six words in the power of the Holy Spirit than to preach seventy years of sermons without the Spirit. He who rested on those who have gone to their reward in heaven can rest this day upon our ministers and bless our evangelists, if we will but seek it of Him. Let us cease to grieve the Spirit of God, and look to Him for help to the faithful ministers who are yet spared to us.

This same Spirit who of old gave to His church eminent teachers *can raise up other and more useful men.* The other day, a brother from Wales told me of the great men he remembered, he said that he had never heard such a one as Christmas Evans, who surpassed all men when he was in the *hwyl.* I asked him if he knew another Welsh minister who preached like Christmas Evans. "No," he said, "we have no such man in Wales in our days." So in England we have neither Wesley nor Whitefield, nor any of their order, yet, as with God is the residue of the Spirit, He can fetch out from some chimney-corner another Christmas Evans, or find in our Sunday school another George Whitefield, who shall declare the gospel with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. Let us never fear for the future, or despair for the present, since the Spirit of God remains with us. What if the growing error of the age should have silenced the

last tongue that speaks out the old gospel; let not faith be weakened. I hear the tramp of legions of soldiers of the cross. I hear the clarion voices of hosts of preachers. "The Lord gave the word; great was the company of those that published it." Have faith in God through our Lord Jesus Christ! When He ascended on high He led captivity captive, and received gifts for men. He then gave apostles, teachers, preachers, and evangelists, and He can do the same again. Let us fall back upon the eternal God, and never be discouraged for an instant.

Nor is this all. The Holy Spirit being with us, *He can move the whole church to exercise its varied ministries*. This is one of the things we want very much—that every member of the church should recognize that he is ordained to service. Everyone in Christ, man or woman, has some testimony to bear, some warning to give, some deed to do in the name of the Holy Child Jesus, and if the Spirit of God is poured out upon our young men and our maidens, each one will be awakened to energetic service. Both small and great will be in earnest, and the result upon the slumbering masses of our population will surprise us all. Sometimes we lament that the churches are so dull. There is an old proverb which says of So-and-So, that he was "as sound asleep as a church." I suppose there is nothing that can sleep so soundly as a church. But yet the Spirit of God still remains, and therefore churches go to be awakened. I mean that not only in part but as a whole, a church may be quickened. The dullest professor, the most slovenly believer, the most captious and useless member of a church, may yet be turned to good account. I see them like a stack of twigs, piled up, dead, and dry. Oh for the fire! We will have a blaze out of them yet.

Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove, brood over the dark, disordered church as once You did over chaos, and order shall come out of confusion, and the darkness shall fly before the light. Only let the Spirit be with us, and we have all that is wanted for victory. Give us His presence, and everything else will come in its due season for the profitable service of the entire church.

If the Spirit is with us, there will come multitudinous conversions. We cannot get at "the lapsed masses," as they are pedantically called. We cannot stir the crass infidelity of the present age, no, *we* cannot, but *He* can. All things are possible with God. If you walk down to our bridges at a certain hour of the day you will see barges and vessels lying in the mud, and all the king's horses and all the king's men cannot stir them. Wait until the tide comes in, and they will walk the water like things of life. The living flood accomplishes at once what no mortals can do. And so, today our churches cannot stir. What shall we do? Oh, that the Holy Spirit would come with a flood tide of His benign influences, as He will if we will but believe in Him, as He must if we will but cry unto Him, as He shall if we will cease to grieve Him. Everything will be even as the saints desire when the Lord of saints is with us. The hope of the continuance and increase of the church lies in the remaining of the Spirit with us. The hope of the salvation of London lies in the wonder-working Spirit. Let us bow our heads and worship the omnipotent Spirit who deigns to work in us, by us, and with us.

Then, brethren, if this should happen—and I see not why it should not—then we may expect to see *the church put on her beautiful garments,* then shall she begin to clear herself of the errors which now defile her, then shall she press to her bosom the truths which she now begins to forget, then will she go back to the pure fountain of inspiration and drink from the Scriptures of truth, and then out of the midst of her shall flow no turbid streams, but rivers of living water. If the Holy Spirit will work among us we shall rejoice in the Lord and glory in the name of our God.

When once the Spirit of God puts forth His might all other things will be in accord with Him. Notice that in the rest of the chapter—which I shall read now, not as relating to that temple at all, but to the church of God—there is great comfort given to us. If the Holy Spirit is once given, then we may expect providence to cooperate with the church of God. Read verse six, "Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake heaven and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land. I will shake all nations." Great commotions will cooperate with the Holy Spirit. We may expect that God will work for His people in an extraordinary fashion if they will but be faithful to Him. Empires will collapse, and times will change, for the truth's sake. Expect the unexpected, reckon upon that which is unlikely, if it is necessary for the growth of the kingdom. Of old the earth helped the woman when the dragon opened his mouth to drown her with the floods that he cast forth, unexpected help shall come to us when affairs are at their worst.

Especially I do look for a shaking among the hosts of unbelief. How often did the Lord of old rout His enemies without His Israel drawing sword! The watchword was, "Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord." The adversaries of old fell out among themselves, and they will do so again. When Cadmus slew the dragon with his javelin, he was bidden to sow its teeth in the earth. When he did so, according to the classic fable, he saw rising out of the ground nodding plumes, and crested helmets, and broad shoulders of armed men. Up from the earth there sprang a host of warriors, but Cadmus needed not to flee, for the moment they found their feet, these children of the dragon fell upon each other till scarcely one was left. Error, like Saturn, devours its own children. Those that fight against the Lord of hosts are not agreed among themselves, they shall sheathe their swords in each other's bosoms.

I saw in the night vision the sea, the deep and broad sea of truth, flashing with its silver waves. Lo, a black horse came out of the darkness and went down to the deep, threatening to drink it dry. I saw him stand there drinking and swelling as he drank. In his pride he trusted that he could snuff up Jordan at a draught. I stood by and saw him drink and then plunge further into the sea, to drink still more. Again he plunged in with fury, and soon he lost his footing, and I saw him no more, for the deep had swallowed *him* that boasted that he would swallow *it.* Rest assured that every black horse of error that comes forth to swallow up the sea of divine truth shall be drowned therein. Therefore be of good courage. God, who makes the earth and the heavens to shake, shall cause each error to fall like an untimely fig.

And next, the Lord in this chapter promises His people that they shall have all the supplies they need for His work. They feared that they could

not build His house, because of their poverty, but says the Lord of hosts, "The silver and the gold are Mine." When the church of God believes in God, and goes forward bravely, she need not trouble as to supplies. Her God will provide for her. He that gives the Holy Spirit will give gold and silver according as they are needed, therefore let us be of good courage. If God is with us, why need we fear? One of our English kings once threatened the great city of London that if its councilors talked so independently, he would—yes—he would, indeed he would—take his court away from the city. The Lord Mayor on that occasion replied, that if his majesty would graciously leave the river Thames behind him, the citizens would try to get on without his court. If any say, "If you hold to these old-fashioned doctrines you will lose the educated, the wealthy, the influential," we answer, "But if we do not lose the godly and the presence of the Holy Spirit we are not in the least alarmed. If the Holy Spirit remains with us, there is a river the streams of which make glad the city of God." Brethren, my heart leaps within me as I cry, "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." "Therefore we will not fear, though the earth is removed, and though the mountains are carried into the midst of the sea."

The best comfort of all remained, "The desire of all nations shall come." This was in a measure fulfilled when Jesus came into that latter house and caused all holy hearts to sing for gladness, but it was not wholly fulfilled in that way, for if you notice, in the ninth verse it is written, "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former; *and in this place will I give peace,"* which the Lord did not fully do to the second temple, since that was destroyed by the Romans. But there is another advent, when, "the desire of all nations shall come" in power and glory, and this is our highest hope! Though truth may be driven back, and error may prevail, Jesus comes, and He is the great Lord and patron of truth; He shall judge the world in righteousness, and the people in equity. Here's our last resource, here are God's reserves. He whom we serve lives and reigns forever and ever, and He says, "Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be." "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be you steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

III. I should be done if it had not been that this text seemed to me to overflow so much, that it might not only refresh God's people, but give drink to thirsty sinners who are seeking the Lord. For a moment or two I give myself to ENCOURAGEMENT FURTHER APPLIED.

It is at the beginning of every gracious purpose that men have most fear, even as these people had who had newly begun to build. When first the Holy Spirit begins to strive with a man and to lead him to Jesus, he is apt to say—"I cannot; I dare not; it is impossible. How can I believe and live?" Now I want to speak to some of you here who are willing to find Christ, and to encourage you by the truth that the Spirit lives to help you. I would even like to speak to those who are *not* anxious to be saved. I remember that Dr. Payson, an exceedingly earnest and useful man of God, once did a singular thing. He had been holding inquiry meetings with all sorts of people, and great numbers had been saved. At

last, one Sunday he gave out that he would have a meeting on Monday night of those persons who did not desire to be saved, and strange to say, some twenty persons came who did not wish to repent or believe. He spoke to them and said, "I am sure that if a little film, thin as the web of the gossamer, were let down by God from heaven to each one of you, you would not push it away from you. Although it was almost invisible, you would value even the slightest connection between you and heaven. Now, your coming to meet me tonight is a little link with God. I want it to increase in strength till you are joined to the Lord forever." He spoke to them most tenderly, and God blessed those people who did not desire to be saved, so that before the meeting was over they were of another mind. The film had become a thicker thread, and it grew and grew until the Lord Christ held them by it forever. Dear friends, the fact of your being in the Tabernacle this morning is like that filmy thread; do not push it away. Here is your comfort; the Holy Spirit still works with the preaching of the word. Do I hear you say, "I cannot feel my need of Christ as I want to feel it?" The Spirit remains among us. He can make you feel more deeply the guilt of sin and your need of pardon. "But I have heard so much about conviction and repentance, I do not seem to have either of them." Yet the Spirit remains with us, and that Spirit is able to work in you the deepest conviction and the truest repentance. "O sir, I do not feel as if I could do anything," but the Spirit remains with us, and all things that are needful for godliness He can give. He can work in you to will and to do of His own good pleasure. "But I want to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." Who made you want to do that? Who but the Holy Spirit? Therefore He is still at work with you, and though as yet you do not understand what believing is, or else I am persuaded you would believe at once, the Spirit of God can instruct you in it. You are blind, but He can give you sight; you are paralyzed, but He can give you strength—the Spirit of God remains.

"Oh, but that doctrine of regeneration staggers me; you know, we must be born again." Yes, we are born again of the Spirit, and the Spirit remains still with us; He is still mighty to work that wondrous change, and to bring you out of the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of God's dear Son. The Spirit remains with us, blessed be His name! "Ah, dear sir," says one, "I want to conquer sin!" Who made you desire to conquer sin? Who, but the Spirit that remains with us? He will give you the sword of the Spirit and teach you how to use it, and He will give you both the will and the power to use it successfully. Through the Spirit's might you can overcome every sin, even that which has dragged you down and disgraced you. The Spirit of God is still waiting to help you. When I think of the power of the Spirit of God, I look hopefully upon every sinner here this morning. I bless His name that He can work in you all that is pleasing in His sight. Some of you may be very careless, but He can make you thoughtful. Coming up to London to see the Exhibition, I hope you may yourselves become an exhibition of divine grace. You think not about things, but He can make you feel at this moment a sweet softness stealing over you, until you long to be alone and to get home to the old armchair and there seek the Lord. You can thus be led to salvation.

I thought when I came in here that I should have a picked congregation, and so I have. You are one of them. Wherever you come from, I want you now to seek the Lord. He has brought you here, and He means to bless you. Yield yourselves to Him while His sweet Spirit pleads with you. While the heavenly wind softly blows upon you open wide every window. You have not felt that you wanted it, but that is the sure proof that you need it, for he that does not know his need of Christ, is most in need. Open wide your heart that the Spirit may teach you your need; above all, breathe the prayer that He would help you this morning to look to the Lord Jesus Christ, for "there is life in a look at the Crucified One—there is life at this moment for you." "Oh," you say, "If I were to begin I should not keep on." No, if *you* began perhaps you would not, but if *He* begins with you *He* will keep on. The final perseverance of saints is the result of the final perseverance of the Holy Spirit; He perseveres to bless, and we persevere in receiving the blessing. If He begins, you have begun with a divine power that faints not neither is weary. I wish it might so happen that on this fifth day of the ninth month, not the prophet Haggai, but I, God's servant, may have spoken to you such a word as you shall never forget, and may the Lord add to the word by the witness of the Holy Spirit, "From this day will I bless you!" Go away with that promise resting upon you. I would like to shake the hand of every stranger here this morning, and say, "Brother, in the name of the Lord I wish you from this day a blessing." Amen and amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
HAGGAI 1; 2:1-9.**

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—956, 957, 451.

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

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

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

THE VERY BOLD PROPHECY
NO. 1919

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 12, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I am sought of them that asked not for Me; I am found of them that sought Me not: I said, Behold Me, behold Me, unto a nation that was not called by My name."
Isaiah 65:1.

THIS is the passage which was quoted by the apostle Paul in the tenth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. At the twentieth verse of that chapter he 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." The apostle followed the Septuagint translation, but altered the position of the clauses.

We learn on inspired authority that this is a very bold passage, it required much courage to utter it at the first, and in Paul's day it needed still more to quote it and press it home upon the Jews around him. He who protests against a self-righteous people, and angers them by showing that others whom they despised are saved while they themselves are being lost, will have need of a dauntless spirit. The Israelite people thought that they had a monopoly on the grace of God, that the Lord who had chosen their fathers, and had indulged them with a divine revelation, would never deprive them of their advantages, nor advance others to the same privileges. They dreamed that God was almost bound to bless them above all the nations that were upon the face of the earth. To meet this national conceit with plain rebuke needed one who was very bold. When Paul spoke of his own mission to the Gentiles, the Jews lifted up their voices, and cried out, "Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live." The apostle, therefore, knew that Isaiah was very bold when in former ages he made Israel know that God would save a people who were not called by His name, while the favored people would die in their sins because they would not listen to the entreaties of their God. It becomes the servants of God to be bold in rebuking sin and protesting against pride, indeed, in all their messages it behooves them to be fearless. They do not deliver their own words, otherwise they might apologize for their speech, they speak the words of the living God, and it is not for them, for fear of feeble men, to soften their words and smooth their tongues. Ah, no! He that is ashamed to speak the truth has need to be ashamed of himself. It

is treason against the King of kings to tone down the word of the Lord. Surely, among all cowards he is the worst who is afraid to be true to God. Such preachers must be especially pointed at in the text, "But the fearful and unbelieving shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."

This text has the clear ring of free grace about it, and for this reason it may be called bold. He had need be bold who in this day would preach fully and plainly the doctrine of the sovereign grace of God. This cultured age repudiates the doctrines of grace, which are the heart of evangelical teaching. Men are vexed when we declare that God is first in human salvation, and seeks men before they seek Him. Many grow red in the face if we testify that the Lord, in His gracious sovereignty meets with persons who have never sought Him, and brings them to Himself, changing their hearts by His own eternal Spirit, while He leaves others to perish in their sins because they resist His Spirit, and refuse the invitations of His mercy. Yet we shall not cease most joyfully to sing unto our God—

"No sinner can be beforehand with Thee;
Your grace is most sovereign, most rich, and most free."

While many who have heard the gospel from their childhood continue to hear it in vain, others who have never heard it before are brought by what are commonly called accidental circumstances to hear the quickening word, and at once they embrace it and live. My prayer has been that this morning our text may be again fulfilled. May the Lord be sought by those who until now have not inquired for Him! May many who have strayed into this place thoughtlessly find Jesus this day! It may be, you are unused to divine things, unaccustomed to the gracious commands of love which bid you trust in Jesus, oh that you may at once be convinced, converted, renewed and saved! While the Lord Jesus at this hour calls to you, "Behold Me, behold Me," I trust you will be made to long, to look, to live, and to love. Truly it will be a wonder of grace, but our Lord is the God of wonders, His name is Wonderful. May He get to Himself great renown throughout eternity by being found this day by those who sought Him not! While I am preaching I shall be praying in the Holy Spirit that this word of the Lord may be carried out most evidently in the midst of this assembly.

I shall ask your earnest attention at once to the text, in which there are four notable things: *the personality of God in the work of grace; His delight in it; the description which He gives of it;* and *the purposes which He would serve by that description*. May the Holy Spirit help us in this four-fold meditation!

I. The first point for your consideration is THE PERSONALITY OF GOD IN THE WORK OF HIS GRACE. This is remarkably prominent in the words before us. Let me read them, and lay the emphasis upon the personal pronouns which relate to God. *"I* was sought of them that asked not for *Me; I* am found of them that sought *Me* not; *I* said, Behold *Me,* behold *Me,* unto a nation that was not called by *My* name." Is not the Lord here, not only as speaker, but as the theme of His own speech? It is most surely and emphatically true that God is present in the works of His grace. He

operates upon the heart personally and not alone by second causes. He works in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure. He is personally operative as well as personally observant of everything gracious.

The philosophy now in vogue labors to shut God out of His own creation. They inform us that by some means this world and all that is therein were evolved. Even this will not long content the men of progress; they care nothing for evolution in itself, but only so far as it may serve their purpose of escaping from the thought of God. If by some method or other vain men could scheme a world without a God, they would be delighted, and that philosopher who comes nearest to the invention of a subtle lie which will justify their forgetfulness of God is the prince of the hour, the favorite of his age. Yes, God must be obliterated somehow, for "the fool has said in his heart, There is no God."

These wise men would have done with God also in the ruling and overruling of providence; according to the modern notion, the universe is like a watch which goes because it has been wound up long ago. It is not even admitted that there was a God to wind it up, but anyhow, if there is such a great personal power, He has put the watch under His pillow, and has gone to sleep while the machine goes on ticking without Him. Certain fixed laws operate without any force at their back, and the world is so self-contained that it goes on by itself without God, this is the modern idea. They have no one to wind up this watch again when it runs down—no prospect of new heavens and a new earth, wherein righteousness shall dwell. Those who would get rid of God out of nature and providence have tried their hands at making a religion without God, and a pretty religion it is!—it is too small a business to need consideration. Those of us who rejoice to see the Lord both in creation and in providence know assuredly that He is most conspicuous in the kingdom of grace. There He is the first and the last, the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. The Lord God in Christ Jesus is the sum and substance of salvation, to Him we look, in Him we find all things, by Him we come to Him, and He is our all in all. God gives freely to those who have hitherto been far off from Him that salvation of which Jonah said, "Salvation is of the Lord." Human salvations are the wages of works; divine salvation is the gift of grace.

Notice that in the text the personality of God comes forth in that *He Himself is observant of all that is done*. Do any seek Him?—He says, "I am sought." Do any find Him?—he says, "I am found." Is there any preaching of the gospel?—the Lord declares, "I said, Behold Me, behold Me." God takes note of it all. Not a prayer is breathed, nor a sigh heaved, nor a note of praise uttered from the heart, but what the omniscient Lord has noted every thought. That eye which behold microscopic life in the lowest depths of the sea, and traces the flight of the condor in its utmost height, spies out the most sorrowful anguish of seeking souls, and observes the most elevated joy of souls that find their God. Grace in its beginnings, its growings, its declinings, its increasings, and its struggles, is ever under the divine eye. At this moment God's omnipresent heart beats in sympathy with all our hearts, if we are seeking His love. You have not to apprise Him that

you are seeking, He perceives your secret thoughts, and meets you in your return to Him. "Behold he prays" is God's immediate expression concerning you if you begin to pray at this hour. If you dart a glance of faith to the Lord Jesus He will at once yield to you and say, "I am found." The Lord's eye is on the heart which feels His grace.

Further, God's personality in the work of grace is conspicuous, because *He Himself is the great object of desire where grace is in operation*. When men are savingly awakened, they seek—what? Religion? By no means. They seek God, if they seek aright. We hear sometimes the saying that such a one has "found religion." Do not use the expression, it is a vain one. That which men find when they find peace and eternal life is God Himself. The Lord says, "I am found." If men do not find God they have found nothing.

God Himself fills the vision of faith, observe the words, "Behold Me, behold Me." We look to God in Christ, and find all that our soul needs. If any man is saved, it will be through looking to God, as it is written, "They looked unto Him and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed." O my hearer, behold your God! Would you have pardon for sin? Seek God in Christ Jesus. Would you have renewal of heart? Seek God the Holy Spirit, by whom alone we are born again. Would you be God's child? Receive Jesus, for "to as many as received Him, to them gave He power" (or authority) "to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." God is the sum of our necessities. God we seek as sinners, God we find as saints. I have sometimes put it thus to you—Here is a little child picked from the gutter, it is starved, unclothed, unwashed, and deathly sick. What does it need? Well, it would take me a long time to write out a list of all its needs. It needs washing, clothing, warming, feeding, nursing, loving—no, I will not attempt to complete the catalog, but I will tell you all in a word: this little child wants *its mother*. If it finds a loving and capable mother, it has all that it needs at once. Every lost soul of man needs a thousand things, but no soul needs more than it will find in God. The lost prodigal needs bread, and a host of other things, but he finds all when he carries out the resolve, "I will arise and go to my Father." It is therefore beautifully evident that God displays His personality in grace, since He is Himself that which the soul seeks, and finds, and rejoices in. "He that is our God is the God of salvation." Yes, more, as Isaiah puts it in his twelfth chapter, "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation."

The loving personality of God comes out in the work of grace, in that *He Himself is the speaker of that call by which men are saved*. Here are the words: *"I said*, Behold Me, behold Me." The Lord Himself speaks the effectual word. Did not Isaiah proclaim the gospel? Yes, he did, and this was the result of Isaiah's speech, "Who has believed our report?" But when God's arm is revealed, so that God speaks through His prophet, then a very different result follows, for God's word shall not return unto Him void, but it shall prosper in the thing whereto He sent it. Dear soul, if you

have looked to Christ, it is because Christ has looked at you, and influenced you to look to Him. If there is any glancing of the eye even of the feeblest faith towards God, it is because He has said by His Spirit, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." I like to think of the gospel as not only prepared and revealed by God, but as actually spoken by Himself into the ear and heart of the man to whom it becomes the power of God unto salvation. You have never heard a living word yet, my brother, a really living, quickening word from my lips alone, it may have come, perhaps, through my mouth as the vocal organ, but if it is a quickening word it must have come from God Himself. Man's words are mere breath, but the word of the Lord is spirit and life. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made," and all heavenly things come from the same source. Praise you, then, the blessed God, who thus personally appears in the conversion of everyone who is led to seek and find his God. It is no wonder that He is found of those who sought Him not, when He Himself comes forth to reveal Himself to men.

Moreover, God is seen in the work of grace, for *He Himself is the director of the message*. "I said, Behold Me, behold Me, unto a nation that was not called by My name" Not only does God speak the gospel, but He speaks it home to those whom He appoints to hear it. We who preach know not to whom the truth will be applied. I speak unto this crowd this day as I am called to do, in so doing I scatter handfuls of heavenly seed, but how do I know where it shall fall? God's eternal purpose carries every single grain of the good seed into the furrow which He has prepared for it. Very marvelous is it how the Lord prepares the ground for the seed and the seed for the ground. Of late, Thursday night after Thursday night I have had singularly striking proofs of this. Letters have come again and again of this character: "I felt drawn to attend the Tabernacle from a notice in the paper, but I shall never forget the words which I then heard, for they were evidently meant for me." Then the person goes on to detail certain circumstances of his life which have corresponded, with remarkable minuteness, to observations made in the sermon. How is this? The preacher knew nothing of the matter, and yet the word fitted like a glove to the hand. Nor is this all, for, strange to tell, the message has seemed equally personal to another individual, whose circumstances were of another order. God's word has many operations, and what to one is an appropriate word of encouragement, may be to another an equally suitable word of rebuke. He can kill and cure by the same word. This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes. If the preaching of the gospel is but a human act, it would produce human results, and there it would end, but if God Himself speaks by His servant and directs His word by His own power, then the divine agency will produce divine results to the praise of the glory of His grace. In the kingdom of grace the word of God is a manifestation of God; by it He works in the new creation even as He did in the old. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us who are saved it is the power of God." I call upon you, therefore, beloved, to rejoice that God

comes very near to us in the work of grace, and is made known to us as our God.

This surrounds the gospel with a strange solemnity. If the gospel blesses us, it is not *it,* but God that blesses; God Himself has come to us. Yet remember that this fact has another aspect to it, for if the gospel is rejected, it is God that is rejected. Read the next verse, "I have spread out My hands all the day unto a rebellious people." Yes, if you accept the gospel you have found your God, but if you reject the gospel you have rejected God Himself. The gospel may be brought to you by the poorest of my Master's servants, but since it is God's own message of love, in refusing it you refuse your God. It is true that the hands which were stretched out to you were human, and therefore you criticized the style of the invitation, and perhaps refused it with scorn, but at the back of the feeble ambassador stood the great King, and behind the simple invitation was the sublime mind of God. He takes it ill that you refuse His message, seeing that in so doing you refuse Him that spoke from heaven. Oh, how differently would some of you hear if you did but remember that in the gospel God Himself in person comes to you! Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have come to pleading terms with you; will you, can you, turn a deaf ear to the Sacred Trinity?

II. But now, secondly, dear friends, in the text I see THE DELIGHT WHICH GOD TAKES IN THE WORK OF GRACE. The text is the utterance of delight. God is glad to be sought and found by those who once were negligent of Him.

It is evident that *He rejoices in contrast to the complaint of the next verse*. It is with joy that God says, "I am sought of them that asked not for Me; I am found of them that sought Me not," for it is placed in opposition to the mournful notes in which the Lord says, "I have spread out My hands all the day unto a rebellious people." We speak of God after the manner of men, for so God speaks of Himself. It is true, then, that He is hurt and grieved when He stretches out His hands in vain. We read of some of old that, "They vexed His Holy Spirit." Frequently are similar expressions used in Scripture. When His kindness is rejected God is grieved. Listen to His cry, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord has spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me." As a relief to such a lamentation this verse has in it a true joy, an intensity of satisfaction, because some are coming to peace and love. God speaks it with pleasure, "I am found of them that sought Me not." Do not forget that utterance, "As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but that he turn unto Me and live." It gives God pleasure to see men turn to Him. Infinitely happy as He must be from His own glorious nature, yet there is a joy which only He feels when He is sought after and found by the sons of men, and this becomes special when the most unlikely ones are seeking and finding. God is gladdest when He says, "Behold Me, behold Me," unto a nation that was not called by His name.

The Lord rejoices in each step of the process. There is a poor soul beginning to cry, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" and lo, the Lord says, "I am sought." A man has only just begun to attend the House of Prayer; he has only lately commenced the earnest study of the Bible; the Lord sees it, and He says, "I am sought." As when a fisherman smiles because a fish has begun to nibble at the bait, so the Lord notes the first movings of the heart towards Himself, and He says, "I am sought." It was but a poor little prayer you prayed last night, you started up from your knees astonished to find that you had actually been attempting to pray, but your heavenly Father saw you, and He said with pleasure, "I am sought." "When he was yet a great way off his Father saw him." Behold the infinite compassion of the all-observing God!

The very next sentence is, "I am found." What a delight it must be to God's heart when at last the poor sinner cries, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" Then Jesus says, "I am found." Do not imagine that a soul ever found the great Father without the great Father's knowing it. There is a consciousness of joy in us when we can say, "I found Him whom my soul loves," but there is a greater and fuller consciousness on the part of Him whom we have found when He declares, in the words of the text, "I am found." God rejoices when He is sought and when He is found! Oh do not think that you seek an unwilling God. He comes to meet you; He falls upon your neck and kisses you. Whatever you do in coming to God, He views it with infinite pleasure.

The Lord also rejoices in the persons who seek Him. He says, "I am sought of them that asked not for Me." God takes special joy in being sought by those who formerly did not seek Him. He will be glad for any heart to keep on seeking that has begun to seek, but He is best pleased when non-seekers become seekers. You that were taught to pray at your mother's knee, God is glad to hear your sincere petitions, but if there is a man here who has never prayed before in their life, let him begin at once, and the Lord will rejoice to hear him. Has your mind never thrilled with the holy desire to seek your Creator, Preserver, and Friend? Have you been careless and godless? Then turn to Him at once, and He will delight in having mercy upon you. Oh come, you giddy ones, and seek Him whom you have never asked for. Come, you thoughtless ones, and find Him whom you have never sought. Come, you who have never called upon the sacred name, and behold your God, your Savior. This is the good pleasure of God, His purpose, and His promise to His Son, "Behold, You shall call a nation that You know not, and nations that knew You not shall run unto You because of the Lord Your God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for He has glorified You."

"Alas!" says one, "I have never sought Him!" Yet you may find Him, for the word of the Lord is, "I am found of them that sought Me not." Our Savior tells us of a merchant of earnest spirit who went out to seek goodly pearls. He traversed many lands inspecting a variety of jewels that he might find one especially precious pearl, and at last he found it, and bought it. They that seek the Lord shall find Him. But there was another

man whose mind sought after less ambitious matters, he was of the earth earthy. He yoked his bullocks one morning to the plow, and he was thinking only of his clods and of his fields, when, all of a sudden, the plow made a stop, there was something in the way. He stopped the oxen, he examined the ground; he dug in the earth. He came to an old crock, and in that crock he found a treasure of gold and of silver. He had found what he never looked for, and the moment he found it he decided to sell all that he had, and buy the field, that he might possess the treasure. My hearer, you came to London on pleasure, or on business, or to see the Exhibition, you certainly did not come with the expectation of finding Christ and eternal life. I hope you have stumbled on full salvation at this moment. Happiness and heaven lie before you, will you not have them? The plow has struck on the hidden treasure of the blessed gospel, and if you will stoop down and look, here are riches such as you never dreamed of. I pray that God the Holy Spirit may so sweetly influence your heart that you may resolve to have Jesus at any price, and give up all that you have of sin or self-righteousness in order to possess Him. Come to Jesus just as you are, and receive at once His full salvation. If you do that, God will rejoice over you. Not only will we be glad, who are His servants on earth, and angels who are His servants in heaven, but Father, Son, and Holy Spirit will rejoice over you. The Lord will say, "I am found of them that sought Me not."

I rejoice to have such a text to preach from. Oh that many of you who are wicked, careless, graceless men may find God at once, and thus set all heaven's bells a-ringing for joy!

The Lord rejoices in the numbers who seek Him and find Him. "I said, Behold Me, behold Me, unto a *nation."* When shall the day come that nations shall be born at once? We want to see tens of thousands brought to Jesus. If you all come, the gate of mercy is wide enough for you, and God will be glorified in your coming, yes, His sacred heart will be glad as He sees you running to Him. Draw them, sweet Spirit. Draw all London to Jesus! Draw all England to Jesus! Draw the world to Jesus! For Your love's sake do this, we beseech You.

III. Now we have a third matter to consider, and that is—THE DESCRIPTION WHICH GOD HIMSELF GIVES OF THE WORK OF GRACE. Time flies too quickly, therefore let me give you only rough hints, instead of full instructions. This verse is a little Bible. Here you have the experience of salvation described.

The Lord tells us where He finds the objects of His grace. He says, "They asked not for Me; they sought Me not; they were not called by My name." In the Book of Hosea, we read that they were not His people. These are the careless and senseless beings, whom the Lord called by His grace. He manifested great love to us when we were dead in trespasses and sins. By nature we are so much worthless clay, and we must owe all to the Potter's hands if we ever become vessels fit for the Master's use. When there is no good thought, nor wish, nor desire, in us, then God comes to us in abounding love. What a mercy it is that He comes to us in our sin and misery, for assuredly we should not otherwise come to Him. Remember

the description which the Lord gives of His Israel as a helpless infant, which had never been washed, or swaddled, or cared for, but was cast out in the open field, with no eye to pity it? Then it is written, "And when I passed by you, and saw you polluted in your own blood, I said unto you when you were in your blood, Live; yes, I said unto you when you were in your blood, Live." Beloved, we are in the same condition by nature, without life, or power, or goodness, or anything that can commend us to God, and it is then that the Lord comes to us and deals with us in grace, causing us to seek and find Him. Oh, the splendor of the grace of God!

Having told us where we were, He next describes *that gospel which comes to them* as the power of God. Here are His own words, "I said, Behold Me, behold Me." If anybody were to ask me to state the gospel in a few words I should answer—the Lord says, "Behold Me, behold Me." The way of salvation is, "Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." Christ on the cross cries to the guilty sinner, "Behold the Lamb of God." To encourage a trembling soul to behold Him with steadfast hope the Lord says twice, "Behold Me, behold Me." Does any sinner exclaim, "But Lord, I am so filthy?" Do not look at yourself, "Behold Me; for I can cleanse you." "But Lord, I am death itself." Do not look at your own death. Behold Me, for I am the resurrection and the life, "But, Lord, the more I look at myself the more I despair." Then do not look at yourself, but look to Me alone. Behold Me, and then behold Me again and again, and keep on beholding Me till your heart finds perfect rest. Look to Jesus, as God is in Him revealed as your Savior and your all. Behold your King is also your sacrifice. You can be justified through Him by whom you shall be judged at the last great day. In this verse our Lord seems delighted to declare that blessed gospel which is the two-edged sword of His grace. Hear it, you sinners! Hear it, and obey it at once! What! Will you not look? Do you deny your Lord a look? Shall God cry, "Behold Me," and will you hide your faces from Him? I trust that some who never knew the gospel before will at this instant behold the Lamb of God. Look to your bleeding Savior, your forgiving God. Look and live.

Then the Lord goes on to mention *the converts which the gospel makes*. The careless become seekers, the ungodly become finders, the prayerless behold their God and live. Sinners who never sought Him hear this gospel and rejoice in its glad tidings. Herein is joy.

The Lord also describes *the experience of the saved*. They asked not for Him before, but now they seek after God. This is the first work of grace—to make us seek grace. God comes to us that we may come to Him. Under a sense of need, driven by a gracious hunger, men seek for God as for bread and water. Are any of you eager for the living God? This is God's finger upon you. He has made you now to desire that which once you had no care for, and you ought to praise Him for this. Quick upon the seeking comes the finding. There is only a semicolon in our text between "I am sought," and "I am found." If you truly seek the Lord, you shall soon find Him, even though for years you have been negligent of the great salvation. I say not that if you seek this or that you shall find it, but if you seek the

Lord He will be found of you. He has promised it, and He will make it good. He is to be found of all them that earnestly desire Him, and the finding frequently follows quick upon the seeking.

I think I may say of this description of the way of salvation, how simple it is! God seeks the sinner, the sinner seeks his God. The sinner finds his God because God has found the sinner, and it is all done. Intricacies and difficulties are at an end; believe and live is simplicity itself. "Oh, but," says one, "there must be a deal of preparation before I who seek God can hope to find Him." There needs no preparation. He says, "Seek you My face" and if your heart says, "Your face, Lord, will I seek," the Lord is near unto you at once. "But surely, sir, I shall have to feel, I shall have to learn, I shall have to do." Oh, yes, you shall have all that by and by, but as to salvation, you may have it at once, there is no need of an hour's delay; behold your God and live. Salvation lies in your finding Him who now displays Himself in the gospel of His Son. Seeking and finding are wrapped up together in this one word, "Behold Me, behold Me." Looking is a kind of blended seeking and finding. We look *for* salvation by looking *to* Jesus. Looking to Christ, we have Christ. We seek Him by an act of faith which finds Him. The desire and its fulfillment dwell together in that one word "look." Oh, I wish I knew how this morning to speak as I should speak about this plain way, this road which the wayfaring man may so readily follow, this method which is as gracious as the blessing to which it leads. Before I knew the Lord Jesus and His cross I used to fancy that there was some great mystery about faith, and poor soul that I was, I feared that I should never be able to understand and enjoy it; but I heard a simple working man say, "Look to Jesus, look and live," and I was not disobedient to the message. I trusted Jesus, and I lived. I gave up trying to understand, I believed, and I lived. I would to God that I could slay all the artful doubts and questions which disturb poor sinners' brains, and harden their hearts. O friends, be wise enough to be fools, and accept Jesus to be your wisdom. Be children and sit down and let the Lord Jesus teach you. Take what He tells you to be true, and never doubt again. Trust! That is all. Look to God for everything, and you are saved.

See how God, who delights in the gospel of His grace, thus gives us in this verse a clear and succinct account of the whole process of salvation. May He write it out large on our hearts by His Spirit!

IV. I conclude with the fourth point, which is this—THE USE WHICH GOD MAKES OF ALL THIS. You see, dear friends, the Lord here took care that when He said, "I am sought of them that asked not for Me," His words should be written down, and that they should be made known to us. It is not everything that God may say to Himself that He will afterwards repeat to us, but here these private utterances of the divine heart are spoken out to us by Isaiah, and left on record in this inspired Book. To what end do you think it is so?

I think, first, that He may excite in us *wonder and admiration*. What a wonder it is that men and women who never had a thought about God but an aversion to Him, should, nevertheless, be turned into seekers! It is of-

ten so; there can be no doubt about it. Sudden conversions have not ceased. I knew a man, a singular person, but a sincere Christian, who, in his early days, never thought of going to any place of worship. One Sunday morning he set out to visit a comrade, intending to conclude a bargain which had been talked over the day before about a pair of ducks. He stepped into the meeting house, because it began to rain, and there he found what he had never sought. He never bought that pair of ducks; he forgot them, as the woman of Samaria forgot her water pot. The Lord met with him there and then, and he beheld his Savior. Many such things have happened in this house, and some such will occur this morning. Remember the famous Colonel Gardiner. He had made an appointment to commit a deed of wickedness, but reached the spot too soon, and while he waited he thought he saw the Savior on the cross, and heard Him say, "I have done all this for you; what have you ever done for Me?" He fled the place, he sought his own chamber, he cried to God, and Colonel Gardiner from being a wild soldier became a saint of God. Surely this is meant to make us reverently adore the Lord of grace. Oh to see the same today! Then shall we wonder and sing for joy. The Lord's grace is like the dew "that tarries not for man, nor waits for the sons of men." His effectual grace takes us by surprise and captures us by force of love—

"Thus the eternal council ran—
Almighty grace, arrest that man."

Then the man is arrested. He had no intent of being so, but the Divine Sheriff's officer laid his hand upon his shoulder and said, "You go no further, sir; you have been the enemy of God, you shall now become His friend," and it is so. "Well," says one, "have not men a free will?" Certainly, and the wonder is that free grace does not violate it, and yet the purpose of God is accomplished. Free will alone ruins men, but free will guided by free grace is another matter. Lead free will captive to free grace and then it is freer than ever, and yet the will of the Lord is done. But it is God that does convert the sinner, and He does so that we may believe in the exceeding greatness of His grace. Many a time have the churches rejoiced because of great persecutors who have bowed before the cross, and become believers. I need not mention Saul of Tarsus, for he is only one among many. Among the chief of sinners the Lord has found earnest heralds of the gospel, who, by the very fact of their change, have been powerful living witnesses to the purifying power of the doctrine of faith.

Why does the Lord thus declare the conversion of those who were out of the way? I think it is *to destroy pride and self-esteem*. Some of you who are not converted are yet in your own esteem a cut above others. You have sittings in the Tabernacle, or else you attend at some thoroughly evangelical church, and you say to yourselves, "If anybody will get to heaven we shall, for we hear the pure word of God." You postpone repentance and put off the consideration of eternal things because you feel that you can secure salvation when it pleases you. What does God do? Why, He sends His gospel to the abandoned and fallen, and brings outcasts to Himself. He saves those whom you thought He had given over to their sins and you

church-going and chapel-going people, who dream that you have a monopoly of privileges, are left to your own willfulness. God will pay no regard to caste. He is no respecter of persons, but calls whomsoever He wills, according to His royal word, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." Pride of birth and education He thus casts to the ground.

He does it next, *to encourage you who are seeking Him,* for if those who do *not* seek Him often find Him, why, you that do seek Him are sure to find Him. If He is found of those who seek Him not, He will surely be found of those who are daily agonizing for Him. Do not believe that He will let you seek His face in vain. Come and believe on Him today, and He will then be found of you.

I think He does this *to encourage workers*. Go to work among the worst of the worst, for since God is found of those that seek Him not, there is hope for the vilest. None of your people are worse than those described in the text. O worker, you will gather precious pearls if you have but the courage to dive deep for them; doubtless the choicest pearls are hidden in the deepest seas. The Lord can bring to Himself infidels, thieves, harlots, blasphemers, and such like; let us not hesitate to go after them, nor fear that our labor will be lost.

The Lord magnifies His grace *that He may convict those who do not come to Him of the greatness of their sin*. Look, says He, those who never heard of Me before have found salvation, while you who have been instructed, and invited, and impressed, have still held out, and resisted My Spirit. You have been persuaded, entreated, prayed over, and wept over, and yet you have not come to Me. Who is to blame for this but yourselves? Your own hard hearts have robbed you of mercy. Publicans and harlots enter the kingdom of heaven before you because of your willful unbelief. Take heed, my hearers! Take heed lest you perish in sight of heaven. I pray you, for God's sake and your own soul's sake, awake to righteousness.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ISAIAH 65.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—166, 233, 235.

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

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

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

BELIEVERS AS BLESSED AS THE BLESSED VIRGIN
NO. 1920

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 19, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And it came to pass, as He spoke these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto Him, "Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the paps which You have sucked." But He said, Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it."
Luke 11:27, 28.

YOU do not wonder that this enthusiastic woman lifted up her voice in admiration of our Lord. I sometimes wonder when the gospel is preached—whose message is so sweet, so charming, so enchanting—that we do not more often observe earnest persons breaking the cold rules of propriety, and uttering exclamations of delight. Few are the hosannas of the multitude today. Is the blood of the world growing colder as the ages tell upon it? Perhaps our western constitution is too cool and self-contained to allow us to copy the demonstrative manners of the East. Assuredly this woman is not to be blamed, but to be commended, for pouring out her heart's love in honor of the Lord. The wonder is, not that she spoke as she did, but that men who hear the teaching of Jesus do not more often speak in His praise. Of our blessed Lord His enemies said, "Never man spoke like this man." His very tone was melody, and His language was truth set to music. The doctrines which He taught were more than golden; they were light to the head and joy to the heart. He revealed the inmost heart of God, and taught as never prophet or sage had taught before. Oh, "certain woman of the company," though we do not know your name, and cannot guess at your history, we are in harmony with your outburst of affection. We thank you for giving utterance to that feeling of delight and admiration with which we are filled. We also cry unto the Lord with you—"Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the paps which You have sucked."

This earnest woman did not mean, in the first place, to praise Christ's mother. I do not know that she had even seen Mary, or that she would have entered into her mind, apart from her matchless Son. It is often the way in the East; if they want to insult a man, they speak vilely of his mother, and on the other hand, if they wish to honor him, they laud his mother to the skies, yet they may have neither dislike nor esteem for the mother, they only reach the son through her. It was while Jesus was preaching that this cry was raised, "It came to pass, as He spoke these things." It was because He spoke so well, that this woman could not

withhold her words of praise. After her fashion as a woman, and as an Eastern woman, she praised the Lord Jesus by extolling His mother.

But lest such an expression, commendable enough in itself, should in later years lend any kind of countenance to that Mariolatry which our Savior foresaw, Jesus said, "Yea, she is blessed doubtless, but still more blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." Our divine Savior, with all the love of His manhood towards His mother, acted towards her in such a way as forever to forbid any degree of religious worship being rendered to her. He gave no countenance to the superstitious titles of "Our Lady," "Mother of God," and so forth, but, on the contrary, He taught that the nearest fleshly relationship to Himself was as nothing compared with spiritual union to Him. Remember how it is written—"Then one said to Him, Behold, your mother and your brethren stand without, desiring to speak with you. But He answered and said unto him that told Him, Who is My mother? And who are My brethren? And He stretched forth His hand towards His disciples, and said, Behold My mother and My brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother."

Worship is due to the Lord alone, and if rendered to the most blessed among women it is idolatrous. This superstition robs God of His glory and ensnares the souls of men. I come back to what I said before, the woman's speech, though it needed to be guarded against erroneous use, was a true speech, and a holy speech.

Moreover, to do this woman further justice; it was a brave speech for her to make, for the Savior had been confronted by the Pharisees and scribes, those teachers of the period, those persons of authority. They had spoken ill words of Him; they had even dared to say that He cast out devils through Beelzebub, the prince of devils. When He had answered them discreetly, this woman did, as it were, proclaim His victory. She lifted up her voice, so shrill, so loud, so passionate in its eagerness, that it seemed to cut through all other sounds, and reached the ears of the preacher, the ears of all the multitude, and of course the ears of the proud revengeful priests. She cared not, she felt that she must declare her feelings, and she did so right boldly. Oh, if there is a time when not only enthusiasm suggests, but when affection compels us to speak for Christ, it is when others are opposing His name and cause. If they dare to say evil things against our glorious Lord, let us lift our voices, feeble though they are, and bless His sacred name. Though we may as a rule be silent, and shun all public observation, yet when occasion requires, let us be loud and vehement in the defense of His righteous cause. "A certain woman of the company lifted up her voice," let us determine to be heard on our Lord's behalf, for surely if we should hold our speech the very stones would cry out. Do they curse Him? He is blessed, yes, and He shall be blessed! Do they dare to deny the eternal truth which He proclaimed? He is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and let Him be forever blessed. We cannot be silent when He is decried. We must and will declare in the teeth of His adversaries that "He has done all things well." O woman! Your courage deserves our praise and our imitation. We will go to school to you to learn your bravery. Oh that we had a fire in

our hearts burning as it did in yours, then would it consume the bonds which hold our stammering tongues. Let us believe that when the current of thought around us runs in a wrong direction, such is the power of enthusiasm, that one earnest, impassioned voice may turn it, and our Lord may yet win glory where now He is despised.

Our Lord, when He was thus interrupted by this woman's hearty testimony, did not reprove her speech, but He improved it. Thus possibly He did gently rebuke her, but it was done so delicately that I scarcely dare concede that it was a rebuke at all. Our Lord averted the wrong interpretation which might be put upon it, and then made an addition to it, but He did not at all deny that she had spoken the truth, for He said, "Yea," before He added, "rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it!" He did as good as say, "What you have said is certain, but yet there is a higher truth; she was blessed who bore Me, but more surely blessed still are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." Notice the humility which hides in this language. He says not, "Blessed are they that hear *My* word, and keep it," though that would have been quite true. At the moment our Lord was being praised, and He therefore shrank out of sight. "As the fining pot for silver and the furnace for gold; so is a man to his praise." Many a man is taken off his balance when he is loudly extolled, but not so our humble Savior; then it was that He peculiarly shone forth as "meek and lowly in heart." The word which He had preached He speaks of as His Father's word, and thus casts a veil over that very beauty which had caused the woman's rapture.

This morning I shall invite your attention, first, for a little time, to *a blessedness which is not to be denied;* blessed was that holy woman who bore the Savior. Secondly, in the text there is mention made of *a blessedness which is to be preferred*. When we have spoken upon this theme, we shall have something to say of *that blessedness as one which is now to be enjoyed*. My prayer shall be—and I hope yours will be the same—that we may enjoy that blessedness this very morning and throughout all the rest of our lives. I see the Redeemer's outstretched hands as He pronounces this benediction upon you at this hour, "Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." Divine beatitude, be you fulfilled in each of us!

I. First, then, here is A BLESSEDNESS NOT TO BE DENIED. The Virgin Mother was blessed among women. I have sometimes thought that in our great eagerness to keep clear of anything like superstitious reverence of Mary we have scarcely given to her her due. We cannot blame the Reformers that when they found her spoken of as the "Queen of Heaven," and worshipped with Ave Marias and so forth, they recoiled from such idolatry. Every enlightened mind ought to revolt from such superstition. "You shall have no other gods before Me" is a precept which puts God alone into the place of worship, and forbids us to worship any other person or thing. To God alone be worship. "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord." But when we have borne this protest, it does not follow that Mary herself suffers in our esteem; on the contrary, we revere the memory of this saintly woman. The angel made no mistake when he said, "Hail, you that are highly favored: blessed are you among women." Nor

was she in error when she said, "From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." We call her blessed most heartily, for so she was.

The blessing which she received had been the desire of ages. The promise given at the gate of Eden—"the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head"—had awakened the desires of all the godly women of Israel. They longed to behold this promised One, the great Messiah, the restorer of the race, and they desired children in the hope that among those children might appear the promised seed. It is probable that mother Eve herself thought that her first-born was the promised Deliverer, for, according to some readings, she said, "I have gotten a man, the Lord." Though she was greatly mistaken, yet still it showed her faith, and her hope. All the families of Israel watched for the appearing of the Desire of all nations, the Glory of His people.

When at last the gift was bestowed upon the humble virgin of Nazareth, who was of the house of David, *it came as a great favor.* Since angels rejoiced over that birth, since shepherds hastened to do homage at the manger, and since wise men from the further East came with their gold, frankincense, and myrrh to adore the new-born King, Mary cannot be thought of as being less than the most blessed among women. All the circumstances of the annunciation, and all the homage paid to the infant Savior, show that her visitation from on high had made her greatly blessed. The angel when he addressed her said, "Hail, you that are highly favored, the Lord is with you: blessed are you among women." We cannot suppose that since in God's eyes, and in the eyes of His angelic messenger, this was a great favor, we are to treat it as a light thing. The Savior's, "yea," was emphatic when the woman spoke of His mother as highly blessed.

She herself received this honor as a great blessing. She bowed herself humbly, and said, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it unto me according to Your word." She believed the word of the Lord; her spirit rejoiced in God her Savior; she treasured up all the holy words in her heart. It was no vain thing to her to have charge of the infancy of our Lord. She felt it to be great blessedness to be placed in such a relation to the holy child Jesus. We can scarcely imagine the holy ecstasy, or the profound joy which filled her spirit. She was an eminently gracious woman, and therefore she never boasted of her relationship, nor misused it for her own purpose. But what a pleasure it must have been to have nursed Jesus in His childhood, to have cared for Him in His youth! She treasured up His little speeches, and pondered in her heart what all could mean. Happy were her fingers that made His garments and that tended to His infant and boyish wants. In His adult life she must have been among those who heard Him with delight. Was she not one of the most charmed of His hearers? What joy that her Son should speak in that way and bring such a salvation to the sons of men! Awe mingled with the mother's delight, deepening it, but not forbidding it. When He had risen from the dead, I think her heart must have been filled with a holy exultation, that He whom she had mourned now lived again. When she knew that He was ascended, though it left a blank in her heart, yet she rose above the sorrow natural to her motherhood, and learned,

though she had known Him after the flesh, now after the flesh to know Him no more. She could not but rejoice in all the glory with which the man who was born of her was now surrounded.

She was, she must have been, blessed among women, and this woman who spoke of her as such made no mistake, for think, my dear friends, *what blessings have come to all the world through the Virgin's wondrous child*. In Him shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. If all generations call Mary blessed, it is only because she brought into the world one that is a blessing to us all. Have you not tasted of the blessedness which is scattered by both the hands of Jesus? Do you not know that life and healing stream from the skirts of His garments? If you have not enjoyed the blessedness which He bestows, it is because you have denied it to yourselves—cruelly denied it to yourselves. His blessedness is free to you if your hearts desire it. Oh, what a Christ is He! His Words unlock prison doors; the glance of His eyes is the light of men; the tread of His feet turns deserts into Edens. Our faith is in His first advent; our hope is in His second advent. In Him we live, and if in Him we sleep we shall in Him awake from the dead to live forever in His glory. He has made us kings and priests unto God, and we shall reign with Him forever and ever. And it was, it must have been, a great blessedness to Mary's heart to think that "that holy thing" which was born of her was the channel of such blessedness to all mankind.

I must, however, remind you that whatever the blessedness which this holy woman derived from being the mother of our Savior's humanity, *she needed it all,* for she was called to a great fight of affliction because of it. Usually all special blessings involve special trials. The thorn in the flesh attends the abundance of revelations. Weight of glory is balanced with a weight of tribulation. Lest the favored one should be exalted above measure, there is given a measure of down-casting with the lifting up. When you ask to drink of His cup, and to be baptized with His baptism, you know not what you are asking, for in that cup there is bitterness as well as sweetness, and His baptism is a baptism of suffering as well as a baptism of honor. Mary had her supreme sorrows. At the very first this woman so pure and holy had to bear the darkest suspicion. She could hardly confront her espoused one; he could hardly be expected to believe her extraordinary story. Faith alone helped her to see the bright light which lined the cloud. The Lord delivered her. Her trials in escaping from Herod by flight into Egypt were not small. Oh what sorrow often hovered over her, when she saw how her son was "despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief!" Once, at least, her faith well-nigh failed her, as I read it, and she trembled for Him, for we find that His mother and His brethren (and of this I will speak another day), somewhere about this very time, stood without, desiring to speak with Him. Mark tells us that His friends sought to lay hands on Him, for they said, "He is beside Himself." He dared such perils, He so boldly opposed established authorities, He spoke such mysterious truths, and He was altogether so unearthly, that His relatives began to think that His mind had failed Him, and it would seem that His mother was almost agreed with them. Her heart must have sunk very low with all her blessedness

when she could not understand her son, and could not save Him from reproach and ill will. In fact, she never had fully understood Him; did He not Himself say to her in His early days, "Know you not"—do you not understand—"that I must be about My Father's business?" She could not comprehend Him, and could not protect Him, and therefore, she must have been often sorrowful.

When Jesus came to die, of all that wept for Him, surely none could have been more full of lamentations than the sorrowful mother. *Mater dolorosa*. Do you not see her fainting at the foot of the cross? Then was fulfilled the text, "Yes, a sword shall pierce through your own soul also." John, with gentle tenderness, took her to his own home, in obedience to those words of the dying Lord, "Son, behold your mother," and "Woman, behold your son." But never a more sorrowful woman was ever housed under heaven than she who was "highly favored." She needed to have the blessedness abundantly ministered to her to sustain her heart and mind. She might have well said, "Call me not Mary, but call me Marah," so bitter was her grief.

Call her "Blessed among women," but do not sigh because this unattainable blessedness is not yours. Her tribulations abounded in full proportion to her joys. Only one, from the necessity of the case, could partake of such peculiar blessedness. This gate of honor is shut to all but that virgin of David's lineage. With full and honest emphasis we pronounce her blessed this day, but no trace of envy rests in our heart. We hear the enthusiastic voice which said, "Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the paps which You have sucked," but it is overpowered by the divine utterance—"Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it!" We do not take away the first, but we establish the second.

II. That brings us to our second head—to hear the word of God and keep it is A BLESSING PREFERABLE to having been the mother of our Lord.

We are sure of this, because in the weighing of the blessings the blessed Master of Beatitudes holds the balances. *Jesus Himself adjusts the scales of blessedness*. He who began His ministry with the word "Blessed," so often repeated, knows best which blessing is the best. We accept without a question, and even without am argument, this statement of our Lord, and we firmly believe, upon His authority, that though Mary is greatly blessed, yet even more emphatically are those blessed who hear the word of God and keep it. We yield our ready assent to what Jesus says, for His word is truth.

Happily this preference so truly given by the Master *puts the highest blessedness within the reach of all of us* who are here this morning. We are at this moment in a position to "hear the word of God, and keep it." If grace is given, there are only these two steps to blessedness. I feel most happy to be addressing a congregation to whom I may say that the highest blessedness conceivable is to be attained by all who "hear the word of God," for if they further receive and keep that word they are already blessed, and the lips of the Lord Jesus have declared them to be so. Remember that this made up the soul of Mary's blessedness, for she was

more blessed as a believer than as the mother of Jesus. Elizabeth said to her, "Blessed is she that believes." So, dear friend, Mary's blessedness lay mainly in the fact that she believed, and therefore quietly acquiesced in the Divine will. She was blessed because her faith enabled her to rejoice in God her Savior. It was not an easy thing to believe that He whom she nursed in her arms and nourished from her breast was also the Son of the Highest. He must have seemed to her more truly an infant than perhaps He may ever appear to us; nevertheless she worshipped Him as in union with the Infinite One, and magnified the name of the Lord. Oh yes, it was her faith that made her blessed, and the same faith may be in us.

When the Savior uttered this text He meant to say to the woman who had pronounced His mother blessed—"You, too, are blessed if you hear the word of God, and keep it. You, good woman, have said, Blessed is My mother; but to you I reply, No, blessed are you also, if hearing the word that has been spoken to you this day you place it in your heart, and keep it in your soul as a hidden treasure." This blessing is open to all of us who by divine grace hear the gospel with our hearts. Dear friends, let me congratulate you on your position. Blessed are your ears, for they hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. Blessed are you that you may sing today, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." Blessed are you if you lay up the witness of God in your hearts, remembering it, treasuring it, and living upon it. You are truly favored if the word of God dwells in you richly. Christ in you the hope of glory is your heart's delight.

I now ask you to notice that this preferable blessing is *found in a very simple manner*. "Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." The process is stripped of all ambiguity or mystery; there is nothing about it that is hard or difficult, "Hear the word, and keep it"—that is all.

By the grace of God the most uneducated, the most sinful, the most despairing, may still *hear* the word of God, and keep it. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," and by faith comes salvation. To hear God's word is the privilege of the poor; yes, of all to whom the word is spoken, as it is written, "He that has ears to hear, let him hear." Beloved, if you would attain to blessedness, hear God's word *as God's word*. Receive it, not as the word of man, for in that way it cannot bless you, but accept it as being the word of God to your own souls. Hear it, therefore, with a reverent credence, which does not quibble at it, nor question it, but which sweetly yields to it. You shall be blessed if you hear it as the word of God ought to be heard. Be silent while God speaks; let judgment, imagination, and desire, all bow before Jehovah's voice.

Let the word fully operate upon you, while your soul sits meekly at Jesus' feet. Be receptive. Receive the truth with no wish but to understand it and retain it. Hear it with your understanding, endeavor to know what it means, that you may be nourished by it. Do not let it come in one ear and go out the other, otherwise it may leave condemnation behind it, but hear it as a man would hear who was listening to a father whom he loved and reverenced. Listen as a man listens who is eagerly catching at

news—news which concerns himself and his highest interests; hear, in fact, as though God spoke. Israel stood trembling about the foot of Sinai because the Lord spoke in tones of thunder, you should hear with the same reverence, though not with the same alarm. As much reverence is due to God's word out of His inspired Book as to that same word thundered out of the thick darkness and the flames of fire. God in these last days has spoken to us by His Son Jesus, who is the express image of His person, and the brightness of His glory. Hear this incomparable word with all your powers and faculties. Let heart and mind and thought and memory and reason attend to that which the Lord says to us. So listening, you shall live. "Blessed are they that hear the word of God."

But we must *keep* it, too. Now, to keep a thing you must first get it. Blessed are they that grasp at what they hear, saying, "That means me." Blessed are they who take home to themselves the truths revealed, who, when they hear that Jesus died, say, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." Hug the truth to your souls; grapple it to your hearts with hooks of steel. When you have laid hold upon it, keep it against all comers. "Skin for skin, yes, all that a man has will he give for his life," and let the word of God be life to you. Hold the word of God as dearer than this mortal life, and sooner part with all things upon earth than yield a syllable of this priceless word. So hold it as to remember it, to meditate upon it, to feed upon it. So hold it as to assimilate it, as when a man gets bread into himself and it builds up his frame, becoming one with himself, so that there is no getting him away from it or it from him. Read, mark, learn and inwardly digest the word. Hold it also by obeying it. Yield yourself up to its sway, obey the precept, catch its spirit, follow out the will of God. If we thus hear and keep the word of God, our Master declares that however blessed may be the virgin of whom He was born, still more are we blessed, because we are hearing the word of God, and keeping it. I again cannot help saying, happy are the lips that have to speak this morning, and to tell you of a blessing not shut up to a few, nor long ago spent upon one favored person, but open to all such as joyfully hear and willingly retain the word of God.

But why is this blessing so very remarkable? It is, my dear friends, because *it is spiritual*. Everything that is of the flesh must die. All relationships to Christ that were carnal passed away. Those who had known Him after the flesh, before long after the flesh knew Him no more. When He had risen from the dead He said to the holy woman, "Touch Me not," He was not now to be known in an outward fashion. Today no one is rated high in the kingdom of God, because, like James, he was "the Lord's brother," or like the apostles, the Lord's attendants, or like Mary, the Lord's mother. In the spiritual kingdom relationship is not of blood or of birth. All external distinctions of place, race, and descent are abolished. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." The Father seeks such to worship Him, and such He finds, but nothing else is precious in His sight. To hear the word of God aright is a spiritual act. To keep that word is a spiritual operation, affecting the heart, the conscience, and the whole man, and hence it is lasting, yes,

everlasting, and for this reason it stands high above everything else in the estimation of the Savior as a ground of blessedness.

Now listen to me for a moment while I set forth the excellence of this blessedness. If those who hear God's word and keep it are more blessed than even was Mary who was the mother of our Lord, then any other form of blessedness must be very secondary to the hearing of the word of God and keeping it. For instance, do you happen to be rich? Say not that the rich are blessed, "blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." Are you endowed with talent? Do not wrap yourselves up in conceit, do not say, "Blessed are we because we have great gifts." "Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." Are you a person held in high esteem, and justly beloved?—yet do not make an idol of man's regard, for "Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." Have you attained to considerable influence? Then thank God for it, and use it rightly, but remember that this is not blessedness, but "Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." Are you enjoying good health? That is one of the greatest of earthly blessings, whatever else you miss, you certainly have a great favor in being free from pain and disease, but health is not blessedness. "Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." If you were on a sickbed in the most poverty stricken attic in this city, and if you had no gifts, and had even lost your sight, yet if inwardly you heard the word of God and kept it, you would be blessed amid all your poverty.

I am going a step further; if any of you possess high religious privileges do not pride yourselves on them as though these alone were blessedness; equally blessed are any who hear God's word, and keep it. Somebody might have said, blessed were the apostles, for they cast out devils and healed the sick. Did they not go back to the Master and say, "Even the devils are subject unto us through Your name"? "Yes," said He, "notwithstanding in this rejoice not; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." Perhaps you will say, "Blessed is the man who can preach to a multitude. Blessed is the man who can lead thousands to Christ." It is so, but yet, "Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." Blessed is the Sunday school teacher, who sees her children saved. Yes, the successful worker is blessed, but even more certainly is he blessed who hears and keeps the sacred word. This blessing rises above all others, and shines with a more heavenly radiance. Again I add, what a mercy that it is within our reach!

This should warn you against priding yourselves upon your relationship to good or great men. Do not say, "My father was a minister," or, "My mother is a saint in heaven." Yes, there is an honor about such a pedigree, but true blessedness comes not in that way, or else Ishmael, and Esau, and Absalom had been blessed. Not he that is born after the flesh, but he that is according to promise, is truly blessed. There is no form of blessedness which exceeds this of hearing the word of God, and keeping it. This seems a commonplace business, but it is not common in the sight of God. This which appertains to the whole family of hearers and believers is, after all, the gem of the casket, the Kohinoor among the jewels. Since to hear the word of God and keep it is a higher blessing

than to bring forth the Babe of Bethlehem, it is superior to all other imaginable blessings which can be found beneath the skies.

III. So now we close by considering this as A BLESSEDNESS TO BE AT ONCE ENJOYED. I breathe to heaven this earnest prayer that we may now enter into this blessedness. Let us see if we cannot sit still in our seats for a while, and drink in this wine on the lees well refined.

This blessedness belongs to the present. Blessed are they that are hearing the word of God, and keeping it. It is not a remote, but an immediate blessedness. While you are hearing and keeping God's word you are then blessed. The blessedness is for this world, and for you. "But I am so cast down." Yes, but you are blessed! "Alas! I bear such a burden of afflictions." Yes, but you are blessed! "Alas! I have not known a good time of late." No, but you are blessed! Your blessedness does not depend upon your fancies and feelings. If you hear the word of God, and keep it, you are at this moment blessed. But says one, "If an angel appeared to me, and said, 'Blessed are you among women,' I would be very happy." Behold, the angels' Lord and King appears to you this morning in this blessed Book, and speaks out of it with living, loving tones, saying, "Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." You are blessed! Does not that assurance make you happy? It ought to do so. It ought to fill you with a calm, serene delight. Jesus says I am blessed, and though, just for the moment sense does not confirm the declaration, yet faith believes it. "Blessed is she that believes: for there shall be a performance of the things that are spoken." Faith finds a present blessedness in the word of God which she hears and keeps.

That blessedness lies, in a great measure, in the very act of hearing and keeping God's word. I can speak experientially in this instance. I bear my witness that whenever God speaks to me I feel in listening to His voice a blessedness. The act of bowing the mind to receive communications from God is most pleasurable, and the actual sense of those communications is supremely so. When I sit down with my opened Bible, and let the divine truth enter my mind and permeate my thoughts and my affections, I would not change places with the angel Gabriel. To hear the voice of God as truth is spoken home to my heart by the Holy Spirit is better music to my soul than could be yielded by harps of angels or songs of shining ones. I hope that sometimes in this house of prayer, when the gospel has been preached, and God has spoken through me, you have felt an exceeding joy in hearing His word. You have felt "Oh, that these services could last forever!" and you have sighed for the place—

"Where congregations never break up,
And Sabbaths have no end."

Hearing the word of God is in itself an intense delight. I do not mean the bare hearing of sermons, nor the reading of good books, nor even the reading of the Bible in the letter, but when the inner ear is really affected by God's own word, oh then we know life, and light, and heaven! The primeval darkness passed away when God sent forth His word. He said, "Light be," and light was. The entrance of His word gives light. All other lights seem dim candles compared with this divine sun. If the Lord's

word has ever said, "Peace be unto you," then the Lord has breathed His own calm into your heart, and you have felt that you are truly blessed.

This blessedness lies also in the retaining of God's word in the soul, in the laying it up and storing it, and especially in the obeying of it. When I feel I am doing God's will I am supremely happy. Active obedience is present enjoyment to the spiritual mind; in keeping His commandments there is great reward. Whenever you have a question about a course of conduct, you are unhappy in it, but when you feel, "This which I am about to do is according to God's mind, I have scriptural warrant for it, and I am called to it," why then you are perfectly at ease. If everybody were to quibble, you would not mind, and if you yourself suffered in consequence of doing it, you would take joyfully the spoiling of your goods. Assured obedience to the word is the surest road to a present happiness.

When a man has once broken the shell of carnality, and has burst forth into the new world where God can be heard, he has entered the kingdom of heaven. God cannot be heard in this carnal nature of ours, which is like the adder, which cannot be charmed. While we are ruled by the flesh we are in a silent land as to God, but when we break loose of the flesh, and enter into the new world of spiritual life and peace, then we are conscious that God has communications with us, for that is what is meant by His "word," and this fact blesses us. When the Lord manifests Himself to us as He does not unto the world—this is heaven! Whether we are in the body or out of it, the reception of communications from God to our hearts, and the storing up of those communications, is a blessedness which excels all that Mary could have known merely as being after the flesh the mother of Jesus. Beloved, I do not need to expatiate here, for this is a matter for experiential test rather than for verbal description. Blessed are they, yes, infinitely blessed are they, who hear the word of God, and keep it. The hearing of it and the keeping of the word are in themselves blessedness.

This blessing is not dependent upon outward circumstances. If you hear God's word and keep it you may be very ill, and yet in spirit you will be well; you may be very feeble, and yet in spirit you will be strong; you may be dying, and yet you shall not die, for he that hears the word of God shall never see death. In listening to the Lord you have reached a region from which you look down upon the dust and smoke of time and sense. The things which are visible are transient dreams which have small power over you now that the word of the Lord has brought you out of the grave of the visible into the living world of the invisible. "We walk by faith, not by sight," and though now we see not our God, yet in our hearts we hear him, and this hearing fills us with joy unspeakable and full of glory. It is a matter of experience, and therefore though I should speak ten thousand words I could not set it forth. I exhort you to try it for yourselves.

Behold, my hearer, there lies at your feet the most precious jewel that ever sparkled before a monarch's eye. Neither earth nor heaven can produce its superior. You are a hearer, be a hearer, a real hearer. But be you not a hearer only, but a doer of the word, for that man is blessed in his deed. The blessedness of hearing and keeping the word of God, will

you prize it, or will you scorn it? What do you say; will you trample this pearl under your feet? I pray you, do not so. Oh take this peerless, priceless blessedness! It lies so near you; do not miss it. If you are wise you will listen to the voice of ancient prophecy which says, "Incline your ear, and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live." Every man desires happiness, and here it is. Blessedness is the aspiration of us all; lo, it lies before you. Wise men strive for blessedness, and even fools wish for it. My hearer, will you have it? You have not to climb to heaven to win it, nor dive to hell to earn it. You need not wait for ecstasies, nor stop till you have acquired great learning, or suffered severe trials; the word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart. If with your heart you will believe on the Lord Jesus, and with your mouth make confession of Him, you shall be saved; or, to put it in the words of the text, "Hear the word of God, and keep it." As soon as you have done this, while you are doing it, and as long as you do it, in hearing and in keeping God's word, there shall come to you a double blessing. God has blessed you, and you shall be blessed. Did you come in here this morning under a conscious curse? Come, then, hear the word of the Lord, and the curse is turned into a blessing. Has the blessing of former days seemed to fade of late? Then, again, hear and keep the good word of God. All other doctrine will cause your blessedness to dwindle.

If you are faint and weary, plunge into the word of God as a man does into a bath when he desires to be refreshed. You shall rise out of the waves of truth revived, refreshed, happy, blessed. O my hearers, the blessedness of my own soul lies at this moment in listening to the word of the living God; how I wish you all knew this sweetness! Then shall you young women be blessed virgins, and you mothers blessed matrons, and all of us blessed men and blessed women. "You are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and your offspring with you." God says, "Surely blessing I will bless you." May you never lose a sense of that blessing! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—LUKE 1:26-56.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—485, 775, 493.

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

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

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

CLEANSING: A COVENANT BLESSING
NO. 1921

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

"Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, I will cleanse you." Ezekiel 36:25.

THIS is one of the opening words of the glorious covenant of grace. Ezekiel's copy of the covenant is full and clear, and deserves to be written in letters of gold and hung up in the best chamber of every believer's dwelling. This is the *Magna Charta* of saints; the title deed of the land of our inheritance. Glorious covenant of grace, our heart delights in every line of promise wherewith you are enriched!

You perceive that this promise deals with *sin,* and it deals with sin because sin broke the first covenant, and thus ruined us all. Sin must be removed before covenant relationship can be re-established. Sin must be purged from the conscience before covenant communion can be enjoyed. Sin must be abhorred before covenant union can be consummated. Blessed be God, sin shall be washed away, for thus it is written in the everlasting covenant.

Sin is the great plague and pest of our lives, now that we are awakened to discern between good and evil, and now that the new heart and the right spirit have been put within us. Is it not well that this cause of misery should be destroyed? It is sin, my brethren, that keeps us away from God. Should not this barrier be utterly broken down and swept out of the way? It was because of sin that we needed to be reconciled to God by the death of His Son. Should not that atoning death effectually kill sin? Sin has done all the mischief. At first it withered Paradise, and sowed the earth with thorns and thistles, and ever since it has brought forth the same painful crop. Still it saps our strength; it destroys our comfort; it robs us of usefulness; it is the foe of all good; it is all ills in one. O curse of curses, fountain of hell, and father of the devil, you unutterably horrible monster, sin! Shall we not be doubly blessed when we are rid of you? We certainly should never fear death if we had no sin, neither need we even fear the devil himself, for, if there were no traitor within the city, Mansoul might laugh to scorn all the attacks of her enemies without.

Sin, to the awakened sinner, is his burden, his misery, his horror. It is a nightmare which haunts him; he can never escape from it. Like David, he cries, "My sin is ever before me." Even when sin is forgiven, the memory of it often makes a man go softly all his days. We could bear disease if we were cured of sin, we could bear the world's troubles if there

were not these spiritual sorrows. We could be content to pine in prison on bread and water all the rest of our natural lives if we could be clear from sin. Yes, I guarantee you that the darkest dungeon would be a bright Paradise to a believer, if there he could be exempt from the temptation, from the remembrance, and from the presence of sin. It is therefore a very blessed thought on the part of our God to make the covenant to bear so much upon our sin and our sinfulness, and especially to make it open with this unconditional promise of infinite love, "Then will I sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, I will cleanse you." As the laver at the Tabernacle door, so stands this promise at the entrance of the covenant. Let us wash and be clean.

I. Our first remark at this time shall be that GOD BEGINS TO DEAL WITH HIS PEOPLE WHILE THEY ARE YET IN SIN. The text evidently implies this. He does not wait until they are clean before He bestows His love and pity upon them. He does not wait till they have saved themselves, and then come to them with a nominal salvation. He does not make promises of purification to them upon condition that they cleanse themselves, but He comes to them according to the riches of His grace, even when they are dead in trespasses and sins. He finds them in all their defilement, rebellion, and iniquity, and He deals with them just as they are. Jesus saves sinners. God's love comes to those who in no degree merit it. His grace stoops to the ruin of the fall and lifts us up from it.

These are very simple words, you say, but there are those here to whom these plain sentences will sound like the ringing of the silver trumpets of jubilee. I know them, for I once was one of them—they are a people sighing because of their defilement, which they mourn over, but cannot remove. Dear hearts, you have not to look for any good in yourselves when you come to God, you are to come just as you are. However filthy, however enslaved by idols you may have been, however much your own heart condemns you, you are to come to Jesus on terms, not of merit, but of grace, and you are to approach Him as sinners, without any further qualification. Christ is a Savior, who came to save His people from their sins, and His salvation, therefore, begins with them while they are yet in their sins. He does not wait till He spies out some sound spot in the patient, but when he is covered all over with leprosy from head to foot, and there is not one sound speck in him as big as the point of a pin, then it is that the great Physician comes and makes the leprous one to be clean. This is plain enough, if you will look at the text, for first, it is clear that *those to whom God makes this promise of His covenant are unclean and unfit for fellowship with Him*. He speaks of their filthiness, yes of "all their filthiness," so that there was much of it, for God's *alls* are by no means trifles. There were also idols about, and many of them, for He speaks of "all your idols." These are abominations unto the Lord, but there they are, and they must be put out of the way. He says, "Then will I sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean," not, "You are clean,

and therefore you may come to Me," but, "I will come to you and make you clean."

Some time ago we explained the type of the ashes of the red cow, how they were kept in water, ready to be used and applied to all persons who became ceremonially unclean. After this water had been sprinkled upon them, they were permitted to return to the camp and go up to the Lord's Tabernacle, but until that purification had been applied they were shut out from fellowship with God and His people. The people of God could not converse with them, the priest of God could not commune with them; God Himself would have nothing to do with them. They were unclean, and so were set aside under a kind of quarantine not to come near the camp, lest the rest of the people should be polluted by them. Now that is just where God finds His people when He begins with them. They are not fit for communion; they are not fit that the saints of God should associate with them, nor that they should stand in the holy place of the Most High. They are not fit for any service, for the Lord will not have the unclean to bear His vessels. Their prayers are defiled; their praises are defiled; there is nothing about them but what is unclean. In such a condition the man could do nothing acceptable to God, his uncleanness put him out of court, and rendered him altogether incapable of pleasing the pure and holy God. He that was unclean made everything unclean that he touched, the pollution was most contagious. If he sat upon a chair, no one else might sit thereon again, for the seat was unclean. If he touched a vessel in the tent, the vessel was unclean, and the tent was unclean. He was a source of defilement, and wherever he went he spread pollution. Such is every sinner in the sight of God. He is a well of foul waters, a fountain of bitterness. He is defiled and defiling. The God of all grace visits His people at the first when they are in this terrible condition.

I may be speaking to one who is ready to cry out, "I am not fit to be in the house of God tonight. I am not worthy to lift my eyes to the place where His honor dwells." That is where He finds you, just there, and it is to you in this sad position that the covenant of grace refers. Our Redeemer comes to us in our very worst estate. As I was speaking to an aged brother in Christ, who is, probably, very near home, he said, "I feel what a blessed thing it is still to come to Christ with the cry, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.' I do not rest upon past experience, or upon anything else, but I constantly begin at the beginning. I come to Jesus even as I did at the first, only more humbly, and with a more intense sincerity than I ever knew before." I am sure there is wisdom in this course, and in no other. If the covenant of grace did not deal with sinners as sinners I should be afraid to come to Christ, but because it opens its mouth wide to me while I am yet unclean and polluted by sin, I feel that it meets my case. The free grace of the covenant does not come half the way, and say to me when I am nearly dead, "Get up and take what I give you, and I will deliver you." But it comes, like the good Samaritan, where I am. It sees me to be unconscious, and it awakens me. When it sees me conscious of my wounds it pours in the oil and the wine. When it sees my weakness to be so great that I cannot stir a step, it sets me on its own beast, and

takes me to the inn. When it marks my utter poverty, so that I am not worth so much as two pence, it does not ask me to pay my own shot, but discharges everything for me, and leaves its promise that whatever more is needed shall be freely given. O blessed charity of covenant love! It will not be turned aside by our abominable filthiness, nor will it leave us because of our idols. Glorious grace, which begins with us where sin and death have left us!

You may notice in the text, or gather it therefrom by clear inference—*that these people with whom God dealt were not only unclean, but they could not cleanse themselves*. It is a rule with miracles, as well miracles of the Spirit as miracles of the body, that, God never does what others can do. As long as there is strength left in the natural laws God does not go beyond them, but our extremity is God's opportunity. Now, inasmuch as the text brings in God, saying, "Then will I sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean," it is clear that this evil could not be cleansed without the divine interposition. There was no other way for the purging of the chosen ones but by the direct interposition of the Lord. Oh, but divines have fine notions nowadays! It appears, according to the latest information, that, children are not now born in sin as they used to be. They say that certain highly favored children commence life in a most extraordinary way; they are born gracious at the very first. They do not need any regeneration or conversion, for the stock is so superior that the branches naturally bring forth good fruit. I have never read of such people in the Scriptures, but I am often told that there are such nowadays; at least, their parents and their parsons say so. Of old it used to be, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," and only "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." That, of course, is very old-fashioned doctrine. Well, when we have a new-fashioned God, I dare say we shall have new-fashioned truth, but at present truth seems to me to be as immutable as God Himself. If it is true today, it was true yesterday, and will be true even to the end, even as God Himself changes not. As for myself, I know that I was born in sin, and I know that in me, that is in my flesh, there dwells no good thing. I know also that I once tried to purge and cleanse my own heart, and labored at it, I believe, as honestly as any person that lived. I went about to seek a righteousness of my own, and I endeavored to get quit of sin, but my failure was complete. I do not advise any other person to try self-healing. It brought me to despair; it drove me almost to the loss of reason. The more I scrubbed and cleansed, the blacker I became. I washed my black self, and he was blacker after I had bathed him than he was before. I only saw how black the black man was when I had whitened him for the moment with my soap. Job said, "If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean; yet shall You plunge me in the ditch, and my own clothes shall abhor me," and it was so with me. Therefore I speak of my own experience, and taught by my own failure, I cannot urge any man to seek cleansing by his own doings or efforts, but I urge him to accept that cleansing which God has promised in the covenant of grace. Cleansing cannot come from any other place, therefore seek it of the Lord, who says, "I will sprinkle clean water

on you, and you shall be clean." If you go about through heaven, and earth, and hell, you shall find no other detergent that shall take away sin but the precious blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God. You shall sooner redden every wave of the Atlantic as you plunge your hands therein than you shall take away one spot of condemnation from off your soul. There is your sin, and there it must be eternally unless Jehovah Himself shall blot it out. He that is filthy shall be filthy still, throughout the ages, unless the Divine One interposes. Our only hope lies in this faithful word, "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean." The Lord begins to save His people when as yet they have no strength, and cannot cleanse themselves.

More than that, when God begins to deal with His people *many of them have a special filthiness*. "From all your filthiness, and from all your idols, I will cleanse you." When He begins with them they are given up to their idols. Other lords have dominion over them, and these lords lead them into filthiness. Some upon whom God has looked with everlasting love have become, before their conversion, openly, manifestly, loathsomely filthy, and yet He begins in His grace with them. The harlot—she strays into the house of God, and feels that she has no right to be there, and yet the day comes when she stands behind the Master, washing His feet with her tears, and wiping them with the hairs of her head, because she has had much forgiven. The man who has been guilty of foul vices, of which we say but little, but which he would gladly weep over with tears of blood at their remembrance—when the Lord of love comes to such a horrible offender in a way of mercy, He says to him, even to him, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and as a cloud, your sins."

I am afraid I do not always speak plainly enough, though I try to do so. Let me try again to cast in the big net. The Lord Jesus Christ forgives thieves and robbers, and liars, and drunks, and criminals of all sorts. The Lord Jesus has mercy upon those who have been blasphemers. "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." I have seen with great joy cases of infidels who have mocked at the Scriptures, denied the deity of Christ, and persecuted God's people, they have stepped in and heard the gospel, and they have been melted down by it, rescued from their obstinacy, and cleansed from their iniquity. In fact, there are such here tonight. "Such were some of you: but you were washed." Oh, it is not for me to tell all that I know of how the Lord has taken some of the ringleaders in the service of Satan, first in all manner of mischief, and has cast the devil out of them, and made them to sit at His feet, clothed, and in their right mind. We believe in a sinners' gospel. To the guilty we preach remission.

The heathen of old once reported that ours was the religion of the most abandoned. They laughed at Christianity, for they said it was like the building of Rome, when Romulus received everybody that was in debt and discontented, and all the criminals from all the towns round about came to make the city of Rome. There is much truth in the statement; it is a very good figure, though meant to be a slander. The Lord does re-

ceive the devil's runaways. If there is one here that is servant to that black master, I would recommend him to run to Christ tonight, and not give his master five minutes' notice. Quit the tyrant's employment and run for it at once. But then look at this, the Lord receives sinners to cleanse them. He does not receive them that they may remain as they were. The Lord Jesus receives sinners just as teachers receive children into a ragged school. It is their glory that it is a ragged school. The more ragged and the dirtier, the more welcome the child. But why do they receive the ragged child? Why, to wash him, to teach him, to clothe him, to instruct him. We do not receive ragged children for the love of their rags, nor to keep them in their rags, but that they may be taught, cleansed, and elevated. Such is my Master's house of mercy. It is a hospital, sick folk are always welcome. It is not a place for spreading disease, nor for treating it lightly; it is the place where disease is discovered, set apart, and made to appear in all its horror, in order that it may be conquered and destroyed. Nobody speaks so sternly against sin as Jesus and those who believe His gospel, but yet it forever stands true, "This man receives sinners." You may come to Jesus, dear friend, whoever you are. Into whatever sin and iniquity you have plunged, you may come right now without any hesitation or deliberation, for the gate stands wide open, and the blessed Lord, with His nail prints still in His hands, stands there to welcome you and say, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Though your sins are as scarlet they shall be as white as snow."

Still is that declaration grandly true, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." Still does God meet men while they are yet in the blackness and filth and degradation of their sin, and there and then, just as they are, He says concerning them, "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, I will cleanse you." O poor wretched sons of Adam, how earnestly would I invite you to Christ! I preach a Savior for the worst and vilest of you. Oh that you would come to Him! I know your house. It is stuffed full with idols of one sort or another. You delight in strong drink! That is your Moloch, or perhaps some sin of the flesh has fascinated you and carried you away, and your house is ruled by Venus and Bacchus, and other dunghill deities. Ah me, what chambers of imagery there are in this city! Notwithstanding all that, the Lord of love will come to your house with His salvation, turn those idols out, and reign in their stead. Your life, it may be, is full of filthiness, and as you sit here you are remembering it to your heart's sorrow. Be of good cheer, you broken down ones, for the Lord Jesus will come to you just as you are, and put your filthiness away.

Do not think that I am talking now only to those who have been grossly immoral, though I do speak to them most certainly in literal terms, but even to those who have never sinned after that similitude I speak at this time. Thank God, there are some who have been kept by the restraints of education from ever going into the more outwardly filthy sins. It was so in my case, I might claim as to most actual sins to be blameless, but, oh,

if there ever was a wretch on earth that felt his filthiness more than I did, I pity him. I loathed myself—utterly so. How often I wished that I had never been born! It seemed horrible to me that such a being should have lived at all. To have lived so long in sin and unbelief seemed still more a marvel, and though I was not then fifteen it appeared horrible to have lived so long without loving Christ. What an awful wretch I judged myself to be to have been surrounded with such mercy, and not to have thought of my God! It was beyond measure shocking to have lived those years without love, without trust, without delight in God. I felt myself to be a foul and filthy a thing that ought to be cast into the common sewer of the universe, and swept away. But, oh, this blessed word, "From all your filthiness, and from all your idols, I will cleanse you." This is spoken as only God can speak. See, then, how God begins with us, just where we are, to the praise of the glory of His own grace. So much upon our first head.

II. The second is this—that GOD PROVIDES FOR THE CLEANSING OF THOSE TO WHOM HE COMES IN SOVEREIGN GRACE. "I will sprinkle *clean water* upon you." He does not ask them to find the purification, but He brings it Himself. Where could this, "clean water," be found by mortal man? Though he should climb up to the heights of the Alps to melt the virgin snows, or descend into the deep which couches beneath where come the sparkling springs, yet he could find no "clean water" that could take out the stain of sin. God Himself provides, it is the way of Him, in the mount it shall be seen that He is Jehovah Jireh. The type is carried out in its antitype in this way—that God has provided a system of cleansing men, perfect in itself, and just, and right, and effectual. Pure water is the best of purifiers, and the Lord has provided that which is the surest purification from sin. When under the old Mosaic Law they took water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled the unclean therewith, he was cleansed ceremonially, and now under the gospel God has provided a wondrous way by which, being Himself perfectly pure, He can put away the impurities of our nature, and the iniquities of our lives.

It is a righteous way. Do you need that I explain to you the way in which God puts away our filthiness? Whether *you* need it or not, there are many who do need it, and therefore we must have the gospel over again. You put bread and salt on your table at every meal, and even so every sermon should have the gospel in it. God must be just; even if He would forgive sin He must still be just. Sin must not go unpunished; it would be ruinous that such a thing should be. Therefore the Lord took sin and laid it on His Son, that His Son might bear what was due for our transgressions. This the Lord Jesus did as our substitute and Savior. "He His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree." He made a full atonement and expiation for the guilt of men, so that "whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." In addition to that, God has given the Holy Spirit as a gift of Christ on His ascension, and that Holy Spirit is here to renew men in their hearts, to take away from them the love of sin, to give them a new life, to create in them a new heart and a right spirit, and so to change their inward longings and de-

sires that their outward conduct shall become altogether different from what it was before. Here are two cleansings—the blood of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit, and these are as clean water. God can justly forgive you, my fellow sinner, and God can totally change you and make you to be as though you had been new-born tonight and were now to begin afresh. You see it is a clean way which God has devised; there is nothing in it which favors wrong or injustice.

And what a *simple way* it is, as well as clean! "I will sprinkle clean water upon you." The application of the blood of Jesus Christ to the conscience, and the coming of the Holy Spirit to the heart, is as simple as the sprinkling of water. The wisdom of God made the rite by which the leper was cleansed under the law very simple, but even simpler is the act by which God applies the merit of His dear Son to us. Oh, that we might have the blood of Jesus sprinkled on our hearts at once by faith. Oh to feel the blood of sprinkling to which every believer in Christ has come—the blood that "speaks better things than that of Abel!" It is a very simple way.

It is *a way of universal adaptation*, too; for wherever there is a soul on whom God has looked with love He can apply to that soul the blood of sprinkling. Whoever you may be, you cannot cleanse yourself, but God can sprinkle you with this clean water. He can save you by the merit of His Son, and by the renewing of the Holy Spirit. No one is outside of this possibility, for the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin. If you are guilty tonight and you cry for mercy, that mercy can come at you, and you can come at that mercy, for so has the Lord put it, "Then will I sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean."

It is a way of *unfailing efficacy,* for He says, "From all your filthiness, and from all your idols, I will cleanse you." He does not only attempt the cleansing, but He accomplishes it. You may have a thousand sins, but this clean water can put the thousand sins away. Your heart may be a very pandemonium of idols, but the power of the Holy Spirit can break them all to pieces, and can do it for you at once. The "then" of the text has to do with the time when Israel was full of sin. It has to do with such a time as there is with you unconverted men and women at this hour. Now, even now, in the midst of your filthiness and your idolatry, God can come with a high hand and an outstretched arm, and commence the work by which you shall be perfectly delivered. What though your heart is like the Augean stable, the labors of Hercules shall be outdone by the wonders of Jesus. He shall cast your sins into the depths of the sea. Your hardness of heart, your pride, your lust, your unbelief, your enmity, your fickleness, shall all go down at a stroke, as when Dagon fell before the incoming of the ark of God into the holy place. Oh, do it, Lord! Do it, we pray You, with many that have strayed into the Tabernacle tonight, that Your name may have the glory!

Thus we have come so far, and we see clearly that God begins with His people in their filthiness, and provides the means of their cleansing.

III. Thirdly, GOD HIMSELF APPLIES THIS MEANS OF CLEANSING. See how He puts it, "Then will *I* sprinkle"—*"I* sprinkle clean water on you,

and you shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, I will cleanse you."

Ah, dear sirs! If God had only provided the medicine, but had never brought it to us, we could not have found it, reached it, or applied it. If He had made the plaster and had left it by the side of the wounded man, the poor wretch would have died, for he never could have laid it to his own wound. The same grace which "first devised the way to save rebellious man" carries out the entire plan from the beginning to the end. Who can sprinkle clean water on the foul sinner? "I will do it," says the Lord. I am sure that I speak to many brothers and sisters here whose experience will bear out what I am going to say, it was the Lord who made us first to feel that we were filthy, and that we loved idols. We were very fine people once—were we not? Our own righteousness was quite as good as that of anybody else, and a little better. If we had sinned, we had a great many excuses for our failings, and besides, we always meant to be so good by and by, therefore we felt that we ought not to be condemned, but rather to be commended. The Lord fetched us down from the tree, and made us lie at the bottom of it and cry for mercy. We would still have refused to taste of His mercy, and we would have perished in our sin if divine grace had not convinced us of our folly. Some of you remember when the Lord first revealed to you how much you needed to be cleansed, that discovery was a great part of the cleansing. Then did it not seem to you impossible that you could be cleansed from so much defilement? It seemed to me—I dare say it did to you—the most extraordinary thing in the world to believe in Jesus. I could not make it out. How could *I* get to Christ? I could see that He was a Savior. I could see that He saved others, and I was glad that He did, but the thing was, how could *I* ever come to be personally a partaker of His power to save? I heard about that woman touching the hem of the garment, and I felt that if Christ were before me, I would touch the hem of His garment with my finger, but I could not understand how I was to touch Him spiritually. To this day the simplest thing under heaven is perverted by our evil hearts into difficulty and mystery. Faith is as clear as the sun, yet many make it as dark as midnight. Our hearers are ingenious at misunderstanding us when we speak of faith. I tried one evening to explain faith as simply as I could, and I quoted that verse of Dr. Watts—

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Christ's kind arms I fall."

A young man came to me afterwards, and said that *he could not fall.* This perplexed me, for I thought such an assertion was impossible. It may be hard to stand, but it is easy to fall. Falling does not require strength, but the very reverse. I intended to express the abnegation of all doing and all effort, and the yielding all into the hands of Christ. But my young friend could not see it, nor could I make him comprehend it. All electric light would be of no use to a stone-blind eye. O God, it is as much a miracle of Your grace to give us faith as to give us a Savior to believe in, and he that has faith knows that it is so. Despite the simplicity of faith, no man ever

would have savingly believed in Jesus Christ if the Lord had not guided him, and led him into that faith.

Oh yes, the clean water is provided, but the clean water must be sprinkled by another hand than ours if we are to be cleansed. Are we not witnesses of this? Do we not acknowledge that when at last we were made clean through the precious blood of Christ the closing act of faith was worked in us by the Holy Spirit? That was no small thing, that passing from death unto life, that being washed in the fountain filled with blood; neither was the faith a trifle which brought us that washing; all, all was of grace. I have heard a great deal about human free will. I never felt any inclination to ascribe the great blessing of confidence in Christ, and consequent full justification, to any uncreated willingness of mine. I was "made willing in the day of His power," and to God I must give the glory. Oh, that bright, that happy day when I could say—

"'Tis done! The great transaction's done!
I am my Lord's, and He is mine."

At that day I could not help also saying, "He drew me"—

"He drew me, and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice divine."

Yes, it is God that applies the power which purifies.

And all the way through the rest of life it is just the same. "All things are of God." If He that has brought me so far towards heaven does not help me throughout the rest of my journey, I must die even within sight of the Promised Land. If the Lord is not with you, even if you should get your foot upon the diamond doorstep of heaven, and your finger on the golden latch, you could not enter. Without fresh grace to carry us the rest of the way all our previous journey is in vain. When we get to heaven, it will be, "Glory be to God forever, and ever, and ever." We shall not hum even a single note to ourselves for our own glory, or on account of any part of the work for which we deserved credit, but we shall ascribe the whole of our salvation to infinite love, and undeserved favor, and to the unceasing faithfulness and power of our gracious covenant God.

Do let us come back to this blessed text, and read it again, and then conclude our sermon with our last point, "Then will I sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall he clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, I will cleanse you."

IV. I close with this last remark, THE LORD EFFECTUALLY CLEANSES ALL HIS PEOPLE.

First, He cleanses them from all their filthiness. I do want to dwell on that for a minute. *"From all your filthiness* will I cleanse you." *All* of it. Oh, what a vast "all" that is! *"All* your filthiness"; all the filthiness of your birth-sin; all the filthiness of your natural temperament, constitution, and disposition. "From all your filthiness will I cleanse you." All the filthiness that came out of you in your childhood, that was developed in you in your youth, that still has vexed your manhood, and perhaps even now dishonors your old age. From all your actual filthiness, as well as from all your original filthiness, will I cleanse you. From all your secret filthiness, and from all your public filthiness; from everything that was wrong in the family; from everything that was wrong in the business; from eve-

rything that was wrong in your own heart—"From all your filthiness will I cleanse you." From all your pride. What a filthy thing that is! From all your unbelief. What an abominable thing that is! From all your tainted imaginations; from all your lusts; from all your wrong words; from all your covetousness; from all your murmuring; from all your anger; from all your malice; from all your envy; from all your distrust; "From all your filthiness will I cleanse you."

Just read right down the Ten Commandments and then stop at each and say, "Lord, You have said, From all your filthiness will I cleanse you. Lord, cleanse me in both ways; take away the evil of the sin, and take away my tendency to the sin—

'Let the water and the blood,
From His riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.'"

Oh, beloved, that seems to me to be so full of richness—"From all your filthiness will I cleanse you." Do not believe that any filthiness need stay upon you in practice. As to the matter of sanctification, do not say to yourself, "I cannot overcome this sin." You can, you must overcome all sin through Jesus Christ. "From all your filthiness will I cleanse you." Do not say to yourself, "I always was quick-tempered, and I must always remain so, for this is a part of my natural temperament." No; "From all your filthiness will I cleanse you." I know that a certain troop of our sins are hard to kill in battle, and they need to be sharply looked after lest they continue to plague us. They get into the cave of our secret hearts, and there they hide themselves away in great quietness, biding their time. They do not even whisper, and we half fancy that they are dead; they are alive enough, as we shall soon see, if we are not awake to them. If we are foolish we are content to roll a big stone at the mouth of the cave, and let the rascals live in their den. This is dangerous work, and when our Joshua comes to us He puts an end to the perilous experiment. He cries, "Bring them out. Hang them up before the sight of the sun, for these enemies must not live." God help us to never tolerate any known sin. We too readily fall into evil habits, but oh, for grace to keep out of them. Do not excuse sin so much as to call it an "infirmity," call it rather an infamy, and scout it from your presence. We do unguardedly yield to sin, but, brethren, we must not excuse ourselves, but we must seek with all our might to obtain perfect holiness. Oh, to know the fullness of this blessing—"From all your filthiness will I cleanse you."

And then it is added that we shall be cleansed *"from all our idols."* We are all of us idolaters by nature and by practice. The unregenerate man has always an idol. He will worship anything rather than his God; yes, he will sooner worship himself than his Savior. Even the Christian may find to his own surprise that his dear Rachel whom he loves so much has managed to hide the idols away under the camel's furniture, and she is even now sitting on them and concealing them. I do not know an idol that is more apt to escape being broken than the idol that some beloved Rachel protects. But it must not be, "the idols He shall utterly abolish." God's way is, "From all your idols will I cleanse you." If there is anything,

beloved, that has our love more than God, it is an idol, and we must be purged from it. This is not a threat but a promise; it is a great blessing to have our images of jealousy put away. If you make an idol of a child, either that child will die, or something else will happen which will make your idol to be your burden. If you want to kill your husband, idolize him. If you desire ill to a beloved one, set him up in Christ's place. We can, alas, make idols of baser things than these, we can love gold, or dress, or honor, or rank, or even a forbidden thing. We are so dull and carnal that our affections are soon captured by earthly objects. Whatever it is that we idolize, God says, "I will cleanse you from it." And I think that we can say, in response, "Lord, be it so"—

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

We have no wish that any of our old lords should retain or regain dominion over us.

Now, poor sinner! Do you see what the Lord can do with you? He can break you loose from your temptations. He can set you free from every sin that holds you in captivity. Pardon and purity Jesus gives most freely. Trust Him to cleanse you, and the work shall be surely done. Trust Him that did hang upon the tree to redeem His people, and you are delivered. Trust Him to sanctify you wholly by His Spirit, and He will purify you till every spot and wrinkle is gone. It is His work to save His people from their sins, believe in Him, and you shall triumph in His salvation.

May the Lord add His blessing, for Jesus' sake!

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
EZEKIEL 36:16-32.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—46, 245, 678.

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

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

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

CONCERNING DEATH
NO. 1922

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 26, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For I know that You will bring me to death,
and to the house appointed for all living."
Job 30:23.

JOB suffered from a terrible sickness, which filled him with pain both day and night. It is supposed that, in addition to his grievous eruptions upon the skin, he endured great difficulty in breathing. He says in the eighteenth verse, "By the great force of my disease is my garment changed: it binds me about as the collar of my coat." His clothes were sodden, and clung to him; his skin was blackened, and seemed to be tightened. He was like a man whose tunic strangles him, the collar of his garment seemed to be fast bound about his throat. Those who have suffered from it know what distress is occasioned by this complaint, especially when they are also compelled to cry, "My bones are pierced in me in the night season: and my sinews take no rest." At such a time Job thought of death, and surely if at any period in our lives we should consider our latter end, it is when the frail tent of our body begins to tremble, because the cords are loosened and the curtain is torn. It is the general custom with sick people to talk about "getting well," and those who visit them, even when they are gracious people, will see the tokens of death upon them and yet will speak as if they were hopeful of their recovery. I remember a father asking me when I prayed with a consumptive girl to be sure not to mention death. In such cases it would be far more sensible for the sick man to turn his thoughts towards eternity, and stand prepared for the great change. When our God by our affliction calls upon us to number our days, let us not refuse to do so. I admire the wisdom of Job, that he does not shirk the subject of death, but dwells upon it as an appropriate topic, saying, "I know that You will bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living."

Yet Job made a mistake in the hasty conclusion which he drew from his grievous affliction. Under depression of spirit he felt sure that he must very soon die, he feared that God would not relax the blows of His hand until his body became a ruin, and then he would have rest. But he did not die at that time. He was fully recovered, and God gave him twice as much as he had before. A life of usefulness, and happiness, and honor lay before him, and yet he had set up his own tombstone, and reckoned himself a dead man. It is a pity for us to pretend to predict the future, for we certainly cannot see an inch before us. As it is idle with daydreams to

fascinate the heart into a groundless expectation, so is it equally foolish to increase the evil of the day by forebodings of tomorrow. Who knows what is to be? Therefore should I wish to lift up the corner of the curtain, and peer into what God has hidden? Some of those who have been most sure that they would die soon have lived longer than others. A prophet once prayed to die, and yet he never saw death. From the lips of Elijah, who was to be caught up by a whirlwind into heaven, it was a strange prayer—"Take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers."

It is the part of a brave man, and especially of a believing man, neither to dread death nor to sigh for it, neither to fear it nor to court it. In patience possessing his soul, he should not despair of life when harshly pressed, and he should be always more eager to run his race well than to reach its end. It is no work of men of faith to predict their own deaths. These things are with God. How long we shall live on earth we know not, and need not wish to know. We have not the choosing of short or long life, and if we had such choice, it would be wise to refer it back to our God. "Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit," is an admirable prayer for living as well as for dying saints. To wish to pry between the folded leaves of the book of destiny is to desire a questionable privilege, doubtless we live better because we cannot foresee the moment when this life shall reach its *finis*.

Job made a mistake as to the date of his death, but he made no mistake as to the fact itself. He spoke truly when he said, "I know that You will bring me to death." Some day or other the Lord will call us from our home above ground to the house appointed for all living. I invite you this morning to consider this unquestioned truth. Do you start back? Why do you do so? Is it not greatly wise to talk about our last hours? "We want a cheerful theme." Do you? Is not this a cheerful theme to you? It is solemn, but it ought also to be welcome to you. You say that you cannot stand the thought of death. Then you greatly need it. Your shrinking from it proves that you are not in a right state of mind, or else you would take it into due consideration without reluctance. That is a poor happiness which overlooks the most important of facts. I would not endure a peace which could only be maintained by thoughtlessness. You have something yet to learn if you are a Christian, and yet are not prepared to die. You need to reach a higher state of grace, and attain to a firmer and more forceful faith. That you are as yet a babe in grace is clear from your admission that to depart and be with Christ does not seem to be a better thing for you than to abide in the flesh.

Should it not be the business of this life to prepare for the next life, and in that respect, to prepare to die? But how can a man be prepared for that which he never thinks of? Do you mean to take a leap in the dark? If so, you are in an unhappy condition, and I beseech you as you love your own soul to escape from such peril by the help of God's Holy Spirit.

"Oh," says one, "but I do not feel called upon to think of it." Why, the very season of the year calls you to it. Each fading leaf admonishes you. You will most surely have to die, why not think upon the inevitable? It is

said that the ostrich buries its head in the sand, and fancies itself secure when it can no longer see the hunter. I can hardly fancy that even a bird can be quite so foolish, and I beseech you do not enact such madness. If I do not think of death, yet death will think of me. If I will not go to death by meditation and consideration, death will come to me. Let me, then, meet it like a man, and to that end let me look it in the face. Death comes into our houses, and steals away our beloved ones. Seldom do I enter this pulpit without missing some accustomed face from its place. Never a week passes over this church without some of our happy fellowship being caught away to the still happier fellowship above. This week a youthful member has melted away, and her mourning parents are in our midst. We as a congregation are continually being summoned to remember our mortality, and so, whether we will hear him or not, death is preaching to us each time we assemble in this house. Does he come so often with God's message, and shall we refuse to hear? No, let us lend a willing ear and heart, and hear what God the Lord would say to us at this time.

Oh, you that are youngest, you that are most full of health and strength, I lovingly invite you not to put away this subject from you. Remember, the youngest may be taken away. Early in the life of my boys I took them to the old churchyard of Wimbledon and bade them measure some of the little graves within that enclosure, and they found several green hillocks which were shorter than themselves. I tried thus to impress upon their young minds the uncertainty of life. I would have every child remember that he is not too young to die. Let others know that they are not too strong to die. The stoutest trees of the forest are often the first to fall beneath the destroyer's axe. Paracelsus, the renowned physician of old time, prepared a medicine of which he said that if a man took it regularly he would never die, except it were of extreme old age, yet Paracelsus himself died a young man. Those who think they have found the secret of immortality will yet learn that they are under a strong delusion. None of us can discover a spot where we are out of bow-shot of the last enemy, and therefore it would be idiotic to refuse to think of it. A certain vainglorious French Duke forbade his attendants ever to mention death in his hearing, and when his secretary read to him the words, "The late King of Spain," he turned upon him with contemptuous indignation, and asked him what he meant by it. The poor secretary could only stammer out, "It is a title which they take." Yes, indeed, it is a title we shall all take, and it will be well to note how it will befit us. The King of terrors comes to kings, nor does he disdain to strip the pauper of his scanty flesh, to you, to me, to all he comes, let us all make ready for his sure approach.

I. First, then, very solemnly under the teaching of God's Spirit, I call your attention to a piece of PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE, "I *know* that You will bring *me* to death, and to the house appointed for all living." A general truth here receives a personal application.

Job knew that he should be brought to the grave, because he perceived *the universality of that fact in reference to others*. He lived on the

verge of an age when life was longer than now and yet the patriarch had never known a person who had not after a certain age left this earthly stage. Cast your eye over every land, glance from the pole to the equator, and along to the other pole, and see if this is not the universal law, that man must be dissolved in death. "It is appointed unto men once to die." Two men alone entered the next world without seeing death, but those two exceptions prove the rule. Another great exception is yet to come, which I would never overlook. Perhaps the Lord Jesus Christ may personally come before we see death, and when He comes we that are alive and remain shall not fall asleep, but even then "we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet, for the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." This is the great exception to the rule, and we cheerfully allow it to dwell upon our minds, but if the Master tarries, we ourselves shall not be exempt from the common rule. Die all we must. Dust to dust, ashes to ashes, must be the last word for us among the sons of men. I hope nobody here is so foolish as to suppose that he shall live on, and never be gathered with the great assembly in the house appointed for all living. Last week one poor fanatic who taught that she herself would never see corruption, was taken from the midst of her dupes to be laid in the sepulcher. A clergyman whom I well knew lectured upon his having found the means of living here forever, but he, too, has gone over to the great majority. That we can avoid the grave is a dream, an idle dream, not worthy of a moment's controversy. All flesh shall see corruption in due time, if it is not changed at the Lord's coming. "What man is he that lives, and shall not see death? Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?" In their myriads the races of the past have subsided into the earth. In one endless harvest death has reaped down all of woman born. Job knew that he himself should be brought to death because all others had been brought there.

He knew it also because *he had considered the origin of mankind*. In our text the Hebrew expression would run somewhat thus, "I know that You will bring me to death." He had never died before, yet the expression is constantly used, as in the following passage—"You turn man to destruction, and say, Return, you children of men." We were never in the grave before, how then can we return? Was it not said to Adam, "Dust you are, and unto dust shall you return?" We were taken out of the earth, and it is only by a prolonged miracle that this dust of ours is kept from going back to its kindred; the day will come when our earth shall embrace its mother, and so the body shall return to its original. If we had come from heaven we might dream that we should not die, if we had been cast in some celestial mold, as angels are, we might fancy that the grave would never encase us, but being of the earth earthy, we must go back to earth. Job says, "I have said to corruption, You are my father: to the worm, You are my mother and my sister." Thus we have affinities which call us back to the dust. Job knew this, and therefore seeing from where men came, he inferred, and inferred correctly, that he himself would return to the earth.

Further, *Job had a recollection of man's sin,* and knew that all men are under condemnation on account of it. Does he not say that the grave is a "house appointed for all living?" It is appointed simply because of the penal sentence passed upon our first parent, and in him upon the whole race. "Dust you are, and unto dust shall you return," was not for father Adam only, but for all the innumerable sons that come of his loins. "Death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." "In Adam all die." Our babes, who have not personally sinned, yet feel the blight of Adam's sin, and wither in the bud, our dear children who are nearing manhood and womanhood are cut down and gathered in their beauty, we also, in the prime and flower of life, bow our heads before the killing wind of death. As for our sires, bending each man upon his staff, their posture salutes the tomb towards which they bend. A common fall, and a common sin, have brought on us universal death. Look on our vast cemeteries, and say, "Who slew all these?" The only answer is, "Death came by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

Once more, *Job arrived at this personal knowledge through his own bodily feebleness*. Perhaps he had not always said, "I know that You will bring *me* to death," but now, as he sits upon the dunghill, and scrapes himself with the potsherd, and writhes in anguish, and is depressed in spirit, he realizes his own mortality. When the tent pole quivers in the storm, and the covering flaps to and fro in the wind, and the whole structure threatens to dissolve in the tempest, then the tenant of the habitation, chilled to his marrow, needs not to be instructed that his tabernacle is frail, he knows it well enough. We need many touches of the rod of affliction before we really learn the undeniable truth of our mortality. Every man, woman, and child in this place should unite with me in saying, "I know that You will bring *me* to death," and yet it is highly probable that a large number of us do not know this to be so. "It is a commonplace matter of fact which we all admit," cries one. I know it is so, and yet in the very commonness of the truth there lies a temptation to overlook its personal application. We know this as though we knew it not. To many it is not taken into the reckoning, and it is not a factor in their being. They do not number their days so as to apply their hearts unto wisdom. That poet was half inspired who said, "All men count all men mortal but themselves." Is it not so with us? We do not really expect to die. We reckon that we shall live a very considerable time yet. Even those who are very aged still think that as a few others have lived to an extreme old age, so may they. I am afraid there are few who could say with a gracious soldier, "I thank God I fear not death. These thirty years together I never rose from my bed in the morning and reckoned upon living till night."

Those who die daily will die easily. Those who make themselves familiar with the tomb will find it transfigured into a bed, the morgue will become a couch. The man who rejoices in the covenant of grace is cheered by the fact that even death itself is comprehended among the things which belong to the believer. I would to God we had learned this lesson. We should not then put death aside among the lumber, nor set it upon the shelf among the things which we never intend to use. Let us live as

dying men among dying men, and then we shall truly live. This will not make us unhappy, for surely no heir of heaven will fret because he is not doomed to live here forever. It is a sad sentence if we were bound over to dwell in this poor world forever. Who among us would wish to realize in his own person the fabled life of the Wandering Jew, or even of Prester John? Who desires to go up and down among the sons of men for twice a thousand years? If the Supreme should say, "Live here forever," it is a malediction rather than a benediction. To grow ripe and to be carried home like shocks of corn in their season, is not this a fit and fair thing? To labor through a blessed day, and then, at nightfall to go home and to receive the wages of grace—is there anything dark and dismal about that? God forgive you that you ever thought so! If you are the Lord's own child, I invite you to look this home-going in the face until you change your thought and see no more in it gloom and dread, but a very heaven of hope and glory.

Suffer not my text to be a dirge, but turn it into a golden psalm, as you say, "I know that You will bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living."

II. Having thus discoursed upon a piece of personal knowledge, I now beg you to see in my text the shining of HOLY INTELLIGENCE. Perhaps, when I read the words in your hearing, you did not notice all they contain. Let me then point out to you certain hidden jewels. Job, even in his anguish, does not for a moment forget his God. He speaks of Him here, "I know that *You* will bring me to death." *He perceives that he will not die apart from God.* He does not say his sore boils or his strangulation will bring him to death, but "YOU will bring me to death." He does not trace his approaching death to chance, or to fate, or to second causes, no, he sees only the hand of the Lord. To Him belong both life and death. Say not that the wasting consumption took away your darling; complain not that a fierce fever slew your father, but feel that the Lord Himself has done it. "It is the Lord; let Him do what seems Him good." Blame not the accident, neither complain of the pestilence, for Jehovah Himself gathers home His own. He only will remove you and me. "I know that *You* will bring *me* to death." There is to my heart much delicious comfort in the language before us. I love that old-fashioned verse—

"Plagues and deaths around me fly.
Till He bids I cannot die;
Not a single shaft can hit
Till the God of Love thinks fit."

In the midst of malaria and pest we are safe with God. "Because you have made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most High, your habitation; there shall no evil befall you, neither shall any plague come near your dwelling." Beneath the shadow of Jehovah's wing we need not be afraid for the terror by night, or for the arrow that flies by day, nor for the pestilence that walks in darkness. We are immortal till our work is done. Be you therefore quiet in the day of evil, rest you peaceful in the day of destruction, all things are ordered by wisdom and precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints. No forces in the world are outside of His control. God suffers no foes to trespass on the domain of

Providence. All things are ordained of God, and especially are our deaths under the peculiar oversight of our exalted Lord and Savior. He lives and was dead, and bears the keys of death at His girdle. He Himself shall guide us through death's iron gate. Surely what the Lord wills and what He Himself works cannot be otherwise than acceptable to His chosen! Let us rejoice that in life and death we are in the Lord's hands.

The text seems to me to cover another sweet and comforting thought, namely, that *God will be with us in death*. "I know that You will bring me to death." He will bring us on our journey till He brings us to the journey's end, Himself our convoy and our leader. We shall have the Lord's company even to our dying hour, "You will bring me to death." He leads me even to those still waters which men so much fear. "Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff they comfort me." Beloved, we live with God, do we not? Shall we not die with Him? Our life is one long holiday when the Lord Jesus keeps us company; will He leave us at the end? Because God is with us we go forth with joy, and are led forth with peace, the mountains and the hills break forth before us into singing, and all the trees of the field do clap their hands. Will they not be equally glad when we rise to our eternal reward? It is not living that is happiness, but living with God, it is not dying that will be wretchedness, but dying without God. The child has to go to bed, but it does not cry if mother is going upstairs with it. It is quite dark, but what of that? The mother's eyes are lamps to the child. It is very lonely and still. Not so, the mother's arms are the child's company, and her voice is its music. O Lord, when the hour comes for me to go to bed, I know that You will take me there, and speak lovingly into my ear, therefore I cannot fear, but will even look forward to that hour of Your manifested love. You had not thought of that, had you? You have been afraid of death, but you cannot be so any longer if your Lord will bring you there in His arms of love. Dismiss all fear, and calmly proceed on your way, though the shades thicken around you, for the Lord is your light and your salvation.

It may not be in the text, but it naturally follows from it, that *if God brings us to death, He will bring us up again*. Job, in another passage, declared that he was sure that God would vindicate His cause—"I know," says he, "that my Redeemer lives, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." Certain wise men who would expunge the very idea of a resurrection out of the Old Testament have tried to make out that Job expected to be restored and vindicated in this life, but he evidently did not expect any such thing, for, according to the text, it is clear that he feared he would die at once. We gather from this verse, by a negative process of reasoning, that the living Redeemer, and the vindication which was to be brought to him by that living Redeemer, were matters of hope in another life after death. O beloved, you and I know this truth from many declarations of our Lord in His divine book. Though we die in one sense, yet in another we shall not die, but live. Though our bodies shall for a little while sleep in their lowly resting places our souls

shall be forever with the Lord. We shall spend an interval as unclothed spirits in the company of Him to whom we are united by vital bonds, and then the trumpet of the archangel shall summon our bodies from their sleeping places to be reunited with our souls. These bodies, the comrades of our warfare, shall be companions of our victory. "This mortal must put on immortality." He who raised up Jesus shall also raise us up. We shall come forth from the land of the enemy in fullness of joy. Therefore we ought to take great comfort from the words of our text, and be of good courage. We shall die; there is no discharge in this war. We shall die; let us not sit down like cowards, and weep tears bitter with despair. We sorrow not as those that are without hope. Let us view our departure in the soft and mellow light which is shed upon it by the words, "You shall bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living."

III. I pass on to notice the QUIET EXPECTATION which breathes in this text. It is my prayer that we may enjoy the same restfulness. My dear brothers and sisters, the text is full of a calm stillness of hope. Job speaks of his death as a certainty, but speaks of it without regret, no, more, if you read the connection, it is with a smile of desire, with a flush of expectancy—"I know that You will bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living." Many men are unable to regard death with composure; they are disturbed and alarmed by the very hint of it. I want to reason with those disciples of our Lord Jesus who are in bondage from fear of death. What are the times when men are able to speak of death quietly and happily? Sometimes they do so *in periods of great bodily suffering*. I have on several occasions felt everything like fear of dying taken from me simply by the process of weariness, for I could not wish to live any longer in such pain as I then endured, and I have no doubt that such an experience is common among sufferers from acute disorders. The sons and daughters of affliction are not only trained to wait the Lord's will, but they are even driven to desire to depart, they would sooner rest from so stern a struggle than continue the fierce conflict. It is well that pain and anguish should cut the ropes which moor us to these earthly shores, that we may spread our sails for a voyage to the Better Land. Oh, what a place heaven must be to those whose bones have worn through their skin through long lying upon the bed of anguish! What a change from the workhouse or the infirmary to the New Jerusalem! I have stood at the bedside of suffering saints where I could not but weep at the sight of their pains, what a transition from such agony to bliss! Track the glorious flight of the chosen one from yon weary couch to the crown, the harp, the palm branch, and the King in His beauty. The bitter suffering of the body helps the believer to look upon his translation as a thing to be desired.

The growing infirmities of age work in the same way. Yonder venerable sister has at length become quite deaf. Her great delight was to attend the house of God, and she comes now, but the service is a mute show to her, she cannot hear her pastor's voice, which was once so sweet in her ears. Her eyes, after being helped with more powerful glasses, are at length unable to read that dear old Bible, which remained her sole solace

when she could not hear. Her existence now is but half-life, she cannot walk far, even in crossing the room her limbs tremble. She is already half gone. Do you not think that she will now feel happy to quit life, even as a ripe apple easily leaves the tree? At any rate, there will be little strength with which to resist the plucking of death's hand. It will be well when the spirit breaks away from the dilapidated hovel of the time-worn body, and rises to the building of God, the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Many of God's aged servants who have been spared to advanced years, have come to look out for the setting of earth's sun without a fear of darkness. While they have seemed to have one foot in the grave, they have really had one foot in heaven.

Beloved, without either falling into sickness, or aging into infirmity, we can reach this state of mind in another way—*by being filled with an entire submission to the will of God*. When the decree of God is our delight, we feel no abhorrence to anything which He appoints either in life or in death. If we are living as Christians ought to live, we have denied our self-will, and we have accepted the Lord to be the arbiter of all events, the absolute ruler of our being. If your soul is truly married to Christ, you find your supreme bliss in the Bridegroom's will. Your cry is, "Your will be done." This should be our ordinary condition in daily life, and it is an admirable preparation for thinking of death with composure. Let me live, if God will be with me in life, let me die, if He will be with me in death. So long as we are "forever with the Lord," what matters where else we are? We will not further ask when or where; our *when* is "forever," our *where* is "with the Lord." Delight in God is the cure for dread of death.

Next, I believe that *great holiness* sets us free from the love of this world, and makes us ready to depart. By great holiness I mean great horror of sin, and great longing after perfect purity. When a man feels sin within him he hates it, and longs to be delivered from it. He loathes the sin that is around him, and cries, "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!" Have you ever been cast in the midst of blasphemers? I am sure you have then sighed to be in heaven. If you have been sickened by the drunkenness and debauchery of this city, you have cried, "Oh that I had wings like a dove! For then would I fly away, and be at rest." Did you not wish as much last year when the lid was being lifted from the reeking caldron of London's unnatural lust? I am sure I did. I sighed for a lodge in some vast wilderness where rumor of such villainy might never reach me more. In the midst of human sin if the trumpet were sounded "up and away," you would be glad to hear it, so that you might speed to the fair land where sin and sorrow will never assail you again.

Another thing that will make us look at death with complacency is *when we have a full assurance that we are in Christ,* and that, come what may, nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Doubt your salvation and you may well be afraid to die. Let even a shadow of doubt fall across the clear mirror in which you see your loving Lord, and you will be disquieted. If you can say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I

have committed unto Him against that day," you cannot fear. What reason can you have for alarm? A Christian should go to his bed at night without an anxious care as to whether he shall wake up in this world or in the next. He should so live that nothing would need to be altered if his last hour should strike.

Let us imitate Mr. Wesley's calm anticipation of his end. A lady once asked Mr. Wesley, "Suppose that you knew you were to die at twelve o'clock tomorrow night, how would you spend the intervening time?" "How, madam?" he replied, "why just as I intend to spend it now. I should preach this evening at Gloucester, and again at five tomorrow morning, after that I should ride to Tewkesbury, preach in the afternoon, and meet the society in the evening. I should then repair to friend Martin's house, who expects to entertain me, converse and pray with the family as usual, retire to my room at ten o'clock, commend myself to my heavenly Father, lie down to rest, and wake up in glory."

Live in such a way that any day would make a suitable top stone for life. Live so that you need not change your mode of living, even if your sudden departure were immediately predicted to you. When you so live, you will look upon death without fear. We usually fear because we have cause for fear, when all is right we shall bid farewell to terror.

Let me add that there are times *when our joys run high,* when the big waves come rolling in from the Pacific of eternal bliss; then we see the King in His beauty by the eye of faith, and though it is but a dim vision, we are so charmed with it that our love of Him makes us impatient to behold Him face to face. Have you not sometimes felt that you could sit in this congregation and sing yourself away to everlasting bliss? These high days and holidays are not always with us. All the days of the week are not Sabbaths, and all our halting places are not Elim. Brethren, when we do play upon the high-sounding cymbals then we are for joining the angelic chorus. When we feel heaven within us, and stand like the cherubim above the mercy seat with outstretched wings, then we do not dread the thought of speedy flight. "Now, Lord, what do I wait for? My hope is in You." Yes, we even cry with Simeon, "Now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word." Brethren, we shall soon be on the wing. Then will we rise and sing, and sing as we rise. We will ascend yon azure sky, and within the jeweled portal we will spend eternity in praise.

I hope some of you are getting up a bit out of your notion that to think of death is gloomy work. I trust you will begin to view it with hope and confidence.

IV. I conclude by saying that this subject affords us SACRED INSTRUCTION. "I know that You will bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living." Brethren and sisters, I shall not always have the privilege of coming here on the Sabbath, to speak with you. Perhaps, before long, another voice will invite your attention, and I shall be silent in the grave. Neither will you mingle in this throng which so happily gathers here, not much longer will you sit among those who frequent these lower courts. What then?

Let us prepare for death. Let us cleave to the Lord Jesus, who is our all. Make your calling and election sure. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and believe intensely. Repent of sin and fly from it earnestly and with your whole heart.

Live diligently. Live while you live. Let every moment be spent as you will wish to have spent it when you survey life from your last pillow. Let us live unto God in Christ by the Holy Spirit. May the Lord quicken our pace by the thought that it is but a little while! A short day will not allow loitering. Do we not live too much as if we played at living? A man will preach a poor sermon if he thinks, "I shall preach for another twenty years." We must preach as though we never might preach again. You will teach that class very badly this afternoon if you have a notion that you can afford to be a little slovenly, since you can make up in the future for the neglects of the present. Drop no stitches. Do all your work at your best. Do a day's work in a day, and have no balance of debt to carry over to tomorrow's account. Soon shall you and I stand before the judgement seat of Christ, to give an account of the things done in the body, therefore let us live as in the light of that day of days, doing work which may bear that fierce light which beats about the great white throne.

Next to that, let us learn from the general assembly in the house appointed for all living to *walk very humbly*. A common inn must accommodate us all in the end; therefore let us despise all pride of birth, rank, or wealth. There are no distinctions in the last meeting house, the rich and the poor meet together, and the slave is free from his master. I hate that pride which makes persons carry themselves as if they were more than mortal. "I have said, You are gods; but you shall die like men." A voice from the tombs proclaims a grim equality in death—

"Princes, this clay must be your bed,
In spite of all your towers;
The tall, the wise, the reverend head
Must lie as low as ours."

Therefore speak no more so exceedingly proud. It is madness for dying men to boast. When Saladin lay a-dying he bade them take his winding sheet and carry it upon a lance through the camp, with the proclamation, "This is all that remains of the mighty Saladin, the conqueror of nations." A lingerer in the graveyard will take up your skull one day and moralize upon it, little knowing how wise a man you were. None will then do you reverence. Therefore, be humble.

Be prompt, for life is brief. If your children are to be trained up in God's fear, begin with them today; if you are to win souls, continue at the holy labor without pause. You will soon be gone from all opportunity of doing good, therefore, whatsoever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might. When the Eastern emperors were crowned at Constantinople, it is said to have been a custom for the royal mason to set before his majesty a certain number of marble slabs, one of which he was to choose to be his tombstone. It was well for him to remember his funeral at his coronation. I bring before you now the unwritten marbles of life, which will you have, holiness or sin, Christ or self? When you have chosen, you will begin to write the inscription upon it, for your life's works will be

your memorial. God help us to be diligent in His business, for it is not long that we can be at it!

Men, and women, *project yourselves into eternity;* get away from time, for you must soon be driven away from it. You are birds with wings; sit not on these boughs forever blinking in the dark like owls, bestir yourselves, and mount like eagles. Rise to the heights above the present. Life is a short day at its longest, and when its sun goes down it leaves you in eternity. Eternal woe or eternal joy will fill your undying spirit. Your indestructible self must swim in endless bliss or sink in fathomless misery. If you mean to be lost count the cost, and know what you are doing. If you have set your mind on sin and its consequences, do the deed deliberately, and do not make a sport of it. Oh, sirs, some of you will one of these days wake up as from an awful dream. Oh that you could foresee the scene which awaits you! Those were strong words, but they were the words of Jesus—"And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments." These words reveal none of that pretty nonsense which some prattle about—"a larger hope," yet Jesus spoke them, and His hope was of the largest. He that loved you better than these philosophers love you also said, "Beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that they which would pass from there to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from there." Our Lord put it very strongly. If you mean to dare the infernal terrors, I can do no less than ask you to know what you are doing. If you have chosen sin you have chosen ruin. Begin to consider it, and see whether it is worth while.

But if you have chosen Christ, mercy, and eternal life, and if by faith these are yours, begin to enjoy them now. Rehearse the music of the skies. Taste the delights of fellowship with God even here! Rejoice in the victory which now overcomes the world, even our faith. You will be in the glory land before long and some of you much sooner than you think. So, as the sermon ends, under a sense of my own frailty I bid you a sincere adieu. Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away—*fare you well.*

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
PSALMS 30, AND 39.**

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—855, 821, 850.

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

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

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

THE ANNUAL ATONEMENT
NO. 1923

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 3, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For on that day shall the priest make atonement for you, to cleanse you, that you may be clean from all your sins before the Lord."
Leviticus 16:30. (NKJV)

BEFORE Adam transgressed he lived in communion with God, but after he had broken the covenant and grieved God's Spirit, he could have no more familiar fellowship with God. Under the Mosaic dispensation, in which God was pleased in His grace, to dwell among His people and walk with them in the wilderness, it was still under a reserve; there was a holy place wherein the symbol of God's presence was hidden away from mortal gaze. No man might come near to it except in one only way, and then only once in the year, "The Holy Spirit this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing." Our subject today illustrates the appointed way of access to God. This chapter shows that the way of access to God is by atonement, and by no other method. We cannot draw near unto the Most High except along the blood-besprinkled way of sacrifice. Our Lord Jesus said, "No man comes unto the Father, but by Me," and this is true in many senses, and in this among them, that our way to God lies only through the sacrifice of His Son.

The reason for this is that sin lies at the door. Brethren, a pure and holy God cannot endure sin. He cannot have fellowship with it, or with those who are rendered unclean by it, for it would be inconsistent with His nature so to do. On the other hand, sinful men cannot have fellowship with God; their evil nature could not endure the fire of His holiness. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? What is that devouring fire, and what are those everlasting burnings, but the justice and holiness of God? The apostle says, "Even our God is a consuming fire." A guilty soul would perish if it were possible for it to draw near to God apart from the Mediator and His atonement. The fire of God's nature must consume the stubble of our nature so long as there is sin in us or about us: Hence the difficulty of access, a difficulty which only a divine method can remove. God cannot commune with sinful men, for He is holy. Sinful men cannot commune with a holy God, because He must destroy them, even as He destroyed Nadab and Abihu when they intruded into His holy place. That terrible judgment is mentioned in the opening verses of the chapter be-

fore us as the reason why the ordinances herein contained were first of all made.

How, then, shall men come to God? Only in God's own way. He Himself devised the way, and He has taught it to us by a parable in this chapter. It would be very wrong to prefer any one passage of Scripture beyond another, for all Scripture is given by inspiration, but if we might do so, we should set this chapter in a very eminent and prominent place for its fullness of instruction, and its clear yet deep doctrinal teaching. It treats upon a matter which is of the very highest importance to all of us. We are here taught the way by which the sin that blocks the door may be taken away, so that a seeking soul may be introduced into the presence of God and stand in His holy place, and yet live. Here we learn how we may say, with the astonished prophet, "I have seen God, and my life is preserved." Oh that we might today so learn the lesson that we may enter into the fullest fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ, in that safe way, that only way, which God has appointed for us. Oh for the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit, that we may know and use "the new and living way!"

Before I proceed to enlarge upon this chapter, I want to notice that, of course, this was only a type. This great day of atonement did not see an actual atonement made, nor sin really put away, but it was the figure of heavenly things—the shadow of good things to come. The substance is of Christ. If this Day of Atonement had been real and satisfactory, as touching God and the conscience of men, there would never have been another, for the worshippers once purged would have had no more conscience of sin. If they had lived fifty or a hundred years, they would never have needed another Day of Atonement, but because this was, in its nature, imperfect and shadowy, being only typical, therefore every year, on the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, a fast was proclaimed, sin was confessed, victims were slain, and atonement was again presented. In the Jewish year, as often as it came round, on one special day they were commanded to afflict their souls, even though it was a Sabbath of rest. In very deed a remembrance of sin was made every year, a painful remembrance for them, although sweetened by a new exhibition of the plan by which sin is cleansed. The Lord said, "This shall be an everlasting statute unto you," it lasted as long as the Mosaic economy in the letter, and its spirit and substance last on forever. They had that day to remember that their sin was not put away once for all and forever, by all their types and ceremonies, and therefore they had again to humble themselves and come before God with sacrifices which could never truly put away sin. This Israel had to do constantly until Jesus, the true High Priest appeared, and now they have no sacrificing priest, nor altar, nor holy of holies. By Jesus Christ's one offering of Himself, sin was put away, once for all, effectually and finally, so that believers are really clean before God. Now if I should seem to run the type into the substance you will just separate them in your own minds. It is not easy so to speak as to keep shadow and substance quite clear of each other. We are

apt to say, "This is so-and-so," when we mean, "this represents so-and-so," and we have our Lord's example for so doing, for He said, "This is My body and My blood," when He meant that the bread and wine represented His body and blood. We are not speaking to fools, or to those who will wrench the letter from its obvious spiritual sense. I shall trust to your intelligence and the guidance of the Holy Spirit that you will in this discourse discern between the symbol and the substance. May the divine Spirit help me and help you to a right understanding of this sacred type!

I. Now, then, let us come to the text, and note, first, WHAT WAS DONE ON that particular day. The text tells us what was done symbolically—"On that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that you may be clean from all your sins before the Lord."

The persons themselves were cleansed. If any of them had become unclean so as to be denied communion with God and His people, they were made clean, so that they might go up to the tabernacle, and mingle with the congregation. All the host were that morning regarded as unclean and all had to bow their heads in penitent sorrow because of their uncleanness. After the sacrifice and the sending away of the scapegoat the whole congregation was clean and in a condition to rejoice. If it happened to be the year of jubilee, the joyful trumpets rang out as soon as the atonement was complete. Every year, within four days after the Day of Atonement, the people were so clean that they kept the joyful Feast of Tabernacles. Jewish Rabbis were known to say that no man had ever seen sorrow who had not seen the Day of Atonement, and that no man had ever seen gladness who had not witnessed the hilarity and delight of the people during the Feast of Tabernacles.

The people themselves were made to be a clean people, and I lay great stress on this, because unless you yourself are purged, everything that you do is defiled in the sight of God. When a man was unclean, if he went into a tent and sat upon anything it was unclean; if a friend touched his garments he was rendered unclean. The man himself needed first to be delivered from impurity, and it is precisely the same in your case and mine. I have need to cry, "Purge *me* with hyssop, and *I* shall be clean; wash *me,* and *I* shall be whiter than snow." Your very person by nature is defiled, and obnoxious to the justice of God. In body, soul, and spirit you are by nature altogether as an unclean thing and all your righteousnesses are as filthy rags; you yourself need to be washed and renewed. It is a far simpler thing to remove outward stains than it is to purge the very substance and nature of man, yet this is what was done on the Day of Atonement typically, and this is what our redeeming Lord actually does for us. We are outlaws, and His atonement purges us of outlawry, and makes us citizens; we are lepers, and by His stripes we are so healed as to be received among the clean. By nature we are only fit to be flung into those fires which burn up corrupt and offensive things, but His sacrifice makes us so precious in the sight of the Lord that all the forces of heaven stand sentinel about us. Once black as night, we are so purged that we shall walk with Him in white, for we are worthy.

Their persons being made clean, *they were also purged of all the sins confessed*. I called attention, in the reading of the chapter, to its many "alls." I think there are seven or eight of them. The work which was done on that day was comprehensive; a clean sweep was made of sin. I begin with that which was confessed, for it was that for which cleansing would be most desired. It is said that "Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him *all* the iniquities of the children of Israel." All sin that was confessed over the scapegoat was carried away into a land not inhabited. Sin that is confessed is evidently real sin, and not a mere dream of a morbid conscience. There is a certain mythical cloud of sin which people talk about, and affect to deplore, and yet they have no sense of the solid weight and heinousness of their actual iniquity. Certain grievous sins are comparable to cauldrons of foaming filth; no man will willingly own to them, however clearly they may be his, but when he does own to them before God, let him recollect that it is this real sin, this foul and essentially abominable transgression, which is put away by the atonement of Christ. Sin confessed with tears, sin which causes the very heart to bleed—killing sin, damning sin—this is the kind of sin for which Jesus died. Sham sinners may be content with a sham Savior, but our Lord Jesus is the real Savior, who did really die, and died for real sin. Oh, how this ought to comfort you, you that are sadly bearing the pressing burden of an execrable life, you, too, who are crushed into the mire of despondency beneath the load of your guilt! Brethren, sin which you are bound to own to as most assuredly committed is the sort of pollution from which Jesus cleanses all believers. Sin which you dare not confess to man, but acknowledge only as you lay your hand upon the divine sacrifice—such sin the Lord removes from you.

The passage is very particular to mention "all sins." "The goat shall bear upon him *all* their iniquities." This includes every form of sin, of thought, of word, of deed, of pride, of falsehood, of lust, of malice, of blasphemy. This comprehends crimes against man, and offenses against God, of peculiar blackness, and it does not exclude sins of inadvertence, or carelessness, or of omission. Transgressions of the body, the intellect; the affections are all blotted out. The outrageous scandals which I dare not mention are yet pardonable, yes, such have been pardoned. There is not the same degree of virus in all sins, but whether or not, the atonement is for all transgressions. The Lord Jesus Christ did not pour out His heart's blood to remove one set of stains and leave the rest, but every spot and trace of sin He takes away from the soul that puts its trust in Him. "Wash me," said David, "and I shall be whiter than snow." He looked for the extreme of cleanness, and such the Savior brings to the soul for whom He has made effectual atonement. I desire to be so plain and broad that the chief of sinners may gather hope from my words. I speak in very simple language, but the theme is full of sublimity, especially to you that feel your need of it. The atonement removed *all* sin. I must give you the exact expression. He says, "*all* the iniquities of the children of Israel, and *all* their transgressions in *all* their sins."

It seems that the divine atonement *puts away the sin of sin*—the essence and heart of sin. Sin has its core, its kernel, its mortal spot. Within a fruit there is a central stone, or pip; this may serve as the likeness of sin. Within each iniquity there seems to lie a something more essentially evil than the act itself, this is the kernel of intent, the core of obstinacy, the inner hate of the mind. Whatever may be the sin of the soul, or the soul of the sin, atonement has been made for it all. Most sins are a conglomerate of sins. A sin may be compared to a honeycomb; there are as many sins within one sin as there are cells within a piece of comb. Sin is a swarming, hiving, teeming thing. You can never estimate its full vileness, nor perceive all its evil bearings. All sorts of sins may hide away in one sin. It would puzzle all the theologians in the world to tell what sin was absent from Adam's first offense. I could take any point you choose, and show that Adam sinned in that direction. All sin was within that first sin. Sin is a multitudinous evil, an aggregate of all manner of filthiness, a chain with a thousand deadly links. A sinner is like a man possessed with a devil who cries, "My name is Legion: for we are many," it is one in evil, and yet countless in forms. The atonement is more than equal to sin; it takes away all our transgressions in all our sins. It is the fullest purgation that could be imagined. The Lord Jesus has not left upon those for whom He has made atonement a single spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, so far as their justification is concerned. He has not left an iniquity for which they can be condemned before the bar of judgement. "You are clean every whit" is His sure verdict, and none can contradict it.

It appears from this chapter, too, that another thing was done. Not only were all the sins that they had committed put away, but also *all their holy things were purged*. There stood the altar upon which only holy things were offered, but because imperfect men ministered there it needed to be sprinkled with blood before it could be clean. There was the holy place of the tabernacle, which was dedicated solely to God's service, wherein the holiest rites of God's ordaining were celebrated; but because the priests that served there were fallible, and unholy thoughts might cross their minds even when they handled the holy vessels, therefore the blood was sprinkled seven times within the holy place. Inside, within the veil, the sanctuary was called the "holy of holies." Yes, but standing, as it did at first, in the midst of the camp of an erring people, and afterwards near to it, it needed to be purged. It is written, "The priest shall make an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel." Even the mercy seat, and the ground whereon it rested, was sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifice seven times. O brothers and sisters, I feel so glad that our Lord has atoned for the sins of our holy things. I rejoice that Jesus forgives the sins of my sermons. I have preached my very soul out among you with purity of motive, seeking to win men for Christ, but I dare not hope to have them accepted in and of themselves, for I perceive that they are defiled with sin. I feel so glad that Jesus has purified our prayers. Many saints spend much time in hearty, earnest cries to God, but even on your knees you sin, and herein is our

comfort, that the precious blood has made atonement for the shortcomings of our supplications. Sometimes when we get together, beloved, we sing to the praise of our Lord with heart and will. I have felt in this place as if you and I and all of us were so many burning coals, all blazing within a censer, and thus letting loose the odors of the sweet incense of our Lord's praise. How often has a pillar of fragrant smoke risen from this house to heaven! Yes, but even then there was sin in our praises, and iniquity in our doxologies. We need pardon for our psalms, and cleansing for our hymns. Blessed be God, atonement is made for all our faults, excesses, and shortcomings. Jesus puts away, not only our unholy things, but the sins of our holy things also.

Once more, on that day *all the people were cleansed.* All the congregation of the house of Israel were typically cleansed from all sin by the Day of Atonement; not the priests only, but all the people; not the princes only, but the poorest servants in the camp. The aged woman and the little child, the grey beard and the youth, were alike purified. Men of business inclined to covetousness, they were cleansed and young men and maidens in their gaiety, too apt to descend into wantonness—they were all made clean that day. This gives great comfort to those of us who love the souls of the multitude. All who believe are justified from all things. It is written, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." I have often heard the text quoted with the "us," left out, permit me to put it in at this moment—"cleanses *us* from all sin." Now put yourself into the "us." Dare to believe that grace admits you there. By an act of faith let all of us all round the galleries and in this great area say, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses US." If you pull "us" to pieces it is made up of a great many "me's." A thousand thousand times *"me"* will all pack away into a single *"us."* Let each one say—"The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses *me,* and cleanses *me* from *all* sin." Be glad and rejoice forever because of this gracious truth. This was done on the Day of Atonement in the symbol, and it has been really done by the Lord Jesus through His atoning sacrifice.

II. Now we notice, in the second place, HOW IT WAS DONE. We have seen what was done, and this is most cheering, but now we will see how it was done. I shall have to be brief in this description. The atonement was made first of all *by sacrifice.* I see a bullock for a sin offering, a ram for a burnt offering, and again a goat for a sin offering. Many victims were offered that day, and thus the people were reminded of the instrumental cause of atonement, namely, the blood of sacrifice. We know that the blood of bulls and of goats could never take away sin; but very distinctly these do point to the sufferings of our dear Redeemer. The woes He bore are the expiation for our guilt. "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." If you want to know by what means sin is put away; think of Messiah's life of grief and shame and arduous service, think of His agony and bloody sweat in the garden, think of the betrayal and denial, the scourging and the spitting.

Think of the false accusations and the reproaches and the jeers, think of the cross, the nailed hands and feet, the bruised soul, and the broken spirit. Fierce were the fires which consumed our sacrifice. "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" is the quintessence of agony, and this came from the heart which was crushed for our sins! Atonement was made for your sins and mine by the shedding of blood—that is to say, by our Lord's suffering, and especially by His laying down His life on our behalf. Jesus died; by that death He purged our sins. He who only has immortality gave up the ghost, in the cold embrace of death the Lord of glory slept. They wrapped Him in spices and linen cloths and laid Him in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathaea. In that death lay the essential deed by which sin dies and grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life.

Notice, next, that the atonement was made not only by the blood of sacrifice, but *by the presentation of the blood within the veil*. With the smoke of incense and a bowl filled with blood Aaron passed into the most holy place. Let us never forget that our Lord has gone into the heavenly places with better sacrifices than Aaron could present. His merits are the sweet incense which burns before the throne of the heavenly grace. His death supplies that blood of sprinkling which we find even in heaven. "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He, entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." The presenting of the blood before God effects the atonement. The material of the atonement is in the blood and merits of Jesus, but a main part of the atoning act lies in the presentation of these in the heavenly places by Jesus Christ Himself.

Furthermore, *atonement was made effectual by its application to the thing or person cleansed*. The atonement was made for the holy place; it was sprinkled seven times with blood. The same was done to the altar; the horns thereof were smeared seven times. So to make the atonement effectual between you and God the blood of Jesus must be sprinkled upon you by a lively faith. Though this does not so plainly appear in the type before us as to the people on this occasion, yet it comes out in other types, the cleansing blood was ever the blood of sprinkling. Before the blood of the Paschal lamb could cause the avenger to pass over the house, it must be marked with the crimson sign. This is that scarlet thread in the window which delivers the Lord's Rahabs in the day of destruction. Before any man can receive reconciliation with God the atonement must be applied to his own heart and conscience. Faith is that bunch of hyssop which we dip into the blood, and with it sprinkle the lintel and two side posts of the house wherein we dwell, and so we are saved from destruction.

Further, my dear brethren and sisters, inasmuch as no one type was sufficient, *the Lord set forth the method of the removal of sin, as far as we are concerned, by the scapegoat*. One of two goats was chosen to live. It stood before the Lord, and Aaron confessed all the sins of Israel upon its

head. A fit man, selected for the purpose, led this goat away into a land not inhabited. What became of it? Why do you ask the question? It is not to edification. You may have seen the famous picture of the scapegoat, representing it as expiring in misery in a desert place. That is all very pretty, and I do not wonder that imagination should picture the poor devoted scapegoat as a sort of cursed thing, left to perish amid accumulated horrors. But please observe that this is all fancy—mere groundless fancy. The Scripture is entirely silent as to anything of the kind, and purposely so. All that the type teaches is this; in symbol the scapegoat has all the sin of the people laid upon it, and when it is led away into the solitary wilderness, it has gone, and the sin with it. We may not follow the scapegoat even in imagination. It is gone where it can never be found, for there is nobody to find it; it is gone into a land not inhabited—into "no man's land" in fact. Stop where the Scripture stops; to go beyond what is written is unwise, if not presumptuous. Sin is carried away into the silent land, the unknown wilderness. By nature sin is everywhere, but to believers in the sacrifice of Christ sin is nowhere. The sins of God's people have gone beyond recall. Where to? Do not ask anything about that. If they were sought for they could not be found; they are so gone that they are blotted out. Into oblivion our sins have gone, even as the scapegoat went out of track of mortal man. The death of the scapegoat does not come into the type; in fact, it would mar the type to think of it. Of Melchizedek, we read that he was without father, without mother, without descent, and so on, because these things are not mentioned in Scripture, and the omission is part of the teaching; so in this case, the fate of the scapegoat is not spoken of, and the silence is a part of the instruction. The scapegoat is gone we know not where, and so our sin have vanished quite away; nobody will ever find the scapegoat, and nobody will ever find the believer's sins.

"Where are my sins? Oh where?" Echo answers, "Where?" Gone to the land of nobody, where Satan himself could not find them. Yes, where God Himself cannot find them. He says He has cast our sin behind His back, where He cannot see. What part of the creation must that be which lies behind God's back, whereas He is everywhere present, beholding all things both by night and by day? There is no such place as "behind His back," and there is no place for our sins. They have gone into nowhere. "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." He has cast them into the depths of the sea—and even that is not so good a figure as the scapegoat, for things that are at the bottom of the sea are still there, but the scapegoat soon passed away altogether, and as far as Israel was concerned, it ceased to be. The sins of God's people are absolutely and irrevocably forgiven. Never, never, never can they be laid to our charge; they are extinct, buried, blotted out, forgotten. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?"

Yet, dear friends, the ceremony was not quite finished, for now *everybody who had had a hand in it must necessarily be washed, so that everybody might be clean*. There is Aaron; he takes off his garments, and

washes himself scrupulously clean, yes, he does it a second time. Here is the man who took the scapegoat away, and he washes himself. Here is a third person, who carried away the skin and the flesh of the sin offering, and burnt them outside the camp; he also washes himself. Everybody becomes purged; the whole camp is clean right through. So, when Jesus completes His sacrifice, we sing—

"Now both the sinner and surety are free."

No sin remains upon Him on whom the Lord once laid the iniquities of us all. The great atonement is made, and everything is cleansed, from beginning to end. Christ has put it all away forever by the water and the blood which flowed from His riven side. All is purified, and the Lord looks down on a clean camp, and soon He will have them rejoicing before Him, each man in his tabernacle, feasting to the full. I am so glad, my joy overflows. O Lord, who is a pardoning God like You? Where can such forgiveness be found as You do freely give to sinners through Jesus, Your Son?

III. In the third place, I ask your attention, for a brief interval, to this special point—WHO DID IT? The answer is, Aaron did it all. Aaron was quite alone in the work of that day. It was heavy, and even exhausting work, but he had no assistant. Aaron performed the work of priest and Levite that day, and no one helped him, for it is written, "There shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goes in to make an atonement in the holy place, until he comes out, and has made an atonement for himself, and for his household, and for all the congregation of Israel." The tabernacle seemed lonely that day. Aaron went into its courts and chambers, and saw no sign of man. Of course there were lamps to be lighted, but Aaron had to light them himself; the showbread had to be changed—Aaron had to change it. All the offices of the tabernacle were left to his sole care for the day. When it came to killing the victims, priests and Levites were there on other days, but now the high priest must do it all. He must kill, and receive the blood, and himself sprinkle it. He must kindle the sacrificial fire, and lay the burning coals upon the incense. Both the incense and the basin of blood he must carry into the holy place with his own hands. I think I see him looking around in the solitude. He says, "I looked, and there was no man." Of the people there was none with him. In the holy place there stood no priest to minister before the Lord save Aaron alone. It must have been with trembling that he lifted up the curtain and passed into the secret place of the Most High with the censer smoking in his hand. There he stood in that awful presence quite alone with the Eternal; no man was with him when he sprinkled the blood again and again till the seven-fold rite was finished. Three times he goes in and out, and never a soul is there, so much as to smile upon him. The tension of mind and heart which he endured alone that day must have been trying indeed. All that livelong day he must have been conscious of a burden of responsibility and a weight of reverence enough to bow him to the dust, and yet no one was present to cheer him. Now fix your eye on the great antitype of Aaron. There was none

with our Lord; He trod the winepress alone. He His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree. He alone went in where the thick darkness covered the throne of God, and none stood by to comfort Him. "All the disciples forsook Him, and fled." It would have been a very natural thing, one would think, that Peter should have defended Him, and even died with Him, but no one died with Jesus except thieves, and nobody could suspect that thieves aided Him in His sacrifice; they showed the need of the sacrifice, but they could do no more. Worship our Lord as working salvation by His own single arm. Do not tolerate those who would share His work. Do not believe in priests of any church who pretend to offer sacrifice for the quick and the dead. They cannot help you, and you do not need their help. Do not put your own merits, works, prayers, or anything else side by side with your one lone High Priest, who in His white garments of holy service performed the whole work of expiation, and then came forth in His garments of glory and of beauty to gladden the eyes of His chosen. I say no more. Let that truth abide in your hearts—our High Priest alone has made reconciliation.

IV. Lastly, WHAT WERE THE PEOPLE TO DO for whom this atonement was made? There were two things they had to do that day, only I must add that one of them was doing nothing. For the first thing, they had *to afflict their souls* that day. Brethren, does it seem to you a strange thing that on a day of rest they were to afflict their souls? Think of it a little, and you will see that there was cause for it. We most rightly sing—

"Here let our hearts begin to melt,
While we His death record,
And, with our joy for pardoned guilt
Mourn that we pierced the Lord."

It was a day of confession of sin. And should not confession be made with sorrowful repentance? A dry-eyed confession is a hypocritical confession. To acknowledge sin without grieving over it is to aggravate sin. We cannot think of our sin without grieving, and the surer we are that it is forgiven; the sorrier we are that ever it was committed. Sin seems all the greater because it was committed against a sin-forgiving God. If you do wrong to a person, and he grows angry, you may be wicked enough to persist in the wrong, but if, instead of growing angry, he forgives, and does you good in return, then you will deeply regret that ever you had an unkind thought towards him. The Lord's pardoning love makes us feel truly sorry to have offended Him.

Not only was it a day of confession, but it was a day of sacrifice. No tender-hearted Israelite could think of that bullock, and ram, and goat dying for him, without saying, "That is what I deserve." If he heard the moans of the dying creature he would say, "My own heart groans and bleeds." When we think of our dying Lord our emotions are mingled; we feel a pleasing grief and a mournful joy as we stand at Calvary. Thus it is we sing—

"Alas! And did my Savior bleed?
And did my Sovereign die?
Could He devote that sacred head

For such a worm as I?
Was it for crimes that I have done
He died upon the tree?
Amazing pity, grace unknown,
And love beyond degree.
Well might the sun in darkness hide,
And shut his glories in,
When God the mighty Maker died
For man, the creature's sin!
Well might I hide my blushing face
When His dear cross appears,
Dissolve my heart in thankfulness,
And melt my eyes to tears."

It was a day of sacrifice, and hence a day of affliction of their souls, and herein we are in sympathy with them.

Once more, it was a day of perfect cleansing, and hence, by a strange logic, a day of the affliction of the soul, for, oh! when sin is forgiven, when we know it is forgiven, when by divine assurance we know that God has blotted out our sins like a cloud, then it is we mourn over our iniquities. "They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced"—that look gives life; "and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn"—this bitterness is one of the truest signs of life. They were to afflict their souls. Brethren, we cannot talk of the cross of Christ except in subdued tones. If you think you can laugh and sport yourself because your sin is forgiven, you know nothing of the matter. Sin has been pardoned at such a price that we cannot henceforth trifle with it. The sacrifice was so august that we must ever speak of it with holy trembling. I always feel a suspicion of those converts who get up and glibly boast that once they were drunks, thieves, blasphemers, and so forth. Brother, if you tell the story of your sin, blush scarlet to think it should be true. I am ashamed to hear a man talk of his sins as an old Greenwich pensioner might talk of his sea-fights. I hate to hear a man exhibiting his old lusts as if they were scars of honor. Friend, these things are disgraceful to you, however much the putting of them away may be to the honor and glory of God, and they are to be spoken of by you with shame and confusion of face. Afflict your soul when you remember what you once were.

On the Day of Atonement they were to afflict their souls, and yet they were to *rest*. Can these things come together—mourning and resting? Oh yes, you and I know how they meet in one bosom. I never am so truly happy as when a sober sadness tinges my joy. When I am the fullest of joy I could weep my life away at Jesus' feet. Nothing is more really sweet than the bitterness of repentance. Nothing is more healthful than self-abhorrence, mixed with the grateful love which hides itself in the wounds of Jesus. The purified people were to rest, they were to rest from all *servile* work. I will never do a hand's turn to save myself by my own merits, works, or feelings. I have done forever with all interference with my Lord's sole work. Salvation as to its meritorious cause is complete; we will not think of beginning it over again, for that would be an insult to

the Savior. "It is finished," said our Lord Jesus, as He bowed His dear triumphant head and gave up the ghost, and if it is finished we will not dream of adding to it. It is finished; we have no work to do with the view of self-salvation. But you say to me—"Have we not to work out our own salvation?" Certainly we have. We are to work out our own salvation because God works it in us. It is our own salvation, and we show it forth in our lives; we work it out from within, we develop it from day to day, and let men see what the Lord has done for us. It must first be worked for us, and then in us, or we can never work it out.

They were assuredly to cease from all *sinful* work. How can the pardoned man continue in sin? We have done with toiling for the devil now. We will no more waste our lives in his service. Many men are worn to rottenness in the service of their lusts, but the servant of God has been set free from that yoke of bondage. We are slaves no longer; we quit the hard bondage of Egypt and rest in the Lord.

We have also done with *selfish* work; we now seek first the kingdom of heaven, and look that all other things shall be added unto us by the goodness of our heavenly Father. Henceforth we find rest by bearing the easy yoke of Christ. We joy to spend and be spent in His beloved service. He has made us free, and therefore we are under bonds to His love forever. O Lord, I am Your servant, I am Your servant, You have loosed my bonds; henceforth I am bound to You. God grant that this may be a high day to you, because you gladly realize the grand truths which are shadowed forth in these delightful types. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—LEVITICUS 16.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—240, 291, 564.

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

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

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

A CHEERING INCIDENT AT BETHABARA
NO. 1924

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 10, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Therefore they sought again to take Him: but He escaped out of their hand, and went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized; and there He abode. And many resorted unto Him, and said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spoke of this man were true. And many believed on Him there."
John 10:39-42.

BECAUSE our Savior's reasoning was unanswerable, "therefore the Jews sought again to take Him." When men are convinced against their wills, when the heart struggles against the head, it usually happens that they turn persecutors. If they cannot answer holy arguments with fair reasoning, they can give hard answers with stones. If you cannot destroy the reasoning, you may, perhaps, destroy the reasoner, and this naturally suggests itself to the heart which is rendered cruel by obstinate unbelief. He who hates truth soon hates its advocate. You must not consider yourself to have been unsuccessful in your proofs when your opponent waxes angry at them, perhaps it is your success which has startled his conscience, and rendered it necessary for him to become malicious to retain his obstinacy. Yet it is a very wretched business when a man knows that he is wrong, and therefore attacks the person who has convinced him. Do I address any person here who, in the secret of his heart, is well aware that the Christian faith is true, and therefore derides it, in order to be able to resist its influence? Do I speak to any man here who has felt the ground clean gone from under him, and therefore has flown in the face of the teaching which has unsettled him? Will he not, as a sensible man, quit his unjustifiable position, and candidly yield to the force of truth? It is a degrading thing to be willfully shutting one's eyes to the light, and cursing the sun for shining. Oh, that such a person would have grace! Let me even say—oh, that he would have sense enough to see that this cannot be a safe and right method of procedure! Oh that he would yield himself to those blessed influences which, I trust, will this morning operate upon his mind!

When our Savior found that there was nothing to be done with the bigoted Jews, but that all He said and did only provoked more furious opposition, He escaped out of their hand, and went away. He knew when to speak, and when to refrain. Divinely guided, He neither fled as a coward, nor rashly pushed on where nothing could be gained. Determined opposition in one quarter is sometimes an intimation to the preacher

that he had better labor elsewhere. When the channel is blocked up by rocks we had better steer in another direction. If we have found no son of peace to welcome us as the messengers of God, it may be time to shake off the dust of our feet against the violent rejecters of the truth, and open our commission in another quarter. If we fail in the first place, we may in the second find that the Lord has much people in the city. The Savior left the infuriated Jews of Jerusalem, and went to a place of retirement, thus illustrating His own words, "When they persecute you in this city, flee you unto another."

But though our Lord left the obstinate, He never ceased to do good. He did not say, "It is of no further use to preach and plead; I am, therefore, driven away to Bethabara, by the lonely Jordan, and I will warn the people no more." No, rather, as many resorted to Him there, He went on with His teaching, and in that place many believed on Him. If, my dear brother, speaking in Christ's name, you find that you have no place in such and such a town, it may be the Spirit's will that you should remove to a people who will receive you. Possibly in a place which promises less you may gain more. Bethabara may yield converts when Jerusalem only yields persecutors. God has ways of changing the position of His servants for His own glory, and for the building up of His church. As one has well said, "The flight of Christ from men in one place may cause the flight of souls to Him in another." Though Jesus withdrew from the stones which filled the hands of angry Jews, He went to that place where John had said, "God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham."

I think that this somewhat obscure incident of our Lord's abiding in Bethabara, though seldom preached upon, may be made exceedingly profitable to us. Much prayer has been offered that many may believe on the Lord Jesus this morning in this house of prayer, and it seems suitable, therefore, to discourse upon the words, "Many believed on Him there."

I. The first remark I shall make is, that when men believe in Jesus Christ IT IS VERY PLEASANT TO KNOW THE PLACE where they believed; therefore is it recorded by inspiration that "many believed on Him *there."* I do not say it is essential for a man to know the place where he believed in Jesus; it is not at all essential. It is not necessary for a person's life for him to know where he was born, yet I am glad that I know my birthplace, and I am happy to remember the humble spot. If anybody were to say to you, "Do you know where you were born?" and you were forced to answer "No," would you expect him to say, "Then you are not alive"? If he did say so, it would be a very bad argument, as you would be able to prove at once by letting him see that you were far from nonexistence, and so, if you cannot state where you were converted, nor when you were converted, do not fret about it. A far more needful inquiry is—Are you converted? Do you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? Are you indeed born from above by the Spirit of God? If so, it is by no means essential that you should know the place, or the means, or the hour. Still, it is very interesting to be able to point out the place of our new birth. I am thankful to be able to do so, and many others of us are glad that they

have an equally vivid memory of the spot whereon they stood when they passed from death unto life. "Yes," you can say, "I believed on Him *there."* Happy place! Holy place! Some of us know the spot to a yard where we looked unto Christ, and felt our burden of sin loosed from our weary shoulders. Standing in one of the halls of the Orphanage is the very pulpit from which I savingly heard the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though I have no reverence for relics of any sort, yet a flood of grateful memories flows before me as I look upon the platform whereon stood the unknown brother who pointed me to Jesus. Who he was I shall never know till the Day of Judgement, but the text, "Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth," was the voice of God to my soul. It is an interesting thing to know where you were converted. May the Tabernacle prove to be the birthplace of a multitude of you, that we may continue to say, "Many believed on Him *there."*

What was there particular about the retired place in which our Lord, on this occasion, gathered so many disciples? What was there about the place beyond Jordan where John at first baptized?

It was a place *where divine ordinances had been observed,* "The place where John at first baptized; and many believed on Him there." Where the Lord is obeyed, we may hope to see him revealed. We are not among those who condemn others for their mistakes about outward ordinances, but yet we do not look upon erroneous practices without sincere regret and apprehension. If the ordinance of baptism is altered, applied to the wrong subjects, practiced in an unscriptural manner, and used for unwarranted purposes, it is a serious error, and will be sure, one day or other, to lead to other errors of still greater importance. Disobedience on this point may even now be grieving the Spirit of God, and restraining His sacred operations. We must be careful to keep the ordinances as they were delivered unto us. We may not tamper with royal statutes. It is forbidden even to batter a penny which bears the king's face upon it, and it is far worse to alter an ordinance which is stamped with divine authority. "Whatsoever He says unto you, do it," was the word of the blessed Virgin concerning her Son, and it was a good word, worthy to be spoken in the ear of the entire Christian church. If a Church labors to keep the ordinances as they were delivered, and endeavors to follow in the tracks of Christ's teaching and example, it may hope to receive the divine blessing. At any rate, one reason for the withdrawal of the Spirit of God is gone, and one reason why the Lord Jesus should bless the work is present. Oh that in this place, where we have baptized many into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we might meet with an abundant blessing! In keeping His commandments there is great reward. Outward ordinances cannot secure a blessing, but the spirit of obedience which leads to a careful observance of them according to the divine command is a blessed fruit of the Spirit. Where John baptized, and Jesus submitted thus to fulfill all righteousness, we find a spot which is suited for a divine revival.

Secondly, remember, this Bethabara was the place *where faithful preaching concerning Jesus had been heard*. For this John who baptized

also preached the gospel of repentance. He laid great stress upon that part of the gospel which prepares men for the coming kingdom. Where repentance has been thoroughly preached, I believe that many will come to believe in Jesus Christ. Jesus fitly followed John, and faith will follow readily where repentance has been thoroughly preached and explained. The plow must lead the way, and then it is good sowing. We must first send in the sharp needle, and then the silken thread will be drawn after it. There must be a measure of conviction of sin before there will be a joyful acceptance of the great sin offering. John had preached repentance. "Oh," you say, "but John was dead." Yes, but he being dead yet speaks. There were the stones of the brook to which John had pointed, and the reeds shaken of the wind to which he could never be likened. There was the river Jordan still flowing on, fit emblem of the stream of grace which washes away the sin of the repentant. The good which men have done lives after them. Herod had cut off John's head, but he had not silenced John's voice. From the wilderness there still came the cry, "Repent you: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." A hallowed influence lingers about the scenes of faithful labors, and I wonder not that our Lord sought retirement where every ripple of the river repeated the Baptist's testimony. From scenes like these the church will be recruited with new disciples.

What fine preaching was that of John! He did no miracle, but all things that he spoke concerning Jesus were true. He spoke of one that was coming after him, who was preferred before him, the laces of whose shoes he was not worthy to unloose. He spoke of Him in terms so plain that the gospel preacher of today, in the full light of the Spirit of God, cannot find better language—"Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." No wonder that many believed on Jesus there, where the savor of such a ministry lingered in men's minds! The population of the country round about had been saturated with such teaching as this, and they had not forgotten, although they might not thoroughly have accepted, what the last of the prophets had declared in their hearing. The true Elijah that was for to come had so spoken as to fix his words in men's memories like well-fastened nails. Brethren, wherever there has been earnest preaching we may expect that many will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ before long. Let no faithful preacher's heart be faint within him; Christ is not preached in vain; you have not pointed to the Lamb of God for nothing. Even should you die without seeing it, there will come another after you who will reap a harvest from the seed which you have sowed. Hidden truth will break out all of a sudden, and it shall be said, "Many believed on Him there."

As for the place wherein we stand, I can solemnly assert that I have with all my heart preached to you the gospel of the grace of God. If a thousand persons were to believe in Jesus this morning I should not be in the least surprised, for this I surely can claim, that to the best of my knowledge and ability I have these many years preached nothing among you but the cross of Christ. I, too, have cried, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." I have endeavored to point out to you Him whose shoe laces I am not worthy to unloose. I have prayed that

He might baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. Many saints have joined me in that earnest prayer. If at Bethabara many believed on Him *there,* we may expect that many will believe on Him *here.*

The next remark about the place is this; it was a spot *where God had borne witness to His Son Jesus*. Jesus had come to be baptized by John, and when He was baptized He came up straightway out of the water, and the heavens were opened, and the Spirit descended upon Him like a dove, while a voice said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The Holy Spirit is known to go where He has gone before, and where the Father has borne witness to Christ once, we may expect Him to bear witness again. Where Jesus was anointed for his lifework the spot was hallowed. Where the Divine voice sounded forth, not through a prophet, but distinctly out of heaven, we might look for other displays of God. Where God has spoken He will speak again. Has not God spoken to your soul in this Tabernacle? My brothers and sisters, has not God often borne witness to His Son in your hearts and consciences in this beloved house of prayer? Not only has Christ been set forth visibly crucified among you, but the attesting voice of God's Holy Spirit has been heard within your spirits, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Therefore let us hope that of this house it shall be said again and again, "Many believed on Him *there."*

Once more; not only was this a very interesting spot to our Lord Jesus Christ, but Bethabara was also very interesting to the leaders of the little band who accompanied Him, it was the place *where the Lord's first disciples had been won*. They heard John speak, and followed Jesus. John and James and Andrew and Peter had been there brought to Jesus, and certain others also had joined the chosen band. To visit the place of their own spiritual birth would cause a renewal of their vows, and act as an encouragement to persevere in winning others. Brethren, we feel hopeful that God will bless others in the place where He has blessed us, in the place where Peter and John and Andrew have been found, it is to be hoped that other Peters and Johns and Andrews will be discovered. Where solid stones have been quarried, there remains much more material which may yet be brought forth. Eternity alone shall tell how many souls have been born to God in this house. We have actually registered nearly eleven thousand persons, who have come forward and confessed their faith, and joined this church, but these are only a small part of the whole, for great numbers come here and return to the country, and unite with other churches. My brethren, if the Lord has found you out in this place, you will cry day and night unto Him that others may be found of Him also. Sit in your pews this morning and say, "Lord, I believed on You in this place; therefore I pray You this day grant that many others may do the same, and may it be said, 'Many believed on Jesus in the Tabernacle.'"

I suppose it was a lovely quiet spot by the banks of the Jordan, with only a little village or hamlet, named Bethany, close by. The word Bethany was altered by Origin into Bethabara, I suppose for distinction's sake. It really was Bethany, and so our Lord had two Bethanys. It was there, in

a rural retreat that many believed on His name. O hills of Piedmont, when the Vaudois preached the Christ amidst your valleys, it may be said of you, "Many believed on Him there!" O mosses and hillsides of Scotland, in the Covenanting times, many believed on Him there! Talk not so exceedingly proud, O you cathedrals or you great tabernacles, for many have believed on Jesus by the highway side, out on the village green, or under the spreading oak. Out in the desert of southern France, where men fled for their lives to hear the gospel, many believed on Jesus. In what place cannot Jesus triumph? He needs no Solomon's temple, no, in its porch He finds quibblers, but yonder by the willows of the Jordan He finds a people that believe on Him. Go forth, you heralds of the cross, and preach the gospel everywhere beneath the arch of heaven. At the corners of the street or on the hillside publish the proclamation of the Great King. Let the trees of the woods sing out and the inhabitants of the rock sing. In all ears proclaim the gospel, till by river, sea, and plain it shall be said, "Many believed on Him *there."* Thus we have seen that it is pleasant to note the place where we first believed in Jesus.

II. Secondly, IT IS VERY INSTRUCTIVE TO NOTE THE TIME when persons are led to faith. Many believed on Him there and then—when He was preaching at the place where John first baptized.

As I have said, some of you do not know when you believed, but you know that you *have* believed, and that knowledge is quite sufficient. Still, it is interesting to know when you believed. Let us see if there were not certain noteworthy circumstances about the season of the conversion of these many. When was it?

First, it was *after a time of very great and obstinate opposition*. The Savior could make nothing of these quibbling Jews, they were so desperately prejudiced against Him, that He turned away from them to more hopeful spirits. No sooner does He cross the river than we read that "many believed on Him there." So great a difference may we find in a few miles and a few hours. Opposition is no sign of defeat, but the contrary. When the devil roars, it is because his kingdom is being shaken, or he is afraid that it will be shaken. It should not depress us when we see a bitter spirit awakened; it should grieve us to see men opposing the truth, but it should not lead us to abstain from spreading it. In the face of intense opposition our eyes should sparkle—

"With that stern joy which warriors feel
In foemen worthy of their steel."

In the name of God expect victory. Now the foe advances to the fight the Lord has delivered him into our hands. Hear how David puts it, "They compassed me about like bees, they are quenched as the fire of thorns: for in the name of the Lord I will destroy them." Have but confidence in God, and all will be well. Nothing is worse than stagnation. The stolid indifference of a thoughtless age is hard to deal with, but there is some little hope of a people who will resist you. Take courage from the blackening down of the darkness, and hope that very soon you will see the dawn of a better day. "Be you steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as you know that your labor is not in vain

in the Lord." If today men take up stones to stone the Christ, tomorrow hearts of stone may be turned to flesh, and we may hear that "Many believed on Him there."

The next point which is worthy of thought is that the time when these believed was *a time of calm, unbroken quietude*. The Savior was abiding at Bethany beyond Jordan, and there He found a resting place. I suppose there was a ferry there, and by this means our Lord crossed to the other side of the Jordan, into a lone spot where He could feel safe from quibblers. Those who came there came with the desire to hear and learn; they resorted to Him, and were prepared to hear thoughtfully. Some persons may be converted through those who strive and cry and cause their voice to be heard in the streets, but I do not think the best minds are won in that manner. Conversion of a solid character is effected in a more solid way. Solemn thought and consideration are the healthiest for gospel preaching. One of the fathers has a famous sermon upon this text in which he deals with women, and speaks of them as having so much more time for retirement and quiet than men, and he thinks that this is one of the reasons why so many of them believe in proportion to men. Men live in the noise of public life, and so grow worldly, and forget the Lord, but women are more often alone and walk in quieter places, and we may, therefore, expect to see more of them turning to God. Certainly an opportunity to think is a great privilege to any man or any woman, and these people at Bethabara, delivered from the noise and clamor of Jerusalem and its priests and sectaries, were able to weigh the claims of Jesus, and were led to decide for Him. Give me the riverside, away from the rush of fashion, and I will preach with great hopefulness.

They began to speak of John. Do you wonder? It was the natural topic to discuss upon the spot where John at first baptized. "John did no miracle, but all things that he spoke concerning this man were true," therefore this Man is the Messiah. This is He of whom John said, "Who coming after me is preferred before me: for He was before me." I thank my God most heartily for giving us quiet worship. We are not dull and sleepy, but we are not excited and noisy. I am glad to hope that some men are converted to God amid war, and earthquakes, and pestilence, but I am inclined to be suspicious of that kind of conversion, for fear it should die with its cause. We had an earthquake in Essex some time ago, and in the little towns everybody went to the place of worship that week. I asked one of the ministers of a certain village in Essex how they were getting on now that frisky Essex had once more settled down. "Oh," he said, "we are as dead as ever. We need an earthquake every week to wake us up." If that had not been true of Essex I am sure it is true of other places. That which is born with fear dies with fear, but our Savior, in the calm of the hamlet by the river's bank, instilled the truth into thoughtful minds. The Jordan rolled between Him and His adversaries; no disturbance of the peace was to be feared; those who came to Him were sincere inquirers, and our Lord, therefore, preached with great success, and "many believed on Him there." A time of calm thoughtfulness and peace of mind should suggest to us the propriety of setting our

house in order towards God and considering the claims of the Lord Jesus. If you are this day free from care, free from labor, free from fret, I beseech you, calmly judge of your condition as to the world to come of which we speak. Think of the Son of God, see whether He is not worthy of your immediate confidence, judge whether it is not a day of grace to your soul wherein it would be wise to believe in Jesus.

This time when many believed was *a time of great desire for hearing*. Let me read it, "Many resorted unto Him, and many believed on Him there." You cannot catch fish where there are none, but when the fish come swarming up to the net, we may hope that some will be taken in its meshes. We cheerfully hope that when men flock to hear the gospel some will believe it. When I see the vast crowds flooding this place like a sea, I hope it will not all be in vain. When men are as eager to enter the house of prayer as others are to get into a theater, surely we may hope that God means to bless them. Oh that God would bless the multitudes that contend for standing room in these aisles! To what purpose does He incline them to come here if it is not that they should believe and live? May it be said of this house, not only that many resorted to it, but that they resorted to Jesus, not only that they heard of Him, but that they believed in Him.

What else shall I say as to this time when many believed in Jesus? I will say nothing else except that *it was a time of which nothing else need be said.* "Many believed on Him there." Blessed is that age which has no history, but more blessed is that age of which this is the history, "Many believed on Him there." Happiest of days in which many believed in Jesus! Brightest of spots of which it is said, "Many believed on Him there!" The most honorable record of any house of prayer will be this, "Many believed on Him there." I am praying that this may be the case here today. I began the morning with this prayer, and my dear brethren, the deacons and elders, when they came in to pray with me before I ventured on this platform, pleaded for the same thing. Only one note has sounded from the harp of our prayer, it is this—"Oh that many may this day believe in the Lord Jesus Christ! Oh that this second Sabbath of October may be marked, not only by the fall of the leaf, but by the Lord Jesus Christ gathering ripe fruit, which shall be the reward of the travail of His soul! Why should it not be so? Why should it not be said today, "Many believed on Him *there* and *then?"*

III. We now make a third remark, which is this, IT IS CHEERING TO OBSERVE THE FACT ITSELF. We have noticed the place and the time, but these are of secondary consequence, it is most charming to observe the fact—"Many believed on Him."

This fact was *a great refreshment to our dear Savior's heart*. I do not say that John tells us so, but I do think that from the style of his writing in this passage it looks so. There is an air of quietude about the passage. He writes, "And there He abode." He seemed at home there, He could rest at Bethabara, because many believed on Him there. He must have been wounded when the inhabitants of His Father's city again and again took up stones to stone Him, but He was pleased to see the plain country folk

flock to hear Him. When the polished citizens rejected Him, when the wise Jews would not hear Him, the plain rustics of Peraea stood listening with delight to His dear words, and then weighed them with care, and expressed one by one, the conviction that John's witness was indeed true, and that in Jesus of Nazareth they saw the Messiah. This was to be an oasis of comfort for our Lord before He traversed the burning desert of His passion and death. Before He was called by His last bitter agony to finish the work which the Father had given Him to do, He was to be refreshed by many true hearts putting their trust in Him.

I observe again that no doubt *it was the fruit of John's word*. The good man's labors were not in vain. Now, at last, the seed which the faithful John had sown brings forth the blade and the ear. By the river's brink the handful of corn grows and ripens to a harvest. Good work never dies.

It was, however, more directly and clearly *the result of our Lord's own presence*. They first saw Him, and what He did, and what He said, and then they compared this with what John had testified beforehand, and drew the conclusion that all things that John spoke of this man were true. Brethren, we must have Jesus Himself here, and I rejoice to believe that He will not refuse to come. Our dear Lord has been known to come to this house on errands of love; there is scarcely a seat in this house which He has not visited; all over the place He has caused the tears of repentance and the songs of faith to flow forth. He is no stranger by His Spirit to this house of prayer; and this week He has been here, not only with those who have confessed His name, but with some who last Wednesday were stricken down by conviction and made to cry out in the midst of the congregation, "What must we do to be saved?" In His infinite mercy and boundless condescension Jesus is with us, and from this fact we believe and are sure that power to heal and save will go forth on all sides. By prayer we will hold Him fast; we will not let Him go until He bless many souls.

The fact is very cheering, for you notice concerning the faith produced, that *it was decided*. They did not say that they would try to believe, but they believed on Him there. They did not promise to think on it, but they believed on Him there. They did not say that they felt impressions, but they believed on Him there. They did not say that they hoped and trusted, and so on, but they believed on Him there. That is the consummation for which I pray at this time, that you should not talk about faith or feeling, nor resolve and promise, but that you should actually believe on Him straight away. Oh that I might see in you a sharp, clear, crisp faith in Jesus Christ—a faith about which there shall be no question! Remember, if you have a certain faith, you have a certain salvation. A doubtful faith will leave a doubt about your security, but those who believe out and out shall have joy and peace through believing.

That belief was prompt. Christ had preached without result for years to some others, but to those who came to this place He spoke only for a short time, and they believed on Him there. How I wish that many who have never heard the gospel before may believe on Jesus this day! I believe that new hearers are often the most hopeful hearers. If you could

take a blind man out under the heavens, and in a moment remove the scales from his eyes, and let him see the stars for the first time, how amazed he would be! It is said that much of the special results of the preaching of Wesley and Whitefield arose out of the fact that the gospel had become a novelty in England, so that when they preached it, men were struck with wonder at it. I have, therefore, hopes that the preaching today of the fact that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanses as from all sin, and that there is immediate pardon to be had by simply trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ, will take some of you so by surprise that you will believe at once, and it shall be said, "Many believed on Him there." These people did not stop to get home; they did not wait for next week, but there and then, by the river's brink, they looked to Him who is the Lamb of God, and believed on His name.

The believing was of the most solid kind, because they could give a reason for it. It was not a hasty, ignorant faith, but they argued thus, "This is the man of whom John spoke: we have seen what He did and what He said, and He is exactly the man that John said He would be. Assuredly He is the Messiah, of whom John spoke," and "They believed on Him there." I would like you to argue the matter out. I would have you know your sin, and the way by which it is removed. I desire you to understand the doctrine of substitution, to get at the back of the plan of salvation, and see the reason why the Lord Jesus is the fit object of our faith. When you do this you will believe with a grip and a hold to your faith such as an ignorant faith can never supply. Oh that we might see worked here today a solid immovable faith which can give a reason for its existence!

This faith is said to have been widespread, for *"many* believed on Him there." I dare say many men, women and children; many of all sorts believed on Him there. Oh the privilege of knowing that Christ is no Savior for the few, but He gave His life a ransom for many! Heaven is not confined in its admissions to a few score, but a number that no man can number shall fill the glory land. I do not think we have anybody left in this congregation of that ancient order of close fellows who glory in the fewness of the elect. I hope they are nearly all gone to heaven out of all the congregations, whom once they harassed. These brethren used to think that if one or two converts were brought in each year, a great work was being done. If they heard of an evangelist holding revival services, and learned that two or three hundred were added to the church, they said, "Ah, h'm! These excitements end in rejection. It is all very fine to hear of so many joining the church. I hope they will all turn out right." This meant, being interpreted, that they did not think they would, and that they would be sorry if they did. Now we are not of that mind. We believe in many conversions; we look for them, and we have them. That power which converts one can convert a hundred. The same argument which convinces one candid man will convince a thousand candid men. The same gospel which wins one heart by the Holy Spirit's power can win ten thousand hearts. O great Master, let us see it done today!

"Many believed on him." *This was what He lived for;* this is what He died for, that men might believe in Him. This is what we preach for; this is what you have come here for. God gives you to hear the gospel that you may believe on Jesus. This is why the Bible was written, "These are written, that you might believe on His name." Your Sundays are given you that you may believe in Christ. Your houses of prayer are built that you may believe in Christ. If you will not believe, our preaching is an unhappy failure for us, an unhappier failure for you. "If you believe not, you shall die in your sins." "If you will not believe, surely you shall not be established." "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved: he that believes not shall be damned." God save us from that, for Christ's sake!

IV. And now I close with the fourth head, which is this; it has been pleasant to know the place, instructive to note the time, and cheering to observe the fact, and now IT IS MOST IMPORTANT THAT WE SHOULD HAVE A SECOND EDITION OF IT. It is most important that many should believe on Christ here, in this very place, at this very hour.

For first, this morning *many are here*. From different motives and from different quarters of the globe you have come *here* at this time. We have so far realized the text that "many resorted unto Him." This is a good beginning; we ought to be very thankful to see it.

Next, *the Lord Jesus Christ is here* by His Spirit. He declares that where two or three are met together in His name there He is, we have many twos and threes here. He has promised to be with His people to the end of the world when they go forth to preach the gospel. We have been crying to Him for a blessing this morning, and He comes to answer our prayers. So far all is hopeful. We have the Lord and the many resorting to Him.

Furthermore, *the witness borne is even more abundant than that which was borne at Bethabara*. John is not here, but then he was not there, for he had been beheaded. His witness was there as his witness is here. Truth is not affected by time; John's witness is as good after nineteen centuries as after three years. We have also the witness of the prophets who all spoke of Jesus. We have what these people had not, we have the witness of the apostles who saw Him live and die and rise again and go up into heaven. We have, moreover, the witness of beloved friends, who have been saved by the Lord Jesus, and can testify that all that has ever been said in the Savior's honor is true. He is able to save; He is willing to save; He casts out none that come to Him. If you put hundreds of us into the witness box we shall all utter our solemn testimony that Jesus is a Savior, and a great one, willing to deliver you from the wrath to come.

Beside that, you have the testimony of His own gospel. The gospel is its own sufficient witness. Somebody wrote a book, and wished to present it to old George the Third. Farmer George asked, "What's the book about, sir?" "Sire, it is an apology for the Bible." "What!" said George, "What! Apology for the Bible! Apology for the Bible! Never heard of such a thing. Don't want your book, sir. Apology for *the Bible* indeed!" Quite right, King George! Surely we do not want any apologies for the gospel—it is its own witness. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself,

not imputing their trespasses unto them." Jesus Christ suffered, bled, and died, bearing human sin in Himself, and whosoever believes in Him shall be immediately forgiven, immediately renewed in his heart by the Holy Spirit, and made a new creature in Christ. Why, this is evidently a divine message. "Look and live." Such a gospel never was invented by men, for no man likes it well enough to invent it, nor even to accept it after it is invented, till God renews his heart. Let it sound forth, that Jesus, mighty to save, invites men to trust Him, and trusting Him they shall live.

Let us now come to bayonet point. Friend, will you believe in Jesus Christ?—that is the point. You have heard about Him long enough—will you now believe on Him? Wagon loads of sermons have been lost upon you—will you now believe on Him? "I will think about it." I don't ask you to think about it, but to believe on Him. "I shall go home and try what I can do." Do not try to do anything; believe on Jesus, for the gospel precept is—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." May the sweet Spirit of God come upon you mightily now, and take you away from all things but the one thing needful! Oh that you would cast your guilty souls on Jesus, and find Him mighty to redeem! Here is a simple verse for you to say in your hearts—

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Christ's kind arms I fall;
He is my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus, and my all."

If you have said that from your heart, you are a saved man! Go your way rejoicing in His salvation! The Lord bless you! Amen and amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
PSALM 95; JOHN 10:22-42

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—914, 539, 483.

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

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

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

JESUS AND THE CHILDREN
NO. 1925

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 17, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And they brought young children to Him, that He should touch them: and His disciples rebuked those who brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was much displeased, and said to them, Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them."
Mark 10:13-16.

IT must be a very great sin indeed to hinder anybody from coming to Christ. He is the only way of salvation from the wrath of God, salvation from the terrible judgment that is due to sin—who would dare to keep the perishing from that way? To alter the signposts on the way to the city of refuge, or to dig a trench across the road, would have been an inhuman act, deserving the sternest condemnation. He who holds back a soul from Jesus is the servant of Satan, and is doing the most diabolical of all the devil's work. We are all agreed about this.

I wonder, my dear friends, whether any of us are quite innocent in this respect? May we not have hindered others from repentance and faith? It is a sad suspicion, but I am afraid that many of us have done so.

Certainly you who have never believed in Jesus yourselves have done sadly much to prevent others believing. *The force of example,* whether for good or bad, is very powerful, and especially is it so with parents upon their children, superiors upon their underlings, and teachers upon their pupils. Perhaps, father, if you had been an earnest Christian, your son would not have been ungodly, possibly, dear mother, if you had been decided for the Savior, the girls would have been Christians too. We have to speak and judge after the manner of men, but, assuredly, example is a great fashioner of character. We can none of us tell if we go down to hell how many we shall draw with us, for we are bound to thousands by invisible bands. Here's the respect which makes a wide calamity out of the ruin of a single soul. Over the tomb of each sinner may be read this epitaph, "This man perished not alone in his iniquity." "None of us lives to himself, and no man dies to himself." If we could fling our souls away as solitary stones out of the sling, this were woe enough, but since we are all threaded beads upon the string of common life, where one goes many go with him. The plague of sin will not confine itself to one man's house, it sallies forth from every door and window, and slays its victims all around, so that "one sinner destroys much good." May I put this ques-

tion to those of you who have never yet repented of your sins, nor sought the Savior's face? Have you calculated what baneful influences are streaming from your lives upon the souls of your children, your wives, your brothers, your friends? Jesus says, "He that is not with Me is against Me, and He that gathers not with Me scatters abroad." How many have you scattered abroad like wandering sheep? How many have you induced to remain careless and godless, since they see you doing the same? These are solemn reflections for those who mean no harm, and yet are doing it.

Do not some persons go further than their example, and hinder others from coming to Christ *by discouraging speeches?* They dishearten those who are hoping for better things. Working men are to be found who never see any tenderness towards holy things in a work-mate but what they hasten at once to wound his heart. If they suspect a comrade of endeavoring to escape from drunkenness, they ridicule him, and if he goes further, and exhibits faith towards God, they make him the football of their contempt. It must entail a fearful responsibility upon a man for him to make himself the opposer of all good in his fellows. Why are so many eager to undertake this responsibility? It is a sorrowful thing that certain men will let others quite alone, and even be friendly with them, should they drink, and swear, and commit lewdness, and yet as soon as they have serious thoughts of religion, they attack them bitterly. Half a fault in a Christian is made the theme of the most ungenerous comment, but actual crimes will be excused in an irreligious person. Why should men wish to prevent their fellow beings from being saved? Friend, if you choose to ruin your own soul, why should you try to ruin others? Why play the dog in the manger? If you will not have religion for yourself, why not let others have it? It can be no gain to you, either in this world or in the world to come, to stand as with a club at the gates of life to drive back all who would enter thereat.

Again, certain would-be wise people hinder souls from coming to Christ *by cunningly insinuating doubts* about the revelation of the divine word. They have heard from an infidel lecturer, or from some "modern thought" preacher, a dangerous piece of error, and they no sooner find a young mind inclined to serious things than they at once repeat this pretty lie. By their captious questions they stagger young minds. By their evil teaching they dry up the springs of repentance, and paralyze the strength of faith. Fierce as Pharaoh, they would throw all new-born faith into the river of doubt. Cruel as the Prince of Darkness, they would quench every newly-kindled candle of hope. They are more diligent to destroy the faith than others are to spread it. What an accumulation of guilt must be resting upon the mind of the man who breathes out doubt as other men breathe air! Neither God, nor Christ, nor heaven, nor hell, can escape the foul steam of his infidelity. See how he blasts the souls on whom he breathes! Calculate his crimes. Put down the soul-murders of which he is guilty. Item; a young man decoyed from the Bible class, familiarized with blasphemous notions, and then led into outward sin and speedy death. Write that down in blood. Note the next item; a young girl,

once hopeful and considerate, impressed by the supposed scientific knowledge of an unbeliever, led from the faith of her mother, and by and by snared by the world so as to live and die impenitent. Write that also in blood to be demanded at the doubter's door in the last great day! Woe unto those who act the part of jackals to the lion of hell! May God give repentance to those who have been the bodyguard of the Prince of Darkness, doing his murderous work with both their hands by denying the truth and sowing the seeds of unbelief! If I speak to any such, I do it with sorrowful indignation, and I beg them to turn from their evil way.

In many ways evil-minded persons may lead others to that evil decision which in the ungodly almost occupies the same place as conversion in the case of the regenerate. Minds in their early days are plastic. The first seven years of our being often shape all the rest, at any rate, give to godly teaching the first twelve years of any child, and it will be difficult to erase the writing. Some seem to take a wretched delight in stamping upon the soft clay their own vile impression, and in confirming upon youth the dangerous tendencies already present. These people work conversions unto evil, by which young minds become settled in vice, and established in wickedness.

God save us from hindering a single soul from coming to Christ and heaven. I cannot help trembling sometimes lest a cold and chilly sermon of mine should wither young buds of promise; lest in the prayer meeting a wandering, rambling prayer from a heartless professor should dampen the rising earnestness of a tearful seeker. I tremble for you, my dear brethren and sisters in Christ, lest levity of conversation, worldliness of conduct, inconsistency of behavior, or callousness of demeanor, should in any one of you, at any time, turn the lame out of the way, or give cause of stumbling to one of the Lord's little ones. Lord, save me from being a partaker in other men's sins, and especially in being in any measure the cause of another man's destruction! Oh to be clear of the blood of all men! God forbid that we should be accomplices in the murder of souls, either before the fact, or in the fact, or after the fact, for in each of these ways we may be guilty. God help us, brethren, to avoid this great sin of hindering others in their coming to Christ.

Yet this is not the subject of my discourse this morning, I shall only deal with a single form of it. I am going to speak upon the great sin of hindering the young from coming to Christ. First, *let us describe it.* Secondly, *let us watch its action.* Thirdly, *let us see how Jesus Christ condemns it.* And then, lastly, *let us take a hint from the doctrine which our Lord incidentally lays down.* It may be that the Lord will bless this to our souls.

I. LET US DESCRIBE THIS SIN of hindering young children from coming to Christ.

First, I may say of it that it is *very common,* it must be common, or else it would not have been found among the twelve apostles. The immediate disciples of our Lord were a highly honorable band of men, despite their mistakes and shortcomings; they must have been greatly sweetened by living near to one so perfect and so full of love. I gather, therefore, that

if these men, who were the cream of the cream, rebuked the mothers who brought their young children to Christ, it must be a pretty common offense in the church of God. I fear that the chilling frost of this mistake is felt almost everywhere. I am not going to make any ungenerous statement, but I think if a little personal investigation were made many of us might find ourselves guilty upon this point, and might be led to cry, with Pharaoh's butler, "I do remember my faults this day." Have we laid ourselves out for the conversion of children, as much as we have done for the conversion of grown-up folks? What? Do you think me sarcastic? Do you not lay yourselves out for anybody's conversion? What must I say to you? It is dreadful that the Cainite spirit should enter a believer's heart and make him say, "Am I my brother's keeper?" It is a shocking thing that we should ourselves, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and leave the famishing multitudes to perish. But tell me now; if you did care for the salvation of souls, would you not think it rather too commonplace a matter to begin with boys and girls? Yes; and your feeling is shared by many. The fault is common.

I believe, however, that this feeling, in the case of the apostles, *was caused by zeal for Jesus*. These good men thought that the bringing of children to the Savior would cause an interruption, He was engaged in much better work, He had been confounding the Pharisees, instructing the masses, and healing the sick. Could it be right to pester Him with children? The little ones would not understand His teaching, and they did not need His miracles; why should they be brought in to disturb His great doings? Therefore the disciples as good as said, "Take your children back, good women. Teach them the law yourselves, and instruct them in the Psalms and the Prophets, and pray with them. Every child cannot have Christ's hands laid on it. If we suffer one set of children to come, we shall have all the neighborhood swarming about us, and the Savior's work will be grievously interrupted. Do you not see this? Why do you act so thoughtlessly?" The disciples had such reverence for their Master that they would send the prattlers away, lest the great Rabbi should seem to become a mere teacher of babes. This may have been a zeal for God, but it was not according to knowledge. Thus in these days, certain brethren would hardly like to receive many children into the church, lest it should become a society of boys and girls. Surely, if these come into the church in any great numbers, the church may be spoken of in terms of reproach! The outside world will call it a mere Sunday school. I remember that when a fallen woman had been converted in one of our county towns, there was an objection among certain professors to her being received into the church, and certain lewd fellows of the baser sort even went the length of advertising upon the walls the fact that the Baptist minister had baptized a harlot. I told my friend to regard it as an honor. Even so, if any reproach us with receiving young children into the church, we will wear the reproach as a badge of honor. Holy children cannot possibly do us any harm. God will send us sufficient of age and experience to steer the church prudently. We will receive none who fail to yield evidence of the new birth, however old they may be, and we will shut out no believ-

ers, however young they may be. God forbid that we should condemn our cautious brethren, but, at the same time we wish their caution would show itself where it is more required. Jesus will not be dishonored by the children; we have far more cause to fear the adults.

The apostles' rebuke of the children arose in a measure from *ignorance of the children's need.* If any mother in that throng had said, "I must bring my child to the Master, for he is sorely afflicted with a devil," neither Peter, nor James, nor John would have demurred for a moment, but would have assisted in bringing the possessed child to the Savior. Or suppose another mother had said, "My child has a pining sickness upon it, it is wasted to skin and bone, permit me to bring my darling, that Jesus may lay His hands upon her"—the disciples would all have said, "Make way for this woman and her sorrowful burden." But these little ones with bright eyes, and prattling tongues, and leaping limbs, why should they come to Jesus? Ah, friends! They forgot that in those children, with all their joy, their health, and their apparent innocence, there was a great and grievous need for the blessing of a Savior's grace. If you indulge in the novel idea that *your* children do not need conversion, that children born of Christian parents are somewhat superior to others, and have good within them which only needs development, one great motive for your devout earnestness will be gone. Believe me, brethren, your children need the Spirit of God to give them new hearts and right spirits, or else they will go astray as other children do. Remember that however young they are, there is a stone within the youngest breast, and that stone must be taken away, or be the ruin of the child. There is a tendency to evil even where as yet it has not developed into act, and that tendency needs to be overcome by the divine power of the Holy Spirit, causing the child to be born again. Oh that the church of God would cast off the old Jewish idea which still has such force around us, namely, that natural birth brings with it covenant privileges! Now, even under the old dispensation there were hints that the true seed was not born after the flesh, but after the spirit, as in the case of Ishmael and Isaac, and Esau and Jacob. Will not even the church of God know that "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit?" "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" The natural birth communicates nature's filthiness, but it cannot convey grace. Under the new covenant we are expressly told that the sons of God are "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Under the old covenant, which was typical, the birth according to the flesh yielded privilege, but to come at all under the covenant of grace you must be born again. The first birth brings you nothing but an inheritance with the first Adam; you must be born again to come under the headship of the second Adam.

But it is written, says one, "that the promise is unto you, and to your children." Dear friends, there never was a grosser piece of knavery committed under heaven than the quotation of that text as it is usually quoted. I have heard it quoted many times to prove a doctrine which is very far removed from that which it clearly teaches. If you take one half of any

sentence which a man utters, and leave out the rest, you may make him say the opposite of what he means. What do you think that text really is? See Acts 2:39, "The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." This grandly wide statement is the argument on which is founded the exhortation, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you." It is not a declaration of privilege special to any one, but a presentation of grace as much to all that are afar off as to them and to their children. There is not a word in the New Testament to show that the benefits of divine grace are in any degree transmitted by natural descent; they come "to as many as the Lord our God shall call," whether their parents are saints or sinners. How can people have the impudence to tear off half a text to make it teach what is not true? No, brethren, you must sorrowfully look upon your children as born in sin, and shaped in iniquity, "heirs of wrath, even as others," and though you may yourself belong to a line of saints, and trace your pedigree from minister to minister, all eminent in the church of God, yet your children occupy precisely the same position by their birth as other people's children do, so that they must be redeemed from under the curse of the law by the precious blood of Jesus, and they must receive a new nature by the work of the Holy Spirit. They are favored by being placed under godly training, and under the hearing of the gospel, but their need and their sinfulness are the same as in the rest of the race. If you think of this you will see the reason why they should be brought to Jesus Christ—a reason why they should be brought as speedily as possible in the arms of your prayer and faith to Him who is able to renew them.

Also, no doubt, this feeling that children may not come to Christ may be derived from *a doubt about their capacity to receive the blessing which Jesus is able to give*. Upon this subject, if I were at this moment to deal with facts alone, and not with mere opinion, I could spend the whole morning in giving details of young children whom I have personally conversed with, some of them very young children indeed. I will say broadly that I have more confidence in the spiritual life of the children that I have received into this church than I have in the spiritual condition of the adults thus received. I will even go further than that, and say that I have usually found a clearer knowledge of the gospel and a warmer love to Christ in the child converts than in the man-converts. I will even astonish you still more by saying that I have sometimes met with a deeper spiritual experience in children of ten and twelve than I have in certain persons of fifty and sixty. It is an old proverb that some children are born with beards. Some boys are little men, and some girls are little old women. You cannot measure the lives of any of us by our ages. I knew a boy who, when he was fifteen, often heard old Christian people say, "The boy is sixty years old, he speaks with such insight into divine truth." I believe that this youth at fifteen did know far more of the things of God, and of soul travail, than any around him, whatever their age might be. I cannot tell you why it is, but so I do know it is that some are old when they are young, and some are very green when they are old; some are wise when

you would expect them to be otherwise, and others are very foolish when you might have expected that they had left their folly. Oh, dear friends, talk not of a child's incapacity for repentance! I have known a child weep herself to sleep by the month together under a crushing sense of sin. If you would know a deep, and bitter, and awful fear of the wrath of God, let me tell you what I felt as a boy. If you would know joy in the Lord, many a child has been as full of it as his little heart could hold. If you want to know what faith in Jesus is, you must not look to those who have been be muddled by the heretical jargon of the times, but to the dear children who have taken Jesus at His word, and believed in Him, and loved Him, and therefore know and are sure that they are saved. Capacity for believing lies more in the child than in the man. We grow less rather than more capable of faith; every year brings the unregenerate mind further away from God, and makes it less capable of receiving the things of God. No ground is more prepared for the good seed than that which as yet has not been trodden down as the highway, nor has been as yet overgrown with thorns. Not yet has the child learned the deceits of pride, the falsehoods of ambition, the delusions of worldliness, the tricks of trade, the sophistries of philosophy, and so far it has an advantage over the adult. In any case the new birth is the work of the Holy Spirit, and He can as easily work upon youth as upon age.

Some, too, have hindered the children because they have been *forgetful of the child's value*. The soul's price does not depend upon its years. "Oh, it is only a child!" "Children are a nuisance." "Children are always getting in the way." This talk is common. God forgive those who despise the little ones. Will you be very angry if I say that a boy is more worth saving than a man? It is infinite mercy on God's part to save those who are seventy, for what good can they now do with the twig end of their lives? When we get to be fifty or sixty, we are almost worn out, and if we have spent all our early days with the devil, what remains for God? But these dear boys and girls—there is something to be made out of them. If now they yield themselves to Christ they may have a long, happy, and holy day before them in which they may serve God with all their hearts. Who knows what glory God may have of them? Heathen lands may call them blessed. Whole nations may be enlightened by them. If a famous schoolmaster was accustomed to take his hat off to his boys because he did not know whether one of them might not be Prime Minister, we may justly look with awe upon converted children, for we do not know how soon they may be among the angels, or how greatly their light may shine among men. Oh, brethren and sisters, let us estimate children at their true valuation, and we shall not keep them back, but we shall be eager to lead them to Jesus at once.

In proportion to our own spirituality of mind, and in proportion to our own child-likeness of heart, we shall be at home with children, and we shall enter into their early fears and hopes, their budding faith and opening love. Dwelling among young converts, we shall seem to be in a garden of flowers, in a vineyard where the tender grapes give a good smell.

II. Secondly, concerning this hindering of children, LET US WATCH ITS ACTION. I think the results of this sad feeling about children coming to the Savior is to be seen, first, in the fact that often there is *nothing in the service for the children*. The sermon is over their heads, and the preacher does not think that this is any fault; in fact, he rather rejoices that it is so. Some time ago a person who wanted, I suppose, to make me feel my own insignificance, wrote to say that he had met with a number of Negroes who had read my sermons with evident pleasure, and he wrote that he believed they were very suitable for what he was pleased to call "Niggers." Yes, my preaching was just the sort of stuff for Africans. The gentleman did not dream what sincere pleasure he caused me, for if I am understood by poor people, by servant girls, by children, I am sure I can be understood by others. I am ambitious of preaching for Africans, if by these you mean the lowest, the rag-tag and bob-tail. I think nothing greater than to win the hearts of the lowly. So with regard to children. People occasionally say of such a one, "He is only fit to teach children, he is no preacher." Sirs, I tell you that in God's sight he is no preacher who does not care for the children. There should be at least a part of every sermon and service that will suit the little ones. It is an error which permits us to forget this.

Parents sin in the same way when they *omit religion from the education of their children*. Perhaps the thought is that their children cannot be converted while they are children, and so they think it of small consequence where they go to school in their tender years. But it is not so. Many parents even forget this when their girls and boys are closing their school days. They send them away to the Continent, to places foul with every moral and spiritual danger, with the idea that there they can complete an elegant education. In how many cases I have seen that education completed, and it has produced young men who are thorough-paced profligates, and young women who are mere flirts. As we sow we reap. Let us expect our children to know the Lord. Let us from the beginning mingle the name of Jesus with their A B Cs. Let them read their first lessons from the Bible. It is a remarkable thing that there is no book from which children learn to read so quickly as from the New Testament; there is a charm about that book which draws forth the infant mind. But oh, dear friends, let us never be guilty, as parents, of forgetting the religious training of our children, for if we do we may be guilty of the blood of their souls.

Another result is that *the conversion of children is not expected* in many of our churches and congregations. I mean, that they do not expect the children to be converted as children. The theory is that if we can impress youthful minds with principles which may in later years prove useful to them, we have done a great deal, but to convert children as children, and to regard them as being as much believers as their seniors, is regarded as absurd. To this supposed absurdity I cling with all my heart. I believe that of children is the kingdom of God, both on earth and in heaven. It is a sacred joy to me on Thursday night to notice certain boys and girls who have for a long time attended the pastor's prayer meeting

with great regularity. Some of you old folks do not come and pray for your pastor, but these children do, for they love their pastor, and he, on his part, highly values their prayers. Happy church which is adorned and blessed by prayers of dear children who early learn to cry to the great Father for the hallowing of His name and the coming of His kingdom! We expect to see children converted, and we do see it.

Another ill result is that *the conversion of children is not believed in*. Certain suspicious people always file their teeth a bit when they hear of a newly-converted child; they will have a bite at him if they can. They very rightly insist upon it that these children should be carefully examined before they are baptized and admitted into the church, but they are wrong in insisting that only in exceptional instances are they to be received. We quite agree with them as to the care to be exercised, but it should be the same in all cases, and neither more nor less in the cases of children. I thank God that the most of those dear children who have been added to this church could stand a rigid examination in doctrinal matters, and would bear favorable comparison with the older folks, but still it seems to me a very hard thing that a high degree of knowledge should be expected of them.

How often do people expect to see in boys and girls the same solemnity of behavior which is seen in older people! It would be a good thing for us all if we had never left off being boys and girls, but had added to all the excellences of a child the virtues of a man. Surely it is not necessary to kill the child to make the saint. It is thought by the more severe that a converted child must become twenty years older in a minute. A very solemn person once called me from the play-ground after I had joined the church and warned me of the impropriety of playing at trap, bat, and ball with the boys. He said, "How can you play like others if you are a child of God?" I answered that I was employed as an usher, and it was part of my duty to join in the amusements of the boys. My venerable critic thought that this altered the matter very materially, but it was clearly his view that a converted boy, as such, ought never to play! What foolery, Brethren! I will say no more.

Do not others expect from children more perfect conduct than they themselves exhibit? If a gracious child should lose his temper, or act wrongly in some trifling thing through forgetfulness, straightway he is condemned as a little hypocrite by those who are a long way from being perfect themselves. Jesus says, "Take heed that you despise not one of these little ones." Take heed that you say not an unkind word against your younger brethren in Christ, your little sisters in the Lord. Jesus sets such great store by His dear lambs that He carries them in His bosom, and I charge you who follow your Lord in all things to show a like tenderness to the little ones of the divine family. I will not say more on that point.

III. And now let us notice, thirdly, HOW JESUS CONDEMNED THIS FAULT.

First, He condemned it as *contrary to His own spirit*. "They brought young children to Him, that He should touch them: and His disciples re-

buked those who brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was much displeased." He was not often displeased, certainly He was not often "much displeased," and when He was much displeased we may be sure that the cause was serious. He was displeased at these children being pushed away from Him, for it was so contrary to His mind about them. The disciples did *wrong to the mothers,* they rebuked the parents for doing a motherly act—for doing, in fact, that which Jesus loved them to do. They brought their children to Jesus out of respect to Him; they valued a blessing from His hands more than gold; they expected that the benediction of God would go with the touch of the great Prophet. They may have hoped that a touch of the hand of Jesus would make their children's lives bright and happy. Though there may have been a measure of weakness in the parents' thought, yet the Savior could not judge harshly of that which arose out of reverence to His person. He was therefore much displeased to think that those good women, who meant Him honor, should be roughly repulsed.

There was also *wrong done to the children*. Sweet little ones! What had they done that they should be chided for coming to Jesus? They had not meant to intrude. Dear things! They would have fallen at His feet in reverent love for the sweet-voiced teacher, who charmed not only men, but children, by His tender words. The little ones meant no ill, and why should they be blamed?

Besides, there was *wrong done to Himself*. It might have made men think that Jesus was stiff, reserved, and self-exalted, like the Rabbis. If they had thought that He could not condescend to children they would have sadly slandered the repute of His great love. His heart was a great harbor, wherein many little ships might cast anchor. Jesus, the child-man, was never more at home than with children. The holy child Jesus had an affinity for children. Was He to be represented by His own disciples as shutting the door against children? It would do sad injury to His character. Therefore, grieved at the triple evil which wounded the mothers, the children and Himself, He was sorely displeased. Anything we do to hinder a dear child from coming to Jesus greatly displeases our dear Lord. He cries to us, "Stand off. Let them alone. Let them come to Me, and forbid them not." Dear grey-headed friend, who are so strict and good, I must get you to stand back a bit, and suffer that child to come to Jesus, for I do not wish the Lord to be displeased with you. And you, good Christian sister, who have curdled a little in your temper, I must beg you be quiet, lest the Lord should be displeased with you, as He will be if you forbid the children to come to Him. So, you see, it was contrary to His spirit.

Next, *it was contrary to His teaching*, for He went on to say, "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." Christ's teaching was not that there is something in us to fit us for the kingdom, and that a certain number of years may make us capable of receiving grace. His teaching all went the other way, namely, that we are to be nothing, and that the less we are and the weaker we are, the better, for the less we have of self the more room there is for His divine

grace. Do you think to come to Jesus up the ladder of knowledge? Come down, sir, you will meet Him at the foot. Do you think to reach Jesus up the steep hill of experience! Come down, dear climber, He stands in the plain. "Oh! But when I am old, I shall then be prepared for Christ." Stay where you are, young man, Jesus meets you at the door of life; you were never more fit to meet Him than just now. He asks nothing of you but that you will be nothing, and that He may be all in all to you. That is His teaching, and to send back the child because it has not this or that is to fly in the teeth of the blessed doctrine of the grace of God.

Once more, *it was quite contrary to Jesus Christ's practice*. He made them see this, for "He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them." All His life long there is nothing in Him like rejection and refusing. He says truly, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." If He did cast out any because they were too young, the text would be falsified at once, but that can never be. He is the receiver of all who come to Him. It is written, "This man receives sinners, and eats with them." All His life He might be drawn as a shepherd with a lamb in His bosom; never as a cruel shepherd setting his dogs upon the lambs and driving them and their mothers away. I have neither time nor strength to say more, and I must close with a mere glance at our last point.

IV. LET US TAKE THE HINT WHICH JESUS GIVES TO THOSE WHO WOULD COME TO HIM. "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." How I wish that all my congregation would come and receive Christ as a little child receives Him! The little child has no prejudices, no preconceived theories nor opinions it cannot give up, it believes what Jesus says. You must come in the same way to learn of Christ. I fear you know a great deal—throw it out the window. You have made up your mind about a great many things—unmake your mind, and be as wax to the seal before Him.

A little child believes with an unquestioning faith which makes everything vivid and real. Believe just so! The child believes in all humility, looking up to its teacher, and receiving its teacher's word as decisive. Believe in Jesus just so! Say, "Lord, I am a know-nothing; I come to You to be taught. I am nothing, be You my all in all."

A child when it comes to Christ comes very sincerely, and with all its heart. It knows nothing of sinister motives, or of formality. Its repentance and faith are genuine. I wish you would come to Christ this morning, you poor guilty ones, in real earnest, just as you are. Do not play at religion any more. Do not look for fine words with which to trim yourselves and make your prayers look neat and pretty, but come as a child does, in all simplicity, not ashamed to talk as your heart feels.

When a child believes in Jesus it cares nothing for critical points. That is the way you must come to Christ. You that have always been inventing religious conundrums, you that for many years have been readers of the last new novels in modern theology—for they are mere novels, and nothing better, you that have addled your brains with the vain thoughts of vain men, come to Jesus as you are, and believe what Jesus says be-

cause Jesus says it. Take Christ at His word, and trust Him, that is the way to be saved.

"But I have no merit," said one, "I have no preparation." Neither has a child. I never find children troubled about being prepared for Christ, I never hear of such a thing as a child worried about qualifications for grace. A child is a sinner and knows it. That is the way to come to Christ. Come as a sinner, knowing that you are such. Say, "Jesus calls me, and I come; Jesus died for me, and I trust Him." That is the true way to come to Jesus. O friends! Instead of thinking yourselves more fit for Christ by growing bigger, grow smaller. Instead of getting greater, get less. Instead of being more wise be more completely bereft of all wisdom, and come to Jesus for wisdom, righteousness, and all things.

Sometimes when we are very feeble, and our language is very simple, God may bless it all the more, and I do pray He may this morning set His seal upon this poor talk of His sick servant. Every particle of my flesh, and every atom of my bones, is praying God to bless this sermon. Grim pain has been racking me while I have been speaking. May this discourse be more honorable than its brethren, because I bore it with sorrow! I long, I pine, I cry before God, that He may bless this feeble word of mine to your conversion, and to the conversion of many dear children. Those of you who have never looked to Christ and lived, do unto Christ, I pray you, just what these dear children did, He called them, and they came, and were folded in His arms. Come along with you! Do you half wish you could be a child again? You can be. He can give you a child's heart, and you can be in His kingdom newly-born. May it be so, for His name's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—LUKE 18.
HYMN FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—917, 704, 546.

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

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

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

LOVE'S COMPLAINING
NO. 1926

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 24, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Nevertheless I have somewhat against you, because you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you are fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto you quickly, and will remove your candlestick out of his place, except you repent." Revelation 2:4, 5.

IT was the work of the priest to go into the holy place and to trim the seven-branched lamp of gold; see how our Great High Priest walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, His work is not occasional, but constant. Wearing robes which are at once royal and priestly, He is seen lighting the holy lamps, pouring in the sacred oil, and removing impurities which would dim the light.

Hence our Lord's fitness to deal with the churches, which are these golden lamp stands, for no one knows so much about the lamps as the person whose *constant* work it is to watch them and trim them. No one knows the churches as Jesus does, for the care of all the churches daily comes upon Him. He continually walks among them, and holds their ministers as stars in His right hand. His eyes are perpetually upon the churches, so that He knows their works, their sufferings, and their sins, and those eyes are as a flame of fire, so that He sees with a penetration, discernment, and accuracy to which no other can attain. *We* sometimes judge the condition of religion too leniently, or else we err on the other side, and judge too severely. Our eyes are dim with the world's smoke, but His eyes are as a flame of fire. He sees the churches through and through, and knows their true condition much better than they know themselves. The Lord Jesus Christ is a most careful observer of churches and of individuals; nothing is hid from His observant eyes.

As He is the most *careful* observer, so He is the most candid. He is ever "the faithful and true witness." He loves much, and therefore He never judges harshly. He loves much, and therefore He always judges jealously. Jealousy is the sure attendant of such love as His. He will neither speak smooth words nor bitter words, but He will speak the truth—the truth in love, the truth as He Himself perceives it, and as He would have us perceive it. Well may He say, "He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches," since His sayings are so true, so just, so weighty.

Certainly no observer can be as *tender* as the Son of God. Those lamps are very precious to Him, it cost Him His life to light them. "Christ loved

the church, and gave Himself for it." Every church is to our Lord a more sublime thing than a constellation in the heavens; as He is precious to His saints, so are they precious to Him. He cares little for empires, kingdoms, or republic, but His heart is set on the kingdom of righteousness, of which His cross is the royal standard. He must reign until His foes are vanquished, and this is the great thought of His mind at this present, "From henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool." He ceases not to watch over His church; His sacrifice is ended, but not His service in caring for the golden lamps. He has completed the redemption of His bride, but He continues her preservation.

I therefore feel at this time that we may well join in a prayer to our Lord Jesus to come into our midst and put our light in order. Oh for a visit from Himself such as He paid in vision to the seven churches of Asia! With Him is the oil to feed the living flame, and He knows how to pour it in according to due measure; with Him are those golden snuffers with which to remove every superfluity of naughtiness, that our lights may so shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven. Oh for His presence now, to search us and to sanctify us, to cause us to shine forth to His Father's praise! We would be judged of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world. We would pray this morning, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." All things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do, and we delight to have it so. We invite you, O great High Priest, to come into this Your sanctuary, and look to this Your lamp this morning.

In the text, as it is addressed to the church at Ephesus and to us, we note three things. First, we note that *Christ perceives,* "I know your works…nevertheless I have this against you." Secondly, *Christ prescribes,* "Remember, therefore, from where you are fallen, and repent," and so forth. Thirdly, *Christ persuades*—persuades with a threat, "I will remove your candlestick out of its place," persuades, also, with a promise, "To him that overcomes will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." If the Lord Himself is here at this time, our plan of discourse will be a river of life, but if He is not among us by His Holy Spirit, it will be as the dry bed of a torrent which bears the name of "river," but lacks the living stream. We expect our Lord's presence; He will come to the lamps which His office calls upon Him to trim, it has been His custom to be with us, some of us have met Him this morning already, and we have constrained Him to tarry with us.

I. First, then, we notice that HE PERCEIVES.

Our Lord sorrowfully perceives the faults of His church—"Nevertheless I have somewhat against you," but *He does not so perceive those faults as to be forgetful of that which He can admire and accept,* for He begins His letter with commendations, "I know your works, and your labor, and your patience, and how you cannot bear them which are evil." Do not think, my brethren, that our Beloved is blind to the beauties of His church. On the contrary, He delights to observe them. He can see beau-

ties where she herself cannot see them. Where we observe much to deplore, His loving eyes see much to admire. The graces which He Himself creates He can always perceive. When we in the earnestness of self-examination overlook them, and write bitter things against ourselves, the Lord Jesus sees even in those bitter self-condemnations a life and earnestness and sincerity which He loves. Our Lord has a keen eye for all that is good. When He searches our hearts He never passes by the faintest longing, or desire, or faith, or love, of any of His people. He says, "I know your works."

But this is our point at this time, that while Jesus can see all that is good, *yet in very faithfulness He sees all that is evil*. His love is not blind. He does not say, "As many as I love I commend," but, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." It is more necessary for us that we should make a discovery of our faults than of our virtues. So notice in this text that Christ perceives the flaw in His church, even in the midst of her earnest service. The church at Ephesus was full of work. "I know your works and your labor, and for My name's sake you have labored, and have not fainted." It was such a laborious church that it pushed on and on with diligent perseverance, and never seemed to flag in its divine mission. Oh that we could say as much of all our churches! I have lived to see many brilliant projects lighted and left to die out in smoke. I have heard of schemes which were to illuminate the world, but not a spark remains. Holy perseverance is a great desideratum. In these thirty-three years we thank God He has enabled us to labor and not to faint. There has been a continuance of everything attempted, and no drawing back from anything. "This is the work, this is the labor," to hold out even to the end. Oh how I have dreaded lest we should have to give up any holy enterprise or cut short any gracious effort! Hitherto the Lord has helped us. With men and means, liberality and zeal, He has supplied us. In this case the angel of the church has been very little of an angel from heaven, but very much of a human angel, for in the weakness of my flesh and in the heaviness of my spirit have I pursued my calling, but I have pursued it. By the help of God I continue to this day, and this church with equal footsteps is at my side, for which the whole praise is due to the Lord, who faints not, neither is weary. Having put my hand to the plow I have not looked back, but have steadily pressed forward, making straight furrows, but it has been by the grace of God alone.

Alas! Under all the laboring the Lord Jesus perceived that the Ephesians had left their first love, and this was a grievous fault. So it may be in this church; every wheel may continue to revolve, and the whole machinery of ministry may be kept going at its normal rate, and yet there may be a great secret evil which Jesus perceives, and this may be marring all.

But this church at Ephesus was not only laborious; it was patient in suffering great persecution. He says of it, "I know your works and your patience, and how you have borne, and have patience, and have not fainted." Persecution upon persecution visited the faithful, but they bore it all with holy courage and constancy, and continued still confessing

their Lord. This was good, and the Lord highly approved it, but yet underneath it He saw the tokens of decline, they had left their first love. So there may seem to be all the patient endurance and dauntless courage that there should be, and yet as a fair apple may have a worm at its core, so may it be with the church when it looks best to the eyes of friends.

The Ephesian church excelled in something else, namely, in its discipline, its soundness in the faith, and fidelity towards heretics, for the Lord says of it, "how you cannot bear them which are evil." They would not have it, they would not tolerate false doctrine; they would not put up with unclean living. They fought against evil, not only in the common people, but in prominent individuals. "You have tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and have found them liars." They had dealt with the great ones; they had not flinched from the unmasking of falsehood. Those who seemed to be apostles they had dragged to the light and discovered to be deceivers. This church was not honeycombed with doubt, it laid no claim to breadth of thought and liberality of view; it was honest to its Lord. He says of it, "This you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate." This was grand of them; it showed a backbone of truth. I wish some of the churches of this age had a little of this holy decision about them, for nowadays, if a man is clever, he may preach the vilest lie that was ever vomited from the mouth of hell, and it will go down with some. He may assail every doctrine of the gospel, he may blaspheme the Holy Trinity; he may trample on the blood of the Son of God, and yet nothing shall be said about it if he is held in repute as a man of advanced thought and liberal ideas. The church at Ephesus was not of this mind. She was strong in her convictions; she could not yield the faith, nor play the traitor to her Lord. For this her Lord commended her, and yet He says, "I have somewhat against you, because you have left your first love." When love dies orthodox doctrine becomes a corpse, a powerless formalism. Adhesion to the truth sours into bigotry when the sweetness and light of love to Jesus depart. Love Jesus, and then it is well to hate the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, but mere hate of evil will tend to evil if love of Jesus is not there to sanctify it. I need not make a personal application, but that which is spoken to Ephesus may be spoken at this hour to ourselves. As we hope that we may appropriate the commendation, so let us see whether the expostulation may not also apply to us. "I have somewhat against you, because you have left your first love." Thus I have shown you that Jesus sees the evil beneath all the good, He does not ignore the good, but He will not pass over the ill.

So, next, *this evil was a very serious one,* it was love declining, "You have left your first love." "Is that serious?" says one. It is the most serious ill of all, for the church is the bride of Christ and for a bride to fail in love is to fail in all things. It is idle for the wife to say that she is obedient, and so forth; if love to her husband has evaporated, her wifely duty cannot be fulfilled; she has lost the very life and soul of the marriage state. So, my brethren, this is a most important matter, our love to Christ, because it touches the very heart of that communion with Him which is the crown and essence of our spiritual life. As a church we must

love Jesus, or else we have lost our reason for existence. A church has no reason for being a church when she has no love within her heart, or when that love grows cold. Have I not often reminded you that almost any disease may be hopefully endured except disease of the heart? But when our sickness is a disease of the heart, it is full of danger, and it was so in this case, "You have left your first love." It is a disease of the heart, a central, fatal disease, unless the great Physician shall interpose to stay its progress, and to deliver us from it. Oh, in any man, in any woman, any child of God here, let alone in the church as a whole, if there is a leaving of the first love, it is a woeful thing! Lord have mercy upon us, Christ have mercy upon us, this should be our solemn litany at once. No peril can be greater than this. Lose love, lose all. Leave our first love, we have left strength, and peace, and joy, and holiness.

I call your attention, however, to this point, that *it was He that found it out. "I* have somewhat against you, because you have left your first love." Jesus Himself found it out! I do not know how it strikes you, but as I thought it over, this fact brought tears to my eyes. When I begin to leave off loving Christ, or love Him less than I do, I would like to find it out myself, and if I did so, there would soon be a cure for it. But for Him to find it out, oh, it seems so hard, so sad a thing! That we should keep on growing cold, and cold, and cold, and never care about it till the Beloved points it out to us. Why even the angel of the church did not find it out, the minister did not know it, but *He* saw it who loves us so well, that He delights in our love and pines when it begins to fail. To Him we are unutterably dear, He loved us up out of the pit into His bosom, loved us up from the dunghill among beggars to sit at His right hand upon His throne, and it is sorrowful that He should have to complain of our cooling love while we are utterly indifferent to the matter. Does Jesus care more about our love than we do? He loves us better than we love ourselves. How good of Him to care one jot about our love! This is no complaint of an enemy, but of a dear wounded friend.

I notice that *Jesus found it out with great pain*. I can hardly conceive a greater grief to Him as the husband of His church than to look her in the face and say, "You have left your first love." What can she give Him but love? Will she deny Him this? A poor thing is the church in herself; her Lord married her when she was in beggary, and if she does not give Him love, what has she to give Him? If she begins to be unfaithful in heart to Him, what is she worth? Why, an unloving wife is a foul fountain of discomfort and dishonor to her husband. O beloved, shall it be so with you? Will you grieve Emmanuel? Will you wound your Well-beloved? Church of God, will you grieve Him whose heart was pierced for your redemption? Brother, sister, can you and I let Jesus find out that our love is departing, that we are ceasing to be zealous for His name? Can we wound Him so? Is not this to crucify the Lord afresh? Might He not hold up His hands this morning with fresh blood upon them, and say, "These are the wounds which I received in the house of my friends. It was nothing that I died for them, but ill it is that, after having died for them, they have failed to give Me their hearts"? Jesus is not as sick of our sin as of our

lukewarmness. It is a sad business to my heart; I hope it will be sad to all whom it concerns, that our Lord should be the first to spy out our declines in love.

The Savior, having thus seen this with pain, now points it out. As I read this passage over to myself, I noticed that the Savior had nothing to say about the sins of the heathen among whom the Ephesians dwelt, they are alluded to because it must have been the heathen who persecuted the church, and caused it to endure, and exhibit patience. The Savior, however, has nothing to say against the heathen, and He does not say much more than a word about those who were evil. These had been cast out, and He merely says, "You cannot bear them which are evil." He denounced no judgment upon the Nicolaitanes, except that He hated them, and even the apostles which were found to be liars, the Master dismisses with that word. He leaves the ungodly in their own condemnation. But what He has to say is against His own beloved, "I have somewhat against *you."* It seems as if the Master might pass over sin in a thousand others, but He cannot wink at failure of love in His own espoused one. "The Lord your God is a jealous God." The Savior loves, so that His love is cruel as the grave against cold-heartedness. He said of the church of Laodicea, "I will spew you out of My mouth." This was one of His own churches, too, and yet she made Him sick with her lukewarmness. God grant that we may not be guilty of such a crime as that!

The Savior pointed out the failure of love, and when He pointed it out *He called it by a lamentable name*. "Remember therefore from where you are fallen." He calls it *a fall* to leave our first love. Brothers, sisters, this church had not been licentious, it had not gone aside to false doctrine, it had not become idle, it had not been cowardly in the hour of persecution, but this one sin summed up the whole—she did not love Christ as she once loved Him, and He calls this a fall. A fall indeed it is. "Oh, I thought," says one, "that if a member of the church got drunk that was a fall." That is a grievous fall, but it is a fall if we become intoxicated with the world, and lose the freshness of our devotion to Jesus. It is a fall from a high estate of fellowship to the dust of worldliness. "You are fallen." The word sounds very harshly in my ears—no, not harshly, for His love speaks it in so pathetic a manner, but it thunders in my soul deep down. I cannot bear it. It is so sadly true. "You are fallen." "Remember from where you are fallen." Indeed, O Lord, we have fallen when we have left our first love for You.

The Master evidently counts this decline of love to be a personal wrong done to Himself. *"I* have somewhat against you." It is not an offense against the king, nor against the judge, but against the Lord Jesus as the husband of the church, an offense against the very heart of Christ Himself. *"I* have somewhat against you." He does not say, "Your neighbor has somewhat against you, your child has somewhat against you, your God has somewhat against you," but "I, I your hope, your joy, your delight, your Savior, *I* have this against you." The word *somewhat* is an intruder here. Our translators put it in italics, and well they might, for it is a bad word, since it seems to make a small thing of a very grave change. The

Lord has *this* against us, and it is no mere "something." Come, brothers and sisters, if we have not broken any law, nor offended in any way so as to grieve anybody else, this is sorrow enough, if our love has grown in the least degree chill towards Him, for we have done a terrible wrong to our best friend. This is the bitterness of our offense: Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight, that I have left my first love. The Savior tells us this most lovingly. I wish I knew how to speak as tenderly as He does, and yet I feel at this moment that I can and must be tender in this matter, for I am speaking about myself as much as about anybody else. I am grieving, grieving over some here present, grieving for all of us, but grieving most of all for myself, that our Well-beloved should have cause to say, "I have somewhat against you, because you have left your first love."

So much for what our Lord perceives. Holy Spirit, bless it to us!

II. And now, secondly, let us note what THE SAVIOR PRESCRIBES. The Savior's prescription is couched in these three words, "Remember," "Repent," "Return."

The first word is *Remember*. "You have left your first love." Remember, then, what your first love was, and compare your present condition with it. At first nothing diverted you from your Lord. He was your life, your love, your joy. Now you look for recreation somewhere else, and other charms and other beauties win your heart. Are you not ashamed of this? Once you were never wearied with hearing of Him and serving Him. Never were you overdone with Christ and His gospel, many sermons, many prayer meetings, many Bible readings, and yet none too many. Now sermons are long, services are dull, and you must have your jaded appetite excited with novelties. How is this? Once you were never displeased with Jesus whatever He did with you. If you had been sick, or poor, or dying, you would still have loved and blessed His name for all things. He remembers this fondness, and regrets its departure. He says to you today, "I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals, when you went after Me in the wilderness." You would have gone after your Lord anywhere in those days, across the sea, or through the fire, you would have pursued Him, nothing would have been too hot or too heavy for you then. Is it so now? Remember! Remember from where you are fallen. Remember the vows, the tears, the communing, the happy raptures of those days, remember and compare with them your present state.

Remember and consider that when you were in your first love, that love was none too warm. Even then, when you did live *to* Him, and *for* Him, and *with* Him, you were none too holy, none too consecrated; none too zealous. If you were not too forward then, what are you now—now that you have come down even from that poor attainment? Remember the past with sad forebodings of the future. If you have come down from where you were, who is to tell you where you will cease your declining? He who has sunk so far may fall much farther. Is it not so? Though you say in your heart like Hazael, "Is your servant a dog?" you may turn out worse than a dog yet, yes, prove a very wolf. Who knows? You may even

now be a devil! You may turn out a Judas, a son of perdition, and deny your Master, selling Him for thirty pieces of silver. When a stone begins to fall it falls with an ever-increasing rate, and when a soul begins to leave its first love, it quits it more and more, and more and more, till at last it falls terribly. Remember!

The next word of the prescription is, *"Repent."* Repent as you did at first. The word so suitable to sinners is suitable to you, for you have grievously sinned. Repent of the wrong you have done your Lord by leaving your first love of Him. Could you have lived a seraphic life, only breathing His love, only existing for Him, you had done little enough, but to quit your first love, how grievously have you wronged Him! That love was well deserved, was it not? Why, then, have you left it? Is Jesus less fair than He was? Does He love you less than He did? Has He been less kind and tender to you than He used to be? Say, have you outgrown Him? Can you do without Him? Have you a hope of salvation apart from Him? I charge you, repent of this your ill-doing towards one who has a greater claim upon your love than ever He had. He ought to be today loved more than you did love Him at your very best! O my heart, is not all this most surely true? How ill are you behaving! What an ingrate are you! Repent! Repent!

Repent of much good that you have left undone through lack of love. Oh, if you had always loved your Lord at your best, what might you not have known of Him by this time! What good deeds you might have done by force of His love! How many hearts might you have won for your Lord if your own heart had been fuller of love, if your own soul had been more on fire! You have lived a poor beggarly life because you have allowed such poverty of love.

Repent! Repent! To my mind, as I thought over this text, the call for repentance grew louder and louder, because of the occasion of its utterance. Here is the glorious Lord, coming to His church and speaking to her angel in tones of tender kindness. He condescends to visit His people in all His majesty and glory, intending nothing but to manifest Himself in love to His own elect as He does not to the world. And yet He is compelled even then to take to chiding, and to say, "I have this against you, because you have left your first love." Here is a love-visit clouded with upbraiding—necessary upbraiding. What mischief sin has done! It is a dreadful thing that when Jesus comes to His own dear bride He should have to speak in grief, and not in joy. Must Holy Communion, which is the wine of heaven, be embittered with the tonic of expostulation? I see the upper springs of nearest fellowship, where the waters of life leap from their first source in the heart of God. Are not these streams most pure and precious? If a man drinks thereof he lives forever. Shall it be that even at the fountainhead they shall be dashed with bitterness? Even when Christ communes personally with us must He say, "I have somewhat against you"? Break, my heart, that it should be so! Well may we repent with a deep repentance when our choicest joys are flavored with the bitter herbs of regret that our Beloved should have somewhat against us.

But then He says in effect, *Return*. The third word is this—"Repent, and do the first works." Notice, that He does not say, "Repent, and get back your first love." This seems rather singular, but then love is the chief of the first works, and moreover, the first works can only come of the first love. There must be in every declining Christian a *practical repentance*. Do not be satisfied with regrets and resolves. Do the first works, do not strain after the first emotions, but do the first works. No renewal is as valuable as the practical cleansing of our way. If the life is made right, it will prove that the love is so. In doing the first works you will prove that you have come back to your first love. The prescription is complete, because the doing of the first works is meant to include the feeling of the first feelings, the sighing of the first sighs, the enjoying of the first joys, these are all supposed to accompany returning obedience and activity.

We are to get back to these first works at once. Most men come to Christ with a leap, and I have observed that many who come back to Him usually do so at a bound. The slow revival of one's love is almost an impossibility, as well expect the dead to rise by degrees. Love to Christ is often love at first sight, we see Him, and are conquered by Him. If we grow cold, the best thing we can do is to fasten our eyes on Him till we cry, "My soul melted while my Beloved spoke." It is a happy circumstance if I can cry, "Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib." How sweet for the Lord to put us back again at once into the old place, back again in a moment! My prayer is that it may be so this morning with any declining one. May you so repent as not merely to feel the old feelings, but instantly to do the first works, and be once more as eager, as zealous, as generous, as prayerful, as you used to be! If we should again see you breaking the alabaster box, we should know that the old love had returned. May the good Master help us to do as well as ever, yes, much better than before!

Notice, however, that this will require much of effort and warfare, for the promise which is made is "to him that overcomes." Overcoming implies conflict. Depend upon it, if you conquer a wandering heart, you will have to fight for it. "To him that overcomes," says He, "will I give to eat of the tree of life." You must fight your way back to the garden of the Lord. You will have to fight against lethargy, against an evil heart of unbelief, against the benumbing influence of the world. In the name and power of Him who bids you repent, you must wrestle and struggle till you get the mastery over self, and yield your whole nature to your Lord.

So I have shown you how Christ prescribes, and I greatly need a few minutes for the last part, because I wish to dwell with solemn earnestness upon it. I have no desire to say a word by which I should show myself off as an orator, but I long to speak a word by which I may prove myself a true brother pleading with you in deep sympathy, because in all the ill which I rebuke I mourn my own personal share. Bless us, O Spirit of the Lord!

III. Now see, brethren, HE PERSUADES. This is the third point; the Lord Jesus persuades His erring one to repent.

First, He *persuades with a warning,* "I will come unto you," "quickly" is not in the original; the Revised Version has left it out. Our Lord is generally very slow at the work of judgement, "I will come unto you, and will remove your candlestick out of its place, except you repent." This He must do, He cannot allow His light to be apart from love, and if the first love is left, the church shall be left in darkness. The truth must always shine, but not always in the same place. The place must be made fit by love, or the light shall be removed.

Our Lord means, first, I will take away the comfort of the Word. He raises up certain ministers, and makes them burning and shining lights in the midst of His church, and when the people gather together they are cheered and enlightened by their shining. A ministry blessed of the Lord is a singular comfort to the church of God. The Lord can easily take away that light which has brought comfort to so many, He can remove the good man to another sphere, or He can call him Home to his rest. The extinguisher of death can put out the candle which now gladdens the house. The church which has lost a ministry by which the Lord's glory has shone forth has lost a good deal, and if this loss has been sent in chastisement for decline of love it is all the harder to bear. I can point you to places where once was a man of God, and all went well, but the people grew cold, and the Lord took away their leader, and the place is now a desolation; those who now attend those courts and listen to a modern ministry cry out because of the famine of the Word of the Lord. O friends, let us value the light while we have it, and prove that we do so by profiting by it; but how can we profit if we leave our first love? The Lord may take away our comfort as a church if our first zeal shall die down.

But the candlestick also symbolizes usefulness; it is that by which a church shines. The use of a church is to preserve the truth, with which to illuminate the neighborhood, to illuminate the world. God can soon cut short our usefulness, and He will do so if we cut short our love. If the Lord is withdrawn, we can go on with our work as we used to do, but nothing will come of it; we can go on with Sunday schools, mission stations, branch churches, and yet accomplish nothing. Brethren, we can go on with the Orphanage, the College, the Colportage, the Evangelistic Society, the Book Fund, and all else, and yet nothing will be affected if the arm of the Lord is not made bare.

He can, if He wills, even take away from the church her very existence as a church. Ephesus is gone; nothing but ruins can be found. Rome once held a noble church of Christ, but has not her name become the symbol of Antichrist? The Lord can soon take away candlesticks out of their places if the church uses her light for her own glory, and is not filled with His love. God forbid that we should fall under this condemnation! Of Your mercy, O Lord, forbid it! Let it not so happen to any one of us. Yet this may occur to us as individuals. You, dear brother or sister, if you lose your first love, may soon lose your joy, your peace, your usefulness. You, who are now so bright, may grow dull. You, who are now so useful, may become useless. You were once an instructor of the foolish, and a teacher of babes, but if the Lord is withdrawn you will instruct no-

body, you will be in the dark yourself. Alas! You may come to lose the very name of Christians, as some have done who once seemed to be burning and shining lights. They were foolish virgins, and before long they were heard to cry, "Our lamps have gone out!" The Lord can and will take away the candlestick out of its place if we put *Him* out of His place by a failure in our love to Him.

How can I persuade you, then, better than with the warning words of my Master? My beloved, I persuade you from my very soul not to encounter these dangers, not to run these terrible risks, for as you would not wish to see either the church or your own self left without the light of God, to pine in darkness, it is needful that you abide in Christ, and go on to love Him more and more.

The Savior holds out a promise as His other persuasive. Upon this I can only dwell for a minute. It seems a very wonderful promise to me, "To him that overcomes will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." Observe, those who lose their first love *fall,* but those who abide in love are made to stand. In contrast to the fall which took place in the paradise of God, we have man eating of the tree of life, and so living forever. If we, through grace, overcome the common tendency to decline in love, then shall we be confirmed and settled in the favor of the Lord. By eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil we fell, by eating of the fruit of a better tree we live and stand fast forever. Life proved true by love shall be nourished on the best of food; it shall be sustained by fruit from the garden of the Lord Himself, gathered by the Savior's own hand.

Note again, those who lose their first love wander far, they depart from God. "But," says the Lord, "if you keep your first love you shall not wander, but you shall come into closer fellowship. I will bring you nearer to the center. I will bring you to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God." The inner ring is for those who grow in love; the center of all joy is only to be reached by much love. We know God as we love God. We enter into His paradise as we abide in His love. What joy is here! What a reward has love!

Then notice the mystical blessing which lies here, waiting your meditation. Do you know how we fell? The woman took of the fruit of the forbidden tree, and gave to Adam, and Adam ate and fell. The reverse is the case in the promise before us; the Second Adam takes of the divine fruit from the tree of promise, and hands it to His spouse; she eats and lives forever. He who is the Father of the age of grace, hands down to us immortal joys, which He has plucked from an unwithering tree. The reward of love is to eat the fruit of life. "We are getting into mysteries," says one. Yes, I am intentionally lifting a corner of the veil, and no more. I only mean to give you a glimpse at the promised gift. Into His innermost joys our Lord will bring us if we keep up our first love, and go from strength to strength therein. Marvelous things are locked up in the cases of which love holds the key. Sin set the angel with a flaming sword between us and the tree of life in the midst of the garden, but love has quenched that sword, and now the angel beckons us to come into the innermost secrets

of paradise. We shall know as we are known when we love as we are loved. We shall live the life of God when we are wholly taken up with the love of God. The love of Jesus answered by our love to Jesus makes the sweetest music the heart can know. No joy on earth is equal to the bliss of being all taken up with love to Christ. If I had my choice of all the lives that I could live, I certainly would not choose to be an emperor, nor to be a millionaire, nor to be a philosopher, for power, and wealth, and knowledge bring with them sorrow and travail, but I would choose to have nothing to do but to love my Lord Jesus—nothing, I mean, but to do all things for His sake, and out of love to Him. Then I know that I should be in paradise, yes, in the midst of the paradise of God, and I should have meat to eat which is all unknown to men of the world.

Heaven on earth is abounding love to Jesus. This is the first and last of true delight—to love Him who is the first and the last. To love Jesus is another name for paradise. Lord, let me know this by continual experience. "You are soaring aloft," cries one. Yes, I own it. Oh that I could allure you to a heavenward flight upon wings of love! There is bitterness in declining love; it is a very consumption of the soul, and makes us weak, and faint, and low. But true love is the foretaste of glory. See the heights, the glittering heights, the glorious heights, the everlasting hills to which the Lord of life will conduct all those who are faithful to Him through the power of His Holy Spirit. See, O love, your ultimate abode! I pray that what I have said may be blessed by the Holy Spirit to the bringing of us all nearer to the Bridegroom of our souls. Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
REVELATION 1; 2:1-7.**

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—425, 797, 804.

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

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

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

OUR SYMPATHIZING HIGH PRIEST
NO. 1927

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 31, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared; though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; and being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him; called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec."
Hebrews 5:7-10.

THE Holy Spirit in this chapter reminds us that two things were necessary in a high priest; first, he must be suitable for the men for whom he stood, and next, he must be acceptable with God. "Every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God." He must be fit from both points of view, both man-ward and God-ward. Our Lord Jesus Christ was ordained of God from of old, and did not of Himself assume the position of high priest. The prophets spoke of Him as the Messiah of God, and Jehovah Himself declared, "You are a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec." When He came into the world the Holy Spirit bore witness to His being the Son of the Highest. At His baptism there came a voice from heaven saying, "You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," and that same voice was thrice heard declaring the same fact. The Father has given further testimony to the mission of Christ, "in that He has raised Him from the dead," and has caused Him to enter into the heavenly places on our behalf. Moreover, He has given Him a pledge that as Melchisedec, being both king and priest, He shall sit at His right hand until He has made His enemies His footstool. Our Lord Jesus has been chosen, ordained, and glorified as our "great high priest that has passed into the heavens." This is the groundwork of our comfort in our Lord Jesus, for we know that He is one with the Father, and that all things are done by Him as the messenger of the covenant, the authorized representative of Jehovah our God.

That is not the point to which I call your attention this morning; I would have you follow the text, and consider *the pre-eminent suitability of our Lord Jesus to be a High Priest for us, viewed from the human side.* A high priest must be one "who can have compassion on the ignorant, and

on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity." He must be one who has learned compassion in the school of suffering, so that he can succor the afflicted. There is no learning sympathy except by suffering. It cannot be studied from a book, it must be written on the heart. You must go through the fire if you would have sympathy with others who tread the glowing coals; you must yourself bear the cross if you would feel for those whose life is a burden to them. Beloved friends, we live in a world of sin and sorrow, and we ourselves are sinful and sorrowful; we need one who can put away our sin and become a sharer in our sorrow. If he cannot go with us through all the rough places of our pilgrim-way, how can he be our guide? If he has never traveled in the night himself, how can he whisper consolation to us in our darkest hours? We have a fully qualified High Priest in our Lord Jesus Christ; He is perfect in that capacity. I desire to speak of Him this morning in that light. Oh for help from on high, for I feel that it needs the inspiration of the Holy One to enable a man to speak of Jesus as He should be spoken of. No careless utterance must attempt to describe the great High Priest of our profession. It needs a perfect preacher to fully describe a perfect Redeemer, and where is he to be found? To preach a crucified Savior in a crucified style is no easy task. I take it that a lip needs as much to be touched with a live coal from off the altar to speak of the lowly sympathy of Jesus as to describe His glory. Of the two I had rather venture to speak of the garden of Paradise than of the garden of Gethsemane, apart from the help of the Holy Spirit. Oh that the divine Instructor would direct our meditations at this time, so that we may glorify Christ, and may with increased confidence repose in Him!

I have this further objective also; while trying to comfort the people of God, I would persuade others to approach our great High Priest. Oh how I long that many of you who have hitherto never known the love of Christ, may now be touched with a sense of it, and may be sweetly drawn to Him! By the very fact that He is able to sympathize with you in your griefs, I hope that those of you who are afflicted may be induced to draw near to Him. Oh that upon this spot, and at this hour, you who have been halting and hesitating for years may at once find a shelter with the compassionate One! He waits to give you everlasting comfort; oh that you would believe in Him, and enjoy it! We shall pray for this, and look for it, and may God grant us our desires, so that His Son Jesus may be glorified!

The great suitability of Christ for His work will be seen as we view Him in three characters. Let us first consider Him as *a suppliant,* and this is set forth in the seventh verse, "Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared." Next we would view Him as *a Son,* "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered." And then we

shall close by regarding Him as *a Savior,* "He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him." Come, Holy Spirit, and take of the things of Christ, and show them to us.

I. First, then, that we may see the suitability of our Lord to deal with us in our cares and sorrows, we shall view Him as A SUPPLIANT.

The text begins with a word which reveals *His weakness,* "Who in the days of His flesh." Our blessed Lord was in such a condition that He pleaded out of weakness with the God who was able to save. When our Lord was compassed with the weakness of flesh He was much in prayer. It would be an interesting exercise for the younger people to note all the times in which the Lord Jesus is said to have prayed. The occasions recorded are very numerous, but these are no doubt merely a few specimens of a far greater number. Jesus was habitually in prayer, He was praying even when His lips did not utter a sound. His heart was always in communion with the Great Father above. This is said to have been the case "in the days of His flesh." This term is used to distinguish His life on earth from His former estate in glory. From of old the Son of God dwelt with the Father, but He was not then a partaker of human nature, and the eternal ages were not "the days of His flesh." Then He could not have entered into that intimate sympathy with us which He now exercises since He has been born at Bethlehem, and has died at Calvary. "The days of His flesh" intend this mortal life—the days of His weakness, humiliation, labor, and suffering. It is true that He wears our nature in heaven, for He said to His disciples after His resurrection, "Handle Me, and see, for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see I have." But yet we should not call the period of His exaltation at the right hand of the Father "the days of His flesh." He prays still; in fact, He continually makes intercession for the transgressors, but it is in another style from that in which He prayed "in the days of His flesh"—

"With cries and tears He offered up
His humble suit below;
But with authority He asks,
Enthroned in glory now."

Among the days of His life on earth there were some which peculiarly deserved to be called "the days of His flesh"—days in which His feebler nature pushed itself to the front. Then men saw less of His greatness as a teacher and more of His suffering as man. I should call that one of the days of His flesh when He went to Gethsemane, and "was exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death." He was very heavy, because the shadow of His cross fell upon Him with a denser darkness as He drew nearer to His death upon it. When the dread desertion by God which was the center of His grief began to startle Him; when men esteemed Him "stricken, smitten of God and afflicted," then were "the days of His flesh." Prostrate under the olives, pouring out His inmost soul in plaintive entreaties, even to

a bloody sweat, you see your Lord a suppliant in weakness—"in the days of His flesh."

Brethren, I beseech you to think of our Lord's pleading, "in the days of His flesh" as a matter of fact. Do not dream of Him as though He was a phantom, and of His prayers as if they were part of a mere show. He was a real man, and His prayers were as real as yours can be. Believe in Jesus as man. You would be indignant at anyone who would diminish the glory of His Godhead, and most justly so, but oh, do not yourself take away from Him the truth of His humanity; He was in very deed made flesh and dwelt among us. This was the case even when His apostles beheld His glory, "the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth!" We must get a firm grip of the true humanity, or otherwise we lose the sacrificial death, the resurrection, and all the rest, and the brotherhood of our Lord, which is a grand source of consolation, also disappears. Remember that He who sits at the right hand of God was once here in the likeness of sinful flesh. He who shall shortly come to judge the quick and dead passed through a period of limitation, weakness, suffering, weariness, since He was in human flesh. "The days of His flesh" were to Him days of poverty, sickness, weariness, reproach, and temptation; though in Him was no sin, yet He was tempted and tried in all points like as we are. Inasmuch as He has passed through such days as these, He is fitted to be the High Priest of believers, who also are passing through the days of their flesh. Brethren, we know too well that we are partakers of flesh and blood, and it is no mean comfort that our Lord Jesus Himself took part in the same.

In the days of His flesh our divine Lord felt *His necessities*. The words, "He offered up prayers and supplications," prove that He had many needs. Men do not pray and supplicate unless they have greater needs than this world can satisfy. Men work for what they can get by working, and pray for that which can by no other means be obtained. The Savior offered no petitions by way of mere form; His supplications arose out of an urgent sense of His need of heavenly aid. It is difficult to realize it, but so it is, that our divine and innocent Savior placed Himself in such a condition for our sakes that His needs were manifold. Of course, as God He could come under no necessity, but being man, like ourselves, He did not permit the power of His Godhead to destroy the man-like weakness of the flesh. Hence He endured such necessities as we do, and resorted, as we must, to the one all-sufficient source of supply, approaching His Father by prayer. He sought for blessings with prayers, He pleaded against evil with supplications. His approaches to God were many—both words are in the plural—"prayers and supplications," and they were manifold in their character, for He presented prayers and supplications of all kinds. Especially in the garden He cried again and again, "If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me." Now, trite as the observation may be, yet it is one that needs to be often repeated, that our Savior did really pray.

When you, in your heaviness, shut the door of your chamber, and kneel down in prayer; when that prayer gathers strength, and you fall flat upon your face in agony; when you cry and weep before the Most High, under a sinking sense of need, it is hard for you to think that Jesus ever did the same. But He did so. He asked as really as you ask, He implored and besought, He entreated and wrestled, even as you must do. He knows that solitary place on Carmel, where Elijah bowed his head between his knees and cried seven times unto the Lord. He knows the turning of the face to the wall and the weeping of the sorrowful eyes, even as Hezekiah knew them. He can have pity upon you in your loneliness, your distraction, your apparent desertion, your sinking of heart, your sorrowfulness even unto death. Look to Him, then, in your night of weeping, and be of good cheer.

Those of you who are only now beginning to pray, I would encourage you to remember Jesus as you the example of praying. If your prayers have but few words in them, and are mainly made up of crying and tears, yet in this they are like those of your Savior, and so you may hope that they will be accepted. If you are afraid that your prayers are shut out from heaven, remember how the Savior complains in the twenty-second Psalm, "O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You hear not; and in the night season, and am not silent." He was heard in the end, but at the first He seemed to plead in vain. Jesus prayed under discouragements; what He did Himself He will help you to do. He knows what the agony of prayer means, and He will cast a brother's eye on you when, in the bitterness of your repentance, you seek the Lord. How clear it is that we have a suitable High Priest, of tender heart, and loving soul!

Further, let us see how like the Son of God was to us in *His intensity* of prayer. I wish I knew how to preach upon a theme so sacred. One had need put off his shoe from his foot upon this doubly-consecrated ground. The intensity of His prayer was such that our Lord expressed Himself in "crying and tears." The evangelists do not record His tears, but the Holy Spirit here reveals what human eyes could not have seen. He pleaded with God until His pent-up grief demanded audible utterance, and He began to cry. He said, so that the disciples heard Him a stone's cast away, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me." His voice grew louder as the stream of His sorrows forced a channel for itself. There was great strength in His cries—they were "strong crying," they were deep, plaintive, touching, heart-breaking, "If it is possible—if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me." We may be thankful that we did not hear the cries of that sore distress which fell upon our great Substitute. Cries are weak things, but His were *strong* crying—strong with the heart of the Great Father. When He ceased His crying, and was silent, His tears took up the strain. The Lord heard a voice in His tears, and who shall say which spoke the more loudly, His crying or His tears? When a man so courageous, so patient as Jesus, betakes Himself to cries and tears,

we may be sure that the sorrow of His heart has passed all bounds. His soul within Him must have been bursting with grief. We know it was so by another sign, for the life-blood forgot to course in its usual channels, and overflowed its banks in a sweat of blood. I do not think, as some do, that it was merely a sweat such as is common to labor, but I believe it was a sweat of blood, or the expression would not have been used, "as it were great drops of blood." A sweat of blood has now and then been seen upon men in great and fatal alarm, but the Savior's was more wonderful than any of these cases, for so profuse was this bloody sweat, that it was as it were great drops of it "falling down to the ground." This was prayer indeed; supplication which exhausted His whole manhood. Body, soul, and spirit were now upon the rack of anguish, and upon the strain of agony. He pleaded with God after a more piteous, painful, terrible, and powerful sort than you and I have yet attained to. But, Brethren, here is the point; if it comes to your case to be in a dark, dark hour, and to be praying with the heavens like brass above your head, and if you are obliged to cry aloud, and weep your soul away, then remember Jesus in the days of His flesh. Usually it may be you are very quiet, and perhaps wordless in prayer, but now you cannot refrain yourself, as Joseph cried so that the Egyptians in the house of Pharaoh heard him, so do you give vent to your agony. Be not ashamed of your weakness, your Lord did so before you. Strong man as you are, you weep like a child. Do not apologize lest you seem to accuse your Savior. Behold, you are not alone! Jesus is passing through the deeps with you. See you not the blood-stained footprint of your Lord? Your utmost anguish is known to Him. Fear not. Commit your way unto the Lord, even in this worst part of it. Trust Him when the iron enters into your soul. Leave all in His experienced hands.

You poor souls who have never as yet trusted my Lord, are you not attracted to Him? If He suffered all this can He not meet your case? By all this He was made perfect as a High Priest, oh, can you not trust Him? Is He not able to enter into your misery? Oh, darkened hearts, is there not light here for you? When you pray with anguish Jesus perfectly understands the situation. Oh, you that loathe yourselves! Oh, you that wish you had never been born! Oh, you daughters of melancholy, and children of despair! Can you not see in the marred visage of your Redeemer a reason for trusting Him? Since from His lips you hear strong crying, and from His eyes you see showers of tears, you may well feel that His is a sympathetic spirit, to whom you may run in the hour of danger, even as the chicks seek the wings of the hen.

Still, to proceed with the text, we have seen our Lord's needs, and the intensity of His prayer, now note *His understanding* in prayer. He prayed "unto Him that was able to save Him from death." The expression is startling; the Savior prayed to be saved. In His direst woe He prayed thoughtfully, and with a clear apprehension of the character of Him to whom He prayed. It is a great help in devotion to pray intelligently, knowing well

the character of God to whom you are speaking. Jesus was about to die, and therefore the aspect under which He viewed the great Father was as "Him that was able to save Him from death." This passage may be read in two ways; it may mean that He would be saved from actually dying if it could be done consistently with the glorifying of the Father; or it may mean that He pleaded to be saved from death, though He actually descended into it. The word may be rendered either *from* or *out of*. The Savior viewed the great Father as able to preserve Him in death from the power of death, so that He should triumph on the cross, and also as able to bring Him up again from among the dead. Remember how He said in the Psalm, "You will not leave My soul in hell, neither will You suffer Your Holy One to see corruption." Jesus had faith in God concerning death, and prayed according to that faith. This brings our blessed Lord very near to us; He prayed in faith even as we do. He believed in the power of God to save Him from death, and even when cast down with fear He did not let go His hold on God. He pleaded just as you and I should plead, impelled by fear and encouraged by faith. Let us imitate His intensity, His intelligence, and His faith. He has condescended to set us an example which we can copy; He has come into living companionship with us in our most urgent supplications. He has had His Jabbok, therefore, O you seed of Jacob, trust in Him.

It will further help you if I now call your attention to *His fear*. I believe our old Bibles give us a correct translation, much better than the Revised Version, although much can be said for the latter, "With strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared." That is to say, He had a fear, a natural and not a sinful fear, and from this fear He was delivered by the strength brought to Him from heaven by the angel. God has implanted in all of us the love of life, and we cannot part from it without a pang, our Lord felt a natural dread of death. If it is said that the Savior was too courageous to know the fear of death, I beg to remark that He was the more courageous because He so calmly encountered that which He feared. Martyrs have died without the preceding dread which fell upon our Lord, but remember, that the help of God which sustained *them* was taken away from Jesus, and consider, also, that His death was special, and differed from that of all others of our race, for in that death there was condensed the penalty due to sin. To the righteous man death is not now a penalty, but a mode of going home; to Jesus it was in the fullest sense the penalty of death for human guilt. He saw before Him, as we do not, all the pains and torments of death; He knew what He had to bear, and foretasted in the garden the smart involved in being a surety for sinful man. The vials of God's wrath were about to be poured upon Him, and Jehovah was heard saying, "Awake, O sword"—as if it had never awoke before—"Awake, O sword, against My shepherd, and against the man that is My fellow, says the Lord of hosts." He saw the abyss into which He must fall. If no dread

had come upon Him, why, I think the very essence of the atoning suffering would have been absent. Fear must take hold upon Him—not that of a coward, but that of one terribly oppressed. His soul was "exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death." So when you tremble after sipping your cup of bitterness, think of Jesus trembling too. When you, in entering into the valley of death's shade, feel yourself greatly disturbed at the prospect before you, think of Jesus who was heard in His fear. Come, you that fear, and find help in one whom also feared. Borrow courage from one who out of fear prayed Himself into victory. Think of Him who cried unto God, "Be not You far from Me, O Lord: O my strength, hasten You to help Me." Trust your souls with Him who in the days of His flesh cried out in anguish, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

But then notice another thing in the text, namely, *His success* in prayer, which also brings Him near to us. He was heard "in that He feared." O my soul! To think that it should be said of your Lord that He was heard, even as you, a poor suppliant, are heard. Yet the cup did not pass from Him, neither was the bitterness thereof in the least abated. When we are compelled to bear our thorn in the flesh and receive no other answer than "My grace is sufficient for you," let us see our fellowship with Jesus and Jesus' fellowship with us. Jesus came forth from His agony saying, "You have heard Me from the horns of the unicorns. I will declare Your name unto My brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise You." Oh what a brother Christ is, since He, too, cried and wept, and had power with God and prevailed! When God has sent from above, and drawn us out of many waters, the Lord Jesus is there to sing with us and rejoice with us, the constant companion of all our experiences. Can we not trust Him? Brothers and sisters, if Jesus rises with us to the highest note of the scale, and if He also comes down with us to the deepest bass that the human voice can reach, then we may conclude that all along He is in unison with us in all the intervening notes. So let us today feel that Jesus is like ourselves in all but our sin, and that we may fearlessly come and trust Him as we would trust a father or a brother, or as a fond wife confides in the husband of her love.

II. Let us now spend a few moments in beholding our Lord as A SON. His prayers and pleading were those of a son with a father, "though He was a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered."

The Sonship of our dear Savior is well attested. The Lord declared this in the second Psalm, "You are My Son; this day have I begotten You." Thrice, as we have already noticed, did the voice out of the excellent glory proclaim this truth, and Jesus was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Yes, He that cried, He that wept, He that pleaded until He came to a bloody sweat, and He from whom the cup could not pass till He had drained it to the dregs, was nevertheless the only-begotten Son of God. So, my brother, when you are put to great grief do not doubt your son-

ship. What son is there whom the father chastens not? When you are in heaviness through manifold trials, do not listen to the insinuations of the enemy, "If you are the Son of God." Yes, if you should have to ask, "Why have You forsaken me?" do not doubt your sonship. Your faith should not be founded upon your own enjoyments, but upon the promise and the faithfulness of God. You are as much a son when you walk in the dark as when you rejoice in the light of Jehovah's countenance.

Being a Son, the text goes on to tell us that *He had to learn obedience*. Is not that a wonderful thing? As man our Savior had to learn. He was of a teachable spirit, and the Lord Himself instructed Him. All God's children go to school, for it is written, "All your children shall be taught of the Lord." The lesson is practical—we learn to obey. Our Lord took kindly to this lesson; He did always the things which pleased the Father. This is our time of schooling and discipline, and we are learning to obey, which is the highest and best lesson of all. How near this brings our Lord to us, that He should be a Son and should have to learn! We go to school to Christ and with Christ, and so we feel His fitness to be our compassionate High Priest.

Jesus must necessarily *learn by suffering*. As swimming is only to be learned in the water, so is obedience only learned by actually doing and suffering the divine will. Obedience cannot be learned at the university, unless it is at the College of Experience. You must suffer the commandment to have its way with you, and then it will educate you. We think when we are first converted that we have learned obedience, and assuredly we have in a measure received the spirit by which we obey, but no man knows obedience till he has actually obeyed, both in an active and a passive sense. Even the Lord Jesus must come under the law, honor the law, and suffer the law, or else He cannot learn obedience. Who knows what it is to obey God to the full until he has had to lay aside his own will in the most tender and painful respects? To plead with God for the life of a beloved child, and yet to see that dear child die, and to kiss the rod—this is to learn obedience. To go alone and plead with God for the life of a husband or wife, and agonize with Him for the gift, and then to be compelled to weep at the new-made grave, and yet to say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord"—this is to learn obedience. Our Lord as man was made to know by His sufferings what full obedience meant; His was practical, experiential, personal acquaintance with obedience, and in all this He comes very near to us. A Son learning obedience: that is our Lord. May we not joyfully walk with Him in all the rough paths of duty? May we not safely lean on the arm of One who knows every inch of the way?

The Lord Jesus Christ learned this obedience to perfection. The text speaks of Him as "being made perfect." As a high priest He is perfect, because He has suffered to the end all that was needful to make Him like His brethren. He has read the book of obedience quite through. He was

not spared one heavy stroke of divine discipline. You and I never go to the end of grief; we are spared the utmost depth, but not so our Lord. The Lord sets us a service proportioned to our strength, but what a service was exacted of the Son of God! Ours is a lightened burden, but the Well-beloved was not spared the last ounce of crushing sorrow. "For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

Our Lord learned by suffering mixed with prayer and supplication. His was no unsanctified sorrow; His griefs were baptized in prayer. It cost Him cries and tears to learn the lesson of His sufferings. He never suffered without prayer, nor prayed without suffering. Supplication and suffering went hand in hand, and in this way our Lord became perfected as the high priest of our profession.

The practical point I am trying to drive at in my poor way is this; let us trust ourselves with Him who as a Son knows the training and discipline of sons. Being yourself a son, look up and see what the elder brother endured, and know that "in that He has suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted." You who are afraid that you never will be the children of God, come and hear your Savior cry as He rises from prayer, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Sons of men: where do you wander? Why not come to Him who is made like to yourselves? Which way are you looking? Look to Him that suffered in your place and stead, and suffered both as a Suppliant and a Son. If you have never trusted Him before, I think that you should begin this morning, now that you see His fellowship with you, His sympathy with you. I do not at this time set Him forth to you in His power and glory—that I will do on another occasion, but I bring Him before you in His weakness and humiliation, hoping thereby to attract to Him the poor and needy who need such a helper.

III. Time fails me, and therefore we can do no more than spend a brief time in beholding the Lord Jesus as A SAVIOR. It is to this end that He pleaded as a Suppliant and learned obedience as a Son.

As a Savior, He is perfect. Being made perfect through suffering, He is able fully to discharge His office. Nothing is wanting in the character and person of Christ in order to His being able to save to the uttermost. He is a Savior, and a great one. You are wholly lost, but Jesus is perfectly able to save. You are sorely sick, but Jesus is perfectly able to heal. You have gone, perhaps, to the extreme of sin, He has gone to the extreme of atonement. In every office essential to our salvation Jesus is perfect. Nothing is lacking in Him in any one point. However difficult your case may seem, He is equal to it. Made perfect by suffering, He is able to meet the intricacies of your trials, and to deliver you in the most complicated emergency.

Henceforth *He is the author of salvation*. What a suggestive word—the *author* of salvation! Author! How expressive! He is the cause of salvation; the originator; the worker; the producer of salvation. Salvation begins with Christ; salvation is carried on by Christ; salvation is completed by Christ. If a man is the author of a book, and not a mere compiler, it is all his own writing. Salvation has Jesus for its author. Do any of you wish to write a little of the book yourselves? Then Jesus would not be the author of it, but it would be Jesus and you. But because our Lord has assumed our nature, and entered into fellowship with us, He has become the author of salvation, and we must not intrude into His office. Let the author of salvation complete His own work. Come and accept the salvation which He is waiting to give to you. He has finished it, and you cannot add to it; it only remains for you to receive it.

Observe that *it is eternal salvation,* "The author of *eternal* salvation." Jesus does not save us today, and leave us to perish tomorrow; He knows what is in man, and so He has prepared nothing less than eternal salvation for man. A salvation which was not eternal would turn out to be no salvation at all. Those whom Jesus saved are saved indeed. Man can be the author of temporary salvation, but only He who is "a high priest forever" can bring in a salvation which endures forever. This reminds us of the word of the prophet, "Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation." Surely I know that whatsoever the Lord does shall be forever. An eternal salvation is worth having, is it not? Jesus does not give a salvation which will let you fall from grace, and perish after all, but a salvation which will keep you to the end—though you should live to be as old as Methuselah. Salvation to eternity and through eternity is provided by Jesus. Oh, love the Lord, all you His saints, since by His stooping to be perfected as a High Priest, He has been able to bring in for you such a salvation as this.

Furthermore, inasmuch as He has learned obedience, and become a perfect High Priest, *His salvation is wide in its range,* for it is unto "all them that obey Him." Not to some few, not to a little select company here and there, but "unto all them that obey Him." One of His first commandments is "Repent." Will you obey Him in that, and quit your sin? Then He is the author of eternal salvation for you. His great command is, "Believe and live." Will you trust Him, then? For if you do, He is the author of eternal salvation to you. He whom I have tried to describe with all my heart—this blessed sympathetic fellow-sufferer of ours—He is willing and able to save all of you who will obey Him at this moment by trusting Him.

Come, my hearers, let Jesus be your Master and your Lord. Come, you runaways, return to Him! Come, you castaways, hope in Him! Be His, for He has made Himself yours. Seek Him, for He has sought you. Obey Him, for He obeyed for you. He is "the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him."

Note, that *He is all this forever,* for He is "a priest forever." If you could have seen Him when He came from Gethsemane, you think you could have trusted Him. Oh! Trust Him today, for He is "called of God to be a high priest after the order of Melchisedec," and that order of Melchisedec is an everlasting and perpetual priesthood. He is able today to plead for you, able today to put away your sins. Oh that God the Holy Spirit may lead many of you to come and obey Him at once!

A heavy atmosphere fills this Tabernacle this morning, making it difficult to speak and more difficult to hear, but yet if some sudden news came to you, as the burning of your house, or the death of a dear child, you would shake off all lethargy and wake up from all dullness and heaviness of spirit, and therefore I claim your liveliest thoughts for the solemn subject which I have introduced to you. Think much of the Son of God, the Lord of heaven and earth, who for our salvation loved and lived and served and suffered. He that made man was made man. As a suppliant, with cries and tears He pleaded with God, even He before whom the hosts of heaven bow adoringly. He has still that tenderness to which He was trained by His suffering; He bids you now come to Him. You that love Him approach Him now, and read the love which is engraved on His heart. You who have not hitherto known Him, come boldly to Him and trust Him who has come so near to you. The Man is very near akin to us. Behold how He loves us! He bends to us with eternal salvation in His hands. Believe in Him and live. God grant it! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
LUKE 22:39-46;

HEBREWS 4:14-16; 5.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—327, 328, 271.

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

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

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

OUR ASCENDED LORD
NO. 1928

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 7, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Who is gone into heaven, and is at the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject to Him."
1 Peter 3:22.

LAST Lord's-Day morning we considered the humiliation of our divine Lord [#1927—*Our Sympathizing High Priest],* and I think, if one may speak for the rest, that we consciously and deeply felt how very near He came to us in His suffering condition, and how very near He still is to us as truly man. On that happy occasion we had fellowship with Him of the truest kind. The sympathy of His soul toward us awoke our sympathies towards Him. We felt it exceedingly profitable to sit and weep with Him who not only wept but bled for us.

This morning, in considering our Lord's glorification, I hope we shall feel quite as near to Him as we did on the former occasion, for if He was humiliated for us, He is also exalted for us. If He Himself once stooped to come near to us, He now lifts us up from our low estate, and brings us near to Himself in His glory. It is not only that He is partaker of our lowliness, but we are partakers of His exaltation. The fellowship is full and complete, for while He takes upon Himself our fall, we, on the other hand, partake in His rising again. He comes down to us in His incarnation, but He calls us up to Him in His ascension; He wears our garb of poverty by bearing our flesh, but He robes us in His splendor as He bears our nature into heaven. Remember, it is "this same Jesus" whom they saw on earth who also is gone into heaven, and who is to come again a second time. Yes, it is "this same Jesus," and He is not less man on the throne than He was on the cross; He is as truly our brother now, amid the acclaim of angels as among the weeping women of Jerusalem. I beseech you, do not let the change of His estate create any distance in *your* hearts, since there is no distance in *His* heart, but rather ask for grace that you may rise up unto Him, to joy in His joy, and triumph in His triumph. Let us behold our Lord's glories today, not as a blaze of intolerable splendor, driving us back with fear, but as a radiance of peace, drawing us near with hope. Let us go to the land where our greater Joseph is Lord of all; let us go into His palace, let us sit at His table with Him there, as He once sat at our table with us here. We went to David in the cave, let us not fear to approach Him now that He is king; yes, let us rejoice that we share His royalty, for He has made us kings and priests, and we shall reign with Him forever and ever.

The history of our Lord after His death is as simple as it is sublime, and I shall not try to set it forth with garnishing of human speech. When a renowned warrior writes home after great victories, his dispatches are short and to the point, the brilliance of the news is sufficient without the light of sparkling sentences. His words are few; he has so much to tell that he does not waste a letter. His achievements are so great that they do not require the aid of poetry or oratory. A dash from the conqueror's pen is enough to set a nation rejoicing. "I came, I saw, I conquered," is a line which will be quoted to the end of time. Such is the life of our Lord Jesus, from the cross onward. If I seem to preach very plainly, and even baldly, this morning, you will understand that my theme forbids the adornments which other subjects invite.

Our Savior died, but He rose again. It is a sort of courtesy to death to speak of the period of our Lord's entombment as three days. The victory of death was so short that Scripture can afford to let it be reckoned in the roughest manner, to give to death the utmost it could claim by the broadest method of reckoning. Give death his three days; that is the outside of all his victory. Let death and hell make the best they can of it; the bruised heel of the seed of the woman soon ceases to be lame.

When the first day of the week began to dawn, before yet the sun had gleamed through the veil of the olives, and lit up the garden of Joseph of Arimathaea, our Lord arose from His slumber, and began to disrobe Himself of His grave clothes. In orderly manner He folded them up, and divided them with intent of instruction. He left the grave clothes for us, that our last chamber may be fitly furnished and tapestried when we shall come to lie therein, and then He put the napkin by itself, that our friends may dry their tears thereon when they remember that there is now a glorious hope in death for all who are in Christ. The living Lord waited a while, and then the messenger from the courts of heaven descended to set Him free. The angel touched the stone which shut the mouth of the grave, the stone removed, the risen one came forth from the dampness of the vault into the freshness of the morning air, frightening the watchmen, and causing the solid earth to quake with fear. He was as truly risen as He had been truly dead. He was no apparition or phantom, but that body which had most certainly given up the ghost now received life again.

Our Lord tarried here for forty days; a time sufficient for the establishment of His identity and the production of proof of the fact that He had truly risen. During those forty days He so showed Himself in different places that the testimony to His resurrection became most abundant and convincing. He was seen by ones and twos, who could more carefully examine Him because they were alone with Him. He was tested by one who put his finger into the print of the nails, and thrust his hand into His side; nothing could be more conclusive than the verdict of that suspicious examiner. He was seen by about five hundred brethren at once, that by the eyes of many the fact of His being the once crucified Jesus might be ascertained beyond all further question. His appearance was not a vision beheld by one or two enthusiasts when alone, He was mani-

festly set forth among a great company as their Lord and Master who had been cruelly put to death, but had risen from among the dead. Our Savior would not go to heaven till He had settled the fact of His resurrection upon a basis which can never be shaken. There is no fact in history, ancient or modern, which is half so well attested as the resurrection of our Lord from the dead. You shall turn to the pages of the most veracious and sober historians of any age you please, but you will not there find such assured evidence of any event as the gospels give to us of the rising again of Jesus. Events which we now speak of as indisputable are not as surely true as that Jesus, who was taken down from the cross and laid in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathaea, did really rise, and live again among the sons of men.

He tarried forty days, not only for the establishment of this great truth, but for the comfort of His disciples. He wiped away the tears which they shed at His death, and made them feel that it was no longer a calamity that their Lord had died. He also prepared them for the more enduring grief of His departure; indeed, He so elevated their minds and raised their spirits that we never hear of their lamenting His ascension. He made them see that it was expedient that He should go away, so that the Comforter might come to them. He also communed with them, gave them of His Spirit, and filled them with His peace. He raised them from being common peasants to be the patriarchs of a new age, the vanguard of the divine crusaders, who would conquer the world for Jesus. They went forth strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, because He had spoken to them, and they had heard from His own lips the gospel which they were commissioned to proclaim.

He stayed also long enough to give them directions how to act; in fact, He organized His forces, ordered their line of battle, and prepared them for the victory. To all He gave the direction to tarry at Jerusalem till they were endowed with power from on high and in that command we have our marching orders for all time. Some of the disciples He had to address individually, for they had special need. He had to cheer the heart of Magdalene, to overcome the unbelief of Thomas, to give warning and encouragement to Peter, and to brace them all for their coming struggle. The great Shepherd of the sheep could not return unto His rest till He had seen to every sickly sheep, and put the whole flock in order. He would not go to His glory till He could leave all whom the Father gave Him prepared for their future destiny.

Those forty days were soon over. Very remarkable days they were, if you study them, so different from His former life. Nobody molested the Lord, no scribes or Pharisees contradicted Him, no malicious Jews took up stones to stone Him. Those were halcyon days, days wherein the birds of peace sat on the still waters, and not a wave ruffled the calm. I might almost say that those days were the prelude of His glory, a sort of anticipation of His reign of peace, when He shall stand in the latter day upon the earth, and wars shall cease unto the end of the earth. When those forty days were over, the Master went His way. All was done that He had

covenanted to perform, and He ascended to His reward. Now we have come to our text.

I shall this morning, first of all, *rehearse the circumstances* which are here mentioned in three parts—He has gone into heaven, He is on the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers are made subject unto Him. When I have rehearsed these circumstances, I shall then, beloved, by the help of God's Spirit, ask you to *learn the simple but sublime lessons* which these facts are meant to teach us.

I. First, LET US REHEARSE THE CIRCUMSTANCES.

They begin thus—*"Who is gone into heaven."* "He is gone," that sounds rather sorrowful. You might touch the mournful string as you hear these words, for if He is gone, we are bereaved indeed. Yet we dare not raise a monument to Christ as one who is dead. Let us complete the sentence—"Who is gone *into heaven."* Now you demand the trumpet, for the words are full of soul-stirring music, and create intense delight.

Still, there are the words, *"He is gone,"* He is gone away from you and from me, we cannot now embrace His feet, nor wash them, nor lean our head upon His bosom, nor look into His face. We have to sing to our Well-Beloved—

"Jesus, these eyes have never seen
That radiant form of Thine!
The veil of sense hangs dark between
Your blessed face and mine!"

Henceforth we are strangers here because He is not here. He intends us to remove, for He has removed. We are not at home on earth. If He were here we might think this world could be our abiding place, but it cannot be so now. If He were here earth would be a kind of heaven to us, but away from Him it is a place of exile. If we could now run to Him and tell Him our griefs as they arise they would cease to be griefs. But Jesus does not mean this to be our lot and portion. Our inheritance is not on this side of Jordan. Truly, this world and all the works that are therein are to be burned up, in token whereof He is gone from it. It is vain for us to think that we can make our abode here. We are ourselves to go away soon, and therefore, He is gone—

"When He arose, ascending high
He taught our feet the way."

He seems to say, "Upwards, my brethren, upwards from off this earth, away from this world to the glory land. I am gone, and you must be gone. This is not your place of resting, but you must prepare yourselves for a time when it shall be said of each one of you, 'He is gone.'" Those who linger behind us will see us no more, for we shall be gone into heaven, to be with our Lord in His kingdom.

I like to remember that our Lord Jesus is gone in the entirety of His nature. His body is gone. He has not left His flesh in the grave. Jesus has carried with Him His entire self, His whole humanity. Therein I rejoice, for He has carried my nature to heaven with Him. My heart is with Him on His throne, and all my being longs to follow it. Jesus has taken our manhood into heaven. He is in heaven, our Adam, the representative of His people. He has taken us up with Himself, beloved, even all of us who

are in Him. He has gone into heaven in His true and proper manhood. In the New Jerusalem He looks like a Lamb that has been slain, and still He wears His priesthood, His manhood and His sympathetic heart. He who is gone into heaven is not a changeling, but the real Christ. We shall know Him there if we have known Him here. He on whose head are many crowns is identical with the Christ whose head was encircled with thorns. Despite the change in His circumstances, there is no change in Him; He is "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever." He, His own self, who bore our sins, is gone up into heaven.

We have dwelt long enough upon the words, "He is gone," now let us consider that He "is gone *into heaven."* What does this signify but, first, that He is gone out of the region wherein our senses can perceive Him? Be sure of this, that you will not now see Him, nor touch Him, nor handle Him. He is gone into heaven, out of reach of our earth-bound senses. It is a vain idea of carnal-minded men that Christ is corporeally in the sacrament. He is gone into heaven. His very flesh and blood cannot be here among us. He is gone up into heaven, and therefore He is not where He can be recognized by these bodily senses. Spiritually He is here, according to His promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," but to say that He is here *corporeally* is to deny that He is gone up into heaven. As man, as His body was of substance, it is not capable of being in more than one place at a time. You must not transform His humanity into deity, His deity is everywhere, but His substantial humanity can only be in its one proper place, and to suppose it to be everywhere is virtually to deny that it is anywhere. A covert unbelief in the reality of our Lord's body thus veils itself under the appearance of a superstitious faith. Jesus is really and indeed gone into heaven, and therefore, we see Him not, we hear Him not, and our communion with Him is by faith, and not by the senses.

But then, beloved, we know that our Lord, as man, is gone into a greater nearness to God than ever, "He is gone into heaven," where is the throne of the great King. The high priest on the Day of Atonement lifted the mysterious veil which shut in the Holy of Holies, he passed within, and the veil fell between him and the people. They could not possibly see him while he was performing his sacred functions, but they knew that he stood before the throne of God. Though he was not with them, he was with God, which was better for them. The high priest was more useful to them within the veil than outside of it, he was doing for them out of sight what he could not accomplish in their view. I delight to think that my Lord is with the Father. Sometimes I cannot get to God, my access seems blocked by my infirmity, but He is always with God to plead for me. Sometimes my intercessions seem to die outside the veil, but His prayers are ever within the holy place, since He Himself is there, presenting His potent pleas directly to the Father, and being always accepted of Him. Let us joy and rejoice that our covenant Head is now in the bosom of the Father, at the fountainhead of love and grace, and that He is there on our behalf.

In going into heaven there is also this thought, that our Lord is gone now into the place of perfect happiness and of complete glory. We rightly sing—

"No more the bloody spear,
The cross and nails no more,
For hell itself shakes at His name,
And all the heavens adore."

No weariness, no mockery, no sinking of heart, no bearing of reproach, no crying, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" He is gone into peace, and bliss, and honor, and renown. "Heaven" is a great word, none of us can understand it, nor shall we approach its meaning till we reach the place. He is where there are pleasures forevermore. The human soul and body of Jesus are filled with delight, the man Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, He that died upon the cross, is now blessed forevermore. The Lord Jesus is filled with ineffable satisfaction, which is the reward of His passion and His death. Let us this day be glad and rejoice in Him, for He is gone up into heaven.

Thinking this over, let us reflect dear brethren that nothing could stop His going there. "He is gone up into heaven, despite all who raged against Him."

Death could not hold Him. Death bound Him very fast with the strongest cords, but He could not be held by them. This great monster must give up Jesus, even as another monster gave up Jonah, after the third day. Our greater Jonah came up again from the depths of the earth. He died and was a captive for our sakes, but His body could not see corruption, nor could His soul abide in the realms of death. He is gone to heaven, despite the stone, the watch, the seal, despite the clay-cold hand of death.

He is gone into heaven despite malicious men. Have you never wondered why they did not attack Him when He had showed Himself openly, and had led out His disciples to the Mount of Olives? They suborned the soldiers to say that His disciples stole Him away while they slept; why did they not seize Him? Why is Herod so quiet, and Caiaphas so still? Scribes and Pharisees, where are they? Are these lions chained? Our greater Daniel is in their den, but they do not even roar at Him. It is now or never with them; if they could capture Him now and stop His way to His eternal triumph, it would be a great victory. It is the last chance for the overthrow of His power. But truly against Him did not a dog move his tongue. They were still as a stone while He passed over to take possession of the inheritance.

As death could not hinder Him, so neither could the malice of men detain Him, nor could all the forces of the devil block His way. I see no trace of the arch-enemy after Christ has risen from the dead. O Prince of darkness, you did meet Him in the wilderness at the beginning, why not close with Him at the end? Why not assail Him by the sea when He stands there with His coals of fire, with fish laid on thereon, and bread? Prince of darkness, why did you not hasten up to shoot a last arrow at Him, and summon all your bands to waylay Him in mid-air to block His passage to the Golden City? No, the powers of darkness were baffled; in

their silence they gnashed their teeth for rage, but they could not even hiss against Him. He had so thoroughly cowed and subdued Satan and all his angels in Gethsemane and on the cross, that nothing remained but to triumph over them, and lead captivity captive. The leaguered hosts of hell could not summon courage for another encounter, His warfare was accomplished, and the road to His Father's capital lay open before Him. In peaceful triumph He passed beyond the clouds. Troops of angels on the road met with their joyful songs the heir of all things returning to His home. My heart rejoices as I think that He is gone into heaven, none disputing His passage.

But I beg you to remember that He is gone up into heaven *as our representative*. Jesus does nothing by Himself now. All His people are with Him. He says, "Behold I and the children which God has given Me." They are always in union with Him. The Head is never separated from the members, the supposition is ghastly. He is our Forerunner marking the way, our Herald predicting our coming, our Breaker clearing the road. As the great Lord calls them home it shall be said of each one of the saints, "who is gone into heaven." Jesus is gone there as Pioneer to open the way, as our Friend to prepare a place for us, and as the Pledge that all who are in Him shall come to the same happiness. If He had not entered, neither could we, but in His person God has given to us a token that we also shall rise from the dead, and shall enter into heaven. He who is the Surety of the covenant is our guarantee of entrance into heaven. This is the best seal that our faith could desire, the resurrection and ascension of Christ being practically the resurrection and the home-bringing of all His redeemed. I forbear; may the Lord bless this to your souls.

Secondly, we have to look at the next circumstance, *His sitting at the right hand of God,* "who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God." Remember that this being on the right hand of God relates to the complex person of our Lord; it relates to Him not as God alone, but as God and man. It is His manhood that is at the right hand of God. Wonderful conception! The next being to God is man. Infinite leagues must necessarily lie between the Creator and the created, but between God and man in Christ Jesus there seems no distance at all, the man Christ Jesus sits at God's right hand. Is not this a sublime thought, that man, creature as he is, is now so linked with the Second Person of the Divine Trinity in Unity, that he is so near to God as to be just at His right hand? So near, so very near to God, he cannot nearer be. This is a wonderful thing, Jesus sits at the right hand of God as man, and man is thus brought into a singular nearness to God. As I said before, there is an chasm immeasurable between God and a seraph, and yet man, whom He made a "little lower than the angels," and who was, consequently a little further off, is in the person of the Son of God brought so near to God that no being of any kind now intervenes between the Almighty God and man.

What does it mean that Christ sits at the right hand of God? Does it not mean, first, unrivalled honor? To sit at the right hand of God is the highest conceivable glory. The mother of Zebedee's children asked that her sons might sit the one on His right hand and the other on His left in

His Kingdom, but Jesus said it was not His to give. The Father has given the Son to sit in the highest place nearest to the throne, yes, on the very throne, of God, for we read of "the throne of God and of the Lamb." Jesus, our brother, is elevated to the throne of the Most High.

Does not it also signify intense love? When Solomon would describe the love of the King to his bride, he said, "Upon your right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir." The Lord God places the Son of man in the seat of love, where none may be but the one who is the beloved of the Father. He loves Him with an unutterable, inconceivable love, and even thus does He love us in Him. Christ at the right hand of God means all His people at the right hand of God; all the saints are in the place of the nearest and dearest love.

It means also communion and counsel. We speak of a person with whom we take advice as "the man of our right hand." God takes counsel with the man Christ Jesus. When you have a friend at court, you hope you will do well, but what a friend have we in the King's courts; even He who is the Wonderful, Counselor! He is the king of glory, the governor of earth, the distributor of thrones and crowns, the man Christ Jesus. Now I know that the decree of God must mean my good, for my Lord sits at the right hand of Him that does decree. Now I understand that the purposes of God must work out the happiness of the chosen, for He who loves them is in union with the Maker of the purpose.

Does it not also signify perfect repose? Jesus is gone up to the right hand of God, and sits there. While He was occupied with His holy service, He did not sit down. There were no seats for the priests in the tabernacle; their work was too laborious for sitting down. But Jesus has forever taken His seat at the right hand of God, expecting till His enemies are made His footstool. O restful Savior, we toiling and laboring, come to You and find rest in You; we also sit down longing for and expecting the time when You shall put down all our enemies, and we shall tread even Satan under our feet. Even now we sit with You in the heavenlies and enjoy Your peace. So much concerning the session of our Lord.

The third fact is, *His dominion,* "Angels and authorities and powers being made subject to Him." Angels are subject to Him upon whom abjects spat—to Him whom they nailed to the cross, and at whom they wagged their heads. This is one of the wonders of heaven. Is it possible that the conjecture of the old writers was true, that Satan rebelled against God because He heard a whisper that a man would one day be head over all principalities and powers? I do not know, but certainly the angels must often marvel that not Gabriel, nor the brightest of the seraphim, is next to God; but, a man! Lord, what is man! Man made of the dust of the earth, what is he that he should sit above more spiritual beings, crowned with glory and honor? Yet it is so. God has set the Christ above all angels and principalities and powers. Is not this one of those things which angels desire to look into? Although Lucifer has fallen, there is yet no gap in heaven. Creatures in part material are lifted up to fill the void caused by the great dragon, when he drew down with his tail the third part of the stars of heaven. Men in countless myriads are in heaven white-robed,

praising God, and one Man is actually on the throne of God, vicegerent, Lord over all; having every knee to bow before Him, and every tongue to call Him Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Oh, think of it; the man Christ Jesus is Lord of all the shining ones! He can send an angel to comfort you in your grief. "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" When you count up the available forces of your Lord, do not forget these invisible armies. Did He not say in the hour of His agony, "Can I not now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels"? The air will soon teem with invisible spirits if they are needed for our defense, for our Savior is their Lord. They will count it all joy to do His bidding on our behalf. They are the chariots of God, in which He rides to the rescue of His own. The day shall come when all the hosts of heaven shall come down to earth, attending the Son of man, then shall they gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and at the same time they shall delight to display their loyalty to Him that once did hang upon the cross. We rejoice today that God has set Him far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named.

But I must not forget that He has power over all devils as well. They are fallen angels, and Jesus has subdued them once for all. They cannot tempt His followers without His permission; they cannot put forth their finger to bring any calamity upon a Job unless God wills it. These dogs are muzzled, wherefore fear them not—

"A faithful God restrains their hands,
And binds them down in iron bands."

Jesus is Lord of all.

Whatever else this term "angels and authorities and powers" may comprehend, Christ has under His sway; that is to say, all kings and princes upon earth, all leaders of thought—political or religious—all controllers of human movements are subject to Him. Do not be afraid of this or that form of anarchy; nothing can shake the eternal throne of the Prince of Peace. Monarchs may die and crumble back to dust, and their empires with them, but the throne of the Son of David shall endure forever and ever. No acts of senators, or decrees of despots, or raging of the multitude, nor foaming of rebels, nor deliverances of sages, can interfere in the least degree with the supreme power of Jesus of Nazareth. His very cross proclaimed Him King, and King He is. Be cheered by His reign. "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." It is surely so, for the Lord has given Jesus the kingdom, and He shall reign forever and ever.

Yes and all kinds of forces other than human are under subjection to Jesus. The Psalmist, when he measured the domain of man, said—"You made him to have dominion over all the works of Your hands; You have put all things under His feet: all sheep and oxen, yes, and the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatever passes through the paths of the seas." We see not yet all things put under man, but we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor. All things this day bow

before the Lord Jesus, willingly or unwillingly. It matters not what powers, and forces, and energies may be now developed, or may be yet developed in the ages to come; they are all subject to the Lord Christ. That heel which once was bruised when the serpent wounded it has crushed the dragon's head and holds it down upon the earth. Life, death, and hell, and worlds unknown, lie in subjection to Him that lives and was dead. Oh that my Lord had a servant that could worthily declare His glories! Great princes have their heralds, who with blast of trumpet proclaim their honors and dignities, but who shall proclaim the glories of the Son of man, who once died for our sins?

Come; let us rejoice together in the victories of our Leader and Lord! I know of no better theme to stir the pulses of my soul with holy exultation than the thought that Jesus is victor. I have heard of wounded men crushed amid a heap of bleeding bodies lying on the battlefield, and awakening all the life that remained in them when they saw the great Napoleon come riding over the plain. With their legs gone, they raised themselves upon their arms, once more to salute their captain. Poor souls! To be thus enthusiastic for one who shed their blood like water; far wiser is our enthusiasm for Him who shed His blood for us. If I knew that I must die in a ditch and be forgotten or slandered and abhorred of men, I would yet rejoice and cry, "Hosanna" at the prospect of my Lord's sure victory! Yes, I will salute Him now with my most hearty praises, and be glad, because I know that He is even now King of kings and Lord of lords. Hallelujah! He of whom they said, "Crucify Him, crucify Him," is now head over all. There I leave it. God grant us grace to rejoice in this story of our Lord!

II. Secondly, and very briefly, LET US LEARN THE LESSONS OF THESE CIRCUMSTANCES.

The first lesson is—*the religion of Christ is true*. Whenever I read modern doubts—and you cannot read long without coming across them—I am glad to get back to facts. If you read a certain set of modern sermons, you will find all the eternal verities denied or maligned. Too many ministers, instead of being servants of Christ, are servants of the devil dressed in the livery of God; the Lord have mercy upon them! Whenever a doubt is proposed to me I fall back upon this fact; Jesus did rise from the dead. That is sure. He did also ascend into heaven, for His disciples saw Him rise. Well, then, I am satisfied to be the least of His disciples, and to take His word, and the words of His inspired apostles, and believe them, even though faith is denounced as ridiculous. "You are left behind in the march of progress. You are poor fools who cannot think for yourselves." I confess that I am such a fool; I believe what God has revealed. I have more confidence in the revelation of God than in the opinions of men. I know nothing among men save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. For this is the truth! We know it! We have facts at our back. Our doctrine is not sentiment, and view, and opinion, but fact. "Who has gone into heaven, and is at the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject to Him."

I learn another lesson—that *Christ's cause is safe*. Let not His church tremble, let her not think of putting out the hand of unbelief to steady the ark of the Lord. The history of the church is to be the history of Christ repeated; she is to be betrayed, she is to be scourged, she is to be falsely accused and spit on; she may have her crucifixion and her death, but she shall rise again. Her Master rose, and like Him she shall rise and receive glory. You can never kill the church till you can kill Christ, and you can never defeat her till you defeat the Lord Jesus, who already wears the crown of triumph. The grand old cause is safe. The outlook may be dark just now, and it may be unpopular to follow the Lamb wheresoever He goes, but the day will come when they who do so shall walk in white, for they are worthy. The wheel will turn, and they that are lowest now shall soon be highest; they that have been with Him in the dust shall be with Him in His glory.

Now I can see that *His saints are safe,* for if Jesus has risen and gone into His glory, then each individual in Him shall be safe too. Where does your hope lie, brother? Why, in Christ. Well, then, your hope is always safe, is it not? If you have any hope outside of Him, it may perish, but if your hope is all within Him, your treasure is all within the heavenly casket, and it is always secure. Wherefore, be you glad and rejoice. You, too, may have to cry, "Why have you forsaken me?" You, too, may thirst. You, too, may die. But you shall live again, and you shall triumph, for as He is, so are you, and what Jesus is, that you shall be in Him.

I can also see another lesson here; *this explains the way in which Jesus deals with sinners*. That which took place in His own person, He makes to be a picture of what takes place in the men whom He saves. If you come to Him you can only get to know the fullness of His gracious power by being scourged and buffeted with conviction and repentance, and by having self, especially self-righteousness, crucified and slain. You must know the destruction of self, you must see death written upon all carnal hopes, and then out of that death you shall live again in newness of life, and you shall receive honor and glory and immortality. Wherefore, dear troubled heart, if Christ is killing you, be assured He will make you alive, for this is what He says, even He, the mighty God, "I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal." The history of Christ has to be written out again in us. Death to sin and a new life unto righteousness must be ours. That is a lesson worth the learning.

And so I must close with one more division which will have several points in it. I think, beloved, since Christ has gone into heaven and sits at the right hand of God, *it shows which way we ought to go*. "I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." He draws them to the cross, and you may be sure He will draw them to the crown. Do you think He has lost His attraction now that He sits on the throne? Not He. He is drawing us up this morning. Let us send all our thoughts upward, our desires, our rejoicings, our aspirations, let them all climb Jacob's ladder up to the Lord. Oh that we could at once rise to Him! Stop a while, my soul! Be patient through your appointed days. Though you can hardly stand delay, yet wait His leisure, for your Lord Himself had to wait. He

had His time of tarrying, and so must you, in order that you may have fellowship with Him in His sufferings. Still feel the drawings. Remember that pretty parable, given by one of our ministers, of the boy's kite. He made it fly aloft; it rose up so high that he could no longer see it. Still he said he had a kite, and he held fast by it. "Boy, how do you know you have a kite?" "I can feel it pull," said he. This morning we feel our Jesus pull. He draws us with a far greater force than a mere string. He is gone into heaven, and He draws us after Him. O Lord, draw us with greater power than ever. "Draw me, we will run after You." Do we not feel as though we could kneel down and pray over those words of the spouse? Wait a bit, and soon you shall climb the shining way to embrace your risen Lord. Yield to His upward drawing! Do not pull away from Him to grasp earth and things that are earthly, but yield to His drawings. As you yield to them, begin to sing; He has conquered! He has conquered! He has conquered! What matters it though my garments are rolled in dust and blood? He has conquered! He has conquered! What does it matter though the arrows fly thick about me, winged by the feathers of death? He has conquered! He has conquered! My soul, grasp the victory, for there is laid up for you also a crown of life that fades not away. God bless you, brethren, for Jesus' sake!

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11; COLOSSIANS 2:8-15.**

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—47, 322, 317.

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

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

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

TO THOSE WHO ARE ANGRY WITH THEIR GODLY FRIENDS
NO. 1929

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

"And the Lord said unto Cain, Why are you angry? And why is your countenance fallen? If you do well, shall you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And unto you shall be his desire, and you shall rule over him." Genesis 4:6, 7.

SINNERS are not all of the laughing sort; Cain's mind was angry, and his heart was heavy. The short life of the vicious is not always a merry one. See, here you have a man who is utterly without God, but he is not without sorrow. His countenance has fallen, his looks are sullen; he is a miserable man. There are many ungodly people still in the world who are not happy in the condition in which they find themselves. The present does not content them, and they have no future from which to borrow the light of hope. The service of sin is hard to them, and yet they do not quit it for the service of the Lord. They are in danger of having two hells—one in this life, and another in the world to come.

They have a religion of their own, even as Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground, but it yields them no comfort, for God has no respect to their offering, and therefore they are displeased about it. The things of God bring an increase to their inward wretchedness; it was after a sacrifice that Cain's countenance fell. Many unrenewed hearts quarrel with God at His own altar, quarrel by presenting what He never commanded, and then by growing angry because He rejects their will-worship. They attend the means of grace, but they are not saved nor comforted, and they do not like it. They pray, after a fashion, and they are not heard, and they feel indignant at the slight. They read the Scriptures, but no cheering promise is ever applied to their hearts, and they grow fierce at their failure. They see another accepted, as Abel was, and this excites their jealousy, and envy gnaws at their heart. They are angry with God, with their fellow man, and with everything about them; their countenance falls, and they are in a morose mood, which fits them for any cruel word or deed. Can you not see their sullen looks?

They would like to have the enjoyments of religion very much, they would like to have peace of conscience, they would like to be uplifted beyond all fear of death; they would like to be as happy as Christian people are, but they do not want to pay the price, namely, obedience to God by faith in Jesus Christ. They would willingly bring an offering to God according to their own choice and taste, but they do not care to come with "the Lamb" as their sacrifice; they cannot accept the atonement made by

our Lord's laying down His life for us. They wish to have the reward of obedient faith while yet they have their own way. They would reap the harvest without sowing the seed. They would gather clusters without planting vines. They would win the wages without serving the Master of the vineyard. But as this cannot be, and never will be, they are full of bitter feeling. Since sin and sorrow are sure to be, sooner or later, married together, and since only by walking in the ways of God can we hope to find peace and rest, they quarrel with the divine arrangement, grow inwardly miserable, and show it by their sullen looks and growling words.

They are in a bitter state of heart, and it is fair to ask each one of them, "Why are you angry?" Alas! They are not angry with themselves, as they ought to be, but angry with God, and often they are angry with God's chosen, and envious of them, even as Cain was malicious and vindictive towards Abel. "Why should my neighbor be saved and not I? Why should my brother rejoice because he has peace with God, while I cannot get it? Why should my own sister be converted and sing of heaven, and I, who have gone to the same place of worship, and have joined in the same prayers and hymns, seem to be left out in the cold?" Such questions might be useful to them, but instead of looking into their own hearts to see what is wrong there, instead of judging themselves and trying to get right with God, they inwardly blame the Lord, or the persons whom they think to be more favored than themselves. The blessings of grace are to be had by them, but they refuse to take them, and yet quarrel with those who accept them. They play the part of the dog in the manger, who could not eat the hay himself, and would not let the horses do so. They will not accept Christ, and yet grumble because others have Him.

It is one of the sure signs of the seed of the serpent—that they will always be at enmity with the seed of the woman. This is one of the marks of distinction between those who walk after the flesh and those who walk after the spirit, for as Ishmael mocked Isaac, so the child of the flesh mocks the child of promise even to this day. As soon as the two sons born to Adam were grown up, the great division was seen, he who was of the wicked one slew the man who by faith offered a more acceptable sacrifice. This division has never ceased, and never will cease, while the race of man remains on earth under the reign of God's long-suffering. By this you shall know to which seed you belong, whether you are of those who hate the righteous, or of those who are hated for Christ's sake.

Now, I want to call attention to a very gracious fact connected with this text, and that is, that although Cain was in such a bad temper that he was very angry, and his countenance fell, yet God, the infinitely gracious One, came and spoke with him, and reasoned with him patiently. It is wonderful that God should speak with man at all, considering man's insignificance. Did not the Psalmist say, "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him? And the son of man, that You visit him?" But for the Lord to speak with sinful man is a far greater marvel, and for Him to reason with such a man as Cain, a murderer in heart, and soon to be a murderer in deed, impenitent, implacable, presumptuous, blasphemous, this is a miracle of mercy! Shall the

pure and holy God speak with such a wretch as Cain, who was angry with his brother without just cause? Why does He not at once cut him off while yet his hate has not issued in murder, and thus at the very beginning show His detestation of envy and malice? Truly His mercy endures forever. Behold, the Lord comes to Cain with a question, gives him an opportunity of speaking for himself, and defending, if he can, his state of mind. "Why are you angry? And why is your countenance fallen? If you do well, shall you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door."

Yet this is no solitary instance of the condescension of God, it is the way of our God to expostulate with sinners, and to let them produce their strong reasons, and justify themselves if they can. It is His fashion to say, "Turn you: turn you, why will you die, O house of Israel?" for He wills not the death of any, but that they should turn unto Him and live. He is greatly patient and waits to be gracious. God gives none up until they fatally resolve to give themselves up, and even then His good Spirit strives with them as long as it is possible to do so, consistently with His holiness.

Often to the very gates of death, and up to the very edge of the bottomless pit, His pity follows obstinate sinners, crying still, "Turn you! Turn you! Turn you! Why will you die?" Yes, the angry sinner—the Cain-ite sinner—the sinner whose face betrays the anger of his soul, whose heart is hot with enmity against God and against His Christ, even he is not left to die without divine pleadings which may show him his fault and folly. Still does the Lord handle conscience with skill, and awaken thought with fit inquiries, "Why are you angry, and why is your countenance fallen?"

I pray God that He may speak to any among my congregation who may be in this sad and evil condition. I have felt lately that I may have but few more opportunities of preaching the gospel, and therefore I would try and speak more solemnly every time I preach, and endeavor to strike right home at the heart and conscience, if by any means I may save some. Oh how I long to bring men to Jesus! I could gladly lay down my life to save my hearers. May the Holy Spirit make my words to be full of force and holy fire, and may they meet the case of some here present whom I have never seen before, but whose thoughts are as well known to God as if they were printed in a book and laid open before His eyes! Oh that I may be moved to speak a word which shall fit the case as a glove fits the hand which wears it! May it not merely be the voice of man that speaks to you, but may it be clear that God has commissioned His servant to speak to your hearts, and that by my sermon God Himself expostulates with you even as He expostulated with Cain in those ancient times!

Recollect that the case is that of a man who is angry, angry mainly because he cannot get the comforts of religion. He sees his brother enjoying them, and he grows angry with him for that reason. With him, and all like him, I would reason with kind words.

I. I shall take the last sentence of the text first, *"Unto you shall be his desire and you shall rule over him."* In these words God argues with Cain and answers the charge of favoritism which was lurking in his mind. He

tells him, in effect, that NO DIFFERENCE IS MADE IN THE ARRANGEMENT OF SOCIAL LIFE BECAUSE OF THE ARRANGEMENTS OF GRACE. Notice that He says to him, "Unto you shall be his desire and you shall rule over him"—which I understand to mean just this, "Why are you so angry against Abel? It is true that I have accepted his offering, it is true that he is a righteous man, and you are not, but for all that, you are his elder brother, and he looks up to you, his desire is toward you, and you shall rule over him. He has not acted otherwise than as a younger brother should act towards an elder brother, but he has admitted your seniority and priority. He has not revolted from you; you rule over him, you are his master. Why, then, are you so angry?" Observe this, then—that if a man shall be angry with his wife because she is a Christian, we may well argue with him—Why are you thus provoked? Is she not a loving and obedient wife to you in all things, except in this matter touching her God? Is she not all the better for her religion? I have known a husband meet his wife at the Tabernacle door and call her foul names all the way home for no other reason than because she joined in the worship of God. Yet she was all the more, loving, diligent, and patient because of that worship. Here is your child converted, and you are angry. Are you not unreasonable in this? You are his father, and he yields obedience to you. God has not caused religion to alter the natural position of things, your child, your servant, your wife, all recognize this, and remain in due subservience to you. For what cause are you thus sullen and angry? Good sir, this is not like a reasonable man. Be persuaded to let better feelings sway you.

Now, this is an important thing to note, because *first of all it takes away from governments their excuse for persecution.* In the early days of Christianity, multitudes of Christians were tormented to death because of their faith in Jesus. There was no excuse for it, for they had done no harm to the State. Christianity does not come into a nation to break up its arrangements, or to break down its fabric. All that is good in human society it preserves and establishes. It snaps no ties of the family; it dislocates no bonds of the body politic. There are theories of socialism and the like which lead to anarchy and riot, but it is not so with the mild and gentle teaching of Jesus Christ, whose every word is love and patience. He says, "Resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite you on your right cheek, turn to him the other, also." His apostle says—"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands: husbands, love your wives; children, obey your parents in all things: servants, obey in all things your masters, not with eye service as men pleasers: masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that you also have a Master in heaven." Such precepts as these are no injury to government. Paul was no leader of sedition, no destroyer of the rights of property. Caesar needed not to fear Christ. Jesus did not covet Caesar's purple or Caesar's throne. Even Herod needed not to tremble for his princedom, for the child that was born at Bethlehem would not have hunted that fox or disturbed his den. "My kingdom is not of this world," said our Lord Jesus, "otherwise would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews." Now, inasmuch as the religion of Jesus Christ does no hurt to so-

cial order, teaches no one to be rebellious, takes away from no man his rights, but guards the rights of all from the meanest to the greatest, all excuse is taken away from any government that dares to put out its hand to touch the church of God. As to each disciple of Jesus, the government may be satisfied that he is loyal. "You shall rule over him" is certainly true. Christians will cheerfully submit to all lawful rule and righteous authority. To them it is a matter of joy if they are enabled to lead peaceable lives because the magistrate is a terror to evildoers. They are a nonresistant, peaceable, quiet people, who have from the beginning of the world until now borne burdens and suffered and been content to suffer, so that they might but be true to their Master. They hate tyranny, but they love order; they protest against oppression, but they uphold law and justice. Why, then, should they be persecuted? They ask nothing from the State by way of pay or patronage, they only ask to be left alone, and to be subject to no disability on account of their religion. Let all who are in authority, whether as kings or petty magistrates, beware of wantonly molesting a people who cause them no trouble, lest they be found in this matter to be fighting against God.

That being so in the broad field of national life, *it is just the same if you bring it down to the little sphere of home*. There is no reason why Cain should be so angry with Abel because God loves him, for the love of God to Abel does not take away from Cain his right as an elder brother. It does not teach Abel to refuse to Cain the rights of his position, nor lead him to act rudely and wrongfully toward him. No, Abel's desire is unto Cain, and Cain rules over him as his elder brother. Why, then, should Cain be angry and his countenance fall? My dear friend, if you are angry tonight about the sovereignty of the grace of God, as seen in the conversion of another, let me ask you what hurt has the grace of God in the heart of the person you envy done to you? Is your eye evil because God's eye is good? Have you suffered in any sense because that other one is saved? You cannot have your way if you wish to coerce the envied one into giving up his faith, but have you a right to your own way? Is it not the privilege of every man to have his conscience left free to serve God alone? What right do you have as an Englishman to take away liberty from another? You say, "Why, I think him very stupid to believe as he does." Very likely you may think so, but then your judgment is given you for yourself, not for another, and you must not become a tyrant and domineer over others. I thought you were a stickler for liberty. And yet you sneer at others because they think for themselves, or at least do not think as you do! If religion made men false in their dealings with others—if it made the servant careless and indifferent—if it made the husband a tyrant—if it made the wife a tattler and slovenly—if it turned all relationships upside-down—then there would be some little reasonableness in the opposition which you offer to it. But if it does nothing of the kind, why are you angry? And why is your countenance fallen? Why, to me it seems to be a great blessing to a man to have his friends converted—a blessing to be desired and prized. Their conversion may do you good, even if you are not converted yourself. Laban learned by experience that the Lord blessed him for Jacob's sake. Look at Joseph. The Lord was with him,

and we find that wherever Joseph went others were the better, because God blessed them through Joseph. A good man in a house is good store to the family. A converted daughter, a praying son, a holy husband, a gracious wife; why, these are the pillars, the ornaments, the buttresses of the house! Godly people roof in the mansion in with their prayers. Who can tell what blessings God gives to unconverted men because of their converted relatives? I do not doubt that, as sometimes the chaff is spared for the sake of the grain which it covers and protects, so, often, the lives of ungodly men are spared for the sake of the children whom they have to bring up—for the sake of those who have to be cherished by them for a while. Had it not been for the grief it would cause the mother whom you mock, the Lord might have cut you down, young man, long ago. Pity for holy relatives may be the motive for the Lord's long-suffering to many rebels. Wherefore be not angry with the righteous.

I could hope, my angry friend, that God means to give a greater blessing still to you—that He means to entice you to heaven by showing your wife the way, or He means to lead you to Christ by that dear child of yours. I have known parents brought to repentance by the deaths of daughters or of sons who have died in the faith. I hope you will not have to lose those you love that you may be brought to Jesus by their dying words. But it may be so; it may be so. It will be better for you to yield to their gentle example while yet they are spared to you, than for you to be smitten to the heart by their sickness and death. Oh that the persecuted one may live to have the great joy of going to the house of God with father, or walking with brother in the ways of godliness, or bringing the thoughtless sister to seek and find the Savior! Why should it not be so? Let us hope for it. At any rate, I do not see any cause to be angry because grace has visited your family. To say the very least about it, a man who is angry with another for enjoying a religion which he himself does not care for is a poor specimen of good nature. Surely he may allow others to enjoy what he does not himself desire. If you do not wish for salvation, why worry yourself because others possess it? If you do not mean to serve Christ, at least stand out of the road and let other people serve Him. There cannot be any gain to you in kicking against the pricks, by resisting the power of divine grace. You will find it hard work in the long run, for the Lord has said that if any shall offend one of the least of His little ones, it were better for him that a millstone were hung about his neck, and that he were cast into the midst of the sea. For prudence's sake, for your own sake, for reason's sake, for freedom's sake, I pray you be no longer angry, and let not your countenance fall. If we cannot agree in matters of religion, let us not persecute or think contemptuously of one another.

II. Now let us advance farther into the text. There is no room for being angry, for THOUGH THE DIFFERENCE LIES FIRST WITH THE GRACE OF GOD, YET IT LIES ALSO WITH THE MAN'S OWN SELF. "If you do well, shall you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door."

First, then, if you are not accepted, and you are angry because you are not accepted, is there not a just cause for it? If you do not enjoy the com-

forts of religion, and you grow envious because you do not, you should cool your wrathfulness by considering this question—*"If you do well, shall you not be accepted?"* That is to say, will you not be accepted on the same terms as Abel? You will be accepted in the same way as your brother, your sister, your child. How is it that the one you envy is full of peace? It is because he has come to Jesus and confessed his sin, and trusted his Redeemer. If you do this, shall not you also be accepted? Has not the Lord said, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out"? If you, too, come and confess your sin, and trust the Savior, you are as certain to be accepted as your friend. You are envious because another is full of joy. Where did that joy come from but from this—that he came according to the divine command, and rested himself upon the finished work of Christ, and gave himself up to be Christ's servant, and asked for the Holy Spirit to renew him and lead him into the way of righteousness? That has been done according to the faithful promise of God, which is sure to all who obey the gospel command. If you come in the same way, and rest on the same Savior, and yield yourself up to be renewed by the same Spirit, the Lord will not refuse you. Put it to the test and see. Try Him. Try Him, and if He refuses you, let me know it, for I am telling everybody that Jesus never casts out any that come to Him, and I must not do so any more if I find out that He does reject you or anyone else. Come to Jesus confessing your sin and trusting in Him, and if He does not save you, let me know it, and I will publish it to the four winds of heaven. We shall be bound to make it known that Christ has broken His word and that His gospel has become of no effect, for we must on no account cry up a falsehood and lead our fellow men to believe that which is not true. Try the Lord Jesus, I beseech you, and I know what the result will be. You shall find that the gate of mercy stands wide open for you and that you will be received as well as others. There is no difference in this matter, whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved, whosoever will, may take of the water of life freely.

Now, is it not much wiser for a man, instead of being angry with another's enjoying the comforts of religion, to seek to enjoy them himself? Am I hungry and angry with another because he has eaten a good meal when the same bread stands before me? Then I am foolish and cross-grained. Do I see another refreshed at the fountain, and do I stand at the freely flowing stream and complain? Do I bitterly demand why his lips are moistened while my mouth is dried up like an oven? What is the use of being angry with the neighbor who has quenched his thirst when the same fountain is free to me? O murmuring friend, why do you not yourself believe? Stoop and drink as your friend has done, and you shall be refreshed as he has been.

If you do well—that is, if you are obedient to the precious word of the gospel—shall you not be accepted? "No," says one, "I am afraid that I shall not be." Who told you so? Your fear is without scriptural foundation. "But perhaps my name is not written in the Book of Life." Who told you so? Who has climbed up to the secret chamber of God to read the mystic roll? Who dares to tell you that your name is not there? Who knows anything about the secret purposes of God? I venture to tell you

this—that if you believe in Jesus Christ, be you who you may, your name *is* written in the Lamb's book of life. "Him that comes to Me," He says, "I will in no wise cast out." Any "him" that comes in all the world, while time shall last, if he does but come to Christ, Christ has said that He cannot and will not cast him out. Therefore, come, and you shall find grace in His sight. Instead of being angry with another for believing and rejoicing, taste for yourself the joys which faith secures. May infinite grace lead you to do so now!

God's second word with Cain was, however, *"If you do not do well, sin lies at the door."* That is to say, "If religion does not yield you joy as it does your brother, what is the reason? Surely sin stops the entrance, *as a stone blocking the doorway*. If you cannot gain an entrance to mercy, it is because sin, like a huge stone, has been rolled against it, and remains there. If the way to God and salvation is, indeed, blocked up, it is only blocked up by your own sin. The door is not locked by a divine decree, nor nailed up by any necessity of circumstances, nor barred by any peculiarity of your case. No, there is neither block, nor bar, nor lock except your sin. Your sin lies at the door, and makes you a prisoner, where otherwise you might be free as air. I desire to press this point home upon any unconverted persons who are somewhat anxious, but yet cannot get peace. A secret something is keeping you from being accepted as Abel was accepted. I am sure it is sin in one shape or another. I entreat you to see what that sin is!

Is it unbelief? In most cases unbelief is the damning sin. You will not believe God's word. You reject the testimony of God concerning His Son Jesus, and thus you put away from you eternal life. You say, "I cannot believe." But that will not do, for you know that God is true, and if God is true how dare you say that you cannot believe Him? If, when I stated solemnly a fact, you told me, "I cannot believe you," I should understand you to mean that I am a liar. And when you say, "I cannot believe God," do you not know that the English of such an expression is this—you make God a liar by refusing to believe on His Son? This unbelief is sin enough—sin enough to destroy you forever. What higher offense can there be against any man, much more against God, than to accuse Him of a lie? But every person here who does not now believe in Jesus Christ is guilty of the high profanity and infinite blasphemy of making the Almighty God a liar. This is the huge stone which lies at the door. May God help you to roll it away, by saying, "I will believe; I must believe. God must be true; the blood of His dear Son must be able to wash away sin. I will trust in it now!"

Possibly, however, another form of the same stone of sin lies at your door and keeps you back. *Is it impenitence?* Are you hardened about your sin? Do you refuse to quit it? Is there no sorrow in your heart to think that you have broken the divine law, and have lived forgetful of your God? A hard heart is a great stone to lie in a man's way, for he who will not own his sin and forsake it is wedded to his own destruction. May God soften your heart, and help you at once to repent of sin!

Or, *is it pride?* Are you too big a man to become a Christian? Are you too respectable, too wealthy, and too polite? Are you too deep a thinker?

Do you know too much? You could not go and sit down with the humble people who, like little children, believe what God tells them. No, no, you have too much brain for that, have you? Now be honest, and own it! You read the reviews, and you like a little dash of skepticism in your literature. You could not possibly listen to Jesus when He says, "Except you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." You do not care for such old-fashioned doctrine, for you are too much of a philosopher. Well, I have heard of a Spanish monarch who perished through etiquette; there was too much fire in the grate, and it was not according to state for His majesty to pull his chair back from the fire, and so he became over-heated, and died in consequence. I would not care to lose my soul to gratify my loftiness. Would you? One's pride may carry him far if he is a great fool, but let him not suffer his pride to carry him into hell, for it certainly will never carry him out again.

Alas! There are some who have another sin, *a hidden sin*. I cannot mention it; it is a shame even to speak of the things which are done of them in secret. I have been frequently puzzled to know why certain persons cannot attain peace. Do what we may with them they appear to have a tide of disquiet forever ebbing and flowing and casting up mire and dirt. They have seemed to be in a fair way to salvation, and yet they have never reached it, they have been one day near and the next far off. In one or two instances I have not discovered the reason why the gospel never succeeded with them, till they were dead. When they were gone the sad truth was revealed which accounted for all their uneasiness, but I will not tell you what it was. There was a secret which, if it had been known, would have made their character abhorrent to those who in ignorance respected them. Does any man here carry about with him a guilty secret? Does he persevere in shameful acts which he labors to conceal? How can a man hope for peace while he wars with the laws of morality? What rest can there be while solemn vows are broken, and the purest of relationships are treated with despite? No, while there is any uncleanness about a man, or about a woman, there cannot be peace with God; such sins must be given up, or there cannot be acceptance with the Most High. Would you for a moment insinuate that the Lord Jesus died to allow you to sin and yet escape its penalty?

We have known persons practice *dishonesty in business,* and this has shut them out from acceptance. Not that they actually pilfer, but they have ways and means of calling things by wrong names, and taking fraudulent advantage. Cheating is called "custom of trade," and so on. I could not tell why the Lord did not accept certain people when they appeared to be seeking mercy. I understand it now. How can the Lord be gracious to one who continues in dishonesty? Will He choose thieves to be His friends? He will take thieves and make them honest, and so they shall enter His kingdom, but if we abide in transgression of any sort, when it is known to us, we cannot expect to be accepted. My brethren, to be very plain with you, an honest heart and an honest hand must be found in every man who is to be justified at the last great day.

Some cannot get peace because they *neglect prayer*. They do not ask, or seek, or knock, and so they do not receive, they cannot find, and the door of grace is not opened to them. Oh, how can you think that God accepts you when you live day after day without prayer?

Not a few harbor *enmity* in their hearts towards their brother or neighbor. O angry hearer, God cannot accept your sacrifice until you are at peace with your brother. It cannot be. He might as well have pressed Cain to His bosom as you, for he that hates his brother abides in death. "You know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him." Go home and be reconciled. Go home and forgive your fellow servant, for if you do not so forgive your little debts, the great Lord will not forgive you all your great debt. Before you can hope to have peace with God, you must be at peace with those who have offended you.

Then there are some who *keep evil company*. They like to come to the Tabernacle, or to some other place where the gospel is preached, and they hope that they may find Christ, but then they also like a lascivious song. They relish those silly, coarse, loathsome ditties which have a touch of "smut" about them. These are disgraceful things, and yet certain people roll them out as choice morsels. While that is the case, can a man hope that God will accept him? No, it is of no use pretending anything of the kind. You and your sins must part, or God and you cannot be friends. God will accept us and receive us as penitent sinners, but not so long as we open the back door for the devil, and enthrone him in our heart of hearts. If you are not accepted, sin lies at the door, and shuts you out of present rest and peace, even as it will ultimately shut you out of heaven.

I think this word of divine expostulation bears another meaning. "If you do not do well, sin lies at the door." That is to say, not only as a stone to block your way, but *as a lion to pounce upon you*. It is true that sin is hindering you from peace, but it is also true that a greater sin is lurking at the door ready to spring upon you. What a warning this word ought to have been to Cain! If you are doing ill and God is not accepting you, and that fact is making you angry, there is a worse sin lying like a couching lion ready to devour you. It was so with Cain. Perhaps at that moment he had not seriously thought of killing his brother. He was angry, but he was not yet implacable and malicious. But God said, "There is a sin lying at your door that will come upon you to your destruction." May it not be the same with you, my hearer? What if I were to look steadily in the face of some undecided person here tonight and say "Friend, are you not accepted by God, and are you angry? A sin is lying at your door which will be your ruin. You will go on from being a sinner to become a criminal"? Is Hazael here? Shall I, like the prophet, look you in the face till my tears begin to flow at the sight of you, and say, "I know what you will do: You will be a terror to all around you." You would probably answer me as Hazael did, "Is your servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" Many a man would be horrified to be told what yet will be the fact in his case. Dreadful to tell, men that have been melted by a sermon have afterwards grown hard enough to perpetrate crimes that have brought them before the court of their country. Almost con-

verted, almost persuaded, it looked as if a vista opened up before them leading to endless glory and happiness, but in one sad hour they turned the other way. Like Felix, they waited for a more convenient season, and their life was henceforth down, down, deeper and deeper and deeper, till it ended in the lowest hell. Oh, my dear hearers, I am always fearful about those who are so near salvation and yet are not decided. Judas who can preach the gospel, Judas who is an apostle, Judas who can say, "Lord, is it I?"—he is the man that at the last sells his Master; for though an apostle in appearance he was in heart a traitor, and a son of perdition. The raw material for a devil is an angel. The raw material for the son of perdition was an apostle, and the raw material for the most horrible of apostates is one who is almost a saint. I say no more than I mean, and than history can prove. There have usually been splendid traits of character about men who have been unfit to live. The question has been in their minds, "Which shall have the mastery?" and for a while the result has trembled in the balance, but when they have decided for evil it has been decision with a vengeance. God gave Cain the clearest warning. He did as good as say—"Why are you angry? And why is your countenance fallen? There is an opportunity for you. If you do well shall not you, even you, O Cain, be accepted? And if you do ill, sin lies at the door to spring upon you and drag you down." Oh that he had been capable of taking the caution, and escaping the evil! Be you warned, O man, to whom these words shall come, lest your last end be worse than the first.

But there is yet another meaning which I must bring out here, and that is one which is held by many critics, though it is questioned by others. I am content to go with a considerable following, especially of the old divines, who say that the word here used may be rendered, "If you do ill, *a sin offering lies at the door."* And what a sweet meaning this gives us! God graciously declares to angry Cain, "You can bring a sin offering, as Abel has done, and all will be well. You can present a bleeding sacrifice, typical of the great atonement; a sin offering lies at the door." This should be an encouraging assurance to anyone who is anxious, and at the same time greatly afraid that pardon is not possible. My dear friend, why need you grow despondent because another enters heaven? A sin offering lies at your door also. You can have *your* sin forgiven even as his has been forgiven; come and try for yourself.

"Where can I find Christ?" asks one. He stands at the door; He waits for you. The offering is not far to seek. You have not to climb to heaven to bring Him down. He has descended. You have not to dive into the depths to fetch Him up. He has risen from the dead. "The word is near you, even in your mouth." So Paul says. What then? If you would have it for your own, and know its virtue, receive it into your soul. "Alas!" cries one, "I am dying; where is the elixir which will restore me?" In your mouth! Swallow it! You have not even to open the box to get out the pill. It is in your mouth. Receive it into your inward parts. Jesus crucified is freely presented to you. All the merit of His death is here at this moment. Accept it. It is yours. A sin offering lies at the door; that is to say, the sufferings of Christ, the atonement of Christ, and the righteousness of Christ, are available at this moment. You may have all that Jesus has purchased—

have it for nothing, the free gift of God. Repenting of sin and believing in Jesus, you have it all. Eternal salvation is yours if the Holy Spirit has made you willing to have it. "He that believes on Him is not condemned." Only trust Him, and the death of Christ is death for you, and the righteousness of Christ is your righteousness. A sin offering lies at the door. God does, as it were, say, "Bring it, I will receive it, and I will receive you, for its sake."

Do but take Christ by faith, and bring Him before God. Say unto God, "My Father, I have no good works to trust in, but I trust Your Son. I desire to be rid of my sin, and I trust in You to purify me. I pine to become a new creature, and I trust in Your Spirit to new-create me. Behold the bloody sacrifice offered upon Calvary. I present it to You. For Jesus' sake accept me." He will do it, dear friend; He will do it. I do not know that I can say any more; I wish that I could have said it better. I would speak right into your heart. May the Spirit of God so speak! Do not be angry because another is saved, but turn your anger on yourself because you have not accepted salvation. Recollect, if you do what other sinners have done, namely, simply come to Christ, you shall be accepted as they have been, and if you are not accepted, it is your sin that is preventing it. A sin offering is waiting to take away that sin. Oh, reject not the priceless gift! Trifle not with your soul and with your Savior. Do not incur an eternity of misery! Do not lose an eternity of bliss! "Turn you, turn you; why will you die, O house of Israel?" If I never should occupy this pulpit again, what should I wish to have preached—nothing but the gospel which I have now preached for so many years. I wish I had spoken better, but I do not know that I could have said more. If these kind pleadings do not touch angry hearts, neither would they be affected though martyrs rose from the dead.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
GENESIS 4:1-15; 1 JOHN 3.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—
103 (1ST VERSION), 641, 293.

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

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

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

IS IT TRUE?
NO. 1930

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 21, 1886,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 12, 1886.

"Nebuchadnezzar spoke and said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego do not you serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?"
Daniel 3:14.

DEAR friends who are not yet decided; if you would become followers of the Lord Jesus Christ it will be well for you to count the cost. It was our Lord's custom to bid men consider what His service might involve. His frequent declaration was, "He that takes not his cross, and follows after Me, is not worthy of Me." He knew and would have us know that it is no child's play to be a soldier of the cross. If we count upon ease in this warfare we shall be grievously disappointed, we must fight if we would reign.

One reason for this is that the world, like Nebuchadnezzar, expects us all to follow its fashions and to obey its rules. The god of this world is the devil, and he claims implicit obedience. Sin in some form or other is the image which Satan sets up and requires us to serve. The tyranny of the world is fierce and cruel, and those who will not worship its image will find that the burning fiery furnace has not yet cooled. If you mean to be a Christian, and therefore intend to cast off the bondage of this present evil world, your resolve must be taken to bear all consequences rather than worship the idol of the hour. The world's flute, harp, sackbut, and psaltery must sound for you in vain. A nobler music must charm your ears and make you bid defiance to the world's threats. The true believer's stand must be taken, and he must determine that he will obey God rather than man. That which commends itself to your conscience as right and pure and true you must follow without reserve, but that which is wrong and foul and false you must quit with fixed resolve. You cannot be Christ's disciple unless you have come to this point and abide by it, for Jesus leads only in the ways of righteousness. He who is a loyal subject of King Jesus will not attempt to live in sin and live in grace too, for he will know that no one can serve two masters. The love of the world and the love of God will no more mix than oil and water. To attempt a fusion of these two is to bring confusion into your heart and life. The prophetic challenge is a wise one—"If the Lord is God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him." One or the other you may serve, but not both. Every man who knows the Lord Jesus Christ and has been washed in His blood, and

has been made a partaker of the divine nature, will understand that he has done with the friendship of this present evil world. The world may demand that he should yield to its behests, but as a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ he will refuse to do so. As Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego said to Nebuchadnezzar, so will true believers say to the world, "We will not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up."

Now, if you can refuse to sin, if you can refuse even to parley with iniquity, it is well with you. If you stand out for truth and righteousness, your conscience will approve your position and this in itself no small comfort. It will be an ennobling thing for your manhood to have proved its strength, and it will tend to make it stronger. Your course of resolute right will be acceptable with God, and this also is an exceedingly great reward. I had rather please the Lord than win the applause of all the angels in heaven and all the princes on earth. In that day, when the blessed and only Potentate shall distribute crowns and palms to the faithful, it will be the height of bliss to hear Him say, "Well done, you good and faithful servant."

Perhaps some of you may say, "We will not bow before the gods of the world, but we will worship God only: we will follow Christ, and none beside." This is a brave resolve, you will never regret it if you stand to it even to the end.

We are glad to hear you speak thus, but *is it true?* "Is it true?" These words I shall take by themselves, and set them on fire. No question can be more necessary or more searching than "Is it true?" It is very well to profess, but "Is it true?" It is very fine to promise and vow, but "Is it true?" It is a bold thing to talk of defying Nebuchadnezzar and his fiery furnace, but "Is it true?" Skeptics question your declaration with a sarcastic sneer, sinners question it with an open unbelief, and saints question it with deep anxiety to have you sincere. From many sides comes the query, *"Is it true?"* It must be asked, it will be asked, it ought to be asked, and therefore I ask it, *"Is it true?"*

I. Follower of Christ, BE READY FOR THE QUESTION, "IS IT TRUE?"

Do not reckon to live unnoticed, for a fierce light beats about every Christian. You will be sure to meet with someone whom you respect or fear, who will demand of you, "Is it true?" Nebuchadnezzar was a great personage to these three holy men; he was their despotic lord, their employer, their influential friend. In his hands rested their liberties and their lives. He was, moreover, their benefactor, for he had set them in high office in his empire. All hope of further promotion lay with him, and if they would prosper and rise in the world they must earn his smile. Many young Christians are tried with this temptation. Many worldly advantages may be gained by currying favor with certain ungodly men who are like little Nebuchadnezzars, and this is a great peril. They are bidden to do wrong by one who is their superior, their employer, their patron. Now comes the test. Will they endure the trial hour? They say that they can endure it, but *is it true?* Let my hearers stand prepared for such an ordeal, for in all probability it will come. Some Nebuchadnezzar will put it

to you pretty plainly—"Will you do as I wish you, or will you obey God?" At such a time I pray that you may answer in the right manner without a second thought, and so prove that your love to God is true.

Nebuchadnezzar spoke in peremptory tones, as if he could not believe that any mortal upon earth could have the presumption to dispute his will. He cannot conceive that one employed under his patronage will dare to resist his bidding; he demands indignantly, "Is it true?" He will not believe it! He must have been misinformed! Can there exist a being in all his wide dominions that can have the impudence to think for himself, or the audacity to insinuate that it can be wrong to do what Nebuchadnezzar commands? He will not believe it. It is condescension on his part even to ask, "Is it true?" You will meet with persons so accustomed to be obeyed that they think it hard that you do not hasten to carry out their wishes. The infidel father says to his boy, "John, is it true that you go to a place of worship against my wishes? How dare you set up to be better than your father and mother?" Often ungodly men profess that they do not believe in the conversion of their fellow workmen. Is it true, John, that you have become religious? A pretty fellow! Why, you used to sing a jolly song, as well as other people, and now you whine out a Psalm like other sanctimonious hypocrites. Is it true? Why, you could empty a glass and follow pretty games, like the rest of us, and now you profess to be afraid of doing wrong. Is it true? Are you really such a fool? You seem almost afraid to put one foot before another for fear you should be hauled over the coals. Are you really the same fellow who could once drink and swear? "Is it true?" They insinuate that you are out of your head, that your wits have gone wool-gathering, and that you are the dupe of fanatics. I do not see the sense of such suggestions, but I suppose they do. In one form or other they put to you the question, "Is it true? Can you really be of this opinion, and do you really intend to carry it out?" Beloved brethren and sisters, I want you to be ready for this assault, and ready to answer without hesitation, "It is most certainly true."

You will not be able to go through life without being discovered; a lighted candle cannot be hid. There is a feeling among some good people that it will be wise to be very reticent, and hide their light under a bushel. They intend to lie low all the war time, and come out when the palms are being distributed. They hope to travel to heaven by the back lanes, and skulk into glory in disguise. Ah me, what a degenerate set! How was it Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came up to the front when the king's command was given? They could not consistently keep back. They were public men, set over provinces, and it was needful that they should set an example. They had been summoned with the rest of the rulers to attend the great ceremony, and their course of action upon this public occasion would be a guide to all other Jews in the Babylonian dominions. It would not have been enough for them to stay at home and send in the excuse that they were not well, or were called elsewhere upon urgent business. Others might do this and not be blamed, but these leaders could not shun the conflict. They must try the question between the living God and the golden idol. They must not only abstain from idolatry,

but they must bear their public protest against it, or else they would be unfaithful to their Lord. Rest assured, my fellow Christians, that at some period or other, in the quietest lives, there will come a moment for open decision. Days will come when we must speak out or prove traitors to our Lord and to His truth. Perhaps you have fallen among godly people, and so you have gone on quietly for a time, but look for storms. If you live with worldlings, perhaps they have not yet suspected you, because of your exceeding closeness of disposition, but your secret will be discovered. You cannot long hold fire in the hollow of your hand, or keep a candle under the bed. Godliness, like murder, will out. You will not always be able to travel to heaven incognito. In every house there comes a time when each person of the family has to take sides, and acknowledge to whom he belongs. The most timid wife, or the most unassuming child, will be compelled to say, "I also am Christ's disciple." Be ready at once to answer the question, "Is it true?"

To be fully prepared to answer the inquiry of opposers, *act upon sound reasons*. Be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in you with meekness and fear. Be able to show why you are a believer in God, why you worship the Lord Jesus Christ, why you trust in His atoning sacrifice, and why you make Him the regulator of your life. Show why you cannot do what others do; why, being a child of God, your nature is changed and you have no wish to do that which you once delighted to do in the days of your unregeneracy. Ask the Lord to help you to go to work with Bible reasons at your fingertips, for these are the best of reasons, and bear a high authority about them; so that when the question is put to you, "Is it true?" you may be able to say, "Yes, it is true, and this is why it is true. At such a time God revealed Himself to me in His grace, and opened my blind eyes to see things in a true light. He renewed my nature when He delivered me from the burden of sin; he made me to be a child of God when I found peace through His name, and because of all this I cannot grieve my loving Lord by living in sin. I am not my own, I am bought with a price, and therefore I must do the will of Him that redeemed me with His own blood." I am sure that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego would never have stood out against the imperious monarch as they did, if they had not known their bearings and well understood why it was that Jehovah alone is to be worshipped as God. When the mind is established, the heart is more likely to be firm. Know your duty and the arguments for it, and you are the more likely to be steadfast in the hour of temptation. These three men were instructed men, well trained in the law of the Lord, and therefore they stood fast where the more ignorant and uninstructed yielded at once.

Next, take care that you always *proceed with deep sincerity*. Superficial profession soon ends in thorough apostasy. Only heart-work will stand the fire. Never let your speech outrun your heart. Do not profess to be more than you really are. Remember, all your professions will have to be tested, and the question will be made a burning one for you, "Is it true?" Mind that it is true, all true; thoroughly true! Alas! My friends, how much there is of praying, and singing, and teaching, and preaching,

which is not real work! How much there is of Christian thought—yes, and what we call "experience," which is not true to the person who talks of having thought and experienced it! How much of external religion is fiction, fluff, form, foam! What is needed is solid reality. We want a religion which will bear us up under the heaviest burdens, and make us patient under the sharpest pains. We need a religion which we can die with. It is a most blessed thing to be able to face death every day like the apostle who said, "I die daily," by this daily education we shall learn how to die gloriously at the last. Put yourself through your paces, and do not believe that your religion is worth a penny unless it will bear death, judgment, and the eternal world.

God grant us to be true in our first repentance, and very thorough in it, and as we begin so may we go on, not borrowing our religion and using it at second-hand, but with personal sincerity making every truth our own. We need that the revelation of God should be a revelation to us; that repentance, faith, hope, love, holiness, should be our own private possessions, our own inheritance. Then when the question comes, "Is it true?" we shall promptly answer before the living God, "It is true. O You heart-searching Lord, You know that I love You!"

This being done, *accustom yourself to act with solemn determination before God on every matter which concerns morals and religion.* Many very decent people are not self-contained, but are dependent upon the assistance of others. They are like the houses which our London builders run up so quickly in long rows; if they did not help to keep each other up they would all tumble down at once, for no one of them could stand alone. How much there is of joint-stock company religion, wherein hypocrites and formalists keep each other in countenance. Where things are not quite as bad as this, yet there is too little personal establishment in the faith. So many people have a "lean-to" religion. If their minister or some other leading person were taken away, their back wall would be gone, and they would come to the ground. In some cases the wife and mother, or the husband and father, or the friend and teacher, constitute the main support of the individual's religion; he leans upon others, and if these fail him there is the end of his hope. Friends, this sort of religion will not do; you cannot all your life long have these good people to be your supporters, and if you could have them in life they must be separated from you by death. It is a safe thing for every Christian to be in the habit to judge for himself as to what is right, and then to adhere to it whether others do so or not. We have need nowadays to set our face as a flint against sin and error. We must purpose in our own heart what we will do, and then stand to our purpose. Happy is he who dares to be in the right with two or three. Happier still is he who will stand in the right, even if the choice two or three should quit it. He who can stand alone is a man indeed; every man of God should be such. Athanasius *contra mundum* is a grand figure. Against the whole world Athanasius proclaimed the Godhead of Christ, and he won the day. If you will not go to the world, the world will have one day to come to you.

Once more, dear friends, when your determination is formed *act in the light of eternity*. Do not judge the situation by the king's threat and by the heat of the burning fiery furnace, but by the everlasting God and the eternal life which awaits you. Let not flute, harp, and sackbut fascinate you, but listen to the music of the glorified. Men frown at you, but you can see God smiling on you, and so you are not moved. It may be that you will be unable to grow rich in your trade if you are honest, but in the light of eternity you will gladly forego the luxuries of wealth to keep a clear conscience. It may be that you will be discharged from your employment unless you can wink at wrong and be the instrument of injustice. Be content to lose place rather than to lose peace. These three holy men took the burning fiery furnace into their account, and yet they cast the balance in favor of fidelity to God. Brethren, have an eye for the endless future. Never forget heaven and hell, and that sublime gathering around the great white throne when you and I shall be of the company.

Now I am sure that these good men believed in immortality, or they would never have dared the violence of the flames. The martyrs, when they went to the stake, were great fools unless they believed that they should live forever, and that in the great hereafter they would find a divine recompense for the torments they were about to suffer. If in this life only they had hope they were certainly poor economists. Believing in the glory of that word, "Well done, good and faithful servants," and weighing eternity as against time, and life at the right hand of God as against a cruel death, the martyrs felt that the eternal was by far the weightier matter, and so they went to prison and to death without a question. These brave men dared the rage of an infuriated tyrant because they saw Him who is invisible, and had respect unto the recompense of the reward. You also must come to live a great deal in the future, or else you will miss the chief fountain of holy strength. If you are living for this life you will soon sell your souls for so many pieces of silver, but if you project yourselves into eternity and live the life eternal, no bribe will lure you from the ways of righteousness. If your ears can hear by anticipation the thunder of that sentence, "Depart, you cursed," you will not dare to incur it. If that sweeter sound, "Come, you blessed," charms your ear, you will be strong in your resolve to follow the Lamb wheresoever He goes. Yes, with eternity before you and around you, your determination will be fixed, and you will, with dauntless spirit, meet the challenge, "Is it true?"

God make us champions of His holy cause! Heroism can only be worked in us by the Holy Spirit. Humbly yielding your whole nature to the power of the divine Sanctifier, you will be true to your Lord even to the end. At the foot of the cross, with your eyes upon those blessed wounds, and your whole soul trusting in Him that lives and was dead, you will not be ashamed of your Lord, or afraid of the consequences of obeying Him.

This much upon this first head of our discourse—be ready to answer the question, "Is it true?"

II. But now, secondly, IF YOU CANNOT SAY THAT IT IS TRUE, WHAT THEN? If, standing before the heart-searching God at this time, you can-

not say, "It is true," how should you act? If you cannot say that you take Christ's cross, and are willing to follow Him at all hazards, then listen to me and learn the truth.

Do not make a profession at all. Do not talk about baptism or the Lord's Supper, or of joining a church, or of being a Christian; for if you do, you will lie against your own soul. If it is not true that you renounce the world's idols, do not profess that it is so. It is unnecessary that a man should profess to be what he is not; it is a sin of supererogation, a superfluity of naughtiness. If you cannot be true to Christ, if your coward heart is unfaithful to your Lord, do not profess to be His disciple, I beseech you. He that is married to the world, or faint-hearted, had better return to his house, for he is of no service in this war.

If you have made a profession, and yet it is not true, *be honest enough to quit it,* for it can never be right to keep up a fraud. A false profession is a crime, and to persevere in it is a presumptuous sin. Whatever you are, or are not, be transparent, sincere, truthful. If there is any man here who says in his heart, "No, I cannot suffer for truth's sake; I will follow Christ as far as it is good walking, and costs nothing, but I will not go through the mire for Him," well, then, turn back at once, for you are no true pilgrim. If you are determined not to press onward even though the way should lie through the Slough of Despond, you had better make the best of your way home to the City of Destruction, for you are not a man that God has called into this kingdom. "Strange advice," you say. Yes, but prudent advice, too. Listen to me. If any of you are ashamed of Christ, afraid of man, unwilling to be abused for Christ's sake, then, like the faint-hearted men with Gideon, it will be well for you to go home, and no longer encumber the little band of the true-hearted.

Will you, then, go back to your old ways? I am sure you will if you cannot answer the question of my text; but remember that in so doing *you will have to belie your consciences*. Many of you who are not firm in your resolves yet know the right. You will never be able to get that light out of your eyes which was shone into them from God's word. You can never again sin so cheaply as others; it will be willfulness and obstinacy in your case. I am sure that many of you will have desperate work to go to hell. You will have to ride steeple-chase over hedge and ditch to reach perdition, for the Lord has put that within you which will never let you rest in sin, or be easy in ungodliness. The Lord has taught you too much to let you be comfortable slaves of ignorance and vice. You who have tasted of the powers of the world to come are spoilt for this world, and if you are such cowards that you will not press forward for the next, you are of all men most miserable. Your consciences will dog you, and haunt you, and torment you. Dare you run the risk of being pursued by such a foe, compared with which the furies of classic fable were gentle beings?

Remember also that by yielding to the fear of man *you are demeaning yourself*. There shall come a day when the man that was ashamed of Christ will himself be ashamed; he will wonder where he can hide his guilty head. Look at him! There he is! The traitor who denied his Lord! The Christ was spat upon and nailed to the cross, and this man was

afraid to own Him. To win the smile of a silly maid, to escape the jest of a coarse fellow, to win a few pieces of silver, to stand respectable among his fellow-men, he turned his back upon his Redeemer and sold his Lord, and now what can be said for him? Who can excuse him? The angels shun him as a man who was ashamed of the Lord of glory. He is clothed with shame and everlasting contempt. Even the lost in hell get away from him, for many of them were more honest than he. Is there such a man as this before me? I summon him in the name of the living God to answer for his cowardice! Let Him come forth and admit his crime, and humbly seek forgiveness at the hands of the gracious Savior.

If your avowal of faith in Jesus and opposition to sin is not true you had better withdraw it and be silent, for by a groundless presence *you will dishonor the cause of God, and cause the enemy to take up a reproach against His people*. If Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had stood before Nebuchadnezzar and had made a compromise, it would have dishonored the name of the Lord. Suppose they had said, "O king, we believe in Jehovah, but we hardly know what to do in our peculiar circumstances. We desire to please you, and we also dread the thought of the burning fiery furnace, and therefore we must yield, though it greatly grieves us." Why, they would have cast shame upon the name of Israel. O brethren, do not talk about principle, and then pocket your principles because they are unfashionable, or will cost you loss and disrepute. If you do this you will be the enemies of the King of kings. God commanded His people not to bow before engraved images, but the king of Babylon commanded them to do so at once or die. Which would they obey? To whom would they render the most honor? There was the point. It would have been idle to say that they would only do it once, that it would be only a mere form, and so on, for had they bowed the knee to the engraved image, they would have set Nebuchadnezzar before Jehovah. They might have pleaded that to refuse the great king was virtually to commit suicide, but they kept from such crooked reasonings. They might have argued that it was wise to save their lives, because they could be so very useful to the Israelites, and to the cause of true religion. How often have I heard this plea for remaining in an erring church and professing to believe what is not believed! Men do evil that good may come, and after bowing in the house of Rimmon, wash their hands, and pray, "The Lord pardon Your servants in this thing." I am glad that the three holy children were not "careful to answer," or they might have fallen upon some crooked policy or lame excuse for compromise. What have we to do with consequences? It is ours to do right, and leave results with the Lord. To do wrong cannot under any circumstances be right. For the Lord's servants to be false to their conviction is always an evil thing, a root that bears wormwood. Yes, these men would have cast a slur upon the living God, and upon their nation, and upon themselves had they flinched in the moment of trial. Thousands of men and women are doing this continually. Shame upon them! They plead their own necessities, their large families, their position, their hopes of usefulness, and the examples of others, but none of these things can excuse cowardice towards God. If by

doing a little wrong we could affect a great deal of good, we should not thereby be excused. This is a common way of drugging conscience, and I beseech you be upon your guard against it, for it comes to this, that you are a better judge of what you ought to do than God is, and your judgment is superior to the law of God. Is not this high presumption? Does it not also suggest itself to you that some would serve God if it did not pay better to serve the devil? And is not this Judas Iscariot over again, the son of perdition reproduced?

I want you to remember also that if you renounce Christ, if you quit Him in obedience to the world's commands, *you are renouncing eternal life and everlasting bliss*. You may think little of that tonight, because of your present madness, but you will think differently before long. Soon you may lie on a sick bed gazing into eternity, and then your estimate of most things will undergo a great change. I know what that solemn outlook means, for I have been called several times to lie in spirit upon the brink of eternity, and I can assure you it is no child's play. The solemn article, the judgment, the declaration of destiny, these are not little. It requires all the faith a man can summon to enable him to look forward, calmly and intelligently, to that great day when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed. Come, my hearers, look to the eternity which awaits you. I charge you; remember that if you take the mess of pottage and barter away your birthright, you will bemoan yourselves at the last. In your dying hours you may find no place for repentance though you seek it carefully with tears. In another world there will be no hope of reformation or of escape from the result of sin. In eternity you will look up from under the fierce wrath of God and see no way of escape, for you will then be too wedded to evil to be able to escape from it. In that day which shall burn as an oven, what will you say to yourself for having sold your Lord? Oh, do not for the sake of a man's frown or a woman's smile forego eternal life! If God goes, all is gone. To lose your Savior is to be lost yourself. Oh, my beloved, take the roughest road rather than part company with your best friend.

The question is a very solemn one—"Is it true?" and if it is not true, I still stick to my advice; do not say that it is so, do not add to all your other sins a lying profession, but act in all honesty as you stand before God.

III. But now, thirdly, let us consider what follows IF IT IS TRUE. I hope that many here can lay their hands upon their hearts, and quietly say, "Yes, it is true; we are determined not to bow before sin, come what may." Well, then, if it is true, I have this much to say to you; dear brother, *state this when it is demanded of you*. Declare your resolve. This will strengthen it in yourself and be the means of supporting it in others. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego spoke out in the presence of the furious king. Perhaps they might have taken means to hide themselves from the ordeal, but they judged it to be their duty to come forward and take the consequences, and there they were. This word is meant for certain Christian people who come in and out of this house, and join with us in public worship, but have never openly avowed themselves to be disciples

of the Lord Jesus. Whenever we gather to the remembrance of our dying Lord, they either take their seats among the onlookers, or else they go home. This raises many anxious thoughts in our minds. Especially we are exercised with this question—these people have a faith which they refuse to acknowledge, will such a faith save them? Scripture evidently lays great stress upon obedience to the Lord, and taking up His cross and following Him. Will Jesus save those who will not come out and bear His reproach? He claims of all His followers that they follow Him in the daylight. It is written, "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. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." He bade us preach this as His gospel, "He that believes, and is baptized, shall be saved." These are not words of mine, but of the Lord Jesus Himself; take heed unto yourselves that you do not slight them. I dare not leave out part of His gospel command when I am preaching it. If you believe in the Lord Jesus stand on His side. Why are you slow to do so? I compared one the other day to a rat behind the paneling, which only comes out at night when the candles are put out, and there are crumbs to be picked up. Too many Christians attempt to live in that style. Dare I call them Christians? Do not be such miserable creatures, but quit yourselves like men. Tremble lest you perish among "the fearful and unbelieving." Join with me, I pray you, in singing—

"I'm not ashamed to acknowledge my Lord,
Or to defend His cause;
Maintain the honor of His Word,
The glory of His cross."

There are many dear children in this place, both boys and girls, who have not been ashamed in their early days to come forward and confess the Lord Jesus Christ. God bless the dear children! I rejoice in them. I am sure that the church will never have to be ashamed of having admitted them. They, at least, show no cowardice; they take a solemn delight in being numbered with the people of God, and count it an honor to be associated with Christ and His church. Shame on you older ones who still hold back! What ails you, that babes and sucklings are braver than you? By the love you bear to Christ, I charge you—come forth and confess His name among this evil and perverse generation.

Is it true? Then *joyfully accept the trial which comes of it*. Shrink not from the flames. Settle it in your minds that, by divine grace, no loss, nor cross, or shame, or suffering, shall make you play the coward. Say, like the holy children, "We are not careful to answer you in this matter." They did not cringe before the king, and cry, "We beseech you, do not throw us into the fiery furnace. Let us have a consultation with you, O king that we may arrange terms. There may be some method by which we can please you, and yet keep our religion." No; they said, "We are not careful to answer you in this matter. If it is so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto you, O king that we will not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set

up." Dear friends, let us be ready to suffer for Christ's sake. Some will say, "Do not be imprudent." It is always prudent to do your duty. We have not enough nowadays of the virtue nicknamed imprudence. I would like to see a display of old-fashioned imprudence in these cold, calculating, selfish days. Oh for the days of zeal, the days when men counted not their lives dear to them that they might win Christ! Men sit down and reckon up what it will cost them to do right, and weigh their conduct as a matter of profit and loss, and then they call such wicked calculations prudence. It is sheer selfishness. Do right, if it costs you your life. Where would England have been if the men who won our liberties in former ages had haggled with the world for gain? If they had saved their skins they would have lost their souls, and ruined the cause of God in England. He loves not Christ who does not love Him more than all things. Oh for men of principle, who know no loss but loss of faith, and desire no gain save the glory of God! Be this your cry—

"Through floods or flames, if Jesus leads,
I'll follow where He goes."

You may lose a great deal *for* Christ, but you will never lose anything *by* Christ. You may lose for time, but you will gain for eternity; the loss is transient, but the gain is everlasting. You will be a gainer by Christ, even if you have to go to heaven by the way of persecution, poverty, and slander. Never mind the way, the end will make full amends. The treasures of Egypt are mere dross compared with the riches of endless bliss.

If it is true that you are willing thus to follow Christ, *reckon upon deliverance*. Nebuchadnezzar may put you into the fire, but he cannot keep you there, nor can he make the fire burn you. The enemy casts you in bound, but the fire will loosen your bonds, and you will walk at liberty amid the glowing coals. You shall gain by your losses; you shall rise by your down-castings. Many prosperous men owe their present position to the fact that they were faithful when they were in humble employments. They were honest, and for the moment they displeased their employers, but in the end earned their esteem. When Adam Clarke was put out as an apprentice, and his master showed him how to stretch the cloth when it was a little short, Adam could not find in his heart to do it. Such a fool of a boy must be sent home to his mother, and his godly mother was glad that her boy was such a fool that he could not stoop to a dishonest trick. You know what he became. He might have missed his way in life if he had not been true to his principles in his youth. Your first loss may be a lifelong gain. Dear young fellow, you may be turned out of your employment, but the Lord will turn the curse into a blessing. If all should go softly with you, you might decline in character, and by doing a little wrong learn to do yet more and more, and so lose your integrity, and with it all hope of ever lifting your nose from the grindstone. Do right for Christ's sake, without considering any consequences, and the consequences will be right enough. If you take care of God's cause, God will take care of you. Rest assured that uprightness will be your preservation, and not your destruction. It will be your highest wisdom to let all things

go, that you may hold fast your integrity, and honor the name of the Lord.

Lastly—and this is a consideration not to be forgotten—if you will stand up for Jesus, and the right, and the true, and the pure, and the temperate, and the good, not only will you be delivered, but *you will do great good.* This Nebuchadnezzar was a poor piece of goods, yet he was compelled to acknowledge the power of these three decided and holy men. They were thrown into the furnace, and they came out of it, and what said Nebuchadnezzar? Just now it was, "The image that I have set up," and now he declares that no man shall speak a word against the God of Israel on pain of being cut in pieces. There is no having influence over the great men, or the little men of this age, except by being firm in your principles, and decided in what you do. If you yield an inch you are beaten, but if you will not yield—no, not the splitting of a hair—they will respect you. The man who can hide his principles, and conceal his beliefs, and do a little wrong, is a nobody. He is a chip in the porridge; he will flavor nothing. But he who does what he believes to be right, and cannot be driven from it—that is the man. You cannot shake the world if you let the world shake you, but when the world finds that you have grit in you, they will let you alone. Nebuchadnezzar was obliged to feel the influence of these men, and even so, the most wicked and the most proud feel the force of the true-hearted, the brave, and the good. For this let us pray God to give us new hearts and right spirits. For this let us cling to the blessed cross of Christ, and yield ourselves up to the power of the blood and water which flowed from His wounded side. So shall our lives be powerful; if not illustrious in the eyes of men, they shall be acceptable in the eyes of God.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—DANIEL 3.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—
670, 671, 877, AND (AFTER SERMON) "DARE TO BE A DANIEL."

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

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

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

ONE MORE CAST OF THE GREAT NET
NO. 1931

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 28, 1886,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 14, 1886.

"And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord has said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call." Joel 2:32.

I THOUGHT within myself, "What shall be the topic for the last sermon before I depart to my quiet resting place?" Perhaps my sermons for the last day of this long stretch of work may be my last altogether, for life is very frail. When I hear of first one and then another in strong health being suddenly taken away, I am made to know the uncertainty of life in my own case. It is wiser to trust a spider's cobweb than the life of man. Brethren, we live on the brink of eternity, and need behave ourselves as men who will soon face its realities. We may have to do so far sooner than we think. So I said within myself, "Shall I feed the flock of God in the rich pastures of choice promise?" Truly it would have been well to have done so, but then I thought of the stray sheep; must I not go after *them?* The ninety-nine are not in the wilderness, and therefore, I shall not be leaving them in any danger. They are well folded, and the Chief Shepherd will not forget them. God has given them to have life in themselves, and the green pastures are with them in plenty, they can afford to be left alone better than the perishing ones. But as for the wandering ones, can I leave them among the wilds and wolves? I have tried to bring them to the great Bishop and Shepherd of souls, but they have not yet returned; how can I forget them? How can I endure to think of their being lost forever?

So I thought I would go out once more after the lost ones hoping that the Lord would help me to find them, even now, and bring them to Himself! I earnestly ask your prayers that a very simple gospel address may be blessed of God to the immediate conversion of those among us who have long halted, and are hesitating even unto this day. I could not have chosen for such a purpose a more suitable text; it is one of the broadest declarations of gospel doctrine that can be found in Holy Scripture.

I shall handle it in the plainest manner. In a book of practical surgery you do not look for figures of speech; all is plain as a walking stick; such will my sermon be. I hand out the bread of heaven, and you do not expect poetry from a bakery.

When the apostle Peter was preaching what I may call the inauguration sermon of the evangelical era, he could do no better than go to Joel for his text. See the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. He explained the wonders of the Pentecost by a reference to this prophetic

passage. When Paul, in his famous Epistle to the Romans, would set out the gospel in all its plainness, he could not do better than quote in his tenth chapter, at the thirteenth verse, this same text, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." If apostles found this passage so suitable for the expression and confirmation of their gospel message, what can I do but follow their wise example? How greatly do I hope that a blessing will rest upon all here present while I preach upon this precious portion of Scripture; even as a blessing rested upon the motley crowd in Jerusalem when Peter spoke to them! The same Spirit is with us, and His sacred power is not in the least diminished. Why should He not convert three thousand now, as He did on that occasion? If there is a failure, it will not arise from Him, but from ourselves.

Look at the connection of our text in Joel, and you will find that it is preceded by terrible warnings, "I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come." Nor is this all, this broad gospel statement is followed by words of equal dread. "Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. Put you in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great. The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining." It was true of the prophets as of the apostles that, knowing the terrors of the Lord, they persuaded men. They were not ashamed to use fear as a powerful motive with mankind. By the prophet Joel the diamond of our text is placed in a black setting, and its brilliance is thereby enhanced. As a lamp is all the more valued when the night is dark, so is the gospel all the more precious when men see their misery without it. To remove from men's minds the salutary fear of punishment for sin is to draw up the floodgates of iniquity. He who does this is a traitor to society. If men are not warned of the anger of God against iniquity, they will take license to riot in evil.

Certain modern teachers pretend that they are so delicate that, if they believed in the Scriptural doctrine of eternal punishment, they could never smile again. Poor sufferers! One is therefore led to suppose that they are persons of superior piety, who are so deeply in love with the souls of men that they weep over them day and night, and labor to bring them to repentance. We should expect to see in them a perpetual agony for the good of their fellows, since they judge themselves to be so qualified to instruct others in the art of compassion. But, my brethren, we have not been able to discover in these sensitive persons any very hallowed sympathy with the ungodly, no, we have heard of their having communion with the worldly in their sports rather than in their sorrow for sin. I have not seen in these men who forswear the use of the terrors of the Lord any remarkable powers of attracting men to Jesus by love. I have not noted any special zeal in them for the conversion of men, either by tender arguments, or by any other means. I question if they believe in conversion at all. On the other hand, the seraphic evangelists who have journeyed around the earth to preach the gospel, and have worn themselves down with evangelical earnestness, are in all cases, men who feel the pressure of the wrath to come. These, though sneered at by the su-

perfine delicates, have shown a tender love to which their judges are strangers.

He who speaks honestly concerning the judgment to come is the man of the tenderest heart. He who pleads with sinners, even to tears, usually does so because he believes that they will be everlastingly ruined except they repent. I do not believe that this modern zeal to conceal the justice of God and hide the punishment of sin is accompanied by an overflowing compassion for souls; I fear that, on the contrary, it is little other than an incidental form of a flippant unbelief which treats all doctrines of God's Word as antiquated notions, deserving to be jested at by men of advanced views. My brethren, the love of Jesus did not prevent His warning men of future woe. He cried aloud, amid a flood of tears, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered your children together!" and He did not withhold the dreadful fact—"Your house is left unto you desolate." The knowledge of the coming destruction of the city awakened His sympathy, and He showed His pity, not by concealing the dreadful future, but by warning men of it. I venture to say that, so far as I have observed, no man ever preaches the gospel at all unless he has a deep and solemn conviction that sin will be punished in a future state in a manner most just and terrible. Preachers gradually get further and further away from the gospel, and its atoning sacrifice, in proportion as they delude themselves with the idea that, after all, sin is a small matter, and its punishment a questionable severity. Those also who look for a future opportunity for the impenitent may well consider it to be of small consequence whether men believe in Jesus, or remain in unbelief. Such a taking of things easy cannot suggest itself to me, for I believe in everlasting punishment. O my hearers, if you do not fly to Jesus, you will be eternally lost, and this urges me to entreat you to be saved! That blood and fire, that darkening sun and crimsoned moon, of which Joel speaks, awaken me to exhort you to seek deliverance. That great white throne, and the dread sentence of Him that shall sit upon it, when He shall say, "Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," all move me to persuade you to flee to Jesus. Therefore it is my delight to come to you with a free, broad, blessed, gospel promise, in the earnest hope that those of you who are now in danger may at once escape for your lives, and flee from the wrath to come.

With that preface I come to the handling of my text, moved by a burning desire that God may bless it. First, notice that it contains *a glorious proclamation*—"It shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered." But this is accompanied with an *instructive declaration,* to which we shall give a measure of attention as time permits—"In mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord has said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call."

I. Listen, first, to THE GLORIOUS PROCLAMATION. As we have no time to spare, we will proceed at once to our theme.

The blessing proclaimed in our text is precious—"Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered," or "shall be *saved."* Salvation is a very comprehensive blessing; it is, in fact, a constellation of favors, a mass of mercies condensed into a word. It is a gift which reaches from the door of hell to the gate of heaven. The salvation which we have to preach to you at this time is salvation from sin in all senses of that term. It is a diamond with many facets. You who dread the eternal conse-

quences of iniquity will be glad to learn that there is salvation from the punishment of sin—complete and eternal salvation. This is no small matter to a soul crushed beneath a consciousness of guilt, and the certainty that the necessary consequences of sin must be overwhelming. The results of sin are not to be thought of without trembling. Verily, dismay may well take hold of the stoutest heart while reflecting upon the judgment to come. We preach salvation from the unutterable woe which follows on the heels of sin. Whatever may be the terrors of that tremendous day, for which all other days were made, we proclaim in God's name salvation from them all. Whatever may be the gloom of that bottomless abyss, into which the guilty shall sink forever, we are enabled to proclaim complete deliverance from that endless fall—salvation for every soul that believes in Jesus Christ the Lord. No form of accusation shall be drawn up against the believer. No sentence of condemnation shall ever be uttered against Him. Salvation sends the prisoner out of court completely cleared. All the penal consequences of all sin shall be turned aside from all who by divine grace are led to call upon the name of the Lord.

Salvation also delivers from the guilt of sin. The Lord is able to justify the ungodly so that he shall be numbered with the righteous. Through the blood of Jesus He makes the filthy whiter than the snow.

He will not merely put away the sin itself, but all the defilement that has come of it to your moral manhood. O my hearer, all the injury which you have already inflicted upon yourself by sin, the Lord can repair! Sin, even if it led to no penal consequences, is a disease which destroys the beauty of your manhood, and makes us loathsome to the eye of God—yes, and shocking to the view of our own conscience, when we see ourselves by the light of God's Spirit in the glass of His Word. O you, on whose foreheads the leprosy is white, we preach perfect healing for you, a salvation which shall renovate your nature, and make your flesh even as the flesh of a little child; as Naaman's was when he came up from the washing, having been obedient to the prophetic command. Brethren, the salvation of the Lord removes every injurious result of sin upon heart and mind. Is not this a joy?

We also preach salvation from the power of sin. Sin finds a nest in the carnal nature, but it hides there as a thief; it shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law, but under grace. O slaves, whose fetters clank in your ears, at this moment you may be free! Whether the bonds are those of drunkenness, or licentiousness, or worldliness, or despair, the Lord looses the prisoners. Jesus has come to break the manacles from your wrists, the fetters from your feet. If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed. He has come to set you free for holiness, for purity, for peace, for love. He will bless you with newness of life; He will cause grace to reign in you unto eternal life. Salvation from the power of evil is a gift worthy of God. This is the salvation that we preach; we proclaim immediate deliverance from the curse of sin, present rescue from the power of sin, and ultimate freedom from the very being of sin. To every man of woman born, is this salvation proclaimed, provided they will obey the gospel command, which says—look unto Christ, and live. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Happy herald who has such a proclamation to make! The gift is incalculably precious.

Further, notice, in the next place, that *the time of this proclamation is present,* for Peter tells us that the time spoken of by the prophet Joel began at Pentecost. When the rushing, mighty wind was heard, and the flaming tongues sat upon the disciples' heads, then was the gospel dispensation opened in all its freeness. The Holy Spirit, who then came down to earth, has never returned; He is still in the midst of the church, not working physical wonders, but performing moral and spiritual miracles in our midst, even to this day. Today, through His power, full remission is preached to every repenting sinner, today is complete salvation promised to everyone that believes in Jesus. This day the promise stands true, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be saved."

I put aside as altogether unscriptural the notion that the day of grace is past for any man who will call upon the name of the Lord. If you will call, you shall be heard, be the day what it may, yes, though it wane to the eleventh hour. The day of grace is never past to any soul that lives, as long as it is willing to believe in Jesus. I am not told to go and say there is grace for men up to a certain point, and beyond that point there is none. No, there is no limit set to the willingness or ability of Christ to save those who call upon His name. Who dares to limit the Holy One of Israel in the deeds of His grace? As long as faith is possible, salvation is possible. I have my Master's order to preach the gospel to every creature. He has said to His servants, "As many as you shall find, bid to the marriage." We are bound to say to everyone, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned." Whether you are a child of ten, or a man of fifty, I have the same message for you. If you have lived to be a hundred, the gospel promise still holds good, despite the lapse of years. The times of your ignorance God has winked at, but He now commands all men everywhere to repent. He graciously declares of all who seek Him, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." Day of grace past, indeed! It is a whisper of Satan. Have nothing to do with that falsehood, for still the Savior bids you come to Him and live. Even at the ebb of life He cries, "Come now, and let us reason together."—

"Life is the time to seek His face:
Through life He freely gives His grace,
And while that lamp holds out to burn,
The vilest sinner may return."

Whoever returns to the Father's house shall find a glad reception. If this very day, this 14th of November, you call upon the Lord, you shall be saved. God speaks by my mouth to you at this moment, and declares that today, if *you* will hear His voice, *your* soul shall live. The proverb says, "There is no time like time present," and it speaks the truth. The present moment is the best moment in your possession. What other moment have you? Whoever, at this passing hour, calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. This is a gospel well worth the preaching, blessed are our ears that we hear the joyful sound!

Next, notice that, as the gift is precious, and the time is present, so *the range of this proclamation is promising.* It is full of good cheer to all who hear me this day. "*Whosoever* shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." *Whosoever!* I am afraid lest anything I should say to express the width of this word should only narrow it, just as the man who tries to explain eternity always makes it seem much shorter than we thought it

to be, and so defeats his own purpose. *"Whoever."* There is in this word no fence, or ditch, or boundary line. You are out upon the open mountains of grace. In riding through Switzerland you will find gates put up here and there along the road, for no reason that I could see but to tax and worry travelers; many of the limits which are set to the gospel proclamation answer no other purpose. Down with these toll bars on the road to heaven! We cannot and dare not discourage any man from calling on the name of the Lord; the promise is to you, and to your children, but it is also to all "that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." In this matter there is no difference between Jew and Gentile. "Whosoever" includes the slum people, even the poorest of the poor, but it does not exclude the carriage people, not even the richest of the rich. "Whosoever" beckons to the educated, and looks favorably upon the cultured and the refined; but none the less does it invites the illiterate, to whom all learning is an unattainable mystery. "Whosoever" has a finger for babes, and an arm for old men; it has an eye for the quick, and a smile for the dull.

Young men and maidens, *whosoever* offers its embrace to you! Good and bad, honorable or disreputable, this "whosoever" speaks to you all with equal truth! Kings and queens may find room in it, and so may thieves and beggars. Peers and paupers sit on one seat in this word. "Whosoever" has a special voice *for you,* my hearer! Do you answer, "But I am an oddity"? "Whosoever" includes all the oddities. I always have a warm side towards odd, eccentric, out-of-the-way people, because I am one myself, at least so I am often said to be. I am deeply thankful for this blessed text, for if I am a lot unmentioned in any other catalog, I know that this includes me; I am beyond all question under the shade of "whosoever." No end of odd people come to the Tabernacle, or read my sermons, but they are all within the range of "whosoever."

"Alas!" cries one, "I am dreadfully desponding, I am too low-spirited, to be intended by the promise of grace!" Are you? I do not believe it. "Whosoever" goes to the very depths of despair, and up to the heights of glory! "Alas!" murmurs another, "I am not sad enough on account of my sin. I am of too frivolous a nature!" Very likely, but "whosoever" includes *you*; if *you* call on the Lord, *you* shall be saved. You may go round the whole Tabernacle this morning, and "whosoever" will include all the thousands in it; after that you may hasten down the streets, and tramp from end to end of London's mighty area, and never find one left out. You may then take a tourist's ticket, and travel through Europe, Africa, and Asia, till you have even traversed China and Japan. You may sweep the southern seas, and search Australia, and then come home by way of San Francisco, and in all that circular tour you will not have met man, woman, or child, whether white, or black, or red, or yellow, or blue, or green, but what is encompassed by the circle of this word "whosoever." "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." I hope I have not diminished the range of the text; certainly I have not intended to do so. Mind that none of you shut the door in your own faces. I want each one to come in, and find salvation at once. For the time being you may forget the Negro, the Red Indian, and the "heathen Chinese;" but I beseech you do not forget to come to Jesus yourself. Come, for you may come, you should come, you must come—

"None are excluded hence but those

Who do themselves exclude;
Welcome the learned and polite,
The ignorant and rude.
While grace most freely saves the prince,
The poor may take their share;
No mortal has a just pretense
To perish in despair."

There is the text "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered," or "saved." Believe it, and obey it. It is a gracious gift; take it, and be rich forever.

Furthermore, *the requirement is very plain*. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord." You do not need a library to explain to you how you can be saved. Here it is—"Call on the name of the Lord." This is "The Plain Man's Pathway to heaven." You will not need to go to the Sorbonne at Paris, nor to the University of Oxford, to be tutored in the art of finding salvation. Believe and live. Is not that plain enough? "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." What does calling upon the name of the Lord mean? To call on the name of the Lord means, first, to *believe in God as He reveals Himself in Scripture*. His revelation of Himself is His "name." If you make a god of your own, you have no promise that he will save you; on the contrary, if you make him, he will be good for nothing, for he will be less than yourself. If you are now willing to come to the light, and see the Lord as He displays Himself in His own Word, then you shall know a great God and a Savior. You are not merely to believe in *a* god, but in the living and true God; in Jehovah, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. If you accept Him as being what He states Himself to be, in Him you shall find salvation. The pity of it is that the most of people in these days worship a god of their own invention. They do not make an image of clay, or of gold, but they construct a deity in their minds according to their own thoughts. They proudly judge as to what God ought to be, and they will not receive God as He really is. What is this but a god-making as gross as that which is performed by the heathen? What can be more wicked than to attempt to imagine a better god than the one true and living God? As the deity of your fancy has no existence, I would not recommend you to trust in him. There is one living and true God, and that living God has revealed Himself in the two Books of the Old and New Testament. In these He is more clearly seen than in His works of creation or of providence. *In this God you must trust,* and if you trust Him, He will not deceive you. "Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him." If you trust in "thought," or "progress," or any other deity of your own making, you will perish; but if you rely upon the living God He will not, cannot, forsake you. Trust in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and you shall be delivered! "He that believes on Him shall not be confounded." A simple, child-like trust in God as He reveals Himself in His Word, and especially as He unveils Himself in the blessed person of the Lord Jesus Christ, will save you. In the Lord Jesus dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; trust in Him and you are saved.

To call on the name of the Lord also means to pray. That is the idea which naturally arises to the mind at the first sound of the word. You are lost in the woods. What are you to do? You are to *call* for help. "O God, hear my cry! Deliver me, for my trust is in You!" If I compare you to a wandering sheep, what can you do? You cannot find your way back to

the fold, the brambles hold you fast, and tear your flesh. Well, you can *bleat,* and thus call for the Shepherd. Prayer—real, sincere, believing prayer will never fail. The Lord has said, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver you."

I recollect, in the time of my soul-trouble, how I lived on this text for months. It only looks like a lozenge, but it is made of the essence of meat, and it will sustain life for many a day. Try the power of it. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." I said to myself—"I do call on His name, and I will continue to call on His name; yes, if I perish, I will pray, and perish only there!" Nor did I call upon the Lord in supplication in vain. He heard me, and saved me. Blessed be His holy name! Praying, believing, trusting, none can fail of salvation. The requirement is very plain—"Trust and pray."

And when you have done this, then remember that *to call upon the name of the Lord means also to confess that name*. We read in the Old Testament, "Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord." Not that they then first prayed, but they then began to meet together avowedly to worship Jehovah. They came out from among men, and named the sacred name as that of their God and Lord; declaring that, whatever others did, they would serve Him. The Lord requires all saved ones to do this. You must confess that the Lord is your God, and Jesus is your Savior. You must say, "This God is our God forever and ever." Our Lord put it, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Paul says, "With the heart man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." You must, in some way or other, confess your faith, and the best way is that which the Lord has Himself ordained, saying, "Thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness." No longer wishing to live without God, no longer trusting to what you can see, and hear, and do, you must henceforth place your whole reliance upon God alone, and own the Lord as your God and Father. No man doing this shall be left to perish. Out of temporal and eternal troubles you shall be delivered. God will help you all your life long if you trust Him. "He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings shall you trust, His truth shall be your shield and buckler." Whosoever trusts, prays, and avows Himself to be on the Lord's side, shall be saved.

This requirement is simple enough, and I do not see what less could be asked of any man. Would you have a man saved who will not trust his God? Would you have a man forgiven who will not obey his Lord? Has Christ come into the world to pander to our sin, and save us while we continue in rebellion? God forbid! His grace is manifested to make us loyal to God in everything, and walk before the Lord in the land of the living. This also the Holy Spirit works in us to will and to do.

I will spend a minute or two in reminding you that, as the requirement is plain, so *the assurance of blessing is positive*. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord *shall* be delivered," or "saved." In this there are no provisos and perhaps'. The text is not a bare hope, but a solemn assertion. If you believe, poor soul, though you are altogether a mass of sin, you shall be saved! Do you not see how sure it is? God, who cannot lie, pledges His word to you; risk your soul on it. Indeed, there is no risk. The only hope I have this day is in the promise of my faithful God which He makes to those who call upon His name. I dare not rest anywhere else, but on His bare word. I gladly venture my eternal all. How can it be

that a sincere trust in God's own promise can ever be rejected of the Lord? Sitting by the bedside of a dying man, who was resting in Christ even as I am, I said to myself—Suppose we, who trust alone in Jesus, should perish, what then? Why, it would be to the everlasting dishonor of the Lord in whom we trusted. We would lose our souls certainly, but He would lose His honor. Think of one of us being able to say in hell, "I trusted in the boasted Savior's aid, and rested myself on God, and yet I am lost." Sirs, heaven itself would be darkened, and the crown jewels of God would lose their luster, if that could once be the case! But it cannot be. If you trust in the Lord God Almighty, He will save you as surely as He is God. No one shall ever think better of God than He is. Open your mouth as wide as you will and He will fill it.

And now, to wind up as to the proclamation, remember that, although it is so far-reaching as to embrace a wide world of believers, yet *it is a personal message to you* at this hour. "Whosoever" includes *yourself,* and if you see it from the right angle, it peculiarly looks at *you*. *You,* calling upon God, shall be saved; *you*, even YOU! Friend, I do not know your name, nor do I need to know it, but I mean this word for *you*. *You* shall be saved if *you* call upon the name of the Lord. "Ah!" you say, "I wish my name was written down in the Bible." Would it comfort you at all? If it were written in the Scripture, "Charles Haddon Spurgeon shall be saved," I am afraid I should not get much comfort out of the promise, for I should go home, and fetch out the London Directory, and see if there was not another person of that name, or very like it. How much worse would it be for the Smiths and the Browns! No, my brethren, do not ask to see your name in the inspired volume, but be content with what you do see, namely, your character! When the Scripture says, "Whosoever," you cannot shut yourself out of that. Since it is written, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved," call on that name, and grasp the blessing. Despair itself can scarcely evade the comfort of this blessed text. O Holy Spirit, the Comforter, seal it upon each heart!

But perhaps you have not called upon the name of the Lord. Then begin at once. Cry, "Lord, have mercy upon me!" and cry after that sort immediately. If you have never prayed, pray now. May God the Holy Spirit lead you to call upon the name of the Lord at this exact moment, without waiting to go home, or to get into another room! Though you have never believed in the Lord Jesus before, believe in Him now. If this is the first breath of faith that you have ever breathed, the promise is as sure to you as it is to those of us who have known the Lord these forty years. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved," is a word to a careless fellow who has never prayed in his life.

O my hearer, the text speaks to you. How I wish I could get at you, take you by the hand, and hold you till I had made you think! I remember when Mr. Richard Weaver preached at Park Street Chapel, in his younger days, he came down from the pulpit, and ran over the pews to get at the people, that he might speak to them individually, and say, "You," and "You," and "You." I am not nimble enough on my legs to do *that,* and I do not think I should try it if I were younger, but I wish I could, somehow or other, come to each one of you, and press home these glad tidings of great joy. *You,* my dear old friend, it means *you! You,* young woman, over there to the right, it means *you! You,* dear child, sitting with your grandmother, it means *you!* "Whosoever shall call on the

name of the Lord shall be saved." O Lord, bless this word to every unconverted person to whom it comes!

II. I could almost wish to close with this soft music, but I dare not maim a text. I will deal with the second part of it with exceeding brevity, but I dare not silence it altogether. The second portion of the text contains AN INSTRUCTIVE DECLARATION. "It shall come to pass that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered." That was abundantly fulfilled at Pentecost, for on that day a great multitude believed, and was baptized, and was saved; thus those who called on the name of the Lord were delivered. But listen, "In mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance." This also was literally true; the first preaching of the gospel was to the Jews at Jerusalem itself. Salvation came to mount Zion, and to the city of the great King. The fountain for sin and for uncleanness was opened at Jerusalem.

There is something about that fact which strikes me very solemnly this morning, for though this deliverance came to some, yet the city was totally destroyed. The kingdom of heaven came near them, but they put it away, and they were overthrown with a fearful destruction. The Jews had long been outwardly the Lord's chosen people, but in a measure He had cast them off, for the Romans ruled the land, and they in their willful blindness crucified their King. The favored nation nailed the Messiah to the tree, and yet to Jerusalem sinners, salvation was first preached. Salvation was of the Jews, and by Jews it was brought to us Gentiles. Sad calamity that they should bring us life, and yet as a nation sink down to spiritual death!

Notice that the prophet says, "In mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord has said." He promised deliverance, and He sent it according to His word; if *they* would not have it, He sent it as He said, and their blood was on their own heads when they refused it. The Lord went to the full length of His mercy in sending salvation to those leaders of iniquity, who with wicked hands had crucified their own Messiah.

As a result of the Lord's goodness, a remnant was saved. Notice it, "and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call." A remnant did call upon the Lord and live. Those eleven that stood up at Pentecost, and bore witness to the resurrection, were all Jews, and those who met in the upper room, when the Holy Spirit came down, were Jews; this was the remnant. But the solemn thought is that it was only a remnant of God's favored people. Centuries of visitations, prophets, miracles, yet only a remnant saved! God's Shekinah shining out among them, and yet only a remnant obedient! The very Christ of God born of their nation, and yet only a remnant saved! To this day we utter the truth when we sing—

"You chosen seed of Israel's race,
A remnant weak and small."

The Jewish church is a very insignificant portion of the Jewish people. The apostle tells us that "at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace," and Isaiah says, "Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah." Poor Israel, poor Israel! Most favored for many an age and yet only a remnant brought to call upon the saving Lord! Many come from distant lands, and sit down with

Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God, but the children of the kingdom are cast out into outer darkness—all but a mere remnant.

To my mind it is most instructive to notice that even that remnant never called upon the name of the Lord until the Lord called upon them—"The remnant whom the Lord shall call." We all of us need a miracle of grace to make us perform the simple act of calling upon God. This was manifestly true in the case of Israel, for as a nation it rejected Jesus of Nazareth, and only a few were converted by the power of the Holy Spirit. But whether Jews or Greeks, we are similarly depraved, and unless effectual calling shall call us out of our natural state, the very last thing that we shall ever do shall be to come to Jesus, and to rest in Him. Unhappy condition, to refuse the highest good!

Believing Jews are a remnant to this day, and only here and there is one called by grace. You say, "What have we to do with that?" We have much to do with it. Let us pray for our Lord's own countrymen. Let us labor for them. This also let us do, let us learn from their fall. O you that are children of godly parents, you that habitually attend places of worship, you who sit in this house of prayer year after year—you are much in the same position as Israel of old! Yours are the outward privileges; will you reject the hopes which they set before you? My fear is lest you should get so accustomed to hearing the gospel that you should think that mere hearing is enough. I tremble lest you should grow so habituated to the externals of religion that you should be dead to all the internal parts of it, and only a remnant of you should be saved. Think of the multitudes in England who hear the gospel, and of the comparatively few who are called by grace to come and believe in Jesus Christ. It is sorrowful to think of the breadth of gospel grace and the narrowness of man's acceptance of it. The feast is great; the guests are few. I see an ocean of mercy without a shore, and on it there floats an ark wherein but few are saved. Shall it always be so? Oh, come, and receive the gift of free grace! Alas! I see men sunk in the darkness of unbelief, and only a remnant rising to the light of faith! Altogether, in this London, out of four or five millions, we have not half a million at worship at any one time! Out of that half million, how many do you think are real Christians? Truly, it is a remnant still. Oh, that you and I may be of that remnant!

Let us further pray the Lord to gather in the multitude, and so to accomplish speedily the number of His elect. Oh, that He would not only magnify the sovereignty of His grace, but reveal the largeness of it! Oh, that He would give the well-beloved Jesus to see of the travail of His soul till He is satisfied! O Lord, the oxen and the fatlings are killed, and all things are ready; let it not be again reported that those who are bidden are not worthy! Or, if it is so, enable us to go out into the highways and hedges and compel the outcasts to come in, that the wedding may be furnished with guests! Go forth, you messengers of Christ, into all the world! Rise up, my brothers and sisters, from this service, and go forth, ever one of you, to call in as many as you find; yes, to compel them to come in! May the Lord cause that in London, and in Britain, there may be deliverance; yes, may His salvation be made known unto the ends of the earth! Amen.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON

TO MY BELOVED FRIENDS AT THE TABERNACLE—I send you one and all my most hearty salutations. After a fellowship continued through a third of a century, without even a moment's coolness, we are not divided in heart when parted as to bodily presence. My last remembrances of the Tabernacle are among the brightest of my life. No less than seventy persons were added to our membership on the last Sabbath but one, quite a little church by itself; and on the very last Sunday you gave grandly, so as to make up the large sum which was behindhand in the Weekly Offering. It was a noble effort, and thoroughly successful. Over two such events we may rejoice together. I pray that some signal mark of blessing may be given to each of you at once. What shall it be? Shall it not be the revival of the church, the salvation of your households, and the growth of grace in all your hearts! The Lord grant all three of these special favors, and all else that His Spirit leads you to desire!

To the host of friends who read the sermons—My larger congregation consists of multitudes whom I have never seen. But I know full many of you from your kind letters of thanks, and from the large amount of help towards the Lord's work, which you have sent me. Doubtless, thousands of you are not even known to me in either of these ways, and yet you remember me in prayer when the Lord blesses the sermons to you. Accept my Christian love at this time, and permit me to ask a double interest in your prayers just now, when I am trying to take in fresh supplies for another year. The weekly sermons are continued, whether I am at home or not, for I have prepared several of my evening discourses for publication. I should be glad if you could use some little effort to increase the circulation of the weekly sermons. It is wonderful that they should have been issued regularly for thirty-two years; for sermons are not according to the literary taste of the many. The largeness of their acceptance leads me to hope that others might profit by them, if they were introduced to their notice. Those who cannot preach the gospel themselves may yet do substantial service by placing in the hands of others a sermon which the Lord has already used for good. Please do me this kindness.

In any case, let us unite in earnest prayer for the spread of true religion in every place, and the overthrow of error in every form. Your loving servant, for Christ's sake,
C. H. SPURGEON.
November 20, 1886.

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

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

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

LOVE'S LAW AND LIFE
NO. 1932

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 5, 1886,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 30, 1886.

"If you love Me, keep My commandments."
John 14:15.

THIS is a chapter singularly full of certainties, and remarkably studded with *"ifs."* Concerning most of the great things in it there never can be an "if," and yet "if" comes up, I think, no less than seven times in the chapter, and "if," too, not about trifles, but about the most solemn subjects. It is, perhaps, worthy of mention that with each of these "ifs" there is something connected, as following out of it, or appearing to be involved in it, or connected with it.

Look at the second verse. "In my Father's house are many mansions: *if* it were not so, I would have told you." If there had been no place for us in the glory land Jesus would have told us. If any truth which had not been revealed would have made our hope a folly, our Lord Jesus would have warned us of it, for He has not come to lure us into a fool's paradise, and at the last deceive us. He will tell us all that it is necessary for us to know in order to a wise faith and a sure hope. The Lord has not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth; He has not spoken in contradiction of His revealed word. Nothing in His secret decrees or hidden designs can shake our confidence, or darken our expectation. *"If* it were not so, I would have told you." Had there been a secret thing which would have injured your prospects, it should have been dragged to light, that you might not be deceived, for the Lord Jesus has no desire to win disciples by the suppression of distasteful truth. If there were anything yet to be revealed which would render your hope a delusion at the end, you should have been made acquainted with it; Jesus Himself would break the sad news to you; He would not leave you to be horrified by finding it out for yourselves; He kindly declares, "I would have told you."

Notice the third verse. Again we meet with "if," and its consequence. *"If* I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself." If the Lord Jesus should go away (and this is a supposition no longer, for He has gone), then He would return again in due time. Since He *has* gone, He will come again, for He has made the one to depend on the other. We make no question that He went up into Heaven, for He rose from out the circle of His followers and they saw Him as He went up into Heaven. They had no sort of doubt as to the fact that the cloud received Him out of their sight, and moreover, they received assurance out of Heaven, by an angelic messenger, that, "He shall so come in like manner

as you have seen Him go into Heaven." "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself." His going Home pledges Him to come and compels us to look for Him!

The next "if" comes at *the beginning of the seventh verse*, *"If* you had known Me, you should have known My Father also." If we really know the Lord Christ, we know God. In fact, there is no knowing God aright except through His Son Jesus. It is evidently true that men do not long hold to theism pure and simple. If our scientific men get away from the Christ, the incarnate God, before long they drift away from God altogether. They begin to slide down the mountain when they quit the incarnate Deity, and there is no more a foothold to stop them. No man comes to the Father but by the Son, and no man long keeps to the Father who does not keep to his faith in the Son. Those who know Christ know God, but those who are ignorant of the Savior are ignorant of God, however much they may pride themselves upon their religion. They may know another god, but the only living and true God is unknown save by those who receive Jesus. The divine Fatherhood, of which we hear so much in certain quarters, is only to be seen through the window of incarnation and sacrifice. We must see Jesus before we can gain even so much as a glimpse at the Infinite, the Incomprehensible, and the Invisible. God comes not within finite perception till He enters human flesh, and there we behold His glory, full of grace and truth.

The next variety of "if" you will find a little farther down in the chapter, namely, *in the fourteenth verse, "If* you shall ask anything in My name, I will do it." The "if" in this case involves an uncertainty about our prayers, if an uncertainty at all. Taking it for granted that we ask mercies in the name of Jesus, a glorious certainty is linked thereto. Jesus says, "I will do it." Here our Lord speaks after a sovereign style. We may not say, "I will," but the "I wills" pertain to Christ. He can answer, and He has the right to answer, and therefore He says without reservation, "I will." "If you shall ask anything in My name, I will do it." Oh that we might put the first "if" out of court by continually petitioning the Lord, and signing our petitions with the name of Jesus! May we be persistent only in prayers to which we are warranted to set that august name, and then boldly using His name and authority, we need be under no apprehension of failure. The great Father in heaven never denies the power of His Son's name; neither does the Son Himself draw back from the keeping of His own pledges. True prayer operates with the same certainty as the laws of nature. "Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart." Oh that we did delight more in the Divine name and character, and then our prayers would always speed to the throne!

Now comes the "if" of our text, of which I will say nothing for the moment. "If you love Me, keep My commandments." Something, you see, is to come out of this "if" as out of all the others. *If* something, *then* something—*"If* you love me," then carry it out to the legitimate result, "keep My commandments."

You have the next "if" in verse twenty-three, "Jesus answered and said to him, *If* a man loves Me, he will keep My words." Respect to His wisdom, and obedience to His authority, will grow out of love. "The love of

Christ constrains us." We hear that passage often quoted, "The love of Christ ought to constrain us," but that is a corruption of the text; the apostle tells us that it does constrain us, and if it really enters the heart, it will do so. It is an active, moving power, influencing the inner life, and then the external conduct—

"'Tis love that makes our willing feet
In swift obedience move."

"If a man loves Me, he will keep my words." He will believe in the verbal inspiration of His Lord, he will regard His teaching as infallible; he will attend to it and remember it. More than this, he will by his conduct carry out the words of his Lord, and so keep them in the best possible manner by enshrining them in his daily life.

The chapter almost closes at the twenty-eighth verse by saying, "If you loved Me, you would rejoice, because I said, I go unto My Father, for My Father is greater than I." Where there is an intelligent love to Christ we rejoice in His gains even though we ourselves appear to be losers thereby. The corporeal absence of our Lord from our midst might seem to be a great loss to us, but we rejoice in it because it is for His own greater glory. If He is enthroned in glory, we dare not lament His absence. Our love agrees to His departure, yes, rejoices in it, for anything which conduces to His exaltation is sweet to us. Let us at this moment, because we love Him, rejoice that He has gone to the Father.

So you see the chapter, if you read it, though enriched with heavenly certainties, is yet besprinkled with "ifs." Like little pools of sparkling water among the ever abiding rocks, these "ifs" gleam in the light of heaven, and refresh us even to look upon them.

Let us now think of our own text, and may the Holy Spirit lead us into the secret chambers of it! *"If* you love Me, keep My commandments."

The present "if" is a serious one. Let that stand as our first head. Secondly, *the test which is added concerning it is a very judicious one,* "If you love Me, keep My commandments." In the third place, I will give you the reading of the Revised Version, and say, *that test will be endured by love,* for the words may be interpreted—"If you love Me, you will keep my commandments." Obedience will follow upon love as a matter of certainty.

I. To begin, then, THE "IF" IN OUR TEXT IS A VERY SERIOUS ONE. It goes to the very root of the matter. Love belongs to the heart, and every surgeon will tell you that a disease of the heart may not be trifled with. A clever doctor said to me, "I feel at my ease with any matter if it does not touch the head or the heart." Solomon bids us keep the heart with all diligence, "for out of it are the issues of life." If the mainspring fails, all the works of a watch refuse to act. We cannot, therefore, think little of a question which concerns our love, for it deals with a vital part. O friends, I hope there is no question about our love to Jesus.

Observe how our Savior puts this *"if"* concerning love, in such a way as to teach us that *love must be prior to obedience.* The text is not, "Keep My commandments, and then love Me." No, we do not expect pure streams till the fountain is cleansed. Nor does He say—"Keep My commandments, and love Me at the same time," as two separate things, alt-

hough that might in a measure correspond with truth. But love is put first, because it is first in importance and first in experience. "If you love Me"—we must begin with love; then "keep My commandments." Obedience must have love for its mother, nurse, and food. The essence of obedience lies in the hearty love which prompts the deed rather than in the deed itself. I can conceive it possible that a man might, in his outward life, keep Christ's commandments, and yet might never keep them at all so as to be accepted before God. If he became obedient by compulsion, but would have disobeyed if he dared, then his heart was not right before God, and his actions were of little worth. The commandments are to be kept out of love to Him who gave them. In obedience, to love is to live; if we love Christ we live Christ. Love to the person of our Lord is the very salt of our sacrifices. To put it most practically—I often say to myself, "Today I have performed all the duties of my office, but have I been careful to abide in my Lord's love? I have not failed as to doing all that was possible to me; I have gone from early morning till late at night, packing as much work as possible into every hour, and trying to do it with all my heart. But have I, after all, done this as unto the Lord and for His sake?" I tremble lest I should serve God merely because I happen to be a minister and am called to preach His word, or because the natural routine of the day carries me through it. I am concerned that I may be impelled by no force but the love of Jesus. This fear often humbles me in the dust, and prevents all glorying in what I have done. Only as we love our Lord can our obedience be true and acceptable. The main care of our lives should be to do right, and to do it because we love the Lord. We must walk before the Lord as Abraham did, and with the Lord as Enoch did. Unless we are under the constant constraint of love to the Lord Jesus Christ we shall fail terribly—

"Knowledge, alas! is all in vain,
And all in vain our fear,
In vain our labor and our pain
If love be absent there."

See, dear friends, how inward true religion is; how far it exceeds all external formalism! How deep is the seat of true grace! You cannot hope to do that which Christ can smile upon until your heart is renewed. A heart at enmity with God cannot be made acceptable by mere acts of piety. It is not what your hands are doing, nor even what your lips are saying; the main thing is what your heart is meaning and intending. Which way are your affections tending? The great flywheel which moves the whole machinery of life is fixed in the heart; hence this is the most important of all suggestions—"If you love Me." "If you love Me" is a searching sound. I start as I hear it. He that believes in the Lord Jesus Christ for his salvation produces as the first fruit of his faith love to Christ; this must be in us and abound, or nothing is right. Packed away within that box of sweets called "love" you shall find every holy thing, but if you have no love, what have you? Though you wear your fingers to the bone with service, weep your eyes out with repentance, make your knees hard with kneeling, and dry your throat with shouting, yet if the heart does not beat with love your religion falls to the ground like a withered leaf in au-

tumn. Love is the chief jewel in the bracelet of obedience. Hear the text, and mark it well, "If you love Me, keep My commandments."

O sirs, what a mass of religion is cast out as worthless by this text! Men may keep on going to church and going to chapel, and they may be religious, yes, throughout a whole life, and apparently, they may be blameless in their moral conduct, and yet there may be nothing in them, because there is no love to the ever-blessed Christ at the bottom of the profession. When the heathen killed their sacrifices in order to prophesy future events from the entrails, the worst sign they ever got was when the priest, after searching into the victim, could not find a heart; or if that heart was small and shriveled. The soothsayers always declared that this omen was the sure sign of calamity. All the signs were evil if the heart of the offering was absent or deficient. It is so in very deed with religion and with each religious person. He that searches us searches principally our hearts. He who tries mankind tries chiefly the reins of the children of men. The Master is in our midst tonight, walking down these aisles with noiseless tread, girt about the paps with a golden girdle, and robed in snow-white garments down to His feet. See, He stops before each one of us, and gently asks, "Do you love Me?" Three times He repeats the question. He waits for an answer. It is a vital question; do not refuse a reply. Oh that the Spirit of the Lord may enable you to answer in sincerity and truth, and say, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You!"

This matter of love to Jesus is put prior to every other because *it is the best reason for our obedience to Him*. Notice, "If you love *Me,* keep *My* commandments." Personal affection will produce personal obedience. Do you not see the drift of the words? The blessed Jesus says, "If you love *Me,* keep *My* commandments," because truly, operative love is mainly love to a person, and love to our Lord's person begets obedience to His precepts. There are some men for whom you would do anything; you will to yield to their will. If such a person were to say to you, "Do this," you would do it without question. Perhaps he stands to you in the relation of master, and you are his willing servant. Perhaps he is a venerated friend, and because you esteem and love him, his word is law to you. The Savior may much more safely than any other, be installed in such a position. From the throne of your affections He says, "If you love Me—if really your hearts go out to Me—then let My word be a commandment; let My commandment be kept in your memory, and then further kept by being observed in your life." So you see the reason why the Master begins with the heart—because there is no hope of obedience to Him in our actions, unless He is enshrined in our affections. This is the spring and source of all holy living—love to the Holy One. Dear friends, have you been captured by the beauties of Jesus, and are you held in a divine captivity to the adorable person of your redeeming Lord? Then you have within you the impulse which constrains you to keep His commandments.

It was greatly needful for our Lord thus to address His disciples. Yes, it was necessary to speak thus even to the apostles. He says to the chosen twelve, "If you love Me." We should never have doubted one of them. We now know by the result that one of them was a traitor to his Lord, and

sold Him for pieces of silver, but no one suspected him for he seemed as loyal as any one of them. Ah! If that question, "If you love Me," needed to be raised in the sacred college of the twelve, much more must it be allowed to sift our churches, and to test ourselves. Brethren, this word is exceedingly needful, in the present assembly; hear its voice—"If you love Me." The mixed multitude here gathered together may be compared to the heap on the threshing floor, and there is need of the winnowing fan. Perhaps you have almost taken it for granted that you love Jesus; but it must not be taken for granted. Some of you have been born in a religious atmosphere, you have lived in the midst of godly people, and you have never been out into the wicked world to be tempted by its follies; therefore you come to an immediate conclusion that you must assuredly love the Lord. This is unwise and perilous. Never glory in armor which you have not tested, nor rejoice in love to Christ which has not sustained trial. What an awful thing if you should be deceived and mistaken! It is most kind of the Savior to raise a question about your love, and thus give you an opportunity of examining yourself and seeing whether you are right at heart. It will be far better for you to err upon the side of too great anxiety than on that of carnal security. To be afraid that you are wrong, and so to make sure of being right, will bring you to a far better end than being sure that you are right, and therefore, refusing to look into the ground of your hope. I would have you fully assured of your love to Jesus, but I would not have you deceived by a belief that you love Him if you do not. Lord, search us and try us!

Remember, if any man loves not the Lord Jesus Christ he will be *anathema Maranatha,* cursed at His coming. This applies to every man, even though he is most eminent. An apostle turned out to be a son of perdition—may not you? Every man, even though he is a learned bishop, or a popular pastor, or a renowned evangelist, or a venerable elder, or an active deacon, or the most ancient member of the most orthodox assembly, may yet turn out to be no lover of the Lord. Though he has gathered to break bread in the sacred name with a select company, yet if he does not truly love the Lord Jesus Christ, the curse rests upon him, whoever he may be. So let us take from the Master's lips the heart-searching word at this time, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." Let us take it personally home, as if addressed to each one of us personally and alone.

While considering the text, let each one view himself apart. What have you to do in this matter with keeping the vineyards of others? See to your own hearts. The text does not say, "If the church loves Me," or, "If such-and-such a minister loves Me," or, "If your brothers love Me," no, but it is, "If *you* love Me, keep My commandments." The most important question for each one to answer is that which concerns his personal attachment to his Redeemer, and the personal obedience which comes out of it. I press this inquiry upon each one. It may seem a trite and commonplace question, but it needs to be put again and again before all in our congregations. The preacher needs to be thus questioned; he gets into the habit of reading his Bible for other people. The Sunday school teacher needs this inquiry; he also is apt to study the Scriptures rather for his class than for himself. We all need the truth to come home to us with personal

and forcible application, for we are always inclined to shift unpleasant inquiries upon others. In the case of very deaf people, when they hold up their horns we speak right down into them; and I wish to speak home pointedly to each one of you at this time. Let the text sound into your individual ear and heart; "If you love Me, keep My commandments."

The question is answerable, however. It was put to the apostles, and they could answer it. Peter spoke as all the eleven would have done when he said, "You know that I love You." It is not a question concerning mysteries out of range and beyond judgement; it deals with a plain matter of fact. A man may know whether he loves the Lord or not, and he ought to know. He who is jealous of himself, and is, therefore, half afraid to speak positively, may all the more truly be a lover of the Lord. Holy caution may raise a question where the answer is far more certain than in the breasts of those who never even make the inquiry because they are carnally secure. Do not be content with merely longing to love Jesus, or with longing to know whether you love Him. Not to know whether you love the Lord Jesus is a state of mind so dangerous that I exhort you never to go to sleep until you have escaped from it. A man has no right to smile—I had almost said, he has no right either to eat bread or drink water so long as that question hangs in the balances. It ought to be decided. It can be decided. It can be decided at once. Not love Jesus? It is better for me not to live than not to love *Him*. Not love Christ? May the terrible fact never be hidden from my weeping eyes! Perhaps the dread discovery may drive me to better things. If I do love my Lord I can never rest with the shadow of a doubt darkening the life of my love. A question on such a matter is unbearable—

"Do not I love You from my soul?
Then let me nothing love:
Dead be my heart to every joy,
When Jesus cannot move.
Would not my heart pour forth its blood
In honor of Your name,
And challenge the cold hand of death
To dampen the immortal flame?
You know I love You, dearest Lord;
But oh, I long to soar
Far from the sphere of mortal joys,
And learn to love You more."

Brethren, hear the question suggested by this little word *"if,"* consider it well, and rest not until you can say, "I love the Lord because He has heard my voice and my supplication."

So much, then, concerning the serious nature of this *"if."*

II. In the second place let me observe that THE TEST WHICH IS PROPOSED IN THE TEXT IS A VERY JUDICIOUS ONE. "If you love Me, *keep My commandments."* This is the best proof of love.

The test indicated does not suggest a lawless liberty. It is true we are not under the law, but under grace, but yet we are under law to Christ, and if we love Him we are to keep His commandments. Let us never enter into the counsel of those who do not believe that there are any commandments for believers to keep. Those who do away with duty do away with sin, and consequently with the Savior. It is not written—"If you love

Me, do whatever you please." Jesus does not say—"So long as you love Me in your hearts, I care nothing about your lives." There is no such doctrine as that between the covers of this holy book. He that loves Christ is the freest man out of heaven, but he is also the most under bonds. He is free, for Christ has loosed his bonds, but he is put under bonds to Christ by grateful love. The love of Christ constrains him henceforth to live to the Lord who loved him, lived for him, died for him, and rose again. No, dear friends, we do not desire a lawless life. He that is not under the law as a power for condemnation yet can say that with his heart he delights in the law of God, he longs after perfect holiness, and in his soul yields hearty homage to the precepts of the Lord Jesus. Love is law; the law of love is the strongest of all laws. Christ has become our Master and King, and His commandments are not grievous.

The text also contains no fanatical challenge. We do not read, "If you love Me, perform some extraordinary act." The test required is not an outburst of extravagance, or an attempt to realize the ambitious project of a fevered brain. Nothing of the kind. Hermits, nuns, and religious mad-caps find no example or precept here. Some persons think that if they love Jesus, they must enter a convent, retire to a cell, dress themselves oddly, or shave their heads. It has been the thought of some men, "If we love Christ we must strip ourselves of everything we possess, put on sackcloth, tie ropes round our waists, and pine in the desert." Others have thought it wise to make effigies of themselves by oddity of dress and behavior. The Savior does not say anything of the kind, but "If you love Me, keep My commandments." Every now and then we find members of our churches who must necessarily leave their trades and their callings to show their love for Jesus; children may starve and wives may pine, but their mad whimsies must be carried out for love of Jesus. Under this influence they rush into all sorts of foolery, and soon ruin their characters because they will not take the advice of sobriety, and cannot be satisfied with the grand test of love which our Lord Himself herein lays down. The text does not condemn these light-headed projects in detail, but it does so in the gross by proposing a far more reasonable test—"If you love Me, keep My commandments." Do not spin theories in your excited brains, and vow that you will do this desperate thing and the other. The probability is that you are not seeking the glory of the Lord, but you want notoriety for yourself. You are aiming at supreme devotion, so that you may become a distinguished person, and that people may talk about your superior saintship. You may even go so far as to court persecution from selfish motives. The Savior, who was wise and knew what was in men, and knew also what would be the surest test of true love to Himself, says, "If you love Me, *keep My commandments."* This is a much more difficult thing than to follow out the dictates of a crazy brain.

Why does the Savior give us this as a test? I think that one reason is, because it is one which *tests whether you are loving Christ in His true position,* or whether your love is to a Christ of your own making, and your own placing. It is easy to crave a half Christ, and refuse a whole Christ. It is easy also to follow a Christ of your own construction, who is merely an antichrist. The real Christ is so great and glorious that He has a right to

give commandments. Moses never used an expression such as our Savior here employs. He might say, "Keep God's commandments," but he would never have said, "Keep *my* commandments." That dear and Divine Person whom we call Master and Lord here says, "Keep *My* commandments." What a commanding person He must be! What lordship He has over His people! How great He is among His saints! If you keep His commandments you are putting Him into the position which He claims. By obedience you own His sovereignty and Godhead, and say with Thomas, "My Lord and my God." I am afraid that a great many people know a Christ who is meek and lowly, their servant and Savior, but they do not know the *Lord* Jesus Christ. Alas! My friends, such people set up a false Christ. We do not love Jesus at all if He is not our Lord and God. It is all sanctimonious and hypocrisy, this love to Christ which robs Him of His Deity. I abhor that love to Christ which does not make Him King of kings, and Lord of lords. Love Him, and belittle Him! It is absurd. Follow your own will in preference to His will, and then talk of love to Him! Ridiculous! This is but the devil's counterfeit of love, it is a contradiction of all true love. Love is loyal; love crowns its Lord with obedience. If you love Jesus aright, you view His every precept as a divine commandment. You love the true Christ if you love a commanding Christ as well as a saving Christ, and look to Him for the guidance of your life as well as for the pardon of your sin.

This test, again, is very judicious, because *it proves the living presence of the object of your love.* Love always desires to have its object near, and it has a faculty of bringing its object near. If you love anybody, that person may be far away, and yet to your thoughts he is close at hand. Love brings the beloved one so near that the thought of him acts upon its life. A gentleman has faithful servants, he goes away, and leaves his house in their charge; he has gone abroad, and yet he is at home to his servants, for every day their work is done as if he were there to see. He is coming home soon, they hardly know when, but they keep all things in readiness for his return, let it happen when it may. They are not eye-servants, and so they work none the less because he is absent. If he does not see *them,* yet the eyes of their love always see *him,* and therefore they work as if he were at home. Their affection keeps him always near. A dear father is dead, and he has left his property to a son who honors his memory. What does the son do? He is generous, like his father, and when he is asked why, he replies, "I do exactly what I believe my dear father would have done if he had been here." "Why?" "Because I love him." When a man is dead he lives to those who love him. So the living Christ, who is not dead, but has gone away, is made present to us by our realizing love, and the proof of our love is that Jesus is so present that He constrains our actions, influences our motives, and is the cause of our obedience. Jesus seems to say—"If you love Me, now that I am gone you will do as you would have done if I were still with you, and looking at you. You will continue to keep My commandments, as in My presence."

It is a most judicious test, again, because, by keeping our Lord's commandments, *we are doing that which is most pleasing to Him, and will most glorify Him.* Some enthusiastic Methodist cries—

"Oh, what shall I do my Savior to praise?"

Listen, my brother, if you love your Savior, keep His commandments. This is all you have to do, and a great all too. Among the rest, you may come and be baptized, while you are thus earnest to praise your Lord. "If you love Me, keep My commandments." There is the answer to every rapturous inquiry. Jesus is more glorified by a consistent obedience to His commands than by the most extravagant zeal that we can possibly display in what is only will-worship, because He has never commanded it. If you wish to break the alabaster box, and fill the house with sweet perfume; if you wish to crown His head with rarest gems, the method is before you—"Keep My commandments." You cannot do your Lord so great a favor, or, in the long run, bring to Him so real an honor, as by a complete, continual, hearty obedience to every one of His commandments.

Moreover, the Savior knew, when He bade us try this test, "If you love Me, keep My commandments," that *it would prepare us for honoring and glorifying Him in many other ways*. Read the context, "If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever." You can greatly glorify Christ if you are filled with the Holy Spirit, but you cannot be filled with the Holy Spirit if you do not keep Christ's commandments. The Spirit of God as a Comforter will come only to those to whom He comes as a Sanctifier. By making us holy, He will qualify us for being useful. The Savior says, "If you love Me, keep My commandments," because we shall then obtain that divine gift by which we can glorify His name. If there is any service which your love would aspire to, obedience to your Lord is the way to it.

But, indeed, I need not stand here and argue. When a friend is dying, and he asks you to prove your love by such-and-such a deed, he may ask what he wills; you give him *carte blanche*. It may be the simplest thing or the hardest thing, but if he will prescribe it as a test of love, you will not tell him no. If your wife should say to you, "You are going to journey far from me, and I shall not see you again for many days, I beg you therefore to carry my portrait within your watch-case," you would not fail to do so. It would be a simple thing, but it would be sacred to you. Baptism and the Lord's Supper will never be slighted by those whose hearts are fully possessed with love to Jesus. They may seem trifles, but if the Lord Jesus commands them they cannot be neglected. To leave off your wedding ring might be no great crime, and yet no loving wife would do it; even so, none who regard outward ordinances as love tokens will think of neglecting them. Ours is not to ask for reasons, ours is not to dispute about whether the deed is essential or non-essential, ours is to obey right lovingly. Bridegroom of our hearts, say what You will, and we will obey You! If only You will smile and strengthen us, nothing shall be impossible if great, nothing trifling if small.

III. Time has well-near gone, or we would dwell upon the third head, which we must now leave, only praying God to prove the truth of it. The third head was this; TRUE LOVE WILL ENDURE THIS TEST. "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." This is the Revised Version, and I

hope it will be written out in capitals upon our revised lives! We will obey, we must obey, since we love Him by whom the command is given.

Come then, brothers and sisters, as the time has gone, let me say this much to you. If you love Christ, set to work to *find out what His commandments are*. Study the Scriptures upon every point upon which you have the slightest question. This sacred oracle must guide you.

Next, *be always true to your convictions* about what Christ's commandments are. Carry them out at all hazards, and carry them out at once. It will be wicked to say, "Hitherto I have obeyed, but I shall stop here." We are committed to implicit obedience to the whole of the Master's will, involve what it may. Will you not agree to this at the outset? If you love Him, you will not delay.

Take note of every commandment as it concerns you. Let me mention one or two, and beg you to obey them as you hear them. "Go you into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Is not this a call to you, my brother, to be a missionary? Do you hear it? Will you not say, "Here am I, send me"? Another person has come into this house tonight full of enmity, somebody has treated him very badly, and he cannot forget it; I pray him to hear the Lord's command, "Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has anything against you; leave there your gift before the altar and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift." And again, "Little children, love one another." If any of you are in debt, obey this commandment, "Owe no man anything, but to love one another." If you neglect the poor, and live in a miserly way, hear this commandment, "Give to him that asks you, and from him that would borrow of you turn not away." At the back of all comes this, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." I might stay here all night, and mention, one after another, the commandments which would be especially applicable to each one of my hearers, but I pray the Holy Spirit to bring all things to your remembrance.

If there is a commandment which you do not relish, it ought to be a warning to you that there is something wrong in your heart that needs setting right. If you ever quarrel with one of Christ's commands, end that quarrel by especially attending to it beyond every other. Do as the miserly man did when he conquered his avarice once for all. He was a Christian, and he promised he would give a pound to the church, but the devil whispered, "You need your money, do not pay." The man stamped his foot, and said, "I will give two." Then the devil said, "Surely you are going mad. Save your money." The man replied that he would not be conquered, he would give four pounds. "Now," said Satan, "you must be insane." Then said the man, "I will give eight, and if you don't stop your tempting, I will give sixteen, for I will not be the slave of covetousness." The point is to throw your whole soul into that very duty wherein you are most tempted to be slack. Jesus does not say, if you love Me, keep this commandment or that, but out of love obey every command.

Many of you do not love my Lord Jesus Christ. I have not preached to you, but that very fact should make you thoughtful. Go home and consider that the preacher said nothing to you because you do not love the

Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore cannot keep His commandments. Write down in black and white—*"I do not love the Lord Jesus Christ."* If it is really so, be honest enough to make a note of it, and think it over. If you love Jesus, you may joyfully write out, "I love the Lord Jesus. Oh for grace to love Him more!" But if you do not love Him it will be honest to put it upon record. Write it boldly, *"I do not love the Lord Jesus Christ."* Look at it, and look again, and oh, may God the Holy Spirit lead you to repent of not loving Jesus, who is the altogether lovely One, and the great lover of men's souls! Oh that you may begin to love Him at once! Amen and Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 14.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—792, 809, 654.

FROM MR. SPURGEON AT MENTONE.

From beneath the bright skies of the Riviera the preacher sends his hearty Christian love to all his friends at the Tabernacle, and elsewhere. He has been requested to report himself weekly, and he does so. *All is well*. Repose of mind and heart will speedily restore the waste caused by the wear and tear of perpetual ministry. May God's own blessing be with those who launch out into the deep, and let down their nets for a draught; and out of His immeasurable fullness may the Lord also grant a portion of blessing to those who have gone out of their boats, and are mending their nets! Supplication was offered for the preacher, that he might leave all his many works in the hand of the Great Father, and have no anxiety about them. He does so leave them; but he asks prayer that the Lord may see fit to prosper them all to His own glory. Oh that a revival would begin at the Tabernacle while the preacher is away! Amen.

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

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

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

"YOUR ROWERS HAVE BROUGHT YOU INTO GREAT WATERS"
NO. 1933

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 12, 1886,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 10, 1885.

"Your rowers have brought you into great waters."
Ezekiel 27:26.

THIS was spoken by the prophet concerning Tyre, that great mercantile city where all the commerce of the East found its outlet towards the West. Tyre, when the Chaldeans invaded Palestine, had greatly rejoiced at the fall of Jerusalem. She said, "Aha, she is broken that was the gates of the people: I shall be replenished now she is laid waste." It was a cruel and selfish exultation. After a while the city in the sea came to feel the weight of the great oppressor's arm, for thus said the Lord, "I will bring upon Tyrus Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, a king of kings, from the north. He shall set engines of war against your walls, and with his axes he shall break down your towers." For thirteen years the city endured a siege under Nebuchadnezzar, and it was concerning this calamity that the prophet said, *"Your rowers have brought you into great waters."* The merchant princes of Tyre had so managed the affairs of the State that they brought the Tyrians into desperate straits. They had incited them to stand out against the great king, and they discovered in due time that they were striving against a power too strong for them. Their policy had been a mistake. Comparing Tyre to one of its own galleys propelled with oars, the prophet declares, "Your rowers have brought you into great waters."

All the glories and the woes of Tyre are now over. "What city is like Tyrus, like the destroyed in the midst of the sea?" That page of history has long ago been turned over to give place to the rise and fall of other cities and empires, but the prophetic expression is still full of power. To many persons in our own day we may well cry with Ezekiel, "Your rowers have brought you into great waters."

I. First and foremost, this is truly applicable to SINNERS WHO ARE BEGINNING TO TASTE THE RESULT OF THEIR SINS—ungodly persons, who have chosen their own ways and followed their own devices, and now at last are finding that the way of transgressors is hard. Sinners may go unpunished for many a bright hour of the morning of life, but as the day grows older, the shadows fall, and their way is clouded over. I meet with many who may be well assured that God will ultimately punish sin, because the first flakes of the endless fire shower have begun to

fall upon them, and they cannot escape. They are now beginning to reap the first ripe ears of that awful harvest whose sheaves of woe shall fill their bosoms, world without end. In those who sin with the flesh the result of their vices is seen and felt to a horrible degree *in their own bodies*. Many a man bears in his bones the sins of his youth. Around us are many who already wish that they had never been born, because of the condition into which their wantonness has brought them. The sin which at first seemed a dainty luxury, sweet to their palate, has now developed into a corrosive poison in their bowels, eating their flesh as with fire, and burning up their spirits. Lust was their pilot, the siren of pleasure lured them on, and now they are wrecks, breaking to pieces on the rocks. Despondent, ashamed, haunted with nameless terrors, afraid to hope, they dare neither live nor die. They are overcome with alarm, as they look forward, for if it is darkness behind, and night around, tenfold blackness lies before them by reason of their transgression and their sins. O sinner spent with sin, "Your rowers have brought you into great waters."

Certain transgressors are beginning to feel the result of wrong-doing *in their circumstances*. They have brought themselves from wealth to poverty by drunkenness, dishonesty, or vice. The owner of a fair estate is compelled to herd with the lowest of the low in a filthy lodging. He who was educated for a profession, and is skilled in learned languages, employs his superior knowledge to beg and cheat, and even then remains in loathsome rags. Not even in this world does sin pay its servants good wages. Drunkenness and idleness clothe a man with rags; these are the livery of sin. Those godly men who spend their lives in the painful business of seeking out the fallen often harrow our feelings with the dread stories of those who are truly prodigals, not merely in parable, but in literal fact, who have wasted their substance in riotous living, and now, if it were possible, would be glad to fill their belly with the husks that swine do eat, and no man gives to them. Many a broken-down sinner has in this house found his way back to the great Father. Oh, that it may be so during this service! Sorely tossed about, in sickness and in want, both of them the result of your sin, you are in a sorry plight at this hour. "Your rowers have brought you into great waters." You would not take Christ to be your pilot in your youth, you were too proud to accept your father's God, your mother's Savior; you must necessarily have your own way, and follow your own devices, and now the desperate tugging of your passions have brought you into deep waters indeed. You said in your pride, "I will not be tied to my mother's apron strings," but you are now a captive, fastened with bonds of steel to one who will be no mother to you, but a destroyer. You gave up your boat to pirate rowers, and now see where they have brought you! The waters about you are dark and tempestuous, and no port is near. One thing you can do and I would have you do it—warn others lest they come into your place of danger. With broken health and lost estate, at least be humane, and when you are most in your misery, call to yourself the young who have not yet known your evil ways, and charge them to shun your course. If you cannot be an example, I would use you as a beacon. "Though hand join in hand, yet shall not the wick-

ed be unpunished," and you are a proof of the same. "Your rowers have brought you into great waters."

Others who have not yet been afflicted by any outward providence are beginning to feel *the sting of sin upon their conscience.* This will, I trust, be used for their good. I trust the Lord has a kind intent towards them, and is condemning them in the inward court of conscience, that they may not be judged and condemned with the godless world at the last great day. The Lord's eye perceives many that once were at ease in their iniquities who are now sorely troubled by their own reflections. Like the troubled sea, they cannot rest; their memories are constantly casting up the mire and dirt of their former transgressions. There is no peace for them day or night. They know that they must die, they have heard also of judgment to come, the blast of the trumpet of doom is sounding in their ears, and therefore they cannot sleep at night, nor be at rest by day. A tempest is hurrying up; black masses of cloud hang overhead, thunder mutters from afar, and the lightning lights up the sky. Sin is ever before them. It casts ashes into their bread, and gall into their drink. Their merry comrades cannot make them out, for they were once as wild as any. Men wonder why it is that for them there seems to be no music in the lute, no pleasure in the bowl, no joy in the dance. They know not the voice which cries to the troubled one—"Your rowers have brought you into great waters."

O soul, you have now come where your sins compass you about, and shut you in on every side. They seemed as if they were all forgotten, like dead men, out of mind, but they have risen again, and in their rising you have fallen. As a man pursued by wolves in the steppes of Russia seeks to escape from the hungry pack which hurry on so swiftly, so are you trying to escape from your sins, but all in vain. You hear their howls behind you as they chase you with untiring feet, and what can you do? The sins of twenty years ago are upon you! Fierce sins of your hot and youthful blood, which seemed so harmless then, they are demons now from which you cannot hide. What would you give to forget them? But they will not be forgotten. The devourers are near you; their hot breath comes upon you! Their fangs are in your flesh! They taste your blood! Verily, you have made a poor business of life to become the prey of such horrors! At a time of life when many a Christian man is in full vigor of usefulness, you are worn out, and near death, and near hell. Your sins are upon you, even now they overtake you, and what will you do? O gallant boat, of the silken sail, and the painted hull, where are you now? "Your rowers have brought you into great waters."

Listen to me, then, while I speak to you words which may seem harsh, but they are all meant in love to you. Listen, I say, and take warning from your present sorrows.

If the waters are great today, what will they be before long? If now you cannot bear the wages of sin, what will you do when they are paid to you in full? "What will you do in the swelling of Jordan?" What will you do when they wipe the clammy sweat from your brow, and tell you that a few more gasps will send you into eternity? O man, however great the

waters are now, they are as nothing compared with what they will be at the last! You are only running with the footmen now, and yet they weary you, what will you do when you contend with horses? When the Lord shall walk through the sea with His horses, through the heap of great waters, what will become of you? Your case is lamentable. My heart weeps for you. "Your rowers have brought you into great waters."

Learn, I pray you, this piece of timely wisdom. Your rowers have brought you into no quiet waters, they have found you no harbors of delight; shall they any longer be your rowers? Do this one thing to your own soul if you have any sense left, or any pity for yourself; cry out against those who are ruining you. Now say, "I will go no further with these rowers. God helping me, the helm shall be reversed." If such is your resolve, and the great Pilot shall come to your help, you will never drink again of the accursed cup, and you will shun the company which has lured you to your present wretchedness. Hear me while I cry to you, "Escape for your life! Look not behind you!" for maybe you will never have another hope of escaping, but you will henceforth drift from bad to worse, till the worst of all shall come. "Your rowers have brought you into great waters"—have no more to do with them. Oh that the Spirit of the Lord may help you to break the oars and cast the rowers into the sea!

Remember, also, that they have rowed you into the stormy waters, but they cannot row you out of them. You can find no rest by continuing in sin, neither can you save yourself from your present forlorn condition. O man, cry mightily unto God. He will hear you. He has revealed a way of deliverance for you in the person of His dear Son, and all your hope lies there. Have you not heard of Jesus, who can stop the wind, and bring your vessel into an instant calm? While there is life in you there is hope in Christ for you. You are not yet in torment, not yet in hell; still does His good Spirit strive, with the chief of sinners dwell. Therefore, though the sun is gone down for this day, I pray you suffer it not to rise again until you have committed your soul into the hands of your Redeemer. In desperate jeopardy of eternal destruction, cry unto the mighty God for succor and He will make bare His arm and rescue you from your destructions. Despair not. There is a Savior, and a great one, and He has come hither to seek and to save that which was lost. Trust in Him who is mighty to save. By the terror of your destruction, I beseech you believe in the great salvation. Cry—

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

I have spoken very feebly, but I pray the Lord to bless it to every unconverted person within these walls.

II. And now, secondly, I think that I see another ship. It is not black with the grime of the world, it resembles the gilded barge of a mighty prince, but still, for all that, its rowers have brought it into great waters.

This represents THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS BROUGHT INTO DISTRESS. Many men are fondly persuaded that either they need no saving or that they can save themselves. Either in whole or in part, their natural goodness, or their benevolent actions, or their careful attention to external religion, will secure their safety. They suppose that by going to hear the gospel, by participating in sacraments, by contributing towards church work, and the like, they will find themselves borne securely towards the desired haven. This ship is rarely built. It resembles that to which Ezekiel likens Tyre, "They have made all your planks of fir trees from Senir: they have taken cedars from Lebanon to make a mast for you. Of the oaks of Bashan have they made your oars; they have made your benches of ivory inlaid in boxwood, from the isles of Kittim. Of fine linen with embroidered work from Egypt was your sail that it might be to you for an ensign; blue and purple from the isles of Elishah was your awning." There is no end to the gallant show which self-righteousness can exhibit. No ship of Tyre can excel it.

Yet to this glorious ship a trying voyage is appointed. Alas, my friend! Your rowers have brought you into great waters. I would like you to think of the difficult journey which lies before you. The proposal is that you shall row yourself by your good works across yon sea of sin to the port of glory. Before you enter upon a matter it is well to count the cost. Do you not know that, if you are to be saved by obedience to the law of God, your obedience must be absolutely perfect? If there is a breach of one single commandment, although all the others should be scrupulously kept, yet the law is broken, and the course of it descends. If you have a chain, and you break one link, it is of no further use. It is idle to say, "All the other links are strong." The miner would not risk his life upon a chain with one dangerous link, and the strength of the whole chain must be measured, not by its strongest, but by its weakest part. Do you think, my friend, that you can perfectly keep the law of God? Can you do it as long as you live? I should like you to think what great waters the rowers are proposing to take you into if you are to win salvation by obedience which shall never fail or falter. You see from Holy Scripture that God gave His Son Jesus Christ to die for us that we might be saved by His grace. Do you suppose that this gift of Jesus was a superfluity? There would have been no need for that great offering on the part of our Lord Jesus Christ if men can save themselves by their own merits. Calvary is a blot upon the character of Deity if salvation by self is possible. His own Son put to death without a stern necessity for it were the grossest charge that could be brought against the great Father! You certainly are attempting a very singular work if you are to perform that which cost the glorious Son of God His life. Great waters, dear friend—waters too great for your frail vessel.

Look, sirs, you who have been resting in your own righteousness, have you never sinned? Take even today to pieces, has no evil thought, or wrong desire, or wanton imagination, defiled its hours? Have you never spoken a sinful, unkind, untruthful, or proud word? Do you claim to have been absolutely perfect before your Maker from your childhood?

Surely, you must have a brow of brass to make such a boast. What does He say to you? "There is not a just man upon earth, that does good, and sins not." "All we like sheep have gone astray." "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Verily, my friend, "Your rowers have brought you into great waters." If you are to be saved by your works, see where you are! Any one day you may slip and stumble, and then what becomes of all your past life? For, "When the righteous man turns away from his righteousness, and commits iniquity, all his righteousness that he has done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he has trespassed, and in his sin that he has sinned, in them shall he die." If this is your style of standing before God, it is a poor standing indeed. Can you ever be sure that you will be safe in an hour's time? Come, my friend, can you be sure that you have done enough, and felt enough, and prayed enough, and given enough alms, and gone a sufficient number of times to the meeting house, or to the church? Can you be sure that it is well with you even now? And if your faith is in a priest, can you be sure that he who baptized you, and confirmed you, had the apostolic succession? Can you be sure that he that gave you the sacrament was truly ordained? When you lie dying, a thousand questions will haunt you! You will have to ask yourself about this, and that, and the other, and on your present way of going to work you can never be sure.

The religion of self-righteousness never proposes such a thing as security. It does not give the quiet of faith, much less the deep repose of full assurance. "Your rowers have brought you into great waters." Uncertainty follows uncertainty, and the wind of fear tosses the billows of doubt. You will have to slave your fingers to the bone with incessant efforts, and then never have done. Your life will be one perpetual treadmill, and you will never be an inch the higher. You might as well attempt to sail across the Atlantic on a dried leaf of autumn, as hope to reach heaven by your own works. You have no good works, man; you are incapable of good works. Your motive is tainted, and it pollutes all you do. Self-salvation is your aim, and therefore, you are serving yourself, and not your God. The motive is the essence of the deed. Now, the grand motive which makes virtue, virtue, is absent in the selfish heart. The motive of love is needful to acceptance with God, and you know nothing of it. As yet, all your labor comes of a joyless servitude, it is slave's work for a slave's wage, and the wage you will get, because you are a sinner, will be no more than death when all is done. "Your rowers have brought you into great waters."

I remember when I reached those same terrible seas. I used, as a youth, sometimes to think that I was as good as other lads, and perhaps I was, for I had not fallen into the grosser vices. I fancied that if anybody was saved by a moral life, I might be. But oh, when God lifted the veil of my nature, and I saw what my heart really was, I sang another tune. I had been down into the cellar of my heart a great many times in the dark, and it seemed pretty fair, but when the Holy Spirit opened the shutters, and let in the light, what loathsome abominations I saw there! My life, too, no longer appeared to be the goodly thing I had imagined it.

Ah, no! My comeliness was turned into corruption. Let but a man get the light of God streaming into His soul, convicting Him of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come, and all reliance upon self, in any form, will seem to him to be the most hateful of crimes. What crime is there that is more like the pride of Lucifer than the pride of a wretched rebel, who talks about meriting heaven, and finding entrance among glorified spirits, without washing his robes in the blood of Jesus, under the pretence that they were never foul. Does he imagine that he will be admitted to the courts of the Eternal King, to sing his own praises, and thus insult the Lord? While others come there through rich and free and sovereign grace, and therefore, rapturously adore almighty love, is he to reach the blissful shores to magnify his own excellence? I tell you, sir, that if you have put to sea in the boat of self-righteousness, however strong the rowers who tug those three banks of oars, and make the vessel leap through the waves, the day shall come when you will hear a voice across the waters crying, "Your rowers have brought you into great waters: the east wind has broken you in the midst of the seas." The voyage is too great for you; shipwreck is sure. May God give you grace to shun the attempt! Flee from your own works to Christ's work. Place your trust where God has placed His love, namely, in the Lord Jesus. Then shall you have good works indeed, but they shall be the cargo which you carry, not the ship which carries you. They shall then be grounded upon the motive of gratitude, and not of selfishness, and then shall real virtue be possible to you—virtue based on love to God. When you are delivered from your sin, and safe in the righteousness of Christ, then will you say, as each believer does when his heart is warm with affection—

"Loved of my God, for Him again
With love intense I burn:
Chosen of Him before time began,
I choose Him in return."

Thus have we seen two gallant ships in grievous straits, and we have hearkened to counsels by which we may avoid their dangers. May God bless my simple word!

III. But now, very briefly, there is a third case, THE ERRORIST IN HIS DIFFICULTIES. This is a very common sight in these wayward times. I might say to many a man who has ventured out to sea under the strong impulse of curiosity, trusting to his own proud intellect, "Your rowers have brought you into great waters." The only safe course for a thoughtful man is to trust in God, and to accept the Scriptures as infallible truth. There is our anchorage. Every mind needs a fixed point; we must have infallibility somewhere; my infallible guide is Holy Scripture. I know of no other anchorage. The revelation of God to man in the person of the Son of God, even Christ Jesus, is the one and only hope of men, and the word of the Lord in which we have the divine testimony to the appointed Savior is our oracle and court of appeal.

But there are men who cannot abide this, and first of all, I think that they begin to get into great waters *when they resolve to be guided by their own judgment* and their own intellect, without submitting to the teachings of Christ. It is proud and dangerous work to set up to be your own

guide. You are undertaking a very large responsibility when you refuse to sit at Jesus' feet, and prefer to assume the teacher's chair. If you will rely upon your own wisdom, wit, and will, you choose a highland road, rough, rugged, and full of perils. You cast away the possibility of that sweet peace which comes of reposing on superior wisdom; you miss, in fact, that joy of faith, that sweet rest of mind which is the reward of the lowly of heart. Simple trust in Christ is to me the wellspring of comfort. To believe because the Lord speaks is rest to my heart. I could not live except as I leave questions with God, and accept His word instead of all reasoning.

O my wise and thoughtful friend, do you know what will soon happen to you? You will probably fall under the domination of another's intellect; you will become the shadow of some greater man. The man who will be guided by nobody is usually guided by someone more foolish or more knavish than himself. I have seen both cases. I have seen a man of superior abilities crouching at the feet of a semi-idiot, who seemed to the other to be a profound mystic, and I have also seen the deep, designing man of brazen impudence towering above an abler man, and cowing him into submission. He swore that he would be independent, and to be so he cast off all old beliefs, and fettered himself to foolish falsehood. He would not stay at home with his father to partake of the joyous heritage, for he longed for freedom. Alas! Before long a master sent him into his fields to feed swine. He could not believe the simplicities of truth, but now he groans beneath the monstrosities of superstition—

"Hear the just law, the judgment of the skies!
He that hates truth shall be the dupe of lies;
And he that will be cheated to the last,
Delusion, strong as hell, shall bind him fast."

The man has given up the old doctrine because it was difficult, and has accepted new doctrine which is ten times more difficult. He would not be credulous, and now he is a hundred times more so. Creation staggered him, and he tries to believe in evolution. Faith in Jesus seemed hard, but he must now accept Agnosticism. The difficulties of unbelief are ten times greater than the difficulties of faith. We may require a great stretch of faith to accept all that the Holy Spirit teaches, but once believe in His faithful word, and you have found a way of life; if you do not do this, you have continually to enlarge the gullet of your credulity, and remain forever receptive of mere wind, which can never fill the mind. Unbelief calls you to go from improbability to impossibility, from extravagance to romance, from romance to raving. I appeal to candid persons who have ventured from the moorings of faith to sport upon the waves of modern speculation, whether they are not conscious of a great loss. When faith evaporates there is a speedy departure of spiritual power. The new notions intoxicate, but they do not sustain. The near approach to God is gone when the old faith in the atonement is shaken, and the enjoyment of hallowed communion ceases when the din of perpetual controversy frightens away the dove of peace. I have heard it remarked that the modern apostles, when they preach, often discourse very prettily—for they are clever men, but all sense of enjoyment of what they preach is

lacking. They are not themselves feeding upon what they hand out. There is no beaming light upon their faces as of men who are enamored by the doctrines they proclaim. Small delight can their teachings cause them, and you see that it is so. They are not heralds arrayed to adorn a banquet, but surgeons gathered to an operation. Well may they be without enjoyment, for there is nothing to enjoy. Who smiles as he sits down to a meatless, marrowless bone? Who rejoices as he lifts a shining cover which has nothing beneath it? In the dogmas of modern thought there is not enough mental meat to bait a mousetrap, as to food for a soul, there is none of it; an ant would starve on such small grain. No atonement, no regeneration, no eternal love, no covenant; what is there worth thinking upon? "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him." They have taken away the light, the life, the love, the liberty of free grace, and they have given us nothing instead thereof but pretty toys, which they themselves will break before many days are past. O sirs, it is all very fine to be amused in the heyday of our health with "bubbles from the brunnen" of superior intellects, but times will come when the soul will have to do business on great waters, and then it will need substantial help. When a man comes face to face with eternity, he demands certainties about which his heart has no shadow of question.

I have lain by the hour together consciously looking into death, in as bitter suffering of body and mind as a man might well endure, and I tell you nothing will then satisfy the heart but the atoning sacrifice; nothing will avail to clear the sky but a distinct view of Jesus as a substitute and a vicarious sacrifice for human sin. Nothing cheers me at such times but the eternal covenant, ordered in all things and sure; promises founded upon the faithfulness of God; grace given by the sovereignty of God to guilty and undeserving men; *you* may do with lighter things, but I must have these, and nothing less. Grace, with omnipotence and immutability to back it, will bear my spirit up, and nothing else. But if you will let go the old gospel, if you will go from one new theory to another, after a short time you will come into misery of the direst order. I have seen men give up first of all the communion of saints, then all belief in the Word of God. After that they have gone into the common pleasures of worldlings, and so they have drifted and drifted till at length the seat of the scorner, the song of the drunkard, or the stews of the unchaste have afforded them carrion suited to their taste. How many, who only meant to go a little from the old ways of truth, have gone too far aside even for themselves! Truly, my speculative friend, "Your rowers have brought you into great waters." I am not intending to follow you. You are so wise that I am satisfied to be a fool, because I would wish to be the reverse of what you are. I am content to be weak, for your strong mind is bringing you small profit. I would not at any time rest my soul's eternal hope upon a theory, or upon the workings of my own brain. I need a firmer foundation. On the truth revealed in *this* Book, on the clear and certain verities of Holy Scripture, I dare risk my soul for time and for eternity, without the shadow of a doubt. I would earnestly entreat you to do the same, lest by and by your rowers bring you into great waters!

Why, to me it seems very great waters to be brought into to be forced to say that I know nothing. One walking with me observed, with some emphasis, "I do not believe as you do. I am an Agnostic." "Oh," I said to him. "Yes. That is a Greek word, is it not? The Latin word, I think, is *ignoramus."* He did not like it at all. Yet I only translated his language from Greek to Latin. These are strange waters to get into, when all your philosophy brings you is the confession that you know nothing, and the stolidity which enables you to glory in your ignorance. As for those of us who rest in Jesus, we know and have believed something, for we have been taught eternal verities by Him who cannot lie. Our Master was not known to say, "It may be," or, "It may not be," but He had an authoritative style, and testified, "Verily, verily, I say unto you." Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle of what He has taught us shall cease to be the creed of our souls. We feel safe in this assurance, but should we quit it, we should expect soon to find ourselves in troubled waters.

IV. Now I pass on to dwell for a moment upon another sight, which is as sad as any of the others, perhaps more sad. Behold THE BACKSLIDER FILLED WITH HIS OWN WAYS. O wanderer from the Lord your God, "Your rowers have brought you into great waters." I have seen and talked with some to whom this text has become an awful truth. There are some here tonight who, if I brought them upon this platform, and they had the courage to speak, could unfold a tale of measureless misery which they have brought upon themselves by departing from the Lord. Look at yonder woman. She once rejoiced in the gospel as one that finds great spoil. It is thirty years ago, but at that time she knew the truth, and loved it. She was the joy of the pastor who brought her to Christ, for she was earnest, intense, devoted. There were years of gracious walking, and then there came a temptation. She grew cold in heart, she was poor, she was infatuated, she turned aside, she was wretched, and she found comfort in the glass. Drop the veil. It is many years ago since that fall, and she plunged on in suffering, misery, and sin, such as I will not attempt to describe. She became a mere wreck; death stared her in the face. She returned to us, and said, "Let me be taken into the church before I die, for I have never lost, after all, the life of God in my soul, but, oh, I stepped aside, and from that day sorrow has pursued me. Restore me to the church, for I am by grace restored to God." As you looked at her, you said, "Poor weather-beaten boat! It was an ill day for you when your rowers brought you into these great waters."

You know how it begins; first of all, that holy, joyful walk with God is lost. You used to sing from morning to night for joy of heart, for, like Enoch, you walked with God. Alas! That music came to a close. It did not seem much—merely to lose rapturous enjoyment, but it was much in itself, and it meant more. Then there came a loss of relish for the means of grace. The services were long, and the ministry grew dull; the prayer meeting was not worth attending, and weeknight services were too much of a good thing. Secret prayer was neglected, and the Bible was unread. The forms of religion were kept up longer than the enjoyment of it, but

there was no life, no power in them. After that there came a general fault-finding with brethren, a quarrelling with sisters; a constant quibbling at this and that. Nothing was good enough. The soul was drifting, and it fancied that the church and the world were no longer what they were, just as men in a boat fancy that the shore is moving. How many endeavor to be blind to their own declensions by pretending to see fault and falsehood in other people! Then there came distaste for Christian company; godly people were too commonplace and prosaic. The love of something "brighter" called them away from solid conversation. Occasionally they were found in places doubtfully virtuous and unquestionably irreligious. Songs other than those of Zion began to be relished, and teachings not of the Bible were listened to.

All the while there was an inward unrest, and there was a yearning of the spirit for better things. The man felt, every now and then, that he was losing sight of shore, and floating into dangerous places, he was uneasy as to where the currents would carry him, and he did not feel safe under his new pilot. Then on a black day there were rocks ahead—rocks from which in former years his vessel had steered clear with ease, and now a current and a wind drove the ship that way, and before he was well aware of it the man was wrecked. To quit our figure, the sin which the man once hated, he now played with, he did not mean to yield, but he gave way a little, and soon became the slave of appetite. He that sat at the sacramental table was now to be seen intoxicated. She that would have communed only with believers in Christ was now found in very dubious society.

At last it went further; it came to actual and open sin, and ruin followed. I cannot tell how long that sinner may remain in his sin. How long David continued impenitent I need not mention, but oh that he had never fallen into it! Oh that he had never idled that day away upon his bed so as only to rise at eventide to see a sight that led him to rush headlong into foul transgression! O brothers and sisters, when you begin to get a little away from Christ you do not know how far you may yet go, nor how soon you may commit the grossest crimes. There may be some here tonight who once were preachers of the gospel, or earnest Sunday school teachers, or Christian women devoted to the cause of God, and now, alas, they are separated from the fellowship of the church, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, outcasts from the communion of saints!

O friend, "Your rowers have brought you into great waters." Oh that He would come who owns your boat, which shed His blood for you! Oh that He would step into your vessel, and take the helm and turn you around tonight by a great stroke of His almighty grace, and turn your head to the port of peace! Do you ask, "Will He receive me again?" Listen to His voice; He says to you, "Turn, O backsliding children, says the Lord; for I am married unto you." Take with you words, and come to Him at once, for He is ready to receive you. Do not linger. But O backslider in heart, before yet you are filled with your own ways, come home, come home and say, "Return unto your rest, O my soul." Remember that if you are a child of God you will never be happy in sin. You are spoiled for the

world, the flesh, and the devil. In the day when you were regenerated there was put into you a vital principle, which can never die nor be content to dwell in the dead world. You will have to come back, if indeed you belong to the family; prodigal as you are, you are still a child. Though you return with every bone broken, you will have to return. He that is married to you has not forgotten the marriage bond. Though you have forsaken Him, and defiled yourself with many lovers, yet it is written, "He hates putting away." He cannot endure divorce; His almighty love will win you back. He cannot and He will not give you up. Read those memorable passages in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, where the Holy Spirit uses that simile which I scarcely dare use tonight, where the most defiled and corrupt of adulterous souls are still bidden to come back to their first husband, because the marriage bond still holds good, and the Lord will neither let them go, nor suffer them to continue in sin. "Your rowers have brought you into great waters." Oh for a steersman to guide you into port! Return, return. I leave my text and those to whom it applies with the God of all grace. May He bless you all, for Christ's sake! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
PART OF PSALM 107.**

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—426, 589, 587.

Mr. Spurgeon, having been taken by a severe attack of his old complaint, is unable to write anything to his friends this week from Mentone; but he begs an earnest interest in their prayers.

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

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

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

"AND WE ARE": A JEWEL FROM THE REVISED VERSION
NO. 1934

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 19, 1886,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 19, 1885.

DEAR friends, the most of my text will be found in our Old Version; but for once I shall ask you to look elsewhere for a part of it.

A genuine fragment of inspired Scripture has been dropped by our older translators, and it is too precious to be lost. Did not our Lord say, "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost"? The half lost portion of our text is restored to us in the Revised Version. Never did a translation of the New Testament fail more completely than this Revised Version has done as a book for general reading, but as an assistant to the student it deserves honorable mention, despite its faults. It exhibits here and there special beauties, and has, no doubt, in certain places brought into notice words of sacred Scripture which had fallen out; we have a notable instance in my present text. Turn to the First Epistle of John, the third chapter, at the first verse—

"Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God."

So far we keep to our Authorized Version. Now read the Revised Version, and note the words added—

"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God: and such we are."

The word *"such"* is not in the original. We therefore leave it out, and then we get the words—AND WE ARE. There are only two words in the Greek—"and we are." That the addition is correct I have not the slightest doubt. Those authorities upon which we depend—those manuscripts which are best worthy of notice—have these words; and they are to be found in the Vulgate, the Alexandrian, and several other versions. They ought never to have dropped out. In the judgment of the most learned, and those best to be relied on, these are veritable words of inspiration. So far as doctrine is concerned, it does not matter much whether they are or are not in the original text, because we get the same words farther on. *"Beloved, now are we children of God,* and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him even as He is."

The point that struck me as being most worthy of notice was that when the apostle had said, "We shall be called children of God," he then adds—We are not only to be called so, but *we are* so. The glory of it is

that we now have this thing. We have it in possession, *"and we are."* This little interjected assertion, "and we are," brings most forcibly before my own mind the truth of our present sonship towards God—*"That we should be called children of God: and we are."*

Let me now introduce to you my text as I mean to preach from it—

"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God: and we are."

Our text begins with the exclamation "Behold." *This word "Behold" is a word of wonder*. John had lived among wonders. John's life, from the time of his conversion, was a life of wonders, not only in what he saw with his natural eye, but in all the sights that the Lord gave him to see with his spiritual eye when He appeared to him in "the isle which is called Patmos." His life was crowned with wonders in his memorable escape from martyrdom, when, according to tradition, he was cast into a caldron of boiling oil, but came out unharmed, his Master having determined that he was not by martyrdom to glorify His name. If ever there was a seer among men to who wonders became common things, it was John. Yet as he wrote this heavenly epistle, he could not help bursting out in exclamations of amazement such as do not generally come from writers so much as from speakers, *"Behold,"* he says, *"Behold,* what manner of love!"

I believe, my brethren, that if we realized the truth of our own adoption into the family of God, we would never leave off marveling at it. That any man of mortal race should become a child of God might astound us, but that we ourselves should be such should amaze us beyond degree. We ought to cry, "Behold! Behold!" Let us begin to talk of it now, for we shall never cease to speak of it when we reach the New Jerusalem. Our regeneration and adoption are complex miracles of grace; a cluster of wonders condensed into one. It would seem too good to be true if the Lord Himself had not revealed it. We will call upon angels, and principalities, and powers, and say to them with delighted wonder, *"Behold,* what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us." Admire, O sanctified intelligences, that God should do this for unworthy sons of Adam!—

"Behold what wondrous grace
The Father has bestowed
On sinners of a mortal race,
To call them sons of God!"

But this "Behold" is also a note of instruction. It is as if the man of God said, "Stand still, and consider the extraordinary love of God." Do not speak of it, for some of these things slip glibly from the tongue, but sit down, and ponder, and weigh, and mark and behold. *Behold,* what manner of love. Here, take your glass, and look at it microscopically. Study it. Wonder at it. Study it with every faculty concentrated upon it, for you shall find new excellences in it every time you look into it. "Behold, what manner of love," the very manner of it is exceedingly sublime and adorable. Do not merely glance and go your way, but stop and rest, and pry into this secret, comparing this love with all other loves, and the manner of it with the manner of men. Come here and dig where there are nuggets of pure gold to reward every moment of your industry. Here, sink your

shafts, and go into the depths to bring up this priceless treasure. *Behold;* read, mark, learn, inwardly digest, and still *behold* again. Look, and look, and look on, for there will be no end to the discoveries you will make. When you have looked, remember that you have not been gazing upon a mere appearance, but have beheld an actual fact, "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God." When you have beheld this, then look again, and behold with equal admiration that it is no supposition, or fancy, or romance, the Lord calls us children, *"and we are."*

Thus having introduced the text with its own note of exclamation, I invite you to behold the two wonders which are enshrined within it. I would first say—*Let us behold with joyful wonder our being called the sons of God,* and then, secondly, *let us behold the equal wonder of our being really so,* expressed in those three words, "and we are."

I. First, then, behold THE WONDER OF OUR BEING CALLED THE SONS OF GOD.

Who calls us so? That is the wonder. Men take upon themselves great names without any right to them. There are degrees among men that are degrees of shame, because the persons who claim them were never justly entitled to them. It is one thing for us to call ourselves children of God, and another thing for the Father to bestow His love so that we are truly called the sons of God. Where does this princely title of "sons of God" come from? Who calls the saints the sons of God?

The Father Himself does so. He speaks unto them as unto children. He deals with them as with sons. He is pleased in infinite love to bid them say, "Our Father," and He answers to them by calling them children and heirs. He acknowledges their sonship, and pities them as a father pities his children. He has called them sons, saying, "I will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord God Almighty." Oh, what a blessing it is to have God calling you His child, the great Almighty and Infinite One looking upon you with a Father's love, and saying, "You are My son!" He speaks the truth, and we may believe it, and be sure; He knows His own children, and gives the name of sons to none whom He will in the end disown. He calls us His children, *and we are.*

Who has called us the sons of God? *Jesus Himself,* the first-born among many brethren, has called us so. Did He not speak of, "My Father and your Father"? What did He mean when He was not ashamed to call us brethren? Everywhere our dear Lord and Master speaks of us as belonging to the one family of which He is the Head. By sweetly taking us into union with Himself Jesus practically calls us sons of God, *and we are.*

The Holy Spirit also dwells in all the heirs of heaven, and thereby calls them sons of God. He bears witness with our spirit that we are the sons of God, and it is He who is given to us to be "the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." That "Abba, Father," of ours is prompted by the Spirit of grace who would never prompt a stranger and an alien to claim kinship with the Lord. Oh no! The witness of the Holy Spirit is the

witness of truth. A filial spirit implanted by the Spirit of God cannot deceive us. Thus Father, Son, and Holy Spirit call us the children of God, *and we are.*

With these *the holy angels* are in full accord. Not in words, perhaps, but in acts and deeds, which speak quite as loudly, they declare us to be the children of God. They bear us up in their hands, lest we dash our foot against a stone, and this they do because we belong to the divine family. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation"? They own that we are heirs of God, and therefore they act as our waiting servants.

All Providence, brethren, owns us to be children of God, if we are indeed so. This is especially true of chastening providences. When they come to us they gently whisper, "What son is there whom the Father chastens not?" Yes, trials and afflictions, especially such as come for the truth's sake, and because of our love to Christ, are tokens of sonship. The persecution which is involved in holy and separated living is the witness of providence that we are no longer of the evil seed, but are adopted sons of God.

Yes, and I trust that there are some here who can modestly say that they have even *the witness of men,* for they are called the children of God even by men who do not know much about the mysteries of the new birth. "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God," they shall not only be so, but they shall extort from others the confession that they are so. I am sure that when William Penn dealt so kindly and peacefully with the Indians when everybody else was false to them, the untutored man of the woods felt that the Quakers were children of the Great Spirit. Their peacefulness was a mark of their descent from the God of peace. Any man or woman who shall be well known to bear injuries with patience, and to make no return but that of doing good for evil, shall be recognized, even by scoffers and blasphemers, as a child of God. God is love, and wherever there is love, men with more or less of intelligence trace it to God. They cannot help it. Blessed are you, beloved, if you have the witness even of your enemies that you are the children of God, and you will have that witness if your lives are conformed to the holy law of love!

Behold, then, how God's people are called the sons of God, called with a divine calling, to which all things bear corroborating witness, so that they believe, and are sure, and in reply to all voices attesting their sonship they cry, *"and we are."*

Inquire next, *what is involved in this calling them to be the children of God?* What is there conspicuous in it? Read the passage. "Behold what manner of_____. What is the word? "What manner of *gift* the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God"? It might have been so written, and have been quite correct, but it is not so written. "Behold what manner of *honor* the Father has bestowed"? No, no! "Behold what manner of *love* the Father has bestowed upon us," as much as to say that the adopting of a man to be a son of God is an act which involves so much of love that you are bidden especially to fix your

eyes on the love of it, and to notice its manner. "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God."

Now just think for a minute what *intense* love is manifested to that man who is favored to be called a child of God. It is love in the highest degree. What love you would have in your heart if you were to take a wanton and malicious enemy, and say, "You shall be my son!" If one had wronged you, and despised you, and defied your authority, and you should say to him, "You shall be my child from this time forth," what a singular deed of love this would be! Yet it might not be very much for you to do, my dear friend, for you may be, after all, nothing very great; it would, however, be the utmost your love could devise. Only think of what it must be for God—even that Infinite and Eternal Spirit—to say, "You shall be My child. I will take you, though you are an heir of wrath, and make you Mine." Herein, indeed, is love, love worth the beholding.

It is certainly an *undeserved* love, because no man can possibly deserve to be made into a child of God. Grace in this instance is the sole source of the stream of goodness. You might think it possible that you could deserve some ordinary gift, but such a gift as to be made a son of God you could not deserve. If you had never sinned, I do not see that you could have had any right to sonship. The most faithful service does not make a servant into a son. Had you been perfect, what would you have given to God as purchase money for this high dignity? He is great and glorious without your service. To be promoted to be a prince of the blood royal of heaven—it is not possible for any man to deserve this. No works can climb to this lofty place; faith only can reach it by the power of grace. "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." This power, this privilege, this honor of sonship before God, is gained in no other way but that of faith.

And oh! See the blessed manner of love there must be in it, since there is *everlasting* love in it; for, if God makes you to be called a son of God, that is done, and done forever, and it never can be undone. Here is the joy of it. The servant abides not in the house forever, but a son abides ever. The relationships that come of service begin and end. You know it is so among men. You can say to a hired servant—"There, take your money, and be gone." But you cannot say that to your son. Whatever you give him, or do not give him, if he is your son, he *is* your son, and always must be so. Especially is this true of the children of God—that they are not only called the children of God, but it is added *"and we are."* In very deed we are, and ever shall be, His sons. We are made really to be what we are said to be. We are *called* the children of God, and *we are* the children of God, and this cannot be undone. How greatly do I rejoice in the final perseverance of the saints! As I have often said, I would not go across the street to pick up the other kind of salvation, which only saves me for a while, and afterwards lets me slip through. Grace brings me into the family of God, and keeps me there. When the Lord calls me His son, I know what He means; He intends all that *we* mean by the relationship,

and more. He does not mean that He will cast His children away, or suffer them to perish, but He means this—"I will put My fear in their hearts, and they shall not depart from Me," or, as the Lord Jesus puts it, "I give unto My sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand."

"Behold," then, "what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." It is *infinite* love that knows no end. It is the love of the Father—that glorious person of the blessed Trinity in whom the fountain of all grace is seen. It is the Father who in boundless love has called us to be His sons. How I do delight to trace this love up to the Fountainhead! Jesus says, "The Father Himself loves you." It is not the death of Jesus which moved the heart of the Father to love us, as some fondly dream; the truth is that the Father's love is the reason why Jesus was given. "Behold, what manner of love the FATHER has bestowed upon us." How it unveils the heart of the Father when we see that He who gave His Son for us has also bestowed upon us this manner of love, that we should be called His sons! Let us adore and love the great Father of our spirits, whose love is the first cause of all our blessings.

Now, while I am asking for your wonderment in answer to the questions—Who calls us sons? And what is involved in the call? I will reply to another question, *"Who are the persons thus called sons?"* "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon *us*, that *we* should be called children of God." It is bestowed upon us *men* and women. We are poor creatures when we make the best of ourselves, and yet He calls us sons of God. "Unto which of the angels said He at any time, You are My son?" Brethren this dignity is reserved for us, whom He has made a little lower than the angels. Think of what His Only-begotten Son is like—that glorious Son of God of whom He says, "Let all the angels of God worship Him." Behold how in splendor of beneficence He deigns to call us also His sons, and so to put us side by side with the Only-begotten; not on an equality as far as His Godhead is concerned, for that cannot be, but yet bestowing on us that same love with which He loves His Son. He loves us in Christ even as He loves Christ Himself. Behold, what manner of love it is, that *we* should be adopted and regenerated by the living God.

And this is true, recollect, of that poor man who does not know where tomorrow's bread shall come from. You say he is not respectable, but I say that he is right honorable, for God has called him His son. I mean that man whose name was never heard of, who lives in a room in a back street, and when he dies will be buried in the corner of the cemetery, "unwept, unhonored, and unsung." Yes, God has bestowed this manner of love upon him—that he is called one of His sons. Yes, I mean that poor consumptive girl; I mean that lame, decrepit youth; I mean that blind man who begs his bread. Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed on such as these. Poor cottagers, hard-working men and women, cobblers and tinkers, and chimney sweepers, and manual laborers—such as these, He calls the sons of God when He has renewed them by His grace. Ah! And I mean those who are lying yonder in the hospital and

in the workhouse infirmary, who are nearing their last hour upon beds found for them by charity. These are God's children if they believe in Jesus. They pine away till bedsores make it hard to move, and harder to lie still. Dissolved by pain, they are melting away into eternity, but behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon such poor, frail mortals as these, that they should be called the sons of God.

Yet the wonder rises a stage higher when we recollect that these are not only men, but *sinners*. Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us sinful ones, that we should be called the children of God. He has taken us from the dunghill, and washed us, and then made us to sit at His royal table. You know the story of the infant in Ezekiel cast out in the open field, defiled in its own blood, and how He that passed by looked on it, and said, "Live," and washed it, and swaddled it, and fed it. It is just what the Lord has done for us poor sinful men and women. We were cast out under condemnation, but behold what manner of love He has bestowed upon us guilty ones to make us children of God. Alas! Even after we are made His sons we are not free from evil; we still need that abundant grace should have patience with us. We still grieve Him by lukewarmness and backsliding, and yet He calls us children. Behold what manner of love He has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!

There! I do not feel as if I wanted to preach about it; I long to sit down, and cry over it for very joy of heart. That ever God should have put *me* among His children shall be my everlasting wonderment. How could He love such a vain, frail, sinful, troubled creature, full of all manner of infirmities! Yet the Spirit of adoption makes me cry with boldness, "Doubtless You are my Father." I cannot help it. I know that I am His, and I dare not question it. But what manner of love, what manner of love, He has bestowed on me! Do *you* not say the same? Does not the gracious Spirit of God now move on your soul, and make you stand in amazement at divine grace? Do you not melt with humble gratitude? What *was* there in you? What *is* there in you that you should be a son of God? "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ," why are we lifted to such a privilege? The blessing of sonship has earth and heaven wrapped up in it, and all this is ours. If we know ourselves we mourn our want of worthiness, and yet we rejoice that we are the Lord's dear children. When we consider the persons who are called the children of God, there is, indeed, reason to say, "Behold, what manner of love!"

And once more, let me just go over the ground again, and show you *what is connected with being* called *the children of God*.

It is, as it were, God's public acknowledgment of His relation to us; He owns us as sons. Sometimes we hear of clandestine marriages, which may be valid, but the man seems to be ashamed to own his wife. He pleads that he could not introduce her into the noble family, to which he belongs, and so he keeps the marriage in the dark, and he does not own the children. This is after the manner of wicked men, but God is not ashamed of us when He takes us to be His children. It is written concerning our Lord Jesus, "For this cause He is not ashamed to call them

brethren." I have heard of some fine gentleman in London, dressed in all his best, walking out in the park. He had a poor old father who lived in the country, and who came up dressed in his rustic raiment to see his son. As the son was not at home when the father reached the house, he went into the park to find him. Now the fine gentleman did not absolutely disown his father, but he went out of the park at a pretty sharp trot, for fear anybody should say, "Who is that country fellow you were talking with?" He did not like to own his father, because he was a laborer. That is lowly as the mud in the kennel, is it not? We would not thus wonder if the glorious Lord refused to own us. There is such a come-down from the loftiness of His holiness to the depth of our faultiness. But yet He has such love, such a manner of love, that He bestows upon us this honor, that we should be openly called the sons of God. He Himself tells us so in our text. His Spirit makes the avowal. "There," He says, "you poor people that love Me, you sick people, you unknown, obscure people, without any talent, I have published it before heaven and earth, and made the angels know it, that you are My children, and I am not ashamed of you. I glory in the fact that I have taken you for My sons and daughters."

There is, moreover, this involved in it, that He claims our loving obedience. Do not put dishonor upon your Father's name. Stand up for your Father. It is one of the marks of a true child that he cannot bear to say or do anything that would place his Father's name under a cloud. God, as it were, stakes His honor upon the character of every one of His people. He has said, "They shall be called My children." Now, if you do anything that is wrong or base, what will men think of your Father? He has condescended to call you a child, do not let His name be evil spoken of through you. He has put this high honor upon us, that we should be called His sons and daughters, let us seek so to behave ourselves that men may see our good works, and glorify our Father who is in heaven.

I have taken up all this time with the first part of the verse, but we must not forget the second part of it, *"and we are."* I shall only introduce it to your meditation and indeed this is all that is needed, if you are able to repeat the words on your own account, and say, *"and we are."*

II. The second and greatest wonder is THE WONDER OF OUR REALLY BEING THE SONS OF GOD. *"And we are."*

Adoption gives us the name of God's children; the new birth gives us the nature of God's children, and so in both senses *we are*. Adoption is the legal act by which our Father receives us; regeneration is that spiritual deed by which we receive the nature of our Father. Every man that is really adopted into the family of God also really becomes a son of God by being begotten again unto a lively hope. I want to put it to you, my hearers, whether you can on this double ground join in these inspired words, and say, *"And we are."*

Let us work out the question. Are we really the children of God? We must answer that question by another—Do we truly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? I have already quoted the inspired declaration, "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." We *can* answer that ques-

tion. Are we, believing in the Lord Jesus Christ with all our heart? Is He our confidence? Do we trust in His blood and righteousness? If so, if we believe in Him, then He has given us the right and the power to become the sons of God.

That question alone might settle it, but let us go a little farther. If we indeed can say, *"and we are,"* then we have received some measure of the nature of God. Have you, brethren, become spiritual? God is a spirit. Do you hate sin? God is holy. Do you love that which is right? Let your conscience speak. Do you endeavor to act generously? Does love rule you? Do you seek to be full of pity, and tender, and courteous, and kind? Have you love to God, and love to men? For, if not, you have not the nature of God, for God is love. Have you somewhat of that nature, and is there within you a longing and a striving to have the whole nature of God in you, as far as it can dwell in mortal man? Remember, no person can be a child of God if he has not something of likeness to God. If you are not in the least like your Father, then you make a mistake if you profess to be His child. "You are made partakers of the divine nature," says one of the apostles, "having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

Am I a child of God? Then listen; I have a *love* to my Father. If you are truly born from above, your heart goes out in longings after Him to whom you owe your heavenly birth. If you are no child of God, you can live without Him; indeed, you will try to do so. To the most of men God is virtually non-existent. They look up to the skies, and view the wondrous lights of heaven, but they never think of Him who shines through them. They do not believe that there is such a Being, or else they have to admit that there must be a design and a designer, and there is an end of the matter with them; whether there is a God or not is no matter of importance to them. How different is it with the regenerate! To us God is all in all. To love God is the great fact of my life. The tears run down my cheeks when I think of Him. He is everything to me—

"Do not I love You from my soul?
Then let me nothing love:
Dead be my heart to every joy,
When Jesus cannot move.
Have You a lamb in all your flock
I would disdain to feed?
Have You a foe, before whose face
I fear Your cause to plead?"

It cannot long be a question with the child of God whether he loves his Father or not. It may occasionally happen that he has to make the inquiry, for times and circumstances will test him, but before long he comes to the solemn conclusion, "You know all things; You know that I love You."

More than that—if I am a child of God, I learn to *trust* my Father. I do not know a more delightful act of childhood than trustfulness in a parent. And how often if we trust God we shall be rewarded! A circumstance happened to me yesterday. I cannot help telling it to you. I received a note from one of the trustees of the Orphanage to say that the running

account was so low that, when the checks were paid on Friday morning, we should have overdrawn our banking account. I did not like that state of things, but I did not fret about it. I breathed a prayer to God that He would send money to put into the bank to keep the account right. Last night, at nearly ten o'clock, I opened a letter that came from Belfast, and it had in it a check for £200, being the amount left as a legacy. I wrote across my acknowledgment, "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together!" That amount put the account square for the time being, and though the Orphanage has no ready money to go on with, still *that* does not matter, God will send more means during the week, and at all other times when the expenditure calls for it. At the moment when I opened the letter, and found the £200, I felt as if my hair stood on end, because of the conscious nearness of the Lord my God. My brother, Hugh Hannah, when he sent that check, and sent it on that particular day, did not know that it would come just when I was praying to God for help in a time of trouble, yet it came exactly when it was sought for. If I were to tell my own personal experience of the way in which God hears prayer, it would seem to you as if it could not be true, it would appear too romantic. But oh, it is a blessed thing to take everything to God, little or big, and leave all with Him! I am resolved to live and die trusting in the living God, and you shall all mark for yourselves whether He forsakes me, or bears me through. See how your child trusts you. He comes to you, and cries, "Please, father, I have a thorn in my finger," or, "Please, father, I have lost my pocket handkerchief." No matter what his trials are, the child brings them all to father or mother. You turn from your business, and attend to him. You say, "My dear, I will see to you directly." You love your little boy, and therefore his little concerns are not too little for you. And God, who gave us to be called the sons of God, teaches us to cry, *"and we are,"* and leads us in that confidence to go to Him with each day's burden and care, and prove for ourselves that *we are* the objects of the Father's love.

Now, the true child of God not only shows love and trust, but he also suffers *sorrow* when he has grieved his Father. If you grieve over sin, if you grieve over error, if you grieve over your omissions, if you go to God with tears in your eyes because you are not what He would have you to be, this sorrow proves that you are one of His children. He that can sin without sorrow will one day sorrow without hope. A broken heart is one of the surest signs of sonship. We have this grief, and this proves that we are sons of God, *"and we are."*

You may also know a child by his *joys*. If a child has joy when his father is glad, when his father's name is honored, oh, then you believe that he is his father's child! I thought to myself one day, "Well, I have preached this gospel to vast crowds of people, but is it my own? Perhaps I have only an official hold of it, and have no personal grip of it for myself." I had a day's respite, and I went in to hear the word in a humble, out-of-the-way room. I sat down on a form, and heard a working-man preach the gospel very sweetly. By the way, the sermon was originally my own, and this the preacher acknowledged most freely, but as he

preached it I found myself melted down with the story of God's love. My heart was so hot within me that I was ready to shout "Hallelujah!" when I heard the preacher magnifying the name of Christ Jesus, my Lord, and I said to myself, "Oh, you are a child of God, after all! You love this food as well as the other children do, and though you generally have to stand at the table and be a waiter, and sometimes wish you could sit and have a meal yourself, yet still you do love this heavenly bread. You have a taste for the things that God provides for His people." Yes, I could talk thus to myself, and of myself, and feel myself to be a child of God. I came away comforted, for I felt that I had a share in the joys of the heirs of salvation.

Need I go on to tell you, what are the sure evidences of being a child of God? The man who is truly such cries, "Why, everything is an evidence." Wherever he is, God is with him, and if he thinks that he has wandered away from God five minutes, he cries to be back again. He sees his Father everywhere, where the infidel cannot see Him at all. He spies Him in the clouds. He hears Him in the thunder. He beholds His flaming glory in every lightning flash, and His tender pity in every dewdrop. *With* God and *on* God the believer lives; *in* God he lives, and God lives in him. All his expectations are from God. Everywhere, in every time, and in every way, he proves that he is a child of God, because he continues to draw his life from his divine Father.

Then God gives him one more seal of his being His child, and that is, that He chastens him. I know an old friend who used to tell me that for sixty years he had never known a day's illness. A splendid healthy old man he was, and about three months ago the old man took typhoid fever. I went to see him, and when he got better he came to see me, and sitting down, he said, "Well, sir, you see I am not the man I was, but I have made a great advance through this sickness. I have never known any weakness before, but now I have been brought very low. The Bible says, 'If you are without chastisement, of which all are partakers, then are you bastards, and not sons.' Oh," he said, "I am not a bastard after all. I have had my chastening, and I hope I shall take up my sonship more than I ever did before." God grant that every chastened child may gather assurance from the covenant rod! You, dear child of God, will not be long without a touch of the rod! May you have as little of it as the Lord judges to be proper! As for myself, I owe everything to the furnace and the hammer. I have made no progress in heavenly learning except when I have been whipped by the great Schoolmaster. The best piece of furniture in my house has been the cross. My greatest enricher has been personal pain, and for that I desire to thank God. I can sing with the poet—

"God in Israel sows the seeds
Of affliction, pain, and toil;
These spring up and choke the weeds
Which would else overspread the soil.
Trials make the promise sweet;
Trials give new life to prayer;
Trials bring me to His feet,
Lay me low, and keep me there."

The children of God under the rod can say, *"And we are."* Thank God for anything which emphasizes that affirmation—*"And we are."* It is wondrous love that we should be called the children of God, *"and we are."* The bastard kicks against his father's stroke, but the wise child kisses the rod, and blesses the hand that uses it, and cries, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." This is a sure seal of our true sonship.

The text says, *"And we are."* I must turn it round, and say, "Are we?" And when you have worked that out, and you can say, "Yes," then I want you all to get to be very positive about this matter—"Now are we the sons of God." I pray that you may be able to say boldly, *"And we are."* When you are depressed, and your spirit hangs fire, say, *"We are."* When the devil says, "If you are the children of God" give him a slap in the face with this, *"And we are."* And when the world says, "What; you call yourselves sons of God?" say, "Yes, *and we are."* Whenever doubts and fears come in, drive these evil birds away from eating your ripe fruit, and let this be the shout you use, *"And we are."* "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God: *and we are."* Called by His name, may we enjoy the full assurance of faith through believing in Jesus! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 JOHN 4.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—728, 750, 626.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON

DEAR FRIENDS—When I left home I had used up my last ounce of life-force, but I hoped that I should escape a great outbreak of my physical infirmity, and should so rest in this balmy air that I should return to my work with full strength. It was my joyful hope that I should write a set of loving pastorals and place them week by week at the end of the sermon, to keep up my fellowship with loving friends. To my great grief I have not been able to write a line for a fortnight, and even now I cannot trust my trembling pen to attempt a letter.

Beloved friends, pray for me. If I must, henceforth, be frequently overthrown by pain, I ask of God grace to work as hard as I can in the intervals; and I ask of men patience with me, that I may be allowed to lie still when I cannot move. Thanks be unto God He is all-sufficient for our labor, and not less so in our inability. Cheerfully submitting to my utmost down-casting, I yet resolve to serve my Lord and His people as soon as ever the possibility returns to me.

Yours heartily,
C. H. SPURGEON.
Mentone, Dec. 11, 1886.

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

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

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

"WHERE ARE THE NINE?"— OR, PRAISE NEGLECTED
NO. 1935

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 26, 1886,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 7, 1886.

"And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? Were there not any found that returned to give glory to God, except this foreigner? And He said to him, Arise, go your way: your faith has made you whole." Luke 17:15 -19.

YOU have often heard the leprosy described; it was a very horrible disease, I should think the worst that flesh is heir to. We ought to be much more grateful than we are that this fell disease is scarcely known in our favored country. You have also heard what an instructive symbol it is in human flesh of what sin is in the human soul, how it pollutes, how it destroys. I need not go into that sad subject. But here was a sight for the Savior—ten men that were lepers! A mass of sorrow indeed! What sights our Lord still sees every day in this sin-defiled world! Not ten men that are sinners, or even ten millions merely, are to be found all the world over, but on this earth there are a thousand millions of men diseased in soul. It is a miracle of condescension that the Son of God should set foot in such a lazar house as this.

Yet observe the triumphant grace of our Lord Jesus to the ten men that were lepers. It would make a man's fortune, it would crown a man with lifelong fame, to heal one leper, but our Lord healed ten lepers at once. So full a fountain of grace is He, so freely does He dispense His favor, that the ten are bidden to go and show themselves to the priests because they are healed, and on the way to the priests they find it is so. None of us can imagine the joy they felt when they perceived that they were healed. Oh, it must have been a sort of new birth to them to find their flesh made fresh as that of a little child! It would not have been a wonder if the whole ten had hurried back, and fallen at Jesus' feet, and

lifted up their voices in a tenfold psalm. The sad thing about it is that nine of them, though they were healed, went on their way to the priests in the coolest possible manner, we never hear of their return, they drop out of the story altogether. They have obtained a blessing, they go their way, and there is an end of them.

Only one of them, a Samaritan, returned to express his thanks. Misery has strange bedfellows, and so the nine lepers of the seed of Israel consorted with an outcast Samaritan, and he, strange to tell it, was the only one, who, seized by a sudden impulse of gratitude, made his way to his Benefactor, fell down at His feet, and began to glorify God.

If you search the world around, among all choice spices you shall scarcely meet with the frankincense of gratitude. It ought to be as common as the dewdrops that hang upon the hedges in the morning, but, alas, the world is dry of thankfulness to God! Gratitude to Christ was scarce enough in His own day. I had almost said it was ten to one that nobody would praise Him, but I must correct myself a little, it was nine to one. One day in seven is for the Lord's worship, but not one man in ten is devoted to His praise. Our subject is *thankfulness to the Lord Jesus Christ*.

I. I begin with the point that I have already touched upon, namely, THE SINGULARITY OF THANKFULNESS.

Here note; *there are more who receive benefits than ever give praise for them*. Nine persons healed, one person glorifying God, nine persons healed *of leprosy,* mark you, and only one person kneeling down at Jesus' feet, and thanking Him for it! If for this surpassing benefit, which might have made the mute to sing, men only thank the Lord in the proportion of one to nine, what shall I say of what we call God's common mercies—only common because He is so liberal with them, for each of them is inestimably valuable? Life, health, eyesight, hearing, domestic love, the continuance of friendships—I cannot attempt a catalog of benefits that we receive every day, and yet is there one man in ten that praises God for these? A cold, "Thank God!" is all that is given. Others of us do praise Him for these benefits, but what poor praises! Dr. Watts' hymn is sadly true—

"Hosannas languish on our tongues,
And our devotion dies."

We do not praise the Lord fitly, proportionately, intensely. We receive a continent of mercies, and only return an island of praise. He gives us new blessings every morning, and fresh every evening, great is His faithfulness, and yet we let the years roll round, and seldom observe a day of praise. Sad is it to see God all goodness, and man all ingratitude! The

tribe who receives benefits may say, "My name is legion," but those who praise God are so few that a child may write them.

But there is something more remarkable than this; *the number of those who pray is greater than the number of those who praise*. For these ten men that were lepers all prayed. Poor and feeble as their voices had become through disease, yet they lifted them up in prayer, and united in crying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" They all joined in the Litany, "Lord, have mercy upon us! Christ, have mercy upon us!" But when they came to the Te Deum, magnifying and praising God, only one of them took up the note. One would have thought that all who prayed would praise, but it is not so. Cases have been where a whole ship's crew in time of storm has prayed, and yet none of that crew has sung the praise of God when the storm has become calm. Multitudes of our fellow citizens pray when they are sick, and near to dying, but when they grow better, their praises grow sick unto death. The angel of mercy, listening at their door, has heard no canticle of love, no song of thankfulness. Alas, it is too sadly true that more pray than praise!

I put it in another shape to you who are God's people—*most of us pray more than we praise*. You pray little enough, I fear, but praise, where is that? At our family altars we always pray, but seldom praise. In our closets we constantly pray, but do we *frequently* praise? Prayer is not so heavenly an exercise as praise, prayer is for time, but praise is for eternity. Praise therefore deserves the first and highest place, does it not? Let us commence the employment which occupies the celestials. Prayer is for a beggar, but I think he is a poor beggar who does not also give praise when he receives alms. Praise ought to follow naturally upon the heels of prayer, even when it does not, by divine grace, go before it. If you are afflicted, if you lose money, if you fall into poverty, if your child is ill, if chastisement visits you in any form, you begin to pray, and I do not blame you for it, but should it be all praying and no praising? Should our life have so much salt and so little sweet in it? Should we get for ourselves so often a draught from the rock of blessing, and so seldom pour out a drink offering unto the Lord Most High? Come; let us chide ourselves as we acknowledge that we offer so much more prayer than praise!

On the same head, let me remark that *more obey ritual than ever praise Christ*. When Jesus said, "Go show yourselves to the priests," off they went, all ten of them, not one stayed behind. Yet only one came back to behold a personal Savior, and to praise His name. So today—you will go to church, you will go to chapel, you will read a book, you will perform an outward religious action, but oh, how little praising God, how little lying at His feet, and feeling that we could sing our souls away for gratitude to Him who has done such great things for us! External reli-

gious exercises are easy enough, and common enough, but the internal matter, the drawing out of the heart in thankful love, how scarce a thing it is! Nine obey ritual where only one praises the Lord.

Once more, to come yet closer home, *there are more that believe than there are that praise,* for these ten men did believe, but only one praised the Lord Jesus. Their faith was about the leprosy, and according to their faith, so it was unto them. This faith, though it only concerned their leprosy, was yet a very wonderful faith. It was remarkable that they should believe the Lord Jesus though He did not even say, "Be healed," nor speak a word to them to that effect, but simply said, "Go show yourselves to the priests." With parched skins, and death burning its way into their hearts, they went bravely off in confidence that Jesus must mean to bless them. It was admirable faith, and yet none of the nine who thus believed ever came back to praise Christ for the mercy received. I am afraid that there is much of faith, better faith than theirs, which concerns spiritual things, which has yet to flower into practical gratitude. Perhaps it blooms late in the year, like the chrysanthemum, but certainly it has not flowered in springtime, like the primrose and the daffodil. It is a faith which bears few blossoms of praise. I chide myself sometimes that I have wrestled with God in prayer, like Elijah upon Carmel, but I have not magnified the name of the Lord, like Mary of Nazareth. We do not laud our Lord in proportion to the benefits received. God's treasury would overflow if the revenue of thanks were more honestly paid. There would be no need to plead for missions, and stir up God's people to self-denial, if there were praise at all proportionate even to our faith. We believe for heaven and eternity, and yet do not magnify the Lord as we should for earth and time. It is real faith, I trust—it is not for me to judge it, but it is faulty in result. Faith was only real in these lepers so far as their leprosy was concerned; they did not believe in our Lord's divinity, or believe for eternal life. So also among ourselves, there are men who get benefits from Christ, who even hope that they are saved, but they do not praise Him. Their lives are spent in examining their own skins to see whether their leprosy is gone. Their religious life reveals itself in a constant searching of themselves to see if they are really healed. This is a poor way of spending one's energies. This man knew that he was healed, he had full assurance upon that point, and the next impulse of his spirit was to get back to where *He* stood who had been his glorious Physician, to fall at *His* feet, and praise *Him* with a loud voice, glorifying God. Oh, that all my timorous, doubting hearers may do the same!

I have said enough, I think, upon the scantiness of thanksgiving. Let us go over those points again. More receive benefits than praise God for them, more pray than praise, more obey ritual than praise God with the

heart, and more believe, and receive benefits through faith, than rightly praise the Giver of those benefits.

II. I have a great deal to say, and little time to say it in, therefore, briefly let us note THE CHARACTERISTICS OF TRUE THANKFULNESS. This man's simple act may show the character of praise. It does not take the same shape in everybody. Love to Christ, like living flowers, wears many forms; only artificial flowers are all alike. Living praise is marked by *individuality*. This man was one of ten when he was a leper; he was all alone when he returned to praise God. You can sin in company, you can go to hell in company, but when you obtain salvation, you will come to Jesus all alone; and when you are saved, though you will delight to praise God with others if they will join you, yet if they will not do so, you will delight to sing a solo of gratitude. This man quits the company of the other nine, and comes to Jesus. If Christ has saved you, and your heart is right, you will say, "I *must* praise Him; I *must* love Him." You will not be kept back by the chilly state of nine out of ten of your old companions, or by the worldliness of your family, nor by the coldness of the church. Your personal love to Jesus will make you speak even if heaven, and earth, and sea are all wrapped in silence.

You have a heart burning with adoring love, and you feel as if it were the only heart under heaven that had love to Christ in it, and therefore you must feed the heavenly flame. You must indulge its desires, you must express its longings, the fire is in your bones, and must have vent. Since there is an individuality about true praise, come, brothers in Christ, let us praise God each one in his own way!—

"Oh, may the sweet, the blissful theme,
Fill every heart and tongue,
Till strangers love Your charming name,
And join the sacred song!"

The next characteristic of this man's thankfulness was *promptness*. He went back to Christ almost immediately, for I cannot suppose the Savior lingered at the village gate for hours that day. He was too busy to be long in one spot, the Master went about doing good. The man was back soon, and when you are saved, the quicker you can express your gratitude the better. Second thoughts are best, they say, but this is not the case when the heart is full of love to Christ. Carry out your first thoughts; do not stop for the second, unless indeed your heart is so on flame with heavenly devotion that second ones consume the first. Go at once and praise the Savior. What grand designs some of you have formed of future service for God! What small results have followed! Ah, it is better to lay one brick today than to propose to build a palace next year! Magnify your Lord in the present for present salvation. Why should His mercies lie in quarantine? Why should your praises be like aloes, which take a century to

flower? Why should praise be kept waiting at the door even for a night? The manna came fresh in the morning, so let your praises rise early. He praises twice who praises at once, but he who does not praise at once praises never.

The next quality of this man's praise was *spirituality*. We perceive this in the fact that he paused on his way to the priests. It was his duty to go to the priests, he had received a command to do so, but there is a proportion in all things, and some duties are greater than others. He thought to himself "I was ordered to go to the priests, but I am healed, and this new circumstance affects the order of my duties, the first thing I ought to do is to go back, and bear witness to the people, glorifying God in the midst of them all, and falling down at Christ's feet." It is well to observe the holy law of proportion. Carnal minds take the ritualistic duty first, that which is external outweighs with them that which is spiritual. But love soon perceives that the substance is more precious than the shadow, and that to bow at the feet of the great High Priest must be a greater duty than to go before the lesser priests. So the healed leper went first to Jesus. In him the spiritual overrode the ceremonial. He felt that his main duty was in person to adore the divine person who had delivered him from his fell disease. Let us go first to Jesus. Let us in spirit bow before HIM. Ah, yes! Come to our services, join in our regular worship, but if you love the Lord, you will need something besides this, you will pine to get to Jesus Himself, and tell Him how you love Him. You will long to do something for Him by yourself, by which you can show forth the gratitude of your heart to the Christ of God.

True thankfulness also manifests itself in *intensity*. Intensity is perceptible in this case; he turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God. He could have praised, could he not, in a quieter way? Yes, but when you are just cured of leprosy, and your once feeble voice is restored to you, you cannot whisper out your praises. Brethren, you know it would be impossible to be coolly proper when you are newly saved! This man with a loud voice glorified God, and you, too, feel forced to cry—

"Gladly would I sound it out so loud
That earth and heaven could hear."

Some of our converts are very wild at times, and they grow extravagant. Do not blame them. Why not indulge them? It will not hurt *you*. We are all of us so very proper and orderly that we can afford to have an extravagant one among us now and then. Oh, that God would send more of that sort to wake the church up, that we, also, might all begin to praise God with heart and voice, with soul and substance, with might and main! Hallelujah! My own heart feels the glow.

In true thankfulness, next, there is *humility*. This man fell down at Jesus' feet; he did not feel perfectly in his place until he was lying there. "I am nobody, Lord," he seemed to say, and therefore he fell on his face. But the place for his prostration was "at His feet." I would rather be nobody at Christ's feet than everybody anywhere else! There is no place as honorable as down at the feet of Jesus. Ah, to lie there always, and just love Him wholly, and let self die out! Oh, to have Christ standing over you as the one figure overshadowing your life from henceforth and forever! True thankfulness lies low before the Lord.

Added to this there was *worship*. He fell down at Jesus' feet, glorifying God, and giving thanks to Him. Let us worship our Savior. Let others think as they like about Jesus, but we will put our finger into the print of the nails, and say, "My Lord and my God!" If there is a God, He is God in Christ Jesus to us. We shall never cease to adore Him who has proved His Godhead by delivering us from the leprosy of sin. All worship be to His supreme majesty!

One thing more about this man I want to notice as to his thankfulness, and that is, *his silence as to censuring others*. When the Savior said, "Where are the nine," I notice that *this man did not reply*. The Master said, "Where are the nine? Were there not any found that returned to give glory to God, except this foreigner?" But the adoring stranger did not stand up, and say, "O Lord, they are all gone off to the priests, I am astonished at them that they did not return to praise You!" O brothers, we have enough to do to mind our own business, when we feel the grace of God in our own hearts! If I can only get through my service of praise, I shall have no mind to accuse any of you who are ungrateful. The Master says, "Where are the nine?" but the poor healed man at His feet has no word to say against those cruel nine, he is too much occupied with his personal adoration.

III. I have not half done, and yet you cannot possibly stay beyond the appointed hour of closing, therefore I must compress my third division as closely as I possibly can—let us consider THE BLESSEDNESS OF THANKFULNESS. This man was more blessed by far than the nine. They were healed, but they were not blessed as he was. There is a great blessedness in thankfulness.

First, *because it is right*. Should not Christ be praised? This man did what he could, and there is always an ease of conscience, and a rest of spirit, when you feel that you are doing all you can in a right cause, even though you fall far short of your own desire. At this moment, my brethren, magnify the Lord—

"Meet and right it is to sing,
In every time and place,

Glory to our heavenly King,
The God of truth and grace.
Join we then with sweet accord,
All in one thanksgiving join!
Holy, holy, holy Lord,
Eternal praise be Yours."

Next, there is this blessing in thankfulness, that *it is a manifestation of personal love*. I love the doctrines of grace, I love the church of God, I love the Sabbath, I love the ordinances, but I love Jesus most. My heart never rests until I can glorify God personally, and give thanks unto the Christ personally. The indulgence of personal love to Christ is one of the sweetest things out of heaven, and you cannot indulge that personal love as well as by personal thankfulness both of heart and mouth, and act and deed.

There is another blessedness about thankfulness, *it has clear views*. The thankful eye sees far and deep. The man healed of leprosy, before he went on glorifying God, gave thanks to Jesus. If he had thanked Jesus and stopped there, I would have said that his eyes were not well open, but when he saw God in Christ, and therefore glorified God for what Christ had done, he showed a deep insight into spiritual truth. He had begun to discover the mysteries of the divine and human person of the blessed Lord. We learn much by prayer. Did not Luther say, "To have prayed well is to have studied well"? I venture to add a rider to what Luther has so ably said, "To have praised well is to have studied better." Praise is a great instructor. Prayer and praise are the oars by which a man may row his boat into the deep waters of the knowledge of Christ.

The next blessedness about praise is that *it is acceptable to Christ*. The Lord Jesus was evidently pleased, He was grieved to think the other nine should not come back, but He was charmed with this one man that he did return. The question, "Where are the nine?" bears within it a commendation of the one. Whatever pleases Christ should be carefully cultivated by us. If praise is pleasant to Him, let us continually magnify His name. Prayer is the straw of the wheat, but praise is the ear. Jesus loves to see the blade grow up, but He loves better to pluck the golden ears when the harvest of praise is ripe.

Next, notice, that the blessedness of thankfulness is that *it receives the largest blessing*, for the Savior said to this man what He had not said to the others, "your faith has made you whole." If you would live the higher life, be much in praising God. Some of you are in the lowest state as yet, as this man was, for he was a Samaritan, but by praising God he rose to be a songster rather than a stranger. How often have I noticed how the greatest sinner becomes the greatest praiser! Those that were farthest off from Christ, and hope, and purity, when they become saved,

they feel that they owe the most, and therefore they love the best. May it be the ambition of every one of us, even if we are not originally among the vilest of the vile, yet to feel that we owe Jesus most, and therefore we will praise Him most; thus shall we receive the richest blessing from His hands!

I have done when I have said three things. Let us learn from all this to *put praise in a high place*. Let us hold praise meetings. Let us think it as great a sin to neglect praise as to restrain prayer.

Next, *let us pay our praise to Christ Himself*. Whether we go to the priests or not, let us go to *Him*. Let us praise Him personally and vehemently. Personal praise to a personal Savior must be our life's objective.

Lastly, if we work for Jesus, and we see converts, and they do not turn out as we expected, do not let us be cast down about it. *If others do not praise our Lord, let us be sorrowful, but let us not be disappointed.* The Savior had to say, "Where are the nine?" Ten lepers were healed, but only one praised Him. We have many converts who do not join the church; we have numbers of persons converted who do not come forward to baptism, or to the Lord's Supper. Numbers get a blessing, but do not feel love enough to own it. Those of us who are soul-winners are robbed of our wages by the cowardly spirits who hide their faith. I thank God of late we have had many avowing their conversion, but if the other nine would come, we should need nine Tabernacles. Alas for the many who have gone back after professing their faith! Where are the nine?

So you that hold cottage meetings, you that go round with tracts, you are doing more good than you will ever hear of. You do not know where the nine are, but even if you should only bless one out of ten, you will have cause to thank God.

"Oh," says one, "I have had so little success; I have had only one soul saved!" That is more than you deserve. If I were to fish for a week, and only catch one fish, I would be sorry, but if that happened to be a sturgeon, a royal fish, I would feel that the quality made up for lack of quantity. When you win a soul it is a great prize. One soul brought to Christ—can you estimate its value? If one is saved, you should be grateful to your Lord, and persevere. Though you wish for more conversions yet, you will not despond so long as even a few are saved, and above all, you will not be angry if some of them do not thank you personally, nor join in church fellowship with you. Ingratitude is common towards soul-winners. How often a minister has brought sinners to Christ, and fed the flock in his early days! But when the old man grows feeble they want to get rid of him, and try a new broom which will sweep cleaner. "Poor old gentleman, he is quite out of date!" they say, and so they get rid of him, as gypsies turn an old horse out on the common to feed or starve, they care not

which. If anybody expects gratitude, I would remind them of the benediction, "Blessed are they that expect nothing, for they will not be disappointed." Even our Master did not get praise from the nine, therefore do not wonder if you bless others, and others do not bless you. Oh, that some poor soul would come to Christ tonight, some leper to be healed of sin-sickness! If he does find healing, let him come out, and with a loud voice magnify the Lord who has dealt so graciously with him.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—LUKE 17:1-19.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—
103 (VERSION 3), 566, 415.

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

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

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

THE UNKEPT VINEYARD—OR, PERSONAL WORK NEGLECTED
NO. 1936

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 19, 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"They made me the keeper of the vineyards;
but my own vineyard have I not kept."
Song of Solomon 1:6.

THE text is spoken in the first person singular, "They made me." Therefore let the preaching tonight be personal to you, dear friends; personal to the preacher first, and then to each one of this mixed multitude. May we at this hour think less of others than of ourselves! May the sermon be of practical value to our own hearts! I do not suppose that it will be a pleasing sermon, on the other hand it may be a saddening one. I may bring unhappy memories before you, but let us not be afraid of that holy sorrow which is health to the soul. Since the spouse in this text speaks of herself, "They made me the keeper of the vineyards; but my own vineyard have I not kept," let each one of us copy her example, and think of ourselves.

The text is the language of complaint. We are all pretty ready at complaining, especially of other people. Not much good comes of picking holes in other men's characters, and yet many spend hours in that unprofitable occupation. It will be well for us, at this time, to let our complaint, like that of the text, deal with ourselves. If there is something wrong at home, let the father blame himself; if there is something evil with the children, let the mother look to her own personal conduct as their instructor. Do not let us lend out our ears, but let us keep them at home for our own use. Let us clear out an open passage to the heart, so that everything that is said shall go down into the spirit, and purify our inner man. Let us from the heart make the confession—"They made me the keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard have I not kept."

Let us make the text practical. Do not let us be satisfied to have uttered the language of complaint, but let us get rid of the evils which we deplore. If we have been wrong, let us labor to be right. If we have neglected

our own vineyard, let us confess it with due humiliation, but let us not continue to neglect it. Let us ask God that holy results may flow out of our self-lamentations, so that before many days we may begin to keep our own vineyards carefully by the grace of God, and then we shall better carry out the office of keeper of the vineyards of others, if we are called to such an employment.

There are two things upon which I am going to dwell at this time. The first is, that there are many Christian people—I hope they are Christian people—who will be compelled to confess that the greater part of their life is spent in labor which is not of the highest kind, and is not properly their own. I shall point out *the worker who has forgotten his heavenly calling*. And when I have done with this case—and I am afraid that there will be much about it that may touch many of us—I shall then take a more general view, and deal with *any who are undertaking other works, and neglecting their own proper vocation*.

I. First, then, let me begin with THE CHRISTIAN MAN WHO HAS FORGOTTEN HIS HIGH AND HEAVENLY CALLING. In the day when you and I were born again, my brethren, we were born for God. In the day when we saw that Christ died for us, we were bound from that day on to be dead to the world. In the day when we were quickened by the Holy Spirit into newness of life, that life was bound to be a consecrated one. For a thousand reasons it is true that, "You are not your own: you are bought with a price." The ideal Christian is one who has been made alive with a life which he lives for God. He has risen out of the dominion of the world, the flesh, and the devil. He reckons that "if one died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not from this day on live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again." This you will not deny. Christian friends, you admit that you have a high, holy, and heavenly calling!

Now let us look back. *We have not spent our life idly;* we have been forced to be keepers of the vineyards. I hope I am not addressing anybody here who has tried to live without employment and labor of some kind. No, we have worked, and we have worked hard. Most men speak of their wages as "hard-earned," and I believe that in many cases they speak the bare truth. Many hours in the day have to be spent upon our occupations. We wake up in the morning, and think of what we have to do. We go to bed wearied at night by what we have done. This is as it should be; for God did not make us that we might sport and play, like leviathan in the deep. Even in Paradise man was bidden to dress the garden. There is something to be done by each man, and especially by each Christian man.

Come back to what I began with. In the day when we were born again, as many of us as are new creatures in Christ Jesus, we began to live to God, and not to ourselves. Have we carried out that life? We have worked, we have even worked hard, but the questions come to us—what have we worked for? Who has been our master? With what objective have we toiled? Of course, if I have been true to my profession as a Christian, I have lived and worked for God, for Christ, for the kingdom of heaven. But has it been so? And is it so now? Many are working very hard for wealth, which means, of course, for self, that they may be enriched. Some are working simply for compensation, which means, if it goes no farther, still for self. Others work for their families, a motive good enough in its way, but still only an enlargement, after all, of self. To the Christian there must always be a far higher, deeper, purer, truer motive than self in its widest sense, or else the day must come when he will look back upon his life, and say, "They made me the keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard"—that is, the service of Christ, the glory of Him that bought me with His blood—"have I not kept." It seems to me to be a terrible calamity to have to look back on twenty years and say, "What have I done in all those twenty years for Christ? How much of my energy has been spent in striving to glorify *Him?* I have had talents, how many of those talents have been used for Him who gave them to me? I have had wealth, or I have had influence. How much of that money have I spent distinctly for my Lord? How much of that influence have I used for the promotion of His kingdom?" You have been busy with this notion, and that motive, and the other endeavor, but have you lived as you will wish to have lived when you stand at His right hand amidst His glories? Have you so acted that you will then judge yourself to have well lived when your Lord and Master shall come to call you to account? Ask yourself, "Am I an earnest laborer together with God, or am I, after all, only a laborious trifler, an industrious doer of nothing, working hard to accomplish no purpose of the sort for which I ought to work, since I ought to live unto my Lord alone?" I invite all my fellow servants to take a retrospect, and just to see whether they have kept their own vineyards. I suppose that they have worked hard. I only put the question—have they kept their own vineyards? Have they served the Lord in all things?

I am half afraid to go a step farther. To a very large degree we have not been true to our own professions; *our highest work has been neglected,* we have not kept our own vineyards. In looking back, how little time has been spent by us in communion with God! How little a part of our thoughts has been occupied with meditation, contemplation, adoration, and other acts of devotion! How little have we surveyed the beauties of

Christ, His Person, His work, His sufferings, His glory! We say that it is "heaven below" to commune with Christ, but do we do it? We profess that there is no place like the mercy seat. How much are we at that mercy seat? We often say that the Word of God is precious—that every page of it glows with a heavenly light. Do we study it? Friends, how much time do you spend upon it? I venture to say that the bulk of Christians spend more time in reading the newspaper than they do in reading the Word of God. I trust that I am too severe in this statement, but I am afraid, greatly afraid, that I am not. The last new book, perhaps the last sentimental story, will win attentive reading, when the divine, mysterious, unutterable depths of heavenly knowledge are disregarded by us. Our Puritan forefathers were strong men, because they lived on the Scriptures. None stood against them in their day, for they fed on good meat, whereas their degenerate children are far too fond of unwholesome food. The chaff of fiction and the bran of the Quarterlies are poor substitutes for the old corn of Scripture, the fine flour of spiritual truth. Alas, my brethren, too many eat the unripe fruit of the vineyards of Satan, and the fruits of the Lord's vines they utterly despise!

Think of our neglect of our God, and see whether it is not true that we have treated Him very ill. We have been in the shop, we have been on the exchange, we have been at the markets, we have been in the fields, we have been in the public libraries, we have been in the lecture room, we have been in the forum of debate, but our own closets and studies, our walk with God, and our fellowship with Jesus, we have far too much neglected.

Moreover, the vineyard of holy service for God we have too much left to go to ruin. I would ask you—How about the work your God has called you to do? Men are dying, are you saving them? This great city is like a seething caldron, boiling and bubbling up with infamous iniquity, are we doing anything by way of antidote to the hell-broth concocted in that caldron? Are we indeed a power working towards righteousness? How much good have we done? What have I done to pluck brands from the burning? What have I done to find the lost sheep for which my Savior laid down His life? Come, put the questions, and answer them honestly! No, do not back out, and say, "I have no ability." I fear you have more ability than you will give an account of with joy at the last great day. I remember a young man who complained that the little church over which he presided was so small. He said, "I cannot do much good. I have not above two hundred hearers." An older man replied, "Two hundred hearers are a great many to have to give an account of at the last great day." As I came in at yonder door this evening, and looked into these thousands of faces,

I could not help trembling. How shall I answer for this solemn charge, for this enormous flock, in that last great day? You have all a flock of some kind, larger or smaller. You have all, as Christian people, somebody for whom you will have to answer. Have you done your Master's work in reference to those entrusted to you? O men and women, have you sought to save others from going down into the pit? You have the divine remedy, have you handed it out to these sick and dying ones? You have the heavenly word which can deliver them from destruction, have you spoken it in their ears, praying all the while that God might bless it to their souls? Might not many a man among you say to himself, "I have been a tailor," or "I have been a shop-keeper," or "I have been a mechanic," or "I have been a merchant," or "I have been a physician, and I have attended to these callings, but my own vineyard, which was my Master's, which I was bound to look to first of all, I have not kept"?

Well, now, *what is the remedy for this?* We need not talk of our fault any more, let us make each one his own personal confession, and then seek amendment. I believe the remedy is a very sweet one. It is not often that medicine is pleasant, but at this time I prescribe for you a charming potion. It is that you follow up the next verse to my text. Read it—"My own vineyard have I not kept. Tell me, O You whom my soul loves, where You feed, where You make your flock to rest at noon; for why should I be as one that turns aside by the flocks of Your companions?" Get to your Lord, and in Him you will find recovery from your neglects. Ask Him where He feeds His flock, and go with Him. They have warm hearts who commune with Christ. They are prompt in duty who enjoy His fellowship. I cannot help reminding you of what I have often spoken of, namely, our Lord's language to the church at Laodicea. That church had come to be so bad that He said, "I will spue you out of My mouth." And yet what was the remedy for that church? "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." After supping with Christ you will not be lukewarm. Nobody can say, "I am neither cold nor hot" when they have been in His company. Rather they will inquire, "Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way?" If there is an angel, as Milton sings, whose name is Uriel, who lives in the sun, I will guarantee you he is never cold, so he that lives in Christ, and walks with Him, is never chill, nor slow in the divine service. Away to your Lord, then!

Hasten to your Lord, and you will soon begin to keep your vineyard, for in the Song you will see *a happy change effected.* The spouse began to keep her vineyard directly, and to do it in the best fashion. Within a very short time you find her saying, "Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that

spoil the vines." See, she is hunting out her sins and her follies. Farther on you find her with her Lord in the vineyard, crying, "Awake, O north wind; and come, you south; blow upon my garden that the spices thereof may flow out!" She is evidently keeping her garden, and asking for heavenly influences to make the spices and flowers yield their perfume. She went down to see whether the vines flourished, and the pomegranates budded. Soon, with her beloved, she rises early to go to the vineyard, and watch the growth of the plants. Farther on you find her talking about all manner of fruits that she has laid up for her beloved. Thus you see that to walk with Christ is the way to keep your vineyard, and serve your Lord. Come and sit at His feet, lean on His bosom, rest on His arm, and make Him to be the joy of your spirit. The Lord grant, dear brethren, that this gentle word, which I have spoken as much to myself as to you, may be blessed to us all!

II. Now, I turn to the congregation in general, and speak with THE MAN WHO IN ANY PLACE HAS TAKEN OTHER WORK, AND NEGLECTED HIS OWN. He can use the words of the text—"They made me the keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard have I not kept."

We know many persons who are always doing a great deal, and yet do nothing; fussy people, people to the front in every movement, persons who could set the whole world right, but are not right themselves. Just before a general election there is a manifestation of most remarkable men—generally persons who know everything, and a few things besides, who, if they could but be sent to Parliament, would turn the whole world upside down, and put even Pandemonium to rights. They would pay the National Debt within six months, and do any other trifle that might occur to them. Very eminent men are these! I have come across impossibly great men. None could be as great as these feel themselves to be. They are an order of very superior persons; reformers, or philosophers, who know what nobody else knows, only, happily, they have not patented the secret, and are prepared to tell it to others, and thereby illuminate us all.

I suggest to our highly-gifted friends that it is possible to be looking after a great many things, and yet to be neglecting your own vineyard. There is a vineyard that a great many neglect, and that is *their own heart*. It is well to have talent, it is well to have influence, but it is better to be right within yourself. It is well for a man to see to his cattle, and look well to his flocks and to his herds, but let him not forget to cultivate that little patch of ground that lies in the center of his being. Let him educate his head, and intermeddle with all knowledge, but let him not forget that there is another plot of ground called the heart, the character, which is more important still. Right principles are spiritual gold, and he

that has them, and is ruled by them, is the man who truly lives. He has not life, whatever else he has, who has not his heart cultivated, and made right and pure. Have you ever thought about your heart yet? Oh, I do not mean whether you have palpitations! I am no doctor. I am speaking now about the heart in its moral and spiritual aspect. What is your character, and do you seek to cultivate it? Do you ever use the hoe upon those weeds which are so plentiful in us all? Do you water those tiny plants of goodness which have begun to grow? Do you watch them to keep away the little foxes which would destroy them? Are you hopeful that yet there may be a harvest in your character which God may look upon with approval? I pray that we may all look to our hearts. "Keep your heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." Pray daily, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me," for if not, you will go up and down in the world, and do a great deal, and when it comes to the end you will have neglected your noblest nature, and your poor starved soul will die that second death, which is the more dreadful because it is everlasting death. How terrible for a soul to die of neglect! How can we escape who neglect this great salvation? If we pay every attention to our bodies, but none to our immortal souls, how shall we justify our folly? God save us from suicide by neglect! May we not have to moan out eternally, "They made me the keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard have I not kept!"

Now, pass over that point, and think of another vineyard. Are not some people neglecting *their families?* Next to our hearts, our households are the vineyards which we are most bound to cultivate. I shall never forget a man whom I knew in my youth, who used to accompany me at times in my walks to the villages to preach. He was always willing to go with me any evening, but I did not need to ask him, for he asked himself, until I purposely put him off from it. He liked also to preach himself much better than others liked to hear him, but he was a man who was sure to be somewhere to the front if he could. Even if you snuffed him out, he had a way of lighting himself up again. He was good-natured and irrepressible. He was, I believe, sincerely earnest in doing good. But two boys of his were well known to me, and they would swear horribly. They were ready for every vice, and were under no restraint. One of them drank himself into a dying state with brandy, though he was a mere boy. I do not believe his father had ever spoken to him about the habit of intoxication, though he certainly was sober and virtuous himself. I had no fault to find with him except this grave fault—that he was seldom at home, was not master of the house, and could not control his children. Neither husband nor wife occupied any place of influence in the house-

hold, they were simply the slaves of their children, their children made themselves vile, and they restrained them not! This brother would pray for his children at the prayer meeting, but I do not think he ever practiced family prayer. It is shocking to find men and women speaking fluently about religion, and yet their houses are a disgrace to Christianity. I suppose that none of you are as bad as that, but, if it is so, please reread this text over, "They made me the keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard have I not kept." The most careful and prayerful father cannot be held accountable for having wicked sons, if he has done his best to instruct them. The most anxious and tearful mother cannot be blamed if her daughter dishonors the family, provided her mother has done her best to train her up in the right way. But if the parents cannot say that they have done their best, and their children go astray, then they are blameworthy. If any of them have come to the Tabernacle tonight, and their boys and girls are—they do not know where, let them go home quickly, and look them up. If any of my hearers exercise no parental discipline, nor seek to bring their children to Christ, I do implore them to give up every kind of public work till they have first done their work at home. Has anybody made you a minister, and are you not trying to save your own children? I tell you, sir, I do not believe that God made you a minister, for if He had, He would have begun with making you a minister to your own family. *"They* made me the keeper of the vineyards." "They" ought to have known better, and you ought to have known better than to accept the call. How can you be a steward in the great household of the Lord when you cannot even rule your own house? A Sunday school teacher, teaching other people's children, and never praying with her own! Is not this a sad business? A teacher of a large class of youths who never has taken a class of his own sons and daughters! Why, what will he do when he lives to see his children plunged into vice and sin, and remembers that he has utterly neglected them? This is plain dealing, but I never wear gloves when I preach. I know not where this knife may cut, but if it wounds, I pray you do not blunt its edge. Do you say that this is "very personal"? It is meant to be personal, and if anybody is offended by it, let him be offended with himself, and mend his ways. No longer let it be true of any of us, "They made me the keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard have I not kept."

Besides that, every man who knows the Lord should feel that his vineyard lies also *round about his own house*. If God has saved your children, then, dear friend, try to do something for your neighbors, for your employees, for those with whom you associate in daily labor. God has appointed you to take care of those nearest, home. They say the cobbler's

wife goes barefooted. Do not let it be true. Begin at home, and go on with those nearest, home. Manifest Christian love to your neighbors. It is a great pity that yonder Christian man, living in a very dark part of London, comes to the Tabernacle, and does good in our societies but never speaks a word for Jesus in the court where he lives. Poor stuff, poor stuff, is that salt which is only salt when it is in the saltbox! Throw that kind of salt away. We want a kind of salt that begins to bite into any bit of meat it touches. Put it where you like, if it is good salt, it begins to operate upon that which is nearest to it. Some people are capital salt *in the box,* they are also good in the cake, they are beautifully white to look at, and you can cut them into ornamental shapes, but they are never used, they are merely kept for show. If salt does not preserve anything, throw it away. Ask the farmer whether he would like it for his fields. "No," he says, "there is no goodness in it." Salt that has no saltiness in it is of no use. You can make the garden path of it. It is good to be trodden under foot by men, but that is all the use to which you can put it. O my beloved fellow Christians, do not let it be said that you reside in a place to which you do no good whatever. I am sure if there were individual, personal work on the part of Christians in the localities where they reside, God the Holy Spirit would bless the unanimous action of His earnest, quickened church, and London would soon know that God has a people in the midst of it. If we keep away from the masses—if we cannot think of laboring in a district because it is too low or too poor—we shall have missed our vocation, and at the last we shall have to lament, "They made me the keeper of the vineyards, but my own vineyard have I not kept."

You and I must cry mightily to the Holy Spirit to help us to live really and truly the lives which our professions demand of us. A day will come when all church going, and chapel going, and preaching, and singing, and sacraments, will seem fluff and useless stuff, if there has not been the substance of real living for Christ in all our religiousness. Oh that we would rouse ourselves to something like a divine earnestness! Oh that we felt the grandeur of our heavenly surroundings! We are no common men! We are loved with no common love! Jesus died for us! He died for us! He died for us! And is this poor life of ours, so often dull and worldly, our sole return? Behold that piece of land! He that bought it paid His life for it, watered it with bloody sweat, and sowed in it a divine seed. And what is the harvest? We naturally expect great things. Is the poor starveling life of many a professor a fit harvest for Christ's sowing His heart's blood? God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, all in action—what is the result? Omnipotence linking hands with love, and working out a miracle of grace! What comes of it? A half-hearted profes-

sor of religion. Is this all the result? O Lord, was there ever so small an effect from so great a cause? You might almost need a microscope to discover the result of the work of grace in some people's lives. Ought it to be so? Shall it be so? In the name of Him that lives and was dead, dare you let it be so? Help us, O God, to begin to live, and keep the vineyard which You Yourself have given to us to keep, that we may render in our account at last with joy, and not with grief! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
MATTHEW 5:1-20.**

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—672, 649, 454.

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

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

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

A MINGLED STRAIN
NO. 1937

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

"Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."
Psalm 51:7.

IN what state of heart should we come to the Communion Table? It is no light matter; in what manner shall we come before the Lord in so sacred an ordinance? By the very nature of the sacred supper we are taught that there should be a mixture of emotions. The bitter and the sweet, the joyful and the sorrowful, are here intermingled. The sacrifice of Christ for sin—is it more a subject of sorrow or of joy? Can we look to the cross without mourning for sin? Can we look at it without rejoicing in pardon bought with blood? Is not the most suitable state of heart for coming to the Communion Table just this—mourning for our transgression, and joy because of the great salvation? There is a double character about this holy rite; it is a festival of life, and yet it is a memorial of death. Here is a cup; it is filled with wine; this surely betokens gladness. Listen to me; that wine is the symbol of blood! This as surely betokens sorrow. In my hand is bread—bread to be eaten, bread which strengthens man's heart; shall we not eat bread with thankfulness? But that bread is broken, to represent a body afflicted with pain and anguish, there must be mourning on account of that agony. At the Paschal supper, the lamb of the Lord's Passover had a special sweetness in it, yet the commandment expressly ran—"with bitter herbs they shall eat it." So is it at this table. Here we, with joy commemorate the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world, but with deep sorrow we recall the sin which, though taken away, causes us in the recollection of it to repent with great bitterness of heart.

Our text is the expression of one who is deeply conscious of sin, and yet is absolutely certain that God can put away that sin. Thus it holds in one sentence a double thread of meaning. Here is a depth of sorrow, and a still greater deep of hopeful joy, "deep calls unto deep." I thought that

this expression of mixed feeling might guide us as to our emotions at this holy festival.

I. I shall handle the text by making three observations. The first will be this; THERE ARE TIMES WHEN THE LANGUAGE OF A SINNER IS MOST SUITABLE TO A CHILD OF GOD. There are seasons when it is about the only language that he can use, when he seems shut up to it, and he uses it without the slightest suspicion that it is out of place upon his lips, and indeed, it is not out of place at all. I suppose that everybody will agree that the language of David in this psalm was most suitable to his condition. When he prayed, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow," he prayed a proper prayer, did he not? Surely no one is going to quibble with David over this petition, and yet I cannot be sure. The modern way of handling the Bible is to correct it here, and amend it there, tear it to pieces, give a bit to the Jews, and a bit to the Gentiles, and a bit to the church, and a bit to everybody, and then make it out that sometimes the old servants of God made great blunders. We, in modern times, are supposed to be more spiritual, and to know a great deal better than the inspired saints of the Old and New Testaments. But still, I should not think that anybody would say that David was wrong, and if he did, I would reply, "This is an inspired psalm, and there is not half a hint given that there is any incorrectness in the language of it, or that David used language under an exaggerated state of feeling, which was not truly applicable to a child of God." I think that nobody will doubt that David was a child of God, and that, even when he had defiled himself, he was still dear to the great Father's heart. I gather, therefore—I feel sure of it—that he was quite right in praying the language of this fifty-first psalm, and saying, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving-kindness; according unto the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions; wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!" Yet this is precisely the way in which an unconverted man ought to pray, just the way in which every soul that comes to God may pray. It is only an enlargement of the prayer of the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" This language, so suitable to the sinner, was not out of place in the mouth of one who was not only a believer, but an advanced believer, an experienced believer, yes, an inspired believer, a teacher of others, who, with all his faults, was such a one as we shall rarely see the likes of again. Yes, among the highest of saints, there was a time with one of them, at least when the lowliest language was appropriate to his condition. There is a spirit abroad which tells us that children of God ought not to ask for pardon of their sins, for they have been pardoned, that

they need not use such language as this, which is appropriate to sinners, for they stand in a totally different position. What I want to know is this, where are we to draw the line? If, on account of a certain sin, David was perfectly justified in appealing to God in the same style as a poor, unforgiven sinner would have done, am I never justified in doing so? Is it only a certain form of evil which puts a man under the necessities of humiliation? It may be that the man has never fallen into adultery, or any other gross sin, but is there a certain extent of sin to which a man may go before, as a child of God, he is to pray like this? And is all that falls below that high-water mark of sin a something so inconsiderable that he need not go and ask any particular forgiveness for it, or pray like a sinner at all about it? May I under most sins speak very confidently as a child of God, who has already been forgiven, to whom it is a somewhat remarkable circumstance that he should have done wrong, but still by no means a serious disaster? I defy anybody to draw the line, and if they do draw it, I will strike it out, for they have no right to draw it. There is no hint in the Word of God that for a certain amount of sin there is to be one style of praying, and for a certain lower amount of sin another style of praying.

I venture to say this, brethren, going farther—that, as this language is certainly appropriate in David's mouth, and as it would be impossible to draw any line at which it would cease to be appropriate, the safest and best plan for you and for me is this—seeing that we are sinners, if we have not been permitted to backslide as much as David, yet *we had better come in the same way,* we had better take the lowest place, urge the lowliest plea, and so make sure work of our salvation. It is safest to assume the greatest supposable need. Let us put ourselves into the humblest position before the throne of the heavenly grace, and cry, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving-kindness: according unto the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions!"

But is not a man of God forgiven? Yes, that he is! Is he not justified? Yes, that he is. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Let that all stand true in the highest sense that you can give to it, but for all that, the sinner's cry is not thereby hushed into silence. True children of God cry, and let me tell you they cry after a stronger fashion than other children. They have their confessions of sin, and these are deeper and more intense than those of others. Whatever our confidence may be, our Lord Jesus Christ never told us to pray, "Lord, I thank You that I am forgiven, and therefore have no sin to confess; I thank You that I need not come to You as a sinner!" But He put into the mouth of His disciples such words as these, "Our Father, which are in heaven, forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." I reckon that

the Lord's Prayer is never out of date. I expect to be able to pray it when I am on the brink of heaven, and if I should ever be sanctified to the fullest extent, I shall never turn round to the Savior, and say, "Now, my Lord, I have got beyond Your prayer! Now, Savior, I can no more address my Father who is in heaven in this language, for I have outgrown Your prayer!" Brethren, the notion sounds to me like blasphemy. Never shall I say to my Savior, "I have no necessity now to come to Your precious blood, or to say to You, 'Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.'" Listen, brethren, "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another," and what then? Why, even then "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." We still need the blood when walking in the light, as God Himself is in the light.

While we are here below we shall need to use just such language as David did. Appropriate as our text is to the sinner, it is equally appropriate to the saint, and he may continue to use it till we get to heaven. Remember, Brethren, that when our hearts cannot honestly use such language, we may think that we are raised up by faith, but it is possible that we may be blown up by presumption. When we do not bow into the very dust, and kiss the Savior's feet, and wash them with our tears, we may think that it is because we are growing in grace, but it is far more likely that we are swelling with self-esteem. The more holy a man is, the more humble he is. The more really sanctified he is, the more does he cry about his sin, whatever it may be—"Oh, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" When you get the clearest possible view of God, what will be the result? Why, the deepest downcasting in your own spirit. Look at Job. He can answer his wretched accusers, but when he sees God—ah, then he abhors himself in dust and ashes! Was Job wrong in heart? I question whether any of us are half as good as Job. I am sure few of us could have played the man as he did under his sorrows. With all the failure of his patience, the Holy Spirit does not call it a failure, for He says, "You have heard of the patience of Job." He says not, "of his impatience," but "of his patience," and yet this blessed, patient man, patient even by God's own testimony, when he saw God, abhorred himself. Look at Isaiah, again. Was there ever a tongue more eloquent, more consecrated, more pure? Were there ever lips more circumcised to God than those of that mighty evangelical prophet? And yet, when he beheld the glory of the Lord, the train of the Lord filling the temple, he said, "Woe is me! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." Those of you that can do so may come to my Master's table tonight as saints; I shall come as a sinner. You that feel that you can come there glorying in your growth in grace

may so come if you like; I shall come feeling that I am nothing, less than nothing. I shall endeavor to come to the cross just as I came at first, for I find that if I get beyond the position of a believing sinner, I get into a dangerous condition. Safety lies in conformity to truth, and truth will not allow any of us to glory before God. The more I know the Lord, and the more I live in communion with Him, the more do I feel happy in lying at His feet, and looking up to Him to be my all in all. I would be nothing, and let Christ be everything. Take this from one who has been a preacher of the gospel for more than thirty-five years, and a soul-winner who needs not to be ashamed—I am as entirely dependent upon the free mercy of the Lord this day as ever I was, and I look to be saved in the same manner as the thief upon the cross.

II. Secondly, let me make another observation. It shall be this; AN EXTRAORDINARY SENSE OF GUILT IS QUITE CONSISTENT WITH THE STRONGEST FAITH. It is a blessed thing when the two go together. David was under an extraordinary sense of sin, and right well he might be, for he had committed an extravagant transgression. He had done a very grievous wrong to man, and committed great lewdness before the Lord, and when the Spirit of God at last awakened his conscience, through the rebuke of Nathan, it is not at all a wonder that he should have bowed down under a deeply humiliating sense of his own guilt. He was guilty, deeply guilty—guiltier than even he himself knew. You and I, perhaps, may also be by God's grace, favored with a deep sense of sin. But I hear some people say, "Did I understand you rightly, sir, or did my ears deceive me? *Favored with a deep sense of sin?"* "Yes, I said that, for while sin is horrible, a thorough sense of it, bitter as it is, is one of the greatest favors with which God blesses His chosen. I am sure that there are some of God's children whose experience is shallow and superficial, for they do not know the heights and depths of redeeming love; neither are they established in the doctrines of grace, and all because they were never deeply plowed with a sharp sense of sin. These know nothing of subsoil plowing, so as to turn their very hearts up under the keen plow of the law. But that man who knows what sin means, and has had it burned with a hot iron into the core of his spirit, he is the man who knows what grace means, and is likely to understand its freeness and fullness. He who knows the evil of sin is likely to know the value of the precious blood. I could scarcely ask for any of you a better thing than that you should fully know in your own spirit the horribleness of sin as far as your mind is capable of bearing the strain.

David was so conscious of his guilt that *he compares himself to a leper*. The language of the text refers, I believe, to the cleansing of lepers. Hys-

sop was dipped in blood, and then the sacrificial blood was sprinkled upon the polluted individuals to make them clean. David felt that he had become a leprous man. He felt like one who had contracted the horrible, the polluting, the incurable disease, of leprosy. He felt that he was not fit to come near to God, or even to associate with his fellow man. He confessed that his guilt was such that he ought to be put away, shut out from the assembly of the people. His guilt had polluted a whole nation, of whom he was the representative, and to whom he was the example. Did you ever feel like that? I tell you that you do not know all the pollution of sin unless you have been made to feel yourself to be a polluted thing. If you had fifty leprosies, they would not pollute you like sin, for a poor leper is not really polluted; he may bear a grand and noble soul within that rotting body. Sin alone is real pollution, hellish pollution, abominable pollution. There is nothing in hell that is worse than sin, even the devil is only a devil because sin made him a devil; so that sin is the most horrible and intolerable evil that can fall upon the spirit of man. David felt that dreadful truth. But yet, mark you, though he felt the horror of the disease of sin, his faith was strong enough to make him use the confident language of the text, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean." "Black as my sin is, filthy as it is, if You do but purge me, O my God, I shall be clean."

Yes, David is sure that God can cleanse him. He pleads as one who has no question upon the matter towards God. His prayer is—"Do You purge me, and I shall be clean! Apply the precious blood of the great Sacrifice to me, O God, and I shall be whiter than snow!" There is about the Hebrew a sense which I could hardly give you, except I was to put it thus, "You will un-sin me." As though God would take his sin right away, and leave him without a speck of sin, without a single grain of it upon him. God could make him as if he had never sinned at all. Such is the power of the cleansing work of God upon the heart that He can restore innocence to us, and make us as if we had never been stained with transgression at all. Do you believe this? Do you believe this? Oh, you are a happy man, if, under the deepest conceivable sense of sin, you can still say, "Yes, I believe that He can wash me, and make me whiter than snow!"

But will you follow me while I go a step farther? The words of our text are in the Hebrew in the future tense, and they might be read, "You shall purge me, and I shall be clean," so that David was not only certain about the power of God to cleanse him, but about the fact that God would do it, "You shall purge me." He cast himself, confessing his sin, at the feet of his God, and he said, "My God, I believe that, through the great Atonement, You will make me clean!" Have you faith like that of David? Do you

believe this? Beloved, some of us can boldly say, "Yes, that we do; we believe not only that God can pardon us, but that He will, yes, that He has pardoned us, and we come to Him now, and plead that He would renew in us the cleansing work of the precious blood, and of the water, which flowed from the side of Christ, and so make us perfectly clean! Yes, we believe that He will do it; we are sure that He will, and we believe that He will continue to cleanse us till we shall need no more cleansing." Hart's hymn sings concerning the precious blood—

"If guilt removed returns and remains,
Its power may be proved again and again."

This witness is true and we set our seal to it.

The Psalmist David believed that, although his sin was what it was, yet God could make a rapid cleansing of it. He speaks of the matter as worked promptly, and speedily. It took seven days to cleanse a leper, but David does not follow the type when the reality excels it. He says, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean." It is done directly, done at once—washed, and whiter than snow. It will not take seven days to wipe out the crimes of seven years, no, if a man had lived seventy years in sin, if he did but come to his God with humble confession, and if the precious blood of Jesus were applied to him, his sins would vanish in the twinkling of an eye. The two facts come together. "Purge me; I shall be clean. Wash me; I shall be whiter than snow." It is done at once. Note the rapidity of the cleansing.

Mark the effectual character of the purgation. "Purge me, and I shall be clean." Not "I shall think that I am," but "I *shall* be. I shall be like a man perfectly healed of leprosy." Such a man was not purged in theory, but in reality, so that he could go up to the court of the Lord's house, and offer his sacrifice among the rest of Israel. So, if you wash me, Lord, I shall be really clean! I shall have access to You, and I shall have fellowship with all Your saints.

Once more—David believed that God could give him internal cleansing. "In the hidden parts," he says, "You shall make me to know wisdom." I do like that about the text. It is, "Purge *me* with hyssop and *I* shall be clean." Where?—Hands? Yes. Feet? Yes. Head? Yes. All this is good, but what about the heart? There is the part that you and I cannot cleanse, but God can. Imagination, conscience, memory, every inward faculty, the Lord can purge us in all these. "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean." This includes the whole man. And this declaration falls from the lips of a man who knew himself to be as defiled as he could be, a very leper, only fit to be put away into his own house, and shut up there for fear of contaminating the rest of mankind. He boldly says, "If the Lord

washes me, I shall be clean, I am certain of it. I shall be perfectly clean, and fit to have communion with Him."

Notice one more remark on this point, namely, that David, while thus conscious of his sins, is so full of faith towards God that *he appropriates all the cleansing power of God to Himself*. "Wash *me,* and *I* shall be whiter than snow. Purge *me* with hyssop, and *I* shall be clean." There are four personal words in one verse. It is easy to believe that God can forgive sin in general, but that He can forgive mine in particular—that is the point. Yes, it is easy to believe that He can forgive man, but to believe that He will forgive such a poor specimen of the race as I am is quite another matter! To take personal hold upon divine blessings is a most blessed faculty. Let us exercise it. Can you do it? Brothers and sisters, can you do it? You that cannot call yourselves brothers and sisters, you far-away ones, can you come to Christ, all black and defiled as you are, and just believe in Him, that you shall be made whole? You will not be believing too much of the Great Sinners' Friend. According to your faith be it unto you.

III. This brings us to our third and last point, upon which I will speak with great brevity. Notice that A DEEP SENSE OF SIN AND A CONFIDENT FAITH IN GOD MAKE THE LORD'S NAME AND GLORY PREEMINENTLY CONSPICUOUS. God is the great actor in the text before us. He purges and He washes, and none but He. The sins and the cleansing are both of them too great to allow of any inferior handling.

"Purge me." He makes it all God's work. He does not say anything about the Aaronic priest. What a poor miserable creature the priest is when a soul is under a sense of sin! Have you ever met with a person who has been really broken in heart who has gone to a priest? If so, he has been made ashamed of his looking to man, for he has found him to be a broken cistern that can hold no water. Why, my brethren, if we had this platform full of popes, and one poor soul under a sense of sin to be comforted, the whole lot of them could not touch the sinner's wound, nor do anything to stanch the bleeding of his heart! No, no, the words of the best of men fall short of our need. As the dying monk said, *"Tua vulnera, Jesu!"*—"Your wounds, Jesus!" These can heal, but nothing else can. God must Himself wash us. Nothing short of His personal interposition will suffice.

Now, notice the next word, "Purge me *with hyssop."* We must have faith, which is represented by hyssop. How little David makes of faith! He thinks of it only as the poor "hyssop." Many questions have been raised as to what hyssop was. I do not think that anybody knows. Whatever it may have been, it was a plant that had many little shoots and leaves, be-

cause its particular fitness was that the blood would cling to its many branches. Its use was that it stored the blood, and held it there in ruby drops upon each one of its sprays, and that is the particular suitability of faith for its peculiar office. It is an excellent thing in itself, but the particular virtue of faith lies in this—that it holds the blood so as to apply it. Scarlet wool was used in the ceremony of cleansing, and the scarlet wool was useful because it soaked in the blood, and held it within itself; but the hyssop was still more useful because, while it held the blood, it held it ready to drop. That is how faith holds the great Sacrifice; it holds the atoning blood upon every spray, ready to drop upon the tortured conscience. Faith is the sprinkling hyssop; it is nothing in itself, but it applies to the soul that which is our cleansing and our life.

David, moreover, seems to me to say, "Lord, if You will purge me with the blood of the great Sacrifice, it does not matter how it is done! Do it with the little hyssop from off the wall. However tiny and insignificant the plant may be, yet it will hold the precious drops, and bring them to my heart, and I shall be whiter than snow." It is God, you see—it is God all the way through.

"And I"—there is just that mention of himself; but what of himself? Why, "I shall be the receiver. I shall be clean." "I." What about that intensive, "I"? "I shall be whiter than snow"—I shall be the material on which You work—the guilty pardoned—the polluted made clean—the leper made whole, and permitted to come up to Your house.

That is all I ask of my Lord tonight—that He will let me come to His table, and be the receiver, the eater, the drinker, the cleansed one, the debtor, the bankrupt debtor, plunged head over heels in debt to the heavenly Creditor. Oh, to be nothing; to lie at His feet! Oh, to be nothing, but washed—washed in the blood! How sweet it is no longer to ride on horses, but to have God for your all in all; no longer to go forth, sword in hand, boasting our strength, and glorying in what we can do, but to sit down at Jesus' feet, and sing the victory which He alone has won! Come, let us pray from our very hearts, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." God bless you, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 51.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—406, 375.

The Preacher is still "detained before the Lord" in affliction; but he is thankful that he can salute his friends with the comfortable prospect of

speedy recovery. Will they in their compassion pray that it may be so? Up hill and down dale we have plodded on thus far, and have come a good distance on our life journey. It is a cause of great rejoicing that, for these many years, the weekly testimony for Jesus has not ceased from these sermons, even when the witness-bearer has himself been laid aside by sickness. With eyes wet with intense gratitude, and heart ablaze with ardent praise, we conclude another year, and see the end of volume thirty-two.

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

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

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

END OF VOLUME 32