THE MASTER KEY—OPENING THE GATE OF HEAVEN
NO. 1938

A SERMON
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"And You said, I will surely do you good."
Genesis 32:12.

THE possession of a God, or the non-possession of a God, makes the greatest possible difference between man and man. Esau is a princely being, but he is "a profane person." *Jacob is a weak, fallible, frail creature, but he has a God.* Have you not heard of "the mighty God of Jacob"? There are many wise, careful, prudent men of the world who have no God, and truly these in the highest sense, like the young lions, do lack, and suffer hunger, for their highest nature is left to famish. Those who wait upon the Lord are often very simple, and devoid of ability and policy, but they shall not lack any good thing; their highest nature is well supplied from heavenly sources. This is the great difference between the two races which people the world; I mean the sons of men who say in their hearts, "No God," and the sons of God, the twice-born, who have received new life, and therefore with heart and flesh cry out for God, even the living God. The child of this world inquires, "Where shall I flee from His presence?" The child of light cries, "O God, You are my God; early will I seek You." There are thus two races of men who can never blend, either in this life or in that which is to come. Deep in their innermost nature lies a vital difference, they are of two distinct seeds. My dear hearers, you can divide yourselves without difficulty by this rule; Have you a God, or have you none? If you have no God, what have you? If you have no God, what good have you to expect? What, indeed, can be good to you? If you have no God, how can you face the past, the present, or the future? But if you have God for your portion, your whole history is covered. The God of the past has blotted out your sin, the God of the present makes all things work for your good, the God of the future will never leave you nor forsake you. In God you are prepared for every emergency. O man, if the God of Jacob is your God, you shall be safe at night, though you may sleep as unguarded as the patriarch at Bethel, and you shall be secure by day, though you may be met by Esau with his four hundred men! You are safe in banishment though Laban is churlish, and safe in the midst of foes, though Canaanites thirst for your blood, for the Lord has said, "Touch not My anointed, and do My prophets no harm." It matters not where you go if the God of Israel is with you, and says to you, "Fear not

to go down into Egypt, for I will go down with you, and I will also surely bring you up again." He shall guard you from all evil; the Lord shall preserve your soul.

Because Jacob had a God, therefore he went to Him in the hour of his trouble. He did not know how he should escape from his injured and angry brother Esau. In fact, he believed that Esau had come on purpose to cut him up, root and branch, and so, after doing the best he could, Jacob looked to his best Friend and Helper, and cried unto his God. He who has a God will be sure to fly to Him in his distress. There is no use in having a God if you do not use Him. I am afraid that many professed Christians place their God afar off, and never dream of going to Him for practical succor in the hour of danger. As well have no God, as have an unreal God, who cannot be found in the midnight of our need. But what a blessing it is to be able to go to our God at all times, and pour out our hearts before Him, for our God will be our Helper, and that right early! He is our near and dear Friend, in joy and in sorrow. Poor Jacob, in the calmer days of his life, had failed to walk with his God, as his father Abraham had done, but now a storm has overtaken him, and he flies to the Lord his God, as a mariner puts into port to escape the tempest.

Dear friend, are you in trouble at this time, and have you a God? Then go to Him in prayer at once, and spread your case before Him. Have you a Rabshakeh's letter in the house? Go, like Hezekiah, and spread it before the Lord. Have you a dying child? Then cry to the Lord as David did. Are you in the deeps with Jonah? Then let your prayer arise from the very bottoms of the mountains. Have you any bitterness in the vessel of your heart? Then pour it out before Him.

Make good use of your God, and especially *gain the fullest advantage from Him by pleading with Him in prayer*. In troublous times, our best communion with God will be carried on by supplication. Tell Him your case; search out His promise, and then plead it with holy boldness. This is the best, the surest, the speediest way of relief.

What would some of us do if we had not a God to go to? Though we are not tried and troubled as some men are, and God has set a hedge about us, yet there are times in our life when we should die of a broken heart if we could not tell our griefs to God. Like Job, we could curse the day of our birth, and wish that we had never been born, if we were utterly bereft of God. We would look forward to annihilation as a hopeful thing if we could not speak with God, our ever-gracious Friend. But when we can get away to Him, and tell out the whole matter, and lay hold upon Him by the hand of faith, and plead His promise, then the darkened cloud withdraws, and we come out into the light again, and sing, "This God is our God forever and ever; He will be our Guide even unto death."

Beloved, we see that Jacob had a God, and that he made use of Him in prayer, but the point I want to call your attention to at this time is, that *the stress, the force, the very sinew of Jacob's prayer consisted in his pleading the promise of God with God*. When he came to real wrestling with the Lord, he cried, "You said." That is the way to lay hold upon the covenant angel—"You said." The art of wrestling lies much in a proper use of "You said." Jacob, with all his mistakes, was a master of the art of

prayer; we justly call him, "wrestling Jacob." He said, "I will not let You go." He gets grip for his hands out of this, "You said." With this he lays hold upon his unknown antagonist—a desperate hold which he will not relax, even though his sinew are made to shrink. "You said" is a good grip with which to hold an honest man, and not less does it lay hold on our faithful God. This will have power over any person in who is truth, for he that speaks truly will not run back from his promise. When we come to pleading terms with God, there is nothing that so helps us as to be able to quote the promise, and plead, "You said."

In handling my text, which was Jacob's prayer, I shall notice, first, that it ought to be *our memorial*, and secondly, that it is *God's bond,* and thirdly, that therefore we may make it *our plea*.

I. First, it ought to be OUR MEMORIAL. I mean, dear friends that we ought to recollect, much more than we do, what God has said. If we had a silent God, who to this age had never revealed Himself, by actual speech, if it were given out at this hour that now, for the first time, God was about to make a promise, how eagerly would all God-fearing men desire to hear it, and how carefully would they treasure it up! Why, every syllable would be more precious than a pearl, the very tone of the utterance would be mystic music full of meaning. You would charge your memory to embalm each word, no, to preserve each syllable in all its living force and beauty. Whatever else you forgot, you would lay up every letter of the newly-spoken promise in the archives of your soul. Ought we not to treat God's word with equal reverence, though spoken ages ago, since it is a fact that He has spoken it? The Lord has spoken often from the foundations of the world by His prophets, and in these last days by His Son, and we are bound to guard jealously every single word which He has thus given to us. He has preserved His own words in the Scriptures; let us preserve them in our hearts. No subjects in the world can be so worthy of the consideration, the memory, and the reverence of man as those upon which his Maker has deigned to give instruction. The choicest communications ever made to human minds are those which have come from the great Father. I ask you, therefore, brothers and sisters, if I say not rightly, that God's divine "You have said" should be our memorial? We should lay up His word in our hearts as men lay up gold and gems in their vaults; it should be as dear to us as life itself. My heart stands in awe of God's word, and I am sorrowful because so many trifle with it. No good can come of irreverence towards Scripture; we ought to cherish it in our heart of hearts.

We ought to do this, first, with regard to *what God has said*. You notice that Jacob puts it, "You said," and then he quotes the words—"Surely I will do you good." It is an essential part of the education of a Christian to learn the promises. I always admire that fact in the life of General Gordon, who, whatever mistakes he made, was a grand believer, a very Abraham among us in these latter days—that he always carried with him that little book called Clark's "Precious Promises," which is an arrangement of the various promises of the Old and New Testaments under different heads. The General used to consult that collection of divine promises, and seek out that holy text which best suited his particular

condition, then he sought solitude, and pleaded before the Lord that inspired word, believing that it was true, and that the Lord would do as He had said. By faith he looked for an answer, and acted upon it. He went down through the Sudan alone, as you know, daring all manner of dangers because he believed in God. The heroism of his life grew out of his confidence in the promises. If we would be heroes, here is the food with which to sustain a noble life.

I would have all Christian people know God's promises. If you had in your house a number of checks which you believed to be good, I do not suppose that you would long be unaware of their nature and value. No merchant here would say, "I have a number of bills, and drafts, and checks at home somewhere; I have no doubt that they are all good, and that they are my lawful property, but I do not know much about them. Their value is quite unknown to me." Such ignorance would argue insanity. Will you know your earthly wealth, and never consider your heavenly riches? In the Bible there are "exceedingly great and precious promises," shall it be said that some of God's children do not know what those promises contain? They have read them, perhaps, but they have never really searched into their meaning to see what God has promised. Of many good things provided for them they are quite ignorant, and even in reference to their personal and present trouble they are not aware of what the Lord has promised to do for them in such a case. What a pity it would be for a trader to be short of money, and to have a draft for a large amount, but not know where to find it! It would be a poor way of doing business, would it not? Is it not a shameful thing to be dealing with God in a like slovenly fashion? Brethren, I would that we studied God's word much more. We read all sorts of books, but many of them are unprofitable. As for a great part of current literature, one might as well open his mouth, and eat the east wind, for there is nothing that can stay his soul therein. One single sentence from God is worth all the books of the Alexandrian library, or of the Bodleian. All that has been consumed of human literature, and all that still exists, put together, would not equal one book of the Bible. O my hearer, get to know what the Lord has said, and you will be on the way to wisdom! Within the compass of "It is written," lies infinite truth. If you are well instructed in it, it shall be well with you.

Moreover, Jacob also knew *when God had spoken* a promise, for he quotes twice the fact that God had spoken to him, and said so-and-so. It is clear that he knew when the promise was spoken. I have often found peculiar comfort, not only in a promise, but in noticing the occasion for its being made. I have observed the condition of the man to whom God gave the promise, and I have gathered much instruction therefrom. Sometimes the frame of a picture is almost as beautiful as the painting itself, and so the occasion of the promise may be as instructive as the promise itself. The conditions under which the Lord uttered it may be so similar to our own that they may cause the word of the Lord to come with special comfort to our hearts. "Surely," you say, "God, who spoke thus to Jacob, or thus to Daniel, or thus to Paul, finding me in the same condition, speaks also thus to me, for the promises are not of private interpretation. They are not allotments hedged in for individuals, but they are a

wide and open common, which is the undisputed property of all believers. They are not confined to those to whom they were first spoken, but they reach also to us who are fellow-heirs with them."

Brethren, take pains to know *what* God has promised, and to know *when* God has promised it. Note well both matter and date. These are flowers from which the bee of meditation will suck much sweetness.

There is another matter which is important for us to know, namely, *to whom God made the promis*e. Jacob knew to whom it was spoken. He tells us in a previous verse that God had spoken a certain promise to him. "Which said *unto me,* Return unto your country, and to your kindred, and I will deal well with you." A promise that was made to another man will be of no service to me until I can discover that I, being in the same condition as that other man, and being of like character as that other man, and exercising like faith as that other man, do stand before God in the same position as he did, and therefore the word addressed to him is spoken also to me. Brethren, I entreat you continually to study God's word to see whether the promise is made to your character and condition, and so is made to yourself, as much as if your name were written upon it. Many and many a time has God brought a promise home to my own heart with such freshness that I have felt that the Bible was made on purpose for me. Yes, I have been sure that the promise was written for me, if for no other man that ever lived. When a man sees a garment left at his door which fits him exactly, and is evidently cut to suit certain peculiarities of his form, he concludes that the garment was meant for him. Even so, in many a promise I see certain private marks which are the exact counterparts of the secrets of my soul, and these show that God meant me when thus and thus He spoke.

Beloved, I say to you, one and all, study much the promises of God's word. Have them at your fingertips. Remember what things God has said to men, and when He has said them, and to what kind of men He has said them, and discover by this means how far He has said them to you. Let this indeed be the forefront of your knowledge. If you cannot read the stars, yet read the promises. If you cannot study the stone book of geology, yet know the Rock of Ages, and the declarations engraved thereon. If you remain a stranger to the deep things of metaphysics and philosophy, yet at least know the household privileges of the family of God. Dear child, do know what your Father has said! It will be very sad if you do not. Happy heir of heaven, do know what it is to which you are an heir according to the promises and the covenant!

Thus much upon the duty of making God's word to live in your mind and memory.

II. Secondly, "You said, I will surely do you good"—this is GOD'S BOND.

Nothing holds a man like his word, and nothing so fully fixes the course of action of the Lord our God as His own promise. We speak with the deepest reverence in reference to the great God, but it would not be reverence if we said less than this—that God has bound Himself to be true to His word. He can do all things, but He cannot lie. If God had made no promise, He would have been free to act, or not to act, but by

His promise He engages Himself to act in a certain way, and He will do so. From the necessity of His nature He will be faithful.

What a mighty thing, then, is a promise, since it is a bond which holds God Himself! How does it do so?

I answer; it holds Him, first, *by His truth*. If a man says, "I will," it is not in his power, without a breach of truth, to refuse to make good his word. If a promise is made by one man to another, it is considered to be a matter of honor to fulfill it. Unless a man is willing to tarnish his honor, and disgrace his truthfulness, he will certainly do as he has solemnly promised to do. Alas! Many persons think lightly of truthfulness, they even dare to swear lightly, but what do we think of such people? To utter solemn promises, and then to disown them, is not the way to be esteemed and honored. It can never be so with God. None can impeach His veracity. None shall ever be able to do so. Has He said, and shall He not do it? Has He given His word, and will He not make it good?

Learn, then, when you are praying to God, whether you are saint or sinner, to take the promise, and say, "O my God, You have bound Yourself to give me this blessing, for You have said that You will do so, and I know You cannot lie. I am sure that You will do even as You have said, for You are a God of truth!" The promise is God's gracious bond, since His truthfulness cannot be put in question.

But, next, he who enters into an engagement is bound to keep his word, or he is considered to be vacillating and changeable; the Lord is, therefore, held by His *immutability*. He is God, and changes not. We hear persons say, "I have changed my mind," but God is of one mind, and who can turn Him? Change is written upon all human things, but listen to the Eternal—"I am the Lord, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed." Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, today, and forever," and all the promises are yes and amen in Him. The great Father of lights is "without variableness, or shadow of turning." When the Lord made His promise He foresaw every possible contingency, and He made His promise with a determination to stand to it. Ages make no difference to Him. His promise is as fresh and unfading as when first He caused it to delight the eyes of His chosen.

This is fine pleading; you can fall upon your knees, and cry, "Lord, there is Your promise; be graciously pleased to fulfill it! I know that You have not changed, and that Your word is not withdrawn. You have never run back from Your word, and You never will, therefore fulfill this word unto Your servant, whereon you have caused me to hope." An unchanging God is the foundation of happiness to the believer!

But sometimes men make a promise, and they are unable to fulfill it from lack of *power.* Many a time it has cost honest minds great grief to feel that, though they are willing enough to do what they have engaged to do, yet they have lost their ability to perform their word. This is a grave sorrow to a sincere mind. This can never happen to the Almighty God. He faints not, neither is weary. To Him there is no feebleness of decline, nor failure of decay. God All-sufficient is still His name. His arm is not shortened so that He cannot reach us, neither is His hand palsied that He cannot help us. The strongest sinew in an arm of flesh will crack in

course of time, but the Lord never fails. The weakness of God is stronger than man. The least of God is greater than the most of man. The Lord cannot possibly withdraw from His word through inability for, "with God all things are possible." Therefore, go to Him in prayer, and take His promise, and say, "Lord, be pleased to help Your servant, for I know that You can deliver me, and I trust in You as God All-sufficient!" The Lord will never allow a slur to be cast upon His power, which is one part of His glorious name. He wills to make His power known, and it is never according to His mind to leave that power in doubt.

Once more, the Lord's *wisdom* also holds Him to His promise. Men make engagements thoughtlessly, and before long they realize that it would be ruinous to keep them. It is foolish to keep a foolish promise. Yet, because wisdom is not in us we make mistakes, and find ourselves in serious difficulties. It may so happen that a person may feel compelled to say, "I promised to do that which, upon more careful consideration, I find it would be wicked and unjust for me to do. My promise was void from the beginning, for no man has a right to promise to do wrong." Whatever justification an erring man may find in his folly to excuse him from fulfilling his rash promise, nothing of the kind can occur with God. He never speaks without knowledge, for He sees the end from the beginning, and He is infallibly good and wise. Therefore, again I say unto you, what a hold we have upon God because of His character! We can plead, "Lord, You did not make a mistake when You did promise me this gift! You knew all that would happen; all my sins and all my follies were foreseen by you! You did foreknow all, therefore be pleased to keep Your word unto Your servant, even as now I bring it before You, and ask You to fulfill it!"

I wish that I had power to make this matter plain, so that every believer who is in need, and is about to pray, may see the arguments with which he may approach the throne of the heavenly grace.

I should not, however, complete my statement if I did not add that to go to God *through Jesus Christ* is to use the best and most powerful of pleas. All the attributes of God are in His Son, and moreover, the Lord Jesus deserves great things at His Father's hand. He permits us to urge His merits, and use His name as our authorization; what better leverage can we desire? Is not this an overwhelming argument? The great God will deny nothing to Jesus. For His sake He will give us all things. When we bring His Son in the arms of our faith, and lay Him before the Father, we may have whatsoever we need. Let us not be slow to use this august plea. Let not our Lord Jesus have to say to us, "Up to now you have asked nothing in My name."

III. So then, last of all, this may be, and this ought to be, in prayer OUR PLEA, as it was Jacob's plea—even this *"You said."* We may urge the gracious promise of the Lord as pleading *against our own unworthiness*. Listen to Jacob's cry, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which You have showed unto Your servant, but You said, 'I will surely do you good.'" Is not that splendid pleading? Down in the dust he prostrates himself, and then prays right up. In this fashion let my hearer cry—"Lord, I am worthy of nothing but wrath, and can-

not hope to speed with You on the ground of works, but, Lord, You have said, *You have said*, YOU HAVE SAID!" This must win the suit. If a man has made me a promise, he cannot refuse to keep it on the ground that I am unworthy, because it is his own character that is at stake, not mine. However unworthy I am, he must not prove himself to be unworthy by failing to keep his word. "If we believe not, yet He abides faithful; He cannot deny Himself." Everything hinges upon the character of the Promiser. Do you not see this? When you are burdened with a deep sense of sin, when your heart is ready to break with an overwhelming consciousness of guilt, still know that "God abides faithful, He cannot deny Himself." When the surges of divine wrath beat upon you without a pause, yet confess your sin, and cease not to plead with God. Acknowledge your wickedness, and firmly lay hold on the promise, and say, "You have said." Plead such a word as that in Isaiah, "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." Say unto the Lord, "You have said, 'I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins."' Entreat the Lord to do as He has said. Under a crushing sense of your own unworthiness, still know that all this does not alter the fact that the Lord has spoken in unchanging mercy, and will surely make it good. A God of truth must keep His promise, however unworthy you may be to whom that promise is made. Is not this most effectual help to a poor soul in drawing near to God in prayer? If you are as black as seven devils, God will not run back from what He has promised you. If you have waded up to your throat in sin's foulest infamy, yet if there is a promise made to you, and you can plead it, God will stand to His word! Whatever you may be, God is no liar, no hypocrite, no changeling. He never made a promise to the ear to break it to the experience. He is more willing to keep the promise than we are to have it kept. Come, poor trembler, in all your sin and defilement, with this upon your tongue, "You said and therefore I pray You do as You have said! Your word says, 'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' Lord, I confess, and I pray You to forgive." O my brothers, such a plea, urged by a breaking heart, must readily prevail with the great Father who waits to be gracious!

This is also good pleading *as against our present danger*. See how Jacob puts it with regard to his own peril. He says, "Deliver me, I pray You, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. And You said, I will surely do you good." In these words he sets out his very natural fear from his brother's anger; the mother, the children, everybody would be stricken by fierce Esau, and to save himself from this threatened horror Jacob lifts the shield of the promise, and as good as says to the Lord his God, "If this calamity should happen, how can Your promise be kept? You said, 'Surely I will do you good' but, Lord, it is not good for Esau's sword to shed our blood! If You permit his anger to slay us, where is Your engagement to do good unto Your servant?" This reminds one of the plea of Moses, when he asked, "What will the Egyptians say?" If Israel

were destroyed in the wilderness, what would Jehovah do for His great name? This is a prevalent argument.

Brethren, what is your present trouble? One sighs out because he knows not where to look for food and raiment. But there is a word of the Lord for that need, "No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." There is another, "He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you," and another, "Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure." Can you not go to the living God with these words of His upon your tongue, and beg Him to be as good as His promise? Say in so many words, "Lord, I am afraid that, if I am much longer without employment, I shall not have shoes for my feet, nor bread for my children, and I shall be brought to a condition of utter poverty, and yet You have said, 'I will never leave you, nor forsake you'! Lord, I plead that promise!" See whether the Lord does not deliver you.

Do you ask me, "Are you sure that God will keep His word?" I answer, yes. I will be bound for Him at any time, and in any place. Many children of God are in sore distress. I do not know how low He may let them go, but I do know that they shall never go lower than that word, "Underneath are the everlasting arms." I cannot say with David, "I have been young, and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread," for I have seen his seed begging bread, and I expect to see it again. If the seed of the righteous misbehave themselves, they shall beg their bread as other people have to do. But I can say, "I have been young, and I am now in middle life; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken; no, not so much as once!" The Lord will not turn His back on His friends, nor suffer those who trust in Him to be forsaken.

One cries, *"I have been anxiously doing my best."* Perhaps you have, dear brother! Perhaps you have, dear sister! I am very far from censuring you for doing your best, but sometimes, if you would let God do His best it would pay you much better. You see Jacob did his best when he divided his company and prepared a present for his brother. But it did not amount to much. It was a very poor little best, was it not? It would have come to nothing if he had not spread the matter before the Lord in prayer. Indeed, when the Lord wrestled with him at Jabbok, that night's prayer, and weeping, and supplication did the work. Esau was won, after all, not by Jacob's little arrangements, but by the hand of the great Lord laid upon his heart. Jacob's schemes and plans do not figure in the whole narrative except as feeble measures which the Lord rendered superfluous. The cry, "You have said," did all the work.

I beg to bear my witness, as far as my experience goes, that the shortest way out of trouble is pleading with God. Straightforward makes the best runner. You may go round about, and round about, and round about, and come at nothing, but go straight to God about the business, and if He does not end it, then it is not to be ended, but is meant to go on, and work out a higher good. In any case, "Cast your burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain you: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." Try that promise, and you shall find it will cover you with armor of light.

Once more, *as to future blessedness*, Jacob used this argument, "You said, I will surely do you good," as to all his future hopes, for he went on to say, "You said, I will make your seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude." Not as much as he should, but still in a measure Jacob lived in the future. He lived under the influence and expectation of the covenant blessing. Now, brethren, what hope have you and I of getting to heaven? None, except that the Lord has said, "I give unto My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish." I shall never perish, for Jesus says I never shall. He has also said, "Where I am, there shall also My servant be." Therefore I shall be in glory with Him, and that is enough for me. All our hope of the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the reward which He will give His saints in the day of His manifestation—all our hopes of the crown of life that fades not away, and of the beatific vision—all depend on "You have said." We, according to His promise, look for a new heaven and a new earth. Did you ever notice, in the Epistle to the Galatians, how the apostle Paul makes this dependence upon the promise the distinguishing mark of the chosen seed? He declares that the child of the bond woman was born according to the flesh, but the child of the free woman was born according to the promise. Hagar's seed was according to the flesh, but the true seed, even Isaac, was by promise—and he says, "We, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise." It is far better to be the child of the promise than to be the child of creature strength, or the child of legal hope—for the child of creature strength and legal hope will have to go packing into the wilderness with a bottle of water and a poor slave mother for his guardian. But the child that *hugs* the promise, the child that *lives* upon the promise, the child that waits for everything till he enters his inheritance, he abides always—and all his Father's goods belong to him! Are you in the line of the promise, dear Friend? If so, get into your chamber in your time of trouble and plead for greater mercy than you have ever enjoyed as of yet, because God has promised it to you—and He will do as He has said.

I have done when I have just mentioned, in as brief a way as ever I can, two or three of the things which God has said, and which I want some of you to plead.

Is there one here who wants to find salvation tonight? I invite you to go home, enter your chamber, shut the door, get down your Bible, and open on this passage, Isaiah 55:7—"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."

Now I imagine that I see you in your little room, and if you do as I wish you to do, you will read the words carefully and thoughtfully, and then say, "Lord, I am one of these wicked ones! This night I desire to forsake my way. I will have done with it. This night I desire, unrighteous as I am, to forsake my thoughts, and return unto You. Now, You have said, 'I will have mercy upon him: I will abundantly pardon him.' Lord, have mercy upon me, and abundantly pardon me, for You have said it!"

When you have thus prayed, expect the Lord to keep the promise. When you look an honest man in the face, and say, "You promised it,"

you expect him to be as good as his promise, even so expect that God in Christ Jesus will fulfill His word. Do not doubt. Believe God, and expect the pardon and the blessing.

Next, O tried child of God, I want *you* to go home, and open your Bible at Psalm 1:15. Put it down on a bit of paper, will you? Read, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me." Put your finger on that text, and then kneel down, and say, "Lord, here I am calling upon You! It is a day of trouble. Deliver me, that I may glorify You." Believe that God means His promise, and is not trifling with you. On the other hand, do not trifle with His word, but make business of it, and wait upon the Lord to have His promise made good. Some big-mouthed promisers will promise anything, but they perform nothing; God is not after their order, I pray you do not treat Him as if He were so. He will hear the cry of the humble, and He will remember for them His covenant.

Is there a poor soul here seeking salvation, who cannot get at either of these promises? Then go home, and look up John 3:18, "He that believes on Him is not condemned." Go and plead that, and say, "I do believe on Jesus Christ, and therefore I am not condemned. Lord, give me to feel the peace which comes of Your justifying grace!"

If that Scripture does not suit you, there is one more, upon which I myself lived for months in the days of my self-despair. It is found in Romans 10:13, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved." I recollect getting hold of that passage, and feeling that it was a door of hope to my soul. Let me quote it in full. "There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him: for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved." My heart said, "I do call upon His name. I do trust in Him. I do pray to Him. If I perish, I will perish crying to Him, and calling upon Him," and on that promise I lived until I found the Lord. I pray that some of you may go home, and plead in the same manner, "Lord, I call upon You; therefore fulfill Your word, and let salvation come unto my house!"

Do you believe that God speaks the truth? If you do, you have living faith within you. Can you trust God to keep His promise? If you can, the work of grace has already begun in your soul. You are no dead sinner any longer. You are not under condemnation. "He that believes on Him has everlasting life." You have a measure of that everlasting life within you at this moment, because you have a measure of faith in God. Oh, for power now to turn that faith to practical use by an earnest, pleading prayer! "Lord, do as You have said!" Such a prayer will soon bring peace and rest to your soul.

God bless you, dear friends! I feel much pleasure in addressing you at this time. If I have exceeded the time, you may well excuse it, for I am not always well enough to address you. Oh, how I have wearied to be in my pulpit! I would ask nothing more of God than to give me bread and water, and permit me to occupy this pulpit on every occasion when I ought to be here, but I cannot as yet get that privilege at His hands, for it is not a matter of promise. If He had said I should always be in good health, I am

sure Satan himself could not make me ill. Having therefore no specific promise, I am satisfied to accept the general assurance that all things work together for good to them that love God. From this assurance I know that I shall have such good health or ill-health as shall be good for me. What more can I desire than that the Lord's will should be done in my mortal body, whether by weakness or by strength? This, however, I will do, by God's help I will preach as earnestly as I can, when I do preach, and I will speak as plainly, and as pointedly, and as earnestly as possible when I am allowed to open my mouth in His name.

Oh, that God might give me every soul in this place at this hour! And He will do it, if we go to Him in humble prayer, pleading what He has said. The Lord is able to bless the word which we preach to an incalculable extent. There is no limit to the good which He can work by this one sermon. Oh, my dear hearer, your hope does not lie in what *you* can say, but in what the Lord has said. Think little of the word of man, but think everything of the word of God. Believe it for yourself, and see if it is not fulfilled. Cling to the promise, come what may. The promise will hold you as surely as you hold the promise. God will be true to His promise, and true to you, for Jesus Christ's sake; be you true to Him. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
GENESIS 28:10-22; 32:1-12.**

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—192, 981, 687.

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The Preacher is recovering from severe illness, and sends his loving salutations to all his readers, desiring for them "A Happy New Year." He hopes to be in his pulpit again as soon as he has recovered strength. Oh, that he might gain spiritual as well as physical vigor! Will not his readers pray for this? If sought, why should it not be received? The present sermon leads the Preacher to beg importunately for the daily prayers of his friends.

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SHAVED AND SHORN, BUT NOT BEYOND HOPE
NO. 1939

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 9, 1887,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 26, 1886.

"However, the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven." Judges 16:22.

LET me introduce the text to you. Samson was set apart from his birth to be the champion of Israel, to break the power of the Philistines who lorded over God's people. Everything in his bringing up had reference to his peculiar calling as the hero of Israel, the hammer of Philistia. He was to be a Nazarite from his birth. Among other things which concerned the Nazarite he never touched wine, no, nor grapes, nor husks of grapes, nor anything that came of the vine, which goes to show that the greatest physical strength is attainable without the use of wine or strong drink. Whatever else overcame Samson, he was never overcome with drunkenness, and yet he greatly sinned, which goes to show that total abstinence is not of itself enough to form a character. A Nazarite, in addition to abstinence from wine, also abstained from wearing the common appearance of men. He was not to have his hair at any time shaven, or cut away, so that when Samson was grown up to manhood, he was covered with a shaggy mass of hair. He must have looked like the lion that he was. Those locks of his were the token of his consecration to God, the outward marks of his being set apart to be the servant of the God of Israel. Can you not see him with the terrible glory of his hair upon him?

Poor Samson was as weak morally as he was strong physically, and he fell a prey first to one evil woman, and then to another. Perhaps the extraordinary strength of his physical frame placed him under stronger temptation than is common to man, at any rate, he was peculiarly constituted, and seemed more like a wanton boy than a judge in Israel. Through this peculiar sin of his, the Philistines found opportunity to assail him. They tempted Delilah, whom he loved, to extract from him the secret of his great strength. He was so strong that he tore a lion as though it had been a kid, so strong that he carried way the gates of the city in which they had shut him up; so strong that he smote an army of Philistines, "hip and thigh, with a great slaughter." The mercenary woman, upon whom he foolishly doted, by degrees extracted from him the secret of his strength, and while he lay asleep upon her lap, the Philistine lords caused a barber to cut away the locks of his head. He awoke from his sleep shaven. Then he went out, and thought to fight the Philistines as before, but to his surprise he found that his strength was gone. The

locks of his dedication had been shorn, he was no longer the acknowledged servant of the Lord, and he was weak as other men. Then, the Philistine lords took him captive, bored out his eyes—for such is the expression in the margin of our old Bibles—gouged out his eyes, bound him to the mill, and made him work like a slave or an ass. In that pitiable plight our text finds him, but it comes with a key of deliverance to set free the captive.

My text runs thus—it is in the twenty-second verse of the sixteenth chapter of Judges—*"However the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven."*

Poor Samson! I roughly sketched his story as with a crayon just now. I cannot stay to attempt a more accurate portrait. Poor Samson, the champion of Israel, now the scoff of his enemies! Poor Samson, the hero of so many fights, now at last conquered by his own foolishness! They have taken him, they have bound him, they have gouged out his eyes, and there he stands, sightless, in the midst of his adversaries, who bind him to the mill, and lash him as he grinds for them. To humiliate him they put him to woman's work, made hard so as to be the work of beasts. See what sin will do. See how the man who had fought God's battles suffers great loss, great pain, great disfigurement, great dishonor, and comes into a cruel and abhorred bondage through his sin. That shaven man made a slave is the picture of very many who once were the avowed servants of God, and were valiant for the truth. They have given up their secret, they have told the world that which none should know but themselves, they have lost the locks of their dedication, and they are led captive by the devil at his will. They cannot see as they used to see, darkness shuts out all joy; they do not work for God as they used to work, for they are slaving for men, for poor, passing, earthborn objects. They have come into an awful bondage, and they have, at the same time, brought great dishonor and weakness upon the church to which they belong. How are the mighty fallen! Children of God, whatever God may do for you, take heed that you always remember that you can never gain anything by sin! It is loss, and utter loss, in every sense, to yield ourselves servants to sin. Again I cry: How are the mighty are fallen! How the champion is become a slave at the mill! In the midst of our churches how often are those, who were excellent and useful, brought to nothing and made to be a derision! How often do our boldest warriors bring the cross of Christ into contempt by their sin! The Lord keep us from thus falling! May we rather die than dishonor our Lord!

I begin thus upon the mournful key, because I want to speak of God's great goodness to backsliders, and of how He restores them, but I want to warn them, at the very outset, that sin does not pay, that whatever may come of it through God's mercy, yet it is an evil and a bitter thing to wander from the Lord. Though Samson's hair grew again, and his strength came back, and he died gloriously fighting against the Philistines, yet he never recovered his eyes, or his liberty, or his living power in Israel! Short and effective was his last stroke against the adversary, but it cost him his life. He could not again rise to be the man he had been before, and though God did give him a great victory over the Philistine people, yet it was but as the flicker of an expiring candle, he was never again

a lamp of hope to Israel. His usefulness was abated, and even brought to an end through his folly. Whatever the grace of God may do for us, it cannot make sin a right thing, or a safe thing, or a permissible thing. It is evil, only evil, and that continually. O, children of God, be not enslaved by fleshly lusts! O Nazarites unto God, guard your locks, lest they be cut away by sin while you are sleeping in the lap of pleasure! O servants of Jehovah, serve the Lord with heart and soul by His grace even to the end, and keep yourselves unshorn by the world!

With that as a preface we come again to the text, "However, the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven."

First, let us see *what this growing of the hair pictures;* secondly, *what it specifically symbolizes,* and thirdly, *what it prophesie*s.

I. First, WHAT THIS GROWING OF THE HAIR PICTURES. I think that this pictures the gradual restoration of certain among us who have backslidden from God. The hair was there upon Samson's head, though it had been cut short. Though the hair was shaved off, yet the adversary could not take the roots away. It was a living thing, and it would grow again. So is it with those who are the people of God. The devil can shave them very closely, and clip off their beauty, their strength, and their consecration, but a living something is still there that will grow again. If there has been a real regenerating work of God the Holy Spirit upon their hearts, it will show itself again. Though the fruit and holy outcome of this living principle may for a while be removed—sadly removed to their bitter loss and damage—yet I say the living roots of grace are still in the soul, and before long we shall have to say, "However, the hair of his head began to grow again." Wells may for a while be stopped, but the living water will break out, and come to the surface again. The tree may lose every leaf which once adorned it, but its substance is in it, and when the spring smiles again, it will once more begin to bud. Eternal life may sleep, may faint, but it cannot utterly die, otherwise, how were it eternal life? The hair, though closely shaved, will grow again.

I will show you this hair in the process of growing. A man was once a member of a Christian church, godly and gracious. Satan has shaved him of all that was distinctive and religious. He has gone into the world; he has been put away by his brethren. His conduct was too inconsistent to allow of a continuance of his profession. But there had really been a change of heart, there had been a radical work of grace in his soul, and therefore, after a while, he begins to be very miserable and uneasy. It is impossible for him to be happy among the Philistines, who have captured him. His comrades, who flattered themselves that they had really got him fast this time, cannot make him out. He has fits of melancholy. Occasionally he falls into a deep despondency, and he utters strange words which they do not like to hear, partly denunciations of himself, and partly prophecies of evil to those around him. He is evidently terribly uneasy in the ways of sin. Now he gets alone, and sighs—

"Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?"

There is a something in his heart which troubles him both by night and by day. His soul is saying, "I will go and return to my first husband, for then was it better with me than now." However, his hair begins to grow

again. It has been shaved very cleverly, but the roots have not been extracted, and you can see that he will soon be a hairy man again. He cannot rest in his sin, no true-born child of God ever can. Giant Slay-good may pick up a pilgrim on the road when he is faint and weary, but he can never pick the bones of a true believer. He will come out of the den of the giant somehow or other. What a pity that he should ever go into it!

Well, now notice that the man begins to drop in to hear a sermon. It is a long time since he was familiar with the house of prayer, but he finds himself here tonight after a long absence. He remembers when he used to be always here, and he almost waters the floor with his tears as he thinks of the happy days which he used to enjoy in the midst of God's people, when he welcomed the light of the Sabbath morning, and the way was never too long for him to come up to the place of his love. In those days the word of the Lord was sweet to him. He has not been for some time, but somehow he felt today that he must come again. How welcome he is! How glad I am to see him, though he looks so rough and grisly, and half-shaved!

I have heard—I am not sure of it, but I think that it is very likely—that he has been reading his Bible again. That poor Book had been left to be covered with dust, but he has taken it down, and he has looked at a psalm that once used to charm his heart, and he has wept over the passage which once revealed Christ to him. He even groaned to think that he should have forgotten the voice of the living God which used to speak to him through that holy Book. He read a sermon today, too. He has not often done *that*. He took a tract from someone in the street, and he looked at it with eagerness, this also was a hopeful sign.

A little while ago, when he first forsook his Lord, he could blaspheme, he could say hard things against Christ and His word, but he does not do so now. It would be impossible for him now to ridicule religion; he is too tender for that. He has a strong desire to hear again the message of free grace and dying love, he longs to listen once more to the ringing of those silver bells that once were music to his ears. I think it must be true that the Lord is bringing him back. Surely my test is being fulfilled—"However, the hair of his head began to grow again." The devil could shave away those flowing locks which once adorned him, but he could not cut out the roots, which are deeper than he can reach. Do you not think that our shorn Samson may yet be himself again? Surely his hair has begun to grow anew, and tonight I trust that it will grow very quickly while he is in this house of prayer hearing the glad tidings of free forgiveness.

I am most of all encouraged with the fact that he begins to feel in his soul an anguish, and a bitterness, and an aching, and a craving, and a longing. I have great hopes of him now that his old feelings are returning. I think I hear him say, "I cannot live like this." He sighs, "I have tried the way of transgressors, and it is hard. I have tested the life of sinful pleasure, and there is nothing in it. The cups of the world are all froth. The devil's bread is all bran. It chokes me; it poisons me. I cannot endure it any longer. Oh, that I could get back to God! Oh, that I could be truly converted, if I never was converted! If I am indeed a child of God, oh, that He would once more manifest His pardoning love to me, and show my

sins forgiven, for I cannot rest as I am!" O my dear brother, I was so sorry when you went astray, your backsliding has caused me many a pang of heart, but I begin to rejoice now as I hear you talk in that way, for I think that the text is coming true, "However, the hair of his head began to grow again"!

And now, stop till our uneasy friend gets home tonight. No, perhaps it will come to pass before he quits this assembly. He begins to pray, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" He does not say that aloud, for he would be afraid that somebody would hear him. He almost wonders now that he is not put out of the place of worship, considering what kind of sinner he has been. He has sneaked in tonight, but he is in, and he trembles to find it is so; he scarcely dares to lift his eye upward. He hardly dares to hope. His desire is to get back to God, and to be forgiven, and so, with trembling hope and quivering fear, he has begun to pray. You notice that Samson began to pray when his hair began to grow, and when they took him into that temple, where they wanted him to make sport for them, he breathed an earnest prayer to God that he might be strengthened but that once to do service to his people and his God. How earnestly do I invite you that have gone away from God and His ways to pray tonight that the Lord will return to you in mercy, fill you to the full once more with His Holy Spirit, and make the bones which he has broken rejoice! If you begin to pray I shall begin to praise, when you plead with tears, I shall begin to bless the Lord with exultation. For you it is coming true—"However, the hair of his head began to grow again after he was shaven."

And if that prayer should go farther still, and you should say, "I will break off every connection that holds me to the paths of sin," this would be better still. If you were to cry, "I know what drew me aside. I will have no more to do with the evil which destroyed me," it would be a hopeful sign indeed. Oh, if tonight there shall be a severance of yourself from the swine, and from all the husks that they do eat, because you are determined to go to your Father, it shall be well with you. From our church fellowship we sometimes find one drawn aside by one motive, and another by another, alas, the ways downward are as plenteous as the gates of death! How many are tempted with unholy loves! How many are seduced by the fatal cup! Ah! How many go aside through false doctrine, heresy, and the delusions of the day! How many are foolishly tempted by their own prosperity! They grow rich, and cannot afford to worship where once they did. On the other hand, how many are led aside by their poverty! They do not think that their clothes are good enough to come in—a piece of pride from which I pray that we may be delivered. Or, because they have come down in the world, and cannot spend as once they did, they forsake their brethren, and their Lord. For different reasons men go aside from truth and holiness, but it is a happy circumstance when they cry, "If I have been led away from Christ by anything sinful, I will give it up. I will part with my eye, or my arm, or my foot, so that I may enter into the kingdom, for it is better for me to enter into life blind, or crippled, or maimed, than that, keeping these dear things, I should be cast into hell fire." When the Lord of grace leads men to this resolve we see the text fulfilled again—"However, the hair of his head began to grow again."

When the backslider comes to that pass, you will soon see other signs. The man who went so far astray now seeks the Lord afresh, and begins again to run in His ways. When a Nazarite lost his consecration, all the years of his consecration before did not count, he had to begin again. So some of you must, begin again. Beginning again is sweet! Beginning again is safe! Even though I trust that I have not wandered from God, either in act or in heart, yet I often begin again. I delight to renew the love of my espousals, and rehearse the vows of my youth before the Lord my God. If the devil says to me, "Your religion is a pretence; your experience is a mistake," I do not attempt to argue with him upon those lines, but I reply, "I will not quibble about the past, but I will begin again." I am a sinner; I know that, and the devil himself has not the impudence to tell me that I am not. Then, Jesus Christ died for sinners, and therefore I return to the sinners' Savior, and trust Him even as if I had never trusted Him before. This I find to be the direct road to peace. To breathe again one's native air is a prescription most helpful to those who would regain their health and strength. Can you not return again to the starting point, you that have wandered? If so, we shall all thank God for you, and look upon you as a Samson whose hair begins to grow again after he has been shaven.

If the matter goes on rightly, I know what will happen—the forlorn backslider will begin to entertain a feeble hope. "Oh," he says, "I trust that I may be restored! I shall be a miracle of divine grace if I am, but I think that I shall be." Further on he even cries, "I hope that I am restored, and once more put among the children." He gets a bit of bread from the children's table, and though he feels that he is not much better than a dog, yet he makes bold to enjoy it. "The dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table," and this poor man is aware of that gracious fact, and dares to take full advantage of it. Sometimes, while he is eating a crumb of promise, it tastes so sweet that he whispers to himself, "I do not think that I can be a dog after all. I think that I must be a child, for I have the taste that a child has. This is children's meat, and I do so enjoy it that, perhaps, I am, after all, a child of God."

Ah! And let me tell you that sometimes, when it is sunshiny weather, this poor seeker feels greatly encouraged and cheered. Though he will go limping to heaven by reason of his past sin, yet, on bright days, he half forgets his lameness. He has played the prodigal, and almost doubted his sonship, but with his face towards the Father's house he now cries, "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon me, that I should be called a child of God!" In his happiest times he feeds ready to burst out with rapture, because he enjoys a sense of divine love. He even makes bold to declare—"Yes, I am forgiven. Jesus smiles, and loves me still." When he is quite alone, and nobody can hear it, he even ventures to speak of himself as, after all, one of those that the Father has loved with an everlasting love, that Christ has redeemed with precious blood, that the Spirit has renewed, and that the Lord will never cast away. What a pleasure to see his faith thus coming back to him! "However, the hair of his head began to grow again." We shall have him back again, and we shall see him and know him again to be the same Samson that once we knew in his first days, before he had played the fool, and brought himself

into bondage. Soon we shall say, "Come in, and welcome, dear brother, for the Lord has recovered you from the disfigurement which your sin brought upon you! You are again a Nazarite, and your head and beard are covered with the tokens of your dedication. Come and take your place among those who are consecrated to the Lord." How much I desire that it may be so with all who formerly turned away from the right path, but are now casting a longing glance towards it!

I think that is the picture which our text paints for us.

II. Now I am going to turn a little way round, still keeping the shorn champion well before us. In the second place, we have to see in our text WHAT IT SPECIFICALLY SYMBOLIZES, that is to say, this text is a distinct type of some one thing. You see that Samson's strength lay in his consecration. His hair was the token of his dedication to God. When he lost his locks, he did, as it were, lose his consecration, and when he lost his consecration, he lost his strength. On the other hand, the only way by which he could regain his strength was to reestablish his consecration, and of this the growing again of his hair was the type and token.

Well, now, I know some *churches* which performed a great work a hundred years ago, or fifty years ago, or less. Their former days were heroic. Their palmy times were beautified with great prosperity. These churches knew how to suffer and to serve, they were faithful to the truth and earnest in holy labor, and the Lord made them to be exceedingly useful, but now they have grown respectable, and useless. They do nothing outrageous now; the question is—Are they doing anything? Their minister is an extremely learned man, and as polished as a looking-glass. Of course he never addresses himself to the vulgar; neither does he oppose the views of his cultured hearers. The church itself is highly respectable; no one ever questions its high respectability, or speaks of it without due deference to its prominent position. Yet it has ceased to be a power for good; it has no influence over the mass of sinners around it. Of course its usefulness is a secondary consideration, for it must not be forgotten that it has a superior ministry, and a superior reputation, its deacons are superior, and so are most of the members! Besides, they have a celebrated choir, and a most delightful organ! A great deal of money has been spent over that organ, and if that will not save souls, and glorify God, what will? What are we to do with our respectability if we do not proclaim it by buying the most expensive organ in the market? But do not forget the choir. I think they wear surplices, but whether they do or not, the singing is fine, the building is of superior architecture, the pulpit is unique, and the whole thing is done in a model manner. It is true that nobody is saved; there are no additions to the church, they have not used the baptistery for a long time, but they are wonderfully respectable! What would you have more?

In the opinion of some persons Samson looked much improved when his matted hair was gone. He was more presentable; more fit for good society. And so, in the case of churches, the notion is that they are all the better for getting rid of their peculiarities. You who are in the secret know better, and you will follow me while I sorrowfully seek a remedy for the unhappy weakness which has fallen upon many communities which once were strong in the Lord. How is this church, all shaven and shorn,

this poor, enslaved, and miserable concern, to be brought back to its old state? How is this Samson, that once was strong, to get its strength back again? Why, only by letting its hair, grow again. It must be consecrated to God again. This church must go back to the old gospel, it must say once more, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." It must again become insatiable for the conversion of men. Prayer must again become the delight of the whole church, and its trust must be in the Spirit of the Lord. The glory of God must take possession of the church instead of its desire to be fashionable and respectable, and when its locks grow again; its strength will come back. When it is consecrated to God, it will resume its former force, bear its testimony as in better days, and once again shake the world with its power.

Now the same truth applies to every *preache*r. There are some preachers who are splendid men, and yet they are practical failures. You see in them wide knowledge, eloquent language, and yet nothing. They can speak so properly that a senate might sit with admiration at their feet, but when they have done, nobody is pricked in the heart; nobody is convinced of sin; nobody is led to behold the beauties of Christ. Yet in their youth these men were soul-winners, and were looked upon as champions for Christ. O Samson, how are we to make you strong again? That preacher must begin again to serve God with all his heart. He must give up the idea of being a great man, or a learned man, or an eloquent man. He must give up the idea of charming the *elite,* and bringing together the fashionable, and must give himself up to glorify God by the winning of souls. When his hair grows again in that respect, we shall see what Samson can do. He will yet lay hold on the pillars of the Philistine temple, and bring them down about the heads of the lords. Give me a man perfectly consecrated, and I do not care much what he is. He may be rough, unpolished, and even illiterate, but if he is consecrated, the people will feel his power. He may be educated so that he may understand all knowledge, and he may speak as eloquently as Cicero, but if he is a consecrated man, his power will be none the less, but perhaps all the greater, because of his education. But this one thing is essential—there must be consecration to God and downright earnestness in consequence, or else he will be a shaven Samson. May God give full consecration to each one of us who stand before the people to speak in His name, for in that consecration lies the power of the Holy Spirit to bless us! He cannot and will not bless unconsecrated men. If we do not live to God's glory, God will not use us.

The same is true of every Christian *worker*. I have seen this demonstrated over and over again in daily life. I have seen a Christian woman most useful in a class, bringing to the Savior many of the girls whom she has taught, but all of a sudden a change has come, there have been no conversions, and for years the class has dwindled away, and nothing has come of it. If inquiry were to be made, it would be found that the consecration of the teacher had declined. She no longer spoke with tearful eyes and earnest heart, seeking to love those girls to Christ, and because her consecration was gone, her strength was gone. It is just the same whether you preach in the street, or distribute tracts, or whatever you do; if you are wholly consecrated to God, you will be strong. I do not say that

you will by sincere devotion alone gain all the talents, and all the mental forces you might desire, but, believe me, force does not lie in these, these are like sword and spear, but the strength with which they are to be wielded lies elsewhere. You do not absolutely require great abilities, but you must have perfect consecration. Be thankful if you have javelin and shield, but go on without them if you have not been armed with them, for, to a devoted man, even a castaway bone will be sufficient weapon. Samson did not wait till he found a sword worthy of his heroic hand, but he used such instruments as he found on the spot. It is in consecration that your strength will lie. Let but the arrow be winged by a mighty pull of the bow, and it will go straight forward in proportion to the force that has impelled it. Let but God fit you to His bow, and send you forward with divine energy; what do you need more? The impulse that comes from on high is your strength, and that impulse is found in your consecration to your Lord.

Perhaps I am addressing some Christian person who is not altogether a worker, but partly *a sufferer*. He is only a private Christian, bearing up as he may under the trials of life. You have grown rather dull of late, dear friend. You do not enjoy things as you once did. You have not the vivacity and the enjoyment which you once had in the things of God. See to it. Has there not been a razor at work upon you somewhere? Oh, yes, I knew a brother who, when he had a little money, rejoiced to have it because he gave to the cause of God abundantly! I believe that he is worth a hundred times as much as he was then, and he gives a hundredth part of what he used to do when he was poorer. In proportion as his pocket has grown golden his heart has grown bronzy. He has gone down in himself in proportion as he has gone up in his property, and now he does not enjoy things as he used to. He is a poor creature to what he once was, even in his own esteem he is not the happy man he once was! How much I wish that this good man's hair would grow so that he would again be living for his Lord, whom I trust he still loves!

I know Christian people who used to spend an hour a day in prayer. The hour has dwindled into five minutes. They used to be constant at week-night services. They very seldom gladden us with their presence now, and they are not as happy as they once were. I can read this riddle. If a man were to reduce his meals to eating once a week, we could not guarantee his health. I would not guarantee that if a man never ate except on Sundays, he would grow strong. So I do not think that people who neglect the means of grace, and give up their consecration, can expect to be lively, happy, or vigorous. When the razor gets to work and the hair of conscious, resolute devotion to God begins to fall on the floor, lock after lock, the strength is departing, and only as that hair begins to grow again, and spiritual consecration returns, can these people expect to be useful, influential, and strong in the Lord.

I must say no more on this point, but it is most important, and I pray the Holy Spirit will stir up your pure minds concerning it.

III. I will close with this further consideration. We are now to remember WHAT IT PROPHESIED when Samson's hair began to grow again. I wonder why these Philistines did not take care to keep his hair from growing to any length. If cutting his hair once had proved so effective, I

wonder why they did not send in the barber every morning to make sure that not a hair grew upon his scalp or chin. But wicked men are not in all matters wise men, indeed they so conspicuously fail in one point or another that Scripture calls them fools. The devil himself is a fool after all. He thinks that he is wonderfully cunning, but there is always a place where he breaks down. These servants of Satan, these boastful Philistines, said confidently, "We have done for him now, once for all. We have put out his eyes, and what can a blind man do?" They do not go on cutting off his hair because they fancy that once lost, the good man's strength is lost forever. Perhaps they said, "Now we have lashed him to the mill, the stronger he gets the more he can grind, therefore let his hair grow, and so he will be the more useful to us." Great was the foolishness of their wisdom, they were fostering their own destruction. Satan, also, is very cunning in getting hold of backsliders, but he generally manages to let them slip by his over-confidence in their willfulness. Many a man have I seen come back to the dear Savior on account of the oppression which he has endured from his old master, the prince of darkness! If he had been treated well, he might never have returned to Christ anymore, but it is not possible for the citizens of the far country to treat prodigals well, sooner or later they starve them, and oppress them, so that they run back home.

When Samson's hair began to grow, what did it prophesy? Well, first, it prophesied *hope for Samson*. I will be bound to say that he put his hand to his head, and felt that it was getting bristly, and then he put his hand to his beard, and found it rough. Yes, yes, yes, it was coming, and he thought within himself, "It will be all right soon. I shall not get my eyes back. *They* will not grow again. I am an awful loser by my sin, but I shall get my strength back again, for my hair is growing. I shall be able to strike a blow for my people and for my God yet." So round the mill he went, grinding away, grinding away, but every now and then putting his hand to his head, and thinking, "My hair is growing; oh, it is growing again! My strength is returning to me." The mill went round merrily to the tune of hope, for he felt that he would get his old strength back. When they loaded it, and tightened it to make the work heavier, yet his hair was growing, and so he found the burden lighter than it had been before, and his heart began to dance within him, in prospect of being his former self again. Now, if any of you have signs of restoring grace in your hearts, and you are coming back to your God and Savior, be glad, be thankful. Do not hesitate to let your renewed devotion to God be seen by those around you. Come along, brother, come along, your brethren wait to receive you! Come along, my wandering sister, come along, all the people of God will welcome you! If the grace of God is moving you at all, be hopeful and quicken your steps, and come to Jesus. Come to Him just now even as you came at first. Yes, and if you never did come before, come now, and throw yourselves at the foot of the cross, and look up to those five precious wounds. Look and live, for there is life in a look at the Crucified One. There is life at this moment even for the chief of sinners.

What did this prophesy? Joy for Samson, but, also, *hope for Israel*. Oh, if any of the Israelites did get in to see him in prison, how they must have been cheered by the sight of his returning hair! Some ancient Isra-

elite would say to his brother, "I have been to see poor Samson. You remember him. We had to put him out of the church, you know. Sad case. I have been to see him." "How did he look?" "Well," he would say, "there was much to grieve me, but somewhat also to comfort me. He does not look as he did on the day when the Philistines shaved him. He looks quite hairy again." "Oh!" the other would say, "then he will get strong again, and when he is strong, he will use his mighty arms against the oppressors of his people. I know he will fight for his country again. When he gets strong again, he will lift that brawny arm of his that smote the Philistines, and he will let them know that he is an Israelite yet. I know he will, for his heart will return to the love of God and His chosen. Philistia shall not always triumph over us. There is hope for us." So, my dear brothers and sisters, when we see in you some little signs of grace, and you are coming back, you do not know how cheerily we talk to one another. Why, at the elders' meeting, one of them said, "Our poor brother Jones was at the Tabernacle the other night. You remember him." "Yes, we do remember him, indeed." "Well he was listening to our pastor; I was so pleased to see him." Another brother also said, "I am glad to tell you that Mrs. So-and-So, the sister that went so sadly astray, was outside the chapel, and when I pressed her to come in, she wept and said she wished she had never gone away. There is a good work going on there." We rejoice together, and we say, "Thank God, they are coming back again!" Oh, you do not know the joy that you backsliders will give to the hearts of God's people if you do but return! There is joy not only with the Great Shepherd, but with His friends and His neighbors when the lost sheep is restored to the fold. Do you not know that the Chief Shepherd calls His brethren together, and says, "Rejoice with Me, for I have found My sheep which was lost"?

Lastly, what did it prophesy? Well, it prophesied *mischief for the Philistines*. They did not know it, but if they could have read the writing in Samson's heart, they would have understood that he meant to shave their nation quite as closely as they had shaved him. There was a storm brewing for Philistia. He that tore the lion as though it had been a kid was getting back his strength. He that seized the jawbone of an ass, and said, "Heaps upon heaps, with the jawbone of an ass have I slain a thousand men," will soon be scattering death among the oppressors of his people. Woe to you, lords of Philistia! Woe to you, princes of Gaza!

When a sinner who has gone astray is restored again, it means mischief to the kingdom of Satan. Oh, how he will serve his God! How he will try to bring back his fellow sinners! Having had much forgiven, this man will love much, and will serve Jesus much. He will be one of your earnest Christian men, depend upon it. He will be much in prayer, he will be careful in his walk, he will be holy in his speech, he will contend earnestly for the doctrines of grace, he will be a leader among the host of God, even as he has been a ringleader in sin. He will invade the dark places, and lead the chief of sinners' captive to the cross. Woe to you, Philistia, when Samson's hair grows again! Woe to the hosts of evil, when the backslider is restored!

There, I have put it all before you. I have tried to put the matter interestingly, but all the while my heart has been yearning over you that have

gone aside, I am pining for the restoration of those who have turned like the dog to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. I long for your restoration, or your true conversion. I want to see a different nature in you that you may neither be dogs nor swine, but may become the real children of our God and Father, and then you will not return to your former ways. If you have defiled yourselves, may you at once be washed! If you have wandered, may you at once be restored to Jesus and His church, to the praise and the glory of His grace, wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—HOSEA 11; 14.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—605, 620, 607.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON.

BELOVED FRIENDS—*A Happy New Year to you all*, in the best possible sense.

In answer to many prayers I am raised up, and I am looking forward hopefully to a happy return to my pulpit. True, I am not strong, and may never be long free from my infirmity, but yet I hope to do good service, and at least to "hold the fort." For this I again beg the prayers of many friends, and once more I would say—if these sermons are of any service to you, please spread them by introducing them to fresh friends. Pardon me for repeating this, for I am anxious that I may do all the good I can while I am spared to publish these discourses.

To my affectionate and sympathetic congregation I desire my hearty love in Christ Jesus. I hope to see them all on Sunday, January 23rd.
Yours to serve, for Christ's sake,
Mentone, New Year's Day, 1887.
C. H. SPURGEON

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

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THE BEST BREAD
NO. 1940

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 16, 1887,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 28, 1886.

"I am that bread of life."
John 6:48.

YOU will observe that our Lord here speaks concerning Himself. He speaks not of His words merely, nor of His offices, nor of His work, but of Himself. "I am that bread of life." And herein He teaches us all to fix our eyes mainly upon His blessed person, and to think of Himself first and foremost. He is the center and soul of all. There is a tendency about us all to get away from Jesus, and to look rather to the streams than to the Fountainhead. Why are we more taken up with bits of glass that sparkle in the light than with the sun Himself? That tree of life, in the midst of the Paradise of God—we forget to eat of that, and we wander to the borders of the garden, to pluck the fruit of the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil. I wish that our ministry—that mine especially—might be tied and tethered to the cross. I would have no other subject to set before you but Jesus only. Moses and Elijah are well enough in their places, but when they disappear, and Jesus is the better seen, we are gainers by their loss. If I might dig for copper, silver, and gold, I should think it no deprivation to be obliged to find only gold. It is no loss to lose all but Jesus. You may wander from Dan to Beersheba, and you may not sin, for it is all holy ground between the two places, but he is wisest who does not ramble even there, but keeps to Calvary, and is content to speak only of Jesus crucified.

"God forbid," said one who was a great and a wise man—"God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Paul would have considered it a terrible calamity if he had become fascinated, or even influenced, by the speculations of the cultured men of His period; he felt that the atoning sacrifice deserved all His admiration, and He had none to spare for anything else.

You know how he fell among certain wise people who were fond of philosophical disquisitions, and to them he said, "I determined not to know anything *among you* save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." He did not endeavor to please his audience by agreeing with them, but the further they went in one direction, the further he went in the other, the more surely to counteract their error. Because they were so broad he would narrow himself to the one theme of the cross. In these times, when the world has run mad upon its idols of human thought, it may be wise to be more strict than ever, and to stand steadfast in Paul's determina-

tion—"I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."

It was *Himself,* my brethren, whom our Lord set before His hearers as the bread of life, He did not mention anything of doctrine, or of precept, or of ordinance, but Himself. He says "I am that bread of life." Of Him, therefore, let us think.

It is of the utmost importance to those of you who have spiritual life that you should feed upon the Lord Jesus. It is well to know everything that is revealed, for every word of God is good, and has its uses, and all Scripture is profitable, but the daily household bread, the substantial meat on which we must be nourished if we would grow strong for God and holiness, is Christ Himself. "I am that bread of life." We do not get bread anywhere else save in Jesus our Lord. We may find certain minor things apart from Him; flavoring, ornaments, and furniture of the table we may get from some other hand, but the bread, the real solid meat, the essence of the festival, is Christ Himself. So let us begin with Him in our discourse, and continue with Him till we close our meditation.

But now, when I have to preach upon a subject like this, I find it necessary to begin a little way from the text. "I am that bread of life." Bread, brethren—bread is for living men and women, but bread is of no use in the tomb. Bread—shall we bring it to a sepulcher? Shall we roll away the stone? Shall we draw out the bodies swathed in linen? Shall we set them upright in ghastly posture, and shall we put bread upon the table before them? To what purpose would it be? It would be a ghastly mockery! If you leave the bread there, and visit again that loathsome banqueting chamber in a year's time, the bread will remain untouched, for until there is life, there is no use for bread. And so, at the opening of my discourse, some of you might say, "Bread is intended for living persons, it is for men and women who are quickened. How can we feed upon Christ, for we are dead in trespasses and sins?" You speak most truly, but yet I have a marvel to relate which meets the case. Listen! That would be a strange kind of bread, would it not, which being put into a dead man's mouth, would make him live? Yet such is the bread that came down from heaven, whereof if a man eats he shall live forever.

The Lord Jesus Christ is living bread. Bread such as we get from the baker is in itself dead, and if you put it to dead lips, there are two dead things together, and nothing can come of the contact. But our Lord Jesus Christ is living bread, and when He touches the dead lips of an unregenerate sinner, life comes into them. He brings life even to those who are dead in sin. He says, "Young man, arise," and he sits up upon the bier. He takes a little girl by her hand, and says, "Tabitha cumi"—Maid, arise, and she sits up in her bed. He calls to Lazarus, who by this time stinks, and He says, "Lazarus, come forth," and he comes forth, wearing his grave clothes. He has shuffled down from the niche in the cave, and he has made his way out of the dampness of the cold sepulcher. Oh, what a wonderful Christ this is, who is not only bread for the living, but life for the dead! Pray, you who can pray, that He would come here just now, and be life to those who are in the darkness of the Valley of the Shadow of Death, that they may live. When they live, then how gladsome will my text be to them, for life needs bread whereby it may be sustained!

The first thing that we want, if we have life, is something for that life to feed upon, and here comes in the text—"I am that bread of life." Your newly-discovered necessities Jesus can meet. Your newly-begotten wants Jesus can supply. Your hunger and your thirst can all be met, not by fifty things, but by one thing, by Jesus Christ Himself, in whom there dwells in fullness all that the spiritual life can possibly require.

I. With that to start with, I now make the first observation upon the text itself, which is this—JESUS CHRIST EXACTLY MEETS ALL THE NEEDS OF THE NEW LIFE. When a man is born again to God, and gets a new life, he has new wants, new desires, new pains, new longings. He enters upon a novel condition, full of new needs and cravings; the Lord Jesus Christ exactly meets the new case. As the key fits the wards of the lock, so does Christ fit the new heart and the right spirit. He knows how to touch the secrets of our soul, and supply our most mysterious necessities.

According to the text, *the Lord Jesus Christ is the ideal bread*—the ideal supply of man's soul-hunger. Grateful Israelites truthfully judged that there never was such bread in all the world as that which fell in the wilderness in the form of manna. It was very wonderful bread, was it not? Men did eat angels' food, and found it good for them. They went out in the morning, and they gathered manna, and they found it most marvelous meat to sustain them. It was the ideal meat for persons traveling through the great and terrible wilderness. There are different theories of what we ought to eat. One person tells us that, if anybody suffers from rheumatism, he must eat so many pounds of meat in a day. Other doctors have vehemently said, "You must not touch meat. It will heat you if you do. You must keep to a strictly vegetable diet." I believe that these learned persons know one as much as the other about it, and probably the whole of them put together know so little that a very small round *nothing* might encompass all their certain knowledge as to health and disease. But there is one thing we do know, that the bread which the Israelites ate in the wilderness, the manna, was the best sort of food. It was God's own invention, and He who created man best knew what nutriment his life would require. It was not aerated bread, but it was celestial bread which had never been soured with earthly leaven, but had dropped immediately from the sky; the best food that men could eat if they would be healthy, active, and able to endure a hard and toilsome life.

Well now, what that manna was to their bodies—the ideal food of man, which had nothing in it injurious—that our Lord Jesus is to the soul. In Him is life for men, and no disease or death. In the manna there was no adulteration, *it was a perfectly pure food;* such food is the Lord Jesus Christ to the spiritual life. He is the bread that came down from heaven, He is the true meat. If our souls live upon Christ and nothing else but Christ, He will breed no disease within the heart, He will not distort the judgement, He will not inflame the imagination, He will not excite the passions. He would be a perfect man who lived on nothing but this perfect bread. Brethren, if you aspire after holiness of the highest type and order, remember that a man is made by that which he feeds upon, and for the best manhood you need the best food. As certain silkworms have

their silk colored by the leaves on which they feed, so if we were to feed on Christ, and nothing else but Christ, we should become pure, holy, lowly, meek, gentle, humble, in a word, we should be perfect even as He is. What wonderful meat this must be! O my brethren, if you have ever tried the flesh and blood of Jesus as your souls' diet, you will know that I am not speaking vain words! There is no such sustenance for faith, love, patience, joy, as living daily upon Jesus, our Savior. You, who have never tasted of this heavenly bread, had better listen to the word, "O taste and see that the Lord is good!"

The Lord Jesus Christ is not only the ideal bread, but *He is in Himself a sufficient bread*. That manna which the Israelites ate in the wilderness was all that they really needed. They began lusting, and they cried after flesh, and they sighed for the leeks, and the garlic, and the onions, which had charmed their degenerate palates when they dwelt among the Egyptians. Wretched was their taste. They must have been of a coarse mold to grow weary of the food of angels, and sigh for something more rank, more tasty, more heavy. Something injurious they wanted, yet had they but been wise and right they would have known that within the manna there was everything that was sufficient and suitable for them, for the God that made man made the manna, and He knew exactly what man needed. Out of the ovens of heaven He sent man bread, fresh and hot, each morning, that he might eat to the full, and yet never be surfeited, nor filled with evil humors. They called the manna "light bread," but what should the food be for those who were always on the march but light, and easy to digest? Our Lord Jesus is simple in doctrine, but what else do we wish for, even we who are wayfaring men, and all too apt to err?

My brethren, if we do but get hold of Jesus Christ, and feed on Him, He is sufficient for us—sufficient for gigantic labors, sufficient for anguish, and grief, and sorrow, sufficient for the weakest of the babes, for He is the unadulterated milk, sufficient for the full-grown men among us, for He is the strong meat of the kingdom. His flesh is meat indeed. For your spiritual manhood there is bone, gristle, muscle, brain, everything that you need, in Christ. If you feed on Him, He will build you up, not in one direction only, but in all ways, for you are complete in Him—thoroughly furnished unto all necessities. Christ Jesus meets all the needs of all His people with a divine sufficiency.

And then there is in Christ what there is in manna—*a sweetness all its own*. I cannot tell you exactly how the manna tasted. Some of them said that it tasted like wafers made with honey. The Jewish notion is that it tasted according to every man's own taste, so that, if he preferred this flavor or that, the manna had that flavor to him, and thus it was to each one a personal and peculiar delicacy. This I know—that there is a sweetness about my Lord which is precisely that which delights *me*. I cannot communicate it to you, for you must each one taste for himself. I believe that our Lord has a flavor to me different from that which He could have to you, because our circumstances and desires somewhat differ. Though there is in the great church of God a sweet community of delight in the Lord, yet each believer has his own special delight. All Israel could claim all Canaan, and yet every Israelite had a little plot of land that was his own, and so all believers can claim all Christ, and yet each believer has a

special portion which is altogether his own. Oh, the sweetness that there is in the bread that came down from heaven! Do you not know it? I trust you do, and if so, you do not need me to say more. If you love Jesus, you wish for nothing new. Modern gospels are forthcoming on all sides. You have heard about them, I dare say, but the preachers of them cannot have the delight in preaching their new gospels that I have in preaching the old one. "Oh," I say to myself, "they may preach better than I can, they may be a world more clever, but they have not such a subject to preach of as I have." When I get preaching up Christ, and His precious blood, and eternal love, and covenant securities, there I beat them all. With such a theme I can compete with the most renowned of the world's orators. When I speak on these themes, my lips drop pearls and diamonds. Brethren, when we declare unto you the Lord Jesus we sail upon a sea of sweetness. The novelties of "modern thought" are a Dead Sea, but our gospel is an ocean of living water. He that has Christ to preach has such a subject that angels might envy him, and cry one to another, "Let us go down below, and tell mankind of Jesus and His love." Brethren; to me the pulpit is a throne, and when I am in full swing, with the Lord Jesus Christ as my subject, I would not change places with the seraphim. It is a celestial joy to tell our fellow men of such a Savior as Jesus, for all sorts of joys are wrapped up in His thrice-blessed name. When Jesus said, "I am that bread of life," He meant, "I am that choice bread, that satisfying bread, that delicious bread, the like of which was never found elsewhere."

Furthermore, it was bread *suitable for the wilderness*. When they were in the wilderness, it was much better for the tribes to eat what they called, "light bread" than for them to be filled with the meat that they had in Egypt, or even the old corn which they enjoyed when they came into Canaan. Manna was suitable food for the climate, and for their condition, and the Lord knew it. So the most suitable meat for us in this vale of tears is Christ Jesus. I believe that there is no meat like it in heaven, but for this world, with its work and its weeping, with its toils and its troubles, its cares and its changes, its wars and its woes, its fears and its frets, there is nothing so suitable as the Lord Jesus—

"Jesus, joy of loving hearts!
You fount of life! You light of men!
From the best bliss that earth imparts
We turn unfilled to You again.
We taste You, O You living bread,
And long to feast upon You still!
We drink of You, the fountainhead,
And thirst our souls from You to fill."

Jesus is all the bread that you need while you are on your way to heaven and God.

What I have to say on this point further is—Try it, dear friends. I would be very practical on this point, and say earnestly, *taste and test*. If you wish to know this bread that came down from heaven, and how satisfying, how suitable, how sweet it is—try it.

Let me hand you out a portion of it. The Lord Jesus, the everlasting Son of God, is also man—man, like ourselves. "In all our affliction He was afflicted." He His own self bore our infirmities, and He is at this mo-

ment "a Brother born for adversity." Is not this a loaf of nourishing bread for a soul to feed on? I am a man, tried, troubled, burdened, and so is my Redeemer, so is He who sits upon the throne of God. I have to bow in prayer, and agonize in supplication; so did He. I have to endure slander and rebuke; so did He—"He endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself." Brothers, sisters, you cannot be in any plight wherein He has never been, you cannot suffer any want so severe, but He also suffered the like. Even if you have not a home, or a lodging, or a bed for the night—"The Son of man had not where to lay His head." He is a partaker with us of the bitter cup of affliction. Now, is not this choice nourishment?—

"Why should I complain of want or distress,
Temptation or pain? He told me no less;
The heirs of salvation, I know from His Word!
Through much tribulation must follow their Lord.
How bitter that cup no heart can conceive,
Which He drank quite up, that sinners might live!
His way was much rougher and darker than mine;
Did Christ, my Lord, suffer, and shall I repine?"

The sympathy of Jesus, our Brother, is living bread for sorrowing men.

Now for another slice from the same loaf. He died; He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost. It was for sin and sinners that He died. "He His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree." "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him." He has put away our sin by making full atonement to divine justice. Sin has ceased to be so far as those are concerned who believe in Him, for He was punished in our stead, and so ended our debt. God will not punish those for whom Christ was punished. He cannot exact the same debt twice, first of the Surety, and then of the sinner. That cannot be! Substitutionary sacrifice is the finest of the wheat. A real atonement is the most satisfactory food for the soul. I know it is so of a truth.

Poor sinner, if you can eat this bread you will not be hungry any more! Feeding upon the glorious doctrine of the vicarious sacrifice of Christ you will find that His flesh is meat indeed, and His blood is drink indeed.

I might continue thus to set forth my Lord as bread for you in His resurrection, in His glorious ascension, in His session at the right hand of God even the Father, where He makes intercession for transgressors, and in the glory of His Second Advent, but time would fail me. I might cut a slice from this loaf, and speak to you upon our communion with Him, upon our acceptance in the Beloved, upon the glory which He wears as our Representative, and wears for us, but I will not; it is enough for me to introduce the text, and let Jesus say for Himself, "I am that bread of life." Certainly there never was such a fruitful and satisfying subject as this of Jesus, our Lord. Oh, that all ministers were constrained to this! Why leave this bread of heaven for the unsatisfying husks afforded by other topics?

Very well; that is the first truth we are to remember, namely, that Jesus Christ fully meets all the needs of the new life.

II. But, secondly, IN ORDER THAT JESUS MAY MEET ALL OUR SOUL'S NEEDS WE MUST RECEIVE HIM. Bread cannot possibly sustain the body unless it is eaten. You know, dear friends, you might be hungry

tonight, and hear about bread, and then be doomed to wait till tomorrow evening without having any of it to eat; that would be a tantalizing business, would it not? I might then preach again, and tell you about bread, and you might go without all through Saturday, and come here on Sunday, and hear two more sermons about bread, and yet all the while have none of it to eat. It would be trying work. None would like it, unless it were those people who are attempting to fast for forty days, and are likely to die in the process. What good would it do you to keep on hearing of the bread, and never eat of it? I cannot see any result. Unless it tended to increase your hunger, I do not know what would come of the wisest discourse on bread if you did not eat. Suppose that you should go to a baker's window, and stand there for an hour, and stare at the bread, I do not think that the sight would fill you much. No, you must eat, or else there might be tons of bread within reach, and yet you would die of famine. You might be buried in a grave of bread, and it would be of no use to you. Even manna would not nourish you unless you ate it. You must receive food into yourself, or it is not food to you. The Savior Himself, if you do not receive Him by faith, will be no Savior to you. Mark that.

Here is a brother, who never eats bread, but instead of eating he studies the theory of nutrition, and he is ready to discuss with anyone the whole system of digestion and assimilation. He has a theory that bread should always be baked in a certain way, and he feels bound to discuss, and discuss, and discuss, till all is moldy. My dear friend, you may discuss if you like, but I want to eat, and I think that, if you intend to live, and not to drop down dead in your discussion, you had better eat a bit yourself, and not put discussion into the place of eating. Some of you have been hearing the gospel for years, and you have never fed upon Christ yet, but you have a great liking for religious controversy. Why, perhaps, this very afternoon you have been discussing this "ism" and that "ism." Why all this chopping of logic? Why do you not eat, friend? Why do you not eat? What is the use of talking about bread when your fainting body pines for a substantial meal? You are at this time ready to fight anybody about the shape that the portions of bread ought to take when they are cut up for a feast. No, no, I am not going to accept your challenge! I am hungry, and want food, and to me the form of it does not matter much. Bread is nothing to anybody till he eats it, and even our Lord Jesus is nothing to any man until he believes in Him, until he receives Him, until he takes Him into himself. That is the one thing that is needed, and the Lord Jesus Christ silently hints as much when He says, "I am that bread of life." When He calls Himself bread, He does in effect say, "Partake of Me, eat Me; feed upon Me."

Here comes in the inquiry—How do we receive Christ into us as we take bread into our bodies?

First, by *believing everything that is revealed about Him*. The Father's witness, and the Holy Spirit's witness, and His own witness concerning Himself—we have all these in God's most holy Word. Take the Book, and read it. Augustine, after years of tossing to and fro, found peace with God by hearing a little child say, "Take, and read." I suppose that the child was singing to itself, and hardly knew what it was saying as it repeated to itself the two words—"Tolle, lege; tolle, lege; tolle, lege." "Take up and

read." That voice struck the ear of the perplexed thinker as though it were the voice of God, and he took the Scripture, and read the Scripture, and no sooner had he read it than he found Christ. I would entreat each one of you to do this, in order that you may find rest for your soul. Believe what is revealed in Holy Scripture. You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life, and they are they which testify of Christ; but you will do well if you go to Christ Himself, and find life. To believe in Him, think of Him. As the look of faith which saves is *to* Jesus, so is it *from* Jesus. By looking we learn to look. As we know of Him we believe in Him. Believe what is spoken about Christ, and so feed on Him.

Then, next, *trust Him for yourself*. That is *the* point—the hinge of the whole business. He is a Savior. I believe *that,* but I go further, and resolve—He shall be *my* Savior. May I say that? Yes, for I am permitted to do so, inasmuch as He says, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." Scripture says that He is exalted on high to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins. Therefore, I look to Him to give me repentance and remission of sins. I trust to Him in that respect, and He is mine. He has said, "It is finished." The atonement is finished, and I believe that it is finished for me. A prominent point about the offering under the old law was that the person who came with the sacrifice laid his hands on it, and said, "This is mine." You must do the same with Jesus. Lay your hands on Him, and say, "This is mine. This sacrificial death is for me." "Oh, but," says one, "suppose He is not mine? What if I were to take Him to myself without warrant?" Suppose such a thing for one moment, yet He would be yours. If I were hungry, and I ate a bit of bread, and after I had eaten it somebody said, "It is not yours;" I would reply, "Perhaps not, but how will you take it from me? It has nourished me, and refreshed me; it is mine, and none can deprive me of it." There is the point, you see; if you take Christ Jesus into yourself, the devil himself may say you had no right to Him, but he cannot take away that which you have eaten. Jesus Himself will not quarrel with you, nor blame you for taking Him, for He has said, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." You may summon a poor man before the magistrate, and say, "He is a thief, for he stole bread from my counter." You may put him in prison for the theft, though I hope you would not if hunger drove him to the act, but you cannot get your bread away from him if he has eaten it. So, if you come to Christ, and take Him into yourself, He is yours, and you shall live by Him. Jesus says, "He that eats Me, even he shall live by Me." Nor death, nor hell, nor time, nor eternity, can take Jesus away when once you have Him within you. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Swallow, then, the divine truth. Let it go down quickly, for fear anybody should come before it has fully entered into your soul. Once there, it is yours! They say that possession is nine points of the law, and I should think in the case of eating that it is the whole ten points, or any other number of points, for there is no getting repossession of that which a man has actually eaten. Get Christ, and Christ is yours—yours by a kind of possession, which will never be disputed before the courts of heaven.

This, then, is to feed upon Christ—to believe that which is revealed about Him, and then to appropriate Him to yourself by personal faith.

Furthermore, to feed upon Christ means to meditate much upon Him—to think much of Him. Brothers, there are many sweet doctrines in the Bible which I delight to make my own by reading, marking, learning, and inwardly digesting them; they are parts of the great circle of truth which is revealed of God. But I find that I am never so comforted, strengthened, and sustained, as by deliberately considering Jesus Christ's precious death and atoning sacrifice. His sacrifice is the center of the circle, the focus of the light. There is a charm, a divine fascination, about His wounds.

O, sacred head, once wounded! O, dear eyes, so red with weeping! O cheeks all stained with spit! I could forever gaze, admire, and adore! There is no beauty in all the world like that which is seen in the countenance "more marred than that of any man." This one vision is enough for all eyes for all time. There is no sustenance to the heart like the sustenance that comes of His flesh and His blood, given up in anguish and in death to work out our redemption. Beloved, this is the bread of heaven. "Take, eat," He says, "this is My body which is broken for you." What food is this! What life ought that to be which is nourished by such bread!

But time flies so quickly that I cannot dwell upon these points as they deserve to be dwelt upon. Oh, live near the cross! Build your house on Calvary! Frequent Gethsemane! Listen to the groans of your pleading Lord! Be much with a dying Christ. Be much with a risen Christ. Be much with a reigning Christ. Be much in anticipation of a coming Christ. For the more you are with Him, the more will your soul be filled with satisfaction, and influenced to sanctification. He shall satiate your soul as with marrow and with fatness, and your mouth shall praise Him with joyful lips, for He can say, and none other, "I am that bread of life." Receive Him, then, and you shall find it so.

III. Now thirdly—and this shall be but a word or two—notice this solemn fact; NOT TO FEED UPON CHRIST IS THE SURE MARK OF DEATH. Terrible fact. The Lord Jesus Christ has said it—"Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you have no life in you." A great preacher, but he does not feed on Christ! You have no life in you. A forward professor, but he does not feed on Christ! You have no life in you. A very knowing theologian, and a clever controversialist, but he does not feed upon the incarnate God! There is no life in you. A daring speculator in modern thought, but he does not care, he says, for the blood of Christ, he even sneers at the mention of it! You have no life in you. Hard words! Hard words! Hard words, if they are true, are better than soft words if they are false. But this is the sure test, "What do you think of Christ?" If He is not bread to your souls, you have no life in you. If anybody were to say to me, "I have a man at home who stands in my hall, and has stood there for years, but he has never eaten a mouthful of bread all the time, nor cost me a penny for food," I should say to myself, "Oh, yes, that is a bronze man, I know, or a plaster cast of a man. He has no life in him, I am sure, for if he had life in him, he would have needed bread." If we could live without eating, it would be a cheap method of existence, but I have never discovered the secret, and I do not mean to make experiments. If you are trying it, and have succeeded in it so far that you can live without Christ, the bread of life, I fear your life is not that of God's

people, for they all hunger and thirst after Jesus, the bread of heaven. O my dear hearer, once a professor, once a church member, if you have given up Christ, and you get on well without Him, you have no life in you! The dead can do without bread, but the living cannot. Jesus tells us, "I am that bread of life," and if you are doing without Him you are doing without the bread of life, and the reason is that you are without life itself.

IV. Next, and the fourth head, shall be with equal brevity—THOSE WHO FEED UPON CHRIST ARE SUPREMELY BLESSED. They shall never hunger. They shall hunger after more of Jesus, but not after anything else besides Jesus. I was greatly pleased some time ago to hear a gentleman say, who had tried to preach another doctrine, that a certain neighborhood which he spoke of was so impregnated with what was called "the gospel" that he could not succeed with his speculations. He said that if men once drank this gospel doctrine it made them so bigoted in their love for it that the cleverest person could not get them out of it. I thought to myself, "This witness is true." An enemy declared it, and it was therefore all the more striking. The subtlest deceivers may try as long as they please, but when we have once fed upon Christ they cannot get us off from Him. They call us away from Him; they proffer us all manner of novelties, but in vain, "Try our thought! Try our science! Try our purgatory! Try our larger hope!" But we hear the pails rattle, and we hear the swine clamoring, and we are not anxious to taste the mixture, or unite in the festival. We are not so selfish as to steal this new wash from those whom it delights. Let those have it who can feed on it, but as for ourselves, we mean to feed on the bread of heaven. The gospel is to us such satisfying bread that all the rest is draff—

"Should all the forms that men devise
Assault my soul with treacherous art;
I'd call them vanity and lies,
And bind the gospel to my heart.

Every true child of God is so far a bigot that he prefers the bread of His Father's house to the husks of the far country. He cannot give up the gospel, and he will not, for it satisfies his whole being. What more does he need? Why should he make a change?

Moreover, he has in Christ food that he can never exhaust. He may feed, and feed, and yet he shall never find that he lacks for meat. I have many an old book in my library in which there have been bookworms, and I have sometimes amused myself with tracing a worm. I do not know how he gets to the volume originally, but being there he eats his way into it. He bores a hole in a direct line, and sometimes I find that he dies before he gets half-way through the tome. Now and then a worm has eaten his way right through from one wooden cover to another, yes, and through the cover also. This was a most successful bookworm. Few of us can eat our way quite so far. I am one of the bookworms that have not got half-way into my Bible yet, but I am eating my way as fast as I can. This one thing I have proven to myself beyond all question, I shall never, never exhaust this precious Book; much less shall I exhaust the wondrous person of my divinely-blessed Lord. He is that bread which came down from heaven. He is utterly inexhaustible.

Brethren, feeding upon Jesus we have an immortal blessedness; we shall never die. If we have fed on Christ, we shall fall asleep, but it will be in Jesus. Some whom we love have lately fallen asleep; they will awake with Him in the morning. But we shall never die. We shall only pass into a higher stage of life, for that food on which we feed shall be in us the pledge of an immortality equal to the immortality of the Christ who has become our bread.

V. I had much more to say to you, but the time has gone. All that I will say further is this. If any of you desire to have Christ, you may depend upon it that you may have Him, because bread is meant to be eaten; JESUS IS PROVIDED TO BE RECEIVED. What is the use of bread if it is never eaten? If you go to the Orphanage, you will see a large batch of bread kept there upon the shelves. It must not be eaten the first day, you know, it would go too fast, and would not be very wholesome for the youngsters. It must get rather staler by being kept a little while. Now suppose that I were to go down there, and say to the baker, "Lock that door; I want to keep that bread. I am going away to Mentone, and I shall take the key with me, that I may save that bread." Suppose I were to do so, and come back in a couple of months' time. Should I say to myself, "I have saved that batch of bread"? I am afraid that it would turn out to be very bad economy. Let us go and look at the loaves which we have kept from use! Come away at once! The sight is not pleasant. Decay and corruption have fallen upon what we have hoarded. It would be a poor matter for the bread. Why, it is the very end of bread, the object of bread, the portion of bread, to be eaten. It is honored in being eaten; it would be degraded by being left to grow stale and moldy. Now the Lord Jesus Christ is never so famous a Christ as when sinners come and feed upon Him. This precious bread must be eaten, or it has not answered its design. What say you to a doctor who has no patients? What say you to a Savior who never saves anybody? The honor of a physician lies in the persons that he heals, and the honor of a Savior lies in the persons that He saves. Christ has become the bread of heaven on purpose for you to have Him, and for me to have Him. He came into the world to save sinners, and if He does not save sinners He has come for nothing. It is His business to save sinners. Now, if a man sets up in business, and never does any business, his undertaking is a failure. "Poor man!" you say, "he has made a great mistake."

I know a brother here who wanted to take a certain shop in a wide street, but his wiser friends said, "Do not take that shop for a baker's. It is not in a good eating locality. You must open a shop in one of the streets where there are plenty of poor people, who will buy the bread every morning. Make it good and cheap, and it will not stay long on the shelves." I noticed in the newspaper that a certain ale-shop was "in a good drinking locality." I am sorry that there are such localities. But, assuredly, a good eating locality must be the very place for vending bread. I think that this Tabernacle stands in a good eating locality. Many are here now who are hungry after Christ, and it is a blessed fact that they may have Him, and feed upon Him without stint. And what is the price? The price? The difficulty with all other traders is to get you up to their price, but my difficulty is to get you down to mine—for the bread of heaven is

without price. Even if you offer a farthing, I cannot take your bid. You may have all for nothing, and have it at once, but not a penny can be accepted from you. The gospel provides a full Christ for empty sinners, pardon on earth and bliss in heaven, and all for nothing. Take it as a free gift, and it is yours. What would you pay? What could you pay? Did Israel pay for the manna? It would have been an insult to God to imagine it. Go your way, and bless the name of the Lord, for this is the gospel—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 6:24-58.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—386, 151, 488.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON

DEAR FRIENDS—The severe weather of England has breathed upon this happier region, and chilled the air day after day. This will render it all the easier to return without experiencing too great a change. My dear friends at the Tabernacle have sent me many a kind telegraphic message and the last which I sent to them in return shall be my word for this week to my Sermon Readers—

"And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen." Romans 15:29, 33.

I ask for the prayers of each reader, that these verses may be true to the full to me and to all my flock.

Yours in Christ Jesus,
Mentone, January 8, 1887.
C. H. SPURGEON

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

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GRACE FOR COMMUNION
NO. 1941

A SHORT ADDRESS TO A FEW FRIENDS AT MENTONE, AT THE BREAKING OF BREAD, *BY C. H. SPURGEON,* ON LORD'S-DAY AFTERNOON, JANUARY 2, 1887.

"Awake, O north wind; and come, you south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my Beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits."
Song of Solomon 4:16.

THE soul of the believer is the garden of the Lord. Within it are rare plants, such as yield "spices" and "pleasant fruits." Once it was a wilderness, overgrown with thorns and briars, but now it is "a garden enclosed," an "orchard of pomegranates."

At times within that garden everything is very still and quiet; indeed, more still than could be wished. Flowers are in bloom, but they seem scentless, for there are no breezes to waft the perfume. Spices abound, but one may walk in the garden, and not perceive them, for no gales bear their fragrance on their wings. I do not know that, in itself, this is an evil condition, it may be that "So He gives His beloved sleep." To those who are worn with labor, rest is sweet. Blessed are they who enjoy a Sabbath of the soul!

The loved one in the text desired the company of her Lord, and felt that an inactive condition was not altogether suitable for His coming. Her prayer is first about her garden that it may be made ready for her Beloved, and then to the Bridegroom Himself, that He would come into His garden, and eat its pleasant fruits. She pleads for the *breath of heaven*, and for *the Lord of heaven*.

First, she cries for THE BREATH OF HEAVEN to break the dead calm which broods over her heart. She cannot unlock the caskets of spice, nor cause the sweet odors to flow forth; her own breath would not avail for such an end. She looks away from herself to an unseen and mysterious power. She breathes this earnest prayer, "Awake, O north wind; and come, you south; blow upon my garden!"

In this prayer there is an evident sense of *inward sleep*. She does not mean that the north wind is asleep; it is her poetical way of confessing that she herself needs to be awakened. She has a sense of *absent-*

mindedness, too, for she cries, "Come, you south." If the south wind would come, the forgetful perfumes would come to themselves, and sweeten all the air. The fault, whatever it is, cannot lie in the winds, it lies in ourselves.

Her appeal, as we have already said, is to that great Spirit who operates according to His own will, even as the wind blows where it wills. She does not try to "raise the wind"—that is an earthly expression relating to worldly matters, but, alas, it might fitly be applied to many imitations of spirituality! Have we not heard of "getting up revivals"? Indeed, we can no more command the Holy Spirit than we can compel the wind to blow east or west. Our strength lies in prayer. The spouse prays, "Awake, O north wind; and come, you south!" She thus owns her entire dependence upon the free Spirit. Although she veiled her faith in a divine Worker under the imagery of her song, yet she spoke as to a person. We believe in the personality of the Holy Spirit, so that we ask *Him* to "Awake" and "Come." We believe that we may pray to Him, and we are impelled to do so.

Notice that the spouse does not mind what form the divine visitation takes so long as she feels its power. "Awake, O north wind;" though the blast is cold and cutting, it may be that it will effectually fetch forth the perfume of the soul in the form of repentance and self-humiliation. Some precious graces, like rare spices, naturally flow forth in the form of tears, and others are only seen in hours of sorrow, like gums which exude from wounded trees. The rough north wind has done much for some of us in the way of awakening our best graces. Yet it may be that the Lord will send something more tender and cheering, and if so, we would cry, "Come, you south." Divine love warming the heart has a wonderful power to develop the best part of a man's nature. Many of our precious things are brought forth by the sun of holy joy.

Either movement of the Spirit will sufficiently bestir our inner life, but the spouse desires both. Although in nature you cannot have the north wind and the south blowing at the same time, yet in grace you can. The Holy Spirit may be at one and the same time working grief and gladness, causing humiliation and delight. I have often been conscious of the two winds blowing at once, so that, while I have been ready to die to self, I have been made to live unto God. "Awake, O north wind; and come, you south!" When all the forms of spiritual energy are felt, no grace will be dormant. No flower can stay asleep when both rough and gentle winds awaken it.

The prayer is—"blow," and the result is—"flow." Lord, if You blow, my heart flows out to You! "Draw me, we will run after You." We know right well what it is to have grace in our souls, and yet to feel no movement of

it. We may have much faith in existence, yet none in exercise, for no occasion summons it into action. We may have much repentance, yet no conscious repenting; much fire of love, yet no love flaming forth, and much patience in the heart, though at the moment we do not display it. Apart from the occurrences of providence, which awakens our inward emotions one way and another, the only plan by which our graces can be set in active exercise is by the Holy Spirit breathing upon us. He has the power to quicken, awake, and bestir our faculties and graces, so that holy fruits within us become perceptible to ourselves, and to others who have spiritual discernment. There are states of the atmosphere in which the fragrance of flowers is much more diffused than at other times. The rose owes much to the zephyr which wafts its perfume. How sweet is even a field of beans after a shower! We may have much spice of piety, and yet yield small fragrance unless the living power of the Holy Spirit moves upon us. In a forest there may be many a partridge, or lively pheasant, and yet we may not see so much as one of them until a passing foot tramples down the underbrush, and causes the birds to rise upon the wing. The Lord can thus discover our graces by many a messenger, but the more choice and spiritual virtues need an agent as mysterious and all-pervading as the wind—need, in fact, the Spirit of the Lord to awaken them. Holy Spirit, You can come to us when we cannot come to You! From any and every quarter You can reach us, taking us on our warm or cold side. Our heart, which is our garden, lies open at every point to You. The wall which encloses it does not shut You out. We wait for a visitation. We feel glad at the very thought of it. That gladness is the beginning of the stir; the spices are already flowing forth.

The second half of the prayer expresses our central desire; we long for THE LORD OF HEAVEN to visit us. The bride does not seek that the spices of her garden may become perceptible for her own enjoyment, nor for the delectation of strangers, nor even for the pleasure of the daughters of Jerusalem, but for her Beloved's sake. *He* is to come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits. We are a garden for His delight. Our highest wish is that Jesus may have joy in us. I fear that we often come to the table of communion with the idea of enjoying ourselves, or, rather, of enjoying our Lord, but we do not rise to the thought of giving *Him* joy. Possibly that might even seem presumptuous. Yet, He says, "My delights were with the sons of men." See how joyfully He cries in the next chapter, "I am come into My garden, My sister, My spouse: I have gathered My myrrh with My spice; I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey; I have drunk My wine with My milk." Our heavenly Bridegroom rests in His love, He rejoices over us with singing. Often He takes more delight in us

than we do in Him. We have not even known that He was present, but have been praying Him to come, and all the while He has been near us.

Note well the address of the spouse to her Beloved in the words before us. *She calls Him hers*—"My Beloved." When we are sure that He is ours we desire Him to come to us as ours, and to reveal Himself as ours. Those words "My Beloved" are a prose poem; there is more music in them than in all the laureate's sonnets. However slumbering my graces may be, Jesus is mine. It is as mine that He will make me live, and cause me to pour forth my heart's fragrance.

While He is hers she acknowledges that *she is wholly His,* and all that she has belongs to Him. In the first clause she says, "Awake, O north wind; and come, you south; blow upon *my* garden." But now she prays, "Let my Beloved come into *His* garden." She had spoken just before of *her* fruits, but now they are *His* fruits. She was not wrong when she first spoke, but she is more accurate now. We are not our own. We do not bring forth fruit of ourselves. The Lord says, "From Me is your fruit found." The garden is of our Lord's purchasing, enclosing, planting, and watering, and all its fruit belongs to Him. This is a powerful reason for His visiting us. Should not a man come into his own garden, and eat his own fruits? Oh, that the Holy Spirit may put us into a fit condition to entertain our Lord!

The prayer of the spouse is—*"Let my Beloved come."* Do we not say, "Amen, let Him come"? If He does not come in the glory of His Second Advent at this moment, as, perhaps, He may not, yet let Him come. If not to His judgment seat, yet let Him come into His garden. If He will not come to gather before Him all nations, yet let Him come to gather the fruit of His redemption in us. Let Him come into our little circle; let Him come into each heart. "Let my Beloved come." Stand back, you that would hinder Him! O, my Beloved, let not my sinful, sluggish, wandering thoughts prevent You from coming! You did visit the disciples, "the doors being shut," will you not come where every opened door bespeaks Your welcome? Where should You come but to Your garden? Surely my heart has great need of You. Many a plant within it needs Your care. Welcome, welcome, welcome! Heaven cannot welcome You more heartily, O my Beloved, than my heart shall now do! Heaven does not need You so much as I do. Heaven has the abiding presence of the Lord God Omnipotent, but if You dwell not within my soul, it is empty, and void, and waste. Come, then, to me, I beseech You, O my Beloved!

The spouse further cries—*"Let Him eat His pleasant fruits."* I have often felt myself overcome with the bare idea that anything I have ever done should give my Lord pleasure. Can it be that any offering I ever gave Him should be thought worthy of His acceptance, or that anything I ever

felt or said should be a joy to Him? Can He perceive any perfume in my spices, or taste any flavor in my fruits? This is a joy worth worlds. It is one of the highest tokens of His condescension. It is wonderful that the King from the far country should come from the glory land, where all choice fruits are at their best, and enter this poor enclosure in the wilderness, and there eat such fruits as ours, and call them pleasant, too! O Lord Jesus, come into our hearts now! O Holy Spirit, blow upon our hearts at this moment! Let faith, and love, and hope, and joy, and patience, and every grace be now like violets which betray themselves by their perfume, or like roses which load the air with their fragrance!

Though we are not content with ourselves, yet may our Lord be pleased with us! Do come to us, O Lord! That You are our Beloved is a greater wonder than that You should come to us. That you have made us Your garden is a greater favor than that You should eat our fruits. Fulfill to us that gracious promise, "I will sup with him, and he with Me," for we do open to You. You said unto the woman of Samaria, "Give Me to drink," and will you not now accept a draught of love from us? She had no husband, but You are our Husband; will You not drink from the cup which we now hold to You? Receive our love, our trust, our consecration. Delight Yourself also in us, as we now delight ourselves in You. We are asking a great thing of You, but Your love warrants large requests. We will now come to Your table, where You shall be our meat and drink, but suffer our spices to be the perfume of the feast, and let us each say, "While the King sits at His table my spikenard sends forth the smell thereof." Fulfill this wish of our soul, divine Lord and Master! 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.

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SALT FOR SACRIFICE
NO. 1942

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 23, 1887,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And every oblation of your meat offering shall you season with salt; neither shall you suffer the salt of the covenant of your God to be lacking from your meat offering: with all your offerings you shall offer salt."
Leviticus 2:13.

IT is taken for granted that all true Israelites would bring many oblations and offerings of different kinds to God. And so they did who were truly devout and really grateful. I am sure that, if the Lord has set our hearts on fire with His own love, we also shall be frequently saying, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?" It will be the habit of the Christian, as it was the habit of the devout Israelite, to be continually bringing oblations to his God.

How is this to be done? There is the point. We have need each of us to say with Paul, "Lord, what will You have me to do?" and we may add another question, "How will You have me do it?" for will-worship is not acceptable with God. If we bring to God what He does not ask, it will not be received. We must only present to Him that which He requires of us, and we must present it to Him in His own way, for He is a jealous God.

I call your attention to the fact that, in this verse, the Lord three times expressly commands that with the meat offerings and all other offerings they were to offer salt. Does the great God that made heaven and earth talk about salt? Does He condescend to such minute details of His service as to enact that the absence of a handful of salt shall render a sacrifice unacceptable, and the presence of it shall be absolutely necessary to its being received by Him? Then, my brethren, nothing in the service of God is trifling. A pinch of salt may seem to us exceedingly unimportant, but before the Lord it may not be so. In the service of God the alteration of an ordinance of Christ may seem to be a pure matter of indifference, and yet in that alteration there may be the taking away of the very vitals of the ordinance, and the total destruction of its meaning. It is yours, and it is mine, to keep to the letter of God's word, as well as to the spirit

of it, remembering that it is written "Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven." It is not for the servant to say, "This order of my master is unimportant, and the other is binding." The servant's duty is to act in all things exactly as he is bidden. Since our Master is so holy and so wise, it is impossible for us to improve upon His commandments. Yes, God enters into detail with His servants, and even makes orders about salt.

If you will read the chapter through, you will note that other things were needed in connection with the sacrifices of the Israelites. Their sacrifices were of course imperfect. Even on the low ground which they occupied as symbols and emblems they were not complete, for you read, in the first place, that they needed frankincense when they offered their sacrifice to God, God did not smell sweet savor in the bullock, or the ram, or the lamb, unless sweet spices were added. What does that teach us but that the best performances of our hands must not appear before His throne without the merit of Christ mingled with it? There must be that mixture of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, with which the garments of our Prince are perfumed, to make our sacrifice to be a sweet savor to the Most High. Take care in your sacrifices that you bring the sacred frankincense.

Another thing that was enjoined constantly was that they should bring oil, and oil is ever the type of the blessed Spirit of God. What is the use of a sermon if there is no anointing in it? What is anointing but the Holy Spirit? What is prayer without the anointing that comes of the Holy Spirit? What is praise unless the Spirit of God is in it to give it life, that it may rise to heaven? That which goes to God must first come from God. We need the oil, we cannot do without it. Pray for me that I may have this oil in the sacrifice of my ministry, as I pray for you that in all that you do for the Lord Jesus, your sacrifice may continually have the sacred oil with it.

Then came a third requisite, namely, salt. If you read the preceding verses, you will see that the Lord forbids them to present any honey. "No meat offering, which you shall bring unto the Lord, shall be made with leaven: for you shall burn no leaven, nor any honey, in an offering of the Lord made by fire. As for the oblation of the first fruits, you shall offer them unto the Lord: but they shall not be burnt on the altar for a sweet savor." Ripe fruits were full of honey, full of sweetness, and God does not ask for sweetness, He asks for salt. I shall notice that as we go on farther. Not honey, but salt, must be added to all the sacrifices which we present before the living God.

What is the meaning of all this? We may not pronounce any meaning of the types with certainty unless we have Scripture to direct us, but still, using our best judgment, we do, first of all, see that the text explains itself. Observe "neither shall you suffer *the salt of the covenant of your God* to be lacking from your meat offering."

I. It appears, then, that salt was THE SYMBOL OF THE COVENANT. When God made a covenant with David, it is written, "The Lord gave the kingdom to David forever by a covenant of salt"—by which was meant that it was an unchangeable, incorruptible covenant which would endure as salt makes a thing to endure, so that it is not liable to putrefy or corrupt. "The salt of the covenant" signifies that whenever you and I are bringing any offering to the Lord, we must take care that we remember the covenant. Standing at the altar with our gift, serving God with our daily service, as I trust we are doing, let us continually offer the salt of the covenant with all our sacrifices. Here is a man who is doing good works in order to be saved. You are under the wrong covenant, my friend, you are under the covenant of works, and all that you will gain in that way is a curse, for "Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." "Therefore," says the apostle, "as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse." Get away from that, and get to that other covenant which has salt in it, namely, the covenant of grace, the new covenant of which Christ is the Head. We must not come to God without the salt of faith in Christ, or our offerings will be a sort of antichrist. A man who is trying to save himself is in opposition to the Savior. He that thinks of the merits of his own good works despises the merit of the finished work of Christ. He is offering to God that which has no salt with it, and it cannot be received.

We want this salt of the covenant in all that we do, in the first place, *to preserve us from falling into legality*. He that serves God for wages forgets the word—"The gift of God is eternal life." It is not wage, but gift, by which you are to live. If you forget that you are under a covenant of pure grace, in which God gives to the unworthy, and saves those who have no claim to any covenant blessing, you will get on legal ground, and once on legal ground, God cannot accept your sacrifice. With all your offerings you shall offer the salt of the covenant of grace, lest you are guilty of legality in your offering.

The covenant is to be remembered also *that it may excite gratitude*. Whenever I think of God entering into covenant that He will not depart from me, and that I shall never depart from Him, my love to Him overflows. Nothing constrains me to such activity, and such zeal in the cause of God, as a sense of covenant love. Oh, the gratitude one feels for every-

thing which comes to us by the covenant of grace! Remember the old Scottish wife, who thanked God for the porridge, and then thanked Him that she had a covenant right to the porridge, since He had said, "Verily, you shall be fed"? Oh, it makes life very sweet to take everything from the hands of a covenant God, and to see in every mercy a new pledge of covenant faithfulness! It makes life happy, and it also inspires a believer to do great things for his gracious God. Standing on covenant ground we feel consecrated to the noblest ends.

This tends *to awaken our devotion to God*. When we remember that God has entered into covenant with us, then we do not do our work for Him in a cold, chilly, dead way, neither do we perform it after a nominal, formal sort, for we say, "I am one of God's covenanted ones." He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; therefore my very soul goes after Him, and this which I am about to do, though it is only to sing a hymn, or to bow my knees in prayer, shall be done intensely, as by one who is in covenant with God, who is, therefore, bound to serve with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his strength. Covenanted service should be the best of service. The covenanting saints of old stopped not at death itself for Him to whom they were bound.

My time will not allow me to enlarge, but I do pray the people of God will always keep the covenant in view. That covenant will claim the last accent of our tongues on earth. It shall employ the first notes of our celestial songs. Where are you if you are out of covenant with God? You are under the curse of the old covenant if you are not under the blessing of the new, but if the Lord Jesus Christ has stood Surety on your behalf, and made the covenant sure to you, you will serve God with alacrity and delight, and He will accept your service as a sweet savor offering in Christ Jesus. That is the first meaning of the text.

II. But, secondly, salt is THE TOKEN OF COMMUNION. In the east, especially, it is the token of fellowship. When an Oriental has once eaten a man's salt, he will do him no harm.

Whenever you are attempting to serve God, take care that you do it in the spirit of fellowship with God. Take care that you suffer not this salt to be lacking from your meat-offering. Offer it in fellowship with God.

And this is a very important point, though I cannot dwell upon it at any length. Beloved, we never serve God rightly, joyfully, happily, if we get out of fellowship with Him. "His servants shall serve Him, and they shall see His face." There is no serving God acceptably unless you see His face. Once you feel your love to God dying out, and the presence of God withdrawn from you, you can live by faith, but you cannot work with

comfort. You must feel a sweet friendship with God, or else you will not so heartily give yourself to God's service as the saints of God ought to do. I want you to live always in the sense of God's nearness to you. Live always in the delightful conviction that God loves you. Never be satisfied to have a doubt about your being one with Christ, or that you are dear to the heart of God. You cannot sing, you cannot pray, you cannot teach a Sunday school class, you cannot preach in a fit and proper style, if you lose this salt of communion. You may limp, but you cannot run in the ways of God if your fellowship is broken. "The joy of the Lord is your strength." Have plenty of this salt of fellowship to heap upon every oblation.

Then, feel fellowship with God as to all His purposes. Does God wish to save souls? So do I. Did Christ die to save souls? So would I live to save them. Can you say that? Does the Holy Spirit strive against sin? So would I strive against sin. Feel all this. Endeavor to run on parallel lines with God as far as the creature can keep pace with the Creator, and when you do so—when all your aims and designs are the aims and designs of God—then, brother, you will plow, and you will sow, and you will reap with joy and gladness of heart. There must be this fellowship with God in His designs. This is the essential salt of sacrifice.

I would have you especially have fellowship with God in Christ Jesus. Does God love Jesus? So do we. Does God desire the glory of His Son? So do we. Does God determine that His Son shall put down all power, authority, and rule, and be King? We too wish Him to reign over us, and over all mankind. "Your Kingdom come" is our prayer, even as it is God's will that the kingdoms of this world should become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.

Now, if you can always work in fellowship with God, what a grand thing it will be! For lack of this, many workers know not their position, and never realize their strength. We are laborers together with God. If we are in our right state, we take a brick to lay it on the wall, and a divine hand has lifted that brick. We use the trowel, and it is the great Master Builder that grasps the tool. We wield the sword, and the Captain of the Lord's host is strengthening our arm, and guiding our hand, that we may do valiantly in the day of battle. What an honor to have the Lord working with us and by us!

But oh, beloved, do not get out of fellowship with God, and if you have done so, before you do another stroke of work for Him, go and get into fellowship with Him. If I was captain of the host, and I saw that you were out of fellowship, and yet you were marching to the battle, I would say, "Brother, go back." When we bring our sacrifice, we are to leave it till we

are reconciled to our brother, and much more must we leave it till we have a sense of being reconciled to God. I cannot go on serving God if I do not know that I am His child. I cannot go on preaching to you if I have any doubt of my own salvation. At any rate, it would be very wretched work to preach of freedom while myself in chains. He preaches best who is at liberty, and can in his own person tell the captives how Christ makes men free. When you know that you are in union with God, and when your heart feels a blessed friendship to Him, then it is, dear friends, that your oblation will come up acceptably before Him, and you can do your work as it ought to be done before Him.

III. But I must get your minds to another point. Salt is the EMBLEM OF SINCERITY. "With all your offerings you shall offer salt." There must be an intense sincerity about all we do towards God.

I bade you note that you were not allowed to present honey before the Lord. I really wish that some of our brethren who are over-done with honey would notice that. There is a kind of molasses godliness which I can never stomach. It is always, "Dear this," and "Dear that," and "Dear the other" and "This dear man," and "That dear woman." There is also a kind of honey-drop talk in which a person never speaks the plain truth. He speaks as familiarly as if he knew all about you, and would lay down his life for you, though he has never set eyes on you before, and would not give you a halfpenny to save your life. These people avoid rebuking sin, for that is "unkind." They avoid denouncing error, they say, "This dear brother's views differ slightly from mine." A man says that black is white, and I say that it is not so. But it is not kind to say, "It is not so." You should say, "Perhaps you are right, dear brother, though I hardly think so." In this style some men think that our sacrifice is to be offered. If they hear a sermon that cuts at the roots of sin, and deals honestly with error, they say, "That man is very narrow-minded." Well, I have been so accustomed to be called a bigot that I by no means deny the charge. I feel no horror because of the accusation. To tell a man that, if he goes on in his sin, he will be lost forever, and to preach to him the hell which God denounces against the impenitent, is no unkindness. It is the truest kindness to deal honestly with men. If the surgeon knows very well that a person has a disease about him that requires the knife, and he only says, "It is a mere trifle: I dare say that with a little medicine and a pill or two we may cure you," a simpleton may say, "What a dear kind man!" But a wise man judges otherwise. He is not kind, for he is a liar. If, instead of that, he says "My dear friend, I am very sorry, but I must tell you that this mischief must be taken out by the roots, and painful as the operation is, I beg you to summon courage to undergo it, for it must be

done if your life is to be saved." That is a very unpleasant kind of person, and a very narrow-minded and bigoted person, but he is the man for us. He uses salt, and God accepts him, the other man uses honey, and God will have nothing to do with him. When honey comes to the fire, it turns sour. All this pretended sweetness, when it comes to the test, turns sour, there is no real love in it. But the salt, which is sharp, and when it gets into the wound makes it tingle, nevertheless does sound service.

Whenever you come before God with your sacrifices, do not come with the pretence of a love you do not feel, or with the beautiful nonsense of hypocrites, but come before the Lord in real, sober, earnest truth. If you are wrong and feel it, say so, and out with it, and if God has made you right through His Spirit, do not deny it, lest you be denying the work of the Holy Spirit, and so dishonor Him.

What is meant is that in all our sacrifices we ought to bring our hearts with us. If we sing, let us sing heartily as unto the Lord, not with our voices only, but with our very souls. If we preach, let us preach with all our might; we have such precious truth to handle that it ought not to be dealt with in a trifling manner. If we try to win a soul, let us throw our whole strength into the work. Though we would not scheme, like the Pharisees, to make a proselyte to our sect, yet let us compass sea and land to bring a man to Christ, for such we should do.

And when we bring our heart, and throw it intensely into the service of God, which is one form of the salt, let us take care that all we do is spiritually performed, not done with the external hand, or lips, or eyes, but done with the soul, with the innermost heart of our being. Otherwise it will be mere flesh, and without salt it will be viewed as corrupt, and rejected at God's altar.

When you attempt to pray, and rise from your knees feeling that you have not prayed, then do not leave the mercy seat, but pray till you pray. When you are singing a hymn, and do not feel quite in tune for singing, sing yourself into tune. Do not leave an ordinance till you have tasted the salt of that ordinance. I admire that resolution of John Bradford the martyr. He said that he made a rule that he never ceased from a holy engagement till he had entered into the spirit of it. Too often we treat these things lightly. There is no soul in them, and yet we are satisfied with them. We eat our unsavory devotions without salt, but the Lord rejects them. We have had a few minutes in prayer in the morning, and perhaps just a few weary minutes at midnight, we have run through a chapter, or perhaps we have taught a class on the Sabbath afternoon, and taught it perfunctorily, without any life, and yet we have been content, or we have preached, but it has been a mere saying of words, there has been no life

or vigor in it. Oh, do not so! Bring not to God your unsalted sacrifices, but let the salt of sincerity savor all. It is better to say, "I did not pray" than it is to say, "I did pray," and yet only to have gone through a form. It is better to have to confess, "I did not sing," than to follow the tune when your heart is not in it. You had better leave off the external form than keep it up if your soul is not in it, lest you be found to mock the Most High God. Pile on the salt! Let it season the whole of your sacrifice through and through. Be sincere before the heart-searching God.

IV. Lastly, salt is THE TYPE OF PURIFYING POWER, and with all our sacrifices we have need to bring a great deal of this salt. The salt eats into the meat, it drives away corruption; it preserves it. We require a deal of this. Brethren, if we come before God with holy things while we are living in sin, we need not deceive ourselves, we shall not be accepted. If there is any man, of whom it can be said that he is a saint abroad and a devil at home, God will estimate him at what he is at home, and not at what he is abroad. He may lay the sacrifice upon the altar, but if it is brought there with foul hands, and an unholy heart, God will have nothing to do with it. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord," and certainly, without holiness can no man serve the Lord. We have our imperfections, but known and willful sin God's people will not indulge. From this God keeps them. As soon as they know a thing to be sin, and their attention is called to it, that which they have committed in inadvertence causes them grief and sorrow of heart, and they flee from it with all their souls. But do not be deceived. You may be a great man in the church of God, and hold office there, and even be a leader, but if you lead an unholy life, neither you nor your sacrifice can ever be accepted by the Most High. God abhors that His priests should serve Him with unwashed hands and feet. "Be you clean that bear the vessels of the Lord." I constantly preach to you free, rich, and sovereign grace, without the slightest condition, and I preach the same at this time, but remember that the grace of God brings sanctification with it, and that the gift of God is deliverance from sin, and that, if we abide in sin, and remain in it, we cannot be the children of God. We must, dear friends, bring with all our oblations that salt in ourselves which shall purify our hearts from inward corruption, and which shall have a power about it to purify others. Know you not that the saints are the salt of the earth? And if we are salt to others, we must have salt in ourselves. How can we conquer sin in others if sin is unconquered in ourselves? How can we give a light we have never seen? How can we have seed as sowers if we have never had bread as eaters? You know what the woman said concerning the well—"Father Jacob," she said, "gave us the well, *and drank thereof himself."* You cannot

give other people wells if you do not drink thereof yourself. You cannot benefit a man by grace if you are not first benefited by grace yourself. Can anything come out of a man that is not in him? There must be a holy, sanctifying power about the child of God; making him to be as salt, or else he cannot act upon the putrid masses round him, as the salt ought to do.

With all your oblations, then, bring this salt. God give it to us! Let us cry to Him for it. I do bless God for this church that God has made you a power in the neighborhood—that God is making you a power all over this country. Those hundreds of ministers who came up this week, whom we have educated here, and whom all of you have helped to educate, are not these a purifying salt? Our brethren by thousands are scattered all over the world. Not a week passes without some of our number going far away, and I always say, "Yes, go, dear brethren. Salt should not remain in the box. It ought to be scattered all over the meat. Wherever you go, mind that you are salt, so that people do not say, 'Is this one of the Tabernacle people? He is a poor, lukewarm creature."' Do not have it so, but do, now that God blesses you so largely, take care that the salt is in you all. "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth," and I have no greater sorrow than this—that there are some among you who are no credit to your profession. There are some among you who do not live even as well as the world expects you to live. I mean not only poor ones, but rich ones among us are a dishonor to us. There are a few of all degrees among us who are not spiritually-minded, but are worldly and carnal; they come to this place, and sit among us, with their faces turned towards heaven, while they themselves are going the way of the ungodly. They know what I mean while I speak it. God grant that they may bear the rebuke, and repent, and turn to the Lord! They are looking one way and rowing another—trying to be the people of God, if they can, and yet at the same time acting as common sinners act. The Lord bless you, beloved, by making you all holy! And if you will not be holy, may He take that great fan into His hand, and blow the chaff away! If it cannot be that this shall be a pure heap lying upon His floor to His honor and glory, then may He still continue that great purgation which is always going on in every church where He is really present! Brethren, *we must be holy*. We must be holy, or else cease to be what we are. God bring us to this—that with every oblation we may offer huge handfuls of salt! May we ever be accepted in Christ, accepted with our sweet savor; holy, acceptable to God, because His Spirit has made us holy, and keeps us right before Him. The Lord bless you evermore! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—EPHESIANS 4.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—386, 623, 435.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON

DEAR FRIENDS—The severe weather in England has induced the officers of the church at the Tabernacle to persuade me to remain in this sheltered spot for another week. I was reluctant to do this, but, at length, feeling myself very weak, I judged it to be the best economy to take the further rest. The little meditation at the Lord's Table, which is here given, will be followed by a similar one next week, and after that I hope to deliver the word from my own pulpit. Again I beg my readers' prayers that I may return strong for service, anointed for high enterprise. With kindest regards to the thousands of my brethren.

Yours to serve,

Mentone, January 15, 1887.

C. H. Spurgeon

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

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LOVE JOYING IN LOVE
NO. 1943

A SHORT ADDDRESS
TO A FEW FRIENDS AT MENTONE, AT THE BREAKING OF BREAD, ON LORD'S-DAY AFTERNOON, JANUARY 9, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON.

"I am come into My garden, My sister, My spouse: I have gathered My myrrh with My spice; I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey; I have drunk My wine with My milk: eat, O friends; drink, yes, drink abundantly, O beloved." Song of Solomon 5:1.

NO sooner does the spouse say, "Let my Beloved come into His garden," than her Lord answers, "I am come into My garden." "Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." When we desire our Lord Jesus to come to us, He has already come in a measure; our desire is the result of His coming. He meets us in all our desires, for He waits to be gracious. Our "come" is no sooner uttered than it is lost in His, "Behold, I come quickly!"

When we perceive that the Bridegroom has come, we perceive also that He has done exactly what He was asked to do. How cheering to find that our mind is in harmony with His mind! Our heart says, "Let my Beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits." His heart replies, "I have gathered My myrrh with My spice; I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey; I have drunk My wine with My milk." "Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart." The Lord Jesus makes the desires of His saints to be the foreshadowing of His own actions, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." His secret counsel is made known in the believing soul by desires inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Note well that the Bridegroom kindly takes to Himself as His own all that is in the garden. His spouse spoke of "His pleasant fruits," and He acknowledges the least and most homely of them to be His own. He repeats the possessive particle—"My;" *"My* myrrh, *My* spice, *My* honeycomb, *My* honey, *My* wine, *My* milk." He disdains nothing which the garden of His bride produces. He is fond of the notion of joint-heirship, even as in another place He said, "My Father, and your Father, My God, and your God." Let us also value the personal possessive pronouns; the

sweetness of the promises lies in them. These are our arms with which we embrace the promises. Beloved brethren in Christ Jesus, is it not charming to see our Lord appropriating us, and all that we are, all that we have, all that grows within us, and all the varied forms of His grace, which are the outcome of His own work within our hearts? Within us certain things are bitter, but wholesome, and He says, "My myrrh." Some things are sweet, though homely, and He says, "My honey." Some things are of a rarer sort, and He says, "My spice," while others are commonplace enough, and He says, "My milk." Our Lord takes no exception to any one of the true growths of the garden, whether it is myrrh or milk, and He asks for nothing more than the garden may be expected to yield; He is content without the butter of cows, or flesh of fed beasts, satisfying Himself with honey fresh from the hive.

I note, with much delight, that matters which seem inconsistent with perfection are not refused by the heavenly Bridegroom. As the Lord did not refuse for an offering the leavened cakes of the first fruits, so in this instance He says, "I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey." The honey would be purer without the comb, but as it is incident thereto, He takes the one with the other. He graciously accepts not only our heart's desire, but the very mode in which our weakness works towards that desire. It is as if He delighted in the words of our prayers as well as in the essence of our prayers, and prized the notes of our songs as well as the meaning of them. Yes, I believe our Lord puts our tears as well as our sorrows into His bottle, and hears our groans as well as our desires. The honeycomb which contains the honey is precious to Him. After He had risen from the grave, He ate a piece of a honeycomb, and I doubt not that He had a reason for choosing that food; sweet gathered from sweets, yet not without wax. Our Lord accepts our services without nicely noting and critically rejecting the infirmity which goes with them.

I note also that He Himself gathers what He enjoys, "I have gathered My myrrh with My spice." Many a holy thing, which we have not in detail offered to Him in set form, He knows to have been given in the gross, and so He takes with His own hand what He knows we have by a comprehensive covenant made over to Him. How sweetly does He fill up our blanks, and believe in our consecration, even when we do not repeat the form of it!

Moreover, He makes mixtures out of our fruits, for He gathers myrrh with balsam, and drinks wine with milk, thus taking the rarer with the more common. He knows how to make holy compounds out of the graces of His people, thus increasing their excellence. He is the best judge of what is admirable, and He is the best fashioner and mixer of character,

He is using His skill upon us. Often by our mingled experiences He accomplishes an increase of virtue in us. Some graces are the result of work and wisdom, as wine which must be trod from the grapes; others are natural, like milk which flows from living fountains without art of man, but the Lord accepts them both, and so combines them that they are pleasant to Him to a high degree. Simple faith and experimental prudence make up a sacred milk and wine, and the like may be seen in rapturous love and calm patience, which blend most deliciously. The Lord loves us, and makes the most of us. He is pleased with all that is the true produce of His grace, and finds no faults with it, on the contrary, He says, "I have eaten My honeycomb with My honey."

Having made these observations upon the Lord's fulfilling the prayer of the spouse; I should like to deliver the following remarks upon the text—

It is evident that *the Lord Jesus is made happy by us*. These poetical sentences must mean that He values the graces and works of His people. He gathers their myrrh and spice because He values them; He eats and drinks the honey and the milk because they are pleasant to Him. It is a wonderful thought that the Lord Jesus Christ has joy of us. We cost Him anguish, even unto death, and now He finds a reward in us. This may seem a small thing to an unloving mind, but it may well ravish the heart which adores the Well-beloved. Can it be true that we afford joy to the Son of God, the Prince Emmanuel? The King has been held in the galleries, He has been charmed by us. Our first repentance made Him call together His friends and His neighbors; the first gleam of faith He ever saw in us made His heart rejoice, and all that He has seen in us ever since of His own image, worked by His grace, has caused Him to see of the travail of His soul. Never has a farmer taken such pleasure in the growth of his choice plants as our Lord has taken in us. "The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him; in those that hope in His mercy." That is a thought to be rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel. Yes, the Lord's church is His Hephzibah, for, He says, "My delight is in her."

The second thought is that *the Lord Jesus will not and cannot be happy by Himself; He will have us share with Him*. Note how the words run—"I have eaten;" "Eat, O friends!" "I have drunk;" "Drink, yes, drink abundantly, O beloved." His union with His people is so close that His joy is in them, that their joy may be full. He cannot be alone in His joy. That verse of our quaint hymn is always true—

"And this I do find, we two are so joined,
He'll not be in glory and leave me behind."

He will not be happy anywhere without us. He will not eat without our eating, and He will not drink without our drinking. Does He not say this

in other words in the Revelation—"If any man hears My voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and He with me"? The inter-communion is complete; the enjoyment is for both. To make our Lord Jesus happy we must also be happy. How can the Bridegroom rejoice if His bride is sad? How can the Head be content if the members pine? At this table of fellowship His chief concern is that we eat and drink. "Take, eat," He says, and again, "Drink you, all of it." I think I hear Him now say—"I have eaten, and I have drunk, and although I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God; yet eat you, O friends: drink, yes, drink abundantly, O beloved!" Thus we have seen, first, that Christ is made happy by us, and secondly, that He insists upon our sharing His joy with Him.

If we have already enjoyed happy fellowship with Him, *the Lord Jesus calls upon us to be still happier*. Though we may say that we have eaten, He will again say, "Eat, O friends!" He presses you to renew, repeat, and increase your participation with Him. It is true we have drunk out of the chalice of His love, but He again invites us, saying, "Drink, yes, drink abundantly, O beloved!" Of other wines it would be ill to say, "Drink abundantly," but of this wine the Lord says, with an emphasis, "Drink abundantly, O beloved!" Oh, for grace to renew all former enjoyments with greater zest, and deeper intensity! It has been sweet even to taste and sip, what must it be to eat and drink abundantly?

Must it not mean that, though we know the Lord Jesus, we should try to know more of Him, yes, to know all that can be known of that love which passes knowledge? Should we not labor, to realize more of HIM, taking in the whole truth concerning His person, and love by meditation, contemplation, understanding and reverent simplicity? Let nothing lie by; let us eat and drink all the stores of the banquet of love.

As the mouth with which we eat is faith, does not the Savior seem to cry, "Believe on Me. Trust Me. Confide in Me abundantly"? Eat and drink with large appetite, by receiving into your heart's belief all that can be received. Oh, for grace to appropriate a whole Christ, and all the love, the grace, the glory that is laid up in Him!

Does it not also mean—have greater enjoyment of divine things? Partake of them without stint. Do not restrict yourself as though you could go too far in feeding upon the Lord Jesus. Do not be afraid of being too happy in the Lord, or of being too sure of His salvation, or of having too much assurance, or too much devout emotion. Dread not the excitements which come from fellowship with Christ. Do not believe that the love of Jesus can be too powerfully felt in the soul. Permit the full sweep

and current of holy joy in the Lord to carry you away; it will be safe to yield to it. "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again, I say, Rejoice."

Beloved, let us now take our fill of Christ. Since we believe, let us believe more unreservedly; if we enjoy, let us enjoy more thoroughly. If we have life, let us have it more abundantly. In this case we may eat, and our soul shall live; we may drink, and not only forget our misery, but drink again, and enter into bliss. Our Lord beckons us from the shore to the sea; He calls us from the lower seat to come up higher. He would have us gladder, stronger, fuller, holier. He presses the provisions of His love upon us, like a host whose joy lies in seeing all his guests feasting. Do not hold back. Be not satisfied with little believing, and scant enjoying, and cool feeling, but let us enter fully into the joy of our Lord!

True, we are unworthy, but He invites us. We shall be wise to yield to His loving pressure. We may not have such another feast just yet, and possibly we may have to go for forty days into the wilderness on the strength of this meal, therefore let us keep the feast heartily. Our Lord, in His invitation, challenges our friendship and our love. He says—"Eat, O *friends!"* Prove yourselves friends by being free at His table. "Drink, yes, drink abundantly, O *beloved!"* If this is His way of testing us, let us not be slow in accepting it. Let us show our love by joying in Him as He joys in us. Amen.

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MIGHT HAVE BEEN, OR MAY BE
NO. 1944

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 30, 1887,
DELIVERED *BY C. H. SPURGEON,*
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?"
John 11:37.

"JESUS WEPT"; it does not mean that He shed a tear or two, but that His tears flowed freely. Such is to be gathered from the original word. He wept copiously and continuously, till He became the observed of all observers. He was deeply affected, and His tears were the fit expression of His intense emotion. *Love made Him weep;* nothing else ever compelled Him to tears. I do not find that all the pains He endured, even when scourged or when fastened to the cruel tree, fetched a single tear from Him, but for love's sake "Jesus wept." At first I feel inclined to say, "Behold, how He wept!" And then I check myself, and borrowing my language from the bystanders, I cry, "Behold, how He loved him!" The Jews recognized, even with their unfriendly eyes, that His tears were drawn from Him by love alone. From this Rock of our salvation no rod but that of love could bring forth floods of tears.

So when we have noticed the tears, and the power of love which brought forth the tears, let us observe how, being such as we are, *tears are towards us a fit expression of His love*. When you look upon your children with love, your eyes flash joy. When they are in health and strength, your love expresses itself fitly in delight in them. But love in Christ towards us most fitly shows itself in tears. When He thinks of what we are, and how we have become subject to death, and how sin has brought us under this bondage, since He loves us, He must weep; no, He must die; for even His tears cannot suffice to manifest His love. Jesus must pour out His soul, not only unto tears, but unto death, that all may see how deeply He loves us.

I should like to begin my sermon with that thought deeply fixed upon our spirits, if we are indeed the people of God—that Jesus loves us—loves us unto tears. Inasmuch as He loved Lazarus when Lazarus was

dead and in the tomb, let us herein behold how He loved us when we were dead in trespasses and sins. See how He loves us though, perhaps, our spirits may be dull and dead, and how He will love us even when we come to die. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." He loves us so that He will love us when we die, even as He loved Lazarus at the grave's mouth.

Let us turn away from our preface, which we have found in the context, to look at the text itself. While there were some who thought only of the love of Christ when they beheld His tears, there were others standing by more full of reasoning, who argued, "Could not this Man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?"

Placing my text in various lights, I see, first, *a vain argument,* secondly *a vile argument.* Thirdly, *a fair argument,* and fourthly, if read in connection with the verses which succeed it, *a full and faithful argument.*

I. But, first, I see in the text A VAIN ARGUMENT. It is an argument about what might have been if such-and-such a thing had been. It is a very common thing to hear people thus talk—"If so-and-so, then so and-so." Such talk is always vain, because *it leads to no practical result.* What was the use of saying, "If Jesus had been here, then Lazarus would not have died," when Lazarus was already dead? The thing is done, and cannot be undone, what is the use of asking about what once might have been but now cannot be? Yet have I seen strange sorrows wrung out of these suppositions. Perhaps the bitterest griefs that men know come not from facts, but from things which might have been, as they imagine; that is to say, they dig wells of supposition, and drink the brackish waters of regret. The sisters of Lazarus did this. Each said, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother had not died." In a more unbelieving way the Jews did it, and said, "Could not this Man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?" Yes and so you say, "Now, if I had gone to so-and-so, this would not have happened, and then the other might have happened, and a third thing probably would have occurred, and then how different it would have been from what it is now!" You blame yourself for steps which were not only innocent, but wise and right, but now that you see the consequences of them, you begin to imagine that they were not innocent, and not wise, and not right, and you fret to think that you took such steps.

I have known some go a great deal further than vainly accusing themselves, they have even accused God. They say, "Why was moral evil admitted into the world? Why were men and women constituted as they are? Could not God, who is omnipotent, have so arranged things that

there should have been no sin and no sorrow?" What a fine mess we get into when once we begin arguing over those points, and conjecturing what might have been under other circumstances! You see, dear friends, these things will not be, and cannot be, and therefore, what is the good of our worrying over what is not, and cannot be? I will plow, but if there be no field, excuse me, I shall not plow the sea, or the mist. I will get to work on anything that is practical, but I will not break my heart over fancies.

If it is to be done, and it is right to do it, let us go at it at once, but if it cannot now be done, but is only a thing that might have been, let us leave it. You may go to the "might have beens," I have better work to do. This was David's method about his child, as it should be yours about all your sick ones, and those that have already departed. David fasts, and prays, and cries to God as long as his child is alive, but when his child is dead, he washes his face, and eats bread, because he says, "Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." It is done, and cannot be undone, and what is the use of fretting over it now? Oh, that you would have grace to leave this foolish chopping of logic with yourself and providence, and use your reason for something better! Lazarus is dead, and what is the use of saying that he might not have died if Jesus had interposed?

I call this a vain argument, in the next place, because, even though we raise the question about what might have been, and we push it until we begin to think that it ought to have been, still *unbelief will never get an explanation of it from the Lord*. In the chapter there is no explanation given to the Jews of why Jesus, being able to open the eyes of the blind man, and able to keep this person from dying, yet did not keep him from dying. An explanation was given by the Lord to His disciples by His assurance that it was for the glory of God. That explanation you will get. You have received it already. If you are God's child, and He has denied you what you think He might as well have given you, if He has permitted you to suffer under a calamity which you think He might have averted, He will give you no other explanation than this which He gives you now without any pressure at all, namely, that it is for His glory. If it is for His glory, is it not for your advantage? What can more advantage a servant than the glory of his master? What can more profit our loving hearts than to see God glorified? If you are not satisfied with that answer, do not expect any other. "Why have I been bereaved of my children?" "Why have I been ill so many years?" "Why did I fail when I hoped to reach wealth?" "Why did I break down in the examination when I might have obtained a degree?" It is an idle piece of business to demand the reasons

of unavoidable trials. It is mere dreaming to guess what would have been if such another thing had been. "What you know not now, you shall know hereafter." Let that content you.

Once again, I call this a vain argument, because *it cannot benefit you to pry into this thing which the Lord has hidden from you.* You are fostering self-conceit in calling God's providence to your bar. You are practically sitting upon a throne, and making God to be the prisoner at your bar. You are weighing over again what He has already weighed in the scale of wisdom. This will never do. A child-like spirit is infinitely healthier as it is infinitely holier than the spirit of questioning. Brothers, we should not even thirst to know all the things that are, for if it is the glory of God to conceal a thing, let it be concealed, but as for the things that might have been, what have we to do with them? If we begin lifting up these curtains, we cannot tell what we may one day see. I have known persons intrude into this sphere until at last they have stumbled on a horror which they were never intended to see, and which indeed they never would have seen if their own unhallowed imaginations had not created it for themselves. They were ambitious to alter providence and change the times and seasons which God had ordained, and at last they fell into such a morbid condition that, if they were not positively mad, they might have been happier if they had been, for there is a state of mind, bordering on insanity, which has still a guilt about it, and is therefore worse than if responsibility had been destroyed. I shall beg you, therefore, brethren, to forbear from prying into those secret things which belong only to God. Your profit lies in the direction of abstaining from such speculations. Do not talk about what might have been, or should have been, interfering with the good which God has given you by pining after what He has denied. Oh, could you know as He knows, and then love as He loves, you would act as He acts! Believe in Him, and sit still at His feet, and talk no more about what He could have done, or might have done, or what you fancy He should have done, lest evil come of it.

II. Secondly, as I have spoken upon a vain argument, I will now speak of A VILE ARGUMENT, for I believe these Jews intended a piece of evil argument against the Christ of God. They put it thus, "This Man says that He opened the eyes of the blind, and all the people think that He did, but if He did so, why did He not prevent His friend, whom He evidently loved, from dying? Either He has a lack of power, which will prove that He did not open the eyes of the blind after all, but that it was an imposture, or else, if He has such power, and does not use it for His friend, He does not love Him, and these tears are a mere pretence. He could have saved this man's life, and now He stands here and weeps because

he is dead." Thus the adversary would put the believer in our Lord upon the horns of a dilemma. We are not gored by either horn, for we know a way of escape from there. Still you see the drift, and this is often the drift of Satan's arguments. Your brother, your mother, your child, your friend—these are dead. You sent to Jesus, you cried to God, you persisted for the precious life, and yet they are dead. Well, then, there must have been a lack of power on the part of God to save life. Perhaps that conversion of yours, in which you have rejoiced, and of which you have said, "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see"—perhaps, after all, that was not a work of divine power, but a delusion, for He that saved your soul could have saved the life of your beloved, and as He did not do so, has He any power at all, and have you ever been the subject of that power?

You see the drift of the specious reasoning; is it not a vile argument? Let us unveil the falsehood of it. Suppose that Jesus is willing to open the eyes of the blind, and does open them; is He therefore bound to raise this particular dead man? If He does not see fit to do so, does that prove that He has not the power? If He lets Lazarus die, is it proven therefore that He could not have saved His life? May there not be some other reason? Does Omnipotence always exert its power? Does it ever exert all its power? May there not be some great reason why Christ should open the eyes of the blind, and yet should not step in to prevent the death of Lazarus? We can see that there may be many such reasons, but it is easy, when you wish to argue against Christ and the gospel, to forget a good deal. You can shut your eyes where it is inconvenient to see, and then you can rush on blindly like a mad bull.

On the other hand, if they say, "If Christ can prevent Lazarus dying, and He does not do so, there is a lack of love in Him;" is it so? Is that a fair argument? It is not true as a matter of fact, nor will it be thought to be true by our faith. It may be infinite love that wounds, that chastens, that afflicts. There is as much love in the Father when He wields the rod as when He gives the kiss; as much love in the Savior when He permits Lazarus to die as when He raises Lazarus from the grave. Yes, and it is possible that the less pleasing deed may be the more greatly charged with love! The greatest blessings come to us in the guise of sorrows. I should not wonder if the death of Lazarus was the passing of Lazarus into a higher state of spiritual life than he had ever enjoyed before. I doubt not that he was a converted man before his death, but, certainly, that wonderful passing into the region of death-shade, (which I will not picture because the Bible does not picture it), and that coming back again, must have given him such a vivid consciousness of the power of Christ

that the spiritual life that was within him must have become more strong, more clear, more supreme than ever it had been before. I should have liked to meet that man after he had been raised from the dead by Him who said, "I am the resurrection and the life." I think he could have preached from that text very wonderfully. He would have understood it by an experience unknown to us. I should think that Lazarus rose into the higher life in the very highest degree, and so it was Christ's love to Lazarus that let Lazarus die, and it was a slander altogether that he died because Jesus had a lack of love towards him. It is Christ's love that has let some of you be ill and poor. It is Christ's love that has suffered you to be despised and down-trodden. It is Christ's love that has let you remain in affliction, because the divine benefit that has come of it is more to your profit than the thing itself could ever be to your loss. So the vile argument may well be driven away, whatever shape it takes in our minds.

There is no justification for our distrust as to what God has done for us in the way of grace; it has been real, and no dream. And there is no justification for any doubt as to what God can do for us and will do for us in the future; He that has helped us so far will help us to the end. He that has done so much for us will withhold no good thing from us, but bestow all that is needful for this life and godliness, and for the life to come and glory.

III. We shall now proceed very briefly to notice what is A VERY FAIR ARGUMENT. If you take the text, and press the malice out of it, it is true. "Could not this Man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?" Yes, it is true. Jesus Christ, by what He has done, has proved His power to do anything. I need not enlarge upon the point, but I will put it before you. There is not a life which He cannot preserve. You may cry to Him about your sick ones. You are permitted to do so. Even if they are given over by the physician, I counsel you to go to Jesus about them, though it is far better to go to Jesus before you consult the physician. We often make a mistake about the use of medicines by using medicine first. We should first go to the Lord, that we may be guided as to what medicine shall be used, and what means shall be employed, and trust in God to bless the means made use of for restoration. We may make idols out of physicians as much as the heathen make idols out of blocks of wood. Medicines are right enough in their place for healing, even as bread is right for nourishment, but as men live not by bread only, so are they not healed by medicine only. Before we eat bread, we ask God's blessing on that bread; let us seek a blessing on medicines whenever we use them. We are not healed by the physician, but by that God who works according to His own will and

pleasure. Let us then believe that the Christ, who has done this and that for other sick folk, can do the same for those whom we bring to Him, and let us leave their cases in His hands.

But take the text spiritually. I want you to believe that Christ can preserve us spiritually from death. Are we forced by our employments into the society of the ungodly? Does providence call some of you working men to toil side by side, or even at the same bench, with infidels? The Lord Jesus can cause that you shall not be injured by them. He can give you spiritual health and strength, even when you seem to be under the most deadly influences. He that opened your eyes, when you were blind, can keep you alive, now that you can see. Trust in Him for your final perseverance with the same unquestioning faith with which you trusted in Him for the pardon of your sins. I say again, He that opened your eyes, when you were in darkness, can cause that you should not die even though the deadliest influences from the world, the flesh, and the devil, should be set in operation against you. Because He lives you shall also live. Fly to Him in the time of your temptation. Cry to Him in the hour of your need, and He will help you, and deliver you. You shall not die, but live and declare the works of the Lord.

Beloved, what a mercy it is that we can look back upon Christ's having opened the blind man's eyes, and see the same thing in ourselves! Here is a blind man whose eyes Christ opened. It is yourself. He was able to give *you* sight, and can you not transfer the argument to others? If the Lord Jesus Christ could give *you* sight, He can give others sight. If He opened *your* blind eyes, He can open the blind eyes of your children, of your unconverted father, your unsaved brothers, your unsaved sisters. Believe about your friends, and cry to God about them. Take the text at once, and read it so, "Could not this Man, who opened my blind eyes, open the blind eyes of those about whom my heart is heavy?" Remember that the man who was blind, whose eyes Christ opened, was born blind. Christ can deal with original sin, and constitutional sin. Some seem to have inherited a nature more wild than common, their heart does not appear to be a heart of flesh, but a heart of stone, yet Jesus, who dealt with this strangely blind man—blind from his birth—can deal with those strange sinners, those sinners of a scarlet hue, who develop in their lives more of desperate viciousness than you see in others. Christ can deal with the blackest of the black. Take them to Him, believe on account of them, and be fully convinced that no case is beyond the power of the living Savior.

For my part, I never can or will despair of the salvation of one of my fellow creatures now that I am myself saved. I know that there were cer-

tain traits in my character, and certain elements in my disposition, which made my conversion to Christ to be more remarkable than that of the conversion of anybody else, and so I shall have hope concerning the most blasphemous, the most obstinate, the most unbelieving. This glorious Man who, in the days of His flesh, opened the eyes of one born blind, which thing had never been known before, can come and deal with the very chief of sinners—yes, with sinners that are dead in sin—with sinners that lie rotting in their lusts, and He can make them to be saints! This is a fair argument; I am sure it is.

IV. But, now, lastly, they had never thought of THE FULL AND FAITHFUL ARGUMENT from the text. All they said was—"This Man, who has opened the eyes of one born blind, could have prevented Lazarus from dying." That was a fair argument, but it was not a full argument, and it never occurred to them to go further, and inquire, "Now that Lazarus is dead, cannot this Man raise him from the dead?" The first piece of argument did not go far enough to yield any comfort, because it only dealt with what might have been, and what could not be. I fear a great deal of our religion is of that kind. But what a mercy it would be if God would give some Christians six-penny-worth of commonsense! Oh, if some people could but believe what I am sure is true—that true religion is sanctified commonsense—that there is about the religion of Jesus Christ that which is just as practical as if our life were to be spent in keeping shop! True, it is spiritual and divine, celestial and sublime, but yet it is as accurate as if we were to be nothing but mathematicians, calculating and estimating through all our days. There is a mathematical truthfulness about our holy faith as well as a lofty, eagle-winged aspiration. So then they should have argued thus; "Jesus Christ, who opened this blind man's eyes, has come to a corpse in its grave, and He is able to make it live." Friend, is there laid upon your mind at this time some poor sinner who is dead in trespasses and sins? You cannot get at him. You do not know how to make him feel or think. There does not seem to be a vital spark anywhere about him, and you know not how to deal with him. Believe that the gospel is meant for such a case as this, and that the living God, in Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit, can meet with this clay-cold dead heart. "Oh, it is worse than that," you say, "it is worse than that. The person I am thinking of is put out of society, and is too corrupt to be spoken with." Yes, I know what you mean. Perhaps you speak of a fallen woman. We are always more eager to bury the fallen women than the fallen men. A man, of whom we must say with Martha, "By this time he stinks," may still be tolerated in society, but if it happens to be a woman that sins, they cry, "Bury her out of sight. Roll the stone to the mouth of

the tomb. We never speak to her, or mention her." If you have an anxiety on your soul about a person who is thus shut out from society, I want you to believe that Jesus can bring out the buried and corrupt.

"Oh," you say, "but it is not merely that the person I think of is buried away, but the case is really one which may not be described. He has been dead four days. He has gone so far that his crime is unmentionable." I know the case. Yet you may mention it before the Lord; in His presence no harm will come of it. I do not read in the gospel narrative of anybody being distressed by the odor when the sepulcher of Lazarus was opened. When Jesus said, "Take you away the stone," He knew that He had divine disinfectants ready at hand. He knew what He did. When you seek after gross sinners, prudent people say, "Well, if you go after such people as that, your own character will be injured before long." The Lord will prevent any harm coming from it, for He can speak to the most corrupt sinner, and say, "Live," and he shall live, and then the corruption is no more. Therefore let us drive out of our minds the notion that any sinner is too far gone for Christ to save him. I used to hear in my youth about a "day of grace," and about persons having passed that day of grace, but I do not believe it. As long as you are in this world I am bidden to preach to you, for the gospel message is to be proclaimed to every creature, and I dare not draw vain distinctions about a day of grace. If you have a disease about you that will carry you off before the clock strikes twelve tonight, I still bid you believe in the Christ of God, and live. If you are so bad in your own esteem that there never lived a worse man or a worse woman out of hell, yet still believe in Jesus Christ. My Lord loves to save great sinners, even as He delighted to bring from the grave the long-dead Lazarus, that he might be received into the bosom of his family, to be the joy of the house, and the glory of Christ.

I have not gone too far; I am sure that I have not. No, I could not go too far. The shoreless, bottomless love of my great Lord—I wish I had the tongues of men and angels to tell of it. You have not sinned beyond His power to save you. He is a great Savior, a mighty Savior, and His precious blood can remove all your death and corruption. When I think of those whom He has saved, I argue, "Could not my Lord Jesus, who opened the eyes of the blind, make these dead sinners live?"

I will tell you something else. If you yourself tonight are that dead sinner, I say to you, in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, "Thus says the Lord, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." "I cannot," says one, "I am dead." I know that you are, but if the Lord speaks to you, you will live; *and He does speak to you by this voice of mine*. I speak to you *in His name*. You careless sinner, in the name of Jesus Christ of

Nazareth, consider your ways! You dead sinner, in the name of Jesus, live! His Spirit has gone with the word which I have spoken. The thing is done in some who have heard me, and will be done in others who will read these words. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, forever and ever! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 11.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—319, 844, 631.

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

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CHRIST'S WORK NO FAILURE
NO. 1945

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 30, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He has set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for His law."
Isaiah 42:4.

PREVIOUS verses at the close of the forty-first chapter indicate the utter failure of the hope of man from man. God Himself looked, and behold "there was no man; even among them, and there was no counselor, that, when I asked of them, could answer a word." How often it is so in human history; man fails to find leadership and help in man! Great men are raised up now and then, and the tendency is to make idols of them, and so to trust in an arm of flesh. These die, and then their fellows look out in the church, and in the world, for other men upon whom they may dote after the same manner, but it sometimes happens that they look in vain; none arise whom they can elect for leaders. Just now I think it is so in more departments than one. Look where you may, where will you see the man who is equal to the crisis? Somehow or other, in the providence of God, every hour has, in due time, had its man, but if our hopes are fixed in men, we must feel at this time sorely pressed.

In expounding the one verse which I have selected for a text, I shall need to open up the whole passage. Follow me, therefore, with opened Bibles, and obey the first word of the chapter, which is, *Behold*.

We are commanded at all times *to behold the Son of God*. There is never a season in which He is not a fit subject for contemplation and expectation. "Behold the Lamb of God" is the standing rule from generation to generation, from the first of January to the last of December. But especially in cloudy and dark days ought we to behold Him. When after having looked, and looked long, you see no man and no counselor, then this precept has an emphatic force about it, "Behold My servant, whom I uphold; My elect, in whom My soul delights." When all other saviors fail, look to *the* Savior whom God has set up. The darker all things else become, the more eagerly look for His appearing whose coming is as a morning without clouds. When the lower lights are burning dim, behold the lamp above.

Our great comfort is that *the Lord Jesus Christ is always to be beheld*. He ever lives and ever works for His people. We must view Him not merely as one who appeared upon the scene years ago, but as still living. He died in the heat of the battle, but He rose again to secure the victory. We do not found our hopes of a brighter future upon a dead Savior; our hopes for the future of the world, and for the accomplishment of God's

gracious purposes, hang upon one, who forever lives and is at this time in the place of vantage, carrying on His great work and warfare at the right hand of God. My text says, "Behold My servant," and that matchless servant of God is to be beheld—not with the eye of sense, that were little worth, for men saw Him in that way, and crucified Him, but He is to be beheld with the eye of faith, and this is a noble sight, for those who look to Him in that manner are lightened, and their faces are not ashamed. At the commencement of my discourse, I beseech you, dear brethren, to look to Jesus Christ the ever-living Worker. If you have been troubled and fretted by peering into these gloomy times and perceiving nothing that can raise your spirits, I pray you look about you no longer, but look up! There *He* sits at the right hand of God, even the Father, the appointed man, the glorious, chosen Deliverer. Behold Him, and your fears and sorrows will fly away.

The text declares concerning our Lord that "He shall not fail nor be discouraged." This leads us to consider what is the work which Jesus Christ has undertaken, in which He will not fail nor be discouraged. Our text directs us in this matter, for it tells us that He has come to "set judgment in the earth," and that "the isles shall wait for His law." The earth is to be delivered from misrule and sin, and men are to be submissive to His instruction and direction. There are some who doubt it, but I still believe in that verse which we sang just now—

"Jesus shall reign wherever the sun
Does his successive journeys run;
His kingdom stretches from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more."

Our Lord has come to save His elect, and He will save every one of them. No soul for whom He stood as surety and substitute shall ever be cast away. The sheep shall pass again under the hand of Him that counts them, and they shall all be there. "He shall not fail nor be discouraged," but He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.

As for the Lord's second coming, we know not when it shall be. Shall the world grow darker and darker till He comes? It may be so. There are passages of Scripture and signs of the times which may be taken to indicate it. On the other hand, shall the age grow brighter and brighter till He appears to bring the perfect day? Through the preaching of the gospel shall there yet be periods in which multitudes shall be converted and whole nations shall be saved? I do not know; there are texts that seem to look that way, and many a brave worker hopes as much. There are brethren who can map out unfulfilled prophecy with great distinctness, but I confess my inability to do so. They get a shilling box of mathematical instruments. They stick down one leg of the compasses and describe a circle here and a circle there, and they draw two or three lines, and there it is. Can you not see it, as plain as a walking stick? I am sick of diagrams; I have seen enough of them to make another volume of Euclid. My impression is that very little is to be learned from the major part of these interpretations or speculations. I do not think that anybody can map out the future so as to be absolutely sure of anything definite except certain great, clearly-stated facts. It is certain that the Lord will come, that He will come in such an hour as the most of men look not for Him,

and that His coming will be a surprise even to many of His own church. He may come at this moment while yet I am speaking to you, and He may delay His coming, if it so pleases Him, through many a century yet. It may sound strange for me to say so, but if our Lord were not to come for ages, we should not be justified in saying, "My Lord delays His coming," nor would any prophecy of Scripture be broken. Furthermore, it seems to me pretty clear that truth and righteousness are to win the day upon the earth; the idols are to be abolished, war is to cease, and the great Jehovah is to be called "the God of the whole earth." Either before or after His second advent—I am not going into that question this morning—this polluted earth is to be cleansed, and this round planet of ours, which today is darkened by sin, shall yet shine out, like a new-born sun, in all the pristine light which beamed from it when first it came from its Maker's hands. The Lord shall reign over all mankind, and a period of peace, and rest, and holiness shall be the fruit of His blessed sway. The Lord Jesus will not rest till He has subdued all things unto Himself, and put down all the spiritual wickednesses which now tyrannize over the world.

I do not think it necessary for me to go further into detail as to all that our Lord is resolved to do. What I have to say is this, *whatever He has undertaken, He will perform;* whatever commission He has received He will fulfill. "He shall not fail nor be discouraged" till all His work is done. Brethren, we doubt sometimes. We ask, Is it all right? Are matters moving on? Behold Him who is at the head of all affairs, the director of the high politics of heaven, the great one upon whose shoulders rests the business of God in the salvation of men! Behold Him, and be comforted. You and I may fail; shame on us if we do! We may be discouraged; it will be our sin if we are, but *He* shall not fail nor be discouraged till He shall have worked out every point of the promises of grace, and shall have accomplished every iota of the eternal purpose of love.

I believe in the final perseverance of the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe in the final perseverance of every saint as an individual. Furthermore, I believe in the final perseverance of the saints as a body; the church of God shall live, and continue her work till she has accomplished it. "The gates of hell shall not prevail against her." But far more divine is the thought to me of the final perseverance of the Christ of God. If *He* were to lay down the task and say it is impossible, woe worth the day to us! If He were to turn His back upon His high enterprise, and say, "I will save no more of these rebellious beings; I will attempt no more to shed light into the darkness which comprehends it not; I will give up the task in which men so madly oppose Me," then were hope blotted out of the language of men. But while this text stands true the door of hope is open. *We* need not fail or be discouraged, since *He* will not.

This morning I shall speak to you in the hope that the Spirit of God may fire you with new courage for the holy war. First, *let this truth be considered and believed,* and then, secondly, *let this truth be believed and enjoyed.*

I. First, then, LET THIS TRUTH BE CONSIDERED AND BELIEVED.

Will you now thoughtfully turn it over in your minds? It is certainly a very marvelous enterprise which our Lord Jesus Christ has undertaken. The salvation of a single soul involves a miracle. The salvation of myriads upon myriads of the human race; what shall I call it but a mountain of marvels? The removal of the darkness which has settled over mankind in tenfold night—what a divine labor! The ending of the enmity which exists between man and God, the reconciling of man unto his Maker—what a design! The redeeming of this world from the bondage of corruption, the setting up of a kingdom of truth and holiness—what an enterprise! Such wonders, has Jesus undertaken, and such wonders He will achieve. He died to lay the foundation of His all-conquering kingdom, and He still lives that this kingdom may be established in its supremacy, and all nations may flow to it. Beloved, I fail to conceive, much more to express, the vastness of the task which He has undertaken. Those of you who love your fellow men often mourn your powerlessness with a single individual. What hard work it is to deal with our own countrymen! How are we baffled by their poverty, their ignorance, their misery, their sin! You have only to battle with a single vice, drunkenness, to wit, to feel what a monster is to be overcome. Only think for a moment of the social impurity of this city, and you are sick at heart as you remember it. Now, the Lord Jesus Christ has come to cleanse this Augean stable, and He will cleanse it. The stream of the river of life shall run through the foulest parts of the earth till even those horrible regions which are comparable to the Dead Sea shall be reclaimed.

The problem staggers us. The systems of evil are colossal. The hold of evil on the race is terrible. Man is inveterately a sinner. You cannot cure him of rebellion; he is desperately set on mischief. Even when the consequences of his sin wound and afflict him he still returns to it. If you prove to him to a demonstration that a thing is right and profitable, he does not therefore love it; if you prove it to be injurious, he therefore chooses it. By the use of an accursed logic he puts darkness for light and light for darkness, and thus stultifies his conscience, and hardens his heart. If, perhaps, you convince his judgment, you have not won his affection, you have not carried his will, you have not subdued his mind. Nothing but Omnipotence itself can save a single soul. What must be that mighty power which shall cause nations to run unto the Lord! They that dwell in the wilderness are to bow before Him, and His enemies are to lick the dust. What a conquest is this! How shall Ethiopia be made to stretch out her hands to Him? Look how black are the hearts of her inhabitants, as well as their faces! How shall, China and India, beclouded by their false philosophies, be led to own the truth? Look, sirs, look at this great mountain, and do not underestimate its mass, and then remember that before our Zerubbabel it must and shall become a plain. The stone mentioned by Daniel, cut out of the mountain without hands, smote the monstrous image and broke it, and in due time filled the whole earth. In the night visions the same prophet saw the Son of Man having dominion, and glory and a kingdom, that, all people should serve Him. So must it be. But how great a thing it is!

The task is rendered the more severe because our Lord Jesus at this present works largely by a church, which is a poor and faulty instrument for the accomplishment of His purpose. I sometimes think there are more difficulties connected with the church than with the world, for the church is often worldly, faithless, lethargic, and I was about to add, inhuman. Might I not almost say as much, for she seems at times well near destitute of tender sympathy for the lost and perishing. The church at one hour receives the light and reflects it like the full moon, so that you have hope of her enlightening men; but soon she wanes into a mere ring of light, and becomes obscured. She declines from the truth, she forgets the glorious gospel entrusted to her, and she seeks after the rotten philosophies of men. How many times since Pentecost has the church started aside after the wisdom of men and after a while has painfully returned to her first faith? At the present moment there is just that kind of wandering going on, and this hinders the work of the Lord. If a man has to do a work, he says to himself, "Give me good tools, at any rate. If I have to strike a heavy blow, do not trouble me with a broken hammer. If I have to write, give me a pen that will not hinder my hand." But alas! The church is too often false to her Master's purpose, and traitorous to His truth. Yet, brethren, the Lord will largely do His work and accomplish His good pleasure by such means as these. He will not fail nor be discouraged. If all Christians should become lukewarm, till the whole church became nauseous, as the church of Laodicea, yet still the Lord Jesus will not fail nor be discouraged. The disciple may sleep, but the great Savior agonizes over men. Let this battalion and the other waver as it may, He who holds the banner in the very center of the fight will never be moved; He will hold the field against all comers, for the Altogether Lovely One is the Standard-bearer among ten thousand. Though you mourn over the disciples, rejoice over their Master. They faint or fly, but "He shall not fail nor be discouraged."

To help you to believe this great truth, I beg you to notice who He is that has undertaken all this; kindly read at the commencement of the chapter, "Behold My servant, whom I uphold, My elect, in whom My soul delights." I am sure that He who is thus spoken of will not fail nor be discouraged, for first, *He is God's own special servant*. God has many servants, but the Christ is above all others called of God, "My servant." He is a Son far excelling all other sons, and in the same sense He is a Servant far exceeding all other servants. He took upon Himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of sinful flesh. He is a servant as none of us can ever hope to be in so high and wonderful a sense; He performs all the will of the Father. If He that was Lord of all became a servant, do you think He will not accomplish His service? If He that made the heavens and the earth laid aside His splendor and veiled Himself in our inferior clay, do you think He will fail in the purpose for which He did this? Can the incarnation of God be a failure? Can the life of the Son of God among men end in defeat? Your heart gives immediate answer—God's own servant will fulfill His service.

Then the great God says of Him, *"My servant whom I uphold."* If God upholds Him, how can He fail? Though God upholds all His people, yet

beyond all others He is upholding His own chosen Son and servant, how then, can He fail? Is it possible with the divine power perpetually streaming into Him and abiding in Him, that He should fail, or be discouraged? The text may be read, "Behold My servant upon whom I lean," and the picture is of a great Oriental monarch who comes forth leaning upon a favorite lord, whom he honors by placing him in that position, indicating thereby that he trusts his affairs with him, and regards him as his right hand man, a very pillar of the State. Yes, we say it with reverence, God the Father leans on Jesus the Christ. He rests His honor and glory with the person of the incarnate God, and now He comes before us as God in Christ Jesus, revealing His glory through the Mediator, putting His own sovereign power into the keeping of His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things. Can that Glorified One fail? Has the Father trusted His kingdom of grace with one who will be overcome? How can He fail whom the Father upholds, and upon whom the Father leans all the dignity and glory of His moral government? "He shall not fail nor be discouraged."

Then the Scripture adds this very significant word, *"My elect in whom My soul delights."* The chosen of God, the most choice one that God knows, shall He prove a failure? Not only does God delight in Him, but it is put still more strongly still, "In whom My soul delights." Do you taste the marrow of the expression? It seems to me to be exceedingly full. The chief delight of God is in His Son, as Mediator. God said of the world, that it was very good, but we read not that His soul delighted in it, but see, the very soul of the Godhead is moved and filled with delight because of the Savior, commissioned to redeem. Blessed Father, we do not wonder that You are taken up with delight in Jesus, for even we ourselves, when we get a sight of Him, are ravished with His charms. There is none like Him. He is Your Only-Begotten, the Son of Your heart; well may You be well pleased with Him. How, then, is it possible that one whom the Lord loves so well, in whom His soul delights, should be put upon a work in which He can fail, or should be left in that work to be discouraged? It is impossible. The connection of Jesus of Nazareth with Jehovah, God of all, makes it absolutely certain that the divine enterprise to which He has pledged Himself shall assuredly succeed. "He shall not fail nor be discouraged."

Furthermore, *our Lord is the abiding place of the Holy Spirit.* The text says, "I have put My spirit upon Him"—the Holy Spirit, to whom is glory and honor forever, the Holy Spirit, very God of very God, dwells in Christ. Upon us He comes in measure. We sometimes receive a large portion of His power, but still we are not capable of receiving all the fullness of the Holy Spirit. But Christ has the residue of the Spirit abiding in Him. The Holy Spirit descended like a dove, and rested upon Him, and it does rest upon Him still. My brethren, do you dream that He on whom the Holy Spirit always rests can fail or be discouraged? Do you believe that the Gospel system is to die out? Is it going to be throttled by philosophy? Strangled by modern thought? Or trampled down beneath the hoof of anarchy? No, while the Holy Spirit abides upon the great Servant of Jehovah we cannot know a fear. The anointing on the head will descend to the skirts of the garments, and as *He* cannot fail nor be discouraged, nei-

ther shall we be dismayed. He who is owned, honored, trusted, sustained, loved, and anointed of God cannot but be successful. Jesus must persevere successfully to the end.

Notice yet further, that *the success of Jesus is guaranteed by the decree of God.* It is written, "He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles." Oh, those blessed "shalls" and "wills"! Some people make little of them, but I make everything of them. Here my heart rests, if God says "shall," then it certainly shall be. "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit at My right hand, until I make Your enemies Your footstool." Do you think He spoke in vain? Turn to the second Psalm, and read, "I will declare the decree: the Lord has said unto Me, You are My Son; this day have I begotten You. Ask of Me, and I shall give You the heathen for Your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." Shall this solemn proclamation of Jehovah be mere waste paper? My brethren, the sun may forget to shine, the eyes of the world may be darkened, yon mighty ocean may cease to ebb and flow, and the heart of the earth may die, all nature may be driven on the rock of fate in general wreckage and confusion, but no word of God shall fall to the ground, for that word is essential life and power. If Jehovah has spoken, it is done. If He declares it, it shall be. Therefore the Christ must and shall succeed, for His work is the subject of a divine decree.

Yet, Brethren, it may be that at times we fear that the gospel is not prospering nor fulfilling the purpose for which God has sent it. Looking back on past history, and looking out upon the present state of affairs, we are afraid that things are not going well. Possibly this may arise out of *our Lord's way of working,* which is so different from what our minds would choose. It is written in the second verse, "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street." You are in an awful hurry, are you not? But He is never in haste. You would make a great stir and noise, I know, but Jesus will not thus spread the gospel. You would go out and fight all the enemies of truth, and set clamor against clamor, cry against cry, but "He shall not strive." You would shout, and rage, and rave, but He shall not cry. You would advertise to the ends of the earth, but He shall not cause His voice to be heard in the street. When Mohammed commenced his enterprise he announced that Paradise was to be found beneath the shadow of swords, and numbers of brave men rushed to the battle, they swept everything before them, and stained continents with blood. They carried the name of Allah and Mohammed over Asia and Northern Africa, and seemed intent on conquering Europe, and yet the work done will not endure. The prophet and his caliphs did indeed strive, and cry, and cause their voices to be heard in the street, but Christ's system is the very reverse of that; His weapons are not carnal. Behold His battle-axe and weapons of war! Truth divinely strong, with no human force at the back of it but that of holiness and love, a gospel full of gentleness and mercy to men, proclaimed not by the silver trumpets of kings, but by the plain voices of lowly men. The Gospel seeks neither prestige nor patronage from the State, nor does it ask to be advocated by scholastic sophistry, or human eloquence. It does not even

aim at becoming predominant by force of the learning or talent of its teachers. It has neither, pomp to commend it, nor arms to enforce it. It finds its strength rather in feebleness than in power. The kingdom comes by the Holy Spirit dropping like dew on human hearts and fertilizing them with a divine life. Christ's kingdom comes not with observation, but in the stillness of the soul. All that is really the work of God is worked in the silence of the heart by that wind which blows where it will. Sweetly the Holy Spirit constrains all things by His own power, but the day of His power is not with roar of tempest, but with the noiseless fall of the dew. You, ardent spirit that you are, are all in a hurry, you are going to push the church before you, and drag the world after you. Go and do it! But if the Lord works not after your fashion be not greatly surprised; for it is written, "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street."

His purpose shall stand, and He will do all His pleasure. He will do His work all the more surely because He sets about it quietly. I always delight in a man who can afford to go about his life-work without fuss, bluster, or loud announcement. See how a master-workman lays down his tools! He arranges his plan, sketches his ideal, and then begins as he means to go on. He will do the thing in that way, depend upon it. Another fellow flings his tools about, rushes at the work without system, makes the dust fly, litters the place with chips, spoils the work, and leaves it in disgust. Our Savior works not so, He calmly, deliberately, resolutely pursues His mighty plan, and He will perform it. "He shall not fail nor be discouraged."

*Note well the spirit in which He work*s. He is gentleness itself, and that always, "A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench." You cannot work in hot haste in this spirit. Gentleness makes good and sure speed, but it cannot endure rashness and heat. We know reformers who, if they had the power, would be like bulls in a china shop; they would do a great deal in a very short time. But the world's best Friend is not given to quench and bruise. Here is a bruised reed, and it is of no use to anybody, you cannot even get music out of it, much less lean upon it, yet He does not break it. Here is a smoking flax, a wick with an offensive smell, containing very little heat, and no light, yet He does not put it out. This oft quoted text is used, as you know, in the New Testament, in reference to the Pharisees, they thought themselves strong pillars, but the Lord knew that they were only bruised reeds; they thought themselves great lights, but He knew that they were only as smoking flax, and yet He did not go out of His way to snuff them out. Even to them, though often righteously indignant, He was yet gentle, and only assailed them when they put themselves in His way, and forced a verdict from Him. The Lord Jesus was too good and great to be irritated by Pharisees. Lions do not hunt for "rats and mice, and such small deer." Great principles are laid down, which in due time destroy the evil which is not worth while to attack in detail. The smoking flaxes of error and the bruised reeds of pretence go in due season, but the gentle Lord is not in hot haste to put them out of the way. Hence we grow discouraged. But He will not fail nor be discouraged any the more because of His gentle-

ness. No, let me tell you, brethren, it is the quiet man, the meek man, who is always hard to be turned aside from his purpose. When a man is passionate, and easily excited, you have only to wait a while, and he will cool down; perhaps chill down below zero. These fiery fellows will be easily managed by the devil, or somebody else, after the flame is over. Give me a man who deliberately makes up his mind, calmly sets to work, and patiently bears all rebuffs, and I know that what He sets himself to do will be done. He will work in God's way, and will not put forth his hand to snatch a premature success at the expense of principle. He is quiet because he is sure, patient because he is strong, gentle because he is firm. The man who cannot be provoked is the man who cannot be turned aside. You cannot discourage him; he will go through with his work, even to the end; be sure of that. As you look at our blessed Master, patient and immovable amidst all the battle and the strife, you may assure yourself that He will not fail nor be discouraged. I do not admire Napoleon, except in the matter of his cool courage, but for that he was noteworthy. They always represent him in the midst of the battle with folded arms. His eagle eyes are on the conflict, but he is motionless as a statue. Every soldier in the imperial army felt that victory was sure, for the captain was so self-possessed. If he had been hurrying to and fro, rushing here, there, and everywhere, and making a great fuss about everything, they would have inferred that defeat was impending. But see him yonder! All is well. He knows what he is doing. It is all right, for he does not strive, nor cry, nor cause his voice to be heard; he is calm, for he can see that all is well. There stands the Crucified this day, upon the vantage ground, at the right hand of God, and He surveys the battle-field in calm expectancy until His enemies are made His footstool. Tender towards the weakest of the weak, and kind even to the unthankful and the evil, we may see in all this mercifulness the pledge of His success. "He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He has set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for His law."

Consideration of the statement leads us to believe it firmly.

II. I want you to give me a few minutes while I say, LET THIS TRUTH BE BELIEVED AND ENJOYED. I want you to enjoy the fruit of this truth, and to be made glad by it.

First, enjoy it by recollecting that *Jesus has finished the work for His people;* that first work wherein He brought in everlasting righteousness, and bore the penalty of human guilt, and laid the foundation whereupon should be built the temple of God. Jesus has done all things well. He persevered in His life-labor till He could say, "It is finished." From the hour when as a child He said, "Know you not that I must be about My Father's business?" all through the contradiction of sinners, and the weakness, and the poverty, and the shame in which His life was spent, you never see about our Divine Master any indication of failing or of being discouraged. We sorrowfully cry, "I am almost ready to give up," but He never spoke in that fashion, nor even thought it. He had reckoned upon all the toil and the grief. He had foreseen it all, He had taken it into His calculations, and therefore He was not surprised and downcast. He determined to go, for our sakes, to death and the grave, and to bear the

shame of our sin and the curse of our guilt, and even to be put by the Father into darkness on our account. He set His face like a flint, and like a flint His face remained to the bitter end. He never turned aside. Let us bless Him this day for His persevering love. It is not a half-finished salvation that we behold on yonder bloody tree; it is not an incomplete redemption that we see in that rising again of Jesus from the dead. When we look up to Him in His glory we know and feel that through all the agony and death He did not fail, and was not discouraged, and that He has set up a kingdom which cannot be removed forever. There let us rest with peaceful confidence.

The next reflection which I want you to enjoy is this—*He will finish the work in His believing people*. He will not fail nor be discouraged until He has completely saved you and me. If I had been my own savior I would have given up the work long ago. We meet now and then with supposed perfect people, but the most of us dare not whisper the word perfection. When I have overcome a whole body of sin, and have risen to be somewhat like my Lord, it seems to me as if a new body of death were formed about me. I kill one dragon, and lo, his body yields a crop of monsters. My evil nature seems to have coats like an onion, and when I have taken off one of them, it only lays bare another quite as offensive. Will it not be so to the end of the chapter? You may be growing better; I hope you are, but I shall be all the more hopeful that you are so if you fear that you are growing worse. If you think less and less of yourselves, it is probably true that you are growing in grace, but if you think more and more of yourselves, it is highly probable that you are growing in pride. There is a great difference between being puffed up and being built up. I can clearly see that I shall fail and be discouraged if salvation rests with me, but here is my comfort—*He* will not fail nor be discouraged. If my Lord begins with me, He will never be beaten off from His purpose. What bad stuff is our humanity! What wretched raw material for sainthood! It must be hard, treading and pounding such gritty clay, and I wonder not that both the hands and the feet of the great Worker were sorely wounded, since He had such clay to deal with. When He fashions us on the wheel, and we begin to assume somewhat of the form which He intends for us, yet we crack and spoil when we come to the oven, and all His work upon us seems lost. He has to grind us down again, to a powder, and begin with us again *de novo,* and fashion us once more. It would have been an easier work to have created new beings altogether than to take us poor fallen ones and lift us up to become sons of God. The Almighty Lord had only to have said, "Let a church be!" and a church most fair and spotless would have leaped into being, but instead thereof, He works upon us sinful ones, and undertakes to make us perfectly pure, and present us to Himself without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. What a marvel of grace! He will do it, brother. He will do it, sister. He has not grown weary of the work, neither is He discouraged by all our ill behavior. Before He began He knew all about it. Had He not been a far-seeing Christ, able to foresee all our shortcomings and backsliding, He might have been surprised into weariness, but He says, "I knew that you are obstinate," and again, "I knew that you would deal very treacherously." He foreknew all our in-

gratitude, backsliding, unbelief, and unworthiness, and therefore He will not fail nor be discouraged till His work in us is done, and we are fit for heaven.

Again, dear friends, *He will finish His work by His people*. Whatever the work is that is to be done by the church; He will not fail nor be discouraged until it is performed. I do not know whether any of you have noticed in my text a very singular thing. If you have the Revised Version, the margin will give you some rather singular information. The text might be read thus, "A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench: yet He shall not burn dimly nor be bruised." Though He deals with bruised reeds and smoking flaxes, yet He Himself is not crushed, nor does His light become a mere glimmer. To my mind, this is a deeply interesting use of words, and should not be allowed to slip. Christianity just now, they say, is a mere smoke; the old-fashioned doctrine especially burns very dim. Do not believe it; the light of Jesus shall not darken or grow less. Those souls that can see His light will tell you that His face shines still like the sun. There is a glory about Him that is undiminished and undiminishable. He does not glimmer, and He is not crushed. He is no reed; His enemies will one day find that He carries a rod of iron. He is a pillar of the house of our God; He bears up all things, for He is strong and mighty, and He cannot fail. I want you to eject at the back door every suggestion that enters your house as to the defeat of the Christ and the failure of the gospel; it is not possible, it cannot be. *You* may smoke like the flax, *you* may be broken like the reed; but He will never glimmer nor be a crushed reed, even to the end; therefore comfort one another with these words.

And to conclude, I would not have treated the text properly if I did not say that it has in it great comfort to those of you who are as yet outside of the Church of God, and are not numbered with His people. Will you kindly read the sixth and seventh verses?—"He shall not fail nor be discouraged," till He has done, what?—the Divine will, and this is a part of it, *"To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house."* "Oh," say you, "I cannot see Christ!" He has come on purpose to make you see. Turn your sightless eyeballs this way. Breathe this prayer, "You Son of David, have mercy on me." And if He says, "What will you that I should do unto you?" answer, "Lord, that I might receive my sight." In one single moment, yes, while the clock is ticking, Jesus Christ can take the scales from a blind man's eyes and let in such a flood of daylight that he shall see heaven itself. Lord, do it this morning. O, dear hearts, will you not each one cry, "Lord, do it to me"? Are you saying that, my friend? He will do it. He loves to hear a blind man's cry. Do you not remember in the New Testament how often He stood still when He heard a blind man's cry? Poor blind soul! Cry to Him now. He shall not fail nor be discouraged; He will come to you and save you.

"Ah!" says one, "but I am worse than that, I am shut up in prison." Kindly read the seventh verse again—"To bring out the prisoners from the prison." You are miserable, without hope, shut up in an iron cage. He has come who will not fail nor be discouraged; He has come on purpose

to fetch you out of the cage. Ask Him to break the bars in sunder. I see Him lay His pierced hands to that iron bar. You have filed it a long while, and it has broken the teeth of your file; you have tried to shake it in its place, but you could not stir it in the least. See what He does! He plucks bar after bar out of its place, as if they had been so many reeds, and you are free. Arise and take your liberty! The Son of God has made you free. If you have trusted Him, He has broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder; you are free, enjoy your liberty.

"Oh, but," says one, "in my case it is blindness and slavery united." Listen, then. He has come to "bring them that sit in darkness out of the prison house." You cannot see the bars that shut you in, nor even mark the limits of your narrow cell, but He has come who will give eyes to you, and light to those eyes, and liberty to your enlightened sight. Only trust Him. All things are possible to Him that believes when Christ is near. You know not, you who are now at the bottom of the sea, how high He can lift you in an instant! Out of the belly of hell, if you will cry, He can lift you in a moment, to the very heights of heaven. I say no more of my Lord than He deserves to have said of Him, no, nor yet half as much. Try Him, and see if He will fail. Try Him now, you in the worst and lowest of circumstances, you devil-bound and devil-tortured spirit. Dare to believe that Jesus can do all things for you. Leave yourself with Him. Go your way, for as you have believed so shall it be unto you. To the name of Him that will not fail nor be discouraged be glory forever and ever! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
ISAIAH 41:28, 29; 42:1-16.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—72 (SONG 1), 339, 953.

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ETERNAL LIFE WITHIN PRESENT GRASP
NO. 1946

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 6, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Lay hold on eternal life."
1 Timothy 6:12.

"Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."
1 Timothy 6:19.

"LAY hold on eternal life." Observe that this precept is preceded by another—"Fight the good fight of faith." Those who lay hold on eternal life will have to fight for it. The way of the spiritual life is no easy one; we shall have to contest every step of the way along which it leads us. "Contest the good contest of the faith" would be an accurate rendering of the passage and a contest it is against the world, the flesh, and the devil. If we live unto God we shall need to war a daily warfare, and tread down the powers of death and hell.

We fight the good fight by firm faith in the Lord our God, "This is the victory that overcomes the world, even your faith." That fight is the fight of faith, fought for the faith, and by the faith. The article should be inserted, and then the words are—"Fight the good fight of *the* faith." "Contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." "Hold fast the form of sound words." It is worth fighting for, even if we come to resistance unto blood. He who dies for the faith has laid down his life in a worthy cause, and he shall find it unto life eternal. We can only hope that we shall be able to live unto God by faith in Him, and faith in the great truths which He has revealed to be the object of our faith. When I say unto you, "Lay hold on eternal life," do not imagine that this is to be done in a dream, or accomplished without awakening your utmost energies, nor even then without that divine assistance which only faith can receive.

As my text follows the command to "fight the good fight of the faith," it teaches us that the best way of contending for the faith is, for ourselves personally to lay hold on eternal life. You cannot defend the faith by mere reasoning; victory does not come through an array of arguments which have been before used by men of learning; you must yourself possess the inward life, and exhibit the force and power of it in your daily conduct, if you would be successful in the holy war. Men who forget the divine life soon cast away the divine truth. If the life is not in us, we may make what profession of orthodoxy we like, but we shall, in all probability, before long, turn aside, like others, unto crooked ways. Well are the two

commands joined together, "Fight the good fight of the faith, lay hold on eternal life." It reminds me of our Lord's words, "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

My brethren, *there is a higher and a better life than that which is known to the most of men.* There is an animal life which all possess; there is a mental life which lifts us up above the beasts, but there is another life as much above the mental life as the mental life is above the mere animal life. The bulk of men are not aware of this, and when they are told of it they do not believe the statement. Men whom they would believe upon any other subject, honest and true men, are, nevertheless, regarded as a sort of madmen when they begin to talk about a spiritual life. How should the carnal mind discern that which is spiritual? For it can only be spiritually discerned. But there is such a life, as many of us know assuredly, and this is the life eternal, which we are bidden to lay hold upon. The life of heaven is none other than the divine life which God's grace imparts to believers here below; only it is developed and brought to perfection. There is no jerk to the believer in death; his line of life is unbroken. There is a change in his condition, for he drops this mortal body and those tendencies to sin which cling to it, but the same life is in him, in the body or out of it, unclothed or clothed upon with his house which is from heaven. His life is the same day, only here it is the dawn, but in glory it is full moon. His life is one, and flows on like a river, widening and deepening until at last it swells into a sea of joyous, perfected life in heaven.

Dream not that any of you will ever obtain eternal life hereafter unless you receive it in this life. Unless you are partakers of it now, tremble for the consequences. Where death finds you eternity will leave you. Thus I read the Word of God, let others read as they may. The only laying hold on eternal life that can be practiced by us must be commenced now; it is now brought to light by Christ Jesus in the everlasting gospel, beware how you put it from you. Grip it now; lay hold of it now and hold on to it at all hazards. Do my expressions sound strange? Let me remind you of that exhortation of Holy Scripture—"Awake, you that sleep, and arise from the dead and Christ shall give you light." Once obtained, we may rest assured that this life will not be wrenched from us in the pangs of departure from the body, nor in the Day of Judgment, nor throughout eternity. "Lay hold on eternal life." I would dwell upon this precept, entreating the aid of the Holy Spirit that I may speak of this true life in a living and true manner.

I. "Lay hold on eternal life," that is, BELIEVE IN IT. You cannot lay hold on it unless you know it to be a reality. We do not lay hold on shadows, or fictions, or fancies, there must be something substantial and tangible for us to lay hold upon. It is needful, therefore, to begin by a realizing faith.

That we may believe in this life let me say that *Holy Scripture constantly describes men unrenewed by divine grace as being dead;* they are "dead in trespasses and sins." They "shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on them." The natural life of fallen men, though it is cultivated to the highest degree, so that they become sages and philosophers, is

nevertheless nothing better than death as compared with the inner life which is called eternal. The life which you possess today, if you are ungodly men, will be taken from you. How suddenly none of us can guess! In this very house we have lately had a solemn reminder of our mortality. But if God gives to you the new life, if there is infused into you the life divine, it is eternal, a living and incorruptible seed which abides forever. It is the life of Christ in you, the sap of the undying vine flowing into the branches. Without this heavenly quickening you are dead while you live, and as the tendency of death is to corruption, you will grow more and more sinful. Men who are dead in trespasses and sins by and by proceed to a further stage, and frequently become so corrupt that society itself cries out, "Bury my dead out of my sight." Without the quickening Spirit you will remain in spiritual death forever.

The Scripture represents believers everywhere as possessing everlasting life. "He that believes in Him has everlasting life." Our death in sin has passed away when we have believed in Christ. That first look of the spiritual eye is sure proof that we possess within us the life of God, and henceforth we are so linked with Jesus that because He lives we shall live also. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory."

This life is produced by the operation of the Holy Spirit within the heart. The Lord Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Except a man is born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." It is by the new life worked of the Spirit that we enter the kingdom. The infusion of the new life is the new birth, and the entrance into the kingdom. We are created anew in Christ Jesus, or, to use another expression, we are quickened and raised from among the dead. Beloved hearers, do you know this change by personal experience? I know that many here present have passed from death unto life, and I rejoice with them in Christ Jesus.

What a difference this quickening has made to those who have received it! What a marvelous life it is! It brings with it new perceptions, new emotions, new desires. It has new senses, there are new eyes, with which we see the invisible; new ears, with which we hear the voice of God, before inaudible. Then we have a new touch, with which we lay hold on divine truth; then we have a new taste, so that we "taste and see that the Lord is good." This new life ushers us into a new world, and gives us new relationships and new privileges. The Lord Jesus, who makes all things new, sits upon the throne of the soul, and is the center of new power and rule. Do you know this life? Some of us confidently bear witness of this life, but what does this avail to dead men? There is no change that can be comparable to that which is worked in men when they are quickened by the infusion of the divine life; it is as though the dead left their graves, and much more than that. The new life is a life of reconciliation, the possessor of it is at peace with God. We are no longer enemies, but friends of God; no longer heirs of wrath, but children of the Most High. The spirit of adoption within us cries, "Abba, Father." We delight ourselves in God, who becomes the spring of all our joys, the light of our delights. This delight in God draws us nearer and nearer to him in communion and fellowship, and this fellowship with God begets a new character in us like

that of God. We are changed into the image of Him in whom we live, and with whom we have communion. The new life has about it a spirituality, an elevation, and a purity which are never found anywhere else. Under its power the man loves the things which are akin to the life of God, and he enters into sympathy with God. The spiritual life has instinctive aspirations after holiness, even as the old natural life has desires after evil. It has new pains and new passions; new joys and griefs. A heavenly fire burns upon the altar of the renewed soul which will utterly consume all that is contrary to holiness. As our God is a consuming fire, so is the life of God within the soul of man, ultimately it will destroy, by the spirit of burning, all the accumulated mass of original and acquired sinfulness. Much of smoke may blind our eyes, and make us weep during the process, but the end is beyond measure to be desired. Do we know this life? Does God live in us? And are our bodies, temples of the Holy Spirit? If not, since the Lord lives, we can never see His face till we live. He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, and only those that live unto Him in Christ Jesus can be in communion with Him.

I scarcely need to tell you that this life is one of high enjoyment. Truly it is a life of battle and of strife against the old death, but the life itself, is as peaceable as it is pure. The spiritual life has in it all the elements of heaven. There is a fullness of joy about it, inasmuch as it brings us into communion with the Ever-blessed One. On high days and holy days some of us have said, as a dear sister said to me last Thursday night, "I am happy as God Himself can make me." We can say, "God, my exceeding joy." The Lord's visits fill us with such calm content and overflowing peace that we rejoice with joy unspeakable. Those who know this happiness may truthfully be said *to live,* but those who know it not have missed "the life which is life indeed."

I want you all to get this idea into your heads—I mean all of you who have not learned this fact as yet, there is a life superior to that of common men—a life eternal, to be enjoyed now and here. I want this idea to become a practical force with you. Stephenson got the notion of a steam engine into his brain, and the steam engine soon became an actual fact with him. Palissy, the potter, had his mind full of his art, and for it he sacrificed everything till he gained his end, so may you, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, lay hold upon eternal life as being a blessed possibility, and may you be moved to seek it! There is an eternal life, there is a life of God in the soul of man, and I trust that you will each one resolve, "If it is to be had I will have it." Henceforth direct your thoughts and desires this way. When the heart begins to value this life and to sigh after it, it is not far from the kingdom. The quickening Spirit is moving upon the soul when it begins to be restless in its fallen estate, and feels a hunger after higher things. Oh that the Lord Himself would convince you this morning that the life spiritual and eternal is no fancy of enthusiasts, but a literal fact, a matter worthy of your very best consideration! In this way you will begin to "lay hold on eternal life."

II. But this is not enough; it is merely the doorstep of the subject. "Lay hold on eternal life," that is to say, POSSESS IT. Get it into your soul; be yourself alive. What am I saying? My brethren, this eternal life must

come to you before you will come to it. The Holy Spirit must breathe upon you, or you will remain in your natural death. Behold, He sends me to cry, "You dry bones, live!" and therefore I dare to speak as I have done. Apart from a divine commission I dare not speak thus to you.

How is eternal life grasped? Well, *it is laid hold of by faith in Jesus Christ*. It is a very simple thing to trust the Lord Jesus Christ, and yet it is the only way of obtaining the eternal life. Jesus says, "He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" By faith we have done with self, and all the confidences that can ever grow out of self, and we rely upon the full atonement made by the Lord Jesus, whom God has set forth to be a propitiation, it is thus that we come to live. Faith and the new life go together, and can never be divided. God grant that we may all lay hold on eternal life by laying hold of God in Christ Jesus!

This life once laid hold upon *is exercised in holy acts*. From day to day we lay hold on eternal life by exercising ourselves unto godliness in deeds of holiness and loving-kindness. Let your life be love, for love is life. Let your life be one of prayer and praise, for these are the breath of the new life. We still live the animal and mental life, but these must be the mere outer courts of our being; our innermost life must be spiritual, and be wholly consecrated to God. Henceforth let devotion be your breathing, faith your heartbeat, meditation your feeding, self-examination your washing, and holiness your walking. Let your best life be most thought of, and most exercised. Be not content to use your eyes, but practice your faith in God, neither be satisfied to exercise your limbs in moving your body, but in the power of the new life mount up with wings as eagles, run without weariness, walk without fainting. Lay hold on the eternal life by exercising it continually, and never allowing it to lie dormant.

In laying hold upon it, remember that it *is increased by growth*. Zealously grasp more and more of it. Do not be afraid of having too much spiritual life. Lay hold on it, for Christ has come not only that we may have life, but that we may have it more abundantly. My brethren, we are none of us what we might be, let us reach after something higher. "To him that has shall be given, and he shall have abundance," let us not forget this encouraging word of our Lord. You that have much life have the promise of more. We may covet earnestly this heavenly treasure. We are quickened, but perhaps our life is sickly, let us bask in the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, for He has healing beneath His wings. Let us lay hold of the fullest measures of eternal life, and go from strength to strength.

Remember that spiritual life is *enjoyed in the fullest sense in close communion with God*. "This is life eternal, to know You the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent." "Acquaint now yourself with God, and be at peace." Do not think that those gates of heaven cut us off from God, for they are never shut, and we may enjoy daily fellowship with Him who reigns within. In heaven or on earth we are in the same Father's house, yes, we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. We are not in heaven yet, but heaven may be in us. Men do not yet say of us, "He is with God," but we know that God is with us. Let us endeavor now

to enjoy the life eternal by abiding in the love of Christ. Then do we live indeed when He sups with us, and we with Him. He being raised from the dead dies no more, and we being raised with Him, live with Him, and for Him, and like Him. This Christ-life in us comes to the front and pushes back the lower order of things. We cry no longer, "What shall we eat?" or, "What shall we drink?" or, "How shall we be clothed," but we cry, "Lord, what would You have me to do?" Oh, to say with Paul, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me"!

III. Thirdly, "Lay hold on eternal life." That is, WATCH OVER IT, guard it, and protect it. Most men will preserve their lives at any cost. Unless they are drunk or mad, they will do anything for dear life, "Skin for skin, yes, all that a man has will he give for his life." *Let every believer regard the life of God within him as being his most precious possession*, more valuable by far than the natural life. It would be wise to lay down a thousand natural lives, if we had them, in order to preserve the spiritual life. It is infinitely better to suffer than to sin, to lose property than purity. God has given us this priceless jewel; let us guard it as the apple of our eye. The other day we read in the newspapers of two persons in America being found dead from "starvation and cold," and we also read that each of these persons was possessed of a considerable sum of money. We say, "What fools!" Men with sums of money about their persons, or hidden away in their rooms, and yet suffering the ills of need till they actually die of hunger—what madness is this! Are those saner who injure and dwarf their spiritual life for the sake of intellectual pride, or carnal joy, or the esteem of men? Is not the spirit infinitely more precious than the body? Brethren, if we starve at all, let us starve our bodies, and not our spirits. If anything must be stunted, let it be the baser nature. Let us not live eagerly for this world, and languidly for the world to come. Having the Divine life within us, let us not neglect to feed it and supply its needs. Here is a man that gives up attendance at religious services in the week because he hungers to increase his business, he buys brass with gold. Another quits the place where he enjoys a gospel ministry to go at a larger salary to a place where his soul will be famished, he barters fine flour for husks. Another goes into all sorts of evil company, where he knows that his character is injured and his soul imperiled, and his excuse is that it pays. O sirs, is it so after all, that this eternal life which you profess to possess is of trifling value in your eyes? Then I protest before you that you do not possess it at all. How could you thus play the fool if the Lord had made you wise unto salvation? "Lay hold on eternal life," for this is the chief good, for the sake of which you may quit inferior things. "Seek you first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." First and foremost, guard beyond everything your life, your real life, wearing ever "the armor of light," "the whole armor of God." Here is a sinking ship, and none can escape but those who can swim. One man grasps a life belt and puts it about him. Sensible man! Another carefully makes up his gold into a girdle and binds it about his waist. Madman! He is treating himself as cruel wretch-

es treat a dog that they sink into the water with a stone about him. This last individual is the portrait of professing Christians who will be rich, and thereby drown themselves in perdition and destruction. See the ninth verse of the chapter before us. Hold you first and foremost onto eternal life, and guard it with all your power, as being yourself, your all.

To that end the apostle bade Timothy *flee from those things which are detrimental to that life*. "You, O man of God, flee these things." A man that is very careful of his life will not remain in a house where fever has been rife. He looks to the drains, and all other sanitary arrangements, and if these are hopelessly bad he quits the house. No measure of cheapness or convenience will make him risk his life. Have you heard of men in their senses who will hunt for dens of fever and cholera, and wantonly enter them? On the contrary, visitors are scared from a city or district by the mere rumor of cholera or other infectious disease. You who profess to be men of God must flee these things which are injurious to purity, to truth, to godliness, to communion with God, for these are detrimental to your best life.

Then the apostle tells Timothy to *seek after everything that would promote his eternal life*. He says, "Follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness," seek after that which will exercise and develop your highest life. Frequent those hills of holiness where the atmosphere is bracing for your new-born spirit. I notice how people who are sickly will leave their homes and journey far for health. Not only will they sojourn upon the sunny shores of the Mediterranean, but they will encounter the pitiless cold of the Alps in mid-winter at St. Maritz or Davoust in the hope of restoration. If physicians would only guarantee prolongation of life, men would immigrate to inhospitable Siberia or banish themselves to Greenland's icy mountains. Men will do anything for life. Shall we not be eager to do all that we can to foster our spiritual life? Christian people, do nothing that will damage your heaven-born lives. Act in this according to the highest prudence.

God help us to lay hold on eternal life, and to that end *above all things lay hold on Christ!* We only live in Him, He is our life. To be divided from Christ is as surely death to us as it would be death to the body to be separated from the head. Make Jesus the Alpha and the Omega of your existence, for without Him you can do nothing, nor even live. "This is the true God and eternal life." To believe in Jesus is to live, to love Him much is to have life more abundantly. Cling to Jesus. Rest in the Lord, for He is our peace. Dwell on Calvary. Live between the first and second comings of the Lord. Lay hold on eternal life as a drowning man lays hold upon a mast, and will not relax his grasp. It is not a vain thing for you, for it is your life. "He that has the Son has life; and he that has not the Son of God, has not life," let us therefore steadfastly abide in the Son of God, and so know that we have eternal life.

IV. But now, fourthly (and with the same brevity) "Lay hold on eternal life," that is, FULFILL IT. Labor, that the time of your sojourning here shall be occupied, not with this poor, dying existence, but with the eternal life. *Fulfill the higher and the eternal life in every position of society*. The chapter opens with advice to servants, who then were slaves. Their

earthly life was wretched indeed, but the apostle bids them live, not for this present life, but for the eternal life. Inasmuch as they could glorify God by continuing to bear the yoke, and would not glorify Him by rising in insurrection against their masters, he bade them remain in their position until better times might come. He would have them by divine grace fulfill the relationship in which they found themselves. Christianity is the deadly foe of slavery, but it took time to destroy it, and meanwhile believing slaves were bidden to glorify God in their station. And this is what the gospel says to every one of us: Honor your station by glorifying God in it. When the famous Spartan warrior Brasidas complained that Sparta was so small a state, his mother replied to him, "My son, Sparta has fallen to your lot, and it is your duty to adorn it." Christian man, adorn the doctrine of God, your Savior, in all things. Wherever you are found endeavor in that place to live out eternal life. Be not so anxious to change your position as to use it for eternal purposes. Are you a preacher? Seek not popularity by pleasing the times, but seek honor by pleasing God. Are you a master? Seek not to use your position to please self, but to bless your day and generation. Are you a servant? Be not perpetually lamenting because of your hard work and scant wage, but let all men see what grace can do. The eternal life should gild the lower life as the sun lights up the landscape. It is a sad pity when we let the lower life rise above us! Shall the horse ride the man? Shall the bullock drive the farmer? Let the position be bettered, if it may be, but if this cannot be improved, be you yourself, improved, and a greater thing is done. Live not for time, but for eternity. What if I am a servant, yet I am the Lord's freeman, let me live as such. What if I am poor, yet I am rich towards God, and let me enjoy my portion. Lay hold on eternal life all the more eagerly if in this temporal life you have little to lay hold on.

Fulfill this better life, also, by *leaving alone those questions which would swallow up the hour*. See how Paul destroys these devourers—"Questions and strifes of words, whereof comes envy, strife, railings, evil surmising, perverse disputes of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw yourself." He speaks in the end of the epistle of "profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called." We are overdone with these canker worms at this hour. Brethren, you can go and interfere in all the controversies of the day if you like, but beware of the consequences. You can be a party politician if you like, or you can be a man of culture, loving speculation better than revelation, if you think fit, but, if you take my advice, you will do nothing of the sort, but "lay hold on eternal life." I like that expression of Mr. Wesley's preachers, when they were asked to interfere in this or that political struggle, they replied, "Our work is to win souls, and we give ourselves to it." Oh that churches, would listen to this just now! They are going in for amusements, and the church is vying with the theater. Oh that we would lay hold on eternal life, and seek the salvation of men. Eternal life in our churches would soon cast out the rubbish which is now defiling them. Jesus in the churches would purify the temple of the puppets, as once He cleansed it of the traders. We need to receive anew this conviction, that our one great business here below is

to lay hold on eternal life, first making our own calling and election sure, and then seeking to bring others to Christ. Other questions compared with this are mere debates as to tweedledum and tweedledee. Let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth until they break each other in their anger, but we strive only for the kingdom of heaven which lies not in trivial things. It is ours to lay hold upon eternal life, as for the rest the will of the Lord be done!

Further, the apostle bids us *do this so as to surmount the temptations of selfishness*. He warns us that "they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." He whose life's object is to accumulate money is not a Christian. No man can serve two masters, and if Mammon is his master Christ is not his Master. To prosper in business with the sincere desire of using everything for the honor and glory of God is laudable and proper, but to make this the end rather than the means is a horrible prostitution and debasement of our energies. To live for this world is to be dead to the world to come. The apostle bids us "lay hold on eternal life" rather than on this life; to gain riches of grace rather than riches of gold. Furthermore, he has a word for us if we become rich—for he supposes that such a thing may be, and that it did happen in his own day. He says—"Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." As the alchemist was said to transmute brass and copper into gold (though he did no such thing), so there is a real alchemy which can sublime gold and silver into everlasting treasure. These talents are not to be despised, but put out to interest for the Lord. They can be laid by where no rust does corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal; they can be traded with in a heavenly market, and turned to everlasting gains. We can use them for helping on the work of the Lord, and by distribution to the poor and needy. I would that all men at this hour abounded in almsgiving, but specially those who are followers of the loving Jesus. Regard your transactions from the standpoint of eternity. Weigh what you do, not as it may be thought of by men of the world, but as it will be judged by yourself when you behold in the heavenly country the face of Him you love. I do not want you to have to say when you come to die, "I have had large possessions, but I have been a bad steward. I have had a competence, and I have wasted my Master's goods. All I have done with my wealth was to furnish my house well, perhaps to buy expensive pictures, and to allow myself luxuries which did me more harm than good." I hope, on the contrary, you will have to say, "I am saved by grace alone, but that grace enabled me to consecrate my substance, and put it to the best uses. I can render up my stewardship without fear. I did not live for the fleeting life which is now over, but for the life everlasting." Brethren, some men

spend so much upon themselves, and so little for the Lord, that they seem to me to eat the apple and give Christ the parings; they hoard up the flour and give the Lord a little of the bran. Happy man who can carry out in life what he has dared to say in song—

"All that I am, and all I have,
Shall be forever Yours;
Whatever my duty bids me give,
My cheerful hands resign.
Yet if I might make some reserve,
And duty did not call,
I love my God with zeal so great,
That I should give Him all."

The apostle means when he says, "lay hold on eternal life," get beyond today and tomorrow, leap out of this month, and this year; live for the future, for eternity. Live not as insects that die in a day, but as men that live forever. This life is as a prick made on paper by a pin, it is too small a thing to compare with the everlasting future. The forever, whether of misery or bliss, dwarfs this life to nothing.

Once more, let me say, the apostle urges us to fulfill the higher life by sundry arguments. He says, "Whereunto you are also called." Sovereign grace has called us to eternal life; we are elect according to the foreknowledge of God from among men, in order that we may live unto Him. We are bound to make eternal life our first and last consideration, for God has called us thereto. Be not false to the call. If you are a minister or deacon you have an official call. Be not unmindful of it, but live up to your high calling. The apostle adds, "And has professed a good profession before many witnesses." Many of you did this in your baptism, when as believers you were buried with Christ "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." In that sacred act you professed that the old nature was there and then to be regarded as buried and you would live for Christ and like Christ. Oh, be not false to your solemn vows, but lay hold on eternal life, and not upon the miserable wretchedness of the passing hour! Then the apostle sets before us the great example, "I charge you in the sight of God, who quickens all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; that you keep this commandment." Christ sacrificed everything for us. He gave *Himself* for us. He laid hold on things eternal; as for anything here below, He let it slip by for our sakes. Eternity was always pressing upon the heart of Christ, for the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame. Therefore, if you are a Christian, professing to follow Christ, lay hold on eternal life, and let this fill your grasp.

V. Last of all, and I have done, *EXPECT* ETERNAL LIFE. By the two hands of faith and hope lay hold on eternal life as the great reward of the righteous. Look for the crown of life which fades not away. The time comes when this mortal life shall be utterly swallowed up in eternal life. Let me suggest to you, my beloved brothers and sisters that we *think much about the life to come*. We shall soon be there in the endless home, let us send our thoughts there like couriers in advance. Let the harps of angels ring out their music to our listening ears; let the songs of the re-

deemed awaken us to unite with them in the praises of our Lord. You will soon be there; anticipate the joy. Put on your white robes by faith, and even if a little imagination should come to the aid of faith it will do no harm. Your heads will soon wear the crown—the crown which you will delight to cast at Jesus' feet. Today you know the straits of poverty, but you are going where the streets are paved with transparent gold. You now know the aches and pains of this frail flesh, but you are going where perpetual youth and vigor shall cause all pain to flee away. You are passing quickly along the journey; think much of that journey's end. Remember the rest which remains, the perfection which is promised, the victory which is secured, the communion which is provided, the glory which is dawning. "His servants shall serve Him, and they shall see His face." Think much of your home; every good child will do so.

When you think of it and your heart grows warm with the thought; then *count it very near*. Suppose you are to live a comparatively long life, yet no human life is really long. Even to a young man, if he has to look forward to a grey old age, life is but a span. How brief it seems on looking back! When I remember the brother who died in yonder pew last Sunday, I can but feel how near heaven is to some among us. We have touched the celestial country; one brother has just leaped on shore. The other day, all of a sudden, I saw the white cliffs of Dover. The swift ship had performed the passage so rapidly that the sea had been crossed before I had reckoned on reaching land. There were the cliffs. Just ahead. Brethren, heaven is just ahead! Run to the bows! Heaven ahoy! Do not forever continue gazing at the misty shores behind you. Look ahead! You are far nearer than you think to the land of the immortal! We are within speaking distance of heaven! The Lord hears our cry, and we hear His promise—

"How near to faith's far-seeing eye
The golden gates appear!"

In this way lay hold on eternal life by confident expectancy.

Rehearse eternal life! Rehearse the service and joy of heaven! They have rehearsals of fine pieces of music; let us have a rehearsal of heaven's harmonies. The thing is practicable. We have often enjoyed rehearsals of temple music in this Tabernacle. In this pulpit I have been within half an inch of heaven, and I hope you know the same nearness in the pews. Let us begin the music here and now. Glorified saints praise the Lamb, let us praise Him; they worship the great God with transports of joy, let us worship with them. They find their all in Jesus; where else have we anything? Let our Sabbaths be each of them a foretaste of the Sabbath that shall have no end. Thus "lay hold on eternal life."

"Ah!" says one, "I wish I were already in heaven." Do not be in a hurry. The best expectancy is that which does with patience wait. Our esteemed brother, Mr. Lockhart, tells a story of one of his members, of the name of Carey—a royal name *that!* She was very sick and near to die, but she expressed a desire to live, at which he was somewhat astonished, for he knew her to be so well prepared to depart. She wished to stay here a while for a good and laudable reason. There was one thing which she could see here on earth, which she could not see in heaven, and she

wished to remain here to see it again and again. "What is that?" Mr. Lockhart asked. "It is the tear of repentance on the sinner's cheek; I want to see a great many more of those before I go home." And so do I. O my unconverted hearers, I would willingly stay out of heaven to weep for you till you weep for sin. To see tears of repentance in all your eyes would be a heaven to me.

My brethren and sisters around me would be willing to wait also, even until Jesus comes, if we could, by our waiting, help to give you repentance. Tears of repentance bedewing the cheeks of sinners are the diamonds of angels and the jewels of saints. Oh, that my beloved helpers may see many drops of the dew of repentance this morning when they come round among you, and may Jesus see them, and speak peace to repenting hearts. Poor sinners! We would stay out of heaven for such as you, even as Jesus came out of heaven for such as you. Believe on the one appointed Savior, and enter into eternal life, and we will dwell in heaven together. The Lord grant it. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 TIMOTHY 6.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—885, 852, 229.

My Sermon readers who from week to week learn what I have said to my congregation would greatly gratify me if they would take in my monthly magazine, "The Sword and the Trowel," and so learn what is done, as well as what is said. I think they will be interested by this periodical, and I feel sure that this would lead to their lending a hand in those many holy enterprises in which I am engaged for my Lord's sake. If I have helped you, dear readers, help me. Order the magazine, and see what those works are by which I try to show that the doctrine of the grace of God is not a fruitless things.—C. H. S.

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WHO IS THIS?
NO. 1947

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 13, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Behold, the Lord has proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say you to the daughter of Zion, Behold, your salvation comes; behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him. And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the Lord, and you shall be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken. Who is this that comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save."
Isaiah 62:11, 12; 63:1.

ISRAEL was often in great trouble, frequently oppressed by neighboring nations. It would not have been so if they had been faithful to Jehovah, but as a chastisement for their idolatry they were given over into the hands of adversaries. One nation, near akin to them, was very jealous of them. The Edomites, the seed of Esau, were always watching against Israel, and whenever the nation fell on evil times, and powerful kingdoms invaded them, Edom was always in alliance with the enemy, ready to profit by Israel's sorrows. Hence Edom was the typical adversary of Israel, and is, in that manner mentioned here with Bozrah, its capital city.

The Lord God of Israel often interposed to rescue His people. I need not go over the history, but any one of these appearances for the overthrow of Israel's enemies may be represented in the language now before us in the commencement of the sixty-third chapter. God coming forth in the glory of His strength overthrows Israel's enemies, and is seen in vision returning from their slaughter. I take the text as a representation of those marvelous victories which the Lord worked for His chosen people when He put forth His power on their behalf. The first verse represents the astonishment of the prophet and of the people, as they beheld the Lord glorious in power, when He had vindicated the cause of His oppressed people, and had crushed the power of their adversaries.

As in God's immediate dealings with men we usually see the Son of God most manifest, this passage may fitly represent the glorious appearings of our Lord Jesus Christ whenever He has come forth to vindicate the cause of His people and to overthrow their enemies. This vision will be astoundingly fulfilled in the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The fourteenth and nineteenth chapters of the Book of Revelation give us parallel passages to this. What astonishment there will be among the sons of men when He shall appear in His vesture dipped in blood, smiting the nations with His iron rod—yes, dashing them in pieces as potters' vessels! In those last tremendous times, when the day of vengeance shall

have arrived, then shall the winepress be trodden without the city, even the great winepress of the wrath of God. No tongue can fully tell the terrors of that day when our Lord shall say, "Ah, I will ease Me of My adversaries." While He shall give victory to the cause of peace, and purity, and truth, and righteousness, and shall save all those who believe in Him, He shall bruise Satan under His feet, and crush the powers of darkness. Then shall these words of the prophet be more fully understood, "Who is this that comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength?"

The commentators and expositors almost universally deny that this text may be used as referring to our Lord's passion. They tell us that to do so would be to wrest the Scripture from its obvious meaning, at any rate, at the best, it would be a mere accommodation of the passage. Now, I take up the gage of battle, and deny the assertion. The church by a holy instinct has referred the passage to our Lord's first as well as His second coming, and she has not been in error. The very first reference of this text is to the Lord's passion in its spiritual aspect as a battle against the enemies of our souls. I grant you that the text does not speak of our Lord as trampled upon and crushed in the winepress, and the blood which stains His garments is not said to be His own blood, but that of His foes. Such a representation might have been expected had it been the prophet's design to describe the sufferings of our Lord; he does not describe the sufferings themselves, but he does most clearly depict their grand result. If we take a deeply spiritual sight of our Lord's passion, such as a prophet would be likely to have before him in vision, we see upon His garments, as the result of His sufferings, not so much His own blood as the blood of the enemies whom in death He overthrew.

The passage is poetical; the battle is a spiritual one; the conflict is with sin and with the powers of darkness, and the conqueror returns from the fight having utterly destroyed His foes, of which His blood-dyed garments are the surest evidence. Our Lord's passion was the battle of all battles, upon which the whole campaign of His life turned, and had He not then and there vanquished all our adversaries, and had He not at the resurrection come back as one who had trampled down all His foes, then there had been no glorious appearing in the latter days. That first combat is the cause of the ultimate triumph. I look upon this sixty-third of Isaiah as the prophetic statement of the event described by Paul in Colossians 2:15—"And having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it." On the resurrection morning it would have been correct poetically to have used the language of our text. Unseen spirits, viewing our Lord after a spiritual manner, might have exclaimed as they beheld the risen Savior—

"Who is this that comes from Edom,
All His raiment stained with blood;
To the slave proclaiming freedom;
Bringing and bestowing good:
Glorious in the garb He wears,
Glorious in the spoils He bears?"

I mean so to use the passage this morning, with a consciousness that I am not accommodating it, nor taking it from its natural sense at all, but rather placing it in the light of its first great fulfillment. I have not concealed from you its relation to the second advent, when the Lord Jesus shall appear in victory, "clothed with a vesture dipped in blood," but at the same time this is a picture of salvation rather than destruction, and its hero appears as "mighty to save," in fulfillment of a divine proclamation, "Behold, your salvation comes." The scene before us describes an interposition of the Messiah, the return of the divinely appointed champion from the defeat of His enemies. As it is evidently a picture of salvation rather than of damnation, as the main feature in it is that He is mighty to save; as the great and chief element of the whole thing is that the year of His redeemed is come, and that the warrior's own arm has brought salvation to His people; I cannot for a moment question that this text is applicable to the first coming of Christ. Then He did battle with the hosts of sin and death and hell, and so vanquished them that in His resurrection He returned with the keys of death and of hell at His girdle. Then was He seen as "mighty to save." Now lend me your hearts as well as your ears, while I proceed to the great subject before us, and may the Holy Spirit grant us His gracious aid!

I. First, in my text there is A PROCLAMATION, "Behold, the Lord has proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say you to the daughter of Zion, Behold, your salvation comes; behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him. And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the Lord: and you shall be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken." The commentators as a whole can see no connection between the sixty-third chapter and the preceding part of the Book of Isaiah, but surely that connection is plain enough to the common reader. In these verses the coming of the Savior is proclaimed, and in the next chapter that coming is seen in vision, and the evangelical prophet beholds the Savior so vividly that He is startled, and inquires, "Who is this?"

Let us consider this proclamation broadly, for we have no time to dwell upon its details. I desire to apply its spiritual lessons as I go on, aiming chiefly at the comfort of those who are in soul trouble. Are any of you oppressed with a sense of sin? Do you see sin to be an enemy too powerful for you to overcome? Are you unable to escape out of the hand of the enemy? Here is a proclamation. God, the ever-gracious One, demands your attention while, as a King, He proclaims His word of mercy to the daughter of Zion, "Behold, your salvation comes."

This great announcement tells you that *there is a salvation from without.* Within your heart there is nothing that can save you; all within you is carnal, sold under sin. Out of bondage only bondage can arise. The proclamation is, "Behold, your salvation comes." It comes to you from a source beyond yourself; it does not arise from within you, for it could not do so. Salvation comes from God Himself. What a blessing, that when there was no salvation in you, nor the possibility of its coming from within, it came from above! Salvation comes not from man's will, or merit, or efforts. "Salvation is of the Lord." "It is not of him that wills, nor of him

that runs, but of God that shows mercy." O soul, if the Lord God comes to save you, Edom and Bozrah, sin and hell will soon be broken in pieces! The power of your sins, and the tyranny of your sinful habits, the cords of your companionships, the bondage of Satan himself, must speedily yield when salvation comes from the eternal throne and the mighty One of Israel hastens to the rescue.

It is a salvation which comes through a person. "Your salvation comes; behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him." The great salvation which we have to proclaim is salvation by Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Jesus of Nazareth, who died on the cross, is also the Son of the Highest. God has set Him forth to be the propitiation for sin, to be the deliverer of mankind from the bondage of evil. Behold Him, the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world! Behold Him, the beloved of the Father! Power to save unto the uttermost is laid upon Him; He is a Savior, and a great one. Remember this, and do not look to rites and ceremonies, or to creeds and doctrines, but to the person of Jesus, who is God and man. Simeon said, when he beheld our Lord as a babe, "My eyes have seen Your salvation," truly we may say the same with emphasis when we see Him in His resurrection.

This salvation leads to holiness, for the text says of those who receive the Savior, "They shall call them, The holy people." If, dear friend, you are to be saved, you are also to be sanctified; indeed, that sanctification is the essence of salvation. This will give you great joy, I know, for no man really desires salvation, rightly understanding what he desires, without meaning by it that he may be saved from the power of sin, and may no longer be in servitude to his own lusts, or to the wicked customs of the world. Sinners rejoice; the great Jehovah proclaims to you a salvation which shall so purify you that you shall be saved from your sins, and shall be called, "The holy people." Is not that the best news you have ever heard?

Further, *it is salvation by redemption;* for it is written that they shall be called, "The redeemed of the Lord." In the sacred Scriptures there is no salvation for men except by redemption. You have enslaved yourselves, and your heritage is under bond, and therefore you and it must be ransomed. Behold, your Redeemer pays your ransom. His own heart's blood Messiah pours forth, that men who have been enslaved may be set free. Redemption by substitution is the gospel. Christ stands in your stead, a sufferer because of your sins; you are set in Christ's stead, rewarded because of His righteousness, accepted because of His acceptableness with God. This is a sure and satisfactory salvation; a salvation which satisfies the conscience of man as well as the justice of God. This salvation is to you without money and without price, but it cost the Redeemer nothing less than Himself. Behold in Him the ransom paid in full, so that He bids you go free. He says, "Fear not, for I have redeemed you." Tell it out among the heathen, tell it out among the fallen, that there is salvation, salvation by a great redemption, full and free. All that lost ones have to do is joyfully accept the purchased freedom, and go forth in joy and peace.

This salvation is complete. "You shall be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken." See the beginning of it, "You shall be called, Sought out." See the end of it; you shall be called, "Not forsaken." You will not begin with God, but God will begin with you. You shall be sought out, and then you will seek Him. He seeks you even now. You shall be known as one that was sought out, a sheep that wandered, a piece of money that fell into the dust, but, behold, you are sought out till the Savior says, "Rejoice with Me; for I have found My sheep which was lost." This is the gracious beginning of salvation. But suppose the Lord found you, and then left you; you would perish after all. But it shall not be so, for the same Lord who calls you, "Sought out," also calls you, "Not forsaken." You shall never be forsaken of the grace of God, nor of the God of grace. Whatever you may be, notwithstanding your weakness and your waywardness, you shall be known in heaven by these two names—first, that you were, "sought out," and next, that you were "not forsaken." It makes my eyes sparkle with delight to think how fully those two names describe myself. I delight to sing—

"Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wandering from the fold of God;
He, to rescue me from danger,
Interposed His precious blood."

Equally true is that other word, "not forsaken." Notwithstanding all my provocations and rebellions, I believe in Him who has said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." I shall not die but live, because He is with me.

This salvation which we have to proclaim to you, then, is one that comes to you, who lie despairing, at hell's dark door. You shall be sought out according to the sovereign grace of God. Jesus comes to you when you are afraid to come to Him. You fear that if you were to commence the march to heaven you would faint by the way, but He who travels in the greatness of His strength comes that you may lean on Him. You that are smitten with faintness of heart because you know your own weakness and changeableness, you, shall be helped and sustained to the end. He that begins the good work of grace in the heart is no changeling, but He will carry it on and carry it out to the praise of the glory of His grace. Oh, this is worth proclaiming! Oh, for a silver trumpet with which to blow a blast that might awaken all who slumber! There is salvation, salvation by a glorious person, salvation unto holiness, salvation by redemption, a salvation so perfect that those who receive it shall never be forsaken. O dear hearer, do you not wish to have this salvation? Do you not desire to obtain it at once? If you do, I beg you to follow me now, while I direct you to Him who is the salvation of His people. While we fix our eyes upon the glorious person raised up and upheld by God, by whom this salvation is brought to the sons of men, I pray that you may believe in Him unto eternal life.

II. To introduce this person, I now come to consider THE QUESTION, "Who is this that comes from Edom?" The prophet beholds in vision the Captain of salvation, returning from battle, arrayed like the warriors of whom we read, "the valiant men are in scarlet." He beholds the majestic

march of this mighty Conqueror, and he cries, "Who is this?" Now when a soul first hears the proclamation of God's salvation, and then sees Jesus coming to him, he says, "Who is this?" *The question in part arises from anxiety*, as if he said, "Who is this that espouses my cause? Is He able to save? Has He really conquered my enemies?" The heart inquires, "You preach to me a Savior, but what sort of a Savior is He? Is He able? Is He willing? Is He tender? Is He strong?" What *you* are, dear friend, is easily told, for you are lost and ruined, but the great question you need to consider is—Who is *He* that comes to save you? And you may well with anxiety put the question, because it concerns your own personal welfare—"Is He such a Savior as will be able to save me?"

The question arose from anxiety, but *it also indicates ignorance*. We do not any of us know our Lord Jesus to the full yet. "Who is this?" is a question we may still put to the sacred oracle. Paul, after He had known Christ fifteen years, yet desired that He might know Him, for His love passes knowledge. If this passage refers to our Savior's resurrection, it is a remarkable truth that even His disciples did not know Him when He had arisen. Launcelot Andrewes, in a famous sermon on this text, enlarges on this point, and I am content to borrow from him. Magdalene, of all the women in the world, ought to have known Him, but she supposed Him to be the gardener. The two disciples that walked with Him to Emmaus were with Him long enough to have spied Him out, and yet in all that long walk they did not know Him. Do you wonder that they did not discern their Lord? Would it have been a marvel had they said, "Who is this? Behold Him traveling in the greatness of His strength, and yet a few hours ago we saw Him dead, and helped to lay His lifeless body in Joseph's tomb! Who is this? We saw Him stripped! They took His garments from Him on the cross, and now He is 'glorious in His apparel.' Who is this? His enemies made nothing of Him, they spat in His face, they nailed Him to the tree, but, lo, His garments are dyed with the blood of His foes, and He comes back more than conqueror! Who is this?" I do not wonder that when the person of Christ first flashes on the sinner's eye, he thinks to himself; He was once a babe at Bethlehem, a weary man before His foes, scourged, spat upon; is this, the Savior? And does He come to me and propose that I should put my trust in Him as having overthrown all my adversaries? "Who is this?"

As the sinner looks, and looks again, he cries, "Who is this?" *in delighted amazement*. Is it indeed the Son of God? Does He intervene to save me? The God whom I offended, does He stoop to fight and rout my sins? He without whom was not anything made, heaven's darling, and the delight of angels, can it be He? The soul is astonished, and scarcely believes for joy. Yet, beloved, it is even He. This same Jesus is both Lord and God. When He ascended up on high He led captivity captive, and made an open show of His vanquished foes. He nailed the handwriting of ordinances that was against us to His cross; He broke the head of the serpent, and destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. How could He be less than God? It is He, and none other than He, God over all, blessed forever, who took upon Himself the form of a servant,

and was made in the likeness of men, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross. It is He whom God has highly exalted, and given Him a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow. No wonder that the soul inquires, "Who is this?"

I think *the question is asked, also, by way of adoration.* Such a question is elsewhere so used. Here is an instance—"Who is a God like unto You, that pardons iniquity, and passes by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage?" So that, as the soul begins to see Jesus, its anxiety is removed by knowledge, and is replaced by an astonishment which ripens into worship. Adoringly the spirit cries, "Who is this?" What a Savior I have! How could it have come about that He should die for me? What a Savior is He in His death! What a Savior in His rising again! What a Savior in His ascension up to heaven! What a Savior in His enthronement! What a Savior in His glorious advent, when He shall come to gather together His own! Who is this? We are lost in wonder as we bow before the infinite majesty of the Son of God, and adore Him as God, our Savior, forever and ever.

It appears from the question that the person asking it knows from where the Conqueror came, for it is written, "Who is this that comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?" Yes, our Redeemer has returned from death, as said the Psalmist, "You will not leave My soul in hell, neither will You suffer Your Holy One to see corruption." He came again from the land of the enemy. He died and descended into the regions of the dead, but He loosed the bands of death, for He could not be held by them. He went forth to fight with all the adversaries of our souls, even with all the powers of darkness. It was a terrible battle. How thick and fast the shafts flew at the commencement of the fight! Our hero soon knew the garments rolled in blood, for He became covered with a bloody sweat. He flinched not from the horrible conflict, although His body had become one bleeding wound. How sharp were the swords that wounded Him, when His friends proved cowards, and one of them betrayed Him! How terrible were the blades that sheathed themselves in His body and mind! They pierced His hands and His feet; they laid open His very heart. His head was bleeding with the thorns, and His back with the knotted scourges, but He ceased not to grapple with the evil powers. He said, "This is your hour," and full well He found it so. He had in the midst of the fight to groan as well as sweat, that cry forced from Him, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" But quickly followed the victorious shout of "It is finished," and there and then He hurled His tremendous adversary headlong, crushed his head, and left him fallen, no more to rise!—

"'Tis finished,' said His dying breath,
And shook the gates of hell."

As on this Resurrection day we see our Lord come back to us, we perceive His garments sprinkled with the blood of all who fought against us. I beseech you to lay hold of this, and trust my blessed Lord, for He has fought with all the enemies of our souls, and He has returned from the enemy's country, leading captivity captive. We may look at Him this day right trustfully, for His fight is over, and His enemies are crushed, as

grapes in the winepress. We not only trust our Lord, but we worship Him this day as King of Kings and Lord of lords—

"Bruised is the serpent's head,
Hell is vanquished, death is dead,
And to Christ gone up on high,
Captive is captivity. Alleluia!"

Next notice *that the prophet in vision observes the color of the Conqueror's garments,* "Who is this that comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?" Red is not Christ's color, hence the question arises, "Why are You red in Your apparel?" Our Beloved's garments are whiter than any fuller can make them. The glory of His purity is such that we say to ourselves, "Red, why, that is the color of Edom, the adversary! Red; that is the color of the earth of our manhood! Red is the color of our scarlet sins." Why is He red? Brethren, although the text treats of the blood of His adversaries, yet I would have you devoutly think of our Lord literally as shedding His own blood, for His victory was thus accomplished. The text sets forth the result of that blood-shedding in the overthrow of His enemies and ours, but we cannot separate the effect from the cause. As a matter of fact, when our Lord's own blood was shed, sin and death and hell were trodden down and destroyed as grapes in the winepress. When He was suffering, He was then smiting down His enemies. By the shedding of His own blood He was shedding the blood of His foes. The life of the powers of darkness was taken away by His death. When I see Jesus coming back literally covered with His own blood, I discern Him spiritually as encrimsoned with the slaughter of evil and its abettors. Glory be to His name! I shall never cease to look upon my Lord in the red colors as in the prime of His beauty. The blood-red colors are the colors of victory. He never looks as lovely as when He appears as "a Lamb that has been slain." I remember how Rutherford seems to glow and burn when in his prose poetry he talks of "the bonnie red man." That crimson vest is His most royal garment. He has taken away all our transgressions and iniquities, and covered all our scarlet sins, and we see the blood of them in His blood. Glory be to the bleeding Christ, I say! If there is one hallelujah louder than any other, let it be unto Him who wears the vesture dipped in blood. His own blood is the token and proof that the blood of all His spiritual foes has been shed. Our warfare is accomplished and our sin is pardoned. Behold the colors of atonement, for they are the ensigns of eternal victory—

"Why that blood His raiment staining?
'Tis the blood of many slain;
Of His foes there's none remaining,
None the contest to maintain;
Fallen they are no more to rise,
All their glory prostrate lies."

But yet the question comes from one who perceives that the Conqueror is royally arrayed. "This that is glorious in His apparel." O, dear hearers, the Jesus we have to preach to you is no lowly Savior; He is clothed with glory and honor because of the suffering of death. He wears today a greater splendor than adorned the sons of Aaron; our great High Priest has put on all His jewels. He wears also the majesty of His kingship, "On

His head are many crowns." He is this day arrayed in light and glory. His majesty is too bright for mortal eyes to gaze upon. When the beloved John beheld Him he fell at His feet as dead. He is "glorious in His apparel."

The question ends with "traveling in the greatness of His strength." He did not come back from slaughtering our enemies feeble and wounded, but He returned in majestic march, like a victor who would have all men know that his force is irresistible. The earth shook beneath our Lord's feet on the resurrection morning, for "there was a great earthquake." The Roman guards became as dead men at His appearing. Beloved, the Lord Jesus Christ is no petty, puny Savior. He is traveling to meet poor sinners, but He is traveling in the greatness of His strength. "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth" He said. As He travels through the nations it is as a strong man against whom none can stand, mighty to rescue every soul that puts its trust in Him.

There is the question. I leave it with you, praying that every soul here that is oppressed by the powers of hell, may ask the question, "Who is this that comes from Edom?"

III. Thirdly, let us consider THE ANSWER. Upon this I must be brief.

No one can answer for Jesus; *He must speak for Himself*. Like the sun, He can only be seen by His own light. He is His own interpreter. Not even the angels could explain the Savior; they get no further than desiring to look into the things which are in Him. He Himself answers the question, "Who is this?" His personality comes out, "I, the Lord Jesus. It is none other than Myself who has come forth to overthrow the adversary." The speaker was too modest to ask the mighty Savior who He was, but that Savior was not too lofty to give Him the information which was desired. O poor heart! Jesus will show Himself to you if you desire to know Him. He will come near to you when you dare not come near to Him. In His own light you will see Him, and if you are bewildered and befogged, but yet truly anxious, He will manifest Himself to you in His great love, and say to you, "It is I; be not afraid."

The answer which our Lord gives is twofold. He describes Himself first as a *speaker,* "I that speak in righteousness." Is He not the Word? Every word that Christ speaks is true; He speaks not in falsehood, but in righteousness. The gospel which He proclaims is a just and righteous one, meeting both the claims of God and the demands of conscience. O soul, if you will listen to Jesus you shall hear that from Him which you could never hear from any other lips! "Never man spoke like this man." He will speak of God's holiness, and yet He will speak to your comfort. He will reveal God's justice, and yet God's love to you. Oh, hear you what the Christ has to say, and believe every word of it without a quibble, for therein lies salvation. "Hear, and your soul shall live."

Our Lord also describes Himself as *a Savior,* "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." Now, observe that the word "mighty" is joined with His saving, and not with His destroying. Although He can crush His foes as easily as a man can crush with His feet the berries of the grape, the prophet does not speak of Him as "mighty to tread down His ene-

mies." He will prove Himself thus mighty in that day of vengeance which is in His heart, but just now He reveals Himself in the year of His redeemed as "mighty to save." Rejoice in this, O my hearers! The Lord Jesus Christ is a Savior, and He is grand in that capacity. Nothing is beyond His power in the line of salvation. He says, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." There is no manner of sin which He cannot forgive, there is no sort of hardness of heart which He cannot remove; there are no spiritual difficulties which He cannot surmount. "His reward is with Him, and His work before Him." "He shall not fail, nor be discouraged." Oh that He stood here this morning instead of me! I do but prattle concerning Him, and yet it is the best that I can do. If you use the eyes of faith, my Lord, who has overcome the foes of His redeemed, stands before you today, and if you ask who He is, He proclaims Himself, for He would have you know Himself. To know Jesus is the first, the chief, the highest piece of human knowledge. He is your teacher, and this is your lesson. He answers the question of the prophetic catechism, and when it is asked, "Who is this?" He replies, "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." Fall at His feet, and love and adore Him this day, and then your heaven shall begin below.

Thus have we gone through the text in a very poor and hurried way, for I want just a few minutes to make practical use of the subject before I send you away.

May the Holy Spirit now apply the truth with power! Poor troubled one! Your sins are many, and they grievously oppress you. You see no hope of escape from the justice of God, or from the power of evil within your nature. Listen to the proclamation, as I dwell upon it again. "Behold, your salvation comes." Jesus can save you, for He is "mighty to save"!

He can save *you,* for He has saved others like you. He has these many years kept His hands at this work. Your case will not perplex Him; He is at home at the business of saving sinners. The chief of sinners was saved long ago, and if the chief, then you, although you may be the next greatest, can be saved. Jesus has never been put to a nonplus yet. He that conquered Edom and Bozrah, He that led captivity captive and vanquished all the hosts of hell shall never be defeated. Do not tell me that His arm is shortened, that He cannot save. He can save *you,* you who now desire to be made holy. You with the hard heart, who desire to have it softened, He can do the mighty deed. He can raise the spiritually dead and even restore those who have become corrupt. He can do it, though nobody else can.

He can overthrow all your enemies. Satan has you now in his grasp, and you are not able to war with him. One evil passion or another binds you. You seem watched like Peter in prison, and bound even as he was, but He who loosed Peter can release you. Jesus can say to the prisoners, "Go forth," and forth they shall go. There is no temptation, no sin, no infernal influence, from which He cannot rescue His chosen. He is so mighty to save that He can deliver every soul that trusts in Him, however great its extremity. Leave your enemies to Jesus; they baffle you, but He

can rout them. His garment is already dyed with their blood, therefore be not afraid!

He can do this alone. If you trust Jesus, and none but Jesus, you have an all-sufficient salvation. "I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with Me." "I looked, and there was none to help; I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore My own arm brought salvation unto me." Poor sinner! Hang on to Jesus and His one salvation. If you have no other sort of hope, if you can see no good thing in yourself, if your prayers die on your lips, if you cannot weep, if you cannot feel, if you have not even so much as a jot of anything that is commendable about you, still cling to Jesus, to Jesus only. The great battle of salvation He fought single-handed and He can save you single-handed. He is exalted to be a Prince and a Savior, and He will not stain His princedom by failing in salvation. I fear I have never done more in my own salvation than rather to hinder than help my Lord, and yet I know that though I believe not, He abides faithful. He will stand to His office, even though I fail in my pledges. When He saves, He does truly save. He is master of the business. He put Himself apprentice to it when He was here below, and set to work to heal all manner of sickness, and He never failed even then, but now that He has gone through death and hell for us, and made Himself perfect through suffering, He is a master workman, and He can save in the teeth of all opposition. Do but trust Him, and you shall find it so.

Let me add to this, dear troubled friend, that He is able to save you *now*. Do you notice that verse, "The day of vengeance is in My heart, and the year of My redeemed is come"? I leaped with joy at those words as I studied them. Yes, I thought, I will tell these sinners that the day of vengeance is in God's heart, and I will warn them that if they do not turn to Him He will destroy them. Ah! But that vengeance is as yet in His heart, He lets it lie there in His long-suffering patience. But *the year of His redeemed is come,* it is present, it is now. It is not, "Today will I destroy you" but, "Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation." Today is the day of salvation, "the year of My redeemed is come." We speak of our dates as *"Anno Domini,"* and so they are; these days are in the year of our Lord. We live in the years of our Redeemer, years of His redeemed, years of pardoning love. Oh, that *you* would come now that your year is come! Jesus is able to save you at this hour. This morning in February, this cold and bitter morning, when the east wind searches you to the very marrow, the Lord Jesus Christ can warm your hearts with a summer tide of love. It was such a morning as this when I first found my Lord; when the snowflakes fell so abundantly, each one seemed to say that Jesus had made me whiter than snow. Even this cruel east wind will breathe comfort to you if you will look to my Lord dressed in His vesture dipped in blood. Behold the glorious apparel of His love and righteousness. He comes back from death and hell triumphant, so that you may never come under their yoke. He proclaims life to you because your foes are dead. He washes your garments white because His are dyed with blood. You shall live forever because He died, and you

shall triumph because He has won the battle on your behalf. You shall go forth conquering and to conquer because He conquers.

Jesus has done the work already. There is nothing to be endured by Him in order to save you from your sins; the expiation is made, the redemption is paid, the righteousness is worked out. Of this salvation our Lord said, at the moment when He won the victory, "It is finished," and it is finished forever. Without seam, and woven from the top throughout, was the garb the Savior's body wore, and now He presents a garment like to it to every naked sinner who trusts Him, and He says, "Put it on." It is freely given though it was dearly worked. It cost our Lord His life to weave it, His blood to dye it, but to the sinner it is a free gift, and if he will but have it, he also shall be glorious in his apparel, and Jesus will strengthen him till he also shall travel in the greatness of His strength. Oh that you would believe in Jesus Christ this morning!

It is a sad wonder that men do not believe in Jesus. It is a mournful wonder that you, who have been hearing the gospel for so many years, do not believe in Him. What are you doing? Why, if somebody were to preach to you any other gospel than what I have delivered, you would grow angry, you would not hear it. Why is it that you delight to hear the gospel, and yet will not accept it to your own salvation? Many of you have a great admiration of my Lord, after a fashion, and you love to hear me praise Him, but what is it to you? What can He be to you unless you trust Him? "Oh, but I don't feel my sins." Have I not told you many times that salvation does not lie in your feelings? "Oh, but I am not—" Have I not told you over and over again that it is not what *you* are, but what Jesus is? Listen to me. Cease from self, and come to Jesus just as you are. Let us finish by each one of us singing this verse from the heart, and all of us together with our tongues—

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Christ's kind arms I fall:
He is my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus and my all."

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
ISAIAH 62.; 63:1-14.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—317, 315, 563.

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THE HEDGE OF THORNS AND THE PLAIN WAY
NO. 1948

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

"The way of the slothful man is as a hedge of thorns: but the way of the righteous is made plain."
Proverbs 15:19.

YOU must have noticed how frequently godly people almost wear out their Bibles in certain places. The Psalms, the Gospel of John, and parts of the Epistles, are favorite portions, and are thumbed in many an old believer's Bible till the fact is very noticeable. There are certain sheep-tracks up the slopes of Scripture which are much more trodden than the rest of the holy fields. I suppose it has always been so, and I will not quarrel with the instincts of the saints.

I do, however, regret that any portion of Holy Writ should be neglected. There are Bible readers who keep clear of the historical parts of Scripture, and also greatly avoid the Book of Proverbs; indeed, they almost wonder how Proverbs and Ecclesiastes came to be a part of the Word of God. Very singular it must seem to them that this Book of Proverbs should be placed so very near to Solomon's Song—that sacred canticle, which is the center and climax of inspired Scripture, a book which I do not hesitate to call "the holy of holies"—the innermost sanctuary of divine love. Concerning that deeply mystical, mysterious, and rapturous canticle, it would be impossible to speak too highly, it is, indeed, the Song of songs—a song, however, which none can sing but such as are made songsters by God Himself, by partaking of the inspiration, not of the fountain which gushed from Mount Parnassus, but of that fountain of every blessing which flows from the mount of everlasting love. It is certainly remarkable that, hard by such a deeply-spiritual Book there should be placed the Book of Proverbs, which mainly consists of instructions for this life. Doubtless there is a meaning in that arrangement. The Lord would not have the highest spirituality divorced from common sense. God has made us body and soul, and He would have us serve Him with both. There is a part of us that is material, and there is a part that is spiritual, and both need guidance such as the Holy Spirit affords us in the inspired Book. The Lord Jesus Christ has redeemed us, not as to our soul alone, or our spirit alone, but as to our body also, and He would have us recognize this fact.

While we are in the world we are not to regard ourselves as if we were pure spirits, having nothing to do with earth, but we are to look to our

lower nature, and our earthly surroundings, and order all these in accordance with the will of the Lord. It is not enough that our hearts are cleansed; our bodies are to be washed with pure water. We are in the world and we must eat, and drink, and work, and trade, even as other men do, and all this must be as much brought under the rule of wisdom as our higher nature and its actions. The Christian's faith does not come to him merely to create holy raptures and heavenly emotions, but it comes to help him in the business of every day.

Grace is intended to sanctify all the relations of life. There is no necessity that a man who is wise unto salvation should in other respects be a fool, but the reverse should be constantly seen; sanctity should beget sagacity, and purity should be the mother of prudence. We are to make the common things of this world sacred to God, so that the bells of the horses may be as truly "Holiness unto the Lord" as was the miter of the consecrated priest who served at the altar.

I pray my friends not to be so spiritual that they cannot do a good day's work, or give full measure, or sell honest wares. To my disgust I have known persons professing to have reached perfect purity who have done very dirty things. I have been suspicious of superfine spirituality since I knew one who took no interest in the affairs of this world, and yet speculated till he lost thousands of other people's money. Do not get to be so heavenly-minded that you cannot put up with the little vexations of the family, for we have heard of people of whom it was said that the sooner they went to heaven the better, for they were too disagreeable to live with below.

As the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ is meant for this world as well as for worlds to come, so the volume of Holy Scripture is fitly made to contain Proverbs as well as Psalms. I have been told, but I do not know how true it is, that Scotland owes very much of its practical shrewdness to the fact that the Book of Proverbs used to be printed in a small form, and was one of the first books read by all the children at the public schools. I can only say that, if it were so, it showed much wisdom on the part of those who made the arrangement, and I have no doubt that if it were so still, it would be a clear gain to the rising generation. It is a right thing to have practical teaching in connection with sound doctrine, and common sense in conjunction with deep spirituality. Let the Gospels, and Psalms, and Prophets, and Epistles be your bread, and let the Book of Proverbs be your salt. Neglect neither the one nor the other.

I preach at this time from the word of Solomon which is now before us, and I shall not withhold from you its everyday meaning, but I shall also exhibit its higher lights, for I believe that there is not a moral truth in the Book of Proverbs which does not also wear a spiritual aspect. I shall try to show you that our text, while it has its temporal bearings which we will not conceal, has beyond these its higher and spiritual teachings, with which we will conclude.

I. First, then, take THE TEXT IN ITS TEMPORAL BEARINGS. It runs thus—"The way of the slothful man is as a hedge of thorns: but the way of the righteous is made plain."

Note then, first of all, that *a slothful man is the opposite of a righteous man*. In the text they are set in opposition. "The way of the slothful man" is placed in contrast, not with the way of the diligent man, but with "the way of the righteous," as if to show that the slothful man is the very opposite of being a righteous man. A sluggard is not a righteous man, and he cannot be, he misses a main part of rightness. It is very seldom that a sluggard is honest, he owes at least more labor to the world than he pays. He is guilty of sins of omission, for he fails in obedience to one of the laws laid upon manhood since the fall, "In the sweat of your face shall you eat bread." He aspires to eat his bread without earning it, he would, if he could, eat bread for nothing, or eat the bread for which others toil, and this verges upon coveting and stealing, and generally leads up to one or both of these sins. The sluggard evades the common law of society, and equally does he offend against the rule which our apostle promulgated in the church, "If any would not work, neither should he eat." The sluggard is not righteous, for he does not render to God according to the strength lent to him, nor to man according to the work assigned him. A slothful man is a soldier who would let others fight the battle of life while he lies under the baggage wagon asleep, until rations are served out. He is a farmer who only farms his own strength, and would eat the grapes while others trim the vines. He would, if possible, be carried on his bed into the kingdom of heaven; he is much too great a lover of ease to go on pilgrimage over rough and weary ways. If the kingdom of heaven suffers violence from others, it will never suffer violence from him. He is too idle to be persistent, too slothful to be earnest.

He cannot be a righteous man, for slothfulness leads to the neglect of duty in many ways, and very soon it leads to lying about those neglects of duty, and no liar can have a portion in heaven. Idleness is selfishness, and this is not consistent with the love of our neighbor, nor with any high degree of virtue. Every good thing withers in the drought of idleness. In fact, all kinds of vices are comprehended in the one vice of sloth, and if you tell me that a man is a sluggard, I have his whole character before me in the blackest of letters. His fallow fields are well adapted for evil seed, and no doubt, Satan will raise a fine crop of weeds in every corner of his life. What this world would have been if we had all been gentlemen, with nothing to do, I cannot tell. The millions that have to work are largely kept out of mischief by their toil, and although crimes are abundant enough in our great city as it is, what would they have been if there had not been daily tasks to keep men from excessive indulgence in drink, and other forms of evil? Without labor the ale-houses would have been crammed every one of the twenty-four hours, folly would have held unbroken carnival, and licentiousness would have burst all bounds. Among the sanitary and salutary regulations of the moral universe there is none much better than this—that men must work. He who does not work is not a righteous man, for he is out of accord with that which makes for righteousness. In some form or other, with either brain or hands, by working or enduring, we share the common labors of the race appointed them of heaven, and if we are not doing so, we are not righteous. I call to

your remembrance the remarkable words of the Savior, "You wicked and slothful servant." Those two adjectives are nearly related—"wicked and slothful." Might not our Lord have said "slothful" alone? He might, but He knew how much of wickedness goes with sloth, and is inherent in it, and therefore, He branded it with the condemning word.

Our second observation is this; *if we avoid sloth we have not done enough, we must also be righteous*. If it had been sufficient to shake off idleness, and become industrious, the text would have run thus, "The way of the slothful is as a hedge of thorns: but the way of *the diligent is made plain."* Ah, dear friends! A man may be very industrious, and energetic, and earnest, but if it is in a wrong cause, he might have been less mischievous had he been slothful. To be exhibiting industry by doing a great deal of mischief is not commendable. To be actively disseminating your opinions, if those opinions are false, is to be doing grievous harm. To rise up early, and sit up late, and to eat the bread of carefulness, merely for selfish ends, is not to secure a blessing. There is a diligence which is produced by greed, or ambition, and this is no better than the selfishness which is the cause of it. Many wear themselves to skin and bone to gather that which is not bread, to hoard up that which can never satisfy them. We are to become the servants of righteousness when we escape from the servitude of sloth. "Not slothful in business" is very well, but to complete the change we must be gracious in our diligence, being "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." We must do that which is right, and kind, and holy, and so we must live to the honor and glory of Him to whom we owe all things.

Young men who are beginning life, it is well that you should be urged to be diligent, but it is better that you should be led to be righteous! Worldlings would have you industrious, but saints would have you righteous. You can be made righteous in state through faith in Jesus Christ and righteous in character through the renewal of your heart by the Holy Spirit. Mind this.

The text leads us to make a third observation, which repeats its very words, namely, that *a slothful man's way is like a hedge of thorns*. Here we enlarge. The idler's way is *not a desirable way*. Unthinking persons suppose that the sluggard lives a happy life, and travels an easy road. It is not so. Many believe in "the sweet doing of nothing," but it is a sheer fiction. Surface appearances are not the truth, though it may seem that idleness is rest, it is not so; though sloth promises ease, it cheats its votaries. Of all unrest there is none more wearisome than that of having nothing whatever to do. The severest toil is far more endurable than utter sloth. I have heard of retired business men going back to the counter from absolute weariness of idleness. It is far more desirable to be righteous than it is to be at ease. Labor of a holy sort has ten thousand times more joy in it than purposeless leisure.

The way of the sluggard is also *difficult*. The idle man walks a hard road in his own apprehension; he has to break through thorns. Every molehill is a mountain to him; every straw is a stumbling block. There is a lion in the way; he will be slain in the streets. You look out, and can

only see the smallest possible dog, but he is sure that it is a roaring lion, and he must stay at home, and go to bed. He cannot plow by reason of the cold. The clods are frozen, he is sure, they are hard as iron and will break the plow. If you look out of doors, you will see the neighbors' teams going, but he has another excuse if you beat him out of the one he has given you. The difficulties that he sees are created in his own mind by his natural sluggishness, but he has such a creative faculty that he has always twenty arguments against exerting himself once. The first thing such persons do in the morning, when they open their window, is to look out, and see a difficulty. Whenever they are sent about a task, or on an errand, they straightway begin to consider the great labor that will be involved in it, the imminent risk that will surely come of it, and the great advantages of leaving it undone. To the slothful man, his way, when he gets so far as having a way at all, always appears to be as hard to pursue as a hedge of thorns, and mark you, if he continues slothful, it will actually become a hedge of thorns. Difficulties imagined are apt to arrive. Duty neglected today will have to be done some time or other, and the arrears of neglected service are grim debts. The slothful is like the spendthrift who does not reckon what he spends, but contents himself with crying, "Put it down." The score increases, and again he cries, "Put it down." He resolves to do better, and then gives a bill, or renews a former bill, and dreams that the debt is paid. But the debt remains, accumulates, and follows the man's track. Old debts pursue a man. Like wolves which hunt the fleeing traveler across the snowy plains of Russia, neglects and obligations follow a man with swift and sure pursuit, and there is no way of escape. It is the past which makes the present and the future so difficult. The sluggard's way appears to lie, not only over a thorny brake, but over a compacted mass of thorns, of set purpose planted for a hedge. Dear friends, do not put off till tomorrow that which can be done today. Keep the road clear of arrears. Do the day's work in the day. I am persuaded that, in your ordinary business work, some of you Christian people need to be warned against shiftless delay. Believe me, there is a piety in keeping your work well in hand, in having the house right, the business in order, the daily task well done. True religion seeks to honor God in all the transactions of life, and this cannot be done by idling, by postponement, and by allowing work to run behind. No sluggard can be a saint; no sluggard can glorify God. Life grows hard and unenviable to men who try to make it easy. A man who neglects his duty, whether he is a carpenter, a bricklayer, a clerk, a minister, or an archbishop, will find his way increase in difficulty until it becomes almost impassable.

Before long, the sluggard's course becomes *a very painful way,* for a way of thorns tears a man's garments, and wounds his flesh, and you cannot be neglectful of the ordinary duties of life without by and by suffering for it. Loss of character, loss of position, and actual need, all come from idleness.

Continue in that course and you will find your way become a hedge of thorns in a further sense, for *it will be blocked up altogether*. You will be

unable to go on at all. You took it easy once, but what will you do now? You neglected duty, you refrained to do the service of the day, and at last your sins have found you out; nobody will have you, and you are a burden to yourself. Now have you found a hedge of thorns in your way. This is clear enough, and it has been seen by most of us in actual life in several cases.

The other truth of the text is equally clear—*a righteous man's way becomes plain,* "The way of the righteous is made plain." When a man, by the Holy Spirit's gracious influence upon him, is made thoroughly truthful, thoroughly honest, so that he walks in his integrity, it is most pleasant to note how soon, by some means or other, his way opens up before him. We have seen good men in great straits and adversities; their own conscientiousness may appear to narrow their course, and of course the depressions of business fall upon righteous men as much as upon the unrighteous, but in the long run you will see that, if a man keeps straight, and walks in strict integrity and faith, the Lord will make darkness light before him, and crooked things straight. Ask the aged man of God, whose life has been full of grace and truth, and he will tell you that, though he was brought low, the Lord has helped him. He will interest you with his account of the struggles of his younger days, and how, when he had his large family of little children about him, he was tempted to do a questionable act, but was enabled to hold fast his integrity, and found in his steadfastness the way to success. Those stories, which some of us heard as boys at our father's fireside, or which our grandfathers told us before they were taken up to heaven, are, to some of us, heirlooms, treasured as tokens for good, and proofs of the faithfulness of God. We know that integrity and uprightness are the best preservatives. If we will not put forth our hand unto iniquity even during the worst pinch, we shall come forth as the light. But if in trouble you try to get out of it by indirect means, you will involve yourself in tenfold difficulty. It is far better to be poor than dishonest, yes, it is better to die than to dishonor our profession. It is God's business to provide for us, and He will do it. We are not to be too fast in providing for ourselves. We must not command the stones to be made bread, by forestalling the Lord in that which is His own peculiar province. Remember our Lord's answer to the tempter, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." We shall dwell in the land, and verily we shall be fed, but how this is to be accomplished is the Lord's business rather than ours. "The way of the righteous is made plain." Only wait and watch, and you shall see the salvation of God.

Thus I have set before you the moral or temporal meaning of the text, commending it earnestly to the consideration of all, especially of men of business, begging them to see to it that there is no neglect about any part of their calling, for a Christian's business ought to be the best done of any man's in the world.

Look to it also that there is no swerving from righteousness in anything that you do, for the safest and surest road is the way of truth, the path of righteousness. If you keep close to God, and make Him your

guide even unto death, you will have no need to trouble yourself about your way—the Lord will make it plain.

II. Now I come to THE SPIRITUAL TEACHING OF THE TEXT, and may the Lord anoint our eyes by His Holy Spirit, that we may see!

Take the first side of the text, *the spiritual sluggard; what is said of him?* His way is "as a hedge of thorns." I gather from the opposition of the text that the spiritual sluggard's way is the way of unbelief, because the opposite of his way is the way of the righteous. Now, the way of the righteous is the way of faith—"We walk by faith." Therefore the spiritual sluggard's way is the way of unbelief.

I will describe him. He has a way, for he is not altogether dead to religious matters. He hears sermons, and attends the house of God. He sometimes reads his Bible, and he often has a correct notion of what the gospel is. But he fails in faith, he has not faith enough in the truth of the things which he professes to believe ever be affected by them in his daily life, or in his truest feelings. If he did really believe these things to be true, his life would not be slothful. When a man believes that there is a hell, he labors to escape from it. When a man verily believes that there is a heaven, unless he is demented, he has an ambition to partake in its glories. When a man really and truly accepts the fact of his having sinned against a righteous God, and believes in the evil of sin, he pines to be cleansed from sin. When he heartily believes in the power of the precious blood of Christ to make him clean, he seeks to be washed therein, that he may be pure before the sight of God. The spiritual sluggard does not believe after that practical fashion. He says, "It is true," but he acts as if it were false. He is too much a sluggard to become an infidel; he is too lethargic to argue against the truth which condemns him; he nods assent, it is the nod of sleep. We might have more hope for him if he would begin to contradict. If he would think enough of the truth to endeavor to justify his unbelief of it, we might hope that he had opened one of his eyes, but while he continues to cry "Yes; oh, yes," and to do all that is proper, but nothing that is decided and earnest, we have small hope for him. He prays at times, but it is a dreamy devotion. He has not faith enough in prayer to continue in it till he is heard in heaven. He listens to the preaching of the gospel, but as a sluggard he lets what is said go in one ear, and out the other; he grasps nothing, feels nothing, retains nothing. He is often on the verge of some good and great thing, but it ends in smoke. He has resolved in real earnest to look to his eternal state, and seek the Lord with all his might, but his resolves are frail as bubbles. If you were to tell him that in seven years' time he would be just as dull, stupid, and sinful as he now is, he would angrily deny it, but such will be the case. He intends only to delay a little longer, and then he is going to entertain the great question in the most serious manner. If I recollect rightly, he was in the same mind twenty years ago, and I fear he will continue in the same mind when death comes upon the scene, and ends all his dreaming. I fear that of him it will be true, "in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments." He will not open his eyes till then.

I must not forget that this sluggard did once make an effort. He gave up one of his vices, that is to say, he almost did so, but he soon returned to it. He was a drunk, and he went the length of not drinking quite so much. Perhaps he even went so far as not drinking at all, which was a good thing for him, but then he made up for his self-denial in that direction by indulgence in another way. If you cannot sink a ship by a hole in one place, you can do so by boring a hole in another; while some go down to perdition by one sin, others destroy themselves by another. The sluggard spent all his strength in tinkering one breakage, and he had no energy left to mend a second flaw. He was so much asleep that he murmured in his dream, "Well done! I am a splendid fellow." Even when a friend shook him, he yawned, and turned over, and went to sleep again. He was almost awakened, but he preferred to doze till a more convenient season. He heard a sermon the other day upon "One thing you lack," and he cried, "That's me!" and slumbered again. He heard a discourse upon judgment to come, and he at once admitted the absolute need of being prepared for death and judgment, but he did not prepare, and in all probability he will die in his sins. The man has no resolution, no soul for action, no spirit for anything good. He is given up to slumber; he pleads always for a little more folding of the arms to sleep. He will, he will; he assures you that he will wake up, but he never does. Oh, that by the grace of God this dreamer could be awakened! His way is the way of unbelief, and he keeps to it with a deadly persistence which must end in destruction.

Now, that way is full of thorns. *It is a very hard way*. I will show you in a minute that it is so. People who are in this state cannot quite give up religion, and yet they have never really taken to it. Do you notice how hard everything is to them? To begin with, ministers always preach such dreadfully long sermons. The sermon is not long to you who feed upon the word, but to those who sleep at the table it is intolerably tedious. The whole service is dreary to them, though to believers it is bright and happy. And Sundays! To me the Sabbath is the pearl of the week, but to these sluggards in religion it is a day of gloom. We hear them speak of "dreary English Sundays." They piteously describe the closed shops, and theatres, and museums, and inquire what a man is to do in so sad a case. To go to church? To hear of the best things? This is much too hard a task for sluggish minds. Poor dear souls! As for a prayer meeting, they never condescend to consider such a gathering, it is too dreary. Or if perchance they go, nobody ever prays to please them; their ideal of devotion is not reached. Ask them whether they read the Bible at home. They might do so if they were fogged to it, but the Bible does not interest them, and it requires so much thought, they cannot muster mind enough for it. To us it is a Book which sparkles with the most divine truth; it is the Book of God; the Lord of books; there is no volume like it. But to these people, Bible reading is hard labor, and worse. Prayer also is slavery; repentance is impossible. The revival plan of "Believe, and live," without any repentance—they rather take to for a time, till they begin to understand more of what the evangelist means.

They go into the inquiry room, and get "converted" in five minutes, and have done with godliness for the rest of their lives. Possibly some time after they hear of a sanctification to be had in the same manner, they believe themselves to be perfect, and feel that there is no more need for watchfulness or striving, for sin is dead, and they are perfect. When they are told what repentance and faith really are, and that these are for daily, life-long use, and that we must every day watch and strive against temptation, without and within, they disappear from among our hearers, for they do not wish to trouble themselves with so great an enterprise. If they could be carried to heaven in a sedan chair, or trip there in their slippers, they would be glad of it, but to go on pilgrimage, up hill and down dale, is another matter. Their way is as full of difficulties as a thorn-hedge is full of prickles.

Moreover, it is *full of perplexities*. Do you ever meet with these sluggards? I do. They sometimes come to see me, and when they come, this is their style of talk. They say, "Well, sir, I have heard about believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. Can you tell me what it means?" I explain that it is a simple acceptance of God's testimony, and trust in the Lord Jesus. Do you understand *that?* They say, "Yes." Then they raise a difficulty, which I explain. Do you quite comprehend *that?* "Yes, sir, I see that, but"—and then follows a further doubt. This also is cleared up in time to make room for another. Again and again it is—"Yes, but then—." Thus I continue grinding wind by the hour together. Their minds are bottomless buckets, and their memories are bags full of holes; it is very unprofitable work to endeavor to fill them. I seem to be trying to catch a fox. I stop up its hole, but it is out at another opening. This also I stop, and fifty more, and to my surprise, I hear the shout, "Hark, away! My fox has gone across country." He is further off than ever; it was great folly on my part to imagine that I could bring him to earth, or dig him out of his burrow. These people are great at questions, the whole difficulty really lying in their unbelief—they are unwilling to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. When a man does not wish to believe, reasons for doubting gather about him in swarms, like flies. Besides, it is such a fashionable thing, you know, to doubt. You are aware that all the cultured folk display great facility in fashioning doubts, while those who believe God to be true, and do not mistrust His word, are common-place persons of a very low order of mind. You smile, but this is a very convincing argument to our sleepy friend. No great logic is needed to lull a sluggard to repose. It is the fashion to doubt, and you may as well be dead and buried as out of fashion! These sluggish people will not take the trouble to sift evidence; they have no wish to be driven to turn from their sins, and seek a Savior, and be reconciled to God; this would be too much exertion, and involve too many self-denials and heart-searching. They prefer a way full of perplexities to the new and living way; they choose a thorn-hedge rather than the King's highway of righteousness.

Nor is this all. In addition to perplexities, their way becomes *full of miseries*. The sermon which pleases the believer, and cheers his heart, saddens the sluggard. The prayer, which is to us a delight, is to them a

cause of anxiety, if they enter into it at all. The sight of bread is a great joy to a hungry man, but suppose he does not eat it, and there it stands—well then it becomes an instrument of torture fit for Tantalus to use. I should suppose that nothing could aggravate thirst much more than the mirage of the desert, when the traveler sees a stream of bright, sparkling water rippling at his feet, and yet not a drop is there. His fancy torments his thirst. So, for some of you to hear of the feast of love, and to see the joy of the children of God, must be horrible, if you yourselves have neither part nor lot therein. That promise quoted by the preacher, how it must have grated on your ear, if you knew its value, and yet did not embrace it by faith! Painful is this predicament. You are sadly placed, for you enjoy neither good nor evil. If you were to go straight out into the world, and plunge into the pleasures of it, you would, at least, know one side of life, but you dare not do that, you have too much conscience, too much training in religious ways, to run with the worldling in his wantonness; so that you neither know the pleasures of the world, nor the pleasures of grace. You feel restraints from both sides, but you know not the liberties of either side. Between two stools you come to the ground. Neither heaven nor hell is on your side; both saints and sinners are shy of you, and so your way is as a thorn hedge. It is dreadful for a man to have enough conscience to know that he is lost, but not enough grace to find salvation; to have enough religion to make him uncomfortable in sin, but not enough to make him happy in Christ. I know some who continue in sin, and yet at night have terrible dreams, and wake up in a cold sweat of fear. They dare not think of the course of conduct, which, nevertheless, they persevere in; they go onward to destruction, and by and by they will take a leap in the dark, because they are too idle to wake up. O mighty grace, wake these sluggards, or else they will sleep themselves into eternal misery!

"The way of the slothful man is as a hedge of thorns." One of these days he will come to the end of his way, and he will see that hedge of thorns *blocking him out of heaven*—blocking him out from God. His sins, like a thick hedge, will stand in front of him as he is about to die, and will shut him out from hope, while his despairing soul will cry, "Oh, that I could find mercy! Oh, that I could find deliverance!" Recollection of wasted opportunities, of a rejected gospel, and of despised Sabbaths, will come up before him, and through that thorn hedge his naked soul will be unable to force its way into hope and peace. God grant that we may not be among the sluggards at the end of the way!

We will now consider the other side of the text very briefly, and notice that *the righteous man's way shall be made plain*. This is a cheering promise, especially to any of you who are walking in the dark at this time. "The way of the righteous is made plain." The Lord will see to this. The way of the righteous is the way of faith. They see Him who is invisible, and they trust in God. They look for their pardon to the precious blood of Jesus Christ; in fact, they look to God in Christ Jesus for everything. Their way has impediments in it; crooked things are in it, mountains are in it, and deep gulfs, but see the beauty of the promise, "The

way of the righteous is made plain." Difficulties shall be removed, the valleys shall be exalted, and the mountains and hills shall be laid low, the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain. Child-like confidence in God shall march on as upon a raised causeway, and always find for itself a road. Faith travels by an unseen track to honor and glory; neither shall anything turn her aside. Her way may not be plain at this moment, but it shall be made so. God is with those who trust in Him, and what or whom shall we fear when God is with us? In due time, the hand of the Lord shall be seen. To the moment the divine power will time its interposition. The Red Sea was not divided a single second before Israel passed through it. The Jordan only flowed apart when the feet of the Lord's priests actually came to the water's brim. Tomorrow's difficulties are real, and tomorrow's grace will be real. When tomorrow comes, sufficient unto the day shall be the divine help thereof. When you come to the sepulcher, you shall find that the stone is rolled away from its mouth. In due time the way of the righteous shall be made plain, and that is all the righteous should desire or expect.

Sometimes the way of the righteous is mysterious and perplexing. I have known the best of men say, "I long to do right, and by God's grace I will not stoop to anything which is evil, but which of the two ways now before me is the right way? Each of them seems to be both hopeful and doubtful; which way shall I turn?" This is a condition which causes great anxiety to one who is deeply earnest to be right. Oh, for an oracle which could plainly indicate the path! Superstition and fanaticism shall not be gratified by either voice or dream, but yet the way of the righteous shall be made plain. Brother, when you do not know your way, ask your guide. Stand still and pray. If you cannot find the way upon the chart, commit yourself to the divine guidance by prayer. Down on your knees, and cry to the Lord! Few go wrong when they pray over their movements, and use the judgment which God has given them. The last is not to be omitted, for I have known persons pray about a matter which was perfectly clear to anyone with half a grain of sense. In order to escape from an evident but unpleasant duty, they have talked about praying over it. Where a plain command is given, an unmistakable finger points the way, and hesitation is rebellion. Sluggards make prayer an excuse for doing nothing. On the other hand, willful people make up their mind, and then pray, and this is sheer hypocrisy.

God is insulted by prayers which only mean that the petitioner would be glad of divine allowance to do wrong—glad of an event which might be twisted into guidance in a doubtful direction. Such prayers God will never hear, but the way of the righteous shall be made plain. The path of faith shall end in peace; the way of holiness shall conduct to happiness. Your way may be so dark that you cannot see your hand before you, but God will before long make it bright as noonday. At this moment all the wise men in the world might not be able to predict your path, but the Lord will direct you. Only trust in the Lord, and do good, and He will light your candle, yes, He will cause His sun to shine upon you. There is

a blessing in the very act of waiting upon God, and out of it comes this joy, that your way shall be made plain.

I find one excellent translation runs thus—"The way of the righteous is a highway." The righteous do not follow the blind alleys and back streets of craft and policy, "The way of the righteous is a highway," it is the open road, where none may challenge the traveler. It is the King's highway, where the passenger has a right to be. It is a grand thing to feel that in your position in life you are where you have a right to be, and that you came there by no trespass, or breaking of hedges, that you are doing what you have a right to do before the living God, and none may challenge you. He that is in the King's highway is under the King's protection, and he that stops him by daylight shall come under the strong hand of the law. Our King has said, "No lion shall be there, neither shall any ravenous beast go up thereon."

He that is on the King's highway will come to a good end, for the King has completed that way so that it does not fall short, but leads to a city of habitations, whose Builder and Maker is God. Oh, to be right with God; yes, to be right with Him in our daily life and private walk! Let that be the case, and our way shall be judged of by the Lord as His own royal highway, and upon it the light of His love shall shine, so that it shall become brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.

O God of great mercy, keep us in Your fear, and through Your grace lead us, in imitation of Your dear Son, to abide in holiness! And to Your name be praise forever and ever! Amen,

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
ISAIAH 35; Hebrews 12:1-13.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—241, 210, 126.

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A SERMON FOR THE WORST MAN ON EARTH
NO. 1949

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 20, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner."
Luke 18:13.

IT was the fault of the Pharisee that, though he went up into the temple to pray, he did not pray; there is no prayer in all that he said. It is one excellence of the publican that he went up to the temple to pray and he did pray; there is nothing but prayer in all that he said. "God be merciful to me a sinner" is a pure, unadulterated prayer throughout. It was the fault of the Pharisee that when he went up to the temple to pray he forgot an essential part of prayer, which is confession of sin; he spoke as if he had no sins to confess, but many virtues to parade. It was a chief excellence in the devotion of the publican that he did confess his sin, yes, that his utterance was full of confession of sin; from beginning to end it was an acknowledgment of his guilt, and an appeal for grace to the merciful God. The prayer of the publican is admirable for its fullness of meaning. An expositor calls it *a holy telegram,* and certainly it is so compact and so condensed, so free from superfluous words, that it is worthy to be called by that name. I do not see how he could have expressed his meaning more fully or more briefly. In the original Greek the words are even fewer than in the English. Oh, that man would learn to pray with less of language and more of meaning! What great things are packed away in this short petition! God, mercy, sin, the propitiation, and forgiveness!

He speaks of great matters, and trifles are not thought of. He has nothing to do with fasting twice in the week, or the paying of tithes, and such second-rate things; the matters he treats of are of a higher order. His trembling heart moves among sublimities which overcome him, and he speaks in tones consistent therewith. He deals with the greatest things that ever can be, he pleads for his life, his soul. Where could he find themes weightier, more vital to his eternal interests? He is not playing at prayer, but pleading in awful earnest.

His supplication speeded well with God, and he speedily won his suit with heaven. Mercy granted to him full justification. The prayer so pleased the Lord Jesus Christ, who heard it, that He condescended to become a portrait painter, and took a sketch of the petitioner. I say the

prayer in itself was so pleasing to the gracious Savior, that He tells us how it was offered, "Standing afar off, he would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast." Luke, who, according to tradition, was somewhat of an artist as well as a physician, takes great care to place this picture in the national portrait gallery of men saved by sovereign grace. Here we have the portrait of a man who called himself *the* sinner, who may yet be held up as a pattern to saints. I am glad to have the divine sketch of this man, that I may see the bodily form of his devotion. I am gladder still to have his prayer that we may look into the very soul of his pleading. My heart's desire this morning is that many here may seek mercy of the Lord as this publican did, and go down to their houses justified. I ask no man to use the same words. Let no man attach a superstitious value to them. Alas, this prayer has been used flippantly, and foolishly and almost looked upon as a sort of charm! Some have said—"We may live as we like, for we have only to say, 'God be merciful to me,' when we are dying, and all will be well." This is a wicked misuse of gospel truth; yes, it turns it into a lie. If you choose thus to pervert the grace of the gospel to your own destruction, your blood must be on your own heads. You may not have space given you in which to breathe out even this brief sentence, or if you have, the words may not come from your heart, and so you may die in your sins. I pray you; do not thus presume upon the forbearance of God. But if with the publican's heart we can take the publican's attitude, if with the publican's spirit we can use the publican's words, then, there will follow a gracious acceptance, and we shall go home justified. If such is the case, there will be grand times today, for angels will rejoice over sinners reconciled to God, and made to know in their own souls the boundless mercy of the Lord.

In preaching upon the text, I shall endeavor to bring out its innermost spirit. May we be taught of the Spirit, so that we may learn four lessons from it!

I. The first is this—THE FACT OF SINNERSHIP IS NO REASON FOR DESPAIR. You need none of you say, "I am guilty, and therefore I may not approach God, I am so greatly guilty that it would be too daring a thing for me to ask for mercy." Dismiss such thoughts at once. My text and a thousand other arguments forbid despair.

For, first, *this man who was a sinner yet dared to approach the Lord.* According to our version, he said, "God be merciful to me *a* sinner," but a more accurate rendering is that which the Revised Version puts in the margin—"*the* sinner." He meant to say that he was emphatically *the* sinner. The Pharisee yonder was *the* saint of his age, but this publican who stood afar off from the holy place was *the* sinner. If there was not another sinner in the world, he was one, and in a world of sinners he was a prominent offender—the sinner of sinners. Emphatically he applies to himself the guilty name. He takes the chief place in condemnation, and yet he cries, "God be merciful to me the sinner." Now if you know yourself to be a sinner, you may plead with God, but if you mourn that you are not only a sinner, but *the* sinner with the definite article, the sinner above all others, you may still hope in the mercy of the Lord. The worst,

the most profane, the most horrible of sinners may venture, as this man did, to approach the God of mercy. I know that it looks like a daring action; therefore you must do it by faith. On any other footing but that of faith in the mercy of God, you who are a sinner may not dare to approach the Lord lest you be found guilty of presumption. But with your eye on mercy you may be bravely trustful. Believe in the great mercy of God, and though your sins are abundant, you will find that the Lord will abundantly pardon, though they blot your character, the Lord will blot them out, though they are red like crimson, yet the precious blood of Jesus will make you whiter than snow.

This story of the Pharisee and the publican is intended as an encouraging example to you. If this man who was *the* sinner found forgiveness, so also shall you, if you seek it in the same way. One sinner has speeded so well, why should not you? Come and try for yourself, and see if the Lord does not prove in your case that His mercy endures forever.

Next, remember that you may not only find encouragement in looking at the sinner who sought his God, but in the God whom he sought. Sinner, *there is great mercy in the heart of God*. How often did that verse ring out as a chorus in the temple song—

"For His mercy shall endure
Ever faithful, ever sure!"

Mercy is an especially glorious attribute of Jehovah, the living God. He is "the Lord God, merciful and gracious." He is "slow to anger and plenteous in mercy." Do you not see how this should cheer you? Sinners are needful if mercy is to be indulged. How can the Lord display His mercy except to the guilty? Goodness is for creatures, but mercy is for sinners. Towards unfallen creatures there may be love, but there cannot be mercy. Angels are not fit recipients of mercy; they do not require it, for they have not transgressed. Mercy comes into exercise after law has been broken, not till then. Among the attributes it is the last which found scope for itself. So to speak, it is the Benjamin, and the darling attribute of God, "He delights in mercy." Only to a sinner can God be merciful. Do you hear this, you sinner? Be sure that you catch at it! If there is boundless mercy in the heart of God, and it can only exercise itself towards the guilty, then you are the man to have it, for you are a guilty one. Come, then, and let His mercy wrap you about like a garment this day, and cover all your shame. Does not God's delight in mercy prove that sinnership is no reason for despair?

Moreover, *the conception of salvation implies hope for sinners*. That salvation which we preach to you every day is glad tidings for the guilty. Salvation by grace implies that men are guilty. Salvation means not the reward of the righteous, but the cleansing of the unrighteous. Salvation is meant for the lost, the ruined, the undone, and the blessings which it brings of pardoning mercy and cleansing grace must be intended for the guilty and polluted. "The whole need not a physician," the physician has his eye upon the sick. Alms are for the poor, bread is for the hungry, pardon is for the guilty. O you that are guilty, you are the men that mercy seeks after! You were in God's eye when He sent His Son into the world to save sinners. From the very first inception of redemption to the

completion of it the eyes of the great God were set on the guilty, and not on the deserving. The very name of Jesus tells us that He shall save His people from their sins.

Let me further say that, inasmuch as that salvation of God is a great one, it must have been intended to meet great sins. O sirs, would Christ have shed the blood of His heart for some trifling, venial sins which your tears could wash away? Do you think God would have given His dear Son to die as a mere superfluity? If sin had been a small matter, a little sacrifice would have sufficed. Do you think that the divine atonement was made only for small offenses? Did Jesus die for little sins, and leave the great ones unatoned? No, the Lord God measured the greatness of our sin, and found it high as heaven, deep as hell and broad as the infinite, and therefore He gave so great a Savior. He gave His only-begotten Son, an infinite sacrifice, an immeasurable atonement. With such throes and pangs of death as never can be fully described the Lord Jesus poured out His soul in unknown sufferings, that He might provide a great salvation for the greatest of sinners. See Jesus on the cross, and learn that all manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men. The fact of salvation, and of a great salvation, ought to drive away the very notion of despair from every heart that hears of it. Salvation, that is for me, for I am lost. A great salvation, that is for me, for I am the greatest of sinners. Oh, hear my word this day! It is God's word of love, and it rings out like a silver bell. O my beloved hearers, I weep over you, and yet I feel like singing all the time, for I am sent to proclaim salvation from the Lord for the very worst of you.

The gospel is especially, definitely, and distinctly addressed to sinners. Listen to it, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." The gospel is like a letter directed in a clear and legible hand, and if you will read its direction, you will find that it runs thus, "TO THE SINNER." O sinners, to you is the word of this salvation sent. If you are a sinner, you are the very man for whom the gospel is intended, and I do not mean by this a merely complimentary nominal sinner, but an out-and-out rebel, a transgressor against God and man. O sinner, seize upon the gospel with joyful alacrity, and cry unto God for mercy at once!—

"'Twas for sinners that He suffered
Agonies unspeakable;
Can you doubt you are a sinner?
If you can—then hope, farewell.
But, believing what is written—
'All are guilty'—'dead in sin,'
Looking to the Crucified One,
Hope shall rise your soul within."

If you will think of it again, there must be hope for sinners, for *the great commands of the gospel are most suitable to sinners*. Hear, for instance, this word, "Repent you therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19). Who can repent but the guilty? Who can be converted but those who are on the wrong track, and therefore

need to be turned? The following text is evidently addressed to those who are good for nothing, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." The very word "repent" indicates that it is addressed to those who have sinned, let it beckon you to mercy.

Then you are bidden to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, salvation by faith must be for guilty men, for the way of life for the innocent is by perseverance in good works. The law says, "This do, and live." The gospel talks of salvation by believing, because it is the only way possible for those who have broken the law, and are condemned by it. Salvation is of faith that it might be by grace. Believe and live! Believe and live! Believe and live! This is the jubilee note of the trumpet of free grace. Oh, that you would know the joyful sound, and thus be blessed! Oh, that you that are sinful would hear the call as addressed to you in particular! You are up to your necks in the mire of sin, but a mighty hand is stretched out to deliver you. "Repent you, and believe the gospel."

If you want any other argument—and I hope you do not—I would put it thus, *great sinners have been saved.* All sorts of sinners are being saved today. What wonders some of us have seen! What wonders have been worked in this Tabernacle! A man was heard at a prayer meeting pleading in louder tones than usual, he was a sailor, and his voice was pitched to the tune of the roaring billows. A lady whispered to her friend, "Is that Captain F—?" "Yes," said the other, "why do you ask?" "Because," said she, "the last time I heard that voice its swearing made my blood run cold, the man's oaths were terrible beyond measure. Can it be the same man?" Someone observed, "Go and ask him." The lady timidly said, "Are you the same Captain F—that I heard swearing in the street, outside my house?" "Well," he said, "I am the same person, and yet, thank God, I am not the same!" O brethren, such were some of us, but we are washed, we are sanctified! Wonders of grace to God belong. I was reading the other day a story of an old shepherd who had never attended a place of worship; but when he had grown grey, and was near to die he was drawn by curiosity into the Methodist chapel, and all was new to him. Hard-hearted old fellow as he was, he was noticed to shed tears during the sermon. He had obtained a glimpse of hope. He saw that there was mercy even for him. He laid hold on eternal life at once. The surprise was great when he was seen at the chapel and greater still when, on the Monday night, he was seen at the prayer meeting; yes, and heard at the prayer meeting, for he fell down on his knees and praised God that he had found mercy. Do you wonder that the Methodists shouted, "Bless the Lord"? Wherever Christ is preached the most wicked of men and women are made to sit at the Savior's feet, "clothed, and in their right minds." My hearer, why should it not be so with you? At any rate, we have full proof of the fact that sinnership is no reason for despair.

II. I must now advance to my second observation, A SENSE OF SINNERSHIP CONFERS NO RIGHT TO MERCY. You will wonder why I mention this self-evident truth, but I must mention it because of a common error which does great mischief. This man was very sensible of his sin

insomuch that he called himself THE SINNER, but he did not urge his sense of sin as any reason why he should find mercy. There is ingenuity in the heart of man, nothing less than devilish, by which he will, if he can, turn the gospel itself into a yoke of bondage. If we preach to sinners that they may come to Christ in all their anguish and misery, one cries—"I do not feel myself to be a sinner as I ought to feel it. I have not felt those convictions of which you speak, and therefore, I cannot come to Jesus." This is a horrible twist of our meaning. We never meant to insinuate that convictions and doubts and despondencies conferred upon men a claim to mercy, and were necessary preparations for grace. I want you, therefore, to learn that a sense of sin gives no man a right to grace.

If a deep sense of sin entitled men to mercy, *it would be a turning of this parable upside down*. Do you dream that this publican was, after all, a Pharisee differently dressed? Do you imagine that he really meant to plead, "God be merciful to me because I am humble and lowly"? Did he say in his heart, "Lord, have mercy upon me because I am not a Pharisee, and am deeply despondent on account of my evil ways"? This would prove that he was in his heart of hearts a Pharisee. If you make righteousness out of your feelings, you are just as much out of the true way as if you made righteousness out of your works. Whether it is work or feeling, anything which is relied upon as a claim for grace is an antichrist. You are no more to be saved because of your conscious miseries than because of your conscious merits; there is no virtue either in the one or in the other. If you make a Savior of convictions you will be lost as surely as if you made a Savior out of ceremonies. The publican trusted in divine mercy and not in his own convictions, and you must do the same.

To imagine that an awful sense of sin constituted a claim upon mercy would be *like giving a premium to great sin*. Certain seekers think, "I have never been a drunk, or a swearer, or unchaste, but I almost wish I had been, that I might feel myself to be the chief of sinners, and so might come to Jesus." Do not wish anything so atrocious, there is no good in sin in any shape or way. Thank God if you have been kept from the grosser forms of vice. Do not imagine that repentance is easier when sin is grosser; the reverse is true. Do believe that there is no advantage in having been a horrible offender. You have sins enough; to be worse would not be better. If good works do not help you, certainly bad works would not. You that have been moral and excellent should cry for mercy, and not be so silly as to dream that greater sins would help you to readier repentance. Come as you are, and if your heart is hard, confess it as one of your greatest sins. A deeper sense of sin would not entitle you to the mercy of God, you can have no title to mercy but that which mercy gives you. Could your tears forever flow, could your grief no respite know, you would have no claim upon the sovereign grace of God, who will have mercy on whom He will have mercy.

Then, dear friends, remember, if we begin to preach to sinners that they must have a certain sense of sin, and a certain measure of conviction, *such teaching would turn the sinner away from God in Christ to himself*. The man begins at once to say, "Have I a broken heart? Do I feel the burden of sin?" This is only another form of looking to self. Man must not

look to himself to find reasons for God's grace. The remedy does not lie in the seat of the disease; it lies in the physician's hand. A sense of sin is not a claim, but a gift of that blessed Savior who is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins. Beware of any teaching which makes you look to yourself for help, but cling to that doctrine which makes you look only to Christ. Whether you know it or not, you are a lost, ruined sinner, only fit to be cast into the flames of hell forever. Confess this, but do not ask to be driven mad by a sense of it. Come to Jesus just as you are, and do not wait for a preparation made out of your own miseries. Look to Jesus and to Him alone.

If we fall into the notion that a certain sense of sin has a claim upon God, *we shall be putting salvation upon other grounds than that of faith,* and that must be false ground. Now, the ground of salvation is—"God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." A simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the way of salvation, but to say, "I shall be saved because I am horribly convicted of sin, and driven to desperation," is not to speak like the gospel, but to rave out of the pride of an unbelieving heart. The gospel is that you believe in Christ Jesus; that you get right out of yourself, and depend alone in Him. Do you say, "I feel so guilty"? You are certainly guilty, whether you feel it or not, and you are far more guilty than you have any idea of. Come to Christ because you are guilty, not because you have been prepared to come by looking at your guilt. Trust nothing of your own, not even your sense of need. A man may have a sense of disease a long time before he will get healing out of it. The looking-glass of conviction reveals the spots on our face, but it cannot wash them away. You cannot fill your hands by putting them into your empty pocket and feeling how empty it is, it would be far wiser to hold them out, and receive the gold which your friend so freely gives you. "God be merciful to me a sinner" is the right way to put it, but not, "God be merciful to me because I sufficiently feel my sinnership, and most fittingly bewail it."

III. My third observation is this, THE KNOWLEDGE OF THEIR SINNERSHIP GUIDES MEN TO RIGHT ACTION. When a man has learned of the Holy Spirit that he is a sinner, then by a kind of instinct of the new life, he does the right thing in the right way. This publican had not often been to the temple, and had not learned the orthodox way of behaving. It is easy to learn how we all do it nowadays in our temples—take off your hat, hold it in front of your face, and read the maker's name and address. Then sit down, and at the proper moment, bend forward and cover your eyes, and furthermore, stand up when the rest of the congregation do so. People get to do this just as if they were wound up by machinery; yet they do not pray when they are supposed to be praying, nor bow before the Lord when worship is being offered. This publican is out of rank, he does not follow the rubric; he has gestures of his own. First, instead of coming forward he stands afar off. He does not dare to come where that most respectable person, the Pharisee, is displaying himself, for he does not feel worthy. He leaves space between himself and God, an opening for a Mediator, room for an Advocate, place for an Intercessor to interpose

between himself and the throne of the Most High. Wise man thus to stand afar off, for by this means he could safely draw near in the person of Jesus. Furthermore, he would not lift so much as his eyes to heaven. It seems natural to lift up your hands in prayer, but he would not even lift his eyes. The uplifting of the eyes is very proper, is it not? But it was still more proper for "the sinner" not to lift his eyes. His downcast eyes meant much. Our Lord does not say that he could not lift up his eyes, but he *would* not. He could look up, for he did in spirit look up as he cried, "God be merciful to me," but he would not, because it seemed indecorous for eyes like his to peer into the heaven where dwells the holy God. In the meanwhile, the penitent publican kept smiting upon his breast. The original does not say that he smote upon his breast once, but he smote and smote again. It was a continuous act. He seemed to say—"Oh, this wicked heart!" He would smite it. Again and again he expressed his intense grief by this Oriental gesture, for he did not know how else to set forth his sorrow. His heart had sinned, and he smote it, his eyes had led him astray, and he made them look down to the earth, and as he himself had sinned by living far off from God, he banished himself far from the manifest Presence. Every gesture and posture is significant, and yet all came spontaneously. He had no book of directions how to behave himself in the house of God, but his sincerity guided him. If you want to know how to behave yourselves as penitents, be penitents. The best rubrics of worship are those which are written on broken hearts. I have heard of a minister who was said to cry in the wrong place in his sermons, and it was found afterwards that he had written in the margin of his manuscript, "Weep here." His audience could not see the reason for his artificial moisture. It must have had a ludicrous effect. In religion everything artificial is ridiculous, or worse, but grace in the heart is the best "master of the ceremonies." He who prays aright with his heart will not much err with foot, and hand, and head. If you would know how to approach God, confess yourself a sinner, and so take your true place before the God of truth, throw yourself on divine mercy, and thus place God in His true position as your Judge and Lord.

Observe that this man, even under the weight of conscious sin, was led aright, for *he went straight away to God*. A sense of sin without faith drives us from God, but a sense of sin with faith draws us immediately to God. He came to God alone; he felt that it would be of no avail to confess his fault to a mortal, or to look for absolution from a man. He did not resort to the priest of the temple, but to the God of the temple. He did not ask to speak to the good and learned man, the Pharisee, who stood on the same floor with him. His inquiry room was the secret of his own soul, and he inquired of the Lord. He ran straight away to God, who alone was able to help, and when he opened his mouth, it was "God be merciful to me a sinner." That is what you have to do, my dear hearer, if you would be saved, you must go distinctly and immediately to God in Christ Jesus. Forget all things else, and say, with the returning prodigal, "I will arise and go to my Father." None but God can help us out of our low estate. No mercy but the mercy of God can serve our turn, and none can give us

that mercy but the God of mercy. Let every broken-down sinner come to his God, against whom he has offended.

The publican did not look round on his fellow worshippers; he was too much absorbed in his own grief of heart. Especially is it noteworthy that he had no remarks to make upon the Pharisee. He did not denounce the pride, or the hypocrisy, or the hard-heartedness of the professor who so offensively looked down upon him. He did not return contempt for contempt, as we are all too apt to do. No, he dealt with the Lord alone in the deep sincerity of his own heart, and it was well. My hearer, when will you do the same? When will you cease to censure others, and reserve your severity for yourself, your critical observations for your own conduct?

When he came to God, it was *with a full confession of sin*—"God be merciful to me a sinner." His very eyes and hands joined with his lips in acknowledging his iniquities. His prayer was wet with the dews of repentance. He poured out his heart before God in the most free and artless manner, his prayer came from the same fountain as that of the prodigal when he said, "Father, I have sinned," and that of David when he cried, "Against You, You only have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight." That is the best praying which comes from the lowliest heart.

Then he appealed to mercy only. This was wise. See how rightly he was guided. What had he to do with justice, since it could only condemn and destroy him? Like a naked sword, it threatens to sheathe itself in my heart, how can I appeal to justice? Neither power nor wisdom, nor any other quality of the great God could be resorted to, only mercy stretched out her wing. The prayer, "God be merciful," is the only prayer that you can pray who have been greatly guilty. If all your lives you have spurned your Savior, all you can now do is to cast yourselves upon the mercy of God.

The original Greek permits us to see that this man had an eye to the propitiation. I do not say that he fully understood the doctrine of atonement, but still his prayer was, "God be propitiated to me the sinner." He had seen the morning and the evening lamb, and he had heard of the sin-offering, and though he might not have known all about atonement, expiation, and substitution, yet as far as he did know, his eye was turned that way. "O God, be propitiated, accept a sacrifice, and pardon me." If you know your sin, you will be wise to plead the propitiation which God has set forth for human sin. May the Spirit of God constrain you to trust in Jesus now! The New Year is already gliding away, its second month is slipping from under us, how many months are to go before you, a guilty sinner, will come and ask mercy of God, the infinitely-gracious One? Great God, let this day be the day of Your power!

IV. I now close with my last head, which is this—THE BELIEVING CONFESSION OF SINNERSHIP IS THE WAY OF PEACE. "God be merciful to me a sinner," was the prayer, but what was the answer? Listen to this, "This man went down to his house justified rather than the other."

In a few sentences let me sketch this man's progress. He came to God only as a sinner, nakedly as a sinner. Observe, he did not say, "God be merciful to me a penitent sinner." He was a penitent sinner, but he did not plead his penitence, and if you are ever so penitent and convicted of

sin, do not mention it as an argument, lest you be accused of self-righteousness. Come as you are, as a sinner, and as nothing else. Exhibit your wounds. Bring your spiritual poverty before God, and not your supposed wealth. If you have a single penny of your own, get rid of it. Perfect poverty alone will discharge you from your bankruptcy. If you have a moldy crust in the cupboard of self-righteousness, no bread from heaven will be yours. You must be nothing and nobody if God is to be your all in all. This man does not cry, "God be merciful to me the penitent," but, "be merciful to me the sinner." He does not even say, "God be merciful to me the *reformed* sinner." I have no doubt he did reform, and give up his evil ways, but he does not plead that reformation. Reformation will not take away your sinnership*;* therefore do not speak as if it could do so. What you are to be will make no atonement for what you have been. Come, therefore, simply as a sinner, not as a changed and improved sinner. Do not come because you *are* washed, but to be washed! The publican does not say, "God be merciful to me a *praying* sinner." He was praying, but he does not mention it as a plea, for he thought very little of his own prayers. Do not plead your prayers; you might as well plead your sins. God knows that your prayers have sin in them. Why, man, your very tears of repentance need washing! When your supplications are most sincere, what are they but the wailings of a condemned creature who cannot give a single reason why he should not be executed? Feel and own that you deserve condemnation, and come to God as a sinner. Off with your paltry finery, I mean your "filthy rags." Do not trick yourself out in the weeds of your own repentance, much less in the fig leaves of your own resolutions, but come to God in Christ Jesus in all the nakedness of your sin, and everlasting mercy will cover both you and your sins.

Next, notice that this man did nothing but appeal to mercy, he said, "God be merciful to me." He did not attempt to excuse himself, and say, "Lord, I could not help it. Lord, I was not worse than other publicans. Lord, I was a public servant, and only did what every other tax collector did." No, no, he is too honest to forge excuses. He is a sinner, and he owns it. If the Lord should condemn him out of his own mouth, and send him to hell, he cannot help it; his sin is too evident to be denied. He lays his head on the block, and humbly pleads, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Neither does this publican offer any *promises* of future amendment as a setoff. He does not say, "Lord, be merciful for the past, and I will be better in the future." Nothing of the sort; "Be merciful to me the sinner" is his one and only request. So would I have you cry, "O God, be merciful to me! Although I am even now condemned, and deserved to be hopelessly damned by Your justice, yet have mercy upon me, have mercy on me now." That is the way to pray, and if you pray in that way God will hear you. He does not offer to *pay* anything, he does not propose any form of self-paid ransom; he does not present to God his tears, his abstinence, his self-denial, his generosity to the church, his liberality to the poor, or anything else, but he simply begs the Lord to be propitiated, and to be merciful to him because of the great sacrifice. Oh, that all of you would at once pray in this fashion!

Now, I want to cheer your hearts by noticing that this man, through this prayer, and through this confession of sin, experienced a remarkable degree of acceptance. He had come up to the temple condemned, "he went down to his house justified." A complete change, a sudden change, a happy change was worked upon him. Heavy heart and downcast eye were exchanged for glad heart and hopeful outlook. He came into that temple with trembling, he left it with rejoicing. I am sure his wife noticed the difference. What had come over him? The children began to observe it also. Poor father used to sit alone, and heave many a sigh, but all of a sudden he is so happy, he even sings psalms of David out of the latter end of the book. The change was very marked. Before dinner he says, "Children, we must give God thanks before we eat this meal." They gather round and wonder at dear father's happy face as he blesses the God of Israel. He says to his friends, "Brethren, I am comforted, God has had mercy upon me. I went to the temple guilty, but I have returned justified. My sins are all forgiven me. God has accepted propitiation on my behalf." What good would come of such a happy testimony! This was a very sudden change, was it not? It was worked in a moment. The process of spiritual quickening is not a matter of hours, but of a single second of time. The processes which lead up to it, and spring out of it, are long, but the actual reception of life must be instantaneous. Not in every case would you be able to put your finger upon that second of time, but the passage from death unto life must be instantaneous. There must be a moment in which the man is dead, and another moment in which he is alive. I grant you, life would be very feeble at first, still, there must be a time in which it was not there at all, and again, there must have been an instant in which it begins. There can be no middle condition between dead and alive. Yet a man may not know *when* the change took place. If you were going to the Cape you might cross the equator at dead of night, and know nothing about it, but still you would cross it. Some poor landsmen have thought that they would see a blue line right across the waves, but it is not perceptible, although it is truly there, the equator is quite as real as if we could see a golden belt around the globe. Dear friends, I want you to cross the line this morning! Oh, that you might go out of this house saying, "Glory, glory, hallelujah! God has had mercy upon me." Though you feel this morning that you would not give two-pence for your life, yet if you come to God through Jesus Christ you shall go away blessing God not only that you are alive, but that you shall live forever, happy in His love.

Once more, this man went away with a witness such as I pray we all may have. "He was justified." "But," you add, "How do I know he was justified?" Listen to these words. Our blessed Lord says, "I *tell you* that this man went down to his house justified rather than the other." *"I* tell you." Jesus, our Lord, can tell. Into our ear He tells it. He tells it to God and the holy angels, and He tells it to the man himself. The man who has cried from his heart "God be merciful to me a sinner" is a justified man. When he stood and confessed his sin, and cast himself wholly upon the divine mercy, that man was unburdened, so that he went down to his house justified. We are all going down to our houses. Oh, that we might

go down justified! You are going home; I want you to go home to God, who is the true home of the soul. *"He* went down to his house justified," and why should not you do the same? Perhaps, my hearer, you have never been to the Tabernacle before. Possibly, my friend, you are one of those gentlemen who spend Sunday mornings in their shirtsleeves at home reading the weekly paper. You have come here this morning quite by accident. Blessed be God! I hope you will go home "justified." The Lord grant it! Perhaps you always come here, and have occupied a seat ever since the Tabernacle was built, and yet you have never found mercy. Oh, that you might find mercy this morning! Let us seek this blessing. Come with me to Jesus. I will lead the way, I pray you say with me this morning—"God be merciful to me *the* sinner." Rest on the great propitiation, trust in Jesus Christ's atoning blood. Cast yourself upon the Savior's love, and you shall go down to your house justified. Is it a poor cottage? Is it less than that, a back room up three flights of stairs? Are you very, very poor, and have you been out of work for a long time? Never mind. God knows all. Seek you His face. It will be a happy Sunday for you, if you this day begin a new life by faith in Jesus. You shall have joy, peace, and happiness if you seek and find mercy from the great Father. I think I see you trudging home, having left your load behind you, but compassed about with songs of praise unto our God. So be it. Amen and Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 51; 32.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—912, 202, 591.

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

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A SERMON FOR THE WORST MAN ON EARTH
NO. 1949

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 20, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner."
Luke 18:13.

IT was the fault of the Pharisee that, though he went up into the temple to pray, he did not pray; there is no prayer in all that he said. It is one excellence of the publican that he went up to the temple to pray and he did pray; there is nothing but prayer in all that he said. "God be merciful to me a sinner" is a pure, unadulterated prayer throughout. It was the fault of the Pharisee that when he went up to the temple to pray he forgot an essential part of prayer, which is confession of sin; he spoke as if he had no sins to confess, but many virtues to parade. It was a chief excellence in the devotion of the publican that he did confess his sin, yes, that his utterance was full of confession of sin; from beginning to end it was an acknowledgment of his guilt, and an appeal for grace to the merciful God. The prayer of the publican is admirable for its fullness of meaning. An expositor calls it *a holy telegram,* and certainly it is so compact and so condensed, so free from superfluous words, that it is worthy to be called by that name. I do not see how he could have expressed his meaning more fully or more briefly. In the original Greek the words are even fewer than in the English. Oh, that man would learn to pray with less of language and more of meaning! What great things are packed away in this short petition! God, mercy, sin, the propitiation, and forgiveness!

He speaks of great matters, and trifles are not thought of. He has nothing to do with fasting twice in the week, or the paying of tithes, and such second-rate things; the matters he treats of are of a higher order. His trembling heart moves among sublimities which overcome him, and he speaks in tones consistent therewith. He deals with the greatest things that ever can be, he pleads for his life, his soul. Where could he find themes weightier, more vital to his eternal interests? He is not playing at prayer, but pleading in awful earnest.

His supplication speeded well with God, and he speedily won his suit with heaven. Mercy granted to him full justification. The prayer so pleased the Lord Jesus Christ, who heard it, that He condescended to become a portrait painter, and took a sketch of the petitioner. I say the

prayer in itself was so pleasing to the gracious Savior, that He tells us how it was offered, "Standing afar off, he would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast." Luke, who, according to tradition, was somewhat of an artist as well as a physician, takes great care to place this picture in the national portrait gallery of men saved by sovereign grace. Here we have the portrait of a man who called himself *the* sinner, who may yet be held up as a pattern to saints. I am glad to have the divine sketch of this man, that I may see the bodily form of his devotion. I am gladder still to have his prayer that we may look into the very soul of his pleading. My heart's desire this morning is that many here may seek mercy of the Lord as this publican did, and go down to their houses justified. I ask no man to use the same words. Let no man attach a superstitious value to them. Alas, this prayer has been used flippantly, and foolishly and almost looked upon as a sort of charm! Some have said—"We may live as we like, for we have only to say, 'God be merciful to me,' when we are dying, and all will be well." This is a wicked misuse of gospel truth; yes, it turns it into a lie. If you choose thus to pervert the grace of the gospel to your own destruction, your blood must be on your own heads. You may not have space given you in which to breathe out even this brief sentence, or if you have, the words may not come from your heart, and so you may die in your sins. I pray you; do not thus presume upon the forbearance of God. But if with the publican's heart we can take the publican's attitude, if with the publican's spirit we can use the publican's words, then, there will follow a gracious acceptance, and we shall go home justified. If such is the case, there will be grand times today, for angels will rejoice over sinners reconciled to God, and made to know in their own souls the boundless mercy of the Lord.

In preaching upon the text, I shall endeavor to bring out its innermost spirit. May we be taught of the Spirit, so that we may learn four lessons from it!

I. The first is this—THE FACT OF SINNERSHIP IS NO REASON FOR DESPAIR. You need none of you say, "I am guilty, and therefore I may not approach God, I am so greatly guilty that it would be too daring a thing for me to ask for mercy." Dismiss such thoughts at once. My text and a thousand other arguments forbid despair.

For, first, *this man who was a sinner yet dared to approach the Lord.* According to our version, he said, "God be merciful to me *a* sinner," but a more accurate rendering is that which the Revised Version puts in the margin—"*the* sinner." He meant to say that he was emphatically *the* sinner. The Pharisee yonder was *the* saint of his age, but this publican who stood afar off from the holy place was *the* sinner. If there was not another sinner in the world, he was one, and in a world of sinners he was a prominent offender—the sinner of sinners. Emphatically he applies to himself the guilty name. He takes the chief place in condemnation, and yet he cries, "God be merciful to me the sinner." Now if you know yourself to be a sinner, you may plead with God, but if you mourn that you are not only a sinner, but *the* sinner with the definite article, the sinner above all others, you may still hope in the mercy of the Lord. The worst,

the most profane, the most horrible of sinners may venture, as this man did, to approach the God of mercy. I know that it looks like a daring action; therefore you must do it by faith. On any other footing but that of faith in the mercy of God, you who are a sinner may not dare to approach the Lord lest you be found guilty of presumption. But with your eye on mercy you may be bravely trustful. Believe in the great mercy of God, and though your sins are abundant, you will find that the Lord will abundantly pardon, though they blot your character, the Lord will blot them out, though they are red like crimson, yet the precious blood of Jesus will make you whiter than snow.

This story of the Pharisee and the publican is intended as an encouraging example to you. If this man who was *the* sinner found forgiveness, so also shall you, if you seek it in the same way. One sinner has speeded so well, why should not you? Come and try for yourself, and see if the Lord does not prove in your case that His mercy endures forever.

Next, remember that you may not only find encouragement in looking at the sinner who sought his God, but in the God whom he sought. Sinner, *there is great mercy in the heart of God*. How often did that verse ring out as a chorus in the temple song—

"For His mercy shall endure
Ever faithful, ever sure!"

Mercy is an especially glorious attribute of Jehovah, the living God. He is "the Lord God, merciful and gracious." He is "slow to anger and plenteous in mercy." Do you not see how this should cheer you? Sinners are needful if mercy is to be indulged. How can the Lord display His mercy except to the guilty? Goodness is for creatures, but mercy is for sinners. Towards unfallen creatures there may be love, but there cannot be mercy. Angels are not fit recipients of mercy; they do not require it, for they have not transgressed. Mercy comes into exercise after law has been broken, not till then. Among the attributes it is the last which found scope for itself. So to speak, it is the Benjamin, and the darling attribute of God, "He delights in mercy." Only to a sinner can God be merciful. Do you hear this, you sinner? Be sure that you catch at it! If there is boundless mercy in the heart of God, and it can only exercise itself towards the guilty, then you are the man to have it, for you are a guilty one. Come, then, and let His mercy wrap you about like a garment this day, and cover all your shame. Does not God's delight in mercy prove that sinnership is no reason for despair?

Moreover, *the conception of salvation implies hope for sinners*. That salvation which we preach to you every day is glad tidings for the guilty. Salvation by grace implies that men are guilty. Salvation means not the reward of the righteous, but the cleansing of the unrighteous. Salvation is meant for the lost, the ruined, the undone, and the blessings which it brings of pardoning mercy and cleansing grace must be intended for the guilty and polluted. "The whole need not a physician," the physician has his eye upon the sick. Alms are for the poor, bread is for the hungry, pardon is for the guilty. O you that are guilty, you are the men that mercy seeks after! You were in God's eye when He sent His Son into the world to save sinners. From the very first inception of redemption to the

completion of it the eyes of the great God were set on the guilty, and not on the deserving. The very name of Jesus tells us that He shall save His people from their sins.

Let me further say that, inasmuch as that salvation of God is a great one, it must have been intended to meet great sins. O sirs, would Christ have shed the blood of His heart for some trifling, venial sins which your tears could wash away? Do you think God would have given His dear Son to die as a mere superfluity? If sin had been a small matter, a little sacrifice would have sufficed. Do you think that the divine atonement was made only for small offenses? Did Jesus die for little sins, and leave the great ones unatoned? No, the Lord God measured the greatness of our sin, and found it high as heaven, deep as hell and broad as the infinite, and therefore He gave so great a Savior. He gave His only-begotten Son, an infinite sacrifice, an immeasurable atonement. With such throes and pangs of death as never can be fully described the Lord Jesus poured out His soul in unknown sufferings, that He might provide a great salvation for the greatest of sinners. See Jesus on the cross, and learn that all manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men. The fact of salvation, and of a great salvation, ought to drive away the very notion of despair from every heart that hears of it. Salvation, that is for me, for I am lost. A great salvation, that is for me, for I am the greatest of sinners. Oh, hear my word this day! It is God's word of love, and it rings out like a silver bell. O my beloved hearers, I weep over you, and yet I feel like singing all the time, for I am sent to proclaim salvation from the Lord for the very worst of you.

The gospel is especially, definitely, and distinctly addressed to sinners. Listen to it, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." The gospel is like a letter directed in a clear and legible hand, and if you will read its direction, you will find that it runs thus, "TO THE SINNER." O sinners, to you is the word of this salvation sent. If you are a sinner, you are the very man for whom the gospel is intended, and I do not mean by this a merely complimentary nominal sinner, but an out-and-out rebel, a transgressor against God and man. O sinner, seize upon the gospel with joyful alacrity, and cry unto God for mercy at once!—

"'Twas for sinners that He suffered
Agonies unspeakable;
Can you doubt you are a sinner?
If you can—then hope, farewell.
But, believing what is written—
'All are guilty'—'dead in sin,'
Looking to the Crucified One,
Hope shall rise your soul within."

If you will think of it again, there must be hope for sinners, for *the great commands of the gospel are most suitable to sinners*. Hear, for instance, this word, "Repent you therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19). Who can repent but the guilty? Who can be converted but those who are on the wrong track, and therefore

need to be turned? The following text is evidently addressed to those who are good for nothing, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." The very word "repent" indicates that it is addressed to those who have sinned, let it beckon you to mercy.

Then you are bidden to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, salvation by faith must be for guilty men, for the way of life for the innocent is by perseverance in good works. The law says, "This do, and live." The gospel talks of salvation by believing, because it is the only way possible for those who have broken the law, and are condemned by it. Salvation is of faith that it might be by grace. Believe and live! Believe and live! Believe and live! This is the jubilee note of the trumpet of free grace. Oh, that you would know the joyful sound, and thus be blessed! Oh, that you that are sinful would hear the call as addressed to you in particular! You are up to your necks in the mire of sin, but a mighty hand is stretched out to deliver you. "Repent you, and believe the gospel."

If you want any other argument—and I hope you do not—I would put it thus, *great sinners have been saved.* All sorts of sinners are being saved today. What wonders some of us have seen! What wonders have been worked in this Tabernacle! A man was heard at a prayer meeting pleading in louder tones than usual, he was a sailor, and his voice was pitched to the tune of the roaring billows. A lady whispered to her friend, "Is that Captain F—?" "Yes," said the other, "why do you ask?" "Because," said she, "the last time I heard that voice its swearing made my blood run cold, the man's oaths were terrible beyond measure. Can it be the same man?" Someone observed, "Go and ask him." The lady timidly said, "Are you the same Captain F—that I heard swearing in the street, outside my house?" "Well," he said, "I am the same person, and yet, thank God, I am not the same!" O brethren, such were some of us, but we are washed, we are sanctified! Wonders of grace to God belong. I was reading the other day a story of an old shepherd who had never attended a place of worship; but when he had grown grey, and was near to die he was drawn by curiosity into the Methodist chapel, and all was new to him. Hard-hearted old fellow as he was, he was noticed to shed tears during the sermon. He had obtained a glimpse of hope. He saw that there was mercy even for him. He laid hold on eternal life at once. The surprise was great when he was seen at the chapel and greater still when, on the Monday night, he was seen at the prayer meeting; yes, and heard at the prayer meeting, for he fell down on his knees and praised God that he had found mercy. Do you wonder that the Methodists shouted, "Bless the Lord"? Wherever Christ is preached the most wicked of men and women are made to sit at the Savior's feet, "clothed, and in their right minds." My hearer, why should it not be so with you? At any rate, we have full proof of the fact that sinnership is no reason for despair.

II. I must now advance to my second observation, A SENSE OF SINNERSHIP CONFERS NO RIGHT TO MERCY. You will wonder why I mention this self-evident truth, but I must mention it because of a common error which does great mischief. This man was very sensible of his sin

insomuch that he called himself THE SINNER, but he did not urge his sense of sin as any reason why he should find mercy. There is ingenuity in the heart of man, nothing less than devilish, by which he will, if he can, turn the gospel itself into a yoke of bondage. If we preach to sinners that they may come to Christ in all their anguish and misery, one cries—"I do not feel myself to be a sinner as I ought to feel it. I have not felt those convictions of which you speak, and therefore, I cannot come to Jesus." This is a horrible twist of our meaning. We never meant to insinuate that convictions and doubts and despondencies conferred upon men a claim to mercy, and were necessary preparations for grace. I want you, therefore, to learn that a sense of sin gives no man a right to grace.

If a deep sense of sin entitled men to mercy, *it would be a turning of this parable upside down*. Do you dream that this publican was, after all, a Pharisee differently dressed? Do you imagine that he really meant to plead, "God be merciful to me because I am humble and lowly"? Did he say in his heart, "Lord, have mercy upon me because I am not a Pharisee, and am deeply despondent on account of my evil ways"? This would prove that he was in his heart of hearts a Pharisee. If you make righteousness out of your feelings, you are just as much out of the true way as if you made righteousness out of your works. Whether it is work or feeling, anything which is relied upon as a claim for grace is an antichrist. You are no more to be saved because of your conscious miseries than because of your conscious merits; there is no virtue either in the one or in the other. If you make a Savior of convictions you will be lost as surely as if you made a Savior out of ceremonies. The publican trusted in divine mercy and not in his own convictions, and you must do the same.

To imagine that an awful sense of sin constituted a claim upon mercy would be *like giving a premium to great sin*. Certain seekers think, "I have never been a drunk, or a swearer, or unchaste, but I almost wish I had been, that I might feel myself to be the chief of sinners, and so might come to Jesus." Do not wish anything so atrocious, there is no good in sin in any shape or way. Thank God if you have been kept from the grosser forms of vice. Do not imagine that repentance is easier when sin is grosser; the reverse is true. Do believe that there is no advantage in having been a horrible offender. You have sins enough; to be worse would not be better. If good works do not help you, certainly bad works would not. You that have been moral and excellent should cry for mercy, and not be so silly as to dream that greater sins would help you to readier repentance. Come as you are, and if your heart is hard, confess it as one of your greatest sins. A deeper sense of sin would not entitle you to the mercy of God, you can have no title to mercy but that which mercy gives you. Could your tears forever flow, could your grief no respite know, you would have no claim upon the sovereign grace of God, who will have mercy on whom He will have mercy.

Then, dear friends, remember, if we begin to preach to sinners that they must have a certain sense of sin, and a certain measure of conviction, *such teaching would turn the sinner away from God in Christ to himself*. The man begins at once to say, "Have I a broken heart? Do I feel the burden of sin?" This is only another form of looking to self. Man must not

look to himself to find reasons for God's grace. The remedy does not lie in the seat of the disease; it lies in the physician's hand. A sense of sin is not a claim, but a gift of that blessed Savior who is exalted on high to give repentance and remission of sins. Beware of any teaching which makes you look to yourself for help, but cling to that doctrine which makes you look only to Christ. Whether you know it or not, you are a lost, ruined sinner, only fit to be cast into the flames of hell forever. Confess this, but do not ask to be driven mad by a sense of it. Come to Jesus just as you are, and do not wait for a preparation made out of your own miseries. Look to Jesus and to Him alone.

If we fall into the notion that a certain sense of sin has a claim upon God, *we shall be putting salvation upon other grounds than that of faith,* and that must be false ground. Now, the ground of salvation is—"God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." A simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the way of salvation, but to say, "I shall be saved because I am horribly convicted of sin, and driven to desperation," is not to speak like the gospel, but to rave out of the pride of an unbelieving heart. The gospel is that you believe in Christ Jesus; that you get right out of yourself, and depend alone in Him. Do you say, "I feel so guilty"? You are certainly guilty, whether you feel it or not, and you are far more guilty than you have any idea of. Come to Christ because you are guilty, not because you have been prepared to come by looking at your guilt. Trust nothing of your own, not even your sense of need. A man may have a sense of disease a long time before he will get healing out of it. The looking-glass of conviction reveals the spots on our face, but it cannot wash them away. You cannot fill your hands by putting them into your empty pocket and feeling how empty it is, it would be far wiser to hold them out, and receive the gold which your friend so freely gives you. "God be merciful to me a sinner" is the right way to put it, but not, "God be merciful to me because I sufficiently feel my sinnership, and most fittingly bewail it."

III. My third observation is this, THE KNOWLEDGE OF THEIR SINNERSHIP GUIDES MEN TO RIGHT ACTION. When a man has learned of the Holy Spirit that he is a sinner, then by a kind of instinct of the new life, he does the right thing in the right way. This publican had not often been to the temple, and had not learned the orthodox way of behaving. It is easy to learn how we all do it nowadays in our temples—take off your hat, hold it in front of your face, and read the maker's name and address. Then sit down, and at the proper moment, bend forward and cover your eyes, and furthermore, stand up when the rest of the congregation do so. People get to do this just as if they were wound up by machinery; yet they do not pray when they are supposed to be praying, nor bow before the Lord when worship is being offered. This publican is out of rank, he does not follow the rubric; he has gestures of his own. First, instead of coming forward he stands afar off. He does not dare to come where that most respectable person, the Pharisee, is displaying himself, for he does not feel worthy. He leaves space between himself and God, an opening for a Mediator, room for an Advocate, place for an Intercessor to interpose

between himself and the throne of the Most High. Wise man thus to stand afar off, for by this means he could safely draw near in the person of Jesus. Furthermore, he would not lift so much as his eyes to heaven. It seems natural to lift up your hands in prayer, but he would not even lift his eyes. The uplifting of the eyes is very proper, is it not? But it was still more proper for "the sinner" not to lift his eyes. His downcast eyes meant much. Our Lord does not say that he could not lift up his eyes, but he *would* not. He could look up, for he did in spirit look up as he cried, "God be merciful to me," but he would not, because it seemed indecorous for eyes like his to peer into the heaven where dwells the holy God. In the meanwhile, the penitent publican kept smiting upon his breast. The original does not say that he smote upon his breast once, but he smote and smote again. It was a continuous act. He seemed to say—"Oh, this wicked heart!" He would smite it. Again and again he expressed his intense grief by this Oriental gesture, for he did not know how else to set forth his sorrow. His heart had sinned, and he smote it, his eyes had led him astray, and he made them look down to the earth, and as he himself had sinned by living far off from God, he banished himself far from the manifest Presence. Every gesture and posture is significant, and yet all came spontaneously. He had no book of directions how to behave himself in the house of God, but his sincerity guided him. If you want to know how to behave yourselves as penitents, be penitents. The best rubrics of worship are those which are written on broken hearts. I have heard of a minister who was said to cry in the wrong place in his sermons, and it was found afterwards that he had written in the margin of his manuscript, "Weep here." His audience could not see the reason for his artificial moisture. It must have had a ludicrous effect. In religion everything artificial is ridiculous, or worse, but grace in the heart is the best "master of the ceremonies." He who prays aright with his heart will not much err with foot, and hand, and head. If you would know how to approach God, confess yourself a sinner, and so take your true place before the God of truth, throw yourself on divine mercy, and thus place God in His true position as your Judge and Lord.

Observe that this man, even under the weight of conscious sin, was led aright, for *he went straight away to God*. A sense of sin without faith drives us from God, but a sense of sin with faith draws us immediately to God. He came to God alone; he felt that it would be of no avail to confess his fault to a mortal, or to look for absolution from a man. He did not resort to the priest of the temple, but to the God of the temple. He did not ask to speak to the good and learned man, the Pharisee, who stood on the same floor with him. His inquiry room was the secret of his own soul, and he inquired of the Lord. He ran straight away to God, who alone was able to help, and when he opened his mouth, it was "God be merciful to me a sinner." That is what you have to do, my dear hearer, if you would be saved, you must go distinctly and immediately to God in Christ Jesus. Forget all things else, and say, with the returning prodigal, "I will arise and go to my Father." None but God can help us out of our low estate. No mercy but the mercy of God can serve our turn, and none can give us

that mercy but the God of mercy. Let every broken-down sinner come to his God, against whom he has offended.

The publican did not look round on his fellow worshippers; he was too much absorbed in his own grief of heart. Especially is it noteworthy that he had no remarks to make upon the Pharisee. He did not denounce the pride, or the hypocrisy, or the hard-heartedness of the professor who so offensively looked down upon him. He did not return contempt for contempt, as we are all too apt to do. No, he dealt with the Lord alone in the deep sincerity of his own heart, and it was well. My hearer, when will you do the same? When will you cease to censure others, and reserve your severity for yourself, your critical observations for your own conduct?

When he came to God, it was *with a full confession of sin*—"God be merciful to me a sinner." His very eyes and hands joined with his lips in acknowledging his iniquities. His prayer was wet with the dews of repentance. He poured out his heart before God in the most free and artless manner, his prayer came from the same fountain as that of the prodigal when he said, "Father, I have sinned," and that of David when he cried, "Against You, You only have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight." That is the best praying which comes from the lowliest heart.

Then he appealed to mercy only. This was wise. See how rightly he was guided. What had he to do with justice, since it could only condemn and destroy him? Like a naked sword, it threatens to sheathe itself in my heart, how can I appeal to justice? Neither power nor wisdom, nor any other quality of the great God could be resorted to, only mercy stretched out her wing. The prayer, "God be merciful," is the only prayer that you can pray who have been greatly guilty. If all your lives you have spurned your Savior, all you can now do is to cast yourselves upon the mercy of God.

The original Greek permits us to see that this man had an eye to the propitiation. I do not say that he fully understood the doctrine of atonement, but still his prayer was, "God be propitiated to me the sinner." He had seen the morning and the evening lamb, and he had heard of the sin-offering, and though he might not have known all about atonement, expiation, and substitution, yet as far as he did know, his eye was turned that way. "O God, be propitiated, accept a sacrifice, and pardon me." If you know your sin, you will be wise to plead the propitiation which God has set forth for human sin. May the Spirit of God constrain you to trust in Jesus now! The New Year is already gliding away, its second month is slipping from under us, how many months are to go before you, a guilty sinner, will come and ask mercy of God, the infinitely-gracious One? Great God, let this day be the day of Your power!

IV. I now close with my last head, which is this—THE BELIEVING CONFESSION OF SINNERSHIP IS THE WAY OF PEACE. "God be merciful to me a sinner," was the prayer, but what was the answer? Listen to this, "This man went down to his house justified rather than the other."

In a few sentences let me sketch this man's progress. He came to God only as a sinner, nakedly as a sinner. Observe, he did not say, "God be merciful to me a penitent sinner." He was a penitent sinner, but he did not plead his penitence, and if you are ever so penitent and convicted of

sin, do not mention it as an argument, lest you be accused of self-righteousness. Come as you are, as a sinner, and as nothing else. Exhibit your wounds. Bring your spiritual poverty before God, and not your supposed wealth. If you have a single penny of your own, get rid of it. Perfect poverty alone will discharge you from your bankruptcy. If you have a moldy crust in the cupboard of self-righteousness, no bread from heaven will be yours. You must be nothing and nobody if God is to be your all in all. This man does not cry, "God be merciful to me the penitent," but, "be merciful to me the sinner." He does not even say, "God be merciful to me the *reformed* sinner." I have no doubt he did reform, and give up his evil ways, but he does not plead that reformation. Reformation will not take away your sinnership*;* therefore do not speak as if it could do so. What you are to be will make no atonement for what you have been. Come, therefore, simply as a sinner, not as a changed and improved sinner. Do not come because you *are* washed, but to be washed! The publican does not say, "God be merciful to me a *praying* sinner." He was praying, but he does not mention it as a plea, for he thought very little of his own prayers. Do not plead your prayers; you might as well plead your sins. God knows that your prayers have sin in them. Why, man, your very tears of repentance need washing! When your supplications are most sincere, what are they but the wailings of a condemned creature who cannot give a single reason why he should not be executed? Feel and own that you deserve condemnation, and come to God as a sinner. Off with your paltry finery, I mean your "filthy rags." Do not trick yourself out in the weeds of your own repentance, much less in the fig leaves of your own resolutions, but come to God in Christ Jesus in all the nakedness of your sin, and everlasting mercy will cover both you and your sins.

Next, notice that this man did nothing but appeal to mercy, he said, "God be merciful to me." He did not attempt to excuse himself, and say, "Lord, I could not help it. Lord, I was not worse than other publicans. Lord, I was a public servant, and only did what every other tax collector did." No, no, he is too honest to forge excuses. He is a sinner, and he owns it. If the Lord should condemn him out of his own mouth, and send him to hell, he cannot help it; his sin is too evident to be denied. He lays his head on the block, and humbly pleads, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Neither does this publican offer any *promises* of future amendment as a setoff. He does not say, "Lord, be merciful for the past, and I will be better in the future." Nothing of the sort; "Be merciful to me the sinner" is his one and only request. So would I have you cry, "O God, be merciful to me! Although I am even now condemned, and deserved to be hopelessly damned by Your justice, yet have mercy upon me, have mercy on me now." That is the way to pray, and if you pray in that way God will hear you. He does not offer to *pay* anything, he does not propose any form of self-paid ransom; he does not present to God his tears, his abstinence, his self-denial, his generosity to the church, his liberality to the poor, or anything else, but he simply begs the Lord to be propitiated, and to be merciful to him because of the great sacrifice. Oh, that all of you would at once pray in this fashion!

Now, I want to cheer your hearts by noticing that this man, through this prayer, and through this confession of sin, experienced a remarkable degree of acceptance. He had come up to the temple condemned, "he went down to his house justified." A complete change, a sudden change, a happy change was worked upon him. Heavy heart and downcast eye were exchanged for glad heart and hopeful outlook. He came into that temple with trembling, he left it with rejoicing. I am sure his wife noticed the difference. What had come over him? The children began to observe it also. Poor father used to sit alone, and heave many a sigh, but all of a sudden he is so happy, he even sings psalms of David out of the latter end of the book. The change was very marked. Before dinner he says, "Children, we must give God thanks before we eat this meal." They gather round and wonder at dear father's happy face as he blesses the God of Israel. He says to his friends, "Brethren, I am comforted, God has had mercy upon me. I went to the temple guilty, but I have returned justified. My sins are all forgiven me. God has accepted propitiation on my behalf." What good would come of such a happy testimony! This was a very sudden change, was it not? It was worked in a moment. The process of spiritual quickening is not a matter of hours, but of a single second of time. The processes which lead up to it, and spring out of it, are long, but the actual reception of life must be instantaneous. Not in every case would you be able to put your finger upon that second of time, but the passage from death unto life must be instantaneous. There must be a moment in which the man is dead, and another moment in which he is alive. I grant you, life would be very feeble at first, still, there must be a time in which it was not there at all, and again, there must have been an instant in which it begins. There can be no middle condition between dead and alive. Yet a man may not know *when* the change took place. If you were going to the Cape you might cross the equator at dead of night, and know nothing about it, but still you would cross it. Some poor landsmen have thought that they would see a blue line right across the waves, but it is not perceptible, although it is truly there, the equator is quite as real as if we could see a golden belt around the globe. Dear friends, I want you to cross the line this morning! Oh, that you might go out of this house saying, "Glory, glory, hallelujah! God has had mercy upon me." Though you feel this morning that you would not give two-pence for your life, yet if you come to God through Jesus Christ you shall go away blessing God not only that you are alive, but that you shall live forever, happy in His love.

Once more, this man went away with a witness such as I pray we all may have. "He was justified." "But," you add, "How do I know he was justified?" Listen to these words. Our blessed Lord says, "I *tell you* that this man went down to his house justified rather than the other." *"I* tell you." Jesus, our Lord, can tell. Into our ear He tells it. He tells it to God and the holy angels, and He tells it to the man himself. The man who has cried from his heart "God be merciful to me a sinner" is a justified man. When he stood and confessed his sin, and cast himself wholly upon the divine mercy, that man was unburdened, so that he went down to his house justified. We are all going down to our houses. Oh, that we might

go down justified! You are going home; I want you to go home to God, who is the true home of the soul. *"He* went down to his house justified," and why should not you do the same? Perhaps, my hearer, you have never been to the Tabernacle before. Possibly, my friend, you are one of those gentlemen who spend Sunday mornings in their shirtsleeves at home reading the weekly paper. You have come here this morning quite by accident. Blessed be God! I hope you will go home "justified." The Lord grant it! Perhaps you always come here, and have occupied a seat ever since the Tabernacle was built, and yet you have never found mercy. Oh, that you might find mercy this morning! Let us seek this blessing. Come with me to Jesus. I will lead the way, I pray you say with me this morning—"God be merciful to me *the* sinner." Rest on the great propitiation, trust in Jesus Christ's atoning blood. Cast yourself upon the Savior's love, and you shall go down to your house justified. Is it a poor cottage? Is it less than that, a back room up three flights of stairs? Are you very, very poor, and have you been out of work for a long time? Never mind. God knows all. Seek you His face. It will be a happy Sunday for you, if you this day begin a new life by faith in Jesus. You shall have joy, peace, and happiness if you seek and find mercy from the great Father. I think I see you trudging home, having left your load behind you, but compassed about with songs of praise unto our God. So be it. Amen and Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 51; 32.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—912, 202, 591.

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EARTHQUAKE BUT NOT HEARTQUAKE
NO. 1950

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 27, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof." Psalm 46:1-3.

THIS Psalm is a song for all Israel, for all who are truly the chosen of God, called to be His own people, should exhibit a fearless courage. The peace of God which passes all understanding should keep the hearts and minds of all who rest in God. If, indeed, the Lord is our refuge and strength, we are entitled to seek after a spirit which shall bear us above the dreads of common men. It is not every man that can sing this Psalm, he must belong to the believing company, he must have God to be his God, and he must, like Israel, have learned the art of prevailing prayer, or else he cannot sing the song of peace amid commotion and calamity. No man can truly sing this psalm but those who are redeemed from the earth.

While this is a psalm for all Israel, it is specially marked as committed to the charge of the sons of Korah. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram perished because of their presumption, they went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them. They and all that appertained unto them were swallowed up, only we are astonished to read, "Notwithstanding, the children of Korah died not." I attribute their singular escape to the sovereign grace of God, who spared them when their kinsmen were destroyed. They were made singers in the courts of the Lord, and surely they would sing with peculiar emphasis these words, "Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed." They saw the earth open her mouth and swallow up the offenders of their household while they were preserved by sovereign grace. Surely the tears must have stood in their eyes when they sang this verse, and thought of the opening gulf at their feet. The circumstance under which a man is saved will influence the rest of his life. To be saved of God from between the teeth of judgment is a rescue so special and vivid that the subject of it learns henceforth to sing aloud unto the preserving Lord. Delivered from so great a death, believers learn to trust that the Lord will yet deliver them. When conversion is especially remarkable, the music of gratitude is pitched in a high key, and the converts reach notes which are impossible to others. It is for sons of Korah to sing, "Therefore will not we fear."

It is significant, also, that this Psalm was to be sung "upon Alamoth," which in all probability means that it was to be set to music suitable for virgin voices. The hallelujah at the Red Sea was chiefly in the hands of Miriam and the maidens of Israel, she took her timbrel, and the daughters of Israel followed after her, singing unto the Lord. This is a Psalm of the same sort. You virgin souls arise and sing unto God, your refuge and strength. Awake, you hearts that follow the Lord fully in the fervor of your first love, and lift your voices to the Lord. Come, you that have been kept pure and undefiled in your words and way, you whose hearts are chaste to the love of Jesus Christ, you are called upon above all others to sing, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea."

It was because Luther's heart was chaste towards God, and his whole mind virgin towards divine truth, that he delighted to sing this Psalm. In the days of the most furious opposition he was known to say to Melancthon, "Come, let us sing the forty-sixth Psalm, and let the devil do his worst." So, too, when Luther was dead, Melancthon heard a girl singing this psalm, and he said to her, "Sing on, dear daughter mine, you know not what comfort you bring to my heart." We read of the armies of Gustavus Adolphus singing this psalm before their victory at Leipsic. So, you see, the young, the simple, the guileless may sing that which nerves warriors for the battle—

"God is our refuge and our strength,
In straits a present aid;
Therefore, although the earth remove,
We will not be afraid."

This morning, as I shall be enabled, I shall say a little, first, upon *the confidence of the saints,* "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." Then I will speak upon *the courage which grows out of it,* "Therefore will not we fear." We shall close with a brief survey of *the conflicts to which that courage will be sure to be exposed,* "Though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though its waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof."

I. First, then, let us carefully consider THE CONFIDENCE OF THE SAINTS.

God's people have a sure confidence. Other men build as best they may, but true believers rest upon the Rock of ages. *Their confidence is altogether beyond themselves*. In this song there is nothing about their own virtue, valor, or wisdom. The heathen moralist boasted that if the globe itself should break, his integrity would make him stand fearless amid the wreck. But the believer has a humbler though a truer reliance. Though the earth is removed he is undismayed, and this does not arise from his own personal self-sufficiency, but from God, who is his refuge and strength. He is fearless, not because of his original stoutness of heart and natural firmness of will, but because he has a God to shelter and uphold him. If he does not fear calamity, it is because he fears God, and God, alone. Our psalm begins with God, and with God it ends—"The God of Jacob is our refuge." We may be as timid by nature as the conies, but

God is our refuge, we are as weak by nature as bruised reeds, but God is our strength. We never know what strength is till our own weakness drives us to trust omnipotence, never understand how safe our refuge is till all other refuges fail us. When the earth is removed, and the waters of the sea roar and are troubled, being driven both from land and sea, we hide ourselves in God. You who are strong in yourselves imagine strength where only weakness can be found, you seek the living among the dead, and substantial confidences amid the "vanity of vanities." If we look to ourselves for courage we shall fail in the hour of trial. When the earth is removed, the mightiest men are the first to shudder; the greatest boasters become the worst cowards. For confidence and peace we must say unto the Lord, "All my fresh springs are in You."

This confidence is gained by an appropriating faith. Peace comes to me, not only by what God is, but by what God is *to me*. "God is *our* refuge and strength." "This God is *our* God." You never enjoy the goodness and greatness of God if you view them in an abstract manner, you must grasp them as your own. It seems a daring act for a man to appropriate God, and yet the Lord invites us to do it, He says, "Let him take hold of My strength."

Why hesitate to make the appropriation? Look at the men of the world, they would appropriate the whole earth if they could—continents are not too wide. It is no fault of theirs if they do not hedge in the stars, and monopolize the sun. And shall not the Christian appropriate those heavenly things of which he is made the heir—an heir of God, a joint-heir with Christ Jesus? Let us join with the prophet Jeremiah in his comfortable soliloquy, "The Lord is my portion, says my soul; therefore will I hope in Him." As with Thomas we behold the print of the nails, let us say unto our blessed Redeemer—"*My* Lord and *my* God." The deep peace which is our right and privilege will not be ours unless, with assured faith, we take the Lord to be ours in all the fullness of His love. Come, let us now say—"God is our refuge and strength."

This confidence will be greatly sustained by a clear knowledge of God. "Acquaint yourself with God, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto you." If we were greater students of God, how much happier we would be! Pope said, "The proper study of mankind is man." It is a deplorably barren subject. Say, rather, "The proper study of mankind is God." When men of God make God their study, then they discover in Him those things which make Him a refuge for their hours of danger; strength for days of labor, and a help for emergencies of every kind. We ought to be able to say more of God today than we could a few years ago, our general notion should now branch out into instructive particulars. We ought to now see the varied blessings which come to us from God, and to speak of Him under a threefold description as "our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." We notice under the Old Testament dispensation that certain sacrifices, like the doves and pigeons which were brought by poor Israelites, were simply cut in two, and were laid on the altar. But other offerings which were brought by richer Israelites were more carefully divided. Take the offering of the rich to represent, as a type, the ideas of those, who are well taught in knowledge and have a

greater experience of the things of God, and then you see how matters of detail were mentioned. When bullocks were presented we read of the fat, and the head, and the legs, and the inwards; so here we read of refuge, and strength, and help. The more we know the Lord, the more shall we perceive that He is full of blessings to us. "They that know Your name will put their trust in You." You shall be saved by the little knowledge which trusts God, but your peace shall be far fuller and deeper if you know the deep things of God and understand His secrets thereof, for then you shall not be afraid of evil tidings, since your heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. If you are as yet a timid believer, seek to grow in the knowledge of God, for thus shall you learn to say, "Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed." Half our fears are the result of ignorance. Truth as yet unknown would greatly encourage us if we did but perceive it. If we knew more of God we would be bold as lions. Therefore I exhort all true believers here to dwell much in the presence of God, and ask to be instructed in the nature, the character, the attributes of God; yes, the purpose, the promise, and the providence of the covenant God of Israel. To know Him is life eternal. Solid peace, which no calamity can destroy, must come from God; from God appropriated, and from God growingly known.

All this will be certified to us by our experience. This Psalm is best sung by men and women who know what they are singing, because they have felt the preserving and delivering grace of God. I shall put it to you this morning, you that know the Lord, can you not say by experience, "God is our refuge"? You have fled to Him; have you not found a shelter in Him? There have been times of trial so severe that you could not endure its force, but were compelled to flee from it. You fled to God; was His door closed against you? Did He bid you go elsewhere? Did He upbraid you for your presumption? And when you have hidden yourself in God, let me ask you, has He not afforded you a very blessed retreat? When you have entered into your chamber, shut your door, and hidden yourself with God, have you not been at perfect peace? Yes, you have been as safe and as happy as Noah when the Lord shut him in. Look at the little chicks yonder, under the hen! See how they bury their little heads in the feathers of her warm bosom! Hear their little chirps of perfect happiness, as they nestle beneath the mother's wings! "He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings shall you trust; His truth shall be your shield and buckler." Have you not found it so? My happiest hours have not been in the days of my mirth, but in the nights of my sorrow. When all waters are bitter, the cup of divine consolation is all the sweeter. For brightness, give me not the sunlight, but that superior glory with which the Lord lights up the darkness of affliction. It is not necessary for happiness that a man should be prosperous in business, or applauded by mankind; it is only necessary that the Lord should smile on him. It is not essential to happiness that he should be in good health, or even that he should be naturally of cheerful spirit; God gives us the truest health in sickness, and the tenderest joy amid depression. Brethren, "God is our refuge." It is many a day since first we went to Him, and we have been many times since, but He has never failed us once. I appeal to the aged

and the experienced here, and I know that the older they are and the more tried they have been, the more steadfast will they bear their witness that "God is a refuge for us."

We can also say that God has been our strength. When we have not been afflicted, but have had arduous labor to perform for God, we have been made to feel and mourn our weakness, and then the Lord has made us to glory in infirmity, because His power has rested on us. What multiform shapes that strength has taken! Many of you have had strength for the daily battle of business life, others for domestic life. Under fierce temptations you remain unconquered, under stern duties you remain unwearied; you have had strength for exhausting service or crushing suffering. Had you been left to your own wit and wisdom, they alone could never have sufficed you; strength of mind has been given from above. See the widow, left penniless, who has brought up a family of children! Can she tell how she did it? See the girl placed amid coarse and brutal men of licentious character, she remains pure, but can she tell you how? God is our strength in ways unknown to ourselves. Our trials are all different. No two of us have proved the Lord in exactly the same way, but yet our testimony is uniform; the Lord has been all-sufficient, His strength is perfect. Thus far we find that promise good, "Your shoes shall be iron and brass, and as your days, so shall your strength be."

We have also proved another thing, namely, that God is "a very present help in trouble." We have had helpers after the flesh who have not been present when we needed them—perhaps they have studiously kept out of the way, at any rate, just at the pinch when we have said, "Oh, that so and so were here," our friend has been at the end of the earth. But it has never been so with God. Has He not said, "Before they call I will answer them, and while they are yet speaking I will hear"? Just there where the burden pressed, God has been immediately present to lighten the load. He is not only present, but *very* present, more present than our nearest friend when most present. God's presence permeates us. He is not only by our side, but He is within us, in the heart of our thoughts, at the springs of our life. Beloved, you have sometimes complained that God was absent from you. Because of your sin He has hidden His face from you, but let me ask you, did you ever find the Lord absent in your hour of trial? In the burning furnace, if ever anywhere, you shall see "one like unto the Son of God." He has said, "When you pass through the waters I will be with you." Wherever else He may be supposed to be absent, He will be sure to be present in trouble. Now, this is matter of experience and because we have experienced it, therefore will we not fear though the earth be removed. Having already tried and tested God, we are not going to doubt Him, now. We feel something of the mind of Sir Francis Drake, who, after he had sailed round the world, was buffeted with a storm in the Thames. "What?" he asked, "have we sailed round the world safely, and shall we be drowned in a ditch?" So do we say at this day. Helped so long, and helped so often! God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble, why should we fear? How dare we fear?

Once more, dear friends, in order to realize the fearlessness of which this text so sweetly sings, we must not only have a past experience at our

back, but *an immediate enjoyment of the divine help*. If you can truly sing in your soul, "God is my refuge and my strength," then it will be impossible for you to be afraid. A sense of the nearness and graciousness of God will be an antidote to fear. I know that it is so in alarms and distresses which come under my observation. I have stood often at the bedsides of dear brethren and sisters, members of this church, when they have come to die, and I have, without exception, always found them perfectly restful and free from fear. It is a sorrow to see friends full of pain, and to know that they are dying, but the various interviews that I have had with the departing have left no impression of gloom on my mind, but the very reverse. I came this week out of a quiet bedchamber where I saw a Sunday school teacher passing away. It was a little sanctuary. Everything so quiet, peaceful, happy. Death cast no shadow over the sweet face. Heaven lighted the features. It seemed more like a marriage day than a death day. Why are these dying beds so happy? Because these people have any goodness of their own? Far from it; without exception they disown it. Because they are strong and self-contained? No. I might speak of young and old believers, greatly emaciated by long sickness, and yet as greatly strong in faith. What brings this peace? Truly, the Lord was there. His presence realized makes death a small matter. Do we not sing—

"Oh, if my Lord would come and meet,
My soul should stretch her wings in haste,
Fly fearless through death's iron gate,
Nor feel the terrors as she passed"?

The presence of God with the soul of a believer swallows up death in victory, and anything else that is terrible in time or in eternity loses its terror in the presence of the mighty God of Jacob. Thus have I shown you where the confidence of the Christian really lies.

II. I come, secondly, to notice THE COURAGE WHICH GROWS OUT OF IT.

This courage is very full and complete. "Therefore will not we *fear."* It does not say, "Therefore will we not run away," but, "Therefore will not we fear." It does not even say, "Therefore will not we faint and swoon in dread," but, "Therefore will not we *fear."* The presence of God does so stay the soul and quiet the heart, that fear, which has torment, is driven away. Nature fears, it could not be otherwise; but through grace the heaven-born spirit triumphs over nature and its fear. God does not take away from us those natural fears which lead us to seek the preservation of life, but He masters them by a serene security of heart produced by His presence. We are perplexed, but not in despair. We see the position to be full of danger, and yet we know that we are in no danger, the Lord being near. "Therefore will not we fear." It is a most delightful thing, when the heart is placid, because we believe in God and in His Christ. This peace is the peace of God which passes all understanding; no pretence of peace, but a divine reality which the world can neither create nor destroy.

Then, further, *this courage is logically justifiable*. It is not the courage of nature, which may be a mere brute virtue, such as dogs and bulls possess. Neither does it grow out of lack of feeling. The courage of the Christian is not the hardness of the stoic. The stoic boasts that he does

not feel, the Christian does feel, feels as keenly as anybody and much more than most; and yet, for all that, the conscious love of God lifts him above fear. The believer's fearlessness is founded upon argument, and so the Psalmist words it, *"Therefore* will not we fear." Because God is present as the refuge of His people, it is unreasonable for them to fear.

Observe, then, dear friends, that whatever happens to the man who has God to be his God he need not fear, because none of these things will affect the ground of his confidence. No calamity will change God's love to us. Suppose we should witness an earthquake, a tempest, a famine, pestilence, a war; none of these would separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. These temporal calamities do not touch the vital matter; such things have no influence upon the unchangeable love of God, except to make it clearer.

Suppose again, that the most awful things were to occur, would they not occur according to God's decree? We believe in a God who has arranged all things according to the counsel of His will. Do you believe that anything is left to chance? Is any event outside the circle of the divine predestination? No, my brethren, with God there are no contingencies. The mighty charioteer of providence has gathered up all the reins of all the horses, and He guides them all according to His infallible wisdom. There is a foreknowledge and predestination which concerns all things, from the motion of a grain of dust on the threshing floor to that of the flaming comet which blazes across the sky. Nothing can happen but what God ordains, and therefore, why should we fear?

Again, nothing happens without the divine power being in it. The Lord says, "Behold, I have created the smith that blows the coals in the fire. I have created the waster to destroy." The most violent and wicked men could not move a finger if strength were not lent them by the Lord. As for the catastrophes of nature, is not the Lord distinctly in them? Who shakes the earth? Is it not God that looks on it and it trembles? When the mountains vomit fire, is it not because He touches the hills and they smoke? Our Father works all things, therefore should His children be afraid?

Furthermore, do not you and I believe that God overrules everything, that even that which naturally might be called evil is turned to good account? The Lord's goodness extracts the viper's tooth, and supplies an antidote to the poison. It was evil, but God transmuted it into good by the alchemy of His divine wisdom. Who is he that can harm you? "No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn."

Furthermore, we know that nothing that can happen, however tremendous it may be, can shake the kingdom of God. Our chief possession lies in that kingdom, and if that is secure, all is safe. The gates of hell shall not prevail against that kingdom, therefore, whatever is imperiled, our highest, best, and most vital interests are safe beyond the shadow of harm. Suppose an accident should take away our lives, I smile as I think that the worst thing that could happen would be the best thing that could happen. If we should die, we should but the sooner be "forever with the Lord." If in the quiver of God's providence there should lie an arrow

which shall today bring us death, it would also bring us glory. So, if the very worst that can befall us is the best that can come, why should we fear? I think this is good reasoning, is it not? If you are a believer indeed, and if God is your refuge and your strength, there is a logical reason why you should not yield to alarm.

Now, *this fearlessness is exceedingly profitable*. If a man is able to contain himself, and possess his soul in patience through the presence of God, he will not do that which is foolish. Men, when they are frightened are in hot haste, and hurry themselves into folly. As if they were turned to children, men in their alarm will act without reason; in fact, terror is a kind of madness. Many absurd actions have been performed under the influence of panic. In times of danger the man who is calm is the most ready to use the proper means of escape. Presence of mind is invaluable, and the best way to secure presence of mind is to believe in the presence of God. In cases of sickness, the patient who does not fret is the most likely to be cured. We have had among us just now instances of dear friends in this church, who have been called to undergo most serious operations, and it has been a wonderful help to them that they have known no dread, but have been passive in the Lord's hands. Our Lord Jesus was ever sweetly serene, and this was one element of the wisdom of His behavior. In the struggle of life a cheerful fearlessness is a grand assistance. Here is a man on the Exchange, and things are going heavily against him, prices are falling, and all that he can do appears to make bad worse. If that man gives way to fear he may plunge into utter ruin, but if he can step aside a minute or two, and breathe a prayer to God, he will pull himself together, and when he comes back he will coolly survey the situation, and act with discretion. Lose your head and you lose the battle. Lose your heart, and you have lost all. To him who knows no fear there is no fear, provided that his forgetfulness of fear arises out of his memory of God. For the prudent government of life as well as for its enjoyment the overcoming of fear is a great help.

Fearlessness also assists in keeping us from doing wrong. The man who can trust God with consequences will not do wrong in order to escape from losses. The man who yields to the fear of man is apt to conceal his convictions, and if he does not deny the faith, he is apt to attempt a compromise, and that is the most dangerous operation which a Christian man can enter on. If faith in God lifts us up above the fear of losses and sufferings, we shall say to every form of temptation, "Get you behind me, Satan."

One thing more I desire to say about this fearlessness, namely, that *it brings great glory to God*. If you are enabled to rise above fear in times of alarm, then those who see you will say, "This is a man of God, and this is God's work upon his soul." I knew a youth, near forty years ago, who was staying with relations when a thunderstorm of unusual violence came on at nightfall. A stack was struck by lightning and set on fire, within sight of the door. The grown-up people in the house, both men and women, were utterly overcome with fright. The strong men seemed even more afraid than the women. All the inmates of the house sat huddled together. Only this youth was quietly happy. There was a little child upstairs in

bed, and the mother was anxious about it, but even her love could not give her courage enough to pass the staircase windows, to bring that child down. The babe cried, and this youth, whom I knew right well, who was then but newly converted, went upstairs alone, took the child, and without hurry or alarm, brought it down to its mother. He needed no candle, for the lightning was so continuous that he could see his way right well. He felt that the Lord was wonderfully near that night, and so no fear was possible to his heart. He sat down and read a psalm aloud to his trembling relatives, who looked on the lad with loving wonder. That night he was master of the situation, and those in the house believed that there was something in the religion which he had so lately professed. I believe that if all of us can, by God's grace, get such a sense of God's nearness to us in times of danger and trouble that we will remain calm, we shall bring much honor to the cause of God and the name of Jesus. Holy confidence sings psalms by its spirit and acts. It is well to sing, in the language of David, "God is our refuge and strength," but it is better still so to act that all can see that we do not fear though the earth is removed.

III. Time has fled, and I must ask your patience while I now dwell for a little while upon the third point, THE CONFLICTS TO WHICH THIS FEARLESSNESS WILL BE EXPOSED. If you become fearless through the presence of God, that courage will be tested.

It will be tried in ways *novel and unusual*. "Though the earth be removed." This is a terrible novelty. Those who have been in earthquakes tell me that the feeling is most singular. It does not seem like a common shake, but as if everything had given way at once. You do not know what to do; the very foundations of everything have slipped from under you. Suppose that the Lord is about to try us in new and unheard of ways, yet, having the Lord to be our refuge, strength, and present help, we will not fear. New trials will bring new grace, and prove the value of old promises.

Certain trials are very *mysterious and threatening*. It would be a great mystery if we were to see "the mountains carried into the midst of the sea." There they have stood for ages, and should they take a leap, we should be at our wits' end to account for their motion. If some giant force plucked them up by their roots, and hurled them into the center of the ocean, we would be amazed. But some afflictions are of that order; you cannot understand them. The sting of sorrow often lies in the unseen. What we cannot comprehend astounds and appalls us. Yet, my brethren, we need not fear if God is with us, though the mountains were hurled into the midst of the sea, the Lord could put them back into their places again. If all the devils in hell had a hand in your trouble, you need not therefore be alarmed, for one God is greater than millions of demons. If all the legions of the pit rushed forth in hosts innumerable as flying locusts, all armed to the teeth, and eager for your blood, yet the Lord of hosts being with you, you would march through them as a man goes through a field of grass. One lion does not fear a flock of sheep, and one man who trusts in God is master of armies of adversaries. Therefore, we

will not fear, "though hills amid the seas be cast." Our God is mightier than all mysterious forces whatsoever.

Some trials also seem to be *utterly ungovernable*—"Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled." You cannot do anything with the sea when it rages. It hurls itself aloft in great masses, it yawns in fathomless abysses, it rushes, it whirls; it sinks. As for its noise, it drowns your thoughts. The water is here, there, everywhere, when the deep once begins to break loose, and certain troubles seem to be of like nature, they rush upon you all of a sudden, they multiply like swelling waves, they drive furiously, they carry all before them, and yet even then we need not fear. If God is with us, He is mightier than the noise of many waters, yes, than the mighty waves of the sea. There is no reason to fear noise, and none even to fear the sea, for "the Lord sits upon the flood; yes, the Lord sits King forever." Let the sea roar, and let its waters be troubled, our faith shall never yield to fear.

Sometimes we get afraid through *sympathy with the fear of others*. Observe, "Though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof," as though when the sea had taken to roaring and trembling, the mountains followed it in sympathy. So, when we see the strongest people giving way, and panic seizing upon them, we are apt to yield, but if God is with us, and we can hold firm to the truth that He is our refuge and our strength, we shall not fear.

"Well," says one, "what is the practical run of all this?" Why, just this. There may come to you and to me trouble great and unexpected and it will then be well to rise out of the reach of fear. War may soon burst upon us. The political atmosphere is charged with war, and we may be surrounded by it before the year grows old. We have enjoyed, as a nation, so much of rest within our own island that we have grown somewhat secure, but even if war were at our gates, those who have made the Most High their refuge need not fear.

Something worse than war is threatening; anarchy seeks to make havoc in the streets. There are plenty of signs and tokens that a breakup of social order is desired by not a few. Fierce spirits are eager to repeat among us the horrors of the French Revolution. To break down, divide, destroy, disintegrate, is the policy of many. The earthquake of society is more to be dreaded than the quaking of the globe, and we are within measurable distance of such a catastrophe. Shall we lie down and die? No, verily, we will not fear, though the earth is removed. If God is our confidence we need not be afraid, though the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing. The unloosing of the bond of society is a thing to be dreaded more than an incursion of wild beasts, but the Lord reigns, and therefore right will prevail.

Perhaps some of you feel this sad depression of trade weighing upon your spirits. "I do not know what is coming of it," says one, "I do not think I shall long be able to provide for my family." Yes, but if God is your refuge and strength, I beseech you, do not lose heart. "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed." This depression is to you what the earthquake has been to the Riviera, but yet you must not be buried in despair. Hope on, hope always.

"Ah!" says one, "but I fear the return of persecution. Popery is making rapid strides, and may come into power again." I am not quite so much alarmed about that as some are, but even if it were so, we must not show the white feather. Do not be afraid. He that helps His people is stronger than their adversaries. He can deliver from the jaws of the lion, and He will deliver without fail.

As for myself, I am often sadly tossed about because of the heresies and false doctrines of this present age. It grieves me to the heart to see the lack of spirituality among ministers, and of holiness among professing Christians. It cuts me to the quick to see the utter rubbish and poison which is preached instead of Christianity. At times it looks as if all things were going wrong, the men to whom one looked as pillars forsake the faith, and the staunchest give way for the sake of peace. We are apt to cry, "What will become of us?" But if God is our refuge and strength, we need not be afraid, even amid general apostasy. While God lives, truth is in the ascendant. I remember years ago meeting with that blessed servant of God, the late Earl of Shaftesbury. He was at Mentone with a dying daughter, and he happened that day to be very much downcast, as, indeed, I have frequently seen him, and as, I am sorry to confess, he has also frequently seen me. That day he was particularly cast down about the general state of society. He thought that the powers of darkness in this country were having it all their own way, and that, before long, the worst elements of society would gain power, and trample out all virtue. Looking up into his face, I said to him, "And is God dead? Do you believe that while God lives the devil will conquer Him?" He smiled, and we walked along by the Mediterranean communing together in a far more hopeful tone. The Lord lives, and blessed be my rock. As long as the Lord lives our hope lives also. Gospel truth will yet prevail; we shall live to see the old faith to the front again. The church, like Noah's dove, will come back to her rest again, and bring something with her which shall prophesy eternal peace.

Now, my beloved friend, think about yourself a minute, and all the trials which may yet beset you. If you are to be afflicted with incurable sickness, and gradually to pine away amid multiplied pains, yet you need not fear. If you are to be an invalid from this time forth to the end of your days, yet, be not greatly depressed in spirit, for the Lord's presence will sustain you. If heart and flesh both fail, God will be the strength of your heart, and your portion forever. By and by you and I will have to die, unless the Lord should suddenly come. What then? Then will the earth be removed, so far as we are concerned, and then, as far as our experience goes, our mountain will be carried into the midst of the sea, but since God is our refuge and strength we ought not to dread the day.

Look into the Book of Revelation and you will see that tremendous events are foretold. All things shall be shaken; all the glories of earth shall melt away. Confusion, like the first chaos, shall cover all things; the earth shall rock and reel, and the stars shall fall from heaven. But even then will not we fear, since God will be our very present help. Some people dine on horrors; they are not content unless a future is set before them spiced with dread. I confess that I am not of their mind. The Lord

Jesus has made an end of horrors for me. Whether we live or die we shall be "forever with the Lord," and to be where He is, is to be far away from fear. There will come a day when the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall rise, but we fear not resurrection. There shall be a day of days, for which all other days were made, with its great white throne, and pomp of angels, and judgment of quick and dead, but, beloved, though that day shall burn as an oven, we will not fear, because we are secure in Christ Jesus. Therefore let us stand at the window and look out at the storm, and see the wreck of matter and the crash of worlds without a trace of fear.

I thought as I read my text what an awful case the ungodly must be in, for the very things which men most dread, namely, the falling of mountains and the gaping open of the earth, will become the desire of terrified sinners at the last. How great must be that horror which will altogether eclipse the horror which sends myriads flying in panic from their homes! When sinners shall see the face of Christ in His glory, they will entreat the mountains to fall upon them, and the rocks to cover them, to hide them from the dreadful vision. The face of love is terrible to those who have rejected it. Oh sinners, what will be your anguish when you shall seek death, and not find it! What will be your dismay when even a tottering mountain, reeling with earthquake, shall be regarded as a friend! Oh, that you would escape from the wrath to come! Oh, that you would by faith take Jesus to be your refuge and your strength!—

"You sinners, seek His grace,
Whose wrath you cannot bear;
Fly to the shelter of His cross,
And find salvation there."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
PSALM 46, 47, 48.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—46 (VERSION 1), 673, 686.

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THE PLEADING OF THE LAST MESSENGER
NO. 1951

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 6, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Having yet therefore one son, his well-beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son. But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours. And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard. What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others."
Mark 12:6-9.

BRETHREN, you know the story of God's dealing with Israel, and Israel's dealing with God. The Lord chose their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; He made them a race separated unto Himself, He brought them out of Egypt from under the iron yoke, He led them through the Red Sea, He fed them for forty years in the wilderness, He led them about and tutored them, even as a man teaches His son. In due time He brought them into the land which flows with milk and honey, and He put them under a dispensation eminently gentle and full of tenderness, where as a nation they might enjoy unbroken prosperity, "sitting every man under his vine and under his fig tree, none making them afraid." All that He required of them was that He should be their God, and that they should put no idols in His place, but should obey His statutes. Alas! From the first they copied the nations among whom they dwelt, they set up the gods of Egypt when they were in the wilderness, and in Canaan they went astray after the polluted deities of the nations. They worshipped defiled gods with rites obscene; they even passed their children through the fire to Moloch, and did horrible things which angered the Most High. In His long-suffering He sent them prophets one after another—prophets who received unworthy treatment at their hands whenever they rebuked their sins. The prophets were derided, persecuted, and even slain with the sword. God in great patience sent them more of His messengers, some of them grandly eloquent, like Isaiah and Ezekiel; others of them full of tears, like Jeremiah, or clothed with dignity, like Daniel. They warned the people, and ceased not to plead with them, whether they would hear or whether they would forbear. Cruel treatment awaited many of the servants of the Lord; they were stoned, they were sawn asunder.

Israel rejected the servants that came from the great Householder asking for the rent of His vineyard. They repudiated the claims of God, and cast off allegiance to Him with contempt and disdain, until at last the nation was led into captivity, and in the end only lingered on the chosen

soil as a mere remnant. Judah wept upon the dunghill, whereas before she was adorned with bridal ornaments, and sat upon the throne. The adversary ruled in the halls of David, for the days of Herod, the Idumaean tyrant, had come. The Roman yoke was heavy upon the people; their sins had brought them low. God, in His infinite compassion, gave them one more opportunity. He had one Son, His Well-beloved Son, and He sent Him to His Israel. With lips that dropped mercy, and with eyes that overflowed with tenderness, He came. "Oh, that you had known," He said, "even you, in this your day"! He wept over the city which would not be saved. But His warning and His weeping were lost upon the blinded people. Those who had rejected the prophets also rejected the Lord; the fate of the servants was repeated in "the Heir." "Let us kill Him," they said, and they put Him to the death of the cross. You know the story; it is full of infinite mercy on God's part, and of immeasurable guilt on the part of man. God seemed to out-do Himself in His long-suffering, and man seemed to out-do himself in his wanton defiance of the Most High. Sin culminated in the murder of the Son of God, it reached its utmost height of horror when the cry was heard, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" Yes, they crucified the Lord of Glory.

What has this to do with us? I am not going to preach this morning merely to rehearse a piece of ancient history which has no bearing on today; I do not so regard the death of our Lord. My anxiety is to reach the consciences of living men, and if possible, to win to the Blessed Heir of all things, who has risen from the dead, some of those who have had a share in His death. I would bring to the Great Householder the fruits of the vineyard which He Himself has planted, and I would move many hearts to relent towards Him at the remembrance of the wicked injuries which have been done to His servants and to His Son. May the Spirit of God silently move over this audience at this time, as I try to use this passage, not in its strictest application, but with such an application as I am sure the Spirit of God will approve! May He bless the Savior's word to present uses that we may this day repent!

The fact is that unless changed by divine grace, we have all refused to pay to our great God the service which is due Him. He has put us here and given us this life, like a vineyard, for us to cultivate, but many have cultivated that vineyard entirely for themselves—themselves or their families and friends, and not for their God, their Maker. "God is not in all their thoughts." Now, the Lord has sent to such many messengers. We have had no prophets in these days living among us, but we have the Word of God and the record of the testimonies of His inspired messengers and these virtually speak to us. We have Moses and the prophets; they are speaking to us even now. Besides that, we have been surrounded by men of God, and encompassed by holy women who have appealed to us on God's behalf. They have been urged to speak by the love of their hearts, and they have tried to bring us to repent of past rebellion and to yield ourselves at once to God. Many are the voices around us and within us which persuade to render unto the great Householder His due, but in many cases none of these have been successful. Last of all God has sent

to each one of us His Son, that He in His own person may lovingly repeat with greater emphasis the requirements of the Lord of love. The incarnate wisdom now cries to us, "My son, give Me your heart." Jesus warns us, "Except you repent, you shall all likewise perish." He sets before us the way of reconciliation, and bids us believe in Him and live. With many a charming parable He would draw the far-off prodigal home to the bosom of forgiving love. The very coming of the Son of God in human form, as Emmanuel, God with us, is love's great plea for reconciliation. Who can resist so powerful an argument? It is in the person of Jesus Christ that God makes His last and strongest appeal to the human conscience. By the Christ of God, He virtually says this morning, "Turn you, turn you: why will you die, O house of Israel?" And I would to God that the answer might be from many a heart, "Come, let us return unto the Lord; for He has torn, and He will heal us." Cause it to be so, O great Spirit!

Three things I shall speak of this morning. The first will be *the amazing mission,* "Having yet therefore one son, his well-beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, they will reverence my son." Secondly, *the astounding crime,* "they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard." And therefore, thirdly, *the appropriate punishment,* of which the text says, "What shall therefore the lord of the vineyard do?" What vengeance can be sufficient for so base a deed?

I. First, then, let us dwell for a few moments upon THE AMAZING MISSION, "Having yet therefore one son, his well-beloved, he sent him also."

Please remember concerning the Son of God, sent to us to reconcile us to the Father that *He came after many rejections of divine love*. As to Israel He followed the prophets, so to us He comes after many others. There are none among us, I should think, who have been left without admonitions and expostulations from God. He began early with some of us, calling us, like Samuel, when as yet we were children. He repeated those calls to us all through the days of our youth. It was never cheap to some of us to sin; we never went astray but what there was a something within which plucked us by the sleeve, and warned us of our wrong-doing. We have been called to God by most earnest entreaties of faithful men and affectionate women. Discourses have been addressed to us who might have moved hearts of stone, but yet, though stirred for the moment, we remain obstinate enemies to God, dishonest to His claims, careful of this world and forgetful of the world to come. After all these refusals, if the Lord had closed the casket of mercy, and had opened the vials of vengeance and had poured them out upon us, who could have blamed Him? Instead of which He still, in His long-suffering pity, speaks to us by His Son. Jesus Christ, by whom He made the worlds, condescends to be the Messenger of the covenant of grace. He gently reminds us of our offenses against the great Father, of our willfulness in not returning to Him, and of the tremendous peril which we incur by remaining in opposition to the great God. The very existence of our Savior gives us warning of our sin, of our ruin, and of the only way of escape. If it is so, that we have rejected God's claims so often, will not the time past suffice us to have played this

dreadful game? Have we not had enough of trifling with our souls? O Lord, how long shall men act the part of fools and risk their immortal souls? Oh, will they not at length yield to wisdom? Jesus Himself, by the preaching of the gospel, pleads with us; are we determined to persevere in our evil ways? Do we not feel some tender relenting? Does not a "still small voice" urge us to arise and go to our Father? After many provocations, will we not at length yield to the God of grace?

Remember, that Jesus Christ when He comes to us today, as the messenger of the Father, *comes for no personal ends*. When the messengers were sent by the householder, it was to claim the householder's rent; when the heir came, it was for the same purpose. So it is in the human emblem, but in the divine, this becomes less conspicuous. When Jesus pleads with us, although He urges us to render unto God our love and our obedience, yet God does not stand in need of these as the householder stood in need of his rents. What is it to the infinite Jehovah whether you serve Him or not? If you rebel against God, will He be less glorious? If you will not obey the Lord, what difference can it make to His boundless happiness? Will His crown shine the less brightly, or His heaven be less resplendent because you choose to be a rebel against Him? What if the straw strives with the fire, will the fire be quenched by it? If a gnat should contend with yonder blast furnace, you know what the end would be. It is for your own sake that God would have you yield to Him, how can it be for His own? If He were hungry He would not tell you, for the cattle on a thousand hills are His. He can crush whole worlds to dust, "or with His word or with His nod," and do you think He has anything to gain from you? You alone will be the gainer or the loser, therefore when Jesus prays you to repent, believe in the selflessness of His heart; believe that it can be nothing but the tenderest regard for your well-being which makes Him warn you. Hear how Jehovah puts it, "As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." A messenger after many rejections, a messenger who comes solely out of love to us, ought to have our respectful attention.

Let us see for a minute who this messenger, is. *He is one greatly beloved of His Father,* and in Himself *He is of surpassing excellence*. The Lord Jesus Christ is so inconceivably glorious that I tremble at any attempt to describe His glory. Assuredly, He is very God of very God, coequal and co-eternal with the Father, and yet He deigned to take upon Himself a human form. He was born an Infant into our weakness, and He lived as a carpenter to share our toil. When He quits the bench and the saw, it is to follow still more laborious ways as a teacher and healer of the people. He was the lowly and suffering teacher of the blessed will of the Father. He took upon Himself the form of a servant, and yet in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. He is the Prince of the kings of the earth, and yet He took a towel and washed His disciples' feet. Such is He who pleads with you. So majestic and so compassionate, so great, and yet so good, will you refuse Him? If I plead with you, I am but as you are, flesh of your flesh, but if Jesus speaks to you, I beseech you by the

glory of His Godhead, as well as by the tenderness of His manhood, do not refuse Him. Because of His Godhead you must not dare to harden your hearts. He is God's Well-beloved, and if you are wise, He will be yours. Do not turn your back on Him whom all the angels worship. Beware, lest you reject One whom God loves so well, for He will take it as an insult to Himself; He that despises the anointed of God has blasphemed God Himself. You put your finger into the very eye of God when you slight His Son. In grieving the Christ you do vex the very heart of God, therefore do not do so. I beseech you, then, by the love which God bears to His Son, to listen to this matchless messenger of mercy, who would gladly persuade you to repent.

I have already said that He is so glorious that I cannot describe Him; I will therefore only say that *His graciousness is as conspicuous as His glory*. There was never such a one as He. None of us loves men as Christ loves them, and if the loves of all the tender-hearted in the world could be run together, they would make but a drop compared with the ocean of the compassion of Jesus. Of old His delights were with the sons of men, and though He might have been happy enough among the angels, yet He left their company that He might take up this inferior race. Yes, He espoused our nature and became bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, for love of that chosen company whom He calls His Bride. He hid not His face from shame and spitting, nor His body from the shedding of blood, nor His soul from deadly agony, but He loved the church and gave Himself for it. It is this lover of souls that becomes God's advocate with us, and pleads with us that we would cease from our rebellion. Do not refuse Him! If He were stern and unloving, I could imagine that all the obstinacy of your nature might be awakened, but His love, which passes the love of women, deserves another treatment. If you reject Him, He answers you with tears; if you wound Him, He bleeds out cleansing; if you kill Him, He dies to redeem; if you bury Him, He rises again to bring us resurrection. Jesus is love made manifest—

"Heart of stone, relent, relent;
Break, by Jesus' cross subdued!
See His body, mangled, rent,
Covered with a gore of blood;
Sinful soul, what have you done?
Crucified God's only Son!"

Furthermore, *His manner is most winning*. When I have been pleading for men with God, and I have ceased my pleading, I have feared that something in my tone or in my manner would cause my pleading to fail. I am not, perhaps, as tender as I should be, nor is there sufficient pathos in my tones. If I could do better, I would go to any school to learn. God has put me often to the school of suffering to instruct me in this respect, and yet I do confess my failings with deep regret. But when Jesus, my Lord, pleads with you, this charge cannot be laid against Him. His pleading is perfect. When Jonah preaches, his tones are harsh, and his spirit forbidding, but that can never be said of Jesus. When Jeremiah weeps, there is an undertone of bitter complaint within the sweet sorrow of his love, but it is never so with Jesus, "Never man spoke like this man." If

ever His words thunder—as they often do—even in that thunder there is heard the voice of love. When He flashes with the lightning of judgment against Scribes and Pharisees, yet soft mercy-drops follow every flame of fire. He is stern because He is tender; His utterances of terror are born of a love which dares not conceal the truth, even though it breaks its heart in the telling of it. God is love, and Christ is God's love incarnate among men. Therefore, my hearer, if you see anything about *me* of which you disapprove, censure me if you will, but be all the more attentive to my Lord, about whom there is nothing but what is wooing and melting. God has sent to you His own Well-Beloved Son; I implore you, do not refuse Him. My heart trembles at the bare suspicion that even one of you should reject the pleading of one so jealous for your eternal welfare.

Yet again, when God sends His Son to plead with men, remember He does not urge us to anything which will be for our loss and detriment; *obedience to Him is happiness for ourselves*. He does not urge us to follow a life of misery, nor to begin a course which will end in our destruction. Far from it. The ways in which He would have us run are ways of pleasantness, and all the paths in which He would lead us are paths of peace. Even repentance is charming sorrow, far sweeter than the joy of sin. They that repent and turn to God through Jesus Christ find such joy, such happiness, that earth becomes to them the vestibule of heaven. The joy-bells ring within the Father's house, when a soul returns to its home. The great Father leads the joy, and all the household rejoice with Him. To persuade you to be holy is to induce you to be happy; to urge you to seek God is to urge you to seek your own best welfare; to urge you to lay down the weapons of rebellion and be reconciled to the Most High, is to set before you the wisest, safest, and best course that you can follow. Therefore, hear Him. The Lord God out of heaven cries to you, "This is My beloved Son; hear Him." Well may you hear Him, when every word that He speaks intends your salvation.

Remember, once more, that if you do not hear the well-beloved Son of God, you have refused your last hope. *He is God's ultimatum*. Nothing remains when Christ is refused. No one else can be sent, heaven itself contains no further messenger. If Christ is rejected, hope is rejected. Neither would you be converted though one rose from the dead, for Jesus has risen from the dead, and you have refused Him. I should like every person here that is unconverted to recollect that there is no other gospel, and no more sacrifice for sin. I have heard talk of "a larger hope" than the gospel sets before us; it is a fable, with nothing in Scripture to warrant it. Rejecting Christ, you have rejected all; you have shut against yourself the one door of hope. Christ, who knows better than all pretenders, declares that, "He that believes not shall be damned." There remains nothing but damnation for those who believe not in Jesus. "There is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." This is clear; for heaven's grandest effort has been made. What more can God do? O heavens and earth! I appeal to you, what more can Jehovah do? If He gives His Son to die, and that great sacrifice is rejected, what remains? Infinite wisdom has done its best, and infinite love has sur-

passed itself; a fearful looking for of judgment is all that despisers may expect.

Thus this amazing mission is set forth before you, and I pray you, as you love yourselves, do not refuse Him that speaks, for if they escaped not who refused Him that spoke on earth, how shall they escape who despise Him that speaks from heaven?

II. I beg your attention while I look, in the second place, to THE ASTOUNDING CRIME. It was nothing less than an astounding crime, that when this householder sent his well-beloved son, the husbandmen said one to another, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours. And they took him, and cast him out of the vineyard." "No," says one, "we never killed the Son of God." I will not charge you with having done so *literally;* that were to make myself chargeable with exaggeration. But a man may do virtually what he cannot do actually. If a murder is committed and I approve of it, if my own principles lead up to it, if I feel no indignation against it, but express myself very coolly about it, if there is reason to believe that if I had been there, I would have done the same, then I may be in the sight of God a partaker in the crime. There are many among us who are guilty of the body and blood of Christ. The hymn we just now sung does not bring a groundless charge—

"Yes, your sins have done the deed,
Driven the nails that fixed Him there,
Crowned with thorns His sacred head,
Plunged into His side the spear,
Made His soul a sacrifice,
While for sinful man He dies!"

Now, I say this, that all those who persistently deny the deity of Christ, virtually kill Him, for the Son of God is not alive if His Godhead is not in existence. It is essential to the idea of Christ, the heir of all things, that He is God, and to deny His Godhead is to stab at His heart.

All those who deny His atonement also slay Him, for the blood of sacrifice is the life of the Christ of God. The very essence of His Christhood, the soul of His character as Jesus, lies in His having been appointed to be a propitiation for sin. No cross no Christ, no atonement no cross. Deny the great expiation for sin, and to the full extent of your power you have annihilated the Christ. As far as you can do it, you have destroyed the Savior.

"Well, we have not done that," cry some of you. "We have been no opposer of the deity or sacrifice of Jesus." But let me remind you that if you do not judge Him to be worthy of your most careful thoughts, if you are indifferent to His claims, and refuse to obey His gospel, you have virtually put Him away. To you it is the same as if there were no Christ—

"Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by?
Is it nothing to you that Jesus should die?"

You have virtually answered "It is nothing." You have set Christ down as nothing compared with the business of daily life, and thus you have virtually slain Him; you have put Him out of existence so far as you are concerned. In the little world of your mind there is no living Savior; He is dead and buried to you, and the claims of God which He pleads you will

not think upon. You have been occupied all the week with trivial amusements, or unimportant discussions, but you have not deigned to think of Him whose advent into the world is so great a wonder, that if you never thought of anything else, you might be justified in a life of devout meditation. He who deserves all your thoughts gets none of them. You have nothing to do with Christ, His cross, His people, or His cause, and therefore—I say it with no harshness, but with much grief—you are killers of Christ, and are guilty of His blood. I charge you with making away with your Savior. I press the accusation home, and trust that it will strike you with horror.

I have still closer work with some of you, who are most assuredly guilty. You were once members of the Church; you came to the communion table, where they gather who remember His precious body and blood; you used to glory in His name, but you have gone back, you have denied the faith, you have ceased to be followers of the Lamb. Now, these are no words of mine, but inspired words—You have "crucified the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame." You are beyond all question among those who have cast the heir out of the vineyard and slain Him, deliberately turning your backs upon His sacred cause. The Lord have mercy on you! You have had no mercy on Christ, or on yourselves.

I must press this home upon a great many more who have heard of Christ, and believe Him to be God, and assent to all the truth about Him, but who yet have never yielded themselves to His authority. O sirs, what have you done? You have preferred the world to Christ; you have chosen Barabbas and condemned the Savior. You have said to the claims of Jesus, "Wait." For whom has your Lord had to wait? What! For a harlot? For a bribe of gold? For your giddy pleasure? When a great question is postponed to let another take precedence of it, we do not object if that other is of pre-eminent importance, but can you say that anything has a greater claim on you than the Son of God? Is there anything that has a greater right to your thoughts, to your consideration, to your love, than the great salvation which Jesus Christ has worked out? If you have pushed the Lord Jesus Christ out of the first place, He will occupy no other, and therefore you have virtually un-Christed Him, and you are guilty of His blood. You must either be justified by Him or you must be condemned by Him. There is no third course to take; you must either believe in Him or disbelieve Him. Now, to refuse to believe Him is to make Him a liar, and to make Him a liar is virtually to slay the Lord of truth. His blood must be on you by faith to cleanse you, or else it will lie on you to condemn you, as it did the Jews of old.

What was the reason why these husbandmen, these dressers of the vineyard, dared thus to treat the heir? The reason is one which presses upon those here present who have rejected Christ. They did it, first, because *they had enjoyed a long immunity from punishment*. They had not been at once punished for their defiance of their lord. They had rejected his messengers without provoking him to war; they had gone on to stone and slay others of his servants, and the householder had not come upon them to overthrow them. The first time they mocked at the messenger

they were somewhat afraid, they feared lest soon the sword of the prince whom they had defied would threaten their gates. But as there was no invasion they grew bold. The next messenger they slew, and washed their hands, in presumption, saying, "Nothing will come of it." They grew at last to be very hardened. I know not what they said, but I conceive that certain of them propagated the theory that their lord took no notice of what they did, or that he was too loving to punish them severely. "See!" they said, "He only sends fresh messengers if we kill the old ones, and even if we kill his son he will bear it. Let us not imagine that he will take vengeance. He is love, and even should we murder his son, he will lay up in store for us a larger hope. At any rate," they seemed to say, "We will run all risks. We will test his graciousness. We will kill his son, and so challenge him to do his worst."

Ungrateful men abuse God's long-suffering today as they did of old. They say, "Well, I have refused the gospel a long time, I have put aside many appeals, but I am not dead, nor struck with blindness, nor smitten down with a stroke. I can go on at least a little longer in safety. I may refuse Christ yet again, for God is merciful." "Certain teachers," you say, "tell us that God is so good, that if we even kill His Son He will take no account of it. We will kill His Son, and so we will reject the atonement, and trample on the precious blood, and yet we doubt not all will come right in the long run, and the evil of our crime will prove to be only temporary." You do not put your thoughts into those words, but you are saying as much by your actions. You dare not *say* it, and yet it lurks in your hearts, and works itself out in your deeds. You are going to run the dreadful risk of trifling with the Son of God. To you this seems a little thing, but horror takes hold of me at the thought of it. O sirs, I will be no partner in your crime. I will not cease to warn you that it must be of all risks the most tremendous. Gracious as He is—and God has proved His grace by sending His Son—yet God is not effeminate or unjust. If you refuse the mercy which He so freely proffers you, He will deal with you in His justice. He is the Judge of all the earth and He must do right. Remember how He puts it, "My sword shall be bathed in heaven." "If I whet My glittering sword, and My hand takes hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to My enemies" (Deut 32:41). For as truly as He is love, so truly is He holiness. He is wondrous in His power to forgive, but He is also terrible out of His holy places. "If the sinner turn not, He will whet His sword; He has bent His bow and made it ready." "Beware, you that forget God, lest He tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver."

The great reason, however, why these husbandmen determined to kill the heir was this; they said, *"Then the inheritance shall be ours."* This is what the heart of man vainly desires. It says, "Let us be rid of this troublesome talk of religion, and then we can live for ourselves, and study our own pleasure without remorse of conscience. Are we not our own? Who shall be lord over us? If we are rid of this Jesus, we shall not have this claim being always made upon us, that we are God's creatures, and that we ought to live to Him. We do not intend to serve God. We will pay no rent to this householder. We will be our own proprietors. God shall

have nothing from us. Who is the Lord, that we should obey His voice? If we can get rid of this Christ business we can live as we wish, and do as we please, and no one will call us to account. If we can persuade ourselves that religion is not true, we shall then care nothing for checks and warnings, but we shall take our full swing and enjoy ourselves without stint. A short life and a merry one will suit us. We might enjoy ourselves if this matter of God, and Christ, and eternity, could be disposed of." Yes, young man, this is what your prototype thought when he said to his father, "Give me the portion of goods that falls to me." Then he gathered all together, and went into a far country, and spent his "substance in riotous living." This is what you hanker after. But your folly is exceedingly great. I grieve as I look into your young face and read the idle dream of your heart. You little know what a tyrant he serves who lives as he wishes. May God grant that I may never live as my sinful lusts would make me live! I had rather be a machine and be compelled to do always what is right than have free will, and with that free will give myself up to do that which is wrong. But there is no need to be made into a machine, the grace of God can make you as free in holiness as in sin. Grace can make you freer in the service of God than in the service of yourself.

Self lies at the bottom of all rejection of Christ—"Let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours." Ah, my hearer! It will not be yours, and if it were yours for a little while, and you could do just as you pleased with it, yet remember that the inheritance which is so gained will soon pass away, and you yourself will soon have to stand before the judgment seat of Christ to give an account of the deeds done in the body, whether they are good, or whether they are bad. And what will *you* do who have slain your Savior? What will you do in that day, which have lived and died unsaved?

III. I must close with that third head, which is so dreadful to me, THE APPROPRIATE PUNISHMENT. I do not suppose that the thought of this subject will be half so dreadful to anybody here who is unconverted as it is to me. I tremble as I meditate upon the wrath to come. How glad I would be if I had not to preach from such a theme! But I must preach from it, or be a traitor to God, and an enemy to you. If you perish, your blood will be required at my hands, if I do not warn you of the punishment of sin. This is how the Savior put it, "When the lord therefore of the vineyard comes, what will he do unto those husbandmen?" He leaves our conscience to award the penalty. He leaves our imagination to prescribe a doom sufficient for a crime so base, so daring, so cruel. They have killed the only son of their lord, what will he do unto those husbandmen?

Here I must interject a terrible passage, which burdens me to deliver. At this present moment I am afraid that this parable is being written out again in the history of the Church of God. God has put into His vineyard, or allowed to come into His vineyard, a number of religious teachers who are not rendering to Him the honor due. Those religious teachers to whom I refer are not teaching the gospel as it is delivered in Holy Scripture, but they are adapting it to the age, and to the scientific knowledge of the period. They are described in the book of the prophet Jeremiah,

"Thus says the Lord of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord. They say still unto them that despise Me, The Lord has said, You shall have peace; and they say unto everyone that walks after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you." The thoughts of their own minds are given instead of the revelation of God. Thus they set up another gospel, which is not another, but there are some that trouble you. My fear is that the Lord will not much longer bear with these husbandmen. He will not long bear these "prophets of the deceit of their own hearts." He will bring an everlasting reproach upon them, and cut them off in His anger. He will destroy those wicked men, and He will give His vineyard to other husbandmen, who will deal more faithfully with the souls of men. I feel in my own soul that it must be so. I dare not live as a preacher of my own inventions. I dare not die as a preacher of my own thoughts, or of the thoughts of other men. I must tell my Master's message or be accursed. The spirit of the age is the spirit of proud self-sufficiency; be it ours to sit at Jesus' feet. My Lord will one day say to me, "I gave you a message, did you deliver it? I bade you speak in My name, did you speak My words or your own? I gave you a revelation; did you deliver that revelation as best you could? Or did you invent a new thing out of your own brain?" I know how I shall answer. I fear that a terrible doom awaits those who go after the fashionable falsehoods of the day. Be they clergymen or dissenting ministers, an unutterably horrible damnation from the right hand of God awaits those who prostitute the office of the ministry for the delivery of human philosophies instead of teaching the gospel of the blessed God. Brethren, beware that none of us sin against the Holy Spirit by setting up our dreams in rivalry with His certainties. Pray for those who do so, lest God deal with them speedily in vengeance. The Lord have mercy upon all false prophets, and bring them humbly and tremblingly to His feet, lest they ensnare the people yet more, to the overthrow of this nation, and the taking away of the candlestick out of its place.

I return to you whom I have already addressed. You have crucified the Son of God by refusing to believe in Him. What shall the Lord do to you when He comes? The sentence cannot be too severe, for the crime is beyond measure horrible. It must be the highest form of punishment known to the law. They slew the servants, and they slew the heir; no temporary punishment can meet the case. Those who plead for a light doom for such a crime must, in their own hearts, be rebels. Those who are evermore making light of hell are probably doing it in the hope of making it easy for themselves. He is the devil's advocate who would judge the punishment of the impenitent to be a light one; God's true servants say, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." Our Lord leaves our own consciences to depict the overwhelming misery of those miserable men who carry their rebellion to its full length.

In the chapter which we read (Matthew 21), our Lord gives us a terrible word. Comparing Himself to the stone which should be the foundation, but which the builders reject, He says, "On whomsoever it shall fall,

it will grind him to powder." Sinner, if you reject the Savior, you will have to feel His full weight. Boundless in power, infinite in majesty, *the whole weight of Him will fall on you.* Will you think that over? Since He breaks the nations in pieces with a rod of iron, judge you His power; since from His presence heaven and earth flee away, judge you His power. But whatever that power may be, you will have to feel the full force of it. This foundation stone falling upon you shall grind you to powder. I will not dwell further upon this tremendous thought, but I will repeat it in set and solemn form; the full weight of the incarnate God, in the day of His wrath, you will have to bear. It is put in another way in that expression—"The wrath of the Lamb." Is not that a marvelous combination, "The wrath of the Lamb"? Love when it turns to jealousy is the fiercest of all passions, and when the love of Christ in infinite justice shall be turned into holy indignation against unrighteousness, then it will be something terrible to think of, and to bear it will be the second death. Are you prepared to bear the awful weight of a Savior's anger? No, you are not. Come, then, to Jesus. "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, while His wrath is kindled but a little." O my hearers, my dear hearers, do not refuse the Lord Jesus, who now pleads with you. I am not worthy to be His ambassador; I am not fit for the office, but yet I would plead with you as a loving brother. Will you lose your souls? Will you reject Christ? O sirs, will you refuse the Son of God? Men and women, can you be as mad as to live and die without the Savior? Are you so far gone as this? Turn, I beseech you, turn this day. Lord, turn them, for your dear Son's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—MATTHEW 21:18-46.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—911, 517, 388.

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THE HOLY SPIRIT—THE NEED OF THE AGE
NO. 1952

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 13, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"O you that are named the house of Jacob, is the spirit of the Lord straitened? Are these His doings? Do not My words do good to him that walks uprightly?" Micah 2:7.

BRETHREN, what a stern rebuke to the people of Israel is contained in the title with which the prophet addressed them—"O you that are named the house of Jacob"! It is as much as to say to them, "You wear the name, but you do not bear the character of Jacob." It is the Old Testament version of the New Testament saying, "You have a name to live, and are dead." They gloried that they were the seed of Israel, they vaunted the peculiar privileges which came to them as the descendants of God's honored and chosen servant Jacob, but they did not act in the same way as Jacob would have acted, they were devoid of Jacob's faith in Jehovah, they knew nothing of Jacob's power of prayer, and nothing of his reliance upon the covenant. The words of Micah imply that the descendants of Jacob in his day were proud of the name of "house of Jacob," but that they were not worthy of it. Nothing is more mischievous than to cling to a name when the thing for which it stands has disappeared. May we never come to such a stage of declension, that even the Spirit of God will be compelled, in speaking to us, to say, "O you that are called the church of God!" To be named Christians, and not to be Christians, is to be deceivers or deceived. The name brings with it great responsibility, and if it is a name only, it brings with it terrible condemnation. It is a crime against the truth of God if we dare to take the name of His people when we are not His people. It is a robbery of honor from those to whom it is due, it is a practical lie against the Holy Spirit; it is a defamation of the character of the bride of Christ to take the name of Christian when the Spirit of Christ is not among us. This is to honor Christ with our lips and disgrace Him by our lives. What is this but to repeat the crime of Judas, and betray the Son of man with a kiss? Brothers and sisters, I say again, may we never come to this! Truths, not names; facts, not professions, are to be the first consideration. Better to be true to God, and bear the names of reproach which the adversary is so apt to coin, than to be false to our Lord, and yet to be decorated with the names of saints, and regarded as the most orthodox of believers. Whether named "the house of Jacob" or not, let us be wrestlers like Jacob, and like him may we come off as prevailing princes—the true Israel of God!

When the Lord found His chosen people to be in such a state that they had rather the name than the character of His people, He spoke to them of the spirit of the Lord. Was not this because their restoration must come from that direction? Was not their evil spirit to be removed by the Lord's good Spirit? "O you that are named the house of Jacob, is the spirit of the Lord straitened?" I believe, brethren, that whenever the church of God declines, one of the most effectual ways of reviving her is to preach much truth concerning the Holy Spirit. After all, He is the very breath of the church. Where the Spirit of God is, there is power. If the Spirit is withdrawn, then the vitality of godliness begins to decline, and the energy thereof is near to dying out. If we ourselves feel that we are backsliding, let us turn to the Spirit of God, crying, "Quicken me in Your way." If we sorrowfully perceive that any church is growing lukewarm, be it our prayer that the Holy Spirit may work graciously for its revival. Let us direct the attention of our fellow Christians under declension to the Spirit of God. They are not straitened in Him, but in themselves, let them turn to Him for enlargement. It is He alone who can quicken us and strengthen the things which remain which are ready to die. I admire the wisdom of God here, that when speaking by the prophet He rebukes the backsliding of the people, and He immediately directs their minds to the Holy Spirit who can bring them back from their wanderings, and cause them to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they were called. Let us learn from this divine wisdom, and in lowly reverence and earnest faith let us look to the Spirit of the Lord.

In speaking to Israel upon the Spirit of God, the prophet Micah uses the remarkable language in our text, upon which I would now speak to you. "O you that are named the house of Jacob, is the spirit of the Lord straitened? Are these His doings? Do not My words do good to him that walks uprightly?" May the Holy Spirit help me to speak, and you to hear!

I. And first, I think we may consider these words to have been spoken TO DENOUNCE THOSE WHO WOULD CONTROL THE SPIRIT OF GOD. "Is the spirit of the Lord straitened?" Can you hold Him a captive, and make Him speak at your dictation?

On turning to the connection you will find that there were certain prophets sent of God to Israel who were unpopular. The message which they brought was not acceptable, the people could not endure it, and so we read in the sixth verse, "Prophesy you not, say they to them that prophesy: they shall not prophesy to them, that they shall not take shame." The words of these prophets came so home to their consciences and made them so ashamed of themselves, that they said, "Do not prophesy; we wish not to hear you." To these Micah replies, "Is the Spirit of the Lord to be straitened by you?"

There were some in those days who would altogether have silenced the Spirit. They would banish all spiritual teaching from the earth, that the voice of human wisdom might be not contradicted. But can they silence the Spirit of God? Has He not continually spoken according to His own will, and will He not continue to do so? Is He not the free Spirit who, like the wind, blows where He wishes? If the adversaries could have slain with the sword all the messengers of God, would He not have found oth-

ers? And if these also had been killed, could He not out of stones have raised up heralds of His truth? While the Scriptures remain, the Holy Spirit will never be without a voice to the sons of men, and while He remains, those Scriptures will not be left without honest hearts and tongues to expound and enforce them. Is it possible for men anywhere to silence the Spirit of God? They may be guilty of the crime because they desire to commit it, and attempt to do so, but yet its accomplishment is beyond their reach. They may "quench the Spirit" in this and that man, but not in those in whom He effectually works. The Almighty Spirit may be resisted, but He will not be defeated. As well might men attempt to stop the shining of the sun, or seal up the winds, or still the pulsing of the tides, as effectually to straiten the Spirit of the Lord—

"When God makes bare His arm,
Who can His work withstand?"

Jehovah speaks, and it is done; who shall resist His word? When His Spirit attends that word, shall it fall to the ground? "My word," says He, "shall not return unto Me void," and all the sinners on earth and all the devils in hell cannot alter that grand decree. Every now and then there seems to be a lull in the history of holy work, a silence as of God, as if He were wearying of men, and would speak no longer to them. But before long, in some unexpected quarter, the voice of the Lord is heard once more, some earnest spirit breaks the awful silence of spiritual death, and again the adversary is defeated. Outbursts of the great spirit of life, and light, and truth comes at the divine will, when men least look for them or desire them. When Jesus has been crucified, even then the Holy Spirit descends, and the victories of the cross begin. No my brethren, the Spirit of the Lord is not silenced; the voice of the Lord is heard above the tumults of the people.

The apostate Israelites also tried to straiten the Spirit of God *by only allowing certain persons to speak in His name*. They would have a choice of their prophets and a bad choice too. See in the eleventh verse, "If a man walking in the spirit and falsehood do lie, saying, I will prophesy unto you of wine and of strong drink; he shall even be the prophet of this people." They had a liking for preachers who would indulge their lusts, pander to their passions, and swell their pride with windy flatteries. This age also inclines greatly to those who have cast off the restraints of God's revelation, and utter the flattering inventions of their own boasted "thought." Your liberal spirits, your large-hearted men, your despisers of the old and hunters after the new—these are the idols of many. As for those who would urge upon men separation from the world and holiness to the Lord, they are Puritanic, and out of date. In Micah's days Israel would only hear false prophets, the rest they would not listen to. "What!" asks Micah "is the spirit of the Lord then to be shut up to speak to you by such men as you would choose? Is He not to speak by whomsoever He pleases?"

It is the tendency of churches in all ages to fetter the free Spirit. Now they are afraid that we shall have too many preachers, and they would restrain their number by a sort of trades-union. In certain churches none must speak in God's name unless they have gone through a certain hu-

manly-prescribed preparation, and have been ordained after a regulation manner; the Spirit of God may speak by the ordained, but He must not speak by others. In my inmost soul I treasure the liberty of prophesying. Not the right of every man to speak in the name of the Spirit, but the right of the Spirit to speak by whomsoever He pleases. He will rest on some rather than on others, and God forbid that we should straiten His sovereignty! Lord, send by whomsoever You will send; choose whom You will to the sacred office of ministers of God. Among the poor and illiterate the Spirit of God has had voices as clear and bold as among the educated and refined, and He will have them still, for He is not straitened, and it is the way of Him to use instruments which pour contempt upon all the vain-glory of men. He anoints His own to bear witness for His truth by life and lip; these, the professing church may criticize, and even reject, saying, "The Lord has not spoken by these," but the word of the Lord will stand, notwithstanding the judgment of men. God's true ministers shall be owned of Him; wisdom is justified of her children. The Lord's Spirit will not be straitened or shut up by all the rules, and modes, and methods which even good men may devise. The wind blows where it wishes, and the power of the Spirit waits not for man, neither tarries for the sons of men.

Further, this people tried to straiten the Spirit of God *by changing His testimony*. They did not wish the prophets to speak upon subjects which caused shame to them. They bade them prophesy smooth things. Tell us that we may sin with safety; tell us that the punishment of sin is not as overwhelming as we have feared. Stand up and be advocates for the devil by flattering us with "a larger hope." Hint to us that, after all, man is a poor, inoffensive creature, who does wrong because he cannot help it, and that God will wink at his sins, and if He does punish us for a while, He will soon set it all right. That was the style of teaching which Israel desired, and no doubt they found prophets to speak in that manner, for the demand soon creates the supply. But Micah boldly asks, "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?" Do you think that He will have His utterances toned down, and His revelation shaped to suit your tastes?

Brethren, let me ask you, do you imagine that the gospel is a nose of wax which can be shaped to suit the face of each succeeding age? Is the revelation once given by the Spirit of God to be interpreted according to the fashion of the period? Is "advanced thought" to be the cord with which the Spirit of the Lord is to be straitened? Is the old truth that saved men hundreds of years ago to be banished because something fresh has been hatched in the nests of the wise? Do you think that the witness of the Holy Spirit can be shaped and molded at our will? Is the divine Spirit to be rather the pupil than the teacher of the ages? "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?" My very soul boils within me when I think of the impudent arrogance of certain willful spirits from who all reverence for revelation has departed. They would teach Jehovah wisdom, they criticize His word and amend His truth. Certain Scriptural doctrines are, indeed, discarded as dogmas of the medieval period; others are denounced as gloomy because they cannot be called untrue. Paul is questioned and quibbled out of court, and the Lord Jesus is first praised and then ex-

plained away. We are told that the teaching of God's ministers must be conformed to the spirit of the age. We shall have nothing to do with such treason to truth. "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?" Shall His ministers speak as if He were? Verily, that same treasure of truth which the Lord has committed unto us we will keep inviolate so long as we live, God helping us. We are not so unmindful of the words of the apostle, "Hold fast the form of sound words," as to change a syllable of what we believe to be the word of the Lord.

Certain of these backsliding Israelites went so far as *to oppose the testimony of God*. Note in the eighth verse—"Even of late My people is risen up as an enemy." It is sad when God's own people become the enemies of God's own Spirit, yet those who professed to be of the house of Jacob instead of listening to the voice of the living God, began to sit in judgment upon His word, and even to contradict the same. The worst foes of the truth are not infidels, but false professors. These men called themselves God's people, and yet fought against His Spirit. "What then," asks Micah "is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?" Will the Spirit of God fail? Will His operations on the hearts of men come to nothing? Will the truth of God be put to shame, and have no influence over human minds? Shall the gospel be driven out of the world? Will there be none to believe it? None to proclaim it? None to live for it? None to die for it? We ask, with scorn, "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?" Brethren my confidence in the success of the old faith is not lessened because so many forsake it. "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower thereof falls away: but the word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached to you." If all the confessors of the faith could be martyred, even from their ashes, like a heavenly phoenix, the truth would rise again. The Spirit of the Lord lives, and therefore the truth of God must live also. Is not all truth immortal? How much more that which is the shrine of God! The Spirit's witness concerning the sin of man, the grace of God, the mission of Jesus, the power of His blood, the glory of His resurrection, reign, and advent—this witness, I say, cannot cease or fail. It is to be greatly lamented that so many have turned aside unto vanities, and are now the enemies of the cross, but fear not, for the victory is in sure hands. O you that would control the Spirit of God, remember, who He is, and bite your lips in despair; what can you do against Him? Go bit the tempest, and bridle the north wind, and then dream that the Spirit of the Lord is to be straitened by you! He will speak when He pleases, by whom He pleases, and as He pleases, and His word shall be with power. None can stay His hand, nor say unto Him, "What are You doing?" Thus much upon the first use of our text.

II. The second use of it is this, TO SILENCE THOSE WHO WOULD CENSURE THE SPIRIT. Some even dare to bring accusations against the Holy Spirit of God. Read the text again, "O you that are named, the house of Jacob, is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? *Are these His doings?"* If anything is amiss, is He to be blamed for it?

The low estate of the Church, is that to be laid at God's door? It is true that the Church is not as full of life and energy and power and spirituali-

ty and holiness as she was in her first days, and therefore some insinuate that the gospel is an antique and an effete thing; in other words, that the Spirit of God is not so mighty as in past ages. To which the answer is, "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Are these His doings?" If we are lukewarm, is that the fault of the Spirit of fire? If we are feeble in our testimony, is that the fault of the Spirit of power? If we are weak in prayer, is that the fault of the Spirit who helps our infirmities? Are these His doings? Instead of blaming the Holy Spirit, would it not be better for us to smite upon our breasts and chasten our hearts? What if the church is not "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners," as once she was; is not this because the gospel has not been fully and faithfully preached, and because those who believe it have not lived up to it with the earnestness and holiness which they ought to have exhibited? Is not that the reason? In any case, are these His doings? Can you lay the blame of defection and backsliding, of lack of strength, of lack of faith, at the door of the Holy Spirit? God forbid! We cannot blame the Holy One of Israel.

Then it is said, "Look at *the condition of the world*. After the gospel has been in it nearly two thousand years, see how small a part of it is enlightened, how many cling to their idols, how much of vice and error, and poverty, and misery, are to be found in the world!" We know all these sad facts, but are these His doings? Tell me, when has the Holy Spirit created darkness or sin? Where has He been the author of vice or oppression? From where, come wars and fighting? Come they from Him? Come they not from our own lusts? What if the world is still an Augean stable, greatly needing cleansing, has the Spirit of God in any degree or sense rendered it so? Where the gospel has been fully preached, have not the words of the Lord done good to them that walk uprightly? Have not cannibals, even during the last few years, been reclaimed and civilized? Has not the slave trade, and other villainies, been ended by the power of Christian influence? How, then, can the Spirit of Christ, the spirit of the gospel, be blamed? Will you attribute the darkness to the sun? Will you charge the filthiness of swine to the account of the crystal stream? Will you charge the pest upon the fresh breeze from the sea? It is quite as just, and quite as sensible. No, we admit the darkness and the sin and the misery of men. Oh, that our head were waters and our eyes a fountain of tears, that we might weep day and night concerning these things! But these are not the work of the Spirit of God. These come of the spirit from beneath. He that is from above would heal them. He is not straitened. These are not His doings. Where His gospel has been preached, and men have believed it and lived according to it, they have been enlightened, and sanctified, and blessed. Life and love, light and liberty, and all other good things, come of the Spirit of the Lord—

"Blessings abound wherever He reigns;
The prisoner leaps to lose his chains,
The weary find eternal rest,
And all the sons of need are blessed."

But some have said, "Yes, but then see *how few the conversions are nowadays!* We have many places of worship badly attended; we have others where there are scarcely any conversions from the beginning of

the year to the end of it." This is all granted and granted with great regret, but "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened; are these His doings?" Cannot we find some other reason far more near the truth? O sirs, if there are no conversions we cannot fall back upon the Spirit of God, and blame Him. Has Christ been preached? Has faith been exercised? The preacher must take his share of blame; the church with which he is connected must also inquire whether there has been that measure of prayer for a blessing on the word that there ought to have been. Christians must begin to look into their own hearts to find the reason for defeat. If the work of God is hindered in our midst, may there not be some secret sin with us which hinders the operation of the Spirit of God? May He not be compelled by the very holiness of His character to refuse to work with an unholy or an unbelieving people? Have you never read, "He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief"? May not unbelief be turning a fruitful land into barrenness? The Spirit Himself is not straitened in His power, but our sin has made Him hide Himself from us. The lack of conversions is not His doing; we have not gone forth in His strength. We shake off with detestation the least trace of a thought that should lay any blame to the Spirit of the Most High. Unto us be shame and confusion of face as at this day.

But it is also said that there is *a lack of power largely manifested by individual saints*. Where are now the men who can go up to the top of Carmel and cover the heavens with clouds? Where are the apostolic men who convert nations? Where are the heroes and martyr spirits of the better days? Have we not fallen upon an age of little men, who little dare and little do? It may be so, but this is no fault of the great Spirit. Our degeneracy is not His doing. We have destroyed ourselves, and only in Him is our help found! Instead of crying today, "Awake, awake, O arm of the Lord," we ought to listen to the cry from heaven which says, "Awake, awake, O Zion; Shake yourself from the dust, and put on your beautiful garments." Many of us might have done great exploits if we had but given our hearts to it. The weakest of us might have rivaled David, and the strongest among us might have been as angels of God. We are straitened in ourselves; we have not reached out to the possibilities of strength which lie within grasp. Let us not wickedly insinuate a charge against the good Spirit of our God, but let us in truthful humility blame ourselves. If we have not lived in the light, can we marvel that we are in great part, dark? If we have not fed upon the bread of heaven, can we wonder that we are faint? Let us return unto the Lord. Let us seek again to be baptized into the Holy Spirit and into fire, and we shall yet again behold the wonderful works of the Lord. He sets before us an open door, and if we enter not, we are ourselves to blame. He gives liberally and upbraids not, and if we are still impoverished, we have not because we ask not, or because we ask amiss. Thus much, then, have I spoken, using the text to silence those who would censure the Spirit of God.

III. In the third place, our subject enters a more pleasing phase, while I use it TO ENCOURAGE THOSE WHO TRUST IN THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD. My brethren, let us this morning with joy remember that the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened.

Let this meet our trouble about *our own straitness*. What narrow and shallow vessels we are! How soon we are empty! We wake up on the Sabbath morning and wonder where we shall find strength for the day. Do you not sigh, "Alas, I cannot take my Sunday school class today with any hope of teaching with power; I am so dreadfully dull and heavy, I feel stupid and devoid of thought and feeling"? In such a case, say to yourself, "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?" He will help you. You purpose to speak to someone about his soul, and you fear that the right words will not come. You forget that He has promised to give you what you shall speak. "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?" Cannot He prepare your heart and tongue? As a minister of Christ I have constantly to feel my own straitness. Perhaps more than any other man I am faced by my own inefficiency and inability to address such an audience so often, and to print all that is spoken. Who is sufficient for these things? I do not feel half as capable of addressing you now as I did twenty years ago. I sink as to conscious personal power, though I have a firmer faith than ever in the all-sufficiency of God. No, the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened. Still is that promise our delight, "My Grace is sufficient for you." It is a joy to become weak that we may say with the apostle, "When I am weak then am I strong." Behold, the strength of the Lord is gloriously revealed, revealed to perfection in our weakness. Come, you feeble workers, you fainting laborers, come and rejoice in the unstraitened Spirit. Come, you that seem to plow the rock and till the sand, come and lay hold of this fact, that the Spirit of the Lord is omnipotent. No rock will remain unbroken when He wields the hammer, no metal will be unmelted when He is the fire. Still will our Lord put His Spirit within us and gird us with His power, according to His promise, "As your days, so shall your strength be."

This also meets another matter, namely, *the lack of honored leaders*. We cry at this time, "Where are the eminent teachers of years gone by?" The Lord has made a man more precious than the gold of Ophir. Good and great men were the pillars of the church in former times, but where are they now? Renowned ministers have died, and where are their successors? It is not an infrequent thing with the older brethren for them to say one to the other, "Do you see the young men springing up who will equal those whom we have lost?" I am not among those who despair for the good old cause, but certainly I would be glad to see the Elishas who are to succeed the Elijahs who have gone up. Oh, for another Calvin or Luther! Oh, for a Knox or a Latimer, a Whitefield or a Wesley! Our fathers told us of Romaine and Newton, Toplady and Rowland Hill; where are the like of these? When we have said "where?" echo has answered "where?" But herein is our hope; the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened. He can raise up standard-bearers for His hosts. He can give to His church stars in her firmament as bright as any that ever gladdened our fathers' eyes. He that walks among the golden candlesticks can so trim the lamps that those which are dim shall burn with sevenfold splendor. He, who found a Moses to face Pharaoh, and Elijah to face Jezebel, can find a man to confront the adversaries today. To equip an army of apostolic men would be a small matter to the Creator of heaven and earth. Let us have no fear

about this. He that ascended on high, leading captivity captive gave such large gifts unto men, that unto the end of the dispensation they will not be exhausted. Still He does give evangelists, pastors, and teachers, according as the need of the church may be. Let us cast away all fear as to a break in the succession of witnesses, for the word of the Lord endures forever, and it shall never lack a man to declare it.

Brethren, the great truth now before us may prevent our being dismayed by *the peculiar character of the age in which we live*. It is full of a terrible unrest. The earthquake in the Riviera is only typical of a far greater disturbance which is going on everywhere. The foundations of society are quivering, the cornerstones are starting. No man can foretell what the close of this century may see. The age is growing more and more irreverent, unbelieving, and indifferent. The men of this generation are even greedier of gain, more in haste after their ambitions, than those that preceded them. They are fickle, exacting, hungering after excitement and sensation. Here comes in the truth—"The Spirit of the Lord is not straitened." Was not the gospel intended for every age, and for every condition of human society? Will it not meet the case of London and Ireland as well as the case of the old Roman Empire, in the midst of which it first began its course? It is even so, O Lord! Our fathers trusted in You; they trusted in You, and You did deliver them, and we with joyful confidence fall back upon the same delivering power, saying in our hearts, "The Spirit of the Lord is not straitened," He will bear us through.

But, then, sometimes we are troubled because of *the hardness of men's hearts*. You that work for the Lord know most about this. If anybody thinks that he can change a heart by his own power, let him try with anyone he pleases, and he will soon be at a nonplus. Old Adam is too strong for young Melancthon; our trembling arm cannot roll away the stone of natural depravity. Well, what then? The Spirit of the Lord is not straitened! Did I hear you cry, "Alas, I have tried to reclaim a drunk, and he has gone back to his degradation"? Yes, he has beaten *you,* but is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Do you cry, "But he signed the pledge, and yet he broke it"? Very likely *your* bonds are broken: but is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Cannot He renew the heart, and cast out the love of sin? When the Spirit of God works with your persuasions your convert will keep his pledge. "Alas!" cries another, "I hoped I had rescued a fallen woman, but she has returned to her iniquity." No unusual thing is this with those who exercise themselves in that form of service, but is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Cannot He save the woman that was a sinner? Cannot He create a surpassing love to Jesus in her forgiven spirit? *We* are baffled, but the Spirit is not. "But it is my own boy," cries a mother. "Alas! I brought him up tenderly from his youth, but he has gone astray. I cannot persuade him to hear the word; I cannot do anything with him." Dear mother, register that confession of inability, and then by faith write at the bottom of it, "But the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened." Have faith in God, and never let your discovery of your own weakness shake your firm conviction that with God all things are possible. It seems to me to be a fountain of comfort, a storehouse of strength. Do not limit the Holy One of Israel, nor conceive of the Holy Spirit as bound and

checked by the difficulties which crop up in fallen human nature. No case which you bring to Him with affectionate tears and with an earnest faith in Jesus shall ever be dismissed as incurable. Despair of no man, since the Lord of hosts is with us.

"Ah well!" says one, "but I am oppressed with *the great problem which lies before the Church*. London is to be rescued; the world is to be enlightened. Think of India, China, and the vast multitudes of Africa. Is the gospel to be preached to all these? Are the kingdoms of this world to become the kingdoms of our Lord? How can these things be! Why, sirs, when I think of London alone, a world of poverty and misery, I see the sheer impossibility of delivering this world from the power of darkness." Do you prefer a theory which holds out no hope of a converted world? I do not wonder! Judge after the sight of the eyes and the hearing of the ears, and the thing is quite beyond all hope. But is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Surely the good Lord means to convince the Church of her own powerlessness, that she may cast herself upon the divine might. Looking around she can see no help for her in her great enterprise, let her look up and watch for His coming that will bring her deliverance. Amid apparent helplessness the Church is rich in secret succors. If the Spirit of God shall anoint our eyes we shall see the mountain full of horses of fire and chariots of fire round about the servants of the Lord. Behold, the stars in their courses fight against our adversaries, the earth shall yet help the woman, and the abundance of the seas shall yield their strength unto God. When the time comes for the Lord to make bare His arm, we shall see greater things than these, and then we shall wrap our faces in a veil of blushing confusion to think that we ever doubted the Most High. Behold, the Son of Man comes, shall He find faith among us? Shall He find it anywhere on the earth? The Lord help us to feel in our darkest hour that His arm is not shortened!

IV. I must close by remarking that this text may be used TO DIRECT THOSE WHO ARE SEEKING AFTER BETTER THINGS. I hope that in this audience there are many who desire to be at peace with God through Jesus Christ. You are already convinced of sin, but you are by that conviction driven to despondency and almost to despair. Now notice this; whatever grace you need in order to salvation the Holy Spirit can work it in you. You want a more tender sense of sin. Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Can He not give it to you? You want to be able to perceive the way of salvation; can He not instruct you? You want to be able to take the first step to Christ, you want, in fact, to trust Him wholly and alone, and so find peace in Him. Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Can He not give you faith? Do you cry, "I would believe, but I cannot tell how"? The Spirit will help you to believe. He can shed such light into your mind that faith in Christ shall become an easy and a simple thing with you. The Spirit of God is not straitened; He can bring you out of darkness into His marvelous light. If you are quite driven from all reliance on your own natural power, then cry unto Him, "Lord, help me!" The Holy Spirit has come on purpose to work all our works in us. It is His office to take of the things of Christ and to show them to us. Yield yourself to His gracious direction. Be willing and obedient, and He will lead you into all truth.

Notice again, although you are under deep depression of spirit, and you feel shut up, so that you cannot come forth; yet the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened. He is not weighed down nor discouraged. His name is the Comforter, and He can comfort to purpose. What though you are to-day ready to lay violent hands upon yourself by reason of the trouble of your restless thoughts, yet is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Look you to the strong for strength, even to your God. Does not the Lord cry to you, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else"? Your strength as well as your salvation lies in Him. When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. Trust you in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength. Trust, implicitly trust, for the Spirit of God is not straitened. Your despondency and unbelief are not His doings, they are your own. He has not driven you into this misery. He invites you to come forth from it, and trust the Son of God, and rest in the finished righteousness of Christ, and you shall come at once into light and peace.

May I invite you to remember how many persons have already found joy, peace, and salvation by believing the teaching of the Spirit of God. In the text the question is asked, "Do not My words do good to him that walks uprightly?" Many of us can bear testimony today that the word of the Lord is not word only, but power. It has done good to us. The gospel has not only been much to us, it has been everything to us. Personally, I do not believe and preach the gospel because I have made a choice, and have preferred it to any other theory of religion out of many others which might have been accepted. No. There is no other truth to me. I believe it because I am a saved man by the power of it. The truth revealed by the Spirit has new-created me. I am born again by this living and incorruptible seed. My only hope of holiness in this life, and of happiness in the life to come, is found in the life and death, the person and merit, of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Give up the gospel! I may when it gives me up, but not while it grasps my very soul. I am not perplexed with doubt, because the truth which I believe has worked a miracle on me. By its means I have received and still retain a new life, to which I was once a stranger. I am like the good man and his wife who had kept a lighthouse for years. A visitor who came to see the lighthouse, looking out from the window over the waste of waters, asked the good woman, "Are you not afraid of a night when the storm is out, and the big waves dash right over the lantern? Do you not fear that the lighthouse and all that is in it will be carried away?" The woman remarked that the idea never occurred to her now. She had lived there so long that she felt as safe on the lone rock as ever she did when she lived on the mainland. As for her husband, when asked if he did not feel anxious when the wind blew a hurricane, he answered, "Yes, I feel anxious to keep the lamps well-trimmed, and the light burning, lest any vessel should be wrecked." As to anxiety about the safety of the lighthouse, or his own personal security in it, he had outlived all that. Even so it is with me, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day." From henceforth let no man trouble me with doubts and questionings, I bear in my soul the proofs of the Spirit's truth

and power, and I will have none of your artful reasoning. The gospel to me is truth; I am content to perish if it is not true. I risk my soul's eternal fate upon the truth of the gospel, and I know no risk in it. My one concern is to keep the lamps burning, that I may thereby enlighten others. Only let the Lord give me oil enough to feed my lamp, so that I may cast a ray across the dark and treacherous sea of life, and I am well content. Now, troubled seeker, if it is so, that your minister and many others in whom you confide have found perfect peace and rest in the gospel, why should not you? Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Do not His words do good to them that walk uprightly? Will not you also try their saving virtue?

In conclusion, just a hint to you. The words of God do good to those who walk uprightly. If they do no good to you, may it not be that you are walking crookedly? Have you given up all secret sin? How can you hope to get peace with God if you live according to your own lusts? Give up the hopeless hope. You must come right out from the love of sin if you would be delivered from the guilt of sin. You cannot have your sin and go to heaven; you must either give up sin or give up hope. "Repent" is a constant exhortation of the Word of God. Quit the sin which you confess. Flee the evil which crucified your Lord. Sin forsaken is through the blood of Jesus turned into sin forgiven. If you cannot find freedom in the Lord, the straitness is not with the Spirit of God, but your sin lies at the door blocking up the gangway of grace. Is the Spirit of God straitened? No, His words "do good to them that walk uprightly," and if you in sincerity of heart will quit your sin, and believe in Christ, you also shall find peace, and hope, and rest. Try it, and see if it is not so. Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
EPHESIANS 3:8-21; 4:1-16.**

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—464, 958, 954.

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A TESTIMONY TO FREE AND SOVEREIGN GRACE
NO. 1953

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

"But the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord."
Psalm 37:39.

SALVATION is a blessing peculiar to the righteous. The ungodly do not, as a rule, believe that they have any need of salvation, therefore, they do not desire it, or seek after it. The righteous know that they are born in a fallen state; they acknowledge that they have destroyed themselves by personal sin, and they are conscious of a thousand dangers which surround them. Hence they need salvation, and seek it, and find it. It is to them that salvation has come to make them righteous, for until they are saved they are unrighteous, even as others, but now that salvation has come to their house, they bring forth the fruits of righteousness to the glory of God their Savior.

This may be used as a description of the believer's life; he lives a life of salvation. He is saved in Christ, who is his life, in whom he has forgiveness of sins, and every other covenant blessing. He is always being delivered, or saved, and from the moment in which he begins as a believer till that last moment on earth when he shall be about to depart out of the world unto the Father, his whole life is encompassed within the divine circle of salvation. God is working salvation for him, and salvation in him, and salvation by him, and is giving him to receive the fullness of salvation which he shall forever enjoy in the world to come—

"Salvation is forever nigh
The souls that fear and trust the Lord;
And grace, descending from on high,
Fresh hopes of glory shall afford."

Beloved friends, we rejoice in that right royal word "salvation." We would let its echo fly over the whole world. To us it is a word of great meaning. It does not signify alone salvation from the punishment of sin, though it comprehends that blessing, and we are glad that it does so, but it means complete and immediate salvation from the love of sin, conscious salvation from the power of sin, growing salvation from the propensity to sin, and ultimate salvation from all tendency to sin. When we have gained full salvation, we shall never, never sin again, but shall find ourselves before the throne of God as pure as that throne, made perfect by the work of the Holy Spirit, who will have sanctified us wholly, spirit, soul, and body. Men of the world think, when we talk of salvation, that

we mean escaping from hell, this is all *they* would fear, and so it strikes them as *the* great matter, but we are not of their mind. Being delivered from the pains and penalties of evil is certainly a great gift, but it is by no means the greatest, it follows in the train of a grander blessing, even as the blaze of the comet follows the central light. The righteous dread sin more than hell and wrong is more terrible to them than any punishment which awaits it. The joy of salvation to us is that we are delivered from this present evil world, delivered from the lusts of the flesh, delivered from the old death of natural corruption, delivered from the power of Satan, and from the dominion of evil. Our salvation will not be full till we are totally and finally delivered from every trace of sin, and are "without fault before the throne of God." Sanctification completed is our salvation perfected; purity without spot will be our Paradise Regained.

"The salvation of the righteous" in the broadest sense of the word "is of the Lord," and the more breadth of meaning we give to it, the more completely we shall see that it must be divine. At the same time, our life is made up of a series of salvations, and each of these is of the Lord. We are constantly being saved, saved from this and that form of danger and evil. As each daily trouble threatens to engulf us, we are saved from it. As each temptation, like a dragon, threatens to swallow us up, we are saved from it. Our God is the God of salvations, and unto Him belong, the issues from death. We escape from deaths often, yes, and from the very belly of hell, and still we live to sing, as Jonah sang when he was in the depths of the sea, "Salvation is of the Lord"

I have said that this glorious salvation, which is of the Lord, is the peculiar heritage of believers. They alone know their need of it, and they alone participate in it. Look at the ungodly man who is pictured in this psalm. He does not want salvation. He flourishes like the green bay tree; he spreads his branches to overshadow everybody else. Such men need no salvation. "Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish." They want no salvation; their lands are abundant, their house is full of treasure, and they leave the rest of their substance to their babes. They put no trust in the name of the Lord, "They call their lands after their own names." They want no God; they have no sighs after Him. They never cry, "As the hart pants after the water-brooks, so pants my soul after You, O God!" They have no trials in their lives, and "there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men." The rod of God's children does not fall upon them. "Whom the Lord loves, He chastens," but often those whom He loves not He leaves to indulge in such pleasure as they can find. He gives His swine good measure of husks, for He would not be unkind even to them, and there they lie and feed without fear, knowing nothing of another world, neither caring for it—

"Fools never raise their thoughts so high;
Like brutes they live, like brutes they die;
Like grass they flourish, till Your breath
Blasts them into everlasting death."

See the distinction between the righteous man who fears God, and him that fears Him not; were it not for this word "salvation," their ease and prosperity might make us envy the ungodly, but this turns the scale. Because "the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord," we would take the worst portion that ever was meted out to them in preference to the best that was ever given to the ungodly. Taking all for all, God's worst is better than the devil's best, and the portion of God's saints at the lowest ebb is better than the portion of the wicked, even when their joys are at the flood.

I am going to speak at this time upon our text as a statement by itself. It is complete and self-contained. It is a diamond of the first water. Its words are few, but its sense is precious. "The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord."

I. Our first head is this, THIS IS THE ESSENCE OF SOUND DOCTRINE. "*The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord.*" There are several young men here who go forth to preach the gospel. I hope that they will speak with clear knowledge and attractive speech, but this is far from being the main object of my desire, I want them to really preach the gospel, the whole gospel, and nothing but the gospel. I reckon preaching to be gospel preaching, and sound preaching, in proportion as it is consistent with this statement; "The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord." It is not every preacher who proclaims this truth in bold terms, and in plain English. More or less I hope that all who preach Christ crucified would subscribe to this, but some are a little afraid of it in all its breadth and length. They must bring in man a little. They must have him *do* something, or *be* something. They are always afraid lest grace should be misunderstood, and should be turned into licentiousness, and truly, I share in their fear, though I would not use their way of preventing the evil which I dread. I have known some of these timorous ones try to say "Free grace," but they have had a little impediment in their speech, and the word has come out "free will." They have meant that it should be all of grace, but by some means or other there has been so much hesitancy, and such a deal of fencing, that one could hardly tell grace from works. There will be no hesitancy on my part when I say that "the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord," neither will you find me guarding the statement as if I thought it a lump of spiritual dynamite which might do infinite damage.

"The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord" *in the planning*. Long before we were in existence, God had planned the way of salvation. Before the fall, He had ordained the covenant by which the fallen should be restored, and that plan shows, in every line of it, that consummate wisdom and infinite love which can be found nowhere but in the Lord. He took counsel with none, and none instructed Him; He alone fixed the eternal settlements of unchanging love.

"The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord" as to the persons who are included in it, for God has chosen from the beginning His people, and "whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate to be conformed unto the image of His Son." There is a choice somewhere, and I am persuaded

we have not chosen Him, but He has chosen us. Did not the Lord Jesus say as much? He is first and foremost in salvation, and though we gladly run when He calls, yet His call comes first, and His choice comes before the call. The salvation of the righteous was determined in the council chambers of eternity before the stars began to shine. It is of God and of God only.

And as it is of the Lord in the planning, so it is of the Lord *in the providing*. It was He who gave His Son from His bosom, and truly our Lord Jesus Christ is the full purchase-price of our salvation. We do not add a penny to it. The mortgage upon lost humanity was paid off by Christ to the last farthing, without any contribution on our part to eke out the matchless price.

The Spirit of God, who is another great item in the provision of salvation, is of the Lord. God has given us the Spirit. The Holy Spirit comes, not according to our mind or will, but according to the gift and purpose of the Lord. Nothing is lacking for the salvation of men. God has provided all. He has not left the garment almost long enough, just needing that we should add a fringe, nor has He provided a feast almost sufficient for us if we bring at least another loaf, nor has He built a house of mercy, almost completed, but leaving us to add a few more tiles to the roof. No, no. The work is finished, and from top to bottom salvation is of the Lord. All covenant provisions are already in the Lord Jesus in full, and the salvation of the righteous is entirely of the Lord in the providing.

So, dear friends, it is of the Lord *in the applying*. The first application of the blessings of the covenant to us is of God. Of course, that first application is in regeneration, when the soul first begins to live. The first sense of need of mercy springs, not from nature, but is a work of grace. The first desire we have to be right, the first prayer we breathe towards God—all this is the movement of eternal grace upon our souls, which otherwise would have lain as dead as the corpses in their graves. The Lord first deals with us before we have any inclination whatsoever to deal with Him. We do not see this truth at first. Possibly we discover it months after our conversion, when we come to sit down, and look over our experience. Then we cry, "Yes! Had You not sought me, I had never sought You. Had You not drawn me, I had never run to You. Had You never looked on me in love, I had never looked to You in faith. It is Your free grace which began with me. I own that the Alpha of my salvation is of the Lord." The knowledge of this truth usually comes to us as we advance in knowledge; the full understanding of it is a fruit of the Spirit, and belongs to our riper years rather than to our spiritual infancy.

As salvation is of the Lord at the commencement, so it is *as to the carrying of it on*. Rest assured, beloved, there is no true growth in grace except that which is of the Lord. No, there is no sustaining the position to which you have reached except by the Lord—

"And every virtue we possess,
And every victory won,
And every thought of holiness,
Are His, and His alone."

He has worked all our works in us, and if we have produced any fruit to the honor of His name, from Him has our fruit come, for our Lord truly said, "Without me You can do nothing." We must give Him all the glory, for certainly He has given us all the grace, and as it has been, so will it be. Between here and heaven there will be nothing of our own in the matter. We shall work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, because He first works it in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure. There is no working out our salvation unless the Lord works it in! We bring to the surface of our life what He works in the deep foundation of our inward nature, but both within and without the spiritual life is all of grace. When we put our foot upon the threshold of glory, and pass through the gate of pearl to the golden pavement of the heavenly city, the last step will be as much taken through the grace of God as was the first step when we turned unto our great Father in our rags and misery. Left by the grace of God for a single moment, we would perish. We are dependent as much upon grace for spiritual life as we are upon the air we breathe for this natural life. Take the atmosphere from us; put us under an exhausted receiver, and we die; take Your grace from us, O our God, and we perish at once! What else could happen to us?

Brethren, we must always believe this and preach it, for it is the sum of all true doctrine. If you do not make salvation to be wholly of the Lord, depend upon it you will have to clip salvation down, and make it a small matter. I have always desired to preach a great salvation, and I do not think that any other is worth preaching. If salvation is of man, then you do not wonder that man falls from grace. Of course he does. What man begins, man also soon ends in his own way with a failure. When God saves He saves eternally. Someone said to me the other day, "I do not quite know about that doctrine of final perseverance whether it is true or not." So I said to him, "What kind of life does Jesus Christ give His sheep?" He answered very correctly—"He has said, 'I give unto My sheep eternal life.'" Very well, does not that settle it? If He has given them eternal life, they have eternal life. "But," he said, "Might they not die?" I answered, "Is it not clear that those who die have not eternal life? If they had *eternal* life, how could they die? Does eternal life mean six months' life?" "No." "Does it only mean six hundred years' life?" "No. It must mean nothing less than life which has no end." Death is out of the question. I must live if I am one of those of whom the Great Shepherd says, "I give unto My sheep eternal life." But what is next? If you cannot quite see the truth from that one expression, what follows? Will the sheep of Christ ever perish? Here is His answer. "They shall never perish." Does not that secure them? What language could better describe their security? But another question is raised—"May it not mean that, if they get away from the Lord Jesus, they shall perish?" Then comes the next sentence—"Neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." Does not that answer it? Oh, but perhaps the Savior might fail! We think not, but listen again, "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."

There are four great reasons why believers are and must be saved; neither can anything shake the force of any one of them. If words mean anything, those who are in Christ are safe. The Lord God Almighty has given them eternal life, they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of Christ's hand, and over that first hand of Jesus is the Father's hand to make assurance doubly sure.

Salvation, then, is of the Lord. This is a doctrine to be believed. If you do not believe it, you are sure to minimize and make small salvation, and especially are you likely to deprive it of its certainty, and immutability. It is a pity that you should attempt this, for thus you rob Christ of His power, God of His glory, and the saints of their comfort. That is the awkward point about a salvation which is of man; it is worth nothing when you get it. We need an eternal salvation. We need a salvation which does really save. We need something which is not made up of "ifs and ans," and "buts," and "perhapses," and "maybe," and "if you do this," and "if you do that." We need sure, immutable, abiding, unchanging salvation, and this is what we get, and what we are not ashamed to preach, while we thunder out this truth, "The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord."—

"'All of grace'—from base to summit,
Grace on every course and stone;
Grace in planning, rearing, crowning,
Sovereign grace and grace alone!"

II. Secondly, this is not only the essence of sound doctrine, but THIS IS A NECESSARY FACT. *"The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord."* Assuredly it must be so, or else they will never be saved. Look for a moment, you that love the Lord, to your own *inward conflicts*. Beloved, we are not all alike, tossed to and fro with the uprising of inbred sin, but there are times with most of God's saints when they are hard put to it to withstand a certain raging temptation; they have to struggle hard to keep it down. And when they have mastered that evil, another form of sin comes on the sly, and attempts to stab them in the back. You were giving all your attention to one insidious foe, and at that terrible moment you were set upon by another, and you had to turn round, and bend all your strength in the name of God to resist this second adversary. Nor was this all, a third evil bent its bow against you, and a fourth prepared a net for your feet. Thus you were beset behind and before, and had it not been that the Lord was on your side, you would have been quickly swallowed up. Some of us know the truth of this in our experience if the rest of you do not.

Salvation must be of the Lord with me, I know, or else my inward lusts, my proud spirit, my rebellious will, and my natural despondency will surely ruin me. Do you not feel it to be so with you? If God does not save you, you are a lost man. You must feel that. I know that those who have no conflicts sing another song, and praise themselves. Your carpet-knights, who wear the regimentals of Christianity, but know nothing of battle with inbred sin, may talk about salvation by self, but he that is hard put to it to wrestle against all wrong-doing will tell another tale. He who grieves if he even utters a rash word, or allows an impure thought to

cross his mind, feels that if God does not save him, saved he never can be, and he sees it to be a necessary fact that the salvation of the righteous must be of the Lord.

When you have looked within a sufficient time to convince you, just look at your *outward temptations*. Ah! We little know what many of our brethren and sisters have to endure in the form of temptation in their own houses from their own friends. Many have a very hard fight of it. I know some now present who will I believe, persevere and hold on to the end, but almost every day they endure a martyrdom. Cruel words are spoken, and unkind actions are done, and a bitter spirit is shown towards them because they are the people of God. Salvation must be of the Lord to these poor persecuted ones, or they will faint under their oppressions. Outside in the world, what temptations abound! You cannot engage in any business without finding that it has its peculiar sins. Many things are done in the trade—many matters established by custom—which the scrupulously upright child of God cannot tolerate. He has to set his face against the general habit, and hence he has a battle. Need I go into particulars? Why, brethren, we are surrounded with snares! They are on the table; you may readily sin there. They are in your secret chamber; you are tempted there. They are in the counting-house, and on the study table. You cannot sit down to read a book without being in danger; you cannot go among the crowd without risk. Depend upon it, if any man is saved in the midst of this wicked and ungodly generation, in which the very air smells of corruption, and the common talk is polluting—his salvation will be evidently of the Lord. If any believer remains steadfast in this day of philosophic doubt, verily, I say unto you, his salvation must be of the Lord. He cannot go through this Vanity Fair, he cannot pass through this horrible slough, this Stygian bog of modern society, and be pure in heart, and lip, and life, unless God shall grant him His salvation.

Besides that, our salvation will certainly be of the Lord, because *the world hates us*. It cannot help it. If you are a genuine Christian, the world will not love you. There may be natural traits of kindness and goodness about you, which even the outside world, may respect, but in proportion as you are definitely and thoroughly a Christian you will have the dogs at you. Worldlings will not see a little flaw in your character but they will report it, and magnify it. Some of us cannot do anything but we are misrepresented, so that we have become careless of what people say about us, so long as we know in our own conscience that we are clear. The act which we have done with the most transparent sincerity has been the very one which they have set upon as though it were a piece of trickery. Blessed be God, the world is crucified to us, and we are crucified unto the world! But if we are to escape its venom—especially those who stand in the front of the battle—if we are to hold on to the end with a stainless character, then we shall have to say and sing, "The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord."

We know, dear friends, that it must be so. It is a necessary fact, even if we only *look at the contrary view*. What professions some make, and

how long they keep them up! We have said of such-and-such a man, "If he is not a child of God, who is?" We have even wished that our soul were in his soul's stead when we have heard him pray, and marked the impressive devotion of his demeanor, and yet we have lived to see the very person we admired rolling in filth, character gone, and hope gone. This happens in the church sadly often. Whenever we see it, we may truly feel that "the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord." If ever you see a Christian man, professedly so, suddenly disappear and melt away, you will say to yourself, "Ah! Had it not been for grace divine, it would have happened just the same to me and my fellow professors also." We should have gone out, like the snuff of a candle, if God had not preserved us, and kept us alight. The older we grow in the divine life, and the more earnestly we seek to exhibit the character of a Christian, the more we shall feel that, if we had to go to this warfare at our own charges, it would be better for us that we had never been born. The life of many modern professors might be lived without supernatural help, but the life of a genuine Christian is a perpetual miracle, which could be worked by none but the Lord God. True Christian life is produced by God Himself working mightily, even as when He made the world, or raised His Only-begotten Son from the dead. I say that this is a necessary fact, for there can be no salvation but that which is of the Lord.

III. In the third place, our text being true, that *"the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord,"* THIS IS A SWEET CONSOLATION, for if my salvation is of the Lord, then I shall be saved. If it had been of anybody else, I should be lost. Ah, Gabriel! If my salvation had to be accomplished by you, and all your fellow angels, I should despair. Ah, my brethren! If all of you put together were sent into this world to try and help poor me to heaven, you would never get me there. I should wear you all out. When it is written, "Salvation is of the Lord," I am comforted, for I am sure that the Lord will do it. He can, for He is omnipotent. He will, for He has promised to do it, and He is true and unchangeable. He will go through with what He has begun. If man began, he might leave off before he had finished, for lack of stores to go on with it, or because he had made a mistake, and changed his fickle mind, but when God begins, as surely as ever He opens the war, He will push on till He has won the victory. As surely as He lays the first stone, He will not withdraw His right hand till He has brought forth the top stone, with shouts of "Grace, grace unto it!" "The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord," therefore it will be accomplished. Not all the temptations of life, or all the terrors of death, or all the furies of hell, shall prevent any soul upon whom God has begun His work of grace from reaching eternal salvation. What a blessing is this, and what a comfort it is!—

"Things future, nor things that are now,
Not all things below nor above,
Can make Him His purpose forego,
Or sever my soul from His love."

This grand fact comforts us partly by leading us to believe in prayer. If the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord, then, whenever we get into any great trouble, we go to Him, and cry, "O Lord, my salvation is of You!

I have come to You for it." When strong temptation seems to catch us, like birds in a net, and we cannot break loose, then we cry, "O God, salvation is of You alone! Help me. You can. I look to You for it!" When our soul lies dead, as it sometimes does, like this heavy weather—when there is little sun to brighten us, or air to enliven us, we feel inactive, and cannot stir. Oh, then it is most blessed in prayer to feel "all my fresh springs are in You, my Lord! You can quicken me. You can give me vigor, and force of character, and energy to do Your work, or suffer Your will!" In drawing near to God we are coming to the right place; we are only asking God to do what He undertakes to do, since "the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord."

This, in addition to increasing our hope in prayer, urges us at all times to look out of ourselves to God. "The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord," then I must not be always searching within my own heart to find some good thing within me; I must not be turning over evidences, and living upon past experiences, but I must remember that the salvation even of the righteous is of the Lord. I have often thrown all my evidences overboard—every one of them. I have felt that I would not give a farthing for the whole lot put together, and I have gone to Christ Jesus just as I went at first, singing my old ditty—

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

We are encouraged to do this by the fact that salvation is of the Lord. Go again to the cross, and read your pardon there. Suppose the devil tells you, or suppose it even to be true, that all your experience is a fiction, all your past profession a lie, all your faith presumption, all your enjoyments delirium, all that you have known and felt a daydream; well, then, Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and He can save you. O my Lord, I can boast nothing whatever of myself, but I come and cast myself on You, and You have said, "He that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out"! Frequent beginnings again are the very safest things, in fact, we should, in a sense, be always beginning, for the spiritual life begins with coming unto Jesus, and the continuance of that spiritual life is described thus, "To whom *coming* as unto a living stone." To whom coming, always coming; always trusting, always looking out of self, always looking to Christ. When evidences are bright, you know where you are, but at such a time you could tell that without them. It is easy to tell the time of day by a sundial, but then the sun must be shining, and when I am at home, and can see the sun, I know whereabouts the sun is at twelve o'clock, and therefore I do not need the sundial to tell me the time. Evidences are exceedingly good things when you do not need them, and they are of very little use when you do. Evidences are clear when Christ is present, but when Christ is present you do not need their help, and when Christ is not present, evidences fail to comfort you. It is better to live by a daily faith upon Christ than to live upon evidences. They most readily turn moldy, and then they are most unwholesome food. Live upon Christ, who is the daily manna and you will live well. You will be driven to such a life by the force of this blessed truth that the salvation of the righteous, just as much as the salvation of the wicked, is of the Lord. A

sinner cannot be saved by himself, neither can a righteous man. A sinner must look to the Lord for salvation, and so must a righteous man. We are on one footing here—the rich saint as well as the poor sinner. Christ must be everything to one as well as to the other, and what a blessed thing it is that He is everything to us! Let us hourly make Him so.

IV. Fourthly, and very briefly, THIS DOCTRINE IS A REASON FOR HUMILITY. *"The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord."* Are you saved, my dear brother? And do you know it? Then all idea of pride must vanish, for it is clear that you did not save yourself. That regeneration, of which you are a partaker, is the free gift of God to an undeserving one—a work of grace upon one whom, could not have worked it upon himself. Pride is excluded. Has the Lord granted you such a salvation that you have remained fast in your integrity all these years? Do not be proud of it, for your salvation from any gross outward sin has been of the Lord. It is none of your doing. Above all, do not begin to censure others, and when you see a poor brother down—yes, when you see a child of God who has erred, and grossly sinned, do not begin censuring him in bitterness, and giving him over to despair. If you had been in his case, you might have done worse. Do I speak harshly? Any man who says, "If I had been in that brother's place I would have done better," is a fool. He does not know himself. The probabilities are that he would have done worse. Ah, Sir Pharisee! You—yes, oh yes, you are a wonder! Marvelous is your purity! Splendidly you act! What a paragon you are! If you were to see yourself in God's light, you would see that you are a mass of corruption, smelling of pride. That is what you are. The man who begins to exult over his fallen brother is the likeliest man to fall himself. He who points at a tear in his brother's garment is in rags himself. If we have stood fast amid temptation, we may bless God that we have done so, but we must not find fault with others as though there was some good thing in ourselves. The salvation of the most righteous man that ever lived is of the Lord. If his sun has not been eclipsed—if his moon has not been turned into darkness—if his stars have not fallen like withered leaves from the tree, it is all owing to the grace of God and the grace of God alone. It is needful to say this to keep us from being lifted up with foolish boasting.

So, dear friends, we shall have to sing to a grave, sweet melody as long as we are here, whenever we touch a matter that concerns ourselves. When we get to heaven, we shall see then much more than we do tonight that salvation is of the Lord. Mr. Bunyan represents his pilgrim as going through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and even while he was in the darkness and horror of that defile he knew that he needed the Lord to help him. He felt that he had a terrible walk of it that night, when there was a bog on this side, and a quagmire on that, and hobgoblins and all sorts of horrid creatures all around, he knew that he needed divine aid. He held on his way, with his sword in his hand, and grasping the weapon of All-prayer, till at last he left that horrible place, and then he knew better than before how great was his necessity. He looked back when the morning rose, and till then he had not fully known what a place he had been traversing, and how great was the power which upheld him in his

night march. When we get to heaven and look back upon our life below, we shall then see the wonders of delivering grace which at this time we do not fully appreciate—

"When I stand before the throne
Dressed in beauty not my own,
When I see You as You are,
Love You with unsinning heart,
Then, Lord, shall I fully know—
Not till then—how much I owe."

I believe that in the day of our full deliverance we shall lift up, every one of us, such a song of praise as we are not capable of here. We shall sing with all our powers of heart and tongue at the sight of what we have been delivered from. Even then this will be the sum and substance of the song—"Salvation is of the Lord," He has worked it all, and brought us safely through. The hymn of Miriam, and of all the children of Israel at the Red Sea, when they had passed through it, and all the Egyptians were drowned, was a very exultant song, but what will ours be when the gates of hell shall have been overthrown, and all our enemies destroyed, and we shall find ourselves before the eternal throne saved forever! Shall we not exclaim, "Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously"? Shall we not, each one, tell out his own experience, and bid our fellow believers sing yet more and more rapturously unto the God of salvation? Will not some of you take up that note which Miriam dwelt upon when she could not see a single Egyptian? Pharaoh's chariots and horses were all sunk in the sea, his chosen captains also were drowned in the Red Sea, and so she struck her timbrel, and with all the maidens she danced right joyously as she sang, "The depths have covered them. There is not one, not one, not one of them left." Thus we will sing in heaven. "There is not one, not one of them left! Not one of all the sins, all the trials, and all the temptations, and all the vexations of life; the Lord has removed them all. There is not one of them left. Salvation is of the Lord."

V. I close with one more remark, and it is this; this text gives US A COMFORTABLE GROUND OF HOPE. *"The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord."* Then I believe He will save *me*. I trust myself with Him, and thus I become righteous by faith, and therefore He will save me from my trouble and care. Brother, draw the same conclusion. Sister, draw the same conclusion. You are in a terrible condition just now. Everything has been going wrong. You do not know what to do. But "the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord." He will bring you through. You are in good hands. The Great Pilot knows the navigation of the river of life better than you do. You cannot see a channel for your boat, there are snags everywhere, or quicksand, or rocks, or shallows. He knows all about it. Rest. Trust. Wait. Commit your way unto the Lord. There is personal comfort in the fact that our salvation is of the Lord.

And there is comfort, next, with regard to all our tried brethren. It is my lot—my happy or unhappy lot—to be continually consulted by brothers and sisters in great trouble. They think I can help them, though I cannot. I hardly know what to say to them. I can only take their burden with my own unto the Lord. I often feel great pain in sympathizing with

trials which I cannot remove, but then it is cheering to know that the Lord can help where we cannot, for "the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord." He can help the helpless, the forlorn, the impoverished, the dying. He will bring His people safely through floods and fires. Their straits are very great, and their burdens very heavy, but the Lord will put underneath them the everlasting arms. Pray for them; sympathize with them; help them as far as you can, and then, when you cast yourself on your Lord, cast them there also.

Next, this ought to give us hope about seekers. I see some brethren and sisters before me whose lives are spent in trying to encourage poor erring souls to return unto the Lord. Sometimes you are balked and defeated. Well, "the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord." Surely, if the salvation of the righteous is to come from the Lord, much more must the salvation of poor seekers. Have hope about the vilest and worst of men. If there are any such here tonight, let them have hope, for if the Lord bids the righteous, in whom there is a measure of His grace, to look to Him for salvation, assuredly He bids you to do the same, for you have nothing of your own. If those who are righteous before God yet find their salvation in Him alone, where are you to look? You must look to the Lord also. Look to Jesus on the cross, and find salvation in Him, for the Lord Jesus redeemed with His precious blood all that trust in Him. O my dear hearer, come and cast yourself upon Him! "In due time Christ died for the ungodly," so runs the word. Look to that wondrous death of the Son of God which redeems such as you are, and in your case too it shall be found that your salvation is of the Lord. May God bless you, and cause you to rejoice in His salvation!

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 37.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—242, 238, AND PSALM 37.

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THE BREAKER AND THE FLOCK
NO. 1954

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 20, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of you; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as the flock in the midst of their fold: they shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men. The breaker is come up before them: they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it: and their king shall pass before them, and the Lord on the head of them."
Micah 2:12, 13.

YOU will remember, dear friends, from our reading last Sabbath morning [Sermon #1952, *The Holy Spirit—The need of the Age*], in the second chapter of the Book of Micah, that the prophet was delivering reproofs and rebukes against a sinful people, a people who tried to straiten the Spirit and silence the voice of prophecy, and refused to listen to the messengers of God. He threatened them with deserved punishment from the Most High. To our surprise, in the very midst of the threat he delivers a prediction brimming with mercy. Not only is not the Spirit of the Lord straitened, but even the people of the Lord are not to be straitened, for one has come forth who will be to them both liberator and leader. Judgment is God's strange work, and He rejoices even in the midst of threats to turn aside and utter gracious words to obedient souls. Surely the brightest and most silvery drops of love that have ever distilled upon men have fallen in close connection with storms of divine justice. The acceptable year of the Lord is hard by the day of vengeance of our God. The blackness of the tempest of His wrath acts as a foil to set forth more brightly the glory of His grace. In this case the thunderbolts stay their course in mid-volley; when the prophet is hurling destruction upon sin and sinners he pauses to interpose a passage of promise most rich and gracious—a passage which I wish to open up to you at this time, as the Spirit of God shall enable me.

Certain willful persons were proudly confident that no enemy could reach them behind the walls of their cities, though the Lord declared that He would make Samaria a heap, and would strip Jerusalem. They coveted fields and took them by violence, and went on with their oppressions as if there had been no Judge of all the earth. The Lord warned them again and again, and assured them that they must not expect to be preserved from chastisement because they were the Lord's people. They boasted that God would protect them; yes, they leaned upon the Lord, and said, "Is not the Lord among us? No evil can come upon us." He told them that Zion would be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem would become

heaps. They were by no means to escape the rod; rather might they look for grace after they had been severely chastened. They would be carried away into captivity, but yet there would come a day in which they should be gathered out of the places wherein they had been scattered, and brought back to their own land. The prophet cried to the daughter of Zion, "You shall go even to Babylon; there shall you be delivered; there the Lord shall redeem you from the hands of your enemies."

Truly, the Lord forgets not to devise means to bring again His banished ones. The words of Micah in the passage before us agree with many others which fell from the lips of prophets, for it is the way of the Lord to restore His chosen in the day of their repentance. Did He not say, by His servant Amos, "Lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve; yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth"? He will preserve the chosen race even in their scattering, and then in His own appointed time He will seek them out, according to His own word, "He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd does his flock." These gathered ones were to be led back to their land under the guidance of a great shepherd, whose business it would be to break down all obstacles and clear the road for them, so that they might safely reach their resting place.

I have no doubt that the first fulfillment of this prophecy was given when Cyrus conquered Babylon and gave permission for Israel to return to their own land. Cyrus may be regarded as "the Breaker," for the prophet Isaiah wrote concerning him, "Thus says the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before you, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron." Then the willing-hearted of Israel gathered together to rebuild the house of the Lord, and to this center multitudes hastened, the Lord being with them and sending them prosperity. It was of these favored ones that we find a striking fulfillment of our text as to the noise made by the concourse of men. Ezra tells us that "the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off." Then was this promise in a measure fulfilled.

But, brethren, the promises of the Lord are perennial springs forever overflowing with new fulfillments. In the latter days, the God of Israel, in abundant grace, will remember His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and will gather together His ancient nation who are at this time a people scattered and peeled. These shall be converted to the Christ of God, and then shall be accomplished the word of the prophet, "I the Lord will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them." The Son of David, whom their fathers slew, not knowing what they did, shall be made known to them as the promised seed, and then they shall look on Him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him. May this day soon come! Then shall the veil be taken away from their hearts, and the cloud shall no longer hang over Israel's head, but the Lord shall restore them, and they shall rejoice in Him. The day comes when the

Breaker shall go up before them, and the King at the head of them, and they shall be brought again unto the inheritance of their fathers.

Even this will not exhaust the prophecy. I regard this passage as setting forth a vision of spiritual things in which Micah dimly saw the gathering together, and the heavenward march of the true Israel, namely, the elect of God, whom He has given to His Son Jesus, and whom the Lord Jesus has undertaken to save. "He is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart" (Rom 2:29). As Paul, by the Spirit of God, interprets the whole story of the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, it is clear that we, brethren, the children of the promise, are the true seed, even those who are born by divine power and as believers are the *spiritual* family of believing Abraham. If we have the faith of Abraham, we are the children of Abraham, and with us is the covenant made, for the seed of Abraham is not reckoned according to descent by the flesh, otherwise would the covenant blessing have fallen to Ishmael and not to Isaac, to Esau and not to Jacob. The covenant is to a spiritual seed, born according to divine promise through divine power. The line in which the Lord has determined that the covenant blessing should run was ordered by divine sovereignty, "that the purpose of God according to election might stand." The Lord purposed that they which are born after the Spirit should be the true heirs, and not those that are born after the flesh. We therefore believe, that to us, even to us who rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh, appertain the promises and the covenant. It shall come to pass that all the elect of God shall yet be gathered together from the places where they have wandered in their sin, and for them a clear way shall be opened up to the land of their inheritance. The Breaker, who is also their King and God, shall lead them through all opposition, and bring them without fail to their quiet resting place. Even as at the first all Israel was brought out of Egypt and safely led with a high hand and an outstretched arm through sea and desert, so shall the Lord Jesus, lead the whole host of His redeemed to the place of His glory. Has not the Lord God declared it—"The redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and sighing shall flee away"?

An august spectacle is set before us in our text. May our eyes be anointed of the Holy Spirit, that we may behold its glories, so that our hearts shall leap for joy!

First, in the text I see *the flock gathered,* "I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of you; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel. I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as the flock in the midst of their fold: they shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men." Secondly, we behold *the champion Shepherd clearing the way of the flock,* "The breaker is come up before them." He, with the arm of His strength, breaks all opposers, and breaks up for them a way from their captivity. Thirdly, behold *the flock advancing,* with their great Shepherd at their head, "They have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it: and their king shall pass before them and the Lord on the

head of them." Jehovah leads the van and the hosts of His redeemed march triumphantly after Him.

I. To begin then, brethren, here is THE FLOCK GATHERED, "I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of you."

Who knows where God's chosen are? Babylon was far off from Jerusalem, but our places of wandering are farther off from God than that. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way." In the cloudy and dark day we have wandered to the uttermost ends of the earth. The Lord's chosen ones lie wide of one another, and they are far off from God Himself. What a mercy it is that in the text we have a promise that they shall be gathered *divinely! "I* will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of you; *I* will surely gather the remnant of Israel." Who else could gather them but the Lord? What power less than divine could fetch such wanderers from their haunts and hidings? One is aloft yonder on the hillside in his pride and self-conceit; another is down below in the despondency of his disappointment. One wanders in the pastures of worldliness, sporting himself in the plenty thereof, and hard to be brought back for that reason; another is entangled in the briars of poverty, half-starved and ready to die, and hopeless of ever seeing the face of God with joy. They are everywhere, my brethren—these lost sheep, they seem to have chosen out, as if deliberately, the most dangerous places; they stumble on the dark mountains, they are caught in the tangled thickets, they have fallen into pits. O sin, what have you done? Rather, what have you not done? For men seem to have gone to the utmost extreme of rebellion against God, and to have done evil with both hands earnestly. Therefore does God Himself come to the rescue. He Himself shall assemble Jacob, and gather the remnant of Israel. Driving with the terrors of His law, drawing with the sweetness of His gospel, He shall surely bring them in. By one instrumentality or by another, and in some cases, apparently, without instrumentality at all, He will bring them from all points of the compass to the place where He will meet with them—

"There is a period known to God,
When all His sheep, redeemed by blood,
Shall leave the hateful ways of sin,
Turn to the fold, and enter in."

This is the result of the divine working, and of that alone. Our hope for the salvation of God's elect lies in the fact that it is God Himself who undertakes to gather them. Remember His word by the prophet Ezekiel, "For thus says the Lord God; Behold, I, even I, will both search My sheep, and seek them out."

Following the text closely, we notice that this gathering is to be performed *surely*. I dwell with great pleasure upon that word "surely," because it is spoken twice, "I will *surely* assemble, O Jacob, all of you; I will *surely* gather the remnant of Israel." There are no "ifs" where there is a God; there are no "peradventures" where divine predestination rules the day. Let Jehovah speak, and it is done; let Him command, and it shall stand firm. Inasmuch as He says "surely" twice, it reminds me of Joseph's word to the Egyptian king, "And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice, it is because the thing is established by God." God

will not change His purpose, nor turn from His promise, nor forget His covenant; He will surely gather together His chosen people wherever they may be. O you that are buffeted by opposition, and driven to sore distress in your holy service, be not dismayed, for the purpose of the Lord shall stand. *You* may fail, but the eternal God will not. Your work may be washed away like the work of little children in the sand of the seashore, but that which God does endures forever. God shakes the earth out of its place, but who can move *Him?* When God says *surely,* who shall cast doubt in the way? The Lord will without fail call out His redeemed from among men. As a worker and a soul-winner I grasp at these words, "I will surely gather the remnant of Israel," and I feel that I shall not labor in vain, nor spend my strength for nothing. When the end comes, and the whole business of salvation shall be complete, it shall be seen that the Lord has achieved His purpose. Jesus says, "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me," and it shall surely be so. Therefore let us be of good courage, and seek out the lost ones in full confidence that they must and shall be found.

This leads us to notice that they shall be gathered *completely*. "I will surely assemble, O Jacob, *all of you."* Not some of the chosen, but all of them, shall be brought out from the world which lies in the wicked one. Not some of the redeemed, but each one of them, shall be made to walk at liberty under the leadership of their Shepherd-King. The Lord will leave none of His sheep in their wanderings, and surrender none to the lion or the bear. Dear friend, sighing and crying afar off and thinking that God will never gather you, have faith in Him. Helpless as you are, trust Him to do His work as a Savior. It is written, "I will surely gather, O Jacob, all of you," and you may not think that you have wandered beyond the reach of the infinite arms. Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? You must not dream that you have sinned yourself beyond the power of grace, for His mercy endures forever! Only look unto Christ, and let your soul stay itself on Him, and God will not overlook you in the day when He gathers His own. Though you are least in Israel, and most unworthy of His regard, yet He has expressly said, "I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick." He will not forget you, you weakest of all the flock. You are needful to the completeness of the company. If you are not there, how shall the Lord keep His word, "I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of you"?

Further, our text declares that the people shall be gathered *unitedly*. There shall be a wonderful union among them, "I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah." Oh that the Lord would in these days more fully and evidently carry out this promise in the happy unity of His visible church! Sinners hate each other while they wander in their different ways, but when the Lord brings them together by His grace, then love is born in their hearts. What enmities are cast out by the power of divine grace! When lusts are conquered, fighting and strife cease. God is not the author of confusion, but of peace. It is grace which causes that Ephraim shall not envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim. I notice that sinners,

when they are under conviction of sin, are not apt to quarrel with one another, and saints, when they behold the Savior and rejoice in pardoning love, come together in holy love. In that visible community which stands for the Church of God—I mean the combined external organization of Christendom—there are many divisions and fierce heart-burnings, but in the real Church of God, that spiritual body which the Holy Spirit inhabits, these evils are buried. The truly spiritual are really one in heart. You may meet with a man from whom you differ in many respects, but if the life of God is in him, and in yourself also, you will feel a kinship with him of the nearest kind. Often I have read books which have awakened in my soul a sense of true brotherhood with their authors, although I have known them to be of a church opposed to many of my own views. If they praise my divine Lord, if they speak of the inner life, and touch upon communion with God, and if they do this with that anointing and living power which are the tokens of the Holy Spirit, then my heart cleaves to them, be they who they may. Is it not so with you? When the Lord brings people to Himself, He brings them to one another. Though depraved nature divides, and pride and self set men apart, yet the Lord overcomes these dividing elements by His renewing grace, and His divine word is accomplished—"I will put them together!" When the Lord puts us together, no man can put us asunder. What is wanted in the much-divided visible church of God is, that we should all come under the divine hand more fully, that we should all feel the touch of the divine life, and yield ourselves more completely to the teaching of the divine truth. Schemes of union are of small value, it is the spirit of union which is needed. Our Lord Jesus prayed, "That they all may be one; that the world may believe that You have sent Me," and His prayer cannot fall to the ground. The church is one in Christ, and none can tear the seamless vesture. Yet more openly as the days pass on, the Lord will gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad (John 11:52).

This gathering together will be done *happily;* they are to be gathered "as the flock in the midst of their fold." God's gathering of His chosen is not to a place of barrenness and misery, but to a place of security and quietude, even to His appointed fold. The Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the sheep, makes us to lie down in green pastures; He leads us beside the still waters. He folds His flock, and makes it to lie down in peace. He says, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." He gives us all things richly to enjoy. O you that are wandering afar from God, there can be no rest for you until the Lord gathers you to the fold of which Jesus is the center and the Shepherd. When you come to Jesus you shall find rest unto your souls, but not till then. "The peace of God that passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds by Christ Jesus," but by Christ Jesus only. Christians are not a miserable company of restless spirits; they are not a pack of dogs howling at one another, and smarting under the keeper's lash, but they are a flock feeding in happy communion, while Jesus in their midst finds for them a place where they may rest at noon. He so loves

His own, and so reveals Himself to His own, that they are a happy people, highly favored, and greatly honored. God has blessed them, and they shall be blessed, let the world say what it will concerning them.

One more note must be made on this head; they shall be gathered *numerously,* "They shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men." The Lord's camp is very great. If you have taken into your head the idea that the Lord has chosen for Himself a very small company, and that in the end there will be only a few saved, dismiss the notion. The redeemed are a number that no man can number. Now, a man can count to a very great extent, and if the chosen are beyond the numbering of men, they are a multitude indeed. The prophet represents them as making a great noise by reason of their multitude, he alludes to "the busy hum of men," the buzz of the crowd as when the bees are swarming. As in a city there is an indescribable sound by reason of the multitude that are making traffic in it, so shall there be a noise in the church of a great concourse of men. Conceive of the noise heard at Bozrah, in the sheep country of Edom, when all the flocks of the country were gathered together to be numbered for the purposes of tribute. Listen to the indescribable noise of the bleating myriads. What a suggestion of the voices of the innumerable hosts of the redeemed when they shall finally be brought together, and shall all in fullest joy lift up their voices! If all the gathered company were to pray together, what a sound of supplication would go up by reason of the multitude of men! But when they all sing—what a sound shall that be! Do you wonder that John said, "I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder"? It makes my eyes water to think of the incomparable armies of the redeemed gathered together in one place. Well might the prophet turn poet when he began to picture that countless flock, and speak of the "great noise by reason of the multitude of men"! I believe we shall not any one of us restrain our voices in that day when we shall meet together with our Lord at our head. I saw one stand up at the opening of this service to look around the Tabernacle, to see the multitude, and well he might, for it is a thing to do one's eyes good to behold this vast assembly. But what shall be our joy when we shall stand up in the midst of the great company of the redeemed? We shall look far and wide, and see no end of the great gathering. When they begin to sing, how will our spirits bear the swell of that majestic psalmody? I know I shall find my best voice that day, when in the midst of the congregation of the faithful I shall sing praise unto the Lord my God. The "great noise by reason of the multitude of men" sets forth the enthusiasm of the praise, and the immense number of the perfected ones who shall pour out their hearts before the throne. Thus I have set before you in a feeble way the gathering of the flock.

II. Follow me while, next, I speak of THE CHAMPION SHEPHERD clearing the way. "The breaker is come up before them." In the tenth verse the Lord says to His people, "Arise you, and depart, for this is not your rest: because it is polluted." But we say to ourselves—How are they to depart from the place where they now are, and press forward to the

pastures on the hilltops of heaven? They are as sheep. How can they find their way? How can they face their foes? How can they break down barriers? A flock is but ill fitted to tramp over pathless deserts, infested by ferocious wolves. How shall the church attain to the abodes of the perfected? Long leagues of distance must be traversed, hills of guilt must be crossed, and nights of blackest darkness must be experienced. Ah, Lord God! How can You expect that this Your church, which is like a flock of sheep, should find its way unto through all difficulties and adversaries unto Yourself? The answer to our fears is before us, "The breaker is come up before them." That great Shepherd of the sheep, whose name is, "The Through-breaker" or "The Breaker-Up," makes a way for His people, yes, creates it by force of arms.

Between us and heaven once lay the tremendous Alps of sin. Not one, of all the flock of God could climb those hills; all must perish who attempt to cross those awful barriers. The way to heaven was effectually blocked by these heaven-defying mountains, for no passes existed; even the eagle's eyes could not discover a way. One sin might keep a man out of heaven, but the multitudes of our iniquities, the blackness, the aggravation, the repetition of our offenses made the case hopeless to all human power or wisdom. I see those awful hills, and wonder how the flock of God can hope to reach eternal bliss with those in the way. Behold He comes, "The Breaker," before whom the mountains sink. "He His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree; and by that bearing He put them all away." He took upon Himself the whole load of His people's iniquities; He endured the entire weight of the crushing burden, and by His atoning death He cast their iniquities into the depths of the sea. The pass of the atonement is our clear way to glory. In the sepulcher of Jesus all our sins are buried. To as many as believe in Jesus Christ no sin remains—

"This Breaker once made sin to be,
Broke from the curse His people free.
He broke the power of death and hell,
And cleared the road for Israel."

"In those days, and in that time, says the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve." The glorious Breaker, with His pierced hands, and nailed feet, and opened side, has worked a miracle of miracles by putting away sin through the sacrifice of Himself. Jesus says, "I am the way," and the way He is; the way which neither past nor present sin can effectually close. But, my brethren, if our sins were all forgiven us, there are other difficulties in the way, for we are without strength, and the depravity of our nature is not readily overcome. Think of the hardness of our hearts, the waywardness of our wills, the blindness of our judgments, the readiness of our minds to yield to temptation! How can we force our way through such obstacles? Why, if the Lord would forgive me all my sin, and give me heaven on condition that I should find my way to it, mine would still be a hopeless case. Even the regenerate find that they have a hard struggle with the flesh, how can we win our way in the teeth of our fallen nature? Beloved, the Breaker

has gone up before us. The Lord Jesus Christ assumed our nature, and was "tempted in all points like we are," He overcame the adversary at every point of the conflict, that through His victory we might be more than conquerors. He sends forth the Holy Spirit to renew us in the spirit of our minds., He takes the stony heart out of our flesh, He rules the will, He governs the affections, He enlightens the understanding, He sanctifies the soul, and thus, though weak in ourselves, we are made strong in Him, so strong that we shall not perish in the wilderness, but shall pursue our pilgrimage till we cross the Jordan, and stand in our lot at the end of the days. Because the Breaker has gone up before us, we shall break through the ramparts of sinfulness, and cut our way to holiness and perfection.

Yet even though this is so, that sin is forgiven and our corrupt nature overcome, there is still another difficulty; the prince of darkness has set himself to obstruct the way. He defies us to advance; he stands across the road, and swears that he will spill our souls. By no means let us be afraid, for the Breaker is gone up before us, and the enemy knows the force of His strong right hand. In the wilderness and in the garden our Lord vanquished this great adversary, and therein gave us full assurance that He will bruise Satan under our feet shortly. We need not fear all the devils in hell; if by faith we have courage to resist them they will flee from us. We shall reach the haven of our rest, the heaven of our bliss. Our glorious Breaker with the mace of the cross has broken the head of leviathan, and made an open show of His adversaries. Thus was it spoken of our Lord at the gates of Eden concerning the old serpent—"You shall bruise his heel," and now by His ascension to heaven He has done the deed, leading captivity captive—

"Gone up as God's co-equal Son,
With all His blood-stained garments on,
While seraphs sing His deathless fame,
And chant the Breaker's glorious name."

This brings us face to face with the last enemy. Death blocks the way to eternal life. Be of good courage, the Breaker has gone up before you in this matter also. Jesus died; the Ever-blessed bowed His head and yielded up the ghost. Listen yet again; He has risen from the dead, He slept a while in the cold prison of the tomb, but He could not be held with the bands of death, and therefore in due time He arose. He arose in newness of life, that all His own might also rise in Him. Come; be not afraid to die, for you will travel a well-beaten track. Be not afraid to go down into the heart of the earth, for there your Emmanuel has slept. Nor will He suffer you to go by this dark road alone. "He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you." He will go down into this Egypt with you, and He will surely bring you up again. The Breaker goes up before you.

But can I hope I shall ever enter the gates of heaven? Those gates of pearl whose mild, pure radiance chides my perturbed and guilty heart—can I hope to pass their portal? Can I hope to stand where all is absolutely perfect? I shrink in the presence of such matchless purity. But, brethren, the Breaker has gone up before us. He has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. It will be safe for us to enter where He has

gone; yes, we must enter, for where He is, there also shall His servants be. He will welcome each one of us with, "Come in, you blessed of the Lord; why do you stand without?" Down those streets of pure gold like unto transparent glass we shall walk without fear, and up to that blazing throne of purest light we shall pass without dismay, for Jesus has gone in before us. Behold Him!—

"He is at the Father's side,
The Man of Love, the Crucified."

The way into the Holiest is now made manifest. The Breaker has torn the veil from the top to the bottom, and given us free access to heaven itself.

But I must pause. Certainly my matter is not exhausted; time alone restrains.

III. Lastly, I have to show you for a minute or two, THE FLOCK ADVANCING, their royal Breaker leading the way. As the Lord Jesus, in His death, resurrection, and ascension, has gone up before us, so by His grace we are led to follow Him from grace to glory. "They go from strength to strength." He says to them, "Follow Me," they know His voice, and as His sheep they follow Him.

Along the way which the great Champion clears we find the whole of the flock proceeding. "The Breaker is come up before them," therefore they keep to His footprints. "They have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it." Behold, my brethren, the vision of visions; the whole company of God's elect following their triumphant Leader! Do you see yonder the pillar of fire and cloud leading the way through the desert? Do you see the host of Israel in glorious order marching to their predestined inheritance? Such is the Church of God as it is seen by spiritual eyes. All down the centuries, in every land, they are marching along that appointed road which Jesus, the Breaker, has cleared for them. You and I, I hope, are in that goodly company; sometimes our following is lame and halting, but yet we are not turned out of the way. To whom else could we go if we were to leave our chosen Leader? Faint, we may be, but pursuing we will be. Oh, that we could keep closer to the Breaker! Oh, that He would break our hearts with His love! Oh, that all our evil habits might be broken by His grace. We would follow our King where ever He goes. Yes, we are in that company, I trust, and God grant we may never stray from it! No other road is prepared by a great Breaker as this road is prepared. This is the King's highway, and we will keep to it all our days.

Observe, that in the text the people of God are described as imitating their King, for it is written, "They have broken up." He is the Breaker, and are, they, breakers too? Yes, they also have broken up. Christ is the great warrior for His people, but not without conflict will any one of them be crowned. It is so arranged in the wisdom of God, that everything is so done for us as not to drive us into inaction, but to draw us into holy diligence. Christ's warfare is repeated in His saints in their measure. The crown is of grace, but we must run for it. Christ has conquered sin, and we have to overcome through faith in Him. He has subdued the adversary, but we also shall have to wrestle with spiritual wickedness. "They

have broken up." Herein is condescending love. Christ might have saved us, and there might have been nothing for us to do, but to display His grace, He intends to conform us to Himself, in conflict and in crown, in breaking up, and in going forth, and in entering in. He makes us know the fellowship of His sufferings. Come, brethren and sisters, let us ask God to fulfill in us the words of the text, "They have broken up." Let us be resolved to break down all sin. Let us be determined to overcome through the blood of the Lamb. This is the victory which overcomes the world, even our faith. If we have it, let us use it to good purpose this day.

Notice that as these people were led on by the Breaker; they persevered in following Him. "They have broken up; they have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it." They did a little at a time; they advanced step by step; they stopped at nothing, but went onward and upward. So do saints go from grace to grace, from faith to greater faith. Note the sentence, "they have broken up, they have passed through the gate, and have gone out by it," this looks as if they did it slowly but surely, gradually but grandly. So, when the grace of God enters into the heart, and we, the sheep of God, are made to follow Him, we are attentive to detail, and notice each part of our obedience. You cannot in grace, any more than in anything else, do a great deal at once, and do it effectually. I find that advance in grace, if it is suppositious, can be rapid, but if it is real, it requires patience. Our Lord gives us line upon line, precept upon precept; here a little, and there a little. Let us be sure even if we are slow.

But now I would have you dwell upon the fact that they are marching under royal leadership, "Their King shall pass before them." Christ is always at the head of His own church. Why? Because He loves it so that He cannot be away from it. He is at the head of His own flock because He has purchased it with His own blood. He will not send an angel to lead His chosen, but He Himself will watch over the objects of His everlasting love. He knows the necessities of His church to be such as He, and only He, can meet; therefore as the King He always remains at their head. Brethren, let us always reverence, honor, and obey Him. Our active, present King must be loyally and earnestly served. As Breaker He did us service; as King we must render Him service. Remember how the Psalmist put it to the chosen bride, "He is your Lord, and worship you Him." As a church, we know no other head; as the people of His pasture, we know no other leader. Let us follow Him boldly and gladly.

Let us give Him praise this day, yes, let us worship and adore Him, for He is Jehovah. He who is at our head is Lord; in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Is it not written, "The Lord shall go before you"? Let us rejoice because the Lord is our King, and He will save us. Do you ever fear that the cause of truth and righteousness will fail? Shake this dust from off you. Banish such a thought. If Jehovah leads the van, who shall stand against Him? If Jesus Christ, once the man of sorrows, but now the King of kings, is to the fore, He will reckon with our adversaries, and make short work of their boastings. Therefore, follow quietly and unquestioningly as sheep follow the shepherd, and your way

shall be prosperous. The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge; therefore comfort one another with these words.

I cannot express the joy I feel in the belief that I am one of the company which is following the Breaker's lead, but my sorrow is that some of you are not of His flock. Oh, that you may belong to those of whom He says, "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring." Oh, that He may bring you in speedily! Do you feel a desire towards Christ this morning? Have you any longings to be reconciled to God by Him? Then you may freely come, with the confident assurance that he who comes to Him He will in no wise cast out. He invites you to His cross, yes, to Himself. Obey the gentle impulse which is now stirring your bosom. Jesus has come on purpose to seek and to save the lost; you are lost; therefore pray that He may save you.

Should the enemy of all good tell you that if you should believe, yet you would never hold out to the end, remind him that the Breaker has gone up before His people, and their King at the head of them, and therefore you are not afraid of meeting anything upon the road which can beat you back from hope and heaven. Join the army which marches under our victorious Joshua, and through sin, and hell, and death the Breaker will clear your way. To Him be praise forever and ever! Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
ISAIAH 40:1-10; 43:14-21.**

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—306, 372, 313.

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JESUS DECLINING THE LEGIONS
NO. 1955

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 27, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?"
Matthew 26:53, 54.

IT is the garden of Gethsemane. Here stands our Lord, and yonder is the betrayer. He is foremost of the multitude. You know his face, the face of that son of perdition, even Judas Iscariot. He comes forward, leaving the men with the staves, and the swords, and the torches, and lanterns, and He proceeds to kiss his Master; it is the token by which the officers are to know their victim. You perceive at once that the disciples are excited; one of them cries, "Lord, shall we smite with the sword?" Their love to their Master has overcome their prudence. There are but eleven of them, a small band to fight against the cohort sent by the authorities to arrest their Master, but love makes no reckoning of odds. Before an answer can be given, Peter has struck the first blow, and the servant of the high priest has narrowly escaped having his head split in two; as it is, his ear is cut off.

One is not altogether surprised at Peter's act, for, in addition to his headlong zeal, he had most likely misunderstood the saying of his Lord at supper—"He that has no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one." There was not time for our Lord to explain, but they were so accustomed to his concrete style of speech, that they should not have misunderstood Him, but they did so. He had simply told them that the days of peace, in which they could go in and out among the people, and be joyfully received by them, had now come to an end, for as He Himself, who had once been in favor with all the people, would now be "reckoned among the transgressors" (see Luke 22:35-38), so would they be counted among the offscouring of all things. Now they could no longer reckon on the hospitality of a friendly people, but must carry their own purse and scrip, and instead of feeling safe, wherever they went, they must understand that they were in an enemy's country, and must travel through the world like men armed for self-defense. They were now to use their own substance, and not to hope for cheerful entertainment among a grateful people, and they would need to be on their guard against those who in killing them would think that they were doing God a service. They took His language literally, and therefore replied, "Lord, behold, here are two swords." I think He must have smiled sadly at their blunder as He an-

swered, "It is enough." He could never have thought of their fighting that He might not be delivered unto the Jews, since for that purpose two swords were simply ridiculous. They had missed His meaning, which was simply to warn them of the changed circumstances of His cause, but they caught at the words which He had used, and exhibited their two swords. Possibly, as some have supposed, these were two long sacrificial knives with which they had killed the Paschal lamb, but, indeed, the wearing of weapons is much more general in the East than with us. Our Lord's disciples were largely Galileans, and as the Galileans were more of a fighting sort than other Jews, the wearing of swords was probably very general among them. However, two of the apostles had swords, not that they were fighting men, but probably because it was the fashion of their country, and they had thought it necessary to wear them when passing through a dangerous district. At any rate, Peter had a sword, and instantly used it. He smites the first man he could reach. I wonder he had not struck Judas; one might have excused him if he had, but it is a servant of the high priest who bears the blow and loses his ear.

Then the Savior comes forward in all His gentleness, as self-possessed as when He was at supper, as calm as if He had not already passed through an agony. Quietly He says, "Suffer it to be so now," He touches the ear, and heals it, and in the lull which followed, when even the men that came to seize Him were spell-bound by this wondrous miracle of mercy, He propounds the great truth, that they that take the sword shall perish with the sword, and bids Peter put away his weapon. Then He utters these memorable words; "Do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" And He also said what John alone appears to have heard—"The cup which My Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?" (John 18:11).

The wound of Malchus served a gracious purpose, for it enabled our Lord to work a new miracle, the likes of which He had never worked before, namely, the restoration of a member maimed or cut off by violence. The blunder of the apostles was also overruled to answer a very instructive purpose. You wonder that the Lord should, even in appearance, encourage His disciples to have swords, and then forbid them to use them. Follow me in a thought which is clear to my own mind. For a man to abstain from using force when he has none to use is no great virtue; it reminds one of the lines of Cowper's ballad—

"Stooping down, as needs he must
Who cannot sit upright."

But for a man to have force ready to his hand, and then to abstain from using it, is a case of self-restraint, and possibly of self-sacrifice, of a far nobler kind. Our Savior had His sword at His side that night, though He did not use it. "What!" say you, "how can that be true?" Our Lord says, "Can I not now pray to My Father, and He will give Me twelve legions of angels?" Our Lord had thus the means of self-defense; something far more powerful than a sword hung at His belt, but He refused to employ the power within His reach. His servants could not bear this test, they had no self-restraint; the hand of Peter is on his sword at once. The fail-

ure of the servants in this matter seems to me to illustrate the grand self-possession of their Master. "Alas," He seems to say, "you cannot be trusted even with swords, much less could you be entrusted with greater forces. If you had the angelic bands at your command, down they would come streaming from the sky to execute works of vengeance, and so mar My great life-work of love." Brethren, we are better without swords and other forms of force than with them, for we have not yet learned, like our Lord, to control ourselves. Admire the glorious self-restraint of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, armed not with a sword but with the embattled hosts of "helmed cherubim and sworded seraphim," yet refused even by a prayer to bring them down to His relief. Peter's passionate use of the sword illustrates the happy self-control of His Lord, and this is the use of the incident.

Let us now proceed to learn from the words of the Lord Jesus which we have selected as our text.

I. First, brethren, I would have you notice from the text OUR LORD'S GRAND RESOURCE. "Do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father?" Our Lord is surrounded by His adversaries, and there are none about Him powerful enough to defend Him from their malice; what can He do? He says, "I can pray to My Father." This is our Lord's continual resource in the time of danger, yes, even in that time of which He said, "This is your hour and the power of darkness." He can even now pray to His Father.

First, Jesus had no possessions on earth, but *He had a Father*. I rejoice in His saying, "Do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father?" He is a betrayed man; He is given up into the hands of those who thirst for His blood, but He has a Father almighty and divine. If our Lord had merely meant to say that God could deliver Him, He might have said, "Do you think not that I can pray to Jehovah?" or, "to God?" But He uses the sweet expression, "My Father," both here and in that text in John, where He says, "The cup which My Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?" O brethren, remember that we have a Father in heaven. When all is gone and spent, we can say, "Our Father." Relatives are dead, but our Father lives. Supposed friends have left us, even as the swallows quit in our wintry weather, but we are not alone, for the Father is with us. Cling to that blessed text, "I will not leave you orphans; I will come unto you." In every moment of distress, anxiety, perplexity, we have a Father in whose wisdom, truth, and power, we can rely. Your dear children do not trouble themselves much, do they? If they have a need, they go to father; if they are puzzled, they ask father; if they are ill-treated, they appeal to father. If but a thorn is in their finger, they run to mother for relief. Be it little or great, the child's sorrow is the parent's care! This makes a child's life easy; it would make ours easy if we would but act as children towards God. Let us imitate the Elder Brother, and when we, too, are in our Gethsemane, let us, as He did, continue to cry, "My Father, My Father." This is a better defense than shield or sword.

Our Lord's resource was to approach His Father with prevailing prayer. "Can I not, now, pray to My Father?" Our Lord Jesus could use that

marvelous weapon of All-prayer, which is shield, and sword, and spear, and helmet, and breast-plate, all in one. When you can do nothing else you can pray. If you can do many things besides, it will still be your wisdom to say, "Let us pray!" But I think I hear you object, that our Lord had been praying, and yet His griefs were not removed. He had prayed Himself into a bloody sweat with prayer, and yet He was left unprotected, to fall into His enemies' hands. This is true, and yet it is not all the truth, for He had been strengthened, and power for deliverance was at His disposal. He had only to press His suit to be rescued at once. The Greek word here is not the same word which would set forth ordinary prayer; the Revised Version puts it, "Do you think that I cannot *beseech* My Father?" We make a great mistake if we throw all prayer into one category, and think that every form of true prayer is alike. We may pray and plead, and even do this with extreme earnestness, and yet we may not use that mode of beseeching which would surely bring the blessing. Up to now our Lord had prayed, and prayed intensely, too, but there was yet a higher form of prayer to which He might have mounted if it had been proper to do so. He could so have besought that the Father must have answered, but He would not. O brethren, you have prayed a great deal, perhaps, about your trouble, but there is a reserve force of beseeching in you yet; by the aid of the Spirit of God you may pray after a higher and more prevailing rate. This is a far better weapon than a sword. I was speaking to a brother yesterday about a prayer which my Lord had remarkably answered in my own case, and I could not help saying to him, "But I cannot always pray in that fashion. Not only can I not so pray, but I would not dare to do so even if I could." Moved by the Spirit of God, we sometimes pray with a power of faith which can never fail at the mercy seat, but without such an impulse we must not push our own wills to the front. There are many occasions upon which, if one had all the faith which could move mountains, he would most wisely show it by saying nothing beyond, "Nevertheless not as I will, but as You will." Had our Lord chosen to do so, He still had in reserve a prayer power which would have effectually saved Him from His enemies. He did not think it right to use it, but He could have done so had He pleased.

Notice that our Lord, *felt that He could even then pray*. Matters had not gone too far for prayer. When can they do so? The word "now" practically occurs twice in our version, for we get it first as "now," and then as "presently." It occurs only once in the original, but as its exact position in the verse cannot easily be decided, our translators, with a singular wisdom, have placed it in both the former and the latter part of the sentence. Our Savior certainly meant—"I am come now to extremities; the people are far away whose favor formerly protected Me from the Pharisees, and I am about to be seized by armed men, but even now I can pray to My Father." Prayer is an ever open door. There is no predicament in which we cannot pray. If we follow the Lamb where ever He goes, we can now pray effectually unto our Father, even as He could have done. Do I hear you say, "The fatal hour is near"? You may now pray. "But the danger is imminent!" You may now pray. If, like Jonah, you are now at the

bottom of the mountains, and the weeds are wrapped about your head, you may even now pray. Prayer is a weapon that is usable in every position in the hour of conflict. The Greeks had long spears, and these were of grand service to the troops so long as the rank was not broken, but the Romans used a short sword, and that was a far more effectual weapon at close quarters. Prayer is both the long spear and the short sword. Yes, brother, between the jaws of the lion you may even now pray. We glory in our blessed Master that He knew in fullness of faith that if He would bring forth His full power of prayer He could set all heaven on the wing. As soon as His beseeching prayer had reached the Father's ear, immediately, like flames of fire, angels would flash death upon His adversaries.

Our Lord's resort was not to the carnal weapon, but to the mighty engine of supplication. Behold, my brethren, where our grand resort must always be. Look not to the arm of flesh, but to the Lord our God. Church of God, look not piteously to the State, but fly to the mercy seat. Church of God, look not to the ministry, but resort to the throne of grace. Church of God, depend not upon learned or moneyed men, but beseech God in supplicating faith. Prayer is the tower of David built for an armory. Prayer is our battle-axe and weapons of war. We say to our antagonist, "Do you think that I cannot now pray to my Father." Let this suffice to display our Savior's grand resource in the night of His direst distress.

II. Secondly, let me invite your attention to OUR LORD'S UNDIMINISHED POWER IN HEAVEN at the time when He seemed to have no power on earth. He says when about to be bound and taken away to Caiaphas, "I can presently call down twelve legions of angels from the skies." He had influence in heaven with the Father, the great Lord of angels. He could have of the Father all that the Father possessed. Heaven would be emptied if needful to satisfy the wish of the Beloved Son. The man Christ Jesus who is about to be hung upon the cross has such power with the Father that He has but to ask and to have. The Father would answer Him at once, "He shall *presently* send Me twelve legions of angels." There would be no delay, no hesitation. The Father was ready to help Him, waiting to deliver Him. All heaven was concerned about Him. All the angelic bands were waiting on the wing, and Jesus had but to express the desire, and instantly the garden of Gethsemane would have been as populous with shining ones as the New Jerusalem itself.

Our Lord speaks of angels that His Father would give Him, or send Him. We may interpret it that the Father would at once put at His disposal the glorious inhabitants of heaven. Think of seraphs at the disposal of the Man of Sorrows! He is despised and rejected of men, and yet angels that excel in strength are at His beck and call. Swift of wing, and quick of hand, and wise of thought, they are charmed to be the messengers of the Son of Man, the servitors of Jesus. Think of this, beloved, when you bow before the thorn-crowned head, and when you gaze upon the nailed hands and feet. Remember that angels and principalities and powers, and all the ranks of pure spirits by whatsoever name they are named, were all at the beck of Jesus when He was newly risen from His

agony, and was about to be led away bound, to the High priest. He is our Lord and God, even at His lowest and weakest.

Jesus speaks of "twelve legions." I suppose He mentions the number twelve as a legion for each one of the eleven disciples and for Himself. They were only twelve, and yet the innumerable hosts of heaven would make forced marches for their rescue. A legion in the Roman army was six thousand men at the very lowest. Twelve times six thousand angels would come in answer to a wish from Jesus. No, He says, "more" than twelve legions. There can be no limit to the available resources of the Christ of God. Thousands of thousands would fill the air if Jesus willed it. The band that Judas led would be an insignificant squad to be swallowed up at once if the Savior would but summon His allies. Behold, dear brethren, the glory of our betrayed and arrested Lord. If He was such then, what is He now, when all power is given Him of His Father! Bear in your minds the clear idea that Jesus in His humiliation was nevertheless Lord of all things, and especially of the unseen world, and of the armies which people it. The more clearly you perceive this, the more you will admire the all-conquering, all-abjuring love which took Him to the death of the cross.

Tarry here just a minute to remember that the angels also are, according to your measure and degree, at your call. You have but to pray to God and angels shall bear you up in their hands lest you dash your foot against a stone. We do not think enough of these heavenly beings, yet they are all ministering spirits sent forth to minister to those that are heirs of salvation. Like Elijah's servant, if your eyes were opened you would see the mountain full of horses of fire and chariots of fire round about the servants of God. Let us learn from our Master to reckon upon forces invisible. Let us not trust in that which is seen of the eye, and heard of the ear, but let us have respect to spiritual agencies which evade the senses, but are known to faith. Angels play a far greater part in the affairs of providence than we know of. God can raise us up friends on earth, but if He does not do so He can find us abler friends in heaven. There is no need to pluck out the sword with which to cut off men's ears, for infinitely better agencies will work for us. Have faith in God, and all things shall work for your good. The angels of God think it an honor and a delight to protect the least of His children.

III. But I cannot linger, although I feel a great temptation to do so. My text is full of teaching, but a main point is the third one—OUR LORD'S PERFECT WILLINGNESS IN SUFFERING. I hope I have already brought that before you. Our Lord would be betrayed into the hands of sinners, but He would go with them willingly. He had not shunned the garden though Judas knew the place. No part of our Lord's sufferings came upon Him by the necessity of His nature. Neither as God nor as sinless man was He bound to suffer. There was no necessity that Christ should endure any of the inflictions laid upon Him, except the necessity of His fulfilling the Scriptures, and performing the work of mercy which He came to do. He must die because He became the great sacrifice for sin, but apart from that, no necessity of death was on Him. They scourged Him,

but they could not have lifted the whip if He had not permitted it. He thirsted on the cruel tree, but all the springs of water in the world He makes and fills, and therefore He needed not to have thirsted if He had not chosen to submit thereto. When He died, He did not die through the failure of His natural strength; He died because He had surrendered Himself to death as our great Propitiation. Even in His expiring moment our Lord cried with a loud voice, to show that His life was in Him still. He "gave up the ghost," freely parting with a life which He might have retained. He voluntarily surrendered His spirit to God. It was not snatched from Him by a force superior to His own will; He willingly bore our sins, and willingly died as our Substitute. Let us love and bless the willing Sufferer.

Indeed, our Lord was not merely submissive to the divine will, but, if I may use words in a paradoxical manner, I would say that He was actively submissive. A single prayer would have brought our Lord deliverance from His enemies, but He exercised force upon Himself, and held in His natural impulse to beseech the Father. He held in abeyance that noblest of spiritual gifts, that choicest of all forms of power—the power of prayer. One would have thought that a good man might always exercise prayer to the full of his bent, and yet Jesus laid His hand upon His prayer power as if it had been a sword, and put it back into its sheath. "He saved others, Himself He could not save." He prayed for others, but, in this instance, for Himself He would not pray, as He might have done. He would do nothing, even though it was to pray a prayer which even in the slightest degree would oppose the will of the Father. He was so perfectly submissive, yes, so eager to accomplish our salvation that He would not pray to avoid the cruelty of His enemies and the bitterness of death. He sees it is the Father's will, and therefore He will not have a wish in opposition to it. "The cup which My Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?" Remember, that He needed not to commit any wrong thing to prevent His being taken and slain; a good thing, namely, a prayer, would do it, but He will not pray; He has undertaken the work of redemption, and He must and will go through with it. He has such a desire for your salvation and for mine, such a thirst to honor and glorify His Father in the work which He had engaged to do, that He will not even prevent His sufferings by a prayer.

Wonderful is that question, "How then shall the scriptures be fulfilled?" It is as much as to say, "Who else can drink this cup? Who else can tread the winepress of Almighty wrath? No, I must do it. I cannot lay this load upon any other shoulders." Therefore, for the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame. He was willing, yes, willing from beginning to end, to be our suffering Savior. He was willing to be born at Bethlehem, to work at Nazareth, to be mocked at Jerusalem, and at last to die at Calvary. At any one point He could have drawn back. No constraint was upon Him but that of a love stronger than death.

I want you, dear hearers, to draw the inference that Jesus is willing to save. A willing Sufferer must be a willing Savior. If He willingly died, He

must with equal willingness be ready to give to us the fruit of His death. If any of you would have Jesus, you may surely have Him at once. He freely delivered Himself up for us all. If He was so willing to become a sacrifice, how willing must He be that the glorious result of His sacrifice should be shared in by you and by all who come to God by Him! If there is unwillingness anywhere, you are unwilling. He rejoices to be gracious. I wish the charm of this truth would affect your heart as it does mine. I love Him greatly, because I see that at any moment He might have drawn back from redeeming me, and yet He would not. A single prayer would have set Him free, but He would not pray it, for He loved us so!—

"This was compassion like a God,
That when the Savior knew
The price of pardon was His blood,
His pity never withdrew."

Do not grieve Him by thinking that He is unwilling to forgive, that He is unwilling to receive a sinner such as you. Has He not said, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out"? You will delight Him if you come to Him, whoever you may be. If you will but draw near to Him by simple trust, He will see in you the purchase of His agony, and all the merit of His death shall flow out freely to you. Come and welcome, sinner, come.

IV. Now I must lead you, with great brevity, to notice OUR LORD'S GREAT RESPECT FOR HOLY SCRIPTURE. He can have twelve legions of angels but "how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?"

Notice that our Lord believed in *the divinity of Scripture*. He says, "How then shall the scriptures be fulfilled?" But if the Scriptures are only the writings of men, there is no necessity that they should be fulfilled. If they are merely the fallible utterances of good men, I see no particular necessity that they should be fulfilled. Our Lord Jesus Christ insisted upon it that the Scriptures must be fulfilled, and the reason was that they are not the word of man, but the Word of God. The Scriptures were evidently the Word of God to our Lord Jesus Christ. He never trifles with them, nor differs from them, nor predicts that they will vanish. It is He that says, "Think not that I have come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I have not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all is fulfilled."

He believed in the divine origin of the Scriptures and also in *their infallibility*. "How then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" He does not hint that the Scriptures might be a little mistaken. He does not argue, "I will bring the twelve legions of angels down to deliver Myself, and it is no matter to Me that then the Scriptures will be made void." Oh, no! The Scriptures must be true, and they must be fulfilled, and therefore He must be betrayed into the hands of men. He settles it as a matter of necessity that Scripture must infallibly be verified, even to its jots and tittles.

See, brethren, *the priceless worth* of Scripture in the estimation of our Lord. In effect He says, "I will die rather than any Scripture shall be unfulfilled. I will go to the cross rather than any one word of God should not

be carried out." The prophet Zechariah has written, "Awake, O sword, against My shepherd, and against the man that is My fellow, says the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered abroad." The fulfillment of that prophecy fell due that night, and the Son of God was prepared to be smitten as the Shepherd of the sheep, rather than the word of the Father should fall to the ground. Skin for skin, yes, all that a man has he will give for his life, but Jesus would give His life for the Scriptures. Brethren, it is worth while for the whole church to die rather than any truth of Scripture should be given up. Let all our thousands be consumed upon the altar as one great holocaust sooner than the Scriptures should be dishonored The Word of the Lord must live and prevail whether we die or not. Our Lord teaches us to prize it beyond liberty or life.

The force of our Lord's language goes further yet. Let me repeat the words and then enlarge upon them. "How then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" Holy Scripture is the transcript of the secret decree of God. We do not believe in fate, a blind, hard thing, but we believe in predestination, the settled purpose of a wise and loving Father. The Book of Fate is cruel reading, but the book of divine Fore-ordination is full of charming sentences, and those lines out of it which are written in the Scriptures we joyfully choose to have fulfilled. It is the will of our Father who is in heaven which settles the things which must be, and because of this we cheerfully yield ourselves up to predestination. Once being assured that God has appointed it, we have no struggles; no, we will not even breathe a wish to have the matter otherwise. Let the will of the Father be the supreme law. It ought to be so. We find a depth of comfort in saying, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seems good to Him." Now, the prophecies of Scripture were to the Lord Christ the revelation of the predestination of God so that it must be, and He cheerfully, joyfully, even without a prayer against it, gives Himself up at once to that which must be, because God has appointed it. If any of you do not believe in the predestination of God, you will, probably, in some hour of depression, ascribe your sorrows to a cruel fate. The human mind, somehow or other, is driven at last to this decision, that some things are beyond the control of man and of his will, and that these are fixed by necessity. How much better to see that God has fixed them! There is the wheel revolving surely and unalterably; would it not comfort you to believe that it is full of eyes, and that it is moving according to the settled purpose of the Lord? That man who says, "It is my Father's will" is the happy man. Predestination is as sure and as certain as fate, but there is at the back of it a living and loving personality, ordering all things. To this we cheerfully yield ourselves.

Beloved, let us value Scripture as much as Christ did; I was going to say, let us value it even more, for if our Lord valued unfulfilled Scripture—which was but a shell till He became its kernel—how much more should we value it, to whom the Scriptures are fulfilled in a large degree, because the Christ has suffered and has done even as it was written of Him by the prophets of God!

Time flies so quickly that I must pass on. You perceive that I have a pregnant text; it is full of living instruction to those who desire to learn. God help us to receive with joy all its holy teaching!

V. But I must come to the last point. We will consider OUR LORD'S LESSONS TO EACH ONE OF US in this text.

The first lesson is this: Desire no other forces for God's work than God Himself ordains to use. Do not desire that the Government should come to your rescue to support your church. Do not desire that the charms of eloquence should be given to ministers, that they may therewith command listening ears, and so maintain the faith by the wisdom of words. Do not ask that learning and rank and prestige may come upon the side of Christianity, and so religion may become respectable and influential. Means that God has not chosen to use should not be looked upon by us with covetous eyes. Has He not said, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts"? Jesus has all those squadrons of angels at His disposal; do you wish that He would use them? What a glorious vision is before us as we see their serried ranks and mark their glittering splendor! But Jesus bids them stand still and see the salvation of God worked out without their interposition. To them He has not put in subjection the new world. They must not meddle with the redemption of men. The conflict for truth is to be a spiritual battle between man and the serpent; nothing but spiritual force is to be employed, and that not by angels, but by men. Man must overcome sin by spiritual means only. Put up the sword, Peter! Jesus does not want its keen edge. Keep your swords in your sheaths, you seraphim! Jesus does not want even your blades of celestial temper. His weakness has done more than human or angelic strength. His suffering and death have done the deed which all the hierarchy of angels could never have accomplished. The truth is to win the fight. The Spirit is to subdue the powers of evil. Brethren, do not ask anybody else to interfere. Let us have this fight out on the ground which God has chosen. Let us know that God is omnipotent in the realm of mind and that by His truth and Spirit He will overcome. He holds back all forces other than those of argument, and persuasion, and enlightenment by His Spirit; do not let us even wish to put our hand to any force other than what He ordains to use.

And next, take care that when other forces are within reach, you do not use them for the promotion of the heavenly kingdom. When you are in argument for the truth, do not grow angry, for this would be to fight the Lord's battles with the devil's weapons. Do not wish to oppress a person whose views are erroneous or even blasphemous. The use of bribes for the propagation of opinions is lowly and the refusal of charities to those who differ from us in sentiment is detestable. Let no threats escape your lip, or bribes pollute your hand. It is not thus that the battles of truth are to be fought. If you ever feel inclined to shut a man's mouth by wishing him banishment, or sickness, or any sort of ill, be grieved with yourself that so unchristly a thought should have entered your head. Desire, only good for the most perverse of men. Fighting for Christ would be wounding Him sorely. The French king heard of the cruelties perpetrated

upon our Lord, and he exclaimed, "Oh, if I had been there with a troop of my guards, I would have cut the villains in pieces!" Yes, but Jesus did not want the King of France nor his guards; He came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. The Lord Jesus desires you, my brethren, to fight for Him by your faith, by your holy life, by your confidence in truth, by your reliance upon the Spirit of God, but whenever your hands begin to itch for the sword hilt, then may you hear Him say, "Put up your sword into its sheath." He will conquer by love, and by love alone. If at this present moment I could take this church and endow it with all the wealth of the Establishment, and gather into its midst all the wisdom and talent and eloquence which now adorns society, and if I could do this by one single prayer, I would long hesitate to offer the petition. These might prove idols, and provoke the living God to jealousy. Infinitely better for us to be poor and weak and devoid of that which is highly esteemed among men, and then to be baptized into the Holy Spirit, than, to become strong and be left of our God. We shall war this warfare with no unsanctified weapons, with no instrument other than God appoints. Speaking the truth in the power of the Spirit of God, we are not afraid of the result. Surely this is what Christ means, "I could pray to My Father and receive at once a bodyguard of angels, but I will do nothing of the kind, for by other means than these must My kingdom come."

And the next lesson is: Never attempt to escape suffering at the expense of truth of God; "How then shall the scriptures be fulfilled?" Christ says, "I can escape being taken, and bound, and made a felon of, but then how are the Scriptures to be fulfilled?" Would you like to be throughout life screened from all afflictions? I think I hear a great many say, "I would." Would you? Would you be always free from sickness, poverty, care, bereavement, slander, persecution? How, then, could that word be true, "I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction"! What would that text mean, "What son is he whom the Father chastens not"? Jesus said, "Except a man take up his cross and follow Me, he cannot be My disciple." Are you to be an exception to the rule? Oh, do not kick against suffering, for in so doing you may be fighting against God. When Peter drew his sword he was unconsciously fighting to prevent our redemption. When we struggle against tribulation or persecution we may be warring against untold benefit. Do you desire to ride through the world like princes? Do not desire such a dangerous fate, for how then could the scriptures be fulfilled, that the disciple is not above his Lord? Bow your spirit before the majesty of Scripture, and patiently endure all things for the elect's sake.

Again, never tremble when force is on the wrong side. You see they are coming, Pharisees and priests and the *posse comitatus* sent by the authorities to arrest the Savior, but He is not afraid. Why should He be? He could command twelve legions of angels to beat off the foe. The man who knows he has a reserve behind him may walk into an ambush without fear. The multitudes think that there stands before them a mere man, a feeble man, strangely red as with bloody sweat. Ah! They know neither Him nor His Father. Let Him give a whistle, and from behind the olives of

the grove, and from the walls of the garden, and from every stone of the Mount of Olives would spring up warriors mightier than those of Caesar, valiant ones, before whom armies would be consumed. One of these mighties of God slew of Sennacherib's army, one hundred and eighty-five thousand men in a single night; another smote all the first-born of Egypt. Think, then, what more than twelve legions of them could accomplish! Brethren, all these holy, heavenly beings are on our side. "Oh, but there are so many against us!" Yes I know there are, but more are they that are for us. All the myriads of heaven are our allies. See you not the legions waiting for the summons? Who wants to give the word of command till our great Commander-in-Chief decides that the hour is come? Let us patiently wait till He shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trumpet of God; then will the reserves pour forth from heaven's gate, and all the holy angels shall swell the pomp of the great appearing. Till that moment, wait! In your patience possess your souls! The Lord Jesus waited; His angels waited; His Father waited. They are all still waiting. Heaven's long-suffering still runs like a silver thread through the centuries. Jesus will come with His angels in all the glory of the Father, but dream not that He must come tomorrow or else be charged with being slack concerning His promise. Desire that He may come in your lifetime, and look for Him, but if He tarries be not dismayed. If He tarries for another century do not be weary, if another thousand years should intervene between us and the bright millennial day, yet stand you fast each man in his place, fearing nothing, but setting up your banners in the name of the Lord. "The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge." We have no lack of strength; it is only that God wills that it be not put forth, and that our weakness for the present should be the instrument of His most majestic conquests. Lord, we are content to trust in You and wait patiently for You, but leave us not, we beseech You. Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
LUKE 22:31-53; MATTHEW 26:47-54.**

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—307, 291, 298.

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ON THE CROSS AFTER DEATH
NO. 1956

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 3, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath day (for that Sabbath day was a high day), besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then came the soldiers, and broke the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that He was dead already, they broke not His legs: But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true; and he knows that he says the truth, that you might believe. For these things were done that the scripture should be fulfilled, 'A bone of Him shall not be broken.' And again another scripture says, They shall look on Him whom they pierced."
John 19:31-37.

CRIMINALS who were crucified by the Romans were allowed to rot upon the cross. That cruel nation can hardly be as severely condemned as our own people, who up to a late period allowed the bodies of those condemned to die to hang in chains upon gallows in conspicuous places. The horrible practice is now abandoned, but it was retained to a time almost, if not quite, within living memory. I wonder whether any aged person here remembers such a horrible spectacle. Among the Romans it was usual, for there are classical allusions to this horror, showing the bodies of persons crucified were usually left to be devoured by ravenous birds. Probably out of deference to the customs of the Jews, the authorities in Palestine would sooner or later allow of the interment of the crucified, but they would by no means hasten it, since they would not feel such a disgust at the sight as an Israelite would. The Mosaic law, which you will find in the Book of Deuteronomy, runs as follows—"If you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but you shall in any wise bury him that day" (21:22, 23). This alone would lead the Jews to desire the burial of the executed, but there was a further reason. Lest the land should be defiled upon the holy Sabbath of the Passover, the chief priests were persistent that the bodies of the crucified should be buried, and therefore that their deaths should be hastened by the breaking of their legs. Their consciences were not wounded by the murder of Jesus, but they were greatly moved by the fear of ceremonial pollution.

Religious scruples may live in a dead conscience. Alas! This is not the only proof of that fact; we could find many in our own day.

The Jews hurried to Pilate, and sought as a gift the merciless act of having the legs of the crucified dashed to pieces with an iron bar. That act was sometimes performed upon the condemned as an additional punishment, but in this instance it was meant to be a finishing stroke, hastening death by the terrible pain which it would cause, and the shock to the system which it would occasion. Ferocious hate of our Lord made His enemies forgetful of everything like humanity; doubtless the more of pain and shame which they could cause to Him the better would they be pleased. Not, however, out of cruelty, but out of regard to the ceremonials of their religion, they "besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away." I have already told you that this breaking of the bones of the crucified was a Roman custom, and of this we have evidence, since there is a Latin word, *crucifragium*, to express this barbarous act. Pilate had no hesitation in granting the desire of the Jews; what would he care about the dead body, since he had already delivered up the living man?

Soldiers go at once to perform the hideous operation, and they commence with the two malefactors. It is a striking fact that the penitent thief, although he was to be in Paradise with his Lord that day, was not, therefore, delivered from the excruciating agony occasioned by the breaking of his legs. We are saved from eternal misery, not from temporary pain. Our Savior, by our salvation, gives no pledge to us that we shall be screened from suffering in this life. It is true, as the proverb has it, "All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the clean and to the unclean." Accidents and diseases afflict the godly as well as the ungodly. Penitent or impenitent, we share the common lot of men, and are born to troubles as the sparks fly upward. You must not expect because you are pardoned, even if you have the assurance of it from Christ's own lips, that, therefore, you shall escape tribulation; no, but from His gracious mouth you have the forewarning assurance that trial shall befall you, for Jesus said, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me you might have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation." Suffering is not averted, but it is turned into a blessing. The penitent thief entered Paradise that very day, but it was not without suffering; say, rather, that the terrible stroke was the actual means of the prompt fulfillment of his Lord's promise to him. By that blow he died that day, otherwise he might have lingered long. How much we may any of us receive by the way of suffering it is hard to guess; perhaps, the promise that we shall be with our Lord in Paradise will be fulfilled that way.

At this point it seemed more than probable that our blessed Lord must undergo the breaking of His bones, but "He was dead already." It had pleased Him, in the infinite willingness with which He went to His sacrifice, to yield up His life, and His spirit had therefore departed. Yet one might have feared that the coarse soldiers would have performed their orders to the letter. See, they do not so! Had they conceived a dread of

one around whom such prodigies had gathered? Were they, like their centurion, impressed with awe of this remarkable personage? At any rate, perceiving that He was dead already, they did not use their hammer. Happy are we to see them cease from such loathsome brutality. But we may not be too glad, for another outrage will take its place; to make sure that He was dead, one of the four soldiers with a spear pierced His side, probably thrusting His lance quite through the heart. Here we see how our gracious God ordained in His providence that there should be sure evidence that Jesus was dead, and that therefore the sacrifice was slain. Paul declares this to be the gospel that the Lord Jesus died according to the Scriptures. Strange to say, there have been heretics who have ventured to assert that Jesus did not actually die. They stand refuted by this spear-thrust. If our Lord did not die, then no sacrifice has been presented, the resurrection is not a fact, and there is no foundation of hope for men. Our Lord assuredly died, and was buried; the Roman soldiers were keen judges in such matters, and they saw that "he was dead already," and moreover, their spears were not used in vain when they meant to make death a certainty.

When the side of Christ was pierced, there flowed from it blood and water, upon which a great deal has been said by those who think it proper to dilate upon such tender themes. It was supposed by some that by death the blood was divided, the clots parting from the water in which they float, and that in a perfectly natural way. But it is not true that blood would flow from a dead body if it were pierced. Only under certain very special conditions would blood gush forth. The flowing of this blood from the side of our Lord cannot be considered as a common occurrence; it was a fact entirely by itself. We cannot argue from any known fact in this case, for we are here in a new region. Granted, that blood would not flow from an ordinary dead body, yet remember, that our Lord's body was unique, since it saw no corruption. Whatever change might come over a body liable to decay, we may not ascribe any such change to His frame, and therefore there is no arguing from facts about common bodies so as to conclude from them anything concerning our blessed Lord's body. Whether, in His case, blood and water flowed naturally from His holy and incorruptible body, or whether it was a miracle, it was evidently a most notable and remarkable thing, and John, as an eyewitness, was evidently astonished at it, and so astonished at it that he recorded a solemn affirmation, in order that we might not doubt his testimony. He was certain of what he saw, and he took care to report it with a special note, in order that we might believe; as if he felt that if this fact was truly believed, there was a certain convincing power which would induce many to believe on our Lord Jesus as the appointed Savior. I could enter into many details, but I prefer to cast a veil over this tender mystery. It is scarcely reverent to be discoursing anatomy when the body of our adorable Lord is before us. Let us close our eyes in worship rather than open them with irreverent curiosity.

The great task before me this morning is to draw truth out of this well of wonders. I shall ask you to look at the events before us in three lights;

first, let us see here *the fulfillment of Scripture, s*econdly, *the identification of our Lord as the Messiah,* and thirdly, *the instruction which He intends.*

I. I ask you to notice THE FULFILLMENT OF SCRIPTURE.

Two things are predicted; not a bone of Him must be broken, and He must be pierced. These were the Scriptures which now remained to be accomplished. Last Lord's-day morning we were all of us delighted as we saw the fulfillment of Scripture [#1955—*Jesus Declining the Legions*] in the capture of our Lord, and His refusal to deliver Himself from His enemies. The theme of the fulfillment of Scripture is worth pursuing yet further in an age when Holy Scripture is treated with so much slight, and is spoken of as having no inspiration in it, or, at least, no divine authority by which its infallibility is secured. You and I favor no such error; on the contrary, we conceive it to be to the last degree mischievous. "If the foundations be removed, what can the righteous do?" We are pleased to notice how the Lord Jesus Christ and those who wrote concerning Him treated the Holy Scriptures with an intensely reverent regard. The prophecies that went before of Christ must be fulfilled, and holy souls found great delight in dwelling upon the fact that they were so.

I want you to notice concerning this case, that *it was singularly complicated.* It was negative and positive; the Savior's bones must not be broken, and He must be pierced. In the type of the Passover lamb it was expressly enacted that not a bone of it should be broken, therefore not a bone of Jesus must be broken. At the same time, according to Zechariah 12:10, the Lord must be pierced. He must not only be pierced with the nails, and so fulfill the prophecy, "They pierced My hands and My feet," but He must be conspicuously pierced, so that He can be emphatically regarded as a pierced one. How were these prophecies, and a multitude more, to be accomplished? Only God Himself could have brought to pass the fulfillment of prophecies which were of all kinds, and appeared to be confused and even in contradiction to each other. It would be an impossible task for the human intellect to construct so many prophecies, and types, and foreshadowing, and then to imagine a person in whom they should all be embodied. But what would be impossible to men has been literally carried out in the case of our Lord. There are prophecies about Him and about everything connected with Him, from His hair to His garments, from His birth to His tomb, and yet they have all been carried out to the letter. That which lies immediately before us was a complicated case, for if reverence to the Savior would spare His bones, would it not also spare His flesh? If a coarse brutality pierced His side, why did it not break His legs? How can men be kept from one act of violence, and that an act authorized by authority, and yet perpetrate another violence which had not been suggested to them? But, let the case be as complicated as it was possible for it to have been, infinite wisdom knew how to work it out in all points, and it did so. The Christ is the exact substance of the foreshadowing of the Messianic prophecies.

Next, we may say of the fulfillment of these two prophecies, that *it was especially improbable.* It did not seem at all likely that when the order was given to break the legs of the crucified, Roman soldiers would ab-

stain from the deed. How could the body of Christ be preserved after such an order had been issued? Those four soldiers are evidently determined to carry out the governor's orders, they have commenced their dreadful task, and they have broken the legs of two of the executed three. The crosses were arranged so that Jesus was hanging in the midst; He is the second of the three. We naturally suppose that they would proceed in order from the first cross to the second, but they seem to pass by the second cross, and proceed from the first to the third. What was the reason of this singular procedure? The supposition is, and I think a very likely one, that the center cross stood somewhat back, and that thus the two thieves formed a sort of first rank. Jesus would thus be all the more emphatically, "in the midst." If He was placed a little back, it would certainly have been easier for the penitent thief to have read the inscription over His head, and to have looked to our Lord, and held conversation with Him. Had they been placed exactly in a line, this might not have been so natural, but the suggested position seems to suit the circumstances. If it were so, I can understand how the soldiers would be taking the crosses in order when they performed their horrible office upon the two malefactors, and came last to Jesus, who was in the midst. In any case, such was the order which they followed. The marvel is that they did not in due course proceed to deal the horrible blow in the case of our Lord. Roman soldiers are apt to fulfill their commissions very literally, and they are not often moved with much desire to avoid barbarities. Can you see them intent upon their errand? Will they not even now mangle that sacred body? Commend me for roughness to the ordinary Roman soldier; he was so used to deeds of slaughter, so accustomed to an empire which had been established with blood and iron, that the idea of pity never crossed his soul, except to be rejected as a womanly feeling unworthy of a brave man. Yet behold and wonder! The order is given to break their legs; two out of the three have suffered, and yet no soldier may crush a bone of that sacred body. They see that He is dead already, and they break not His legs.

As yet you have only seen one of the prophecies fulfilled. He must be pierced as well. And what was that which came into that Roman soldier's mind when, in a hasty moment, he resolved to make sure that the apparent death of Jesus was a real one? Why did he open that sacred side with his lance? He knew nothing of the prophecy; he had no dreams of Eve being taken from the side of the man, and the church from the side of Jesus. He had never heard that ancient notion of the side of Jesus being like the door of the ark, through which an entrance to safety is opened. Why, then, does he fulfill the prediction of the prophet? There was no accident or chance here. Where are there such things? The hand of the Lord is here, and we desire to praise and bless that omniscient and omnipotent Providence which thus fulfilled the word of revelation. God has respect unto His own word, and while He takes care that no bone of His Son shall be broken, He also secures that no text of Holy Scripture shall be broken. That our Lord's bones should remain unbroken, and yet that He should be pierced, seemed a very unlikely thing, but it was car-

ried out. When next you meet with an unlikely promise, believe it firmly. When next you see things working contrary to the truth of God, believe God, and believe nothing else. Let God be true and every man a liar. Though men and devils should give God the lie, hold on to what God has spoken, for heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle of His word shall fall to the ground.

Note again, dear friends, concerning this fulfillment of Scripture, that *it was altogether indispensable*. If they had broken Christ's bones, then that word of John the Baptist, "Behold the Lamb of God," had seemed to have a slur cast upon it. Men would have objected, "But the bones of the Lamb of God were not broken." It was especially commanded twice over, not only in the first ordaining of the Passover in Egypt, but in the allowance of a second to those who were defiled at the time of the first Passover. In Numbers, as well as in Exodus, we read that not a bone of the lamb must be broken. How, then, if our Lord's bones had been broken, could we have said, "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us," when there would have been this fatal flaw? Jesus must remain intact upon the cross, and He must also be pierced, otherwise that famous passage in Zechariah, which is here alluded to, "They shall look on Me whom they have pierced," could not have been true of Him. Both prophecies must be carried out, and they were so in a conspicuous manner. But why need I say that this fulfillment was indispensable? Beloved, the keeping of every word of God is indispensable. It is indispensable to the truth of God that He should be true always, for if one word of His can fall to the ground, then all may fall, and His veracity is gone. If it can be demonstrated that one prophecy was a mistake, then all the rest may be mistakes. If one part of the Scripture is untrue, all may be untrue, and we have no sure ground to go upon. Faith loves not slippery places; faith seeks the sure word of prophecy, and sets her foot firmly upon certainties. Unless all the Word of God is sure and pure "as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times," then we have nothing to go upon, and are virtually left without a revelation from God. If I am to take the Bible and say, "Some of this is true, and some of it is questionable," I am no better off than if I had no Bible. A man, who is at sea with a chart which is only accurate in certain places, is not much better off than if he had no chart at all. I see not how it can ever be safe to be "converted and become as little children" if there is no infallible teacher for us to follow. Beloved, it is indispensable to the honor of God and to our confidence in His Word, that every line of Holy Scripture should be true. It was evidently indispensable in the case now before us, and this is only one instance of a rule which is without exception.

But now let me remind you that although the problem was complicated, and its working out was improbable, yet *it was fulfilled in the most natural manner*. Nothing can be less constrained than the action of the soldiers, they have broken the legs of two, but the other is dead, and they do not break His legs, yet, to make sure that they will be safe in omitting the blow, they pierce His side. There was no compulsion put upon them, they did this of their own proper thought. No angel came from heaven to

stand with his broad wings in front of the cross, so as to protect the Savior; no awful aegis of mystery was hung over the sacred body of the Lord so that intruders might be driven back with fear. No, the quaternion of soldiers did whatever they wished to do. They acted of their own free will, and yet at the same time they fulfilled the eternal counsel of God. Shall we never be able to drive into men's minds the truth that predestination and free agency are both facts? Men sin as freely as birds fly in the air, and they are altogether responsible for their sin, and yet everything is ordained and foreseen of God. The fore-ordination of God in no degree interferes with the responsibility of man. I have often been asked by persons to reconcile the two truths. My only reply is—They need no reconciliation, for they never fell out. Why should I try to reconcile two friends? Prove to me that the two truths do not agree. In that request I have set you a task as difficult as that which you propose to me. These two facts are parallel lines, I cannot make them unite, but you cannot make them cross each other. Permit me also to add that I have long ago given up the idea of making all my beliefs into a system. I believe, but I cannot explain. I fall before the majesty of revelation, and adore the infinite Lord. I do not understand all that God reveals, but I believe it. How can I expect to understand all the mysteries of revelation, when even the arithmetic of Scripture surpasses My comprehension, since I am taught that in the Godhead the Three are One, while in the undivided One I see most manifestly Three? Need I measure the sea? Is it not enough that I am borne up by its waves? I thank God for waters deep enough for my faith to swim in, understanding would compel me to keep to the shallows, but faith takes me to the main ocean. I think it more to my soul's benefit to believe than to understand, for faith brings me nearer to God than reason ever did. The faith which is limited by our narrow faculties is a faith unworthy of a child of God, for as a child of God he should begin to deal with infinite sublimities, like those in which his great Father is at home. These are only to be grasped by faith. To return to my subject, albeit the matter must be as Scripture foreshadowed, yet no constraint nor inducement was put forth, but as free agents, the soldiers performed the very things which were written in the Prophets concerning Christ.

Dear friends, suffer one more observation upon this fulfillment of Scripture, *it was marvelously complete*. Observe that in these transactions a seal was set upon that part of Scripture which has been most exposed to skeptical derision, for the seal was set first of all upon *the types*. Irreverent readers of Scripture have refused to accept the types, they say, "How do you know that the Passover was a type of Christ?" In other cases, more serious persons object to detailed interpretations, and decline to see a meaning in the smaller particulars. Such persons would not attach spiritual importance to the law, "Not a bone of it shall be broken," but would dismiss it as a petty regulation of an obsolete religious rite. But observe, beloved, the Holy Spirit does nothing of the kind, for He fixes upon a minor particular of the type, and declares that this must be fulfilled. Moreover, the providence of God intervenes, so that it shall be carried out. Therefore, be not scared away from the study of the types by the

ridicule of the worldly-wise. There is a general timidity coming over the minds of many about Holy Scripture, timidity to which, thank God, I am an utter stranger. It would be a happy circumstance if the childlike reverence of the early fathers could be restored to the church, and the present irreverent criticism could be repented of and cast away. We may delight ourselves in the types as in a very Paradise of revelation. Here we see our best Beloved's beauties mirrored in ten thousand delightful ways. There is a world of holy teaching in the books of the Old Testament, and in their types and symbols. To give up this patrimony of the saints, and to accept criticism instead of it, would be like selling one's birthright for a mess of pottage. I see in our Lord's unbroken bones a setting of the seal of God upon the types of Scripture.

Let us go further. I see, next, the seal of God set upon *unfulfilled prophecy,* for the passage in Zechariah is not yet completely fulfilled. It runs thus, "They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced." Jehovah is the speaker, and He speaks of "the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem." They are to look on Jehovah whom they have pierced, and to mourn for Him. Although this prophecy is not yet fulfilled on the largest scale, yet it is so far certified, for Jesus is pierced, the rest of it, therefore, stands good, and Israel shall one day mourn because of her insulted King. The prophecy was fulfilled in part when Peter stood up and preached to the eleven, when a great company of the priests believed, and when multitudes of the seed of Abraham became preachers of Christ crucified. Still it awaits a larger fulfillment, and we may rest quite sure that the day shall come when all Israel shall be saved. As the piercing of their Lord is true, so shall the piercing of their hearts be true, and they shall mourn and inwardly bleed with bitter sorrow for Him whom they despised and abhorred. The point to mark here is, that a seal is set in this case to a prophecy which yet awaits its largest fulfillment, therefore, we may regard this as a pattern, and may lay stress upon prophecy, and rejoice in it, and receive it without doubt, come what may.

I have said this much upon the fulfillment of the Word concerning our Lord; let us learn hence a lesson of reverence and confidence in reference to Holy Scripture.

II. But now, secondly, and briefly, THE IDENTIFICATION OF OUR LORD AS THE MESSIAH was greatly strengthened by that which befell His body after death. It was needful that He should conclusively be proven to be the Christ spoken of in the Old Testament. Certain marks and tokens are given, and those marks and tokens must be found in Him; they were so found.

The first mark was this; *God's Lamb must have a measure of preservation.* If Christ is what He professes to be, He is the Lamb of God. Now, God's lamb could only be dealt with in God's way. Yes, there is the lamb, kill it, sprinkle its blood, roast it with fire, but break not its bones. It is God's lamb, and not yours, therefore thus far shall you come, but no further. Not a bone of it shall be broken. Roast it, divide it among yourselves, and eat it, but break no bone of it. The Lord claims it as His own, and this is His reserve. So, in effect, the Lord says concerning the Lord

Jesus, "There is My Son, bind Him, scourge Him, spit on Him, crucify Him, but He is the Lamb of My Passover, and you must not break a bone of Him." The Lord's right to Him is declared by the reservation which is made concerning His bones. Do you not see here how He is identified as being "the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world"? It is a mark of identity upon which faith fixes her eyes, and she studies that mark until she sees much more in it than we can this morning speak about, for we have other things to dwell upon.

The next mark of identity must be, that *Jehovah our Lord should be pierced by Israel*. So Zechariah said, and so must it be fulfilled. Not merely must His hands and feet be nailed, but most conspicuously must Himself be pierced. "They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him." Pierced He must be. His wounds are the marks and tokens of His being the real Christ. When they shall see the sign of the Son of man in the last days, then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and is not that sign His appearing as a Lamb that has been slain? The wound in His side was a sure mark of His identity to His own disciples, for He said to Thomas, "Reach hither your hand, and thrust it into My side: and be not faithless, but believing." It shall be the convincing token to all Israel, "They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one that mourns for his only son." To us the opened way to His heart is in His flesh the token that this is the incarnate God of love, whose heart can be reached by all who seek His grace.

But I have not finished this identification, for observe, that when that side was pierced, "forthwith came there out blood and water." You that have your Bibles will have opened them already at Zechariah twelve. Will you kindly read on till you come to the first verse of the thirteenth chapter, which ought not to have been divided from the twelfth chapter. What do you find there? "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness." They pierced Him, and in that day they began to mourn for Him, but more, in that day there was a fountain opened. And what was that fountain but this gush of water and of blood from the split side of our redeeming Lord? The prophecies follow quickly upon one another; they relate to the same person, to the same day, and we are pleased to see that the facts also follow quickly upon one another, for when the soldier with the spear pierced the side of Jesus, "*forthwith* came there out blood and water." Jehovah was pierced, and men repented, and beheld the cleansing fountain within a brief space. The men who saw the sacred fountain opened rejoiced to see in it the attestation of the finished sacrifice, and the token of its cleansing effect.

The identification is more complete if we add one more remark. Take all the types of the Old Testament together, and you will gather this, that *the purification of sin was typically set forth by blood and water*. Blood was conspicuous always, you have no remission of sin without it, but water was exceedingly prominent also. The priests before sacrificing must wash, and the victim itself must be washed with water. Impure

things must be washed with running water. Behold how our Lord Jesus came by water and by blood, not by water only, but by water and blood. John who saw the marvelous stream never forgot the sight, for though he wrote his Epistles, I suppose, far on in life, the recollection of that wondrous scene was fresh with him. Though I suppose he did not write his Gospel until he was a very old man, yet when he came to this passage it impressed him as much as ever, and he uttered affirmations which he was not at all accustomed to use, "He that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knows that he says the truth" In solemn form he thus, after a manner, gave his affidavit before God's people, that he did really behold this extraordinary sight. In Jesus we see one who has come to atone and to sanctify. He is that High Priest who cleanses the leprosy of sin by blood and water. This is one part of the sure identification of the great Purifier of God's people that He came both by water and by blood, and poured out both from His pierced side. I leave these identifications to you. They are striking to my own mind, but they are only part of the wonderful system of marks and tokens by which it is seen that God attests the man Christ Jesus as being in very deed the true Messiah.

III. I must close by noticing, thirdly, THE INSTRUCTION INTENDED FOR US in all these things.

The first instruction intended for us must be only hinted at, like all the rest. *See what Christ is to us*. He is the Paschal Lamb, not a bone of which was broken. You believe it. Come, then, and act upon your belief by feeding upon Christ; keep the feast in your own souls this day. That sprinkled blood of His has brought you safety; the Destroying Angel cannot touch you or your house. The Lamb Himself has become your food, feed on Him; remove your spiritual hunger by receiving Jesus into your heart. This is the food of whereof if a man eats he shall live forever. Be filled with all the fullness of God, as you now receive the Lord Jesus as God and Man. "You are complete in Him." You are "perfect in Jesus Christ." Can you say of Him, "He is all my salvation and all my desire"? "Christ is all and in all." Do not merely learn this lesson as a doctrine, but enjoy it as a personal experience. Jesus our Passover is slain; let Him be eaten. Let us feast on Him, and then be ready to journey through the wilderness, in the strength of this divine meat, until we come to the promised rest.

What next do we learn from this lesson but this? See *man's treatment of Christ*. They have spit on Him, they have cried, "Crucify Him, crucify Him," they have nailed Him to the cross, they have mocked His agonies, and He is dead, but man's malice is not glutted yet. The last act of man to Christ must be to pierce Him through. That cruel wound was the concentration of man's ill-treatment of Jesus. His experience at the hands of our race is summed up in the fact that they pierced Him to the heart. That is what men have done to Christ; they have so despised and rejected Him that He dies, pierced to the heart. Oh, the depravity of our nature! Some doubt whether it is *total* depravity. It deserves a worse adjective than that. There is no word in human language which can express the venom of the enmity of man to his God and Savior; he would wound

Him mortally if He could. Do not expect that men will love either Christ or you, if you are like Him. Do not expect that Jesus will find room for Himself in the inn, much less that He will be set on the throne by guilty, unrenewed men. Oh, no! Even when He is dead they must insult His corpse with a spear thrust. One soldier did it, but he expressed the sentiment of the age. This is what the world of sinners did for Him who came into the world to save it.

Now, learn, in the next place, *what Jesus did for men*. Beloved, that was a sweet expression in our hymn just now—

"Even after death His heart
For us its tribute poured."

In His life He had bled for us; drop by drop the bloody sweat had fallen to the ground. Then the cruel scourges drew from Him purple streams, but as a little store of life-blood was left near His heart, He poured it all out before He went His way. It is a materialistic expression, but there is something more in it than mere sentiment—that there remains among the substance of this globe a sacred relic of the Lord Jesus in the form of that blood and water. As no atom of matter ever perishes, that matter remains on earth even now. His body has gone into glory, but the blood and water are left behind. I see much more in this fact than I will now attempt to tell. O world, the Christ has marked you with His blood and He means to have you! Blood and water from the heart of God's own Son have fallen down upon this dark and defiled planet, and thus Jesus has sealed it as His own, and as such it must be transformed into a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness. Our dear Lord, when He had given us all He had, and even resigned His life on our behalf, then parted with a priceless stream from the fountain of His heart, "forthwith came there out blood and water." Oh, the kindness of the heart of Christ that did not only for a blow return a kiss, but for a spear thrust returned streams of life and healing!

But I must hurry on. I can see in this passage also *the safety of the saints*. It is marvelous how full of eyes the things of Jesus are, for His unbroken bones look backward to the Paschal lamb, but they also look forward throughout all the history of the church to that day when He shall gather all His saints in one body and none shall be missing. Not a bone of His mystical body shall be broken. There is a text in the Psalms which says of the righteous man—and all righteous men are conformed unto the image of Christ—"He keeps all His bones: not one of them is broken." I rejoice in the safety of Christ's elect; he shall not permit a bone of His redeemed body to be broken—

"For all the chosen seed
Shall meet around the throne,
Shall bless the conduct of His grace,
And make His glories known."

A perfect Christ there shall be in the day of His appearing, when all the members of His body shall be joined to their glorious Head, who shall be crowned forever. Not one living member of Christ shall be absent, "Not a bone of Him shall be broken." There shall be no lame, maimed Christ, no

half-worked redemption, but the purpose that He came to accomplish shall be perfectly achieved to the glory of His name.

I have not quite done, for I must add another lesson. *We see here the salvation of sinners*. Jesus Christ's side is pierced to give to sinners the double cure of sin, the taking away of its guilt and power, but better than this, sinners are to have their hearts broken by a sight of the Crucified. By this means also they are to obtain faith. "They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him." Beloved, our Lord Jesus came not only to save sinners, but to seek them; His death not only saves those who have faith, but it creates faith in those who have it not. The cross produces the faith and repentance which it demands. If you cannot come to Christ *with* faith and repentance, come to Christ *for* faith and repentance, for He can give them to you. He is pierced on purpose that you may be pricked to the heart. His blood, which freely flows, is shed for many for the remission of sins. What you have to do is just look, and as you look, those blessed feelings which are the marks of conversion and regeneration shall be worked in you by a sight of Him. Oh, blessed lesson! Put it into practice this morning. Oh, that in this great house many may now have done with self and look to the crucified Savior, and find life eternal in Him! For this is the main end of John's writing this record, and this is the chief design of our preaching upon it; we long that you may believe. Come, you guilty, come and trust the Son of God who died for you. Come, you foul and polluted, come and wash in this sacred stream poured out for you. There is life in a look at the Crucified One. There is life at this moment for every one of you who will look to Him. God grant you may look and live, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 19:13-42.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—910, 276, 277.

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THE LORD'S OWN VIEW OF HIS CHURCH AND PEOPLE
NO. 1957

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

"A garden enclosed is My sister, My spouse;
a spring shut up, a fountain sealed."
Song of Solomon 4:12.

WE understand this sacred love song to be a Canticle of Communion between the Lord Jesus Christ and His church. He is the Bridegroom, and she the bride. Solomon furnishes the figure, as some think, and his Solyma is with him, but the type is dimly seen, it is the antitype which shines forth as the sun to the view of all spiritual minds.

At the very outset of the present discourse it is needful, for the sake of the less instructed, to say what the church is. A church is a congregation of faithful men—that is to say, of men who are believers in the Lord Jesus, men in whom the Holy Spirit has created faith in Christ, and the new nature of which faith is the sure index. The one church of Jesus Christ is made up of all believers throughout all time. Just as any one church is made up of faithful men, so is the one church of Christ, made up of all faithful churches in all lands and of all faithful men in all ages.

The church was viewed as one in the purpose of God before the world was. The Eternal Father chose to Himself a people, and gave them over to His Son, that they might be His portion forever and ever. This is the church of which we read—"Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it." This is "the church of God, which He has purchased with His own blood." This is the church with which the marriage supper shall be celebrated when the Well-beloved shall come to take His own unto Himself forever. While we at this time speak of the church as a whole, it will be quite correct for each individual believer to take home to himself any truth, whether doctrinal, experimental, or practical, which we treat of as the heritage of the church. Each saint may say, "This belongs to me." That which belongs to the redeemed family belongs to each member of that family. That which is true of light is true of each beam, that which is true of water is true of each drop, and that which is true of the church as a whole is true of each member of that mystical body.

The love of the Lord Jesus is to His church as a body, and it is the same to each believer as a member of that body. That which is true of the whole number is true of the units which make it up. He who invites a company to a feast virtually invites each person of the company. Jesus loves each one of His people with that same love with which He loves the whole of His people, insomuch that if you, my brethren, are Christ's be-

loved, and if you were the only persons that were ever born into the world, and all His love were yours, He would not then love you one atom more than He loves you now. The love of Jesus is dispersed, but not divided; it flows to all with the same force with which it flows to one. To redeem a single soul our Ransom must have laid down His life, and He loves each one with such a love that He did lay down His life for each one, as much as if there had not been another to redeem. We shall not be presumptuous if we enjoy all the love of Jesus of which we are capable, enjoying and appropriating the words of love to ourselves as if they were meant for us alone. The invitation of the Bridegroom in this Song gives a permit to the largest faith and to the most daring enjoyment. "Eat, O friends; yes, drink abundantly, O beloved."

I shall call your attention to four things, with as much brevity and earnestness as possible. Come, gracious Spirit, and lead us into the sweetness of them!

I. The first is, THE NEARNESS OF KIN OF THE CHURCH TO CHRIST, AND CHRIST TO THE CHURCH. He calls her in the text, "My sister, My spouse." As if He could not express His near and dear relationship to her by any one term, He employs the two. "My sister"—that is, one by birth, partaker of the same nature. "My spouse"—that is, one in love, joined by sacred ties of affection that never can be snapped. "My sister" by birth. "My spouse" by choice. "My sister" in communion, "My spouse" in absolute union with Myself. I want you who love the Savior to get a full hold of this thought of near and dear kinship under this head. Oh, how near akin Christ is to all His people!

But first, *do try to realize the person of Christ*. I am not going to speak to you at this time of a doctrine, or a mere historical fact that has vanished into the dim past. No, we speak of a real Person. Jesus Christ *is*. As Man and as God in the perfection of His nature He still exists. He dwells at the right hand of God at this moment, and though He cannot be here in His corporeal person, yet He is everywhere by His spiritual presence, which is more real still. Do not spirit Him away. Believe that He truly is, and that He truly is here—as much here and as really here as He was at Jerusalem, when He sat at the head of the table, and entertained the twelve at the last supper. Jesus is a real Man, a real Christ—recollect that.

Then let this further truth be equally well realized, that *He has so taken upon Himself our human nature that He may correctly call His church His siste*r. He has become so truly man in His incarnation, that He is not ashamed to call us brethren. He calls us so because we are so. No, He is not a deified man any more than He is a humanized God. He is perfectly God, but He is also perfectly man, and man such as we are, touched with the feeling, not only of our attainments, but of our infirmities; not only trusting in all points as we do, but tempted in all points like as we are, though without sin. He was, when He was here, evidently man and eminently man, and He now so remembers all that He passed through while here below that He remains in perfect sympathy with us at this very moment. Change of place has made no change of heart in Him. He in His glory is the same Jesus as in His humiliation.

No man is so fully a man as Jesus Christ. If you speak of any other man, something or other narrows his manhood. You think of Milton as a poet and an Englishman, rather than as a man. You think of Cromwell rather as of a warrior, than as a man. Either his office, his work, his nationality, or his peculiar character, strikes you in many a man rather than his manhood, but Jesus is *the* Man, the model Man; in all His deeds and words man to the fullness of manhood, in its purest and truest state. The second Adam is, *par excellence,* man.

We may not think of Him as one among a vast number who may be distantly akin to us, as all men are akin to one another by descent, but *the Lord comes near to each individual.* He takes each one of His believing people by the hand, and says, "My brother." In our text He salutes the whole church as "My sister." He says this with tender emphasis. The love between brothers, if those brothers are what they should be, is very strong, and peculiarly selfless and admirable. A brother is born for adversity. A true brother is one upon whom you can rely in time of need. One heart in two bodies is the realization of true brotherhood. Such is, emphatically, the relationship of the Redeeming Lord to each believer. He is your brother. "The man is next of kin unto us." You may have the joy of saying, "I know that my near Kinsman 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." Happy man who, without presumption, can feel the ties of kinship with the Son of Man, and can sing with the poet of the sanctuary—

"Jesus, our Kinsman and our God,
Arrayed in majesty and blood,
You are our life; our souls in Thee
Possess a full felicity."

As we have already observed, the first term, "sister," implies kinship of nature, but *the second term, "My spouse," indicates another kinship, dearer, and in some respects, nearer;* a kinship undertaken of choice, but, once undertaken, irrevocable and everlasting. This kinship amounts to unity, insomuch that the spouse loses her name, loses her identity, and to a high degree, is merged in the greater personality to which she is united. Such is our union to Christ; if indeed we are His that nothing can so well set it forth as marriage union. He loves us so much that He has taken us up into Himself by the absorption of love. We may henceforth forego our name, for "this is the name by which *she* shall be called, The Lord our righteousness." Wonderful that the very name which belongs to our Lord Jesus, and one of the most majestic of His names, should yet be used as the name of His church. The Lord Jesus Christ's name is now named upon her, and she is permitted to make use of His name whenever she draws near to the throne of the heavenly grace in prayer. "In His name"—this is to be her great plea whenever she intercedes with heaven. She speaks in the name which is above every name, the name at which angels bow.

The Bridegroom calls His church "My sister, My spouse." Now come, renewed heart, you that have learned to trust your Savior, see how near, how dear you are to Him! If He says, "My sister, My spouse," answer to Him, "My Brother, my Husband." If He is not strange to you, oh, be not

cold to Him! Think not of Him as of some great one to whom you may not approach. Have you in your memory that great text, "It shall be at that day, says the Lord, that you shall call me Ishi (my Husband), and shall call me no more Baali, (my Lord). For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name." We feel no dreadful lordship now. Though He is Master and Lord, yet it is such a loving lordship which He exercises towards us that we rejoice in it. We hear a voice full of music, saying, "He is your Lord, and worship you Him," but His commandments are not grievous. His yoke is easy, and His burden is light. When we bow before Him, it is not because we fear with servile trembling, but because we rejoice and love. We rejoice in His rule and reign. Perfect love has cast out fear. We live in such joyful fellowship with Him as a sister has with a brother, or a wife with a husband. Be not backward towards your own Betrothed. Be not stiff and cold. Set not a boundary around the mountain, for it is not Sinai; there are no boundaries to the hill of Zion. Hang not up a curtain, for He has rent the veil. Think not of Him as though He were far divided from you, when He is exceedingly near to you, and has taken you up unto Himself, to be one with Him forever—

"Lost in astonishment I see,
Jesus, Your boundless love to me:
With angels I Your grace adore,
And long to love and praise You more.
Since You will take me for Your bride,
Oh, keep me, Savior, near Your side!
I gladly would give You all my heart,
Nor ever from my Lord depart."

I do not know how to preach upon this subject. Who can? Is it a subject for exposition in a mixed assembly? If it were, who could compass it? I beg you, O believers, to sit in your pews, and let holy thought occupy you; let this choice subject saturate your willing minds. If you are true believers, if you have been born again, if you are really looking to Christ alone for salvation, He has brought you into a condition of the utmost conceivable nearness with Himself; He has participated in *your* nature, and He has made you a partaker of *His* nature, and in so many words He says, "I will betroth you unto Me forever; yes, I will betroth you unto Me in righteousness, and in judgement, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth you unto Me in faithfulness: and you shall know the Lord." Can you grasp it? It will make your heart dance for joy if you can. Never did a more joyful thought illuminate a human mind. One with Jesus! By eternal union, one with Jesus! Is not this heavenly? There can be no divorce between Christ and His church, for thus it is written, "The Lord, the God of Israel, says that He hates putting away." He will have nothing to do with putting away. Having espoused us, He declares the thing done. "I am married unto you, says the Lord." He has taken our nature, and made us "partakers of the divine nature," and after He has done that, who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord? Neither height, nor depth, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, shall ever be able to effect a breakup of this most complete, perfect, mystical union between

Christ and His people. Again I pray the Holy Spirit to make every believer feel this, and then we shall go home from this house glad in spirit. My heart will be as a wedding feast, and the joy-bells of my soul will ring out the words—

"White and ruddy is my Beloved,
All His heavenly beauties shine;
Nature can't produce an object,
Nor so glorious, so divine;
He has wholly
Won my soul to realms above.
Such as find You find such sweetness
Deep, mysterious, and unknown;
Far above all worldly pleasures,
If they were to meet in one;
My Beloved,
O'er the mountains haste away."

II. To a second thought I would call your attention. See in the text THE SECURITY OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD IN CONSEQUENCE OF BEING WHAT THEY ARE. "A garden enclosed is My sister, My spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed." We are not only like a garden, but a garden *enclosed*. If the garden were not enclosed, the wild boar out of the woods would bark the vines, and uproot the flowers, but infinite mercy has made the church of God an enclosure, into which no invader may dare come. "For I, says the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her." Is she a spring? Are her secret thoughts, and loves, and desires like cool streams of water? Then the Bridegroom calls her "a spring shut up." Otherwise, every beast that passed by might foul her waters, and every stranger might quaff her streams. She is a spring shut up, a fountain sealed, like some choice cool spring in Solomon's private garden around the house of the forest of Lebanon—a fountain which he reserved for his own drinking, by placing the royal seal upon it, and locking it up by secret means, known only to himself. The legend has it that there were fountains which none knew of but Solomon, and he had so shut them up that, with his ring he touched a secret spring, a door opened, and living waters leaped out to fill his jeweled cup. No one but Solomon knew, the secret charm by which he set flowing the pent-up stream, of which no lips drank but his own. Now, God's people are as much shut up, and preserved, and kept from danger by the care of Christ, as the springs in Solomon's garden were reserved expressly for himself.

Beloved, this is a cheering thought for all believers, that the Lord has set apart him that is godly for Himself. He has taken measures to *preserve* all His chosen from all those who would defile and destroy them. He walled them round about with His divine decree of old, saying, "This people have I chosen for Myself." He then issued His command that none should injure them, saying, "Touch not My anointed, and do My prophets no harm." He sets a hedge about them in providence, so that nothing shall by any means harm them. He has shut them up from the enemy, and sealed them up for perpetual preservation. The wandering Bedouins in the East plunder the open fields, but a king's garden, enclosed and protected, is safe from their ravages. So are the saints enclosed from all

invading powers. Especially has the Lord walled them about with grace. While angels keep watch and ward around this sacred garden to drive off the powers of darkness, the invincible grace of God is always like a wall about the plants of the Lord's right hand planting, so that neither sin nor the world shall be able to uproot them. You are a garden, and a garden is a tender thing, soon destroyed, but the Lord, who planted you, has seen to your protection and provision. A garden in the East is a very needy place. One day's burning sun might suffice to wither all its verdure, but the Lord has declared of His church, "The sun shall not smite you by day, nor the moon by night." "I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." A garden is a dependent thing, requiring perpetual care from the husbandman, and that care the church of God shall have, for it is written, "He cares for you." Jesus says, "My Father is the husbandman," and surely that is enough.

In a garden weeds spring up, and alas, in the church, and in our hearts, the weeds of sin are plentiful, but there is One who will take care to pluck up evil growths, and cut away all rank shoots, that none of the precious plants may be choked or overgrown. In all ways every single plant, however feeble, shall be tended with all-sufficient skill.

It is very precious to see how the Lord lays Himself out to preserve His own beloved. We are too dear to Him to let us perish. Yet, O tender plant, you are often fearful! Did you say the other day that He had left you? How can this be? Do you know at what a price He bought you? Leave you! Will the husband forget his beloved spouse, and will the Husband of your soul forget you? Let not the thought tarry with you for a moment, for it is dishonoring to your Lord's love. "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." You are as safe as Jesus, for on His heart He bears your name. You are as safe as He is, for on the arm of His strength He wears your name, as the high priest wore the names of the tribes upon his shoulder, as well as upon his breastplate. "I give unto My sheep," says He, "eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." I want you to enjoy a sense of this security. I will not preach upon it much, but I will ask you to believe it, and to rejoice in it. Are you really in Christ? If so, who is to pluck you from there? Are you really trusting Him? How can He fail you? Have you been begotten again into the divine family? How can that new life be quenched? Do not let anything drive from your mind a sense of your security in Christ. I hear somebody say that this might lead men to carnal security. Far from it; the security of the Spirit is a death-blow to the security of the flesh. I tell you, sirs, that it is most needful that you should not believe in Jesus Christ half way, as some do that trust the Lord to put away the sin of the past, but cannot trust for the future. I believe in Him to put away all my sins that ever shall be, as well as all the sins that have been. To believe in Him only to obliterate the years of former sin is but a limping half-way faith. Believe in Him for all the years that shall be. What does He say? "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Do you believe in Him to give you life for a little time, so that you venture to take a quar-

ter's ticket of membership? I am glad that you believe even so much, but why limit His power? Believe in the Lord Jesus for the whole of life, yes, for eternity. "According to your faith be it unto you." Do you believe in Him to give you a sip of the living water to stay your thirst for a while? Believe in Him a great deal more than that, and accept Him as quenching your thirst forever. For, "you are complete in Him." "He that believes in Him has everlasting life."

I look upon this sense of security in a Christian as being the mainspring of unselfish virtue. What is that perpetual anxiety to save yourself? What is that daily hungering and perpetual thirsting? It is only a spiritualized selfishness. Only when a man is saved does he forget self. When I know that I am saved I am able to glorify God. The thought of saving myself by anything that I shall do, or be, or feel, I hurl to the winds, for I am already saved as a believer in Christ. Now is there scope for virtue. Now is there an opportunity to love God, and to love one's fellow men from a pure, unselfish motive. A man is drowning, the ship is going down from under him; he is not a likely man to be looking after the interests of those about him. Once let him grasp an oar in the lifeboat, and he is the man to be the savior of others. I want you to be out of the wreck, and in the lifeboat, that you may be a hearty worker for the salvation of the perishing. I want you to get out of that "if," "perhaps," "perchance," "maybe," into certainty and full assurance, for then your undivided zeal will go for the glory of God. "We know that we have passed from death unto life," says the apostle, speaking in the name of the saints in his day, and when you once know this, then, you will rejoice to proclaim life to those around you. When you are assured that you are not only a garden, but a garden *enclosed,* not only a spring, but a spring shut up, and a fountain sealed against all adversaries—then you will give all your strength to Him who has thus secured you. A happy and holy security in Christ will put spirit into you, and cause you to do exploits. For the love you bear His name, you will be ready to live to this sole end—to magnify and glorify the Lord Jesus, whose you are, and whom you serve.

I leave the thought, but I pray the Holy Spirit to breathe over His people a delicious sense of perfect security in Christ Jesus.

III. Thirdly, THE MOST STRIKING IDEA OF THE TEXT IS THAT OF SEPARATION, "A garden enclosed is My sister, My spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed." A garden is a plot of ground separated from the common waste for a special purpose, such is the church. The church is a separate and distinct thing from the world. I suppose there is such a thing as "the Christian world," but I do not know what it is, or where it can be found. It must be a singular mixture. I know what is meant by a worldly Christian, and I suppose the Christian world must be an aggregate of worldly Christians. But the church of Christ is not of the world. "You are not of the world," says Christ, "even as I am not of the world." Great attempts have been made of late to make the church receive the world, and wherever it has succeeded it has come to this result, the world has swallowed up the church. It must be so. The greater is sure to swamp the lesser. They say, "Do not let us draw any hard and fast lines.

A great many good people attend our services, who may not be quite decided, but still their opinion should be consulted, and their vote should be taken upon the choice of a minister, and there should be entertainments and amusements, in which they can assist." The theory seems to be, that it is well to have a broad gangway from the church to the world; if this is carried out, the result will be that the nominal church will use that gangway to go over to the world, but it will not be used in the other direction. It is thought by some that it would perhaps be better to have no distinct church at all. If the world will not come up to the church, let the church go down to the world; that seems to be the theory. Let the Israelites dwell with the Canaanites, and become one happy family. Such a blending does not appear to have been anticipated by our Lord in the chapter which was read just now; I mean the fifteenth of John. Read verses eighteen and nineteen, "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love his own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." Did Jesus ever say—"Try to make an alliance with the world, and in all things be conformed to its ways"? Nothing could have been further from our Lord's mind. Oh, that we could see more of holy separation, more dissent from ungodliness, more nonconformity to the world! This is "the dissidence of Dissent" that I care for, far more than I do for party names and the political strife which is engendered by them.

Let us, however, take heed that our separateness from the world is of the same kind as our Lord's. We are not to adopt a peculiar dress, or a singular mode of speech, or shut ourselves out from society. He did not so, but He was a man of the people, mixing with them for their good. He was seen at a wedding feast, aiding the festivities, He even ate bread in a Pharisee's house, among captious enemies. He neither wore phylacteries, nor enlarged the borders of His garments, nor sought a secluded cell, nor exhibited any eccentricity of manner. He was separate from sinners only because He was holy and harmless, and they were not. He dwelt among us, for He was of us. No man was more a man than He, and yet, He was not of the world, neither could you count Him among them. He was neither Pharisee, nor Sadducee, nor Scribe, and at the same time, none could justly confound Him with publicans and sinners. Those who reviled Him for consorting with these last did, by that very reviling, admit that He was a very different person from those with whom they went. We want all members of the church of Christ to be, manifestly and obviously, distinct persons, as much as if they were of a separate race, even when they are seen mingling with the people around them. We are not to cut ourselves off from our neighbors by affectation and contempt. God forbid. Our very avoiding of affectation, our naturalness, simplicity, sincerity, and amiability of character, should constitute a distinction. Through Christians being what they seem to be, they should become remarkable in an age of pretenders. Their care for the welfare of others, their anxiety to do good, their forgiveness of injuries, their gentleness of manner—all these should distinguish them far more than they could be distinguished by distinctive dress or by any outward signs. I long to see Christian peo-

ple become more distinct from the world than ever, because I am persuaded that, until they are so, the church will never become such a power for blessing men as her Lord intended her to be. It is for the world's good that there should be no alliance between the church and the world by way of compromise, even to a shade. See what came to pass when the church and the world became one in Noah's day; when "the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair," and were joined with them. Then came the deluge. Another deluge, more desolating even than the former, will come if ever the church forgets her high calling, and enters into confederacy with the world.

The church is to be a garden, walled, taken out of the common, and made a separate and select plot of ground. She is to be a spring shut up, and a fountain sealed, no longer open to the fowl of the air, and the beasts of the field. Saints are to be separate from the rest of men, even as Abraham was when he said to the sons of Seth, "I am a stranger and a sojourner with you."

Come now, My dear friends, are you of this sort? Are you foreigners in a country not your own? You are not Christians, remember, if you are not so. "Come out from among them, and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing." That is the Lord's own word to you. Did not He Himself suffer without the gate that you might go forth unto Him without the camp? Are you at one with the rest of mankind? Could anybody live with you, and never see that any alteration had taken place in you? Would they think that you were just the same as any other man? Then, by your fruits you shall be known. If there is no difference of life between you and the world, the text does not address *you* as the "sister" and the "spouse" of Christ. Those who are such are enclosed from the world, and shut up for Christ. "I wish I were more so," cries one. So do I, my friend, and may you and I practically prove the sincerity of that desire by a growing separateness from the world!

IV. Lastly, I think THE TEXT BEARS EVEN MORE FORCIBLY ANOTHER IDEA, NAMELY, THAT OF RESERVATION. The church of God is "a garden enclosed." What for? Why, that nobody may come into that garden, to eat the fruit thereof, but the Lord Himself. It is "a spring shut up," that no one may drink of the stream but the Lord Jesus. I beg you to consider this for a few minutes and then practically to remember it all your lives. A church exists only for the Lord Jesus to accomplish His ends and purposes among the sons of men. Never may this be forgotten. May the Spirit of God daily sanctify us unto the Lord, to be a peculiar people! I am persuaded that if any church desires to be much honored of the Lord in these days, both as to internal happiness and external usefulness, it will find that the nearest way to its desire is to be wholly consecrated to the Lord. The church is not formed to be a social club, to produce society for itself; not to be a political association, to be a power in politics; nor even to be a religious confederacy, promoting its own opinions; it is a body created of the Lord to answer His own ends and purposes, and it exists for nothing else. The heavenly bridegroom says to His church, "Forget also your own people, and your father's house; so shall the king greatly desire your beauty: for He is your Lord; and wor-

ship you Him." Churches which fail of their high vocation shall be cast forth as salt that has lost its savor. If we do not live for the Lord, we are dead while we live. If we do not bring glory to His name we cannot justify our existence. If we are not as a garden enclosed for Jesus, we are mere bits of waste land, if we are not fountains sealed for Jesus, we are mere brooks in the valley, and shall soon run dry.

"But," cries one, "are we not to seek the good of our fellow men?" Assuredly we are to do so for Christ's sake. "Are we not to seek to help on sanitary, educational, and purifying processes, and the like?" Yes, so far as all can be done for His sake. We are to be the Lord's servants for the blessing of the world, and we may do anything which He would have done. In such a garden as the text speaks of, every plant bears flowers for its owner, every tree yields fruit for Him. I pray God that this church, whether it carries on its Orphan houses, or its College, or its Colportage, or whatever else it does, may do it all for Christ. Keep this thought to the front as a church and people. You are not to bear fruit for the markets, but fruit for the Master's table. You are not to do good that you may have honor as an industrious and energetic community, but that glory may be given to Jesus, to whom you belong. "All for Jesus" is to be our motto. No one among us may dare to live unto himself; even in the refined way in which many are doing it, who, even try to win souls that they may have the credit of being zealous and successful. We may so far degenerate as even to attempt to glorify Christ that we may have the credit of glorifying Him. It will not do. We must be truly, thoroughly, really living for Jesus; we must be an enclosed garden, reserved, shut up for Him. O brother, your life is to be a stream that flows for the refreshment of Him who poured out His life for you! You are to let Him drink of the deep fountains of your heart, but no one else may rival Jesus there. You are a spring shut up, a fountain sealed for Jesus, for Jesus only, and that altogether, and always. Should self come forward, or personal advantage, you are to bid them be gone. They must have no admission here. This garden is strictly private. Trespassers beware! Should the world, the flesh, or the devil leap over the wall, and stoop down to drink of the crystal fountain of your being, you are to chase them away, lest their leprous lips should defile this spring, and prevent the King from drinking there again. Our whole being is to be a fountain sealed for Jesus Christ alone. All for Jesus; body for Jesus, mind for Jesus, spirit for Jesus, eyes for Jesus, mouth for Jesus, hands for Jesus, feet for Jesus, all for Jesus. The wall must wholly enclose the garden, for a gap anywhere will admit an intruder everywhere. If one part of our being is left under the dominion of sin, it will show its power everywhere.

The spring must be sealed at the very source that every drop may be for Jesus throughout the whole of its course. Our first thoughts, desires, and wishes must be His, and then all our words and deeds. We must be "wholly reserved for Christ that died, surrendered to the Crucified." Brethren, do we belong to Jesus? Does He know the walks of our garden and the secret springs of our nature? Here is evidence by which you may judge whether Jesus fully possesses you. Is there anything, my brethren, that ever stirs you like the name of Jesus? I recollect, some years ago,

when I was very weary, faint, and heart-sore. I was vexed with the question as to whether all was right between my Lord and my heart. I went into an obscure country meeting house, where a brother who preached did me a great service. There was not much in the preaching of itself, but it was all about Jesus Christ, and I found myself within a few minutes weeping freely. The gospel had found out the secret fountains of my being, and set them flowing. The name of Jesus acted on me like a charm. Yes, I thought, my Lord knows how to get at my heart as nobody else does; depend upon it, He must have been there before! I was quite sure that my Lord had the key that could open the sealed fountain of my being, for I was stirred to the innermost depth of my soul. Then I knew that He was no stranger to me. There is a secret drawer inside my soul that nobody can ever open except Himself. He made that drawer, and knows the secret spring which shuts and opens it. My Lord and my Lord only, can play upon the strings of my heart as a minstrel on his harp, and therefore I know that I belong to Him.

Beloved, I am sure that many of you can thus assure yourselves of your interest in Christ. He holds the clue of the maze of your soul, and can enter the sacred chamber of your spirit. Can He not? Do you ever feel as happy as when He is near? Why, you love the very place where His honor dwells. It happens at times that you are sick and sorry, and begin to doubt your interest in Christ, but if anybody begins extolling the Savior, you are ready to cry out with delight. Oh how I love to hear Him praised! It sets my heart dancing. I cry with Herbert, "Oh, for a well-tuned harp!" for I want to make music too. When Jesus is set forth in all His glories and beauties, you can hardly contain yourself; you want to be singing His high praises. No wonder that the Methodist cries, "Bless the Lord!" You, who are very proper and quiet, half wish that you had courage enough to shout "Hallelujah!" You may freely do so if you like. Well now, if the Lord Jesus Christ holds the reins of your soul at that rate, I feel persuaded that you are His. If His name awakens the echoes of your whole being as nothing else does, then it must be because there are certain secrets between you and Him which no one else can know. My heart is often like the captive king, who sat pining in a lonely tower, with nothing to relieve his sadness, as he remembered his native land, and his vacant palace, and the malice of the enemy who kept him in exile. Nothing awakened him from his dreamy melancholy. Many were the voices within and without the castle, but they were nothing to him. The serenade of troubadours only mocked his misery. But one day a tender voice thrilled him. He listened to the verse of a song. It was even as life from the dead. None knew the next verse but himself. See what effect that sonnet has had on the monarch! His eyes, how they sparkle! His whole frame, how it is reanimated! He sings in response. With what rapture he pours forth the tempo! He is a fine singer, surely! We did not know that the King had such a voice. How charmed he is as a third stanza is sung by the minstrel below! And why? Because it is Blondel, his friend, who has at last, found him, and thus salutes him. They knew, and nobody else in the world knew that song. Even thus, the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. My Lord knows what it is that can move me, and my heart

melts when He speaks. My heart has a song which it sings to her Beloved, and He has a song for me. I feel that I must be His, for nobody stirs my soul as He does.

Dear friends, if you know that this is so, be happy in His love. See to it that you live wholly to Him, and for Him. As you have a good hope that He is altogether yours, *be* altogether His. Honor Him in your families, and honor Him in the outside world. Serve the Lord wherever you are, whether you are most found in the kitchen, the parlor, the workshop, the street, or the field. Make it your delight that you are reserved unto Him. Acknowledge that the vows of the Lord are upon you. You are His sister and His spouse—give Him love in both forms; find in Him brother and bridegroom. You are His garden enclosed; His spring shut up; His fountain sealed—then yield your all to Him, both of fruit and flow, of work of hand and warmth of heart. Be yours the honor, the bliss, of being altogether your Lord's.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 15.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—663, 658.

DEAR FRIENDS—I have issued this sermon rather than the discourse of last Lord's-Day because I am greatly occupied by preparing for the Conference of the ministers who have been educated in our College. They come together on Monday, the 18th, and spend the week in holy convocation. Will my sermon readers pray that the Lord may be with us? On Wednesday evening, April 20th, is *the Annual Supper for the College,* when friends are accustomed to aid our funds largely. Will not some who cannot be present nevertheless cheer me by sending aid?

C. H. SPURGEON,
Beulah Hill,
Upper Norwood

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

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THE FIRST APPEARANCE OF THE RISEN LORD TO THE ELEVEN
NO. 1958

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 10, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And as they thus spoke, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And He said unto them, Why are you troubled? And why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself: handle Me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see Me have. And when He had thus spoken, He showed them His hands and His feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, He said unto them, Have you here any meat? And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish, and of a honeycomb. And He took it, and did eat before them. And He said unto them, These are the words which I spoke unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Me."
Luke 24:36-44.

THIS, beloved friends, is one of the most memorable of our Lord's many visits to His disciples after He had risen from the dead. Each one of these appearances had its own peculiarity. I cannot at this time give you even an outline of the special colorings which distinguished each of the many manifestations of our risen Lord. The instance now before us may be considered to be the fullest and most deliberate of all the manifestations, abounding beyond every other in "infallible proofs." Remember, that it occurred on the same day in which our Lord had risen from the dead, and it was the close of a long day of gracious appearings. It was the summing up of a series of interviews, all of which were proofs of the Lord's resurrection. There was the empty tomb and the grave clothes left therein; the place where the Lord lay was accessible to all who chose to inspect it—for the great stone which had been sealed and guarded was rolled away. This in itself was most impressive evidence. Moreover, the holy women had been there, and had seen a vision of angels, who said that Jesus was alive. Magdalene had enjoyed a special interview. Peter and John had been into the empty tomb and had seen for themselves. The report was current that "the Lord was risen indeed, and had appeared unto Simon." It was a special thing that He should appear unto Simon, for the disciples painfully knew how Simon had denied his Master, and His appearance unto Simon seemed to have struck them as peculiarly characteristic; it was so like the manner of our Lord.

They met together in their bewilderment; the eleven of them gathered, as I suppose, to a social meal, for Mark tells as that the Lord appeared unto them "as they sat at meat." It must have been very late in the day,

but they were loath to part, and so kept together till midnight. While they were sitting at meat two brethren came in who, even after the sun had set, had hastened back from Emmaus. These newcomers related how one who seemed a stranger had joined Himself to them as they were walking from Jerusalem, had talked with them in such a way that their hearts had been made to burn, and had made Himself known unto them in the breaking of bread at the journey's end. They declared that it was the Lord who had thus appeared to them, and though they had intended to spend the night at Emmaus, they had hurried back to tell the marvelous news to the eleven. Hence the witnesses accumulated with great rapidity; it became more and more clear that Jesus had really risen from the dead. But as yet the doubters were not convinced, for Mark says, "After that He appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them."

Everything was working up to one point; the most unbelieving of them were being driven into a corner. They must doubt the truthfulness of Magdalene and the other saintly women; they must question the veracity of Simon; they must reject the two newly-arrived brethren, and charge them with telling idle tales, or else they must believe that Jesus was still alive, though they had seen Him die upon the cross. At that moment the chief confirmation of all presented itself, "for Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them." The doors were shut, but despite every obstacle, their Lord was present in the center of the assembly. In the presence of one whose loving smile warmed their hearts, their unbelief was destined to thaw and disappear. Jesus revealed Himself in all the warmth of His vitality and love, and made them understand that it was none other than His very self, and that the Scriptures had told them it should be so. They were slow of heart to believe all that the prophets had spoken concerning Him, but He brought them to it by His familiar communion with them. Oh that in a like way He would put an end to all our doubts and fears.

Brethren, though you and I were not at that interview, yet we may derive much profit from it while we look at it in detail, anxiously desiring that we may in spirit see, and look upon, and handle the Word of Life manifested in the flesh. Oh to learn all that Jesus would teach us, as we now in spirit take our places at that midnight meeting of the chosen ones.

In this wonderful manifestation of our Lord to His apostles I notice three things worthy of our careful observation this morning. This incident teaches us *the certainty of the resurrection of our Lord;* secondly, it shows us a little of *the character of our risen Master;* and thirdly, it gives us certain hints as to *the nature of our own resurrection,* when it shall be granted us. Oh that we may be counted worthy to attain to the resurrection from among the dead.

I. First, then, let us see here THE CERTAINTY OF OUR LORD'S RESURRECTION. We have often asserted, and we affirm it yet again, that no fact in history is better attested than the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The common mass of facts accepted by all men as historical are not one-tenth as certainly assured to us as this fact is. It must not be denied by any who are willing to pay the slightest respect to the

testimony of their fellow men, that Jesus, who died upon the cross, and was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, did literally rise again from the dead.

Observe that when this person appeared in the room, the first token that it was Jesus was His speech; *they were to have the evidence of hearing;* He used the same speech. No sooner did He appear than He spoke. He was never mute, and it was natural that the great Teacher and Friend should at once salute His followers, from whom He had been so painfully parted. His first accents must have called to their minds those cheering notes with which He had closed His last address. They must have recognized that charming voice. I suppose its tone and rhythm to have been rich with a music most sweet and heavenly. A perfect voice would naturally be given to a perfect man. The very sound of it would, through their ears, have charmed conviction into their minds with a glow of joy, had they not been frozen up in unbelief. "Never man spoke like this man," they might have known Him by His speech alone. There were tones of voice as well as forms of language which were peculiar to Jesus of Nazareth.

What our Lord said was just like Him; it was all of a piece with His former discourse. Among the last sounds which lingered in their ears was that word "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world gives, give I unto you," and now it must surely be the same person who introduces Himself with the cheering salutation, "Peace be unto you." About the Lord there were the air and style of one who had peace Himself, and loved to communicate it to others. The tone in which He spoke peace tended to create it. He was a peacemaker, and a peace giver, and by this sign they were driven to discern their Leader.

Do you not think that they were almost persuaded to believe that it was Jesus when He proceeded to chide them in a manner tenderer than any other chiding could have been? How gentle the accents when He said, "Why are you troubled? And why do thoughts arise in your hearts?" Our Lord's chidings were comforts in disguise. His upbraidings' were consolations in an unusual shape. Did not His upbraiding on this occasion bring to their minds His question upon the Sea of Galilee when He said to them, "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" Did they not also remember when He came to them walking on the water, and they were afraid that He was a spirit, and cried out for fear, and He said to them, "It is I; be not afraid"? Surely they remembered enough of these things to have made sure that it was their Lord, had not their spirits been sunken in sorrow. Our Lord had never been unwisely silent as to their faults. He had never passed over their errors with that false and indulgent affection, which gratifies its own ease by tolerating sin, but He had pointed out their faults with the fidelity of true love, and now that He thus admonished them, they ought to have perceived that it was none other than He. Alas. Unbelief is slow to die.

When Jesus came at last to talk to them about Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms, He was upon a favorite topic. Then the eleven might have nudged each other and whispered, "It is the Lord." Jesus had, in His latter hours, been continually pointing out the Scriptures which were being fulfilled in Himself, and at this interview He repeated His former

teaching. This is assuredly none other than He who always spoke His Father's mind and will, and constantly did honor to the Holy Spirit by whom the sacred books were inspired. Thus in His tones and topics our Lord gave clear indications that it was He who had suddenly appeared in that little assembly.

I want you to notice that this evidence was all the better, because they themselves evidently remained the same men as they had been. "They were terrified and frightened, and supposed that they had seen a spirit," and thus they did exactly what they had done long before when He came to them walking on the waters. In the interval between His death and His appearing, no change had come over them. Nothing had happened to them to elevate them as yet out of their littleness of mind. The Holy Spirit was not yet given, and therefore all that they had heard at the Last Supper, and seen in Gethsemane and at the cross had not yet exercised its full influence upon them; they were still childish and unbelieving. The same men, then, are looking at the same person, and they are in their ordinary condition; this argues strongly for the correctness of their identification of their well-beloved Lord. They are not carried away by enthusiasm, nor wafted aloft by fanaticism; they are not even as yet borne up by the Holy Spirit into an unusual state of mind, but they are as slow of heart and as fearful as ever they were. If *they* are convinced that Jesus has risen from the dead, depend upon it, it must be so. If they go forth to tell the tidings of His resurrection, and to yield up their lives for it, you may be sure that their witness is true, for they are not the sort of men to be deceived. In our day there has been a buzz about certain miracles of faith, but the statements usually come from persons whose impartiality is questionable—credulous persons who saw what they evidently wished to see. I know several good people who would not willfully deceive, who nevertheless upon some points are exceedingly unreliable, because their enthusiasm is prepared to be imposed upon. Any hawker of wonders would expect them to be buyers; they have a taste for the marvelous. As witnesses, the evidence of such people has no value in it as compared with that of these eleven men, who evidently were the reverse of credulous or excitable. In the apostles' case the facts were tested to the utmost, and the truth was not admitted till it was forced upon them. I am not excusing the unbelief of the disciples, but I claim that their witness has all the more weight in it, because it was the result of such cool investigation. These apostles were in special manner to be witnesses of the resurrection, and it makes assurance doubly sure to us when we see them arrive at their conclusion with such deliberate steps. These were men like ourselves, only perhaps a little less likely to be deceived; they needed to be convinced by overwhelming witness, and they were so; ever afterwards they declared boldly that their crucified Lord had indeed risen from the dead.

Thus far in the narrative they had received the evidence of their ears and that is by no means weak evidence, but now *they are to have the evidence of sight*, for the Savior says to them, "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself," "and when He had thus spoken, He showed them His hands and His feet." John says also "His side," also, which *he* especially noted because he had seen the piercing of that side, and the out-

flow of blood and water. They were to see and identify that blessed body which had suffered death. The nail prints were visible, both in His hands which were open before them, and also in His feet which their condescending Lord deigned to expose to their deliberate gaze. There was the mark of the gash in His side, and this the Lord Jesus graciously bared to them, as afterwards He did more fully to Thomas, when He said, "Reach here your hand, and thrust it into My side." These were the marks of the Lord Jesus, by which His identity could be verified. Beyond this there was the general contour of His countenance, and the fashion of the whole man by which they could discern Him. His body, though it was now in a sense glorified, was so far veiled as to its new condition that it retained its former likeness; they must have perceived that the Lord was no longer subject to the pains and infirmities of our ordinary mortality—otherwise His wounds had not been healed so soon, but yet there remained sure marks by which they knew that it was Jesus, and no other. He looked like a lamb that had been slain; the signs of the Son of Man were in His hands and feet and side. Their sight of the Lord was not a hasty glimpse, but a steady inspection, for John in his first epistle writes, "Which we have seen and looked upon." This implies a lengthened looking, and such the Lord Jesus invited His friends to take. They could not have been mistaken when they were afforded such a view of those marks by which His identity was established. The same Christ that died had risen from the dead, the same Jesus that had hung upon the cross now stood in the midst of those who knew Him best. It was the same body, and they identified it, although a great change had doubtless come over it since it was taken down from the tree.

Furthermore, that they might be quite sure, *the Lord invited them to receive the evidence of touch or feeling*. He called them to a form of examination, from which, I doubt not, many of them shrank; He said, "Handle Me. Handle Me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see Me have." Writers have remarked upon the use of the word "bones," instead of blood, in this case, but I do not think that any inference can be safely drawn from there. It would have been barely possible for the disciples to have discovered by handling that the Lord had blood, but they could by handling perceive that He had bones; hence the expression is natural enough, without our imputing to it a meaning which it may never have been intended to convey. The Savior had a reason, no doubt, other than some have imagined, for the use of the terms, "a spirit has not flesh *and bones* as you see Me have." The Savior had not assumed a phantom body; there was bone in it as well as flesh; it was to the full as substantial as ever. He had not put on an appearance, as angels do when they visit the sons of men. No, His body was solid substance, which could be handled. "Handle Me, and see that it is I Myself." He bade them see that it was flesh and bone, such as no spirit has. There were the substantial elements of a human frame in that body of Christ which stood in the midst of the eleven. Jesus cried, "Handle Me, and see."

Thus our Lord was establishing to the apostles, not only His identity, but also His substantial corporeal existence; He would make them see that He was a man of flesh and bones, and not a ghost, airy and unsubstantial. This should correct a certain form of teaching upon the resur-

rection which is all too common. I was present some years ago at the funeral of a man of God for whom I had much respect. In the chapel a certain excellent Doctor of Divinity gave us an address before the interment, in which he informed us as to the condition of his departed friend. He said that he was not in the coffin; indeed, there was nothing of him there. This I was sorry to hear, for if so I was ignorantly mourning over a body which had no relation to my friend. The preacher went on to describe the way in which the man of God had ascended to heaven at the moment of death, his spirit fashioning for itself a body as it passed through the air. I believed in my friend's being in heaven, but not in his being there in a body. I knew that my friend's body was in the coffin, and I believed that it would be laid in the tomb, and I expected that it would rise again from the grave at the coming of the Lord. I did not believe that my friend would weave for himself a filmy frame, making a second body, nor do I believe it now, though I heard it so affirmed. I believe in the resurrection of the dead. I look to see the very body which was buried raised again. It is true that as the seed develops into the flower, so the buried body is merely the germ out of which will come the spiritual body, yet still it will not be a second body, but the same body, as to identity. I shall enter into no dispute about the atoms of the body, nor deny that the particles of our flesh, in the process of their decay, may be taken up by plants and absorbed into the bodies of animals, and all that; I do not care one jot about identity of atoms; there may not be a solitary ounce of the same matter, but yet identity can be preserved, and it must be preserved if I read my Bible right. My body today is the same as that which I inhabited twenty years ago, and yet all its particles are different, even so the body put into the grave and the body that rises from it are not two bodies, but one body. The saints are not at the coming of their Lord to remain disembodied spirits, nor to wear freshly created bodies, but their entire manhood is to be restored, and to enjoy endless bliss. Well said the patriarch of old, "in my flesh shall I see God." "He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus." I cannot see how the doctrine of Christ goes beyond the doctrine of Plato and others if it is not a doctrine which respects this body. The immortality of the soul was accepted and known as a truth before the faith of Christ was preached, for it is dimly discoverable by the light of nature, but the resurrection of the body is a revelation peculiar to the Christian dispensation, at which the wise men of the world very naturally mocked, but which it ill becomes Christian men to spirit away. The body which is buried shall rise again. It is true it is sown a natural body and shall be raised a spiritual body, but it will be truly a body, and the same *it* which was sown shall be raised. It is true it is sown in weakness and raised in power, but the same *it* is thus raised. It is true that it is sown in weakness to be raised in power, and sown a corruptible body, to be raised in incorruption, but in each case it is the same body, though so gloriously changed.

It will be of a material substance also, for our Savior's body was material, since He said, "Handle Me, and see that it is I Myself, for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see Me have."

Still further to confirm the faith of the disciples, and to show them that their Lord had a real body, and not the mere form of one, *He gave*

them evidence which appealed to their common sense. He said "Have you any meat? And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish, and of a honeycomb. And He took it, and did eat before them." This was an exceedingly convincing proof of His unquestionable resurrection. In very deed and fact, and not in vision and phantom, the man who had died upon the cross stood among them.

Let us just think of this and rejoice. This resurrection of our Lord Jesus is a matter of certainty, for, if you spirit this away, you have done away with the gospel altogether. If He is not risen from the dead, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain; you are yet in your sins. Justification receives its seal in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, not in His appearing as a phantom, but in His very self being loosed from death, and raised to a glorious life. This is God's mark of the acceptance of the work of the great Substitute, and of the justification of all for whom His atoning work was performed.

Note well that this is also our grand hope concerning those who are asleep. You have buried them forever if Christ was not raised from the dead. They have passed out of your sight, and they shall never again have fellowship with you, unless Jesus rose again from the dead, for the apostle makes the resurrection of all who are in Christ to hinge upon the resurrection of Christ. I do not feel it necessary, when I talk with the bereaved, to comfort them at all concerning those that are asleep in Christ, as to their souls; we know that they are forever with the Lord, and are supremely blessed, and therefore, we need no further comfort. The only matter upon which we need consolation is that poor body, which once we loved so well, but which now we must leave in the cold clay. The resurrection comes in as a final undoing of all that death has done. "They shall come again from the land of the enemy." Jesus says, "Your dead men shall live, together with My dead body shall they arise." If we question the resurrection of Christ, then is the whole of our faith questioned, and those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished, and we are left just where others were before Christ brought this divine truth to light. Only as we are sure of the resurrection of Jesus can we cry, "O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?"

II. Secondly, will you follow me while I very briefly set forth OUR LORD'S CHARACTER WHEN RISEN FROM THE DEAD?

What is He, now that He has conquered death, and all that belongs to it? What is He now that He shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore? He is much the same as He used to be; indeed He is altogether what He was, for He is "the same yesterday, today and forever."

Notice, first, that in this appearance of Christ we are taught that *He is still anxious to create peace in the hearts of His people*. No sooner did He make Himself visible than He said, "Peace be unto you." Beloved, your risen Lord wants you to be happy. When He was here on earth, He said, "Let not your hearts be troubled," He says the same to you today. He takes no delight in the distresses of His people. He would have His joy to be in them, that their joy may be full. He bids you rejoice in Him evermore. He whispers to you this morning, as you sit in the pew, "Peace be unto you." He has not lost His tender care over the least of the flock, He

would have each one led by the still waters, and made to lie down in green pastures.

Note again, that *He has not lost His habit of chiding unbelief, and encouraging faith,* for as soon as He has risen, and speaks with His disciples, He asks them, "Why are you troubled? And why do thoughts arise in your hearts?" He loves you to believe in Him, and be at rest. Find if you can, beloved, one occasion in which Jesus inculcated doubt, or bade men dwell in uncertainty. The apostles of unbelief are everywhere today, and they imagine that they are doing God service by spreading what they call "honest doubt." This is death to all joy! Poison to all peace! The Savior did not so. He would have them take extraordinary measures to get rid of their doubt. "Handle Me" He says. It was going a long way to say that, but He would sooner be handled than His people should doubt! Ordinarily it might not be fitting for them to touch Him. Had He not said to the women, "Touch Me not"? But what may not be allowable ordinarily becomes proper when necessity demands it. The removal of their doubt as to our Lord's resurrection needed that they should handle Him, and therefore He bids them do so. O beloved, you that are troubled and vexed with thoughts, and therefore get no comfort out of your religion because of your mistrust, your Lord would have you come very near to Him, and put His gospel to any test which will satisfy you. He cannot bear you to doubt. He appeals tenderly, saying, "O you of little faith, why do you doubt?" He would at this moment still encourage you to taste and see that the Lord is good. He would have you believe in the substantial reality of His religion, and handle Him and see; trust Him largely and simply, as a child trusts its mother and knows no fear.

Notice, next, that when the Savior had risen from the dead, and a measure of His glory was upon Him, *He was still most condescendingly familiar with His people*. He showed them His hands and His feet, and He said, "Handle Me, and see." When He was on earth, before His passion, He was most free with His disciples; no affectation of dignity kept Him apart from them. He was their Master and Lord, and yet He washed their feet. He was the Son of the Highest, but He was among them as one that serves. He said, "Suffer little children to come unto Me." He is the same today—

"His sacred name a common word
On earth He loves to hear;
There is no majesty in Him
Which love may not come near."

Though He reigns in the highest heavens, His delights are still with the sons of men. Still He will permit us to sit at His feet, or even to lean our head upon His bosom. Jesus will hear us tell out our griefs, He will regard our cry when we are not pleading about a sword in our bones, but only concerning a thorn in our flesh. Jesus is still the brother born for adversity; He still manifests Himself to us as He does not unto the world. Is not this clear, and also very pleasant to see, as we study this interview?

The next thing is that *the risen Lord was still wonderfully patient,* even as He had always been. He bore with their folly and infirmity, for "while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered," He did not chide them. He discerned between one unbelief and another, and He judged that the un-

belief which grew out of wonder was not as blamable as that former unbelief which denied credible evidence. Instead of rebuke He gives confirmation. He says, "Have you here any meat?" and He takes a piece of broiled fish, and of a honeycomb, and eats it. Not that He needed food. His body could receive food, but it did not require it. Eating was His own sweet way of showing them that if He could He would solve all their questions. He would do anything in His great patience that they might be cured of their mistrust. Just so today, beloved, Jesus does not chide you, but He invites you to believe Him; He invites you, therefore, to sup with Him, and eat bread at His table. "He will not always chide, neither will He keep His anger forever," but in His great mercy He will use another tone, and encourage you to trust Him. Can you hold back? Oh, do not do so.

Observe that our Savior, though He was risen from the dead, and therefore in a measure in His glory, *entered into the fullest fellowship with His own*. Peter tells us that they did eat and drink with Him. I do not notice in this narrative that He drank with them, but He certainly ate of such food as they had, and this was a clear token of His fellowship with them. In all ages eating and drinking with one another has been the most expressive token of communion, and so the Savior seems to say to us today, "I have eaten with you, My people, since I have quit the grave, I have eaten with you through the eleven who represented you. I have eaten, and I will still eat with you, till we sit down together at the marriage supper of the Lamb. If any man opens unto Me, I will come in to Him, and will sup with Him, and he with Me." Yes, the Lord Jesus is wonderfully near to us still, and He waits to grant us the highest forms of fellowship which can be known on this side the gate of pearl. In this let our spirits quietly rejoice.

Let me call your attention to the fact that when Jesus had risen from the dead *He was just as tender of Scripture as He was before His decease*. I have dwelt for two Sunday mornings [Sermons #1955—*Jesus Declining the Legions* and #1956—*On the Cross After Death*] upon the wonderful way in which our Lord always magnified the Scriptures, and here, as if to crown all, He told them that "all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning Himself, and He opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead." Find Jesus where you may, He is the antagonist of those who would lessen the authority of Holy Scripture. "It is written" is His weapon against Satan, His argument against wicked men. The learned at this hour scoff at the Book, and accuse of Bibliolatry those of us who reverence the divine word, but in this they derive no assistance from the teaching or example of Jesus. Not a word derogatory of Scripture ever fell from the lips of Jesus Christ; but evermore He manifested the most reverent regard for every jot and tittle of the inspired volume. Since our Savior, not only before His death, but after it, took care thus to commend the Scriptures to us, let us avoid with all our hearts all teaching in which Holy Scripture is put into the background. Still the Bible, and the Bible alone, should be and shall be the religion of Protestants, and we will not budge an inch from that standpoint, God helping us.

Once again, our Savior, after He had risen from the dead, *showed that He was anxious for the salvation of men,* for it was at this interview that He breathed upon the apostles, and bade them receive the Holy Spirit, to fit them to go forth and preach the gospel to every creature. The missionary spirit is the spirit of Christ—not only the spirit of Him that died to save, but the spirit of Him who has finished His work, and has gone into His rest. Let us cultivate that spirit, if we would be like the Jesus who has risen from the dead.

III. I can stay no longer, because I would draw your attention, in the third place, to the light which is thrown by this incident upon THE NATURE OF OUR OWN RESURRECTION.

First, I gather from this text that our nature, *our whole humanity, will be perfected at the day of the appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,* when the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we that may then be alive shall be changed. Jesus has redeemed not only our souls, but our bodies. "Know you not that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit?" When the Lord shall deliver His captive people out of the land of the enemy, He will not leave a bone of one of them in the adversary's power. The dominion of death shall be utterly broken. Our entire nature shall be redeemed unto the living God in the day of the resurrection. After death, until that day, we shall be disembodied spirits, but in the adoption, to wit, the redemption, of the body, we shall attain our full inheritance. We are looking forward to a complete restoration. At this time the body is dead because of sin, and hence it suffers pain, and tends to decay, but the spirit is life because of righteousness; in the resurrection, however, the body shall be quickened also, and the resurrection shall be to the body what regeneration has been to the soul. Thus shall our humanity be completely delivered from the consequences of the fall. Perfect manhood is that which Jesus restores from sin and the grave, and this shall be ours in the day of His appearing.

I gather next that in the resurrection *our nature will be full of peace*. Jesus Christ would not have said, "Peace be unto you," if there had not been a deep peace within Himself. He was calm and undisturbed. There was much peace about His whole life, but after the resurrection His peace becomes very conspicuous. There is no striving with scribes and Pharisees, there is no battling with anybody after our Lord is risen. A French author has written of our Lord's Forty Days on earth after the resurrection under the title of "The Life of Jesus Christ in Glory." Though rather misleading at first, the title is not as inaccurate as it appears, for His work was done, and His warfare was accomplished, and our Lord's life here was the beginning of His glory. Such shall be our life, we shall be flooded with eternal peace, and shall never again be tossed about with trouble, and sorrow, and distress, and persecution. An infinite serenity shall keep our body, soul, and spirit throughout eternity.

When we rise again *our nature will find its home amid the communion of saint*s. When the Lord Jesus Christ had risen again His first resort was the room where His disciples were gathered. His first evening was spent among the objects of His love. Even so, wherever we are we shall seek and find communion with the saints. I joyfully expect to meet many of you in heaven, and to know you, and commune with you. I should not

like to float about in the future state without a personality in the midst of a company of undefined and unknown beings. That would be no heaven to me. No, brethren, we shall soon perceive who our comrades are, and we shall rejoice in them, and in our Lord. There could be no communion among unknown entities. You cannot have fellowship with people whom you do not recognize, and therefore it seems to me most clear that we shall in the future state have fellowship through recognition, and our heavenly bodies shall help the recognition and share in the fellowship. As the risen Christ wends His way to the upper room of the eleven, so will you by force of holy gravitation find your way to the place where all the servants of God shall gather at the last. Then shall we be truly at home, and go no more out forever.

Furthermore, I see that in that day *our bodies will admirably serve our spirits*. For look at our Lord's body. Now that He is risen from the dead He desires to convince His disciples, and His body becomes at once the means of His argument, the evidence of His statement. His flesh and bones were text and sermon for Him. "Handle Me," He says, "and see." Ah, brethren! Whatever we may have to do in eternity, we shall not be hindered by our bodies as we now are. Flesh and blood hamper us, but "flesh and bones" shall help us. I want to speak sometimes, and my head aches, or my throat is choked, or my legs refuse to bear me up, but it is not so in the resurrection from the dead. A thousand infirmities in this earthly life compass us about, but our risen body shall be helpful to our regenerated nature. It is only a natural body now, fit for our soul, but hereafter it shall be a spiritual body, adapted to all the desires and wishes of the heaven-born spirit, and no longer shall we have to cry out, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." We shall find in the risen body a power such as the spirit shall wish to employ for the noblest purposes. Will not this be well?

In that day, beloved, when we shall rise again from the dead, *we shall remember the past*. Do you not notice how the risen Savior says, "These are the words which I spoke unto you, while I was yet with you." He had not forgotten His former state. I think Dr. Watts is right when he says that we shall "with transporting joys recount the labors of our feet." It is rather a small subject, and probably we shall far more delight to dwell on the labors of our Redeemer's hands and feet, but still we shall remember all the way whereby the Lord our God led us, and we shall talk to one another concerning it. In heaven we shall remember our happy Sabbaths here below, when our hearts burned within us while Jesus Himself drew near. Since Jesus speaks after He has risen of the things that He said while He was with His disciples, we perceive that the river of death is not like the fabled Lethe, which caused all who drank thereof to forget their past. We shall arise with a multitude of hallowed memories enriching our minds. Death will not be oblivion to us, for it was not so to Jesus. Rather shall we meditate on mercies experienced, and by discoursing on them we shall make known to principalities and powers the manifold wisdom of God.

Observe that our Lord, after He had risen from the dead, *was still full of the spirit of service,* and therefore He called others out to go and preach the gospel, and He gave them the Spirit of God to help them.

When you and I are risen from the dead, we shall rise full of the spirit of service. What engagements we may have throughout eternity we are not told, because we have enough to do to fulfill our engagements now, but assuredly we shall be honored with errands of mercy and tasks of love fitted for our heavenly being, and I doubt not it shall be one of our greatest delights while seeing the Lord's face to serve Him with all our perfected powers. He will use us in the grand economy of future manifestations of His divine glory. Possibly we may be to other dispensations what the angels have been to this. Be that as it may, we shall find a part of our bliss and joy in constantly serving Him who has raised us from the dead.

There I leave the subject, wishing that I could have handled it much better. Think it over when you are quiet at home, and add this thought to it, that you have a share in all that is contained in resurrection. May the Holy Spirit give you a personal grip of this vital truth! You yourself shall rise from the dead, therefore, be not afraid to die.

If any of my hearers have no share in our Lord's resurrection, I am truly sorry for them. O my friend, what you are losing! If you have no share in the living Lord, may God have mercy upon you! If you have no share in Christ's rising from the dead, then you will not be raised up in the likeness of His glorified body. If you do not attain to that resurrection from among the dead, then you must abide in death, with no prospect but that of a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and of fiery indignation. Oh, look to Jesus, the Savior! Only as you look to Him can there be a happy future for you. God help you to do so at once, for His dear name's sake! Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
MARK 16:1-14; LUKE 24:33-48; 1 John 1.**

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—909, 309, 306.

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THE WATCHWORD FOR TODAY: "STAND FAST"
NO. 1959

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 17, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For our conversation is in heaven: from where also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself. Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved." Philippians 3:20, 21; 4:1.

EVERY doctrine of the Word of God has its practical bearing. As each tree bears seed after its kind, so does every truth of God, bring forth practical virtues. Hence you find the apostle Paul very full of *therefores*—his therefores being the conclusions drawn from certain statements of divine truth. I marvel that our excellent translators should have divided the argument from the conclusion by making a new chapter where there is least reason for it.

Last Lord's Day I spoke with you concerning the most sure and certain resurrection of our Lord Jesus [#1958—*The First Appearance of the Risen Lord to the Eleven*]; now there is a practical force in that truth, which constitutes part of what is meant by "the power of His resurrection." Since the Lord has risen, and will surely come a second time, and will raise the bodies of His people at His coming, there is something to wait for, and a grand reason for steadfastness while thus waiting. We are looking for the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ from heaven, and that He shall "fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory," therefore let us stand fast in the position which will secure us this honor. Let us keep our posts until the coming of the great Captain shall release the sentinels. The glorious resurrection will abundantly repay us for all the toil and travail we may have to undergo in the battle for the Lord. The glory to be revealed even now casts a light upon our path, and causes sunshine within our hearts. The hope of this happiness makes us even now strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.

Paul was deeply anxious that those in whom he had been the means of kindling the heavenly hope might be preserved faithful until the coming of Christ. He trembled lest any of them should seem to draw back, and prove traitors to their Lord. He dreaded lest he should lose what he hoped he had gained, by their turning aside from the faith. Hence he beseeches them to "stand fast." He expressed in the sixth verse of the first chapter his conviction that He who had begun a good work in them would perform it, but his intense love made him exhort them, saying,

"Stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved." By such exhortations final perseverance is promoted and secured.

Paul has fought bravely, and in the case of the Philippian converts he believes that he has secured the victory, and he fears lest it should yet be lost. He reminds me of the death of that British hero, Wolfe, who on the heights of Quebec received a mortal wound. It was just at the moment when the enemy fled, and when he knew that they were running, a smile was on his face, and he cried, "Hold me up. Let not my brave soldiers see me drop. The day is ours. Oh, do keep it!" His sole anxiety was to make the victory sure. Thus warriors die, and thus Paul lived. His very soul seems to cry, "We have won the day. Oh, do keep it!"

O my beloved hearers, I believe that many of you are "in the Lord," but I entreat you to "stand fast in the Lord." In your case, also, the day is won, but oh, do keep it! There is the pith of all I have to say to you this morning, may God the Holy Spirit write it on your hearts! Having done all things well up to now, I entreat you to obey the injunction of Jude, to "keep yourselves in the love of God," and to join with me in adoring Him who alone is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before His presence with exceedingly great joy. Unto Him be glory forever. Amen.

In leading out your thoughts I will keep to the following order—

First, it seems to me from the text that *the apostle perceived that these Philippian Christians were in their right place,* they were "in the Lord," and in such a position that he could safely bid them "stand fast" in it. Secondly, *he longed for them that they should keep their right place*—"Stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved," and then, thirdly, *he urged the best motives for their keeping their place*. These motives are contained in the first two verses of our text, upon which we will enlarge further on.

I. Paul joyfully perceived that his BELOVED CONVERTS WERE IN THEIR RIGHT PLACE. It is a very important thing indeed that we should begin well. The start is not everything, but it is a great deal. It has been said by the old proverb, that, "Well begun is half done," and it is certainly so in the things of God. It is vitally important to enter in at the strait gate, to start on the heavenly journey from the right point. I have no doubt that many slips and falls and apostasies among professors are due to the fact that they were not right at first, the foundation was always upon the sand, and when the house came down at last, it was no more than might have been expected. A flaw in the foundation is pretty sure to be followed by a crack in the superstructure. Do see to it that you lay a good foundation. It is better to have no repentance than a repentance which needs to be repented of; it is better to have no faith than a false faith; it is better to make no profession of religion than to make an untruthful one. God give us grace that we may not make a mistake in learning the alphabet of godliness, or else in all our learning we shall blunder on and increase in error. We should learn early the difference between grace and merit, between the purpose of God and the will of man, between trust in God and confidence in the flesh. If we do not start aright, the further we go the further we shall be from our desired end, and the more thoroughly in the wrong shall we find ourselves. Yes, it is of prime

importance that our new birth and our first love should be genuine beyond all question.

The only position, however, in which we can begin aright, is to be "in the Lord." This is to begin as we may safely go on. This is the essential point. It is a very good thing for Christians to be in the church, but if you are in the church before you are in the Lord you are out of place. It is a good thing to be engaged in holy work, but if you are in holy work before you are in the Lord you will have no heart for it, neither will the Lord accept it. It is not essential that you should be in this church or in that church, but it is essential that you should be "in the Lord;" it is not essential that you should be in the Sunday school, nor in the Working Meeting, nor in the Tract Society, but it is essential to the last degree that you should be in the Lord. The apostle rejoiced over those that were converted at Philippi because he knew that they were in the Lord. They were where he wished them to remain, therefore he said, "Stand fast in the Lord."

What is it to be "in the Lord"? Well, brethren, *we are in the Lord vitally and evidently when we fly to the Lord Jesus by repentance and faith,* and make Him to be our refuge and hiding place. Is it so with you? Have you fled out of self? Are you trusting in the Lord alone? Have you come to Calvary, and beheld your Savior? As the doves build their nests in the rock, have you thus made your home in Jesus? There is no shelter for a guilty soul but in His wounded side. Have you come there? Are you in Him? Then stay there. You will never have a better refuge, in fact, there is no other. No other name is given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved. I cannot tell you to stand fast in the Lord, unless you are there, hence my first inquiry is—Are you in Christ? Is He your only confidence? In His life, His death, and His resurrection do you find the grounds of your hope? Is He Himself all your salvation, and all your desire? If so, stand fast in Him.

Next, these people, in addition to having fled to Christ for refuge, were now *in Christ as to their daily life*. They had heard Him say, "Abide in Me," and therefore they remained in the daily enjoyment of Him, in reliance upon Him, in obedience to Him, and in the earnest copying of His example. They were Christians, that is to say, persons upon who was named the name of Christ. They were endeavoring to realize the power of His death and resurrection as a sanctifying influence, killing their sins and fostering their virtues. They were laboring to reproduce His image in themselves, that so they might bring glory to His name. Their lives were spent within the circle of their Savior's influence. Are you so, my dear friends? Then stand fast. You will never find a nobler example; you will never be saturated with a diviner spirit than that of Christ Jesus your Lord. Whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, let us do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, and so live in Him.

These Philippians had, moreover, realized that they were *in Christ by a real and vital union with Him*. They had come to feel, not like separated individualities, copying a model, but as members of a body made like to their Head. By a living, loving, lasting union they were joined to Christ as their covenant head. They could say, "Who shall separate us from the

love of God which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord?" Do you know what it is to feel that the life which is in you is first in Christ, and still flows from Him, even as the life of the branch is mainly in the stem? "I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me." This is to be in Christ. Are you in Him in this sense? Forgive my pressing the question. If you answer me in the affirmative, I shall then entreat you to "stand fast" in Him. It is in Him, and in Him only, that spiritual life is to be sustained, even as only from Him can it be received. To be engrafted into Christ is salvation, but to abide in Christ is the full enjoyment of it. True union to Christ is eternal life. Paul, therefore, rejoiced over these Philippians, because they were joined unto the Lord in one spirit.

This expression is very short, but very full. "In Christ." Does it not mean that we are in Christ as the birds are in the air which buoys them up, and enables them to fly? Are we not in Christ as the fish are in the sea? *Our Lord has become our element,* vital, and all surrounding. In Him we live, and move, and have our being. He is in us, and we are in Him. We are filled with all the fullness of God, because in Christ does all fullness dwell, and we dwell in Him. Christ to us is all, He is in all, and He is all in all! Jesus to us is everything in everything. Without Him we can *do* nothing, and we *are* nothing. Thus are we emphatically in Him. If you have reached this point, "stand fast" in it. If you dwell in the secret place of the tabernacles of the Most high, abide under the shadow of the Almighty. Do you sit at His table, and eat of His dainties? Then prolong the visit, and think not of removal. Say in your soul—

"Here would I find a settled rest,
While others go and come;
No more a stranger, or a guest,
But like a child at home."

Has Jesus brought you into His green pastures? Then lie down in them. Go no further, for you will never fare better. Stay with your Lord, however long the night, for only in Him have you hope of morning.

You see, then, that these people were where they should be—in the Lord, and this was the reason why the apostle took such delight in them. Kindly read the first verse of the fourth chapter, and see how he loves them, and joys over them. He heaps up titles of love! Some dip their morsel in vinegar, but Paul's words were saturated with honey. Here we not only have sweet words, but they mean something, his love was real and fervent. The very heart of Paul is written out large in this verse—"Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved." Because they were in Christ, therefore first of all they were Paul's *brethren*. This was a new relationship, not earthly, but heavenly. What did this Jew from Tarsus know about the Philippians? Many of them were Gentiles. Time was when he would have called them dogs, and despised them as the uncircumcised, but now he says, "My brethren." That poor word has become very hackneyed. We talk of brethren without particularly much of brotherly love, but true brothers have a love for one another which is very unselfish and admirable, and so there is between real Christians a brotherhood which they will neither disown, nor dissemble, nor forget. It is said of our Lord, "For this cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren,"

and surely they need never be ashamed to call one another brethren. Paul, at any rate, looks at the jailor, that jailor who had set his feet in the stocks, and he looks at the jailor's family, and at Lydia, and many others, in fact, at the whole company that he had gathered at Philippi, and he salutes them lovingly as "My brethren." Their names were written in the same family register because they were in Christ, and therefore had one Father in heaven.

Next, the apostle calls them, "my *dearly beloved."* The verse almost begins with this word, and it quite finishes with it. The repetition makes it mean, "My doubly dear ones." Such is the love which every true servant of Christ will have for those who have been begotten to the faith of Christ by his means. Oh, yes, if you are in Christ, His ministers must love you. How could there be a lack of affection in our hearts towards you, since we have been the means of bringing you to Jesus? Without hypocrisy or display we call you our "dearly beloved."

Then the apostle calls them his *"longed for,"* that is, his most desired ones. He first desired to see them converted; after that he desired to see them baptized; then he desired to see them exhibiting all the graces of Christians. When he saw holiness in them he desired to visit them and commune with them. Their constant kindness created in him a strong desire to speak with them face to face. He loved them, and desired their company, because they were in Christ. So he speaks of them as those for whom he longed. His delight was in thinking of them and in hoping to visit them.

Then he adds, "My joy and crown." Paul had been the means of their salvation, and when he thought of that blessed result he never regretted all that he had suffered, his persecutions among the Gentiles seemed light indeed since these priceless souls were his reward. Though he was nothing but a poor prisoner of Christ, yet he talks in right royal style; they are his crown. They were his *stephanos,* or crown given as a reward for his life-race. This among the Greeks was usually a wreath of flowers placed around the victor's brow. Paul's crown would never fade. He writes as he felt the amaranth around his temples; even now he looks upon the Philippians as his chaplet of honor; they were his joy and his crown, he anticipated, I do not doubt, that throughout eternity it would be a part of his heaven to see them amid their blessedness, and to know that he helped to bring them to that felicity by leading them to Christ. O beloved, it is indeed our highest joy that we have not run in vain, neither labored in vain; you who have been snatched as "brands from the burning," and are now living to the praise of our Lord Jesus Christ, you are our prize, our crown, our joy.

These converts were all this to Paul simply because they were "in Christ." They had begun well; they were where they should be, and he, therefore, rejoiced in them.

II. But secondly, it was for this reason that HE LONGED THAT THEY SHOULD KEEP THERE. He entreated them to stand fast. "So stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved." The beginning of religion is not the whole of it. You must not suppose that the sum of godliness is contained within the experience of a day or two, or a week, or a few months, or even a few

years. Precious are the feelings which attend conversion, but dream not that repentance, faith and so forth, are for a season, and then all is done, and done with. I am afraid there are some who secretly say, "Everything is now complete, I have experienced the necessary change, I have been to see the elders and the pastor, and I have been baptized, and received into the church, and now all is right forever." That is a false view of your condition. In conversion you have started in the race, but you must run to the end of the course. In your confession of Christ you have carried your tools into the vineyard, but the day's work now begins. Remember, "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." Godliness is a life-long business. The working out of the salvation which the Lord Himself works in you is not a matter of certain hours, or of a limited period of life. Salvation is unfolded throughout all our sojourn here. We continue to repent and to believe, and even the process of our conversion continues as we are changed more and more into the image of our Lord. Final perseverance is the necessary evidence of genuine conversion.

In proportion as we rejoice over converts we feel an intense bitterness when any disappoint us, and turn out to be merely temporary camp-followers. We sigh over the seed which sprang up so speedily, but which withers so soon because it has neither root nor depth of earth. We were ready to say—"Ring the bells of heaven," but the bells of heaven did not ring because these people talked about Christ, and said they were in Christ, but it was all a delusion. After a while, for one reason or another, they went back, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." Our churches suffer most seriously from the great numbers, who drop out of their ranks and either go back to the world, or else must be pursuing a very secret and solitary path in their way to heaven, for we hear no more of them. Our joy is turned to disappointment, our crown of laurel becomes a circle of faded leaves, and we are weary at the remembrance of it. With what earnestness, therefore, would we say to you who are beginning the race, "Continue in your course. We beseech you turn not aside, neither slacken your running, till you have won the prize!"

I heard an expression yesterday which pleased me much. I spoke about the difficulty of keeping on. "Yes," answered my friend, "and it is harder still to keep on keeping on." So it is. There is the pinch. I know lots of fellows who are wonders at the start. What a rush they make! But then there is no stay in them, they soon lose breath. The difference between the spurious and the real Christian lies in this staying power. The real Christian has a life within him which can never die, an incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever, but the spurious Christian begins after a fashion, but ends almost as soon as he begins. He is esteemed a saint, but turns out a hypocrite. He makes a fair show for a while, but soon he quits the way of holiness, and makes his own damnation sure. God save you, dear friends, from anything which looks like apostasy. Hence I would with all my might press upon you these two most weighty words, "Stand fast."

I will put the exhortation thus—"Stand fast *doctrinally."* In this age all the ships in the waters are pulling up their anchors, they are drifting with the tide; they are driven about with every wind. It is your wisdom to put down more anchors. I have taken the precaution to cast four anchors out of the stern, as well as to see that the great bower anchor is in its proper place. I will not budge an inch from the old doctrine for any man. Now that the cyclone is triumphant over many a bowing wall and tottering fence, those who are built upon the one foundation must prove its value by standing fast. We will listen to no teaching but that of the Lord Jesus. If you see a truth to be in God's word, grasp it by your faith, and if it is unpopular, grapple it to you as with hooks of steel. If you are despised as a fool for holding it, hold it the more. Like an oak, take deeper root, because the winds would tear you from your place. Defy reproach and ridicule, and you have already vanquished it. Stand fast, like the British squares in the olden times. When fierce assaults were made upon them every man seemed transformed to rock. We might have wandered from the ranks a little in more peaceful times, to look after the fascinating flowers which grow on every side of our march, but now we know that the enemy surrounds us, so we keep strictly to the line of march, and tolerate no roaming. The watchword of the host of God just now is—"Stand fast!" Hold to the faith once delivered to the saints. Hold fast the form of sound words, and deviate not one jot or tittle from them. Doctrinally stand fast!

Practically, also, abide firm in the right, the true, the holy. This is of the utmost importance. The barriers are broken down, they would amalgamate church and world; yes, even church and stage. It is proposed to combine God and devil in one service, Christ and Belial are to perform on one stage. Surely, now is the time when the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and very dirty straw too. So they say, but I repeat to you this word, "Come out from among them, and be you separate, and touch not the unclean thing." Write "holiness unto the Lord" not only on your altars, but upon the bells of the horses; let everything be done as before the living God. Do all things unto holiness and edification. Strive together to maintain the purity of the disciples of Christ, and take up your cross, and go without the camp bearing His reproach. If you have already stood apart in your decision for the Lord, continue to do so. Stand fast. In nothing moved by the laxity of the age, in nothing affected by the current of modern opinion, say to yourself, "I will do as Christ bids me to the utmost of my ability. I will follow the Lamb wherever He goes." In these times of worldliness, impurity, self-indulgence, and error, it becomes the Christian to gather up his skirts and keep his feet and his garments clean from the pollution which lies all around him. We must be more Puritanic and precise than we have been. Oh, for grace to stand fast!

Mind also that you stand fast *experientially*. Pray that your inward experience may be a close adhesion to your Master. Do not go astray from His presence. Neither climb with those who dream of perfection in the flesh, nor grovel with those who doubt the possibility of present salvation. Take the Lord Jesus Christ to be your sole treasure, and let your heart be ever with Him. Stand fast in faith in His atonement, in confi-

dence in His Divinity, in assurance of His Second Advent. I pine to know within my soul the power of His resurrection, and to have unbroken fellowship with Him. In communion with the Father and the Son let us stand fast. He shall fare well whose heart and soul, affections and understanding are wrapped up in Christ Jesus, and in none beside. Concerning your inward life, your secret prayer, your walk with God, here is the watchword of the day—"Stand fast."

To put it very plainly, "Stand fast *in the Lord," without wishing for another trust*. Do not desire to have any hope but that which is in Christ. Do not entertain the proposition that you should unite another confidence to your confidence in the Lord. Have no hankering after any other fashion of faith except the faith of a sinner in his Savior. All hope but that which is set before us in the gospel and brought to us by the Lord Jesus is a poisoned delicacy, highly colored, but by no means to be so much as tasted by those who have been fed upon the bread of heaven. What need we more than Jesus? What way of salvation do we seek but that of grace? What security but the precious blood? Stand fast, and wish for no other rock of salvation save the Lord Jesus.

Next, stand fast *without wavering in our trust*. Permit no doubt to worry you. Know that Jesus can save you, and what is more, know that He has saved you. So commit yourself to His hands, that you are as sure of your salvation as of your existence. The blood of Jesus Christ this day cleanses us from all sin, His righteousness covers us, and His life quickens us into newness of life. Tolerate no doubt, mistrust, suspicion, or misgiving. Believe in Christ up to the hilt. As for myself, I will yield to be lost forever if Jesus does not save me. I will have no other string to my bow, no second door of hope, or way of retreat. I could risk a thousand souls on my Lord's truth and feel no risk. Stand fast, without wishing for another trust, and without wavering in the trust you have.

Moreover, stand fast *without wandering into sin*. You are tempted this way and that way, stand fast. Inward passions rise, lusts of the flesh rebel, the devil hurls his fearful suggestions, the men of your own household tempt you, stand fast. Only so will you be preserved from the torrents of iniquity. Keep close to the example and spirit of your Master, and having done all, still stand.

As I have said, stand fast without wandering, so next I must say stand fast *without wearying*. You are a little tired. Never mind, take a little rest and brush up again. "Oh," you say, "this toil is so monotonous." Do it better, and that will be a change. Your Savior endured His life and labor without this complaint, for zeal had eaten Him up. "Alas," you cry, "I cannot see results." Never mind, wait for results, even as the husbandman waits for the precious fruits of the earth. "Oh, sir, I plod along and make no progress." Never mind, you are a poor judge of your own success. Work on, for in due season you shall reap if you faint not. Practice perseverance. Remember that if you have the work of faith and the labor of love, you must complete the trio by adding the patience of hope. You cannot do without this last. "Be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." I am reminded of Sir Christopher Wren, when he

cleared away old St. Paul's to make room for his splendid pile. He was compelled to use battering rams upon the massive walls. The workmen kept on battering and battering. An enormous force was brought to bear upon the walls for days and nights, but it did not appear to have made the least impression upon the ancient masonry. Yet the great architect knew what he was doing; he bade them keep on incessantly, and the ram fell again and again upon the rocky wall, till at length the whole mass was disintegrating and coming apart, and then each stroke began to tell. At a blow it reeled, at another it quivered, at another it moved visibly, at another it fell over amid clouds of dust. These last strokes did the work. Do you think so? No, it was the combination of blows, the first as truly as the last. Keep on with the battering ram. I hope to keep on until I die. And mark you, I may die and I may not see the errors of the hour totter to their fall, but I shall be perfectly content to sleep in Christ, for I have a sure expectation that this work will succeed in the end. I shall be happy to have done my share of the work, even if I personally see little apparent result. Lord, let Your work appear unto Your servants, and we will be content that Your glory should be reserved for our children. Stand fast, my brethren, in incessant labors, for the end is sure.

And then, in addition to standing fast in that respect, stand fast *without warping*. Timber, when it is rather green, is apt to go this way or that. The spiritual weather is very bad just now for green wood; it is one day damp with superstition, and another day it is parched with skepticism. Rationalism and Ritualism are both at work. I pray that you may not warp. Keep straight; keep to the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, for in the Master's name we bid you "Stand fast in the Lord."

Stand fast, for there is great need. 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.

Paul urged them to stand fast because, even in his own case, spiritual life was a struggle. Even Paul said, "Not as though I had already attained." He was pressing forward; He was straining his whole energy by the power of the Holy Spirit. He did not expect to be carried to heaven on a feather bed; He was warring and agonizing. You, beloved, must do the same. What a grand example of perseverance did Paul set to us all! Nothing enticed him from his steadfastness. "None of these things move me," he said, "neither count I my life dear unto me." He has entered into his rest, because the Lord his God helped him to stand fast, even to the end. I wish I had power to put this more earnestly, but my very soul goes forth with it. "Stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved."

III. Thirdly, THE APOSTLE URGED THE BEST MOTIVES FOR THEIR STANDING FAST.

He says, "Stand fast *because of your citizenship."* Read the twentieth verse, "For our citizenship is in heaven." Now, if you are what you profess to be, if you are in Christ, you are citizens of the New Jerusalem. Men ought to behave themselves according to their citizenship, and not dishonor their city. When a man was a citizen of Athens, in the olden time, he felt it incumbent upon him to be brave. Xerxes said, "These Athenians are not ruled by kings: how will they fight?" "No," said one, "but every

man respects the law and each man is ready to die for his country." Xerxes soon knew that the same obedience and respect of law ruled the Spartans, and that these, because they were of Sparta, were all brave as lions. He sends word to Leonidas and his little troop to give up their arms. "Come and take them," was the courageous reply. The Persian king had myriads of soldiers with him, while Leonidas had only three hundred Spartans at his side, yet they kept the pass, and it cost the eastern despot many thousands of men to force a passage. The sons of Sparta died rather than desert their post. Every citizen of Sparta felt that he must stand fast; it was not for such a man as he to yield. I like the spirit of Bayard, that "knight without fear and without reproach." He knew not what fear meant. In his last battle, his spine was broken, and he said to those around him, "Place me up against a tree, so that I may sit up and die with my face to the enemy." Yes, if our backs were broken, if we could no more bear the shield or use the sword, it would be incumbent upon us, as citizens of the New Jerusalem, to die with our faces towards the enemy. We must not yield; we dare not yield, if we are of the city of the great King. The martyrs cry to us to stand fast, the cloud of witnesses bending from their thrones above beseech us to stand fast; yes, all the hosts of the shining ones cry to us, "Stand fast." Stand fast for God, the truth, holiness, and let no man take your crown.

The next argument that Paul used was *their outlook*. "Our conversation is in heaven; from where also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." Brethren, Jesus is coming. He is even now on the way. You have heard our tidings till you scarcely credit us, but the word is true, and it will surely be fulfilled before long. The Lord is coming indeed. He promised to come to die, and He kept His word; He now promises to come to reign, and be you sure that He will keep His tryst with His people. He is coming. Ears of faith can hear the sound of His chariot wheels; every moment of time, every event of providence is bringing Him nearer. Blessed are those servants who shall not be sleeping when He comes, nor wandering from their posts of duty; happy shall they be whom their Lord shall find faithfully watching, and standing fast in that great day!

To us, beloved, He is coming, not as Judge and Destroyer, but as *Savior*. We look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, if we do look for Him, let us "stand fast." There must be no going into sin, no forsaking the fellowship of the church, no leaving the truth, no trying to play fast and loose with godliness, no running with the hare and hunting with the hounds. Let us stand so fast in singleness of heart that, whenever Jesus comes, we shall be able to say, "Welcome, welcome, Son of God!"

Sometimes I wait through the weary years with great comfort. There was a ship some time ago outside a certain harbor. A heavy sea made the ship roll fearfully. A dense fog blotted out all buoys and lights. The captain never left the wheel. He could not tell his way into the harbor, and no pilot could get out to him for a long time. Eager passengers urged him to be courageous and make a dash for the harbor. He said, "No, it is not my duty to run so great a risk. A pilot is required here, and I will wait for one if I wait a week." The truest courage is that which can bear to be charged with cowardice. To wait is much wiser than when you cannot

hear the foghorn and have no pilot yet to steam on and wreck your vessel on the rocks. Our prudent captain waited his time, and at last he spied the pilot's boat coming to him over the boiling sea. When the pilot was at his work the captain's anxious waiting was over. The church is like that vessel, she is pitched to and fro in the storm and the dark, and the pilot has not yet come. The weather is very threatening. All around the darkness hangs like a pall. But Jesus will come, walking on the water, before long; He will bring us safe to the desired haven. Let us wait with patience. Stand fast! Stand fast! For Jesus is coming, and in Him is our sure hope.

Further, there was another motive. *There was an expectation.* "He shall change our vile body," or rather, "body of our humiliation." Only think of it, dear friends! No more headaches or heartaches, no more feebleness and fainting, no more inward tumor or consumption, but the Lord shall transfigure this body of our humiliation into the likeness of the body of His glory. Our frame is now made up of decaying substances; it is of the earth, earthy. "So to the dust return we must." This body groans, suffers, becomes diseased, and dies; blessed be God, it shall be wonderfully changed, and then there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain. The natural appetites of this body engender sad tendencies to sin, and in this respect it is a "vile body." It shall not always be so; the great change will deliver it from all that is gross and carnal. It shall be pure as the Lord's body! Whatever the body of Christ is now, our body is to be like it. We spoke of it last Sunday, you know, when we heard Him say, "Handle Me." We are to have a real, corporeal body as He had for substance and reality, and like His body, it will be full of beauty, full of health and strength; it will enjoy peculiar immunities from evil and special adaptations for good. That is what is going to happen to me and to you, therefore let us stand fast. Let us not willfully throw away our prospects of glory and immortality. What! Relinquish resurrection? Relinquish glory? Relinquish likeness to the risen Lord? O God, save us from such a terrible piece of apostasy! Save us from such immeasurable folly! Suffer us not to turn our backs in the day of battle, since that would be to turn our backs from the crown of life that fades not away.

Lastly, the apostle urges us to stand fast because of *our resources.* Somebody may ask, "How can this body of ours be transformed and transfigured until it becomes like the body of Christ?" I cannot tell you anything about the process; it will all be accomplished in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. But I can tell you by what power it will be accomplished. The Omnipotent Lord will lay bare His arm, and exercise His might, "according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself." O brethren, we may well stand fast since we have infinite power at our backs. The Lord is with us with all His energy, even with His all-conquering strength, which shall yet subdue all His foes. Do not let us imagine that any enemy can be too strong for Christ's arm. If He is able to subdue all things unto Himself, He can certainly bear us through all opposition. One glance of His eyes may wither all opposers, or, better still; one word from His lips may turn them into friends. The

army of the Lord is strong in reserves. These reserves have never yet been fully called out. We, who are in the field, are only a small squadron, holding the fort, but our Lord has at His back ten thousand times ten thousand who will carry war into the enemy's camp. When the Captain of our salvation comes to the front, He will bring His heavenly legions with Him. Our business is to watch until He appears upon the scene, for when He comes, His infinite resources will be put in marching order. I like that speech of Wellington (who was so calm amid the roar of Waterloo), when an officer sent word, "Tell the Commander-in-Chief that he must move me, I cannot hold my position any longer, my numbers are so thinned." "Tell him," said the great general, "he *must* hold his place. Every Englishman today must die where he stands, or else win the victory." The officer read the command to stand, and he did stand till the trumpet sounded victory. And so it is now. My brethren, we must die where we are rather than yield to the enemy. If Jesus tarries we must not desert our posts. Wellington knew that the heads of the Prussian columns would soon be visible, coming in to ensure the victory, and so by faith we can perceive the legions of our Lord approaching; in serried ranks His angels fly through the opening heaven. The air is teeming with them. I hear their silver trumpets. Behold, He comes with clouds! When He comes He will abundantly recompense all who stood fast amid the rage of battle. Let us sing, "Hold the fort, for I am coming."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PHILIPPIANS 3.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—672, 674, 670, AND "HOLD THE FORT."

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THE SERVANTS AND THE POUNDS
NO. 1960

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 24, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called ten of his servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come." Luke 19:12, 13.

WE are told the reason for the Savior's delivering this parable at this particular time. He was going up to Jerusalem, and the ignorant and enthusiastic crowd hoped that He might now set up a temporal sovereignty. "They thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear." Their minds were crowded with mistakes, and the Savior would set them right upon this matter. To banish from their minds the idea of a Jewish empire, in which every Hebrew would be a prince, our Lord told them this story; I use the word advisedly, for his parable was also a fact. He would show them that as yet they were not to be partakers in a kingdom, but were soon to be waiters for an absent Lord who had gone to receive a kingdom, and to return. In His absence His disciples were to be in the position of servants put in trust with property while their Master was gone far away to receive a kingdom, and then to come again. He was now like a nobleman, who may be one among many citizens, but He was going away to a court where He would be invested with royal authority, and He would come back a king. They were to be put in trust with certain pounds till He should return.

I confess I never thoroughly saw the meaning of this parable till I was directed by an eminent expositor to a passage in Josephus, which, if it is not the key of it, is a wonderfully close example of a class of facts which, no doubt, often occurred in the Roman Empire in our Savior's day. Herod, you know, was king over Judea, but he was only a subordinate king under the Roman emperor. Caesar at Rome made and unmade kings at his pleasure. When Herod died he was followed by his son Archelaus, of whom we read in Matthew's account of our Lord's infancy that when Joseph heard that Archelaus was king in Judea in the place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. This Archelaus had no right to the throne till he obtained the sanction of Caesar, and therefore he took a ship with certain attendants, and went to Rome, which in those days was a far country, that he might receive the kingdom and return. While he was on the way his citizens, who hated him, sent an ambassador after him, so has the Revised Version correctly worded it, and this ambassador bore this message to Caesar—"We will not that this man reign over us." The messengers represented to Caesar that Archelaus was not fit to be

king of the Jews. Certain of the pleadings are recorded in Josephus, and they show that barristers nineteen hundred years ago pleaded in much the same style as their brethren of today. The people were weary of the Herods, and preferred anything to their cruel rule. They even asked that Judea might become a Roman province, and be joined to Syria, rather than they should remain under the hated yoke of the Idumaean tyrants. It is evident that in the case of Archelaus his citizens hated him, and said, "We will not have this man to reign over us." It pleased Caesar to divide the kingdom, and to put Archelaus on the throne as ethnarch, or a ruler with less power than a king. When Archelaus returned, he took fierce revenge upon those who had opposed him, and rewarded his faithful adherents most liberally. This story of what had been done thirty years before would, no doubt, rise up in the recollection of the people when Jesus spoke, for Archelaus had built a palace for himself very near to Jericho, and it may be that under the walls of that palace the Savior used the event as the basis of His parable. Those who lived in our Lord's day must have understood His allusions to current facts much better than we do who live nineteen centuries later. The providence of God provided that observant Jew, Josephus, to store up much valuable information for us. Read the passage in his history, and you will see that even the details tally with this parable. There is the story.

The Savior, without excusing Archelaus or commending him in the least degree, simply makes his going to Rome an illustration. Here is a noble personage who is to be a king, but to obtain the throne he must journey to the distant court of a superior power. While he is going, his citizens so hate him that they send an ambassador to oppose his claims, for they will not have him for their king. However, he receives the kingdom, and returns to rule it. When he does so, he rewards those who have been faithful to him, and he punishes with overwhelming destruction those who have tried to prevent his reigning. There is the story; let me further interpret it.

The Savior likens Himself to a nobleman. He was here on earth a man among men, and truly a nobleman in the midst of His fellow citizens. It was His to become king, king of all the earth; indeed, He is such by nature and by right, but He must first go, by death, resurrection, and ascension, away to the highest courts, and there from the great Lord of all He must receive for Himself a kingdom. It is written, "Ask of Me, and I will give You the heathen for Your inheritance," and therefore Jesus must plead His claims before the king, and win His suit. The day is coming when He will return, clothed with glory and honor, to take unto Himself His great power and reign, for He must reign till all enemies are put under His feet. When He comes His enemies will be destroyed, and His faithful servants will be abundantly rewarded.

Let us now draw near to this feast of divine teaching. May the Spirit of God help us to gather practical lessons from this parable!

I. First, I invite you to notice that THERE ARE HERE TWO SETS OF PERSONS. We see the enemies who would not have this man to reign over them, and the servants who had to trade with his money. There are many divisions among men into nationalities, ranks, offices, and charac-

ters, but, after all, the deep divisions will always be two—the enemies and the servants of Christ Jesus. You that are not servants are enemies; you that are not enemies must take care that you are servants. I find no class of persons mentioned in the parable but these two, and I feel certain that there are no others on the face of the earth. You are all either enemies or servants of Jesus Christ.

Consider *the enemies!* The person hated was a nobleman. He was a man, but a noble man. What a man is the Lord Jesus! Forgetting His Godhead for the moment, regard Him only as the man Christ Jesus, and what a man! I need not dwell upon the nobility of His birth, of the seed of David, but I would remind you of the nobility of His character, for that is where true nobility resides. In this respect where is there nobility to be compared to His? Brothers, it would be difficult to find a second to the man Christ within measurable distance of Him; even those who copy Him most nearly confess, regretfully, that in many things they fall short of His glory. There was nothing petty, mean, or selfish about Jesus of Nazareth. He was altogether the noble man.

He deigned, for gracious purposes, to become a citizen among others, for since we read of His being anointed above His fellows, it is implied that some were His fellows. He was a man among men. He was of the society of carpenters; He was also free of the company of itinerant preachers. He associated with men of the sea, with men that handled the net and the oar. He went in and out among the peasantry and in His dress and style of living there was nothing to distinguish Him from the rest of the citizens. Truly, He was separate from them by His holier character, but the separation was not caused by His unwillingness to come down to them, but by their inability to go up to Him.

The citizens hated Him, but they hated Him without cause. There is always some cause for dislike in us, but there was none in Him. In tone, or manner, or spirit, the best give some cause of offense, but in Him there was nothing which could excuse their hate; it was a wanton rejection of the fittest to reign.

As He claimed to be the King of the Jews, they especially hated His royalty, saying, "We will not have this man to reign over us," and again, "We have no king but Caesar." "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." Yet, my brethren, merely regarding Jesus as a man, if we wanted a king, He ought to be elected by the universal suffrages of mankind, openly given by uplifted hands and joyful acclamations, *Io triumphe!* Mighty Conqueror, reign forever! Prince of the kings of the earth, lover of the sons of men, who did for our sake pour out Your precious blood, You deserve to be king of all! The most kingly of men should be king of men. Yet they hated His royal claims and this also without cause. Which of them had He oppressed? What revenue did He extort from the people? What law of His was hard or cruel? In what case did He ever judge unrighteously? Yet His citizens hated Him. There is that same hate of Christ in the world today. Do any of you hate Him? "No," you say. Yet are not some of you who do not oppose Him treating Him with greater contempt than if you did oppose Him? You pass Him by altogether, He is not in all your thoughts; you act as if He were not worthy even to be op-

posed; you make nothing of Him. He is not among the objects for which you live. Sometimes you may speak with a partial admiration of His character, but earnest admiration leads to imitation. If Jesus is a Savior, what worse can you do to Him than to refuse to be saved by Him? I charge you indifferent ones with being, in the core of your hearts, His worst enemies. Oh that you would repent of this, and turn unto Him, for He is coming again, and when He comes He will say, "As for these My enemies, slay them before My eyes." The expression is full of terror. To be slain before the eyes of injured love is doubly death. The Lord by His grace, deliver us from so dread a doom!

The other set of persons in the parable were *his servants,* the original would justify the translation, his bond-servants. Those who were not his enemies were his faithful servants. I suppose that the nobleman had bought them with his money, or that they had been born in his house, or that they had willingly bound themselves by indentures to him. When I said that these were only his slaves you inwardly said, "Then you that believe in Jesus are His bond-servants." Spare us not even the harsher word "slaves." We were never free till we came under bonds to Jesus, and we grow in freedom as we yield to Him. Paul said, "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus," as if the hot iron of affliction had branded him with the name of Christ. Yes, we are the property of the Lord Jesus, and not our own. We cannot somehow find words which will in all its fullness express our belonging to Jesus; we wish to sink into Christ, and to become as nothing for His sake. Truly He has called us friends, but we call ourselves His servants. We take a great delight in owning Him as Master; like David, who said, "I am Your servant," and then again, "I am Your servant," and then again, "and the son of Your handmaid." He was born a servant, born of a mother who was also herself a servant. After all this he added, "You have loosed my bonds." Servitude to Christ is perfect freedom, and in every respect we have found it so. We never expect to know perfect freedom until He has brought every thought, every conception, imagination, desire, into captivity to Himself. We have been bought with His money, and we cost Him dearly. We have also been born in His house by a second birth, and we are bound to Him by indentures which we have gladly signed and sealed, and are ready to sign and seal again—

"High heaven, that heard the solemn vow,
That vow renewed shall daily hear:
Till in life's latest hour we bow,
And bless in death a bond so dear."

We are truly thus on the opposite side of His enemies, for we are willingly His servants.

I have thus introduced to you the two classes. Before we go any further, may the Holy Spirit operate upon us, to make us discern to which of these two we belong! If we are enemies, may we become servants from this time forth!

II. We now advance a step further, and notice THE ENGAGEMENTS OF THESE SERVANTS. Their lord was going away, and he left his ten servants in charge with a little capital, with which they were to trade for him till he returned. He did not tell them how long he would be away, perhaps he did not know himself—I mean the king in the story; even our

Master says, "Of that day and hour knows no man, no, not the angels of heaven." "I am going away," he said, "you are my servants, and I leave you as my servants in the midst of my enemies. Be loyal to me, and to prove your faithfulness, continue to trade in my name. I shall entrust to each of you a very small sum of money, but it will keep you occupied, and your trading on my account will be your daily declaration that you are loyal to me, whatever others may be."

Notice, first, that *this was honorable work*. They were not entrusted with large funds, but the amount was enough to serve as a test. It put them upon their honor. If they were really attached to their master they would feel that he had placed a confidence in them which they must justify. Slaves are not always to be entrusted with money, in fact, the tendency of bondage has always been to take away from men the quality of trustworthiness; our bondage to Christ has the opposite effect, because it is no bondage at all. These servants of the master were treated in some respect as partners; they were to have fellowship with him in his property. They were his confidants and trustees. His eye was not watching them, for he had gone into a far country, and he trusted them to be a law unto themselves. They were not to render a daily account, but to be left alone until he returned. Now that is just how the Master has treated us; He has put us in trust with the gospel, and He relies upon our honor. He does not call us at once to an audit, for He is not here. I do not think that systems of church government which involve a measure of the spy system are at all after our Lord's mind. If Christians are what they ought to be, they can be trusted; they are a law unto themselves. The Lord puts you not under certain rules and regulations so as to ordain that you shall give a tenth, though I wish you did give as much at least. He does not say, "You shall subscribe so much at such a time, and work in such a way." No, you are not under law, but under grace. If you love your Master you will soon discover what to do for Him, and you will do it with delight. The Lord does not lay down rigid rules, and order that at such an hour in the morning you must begin work, and that you must work on for so many hours. No, He says, "Take my pound, and trade with it." Our version, "Occupy till I come," is a lumbering Latin way of saying, "Trade therewith till I come." The Lord has put us on the footing of confidence, appealing to our honor and love. He will not come and look after us today or tomorrow, though He will ultimately have a strict reckoning with us. Meanwhile He has gone, but He has left us here in the midst of His enemies, to show His enemies that He has some friends, and that He must be a good Master, since even those who own themselves to be His vassals rejoice to spend their whole lives in His service. I say He gave them honorable work, and was it not so?

It was work for which he gave them capital. He gave to each of them a pound. "Not much," you will say. No, he did not intend it to be much. They were not capable of managing very much. If he found them faithful in "a very little" he could then raise them to a higher responsibility. I do not read that any of them complained of the smallness of his capital, or wished to have it doubled. Brothers, we need not ask for more talents, we have quite as many as we shall be able to answer for. Preachers need not

seek for larger spheres; let them be faithful in those which they now occupy. A brother said to me, "I cannot do much with a hundred hearers," and I replied, "You will find it hard work to give in a good account for even a hundred people." I confess it very quietly, but I have often wished that I had a little congregation that I might watch over every soul in it, but now I am doomed to an everlasting dissatisfaction with my work, for what am I among so many? I can only feel that I have not even begun to do the hundredth part of what needs to be done in such a church as this. Each one had a pound in his hand, and his lord only said, "Trade with it." He did not expect them to do a wholesale business on so small a stock, but they were to trade as the market would allow. He did not expect them to make more than the pound would fairly bring in, for, after all, he was not "an austere man." "Take that pound," he said, "and do your best. I know the times are bad, for you have to trade among enemies. You could not, perhaps, manage to put out twenty pounds under such circumstances, but you can turn over a pound, and use every shilling of it." Thus he gave them a sufficient capital for his purpose. My friend, have you that pound anywhere about you? "Alas," says one, "I have no abilities at all." How is that? Your Lord gave you a pound, what has become of it? You are one of His servants, and if you are doing nothing you are in an evil case, and ought to be ashamed. What have you done with that pound? Put your hand in your pocket again. It is not there. Is it in the napkin?—that napkin with which you ought to have wiped the sweat of labor from your brow? Have you got that pound? You say, "It is not much." The Master did not say it was much, on the contrary, He called it "very little," but have you used that very little? This should go home to your consciences. You have been treated as confidential servants, and yet you are not true to your Lord. How is this?

*What they had to do with the pound was prescribed in general term*s. They were to trade with it, not to play with it. I dare say they were inclined to argue, "Our master's cause is assailed, let us fight for him," yet he did not say, "fight," but *trade*. Peter drew his sword. Oh, yes, we are eager combatants, but slow merchants. Many manifest a defiant spirit, and are never more satisfied than when they are in noise and strife. The servants in this parable were not to fight, but to trade, which is a much more cool-blooded and ignoble thing in common esteem. We may leave our Lord's enemies to Himself; He will end their rebellions one of these days. We are to follow a much lowlier line of things.

No doubt certain of them might have thought that the pound would be useful to purchase them comforts, or even luxuries, one would buy a new coat, and another would bring home a piece of furniture for his house, and others would solemnly say, "We have our families to think of." Yes, but their lord did not say so, the master said, "Trade with it until I come." They were neither to fight with it, nor hoard it, nor spend it, nor waste it, but to trade with it for him.

The pound was not put into their hands for display. They were not to glory over others who had not so much as a penny to bless themselves with, for though they were little capitalists, that capital was their lord's. It is a pity when graces or talents are boasted of as if they were our own.

A tradesman who is prospering seldom has much money to show; it is all needed in his business. Sometimes he can scarcely put his hand upon a five-pound note, because his cash is all absorbed, his golden grain is all sown in the field of his trade. Speaking for myself, I cannot find any room for glorying in myself, for if I have either grace or strength, I certainly have none to spare. I have barely enough for the work in hand, and not enough for the service in prospect. Our pound is not to be hung on our watch-chain, but to be traded with.

Trading represents a life which may be called commonplace, but it is eminently practical, and it has an exceedingly practical effect upon the person engaged in it. This is owing in part to the fact that it is an occupation in which there is great *scope for judgment*. They were not tied down to a special kind of trade. The man who made his one pound into ten chose the best form of business. He sought not that which was most pleasant, but that which was most profitable. So you are left, dear friends, to choose your own line of service for your Master, only you must trade for Him, and for Him everything must be done well. At the present time no trading pays better than the mission to the Congo, or to the hill-tribes of India; large dividends come also from dealings with the poorest of the poor in the slums, and as much from widows and orphans who are in extreme destitution. When men have to lay down their lives for the Lord Jesus, after a life languished away with fever, the returns are amazing. Where the need is greatest our Lord receives most glory. It is left to you to judge what you can do, how you can do it, and where you will do it. Do that, which will most surely win souls, and that which will best establish your Lord's kingdom. Exercise your very best judgment, and get into that line of holy service in which you can bring in the largest revenue for your glorious Master.

The work which he prescribed was *one that would bring them out*. The man who never succeeds in trade, do you know him? I know him. He complains that he has a small head, and usually the complaint is founded on fact. He needs to follow a business in which the bread and butter will be brought to his door ready spread, and even then, unless it is cut up into dice pieces on his plate, he will get no breakfast. The man that is to succeed in trade in these times must have confidence, look alive, keep his eyes open, and be all there. Our times are hard, but not as hard as those described in the parable when the faithful servants were trading in the midst of traitors; they had need of sharp wits. Trade develops a man's perseverance, patience, and courage; it tests honesty, truthfulness, and firmness. It is a singularly excellent discipline for character. When this nobleman gave his servant the pound, it was that he might see what stuff he was made of. Trade with small capital means personal work and drudgery, long hours and few holidays, plenty of disappointment and small gains. It means working with might and main, and doing the thing with all your heart and mind. In such a manner are we to serve Christ. The word "trade" has a world of meaning in it. I cannot bring it out this morning, but there is no need, for the most of you know more about trade than I do, and you can instruct yourselves. You are to trade for the Lord Jesus Christ in a higher and yet more emphatic sense than

that in which you have traded for yourselves. With your physical strength, your mental faculties, your substance, your family, with everything—you are to bring glory to God, and honor to the name of Jesus. It is to be your life-business to work *for* Jesus, and *with* Jesus.

Trading, if it is successfully carried on, is *an engrossing concern,* calling out the whole man. It is a continuous toil, a varied trial, a remarkable test, a valuable discipline, and this is why the nobleman put his bondsmen to it, that he might afterwards use them in still higher service. Brethren, learn what is meant by trading, and then carry on a spiritual trade with all your heart.

At the same time, let us notice that *it was work suitable to their capacity*. Small as the capital was, it was enough for them, for they were no more than bondsmen, not of a high grade of rank or education. Their master gave them only a pound, which did not mean more than £3 10s of our money. One would not get a large shop, or even a decent stock, with that small amount. They could not complain that they were placed in a business which was too heavy for them to manage. They could any of them buy a few goods, and hawk them. The Lord Jesus Christ does not ask you to do more than you can do, He does not break you down with cares beyond your capacity. We have not yet reached the limit of our powers, we can yet do more. Jesus is no exacting master; it is only a false and lying servant who will call Him "an austere man, reaping where He has not sowed." Nothing of the kind. He has given us a light business; our work for Him is suited to our limited powers, and He is ready, by His Holy Spirit, to assist us. Let us use well our single pound. Let it be our ambition to make ten of it at the very least, and may the Lord graciously prosper our endeavors, that we may have large interest to present to Him when He shall come!

Did you inquire as to how these men were to be supported? Their master did not tell them to live out of his pound. No, they were his servants, and so they lived under his roof, and he provided for all their needs. He had gone on a journey, but his establishment was not given up, the table was still spread, and the children and the servants had bread enough and to spare. "Oh," says one, "that alters the case." Just so, but it does not make it different from yours; or, if it does, I am sorry for you. Are you your own provider? Do you cry, "What shall I eat? What shall I drink?" Do you not know that all these things do the nations of the earth seek after? Whereas Jesus says, "Your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things." As I understand my life, I am to do my Lord's work, and He is to provide for me. He may do this through my own industry, but still it is *His* work to do it, and not mine. If the providence of God is not sufficient to provide for us, then I am sure we cannot provide for ourselves, and if it is sufficient, we shall be wise to cast all our care on the Lord, and live undividedly for His praise. Remember that text, "Seek you first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." You, as a servant, are not to be entangled with troublesome cares about your own interests, but you are to give your whole thought and life to your Master's

service. He will take care of you now, and reward you when He shall come.

III. Thirdly, to understand this parable, we must remember THE EXPECTANCY WHICH WAS ALWAYS TO INFLUENCE THEM. They were left as trusted servants till he should return, but that return was a main item in the matter.

They were to believe that *he would return,* and that he would return a king. The citizens did not believe it. They hoped that Caesar would refuse him the throne, but we are to be sure that our noble Master will receive the kingdom. This rebel world does not believe that Jesus will ever be king. The other day we read of the "Eclipse of Christianity." Constantly we see His dominion assailed. They say that it is practically disproved by facts. Is it? Sirs, excuse me, I am desperately prejudiced, for I am His servant. I owe Him my life, my all. I am persuaded that He is and must be King of kings. I know Him so well that I am sure that He will prevail at the court to which He has gone. He is in very high favor there. The last time I saw the face of the great King, I obtained that favor through the use of His name. I receive anything I ask for when I mention His name, and so I am sure that He is in wonderful high repute above. Why, His Father is the sovereign! I am sure He will not deny the kingdom to His only-begotten Son. Jesus will come in His kingdom; I am sure of it. Let us work in the full conviction that our absent Lord will soon be here again, with a glorious diadem upon His brow. When He went away He took with Him the scars of one, who died a felon's death, and He will come again with them, but the nail prints will be no memorials of His shame; they will be as jewels to His hands.

His servants were to regard their absent master as *already king,* and they were so to trade among his enemies that they should never compromise their own loyalty. They were of the king's party and of no other. It is a very awkward position to be in, to trade among people that are enemies to your king; you need in such a case to be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. This is precisely our position. We have to bring glory to God out of men who hate Him; we have to magnify our Lord among men who would, if they could, again crucify Him. We have to go in and out among them in such a manner that they can never say that we side with them in their rebellion, or wink at their disloyalty. We cannot be "Hail fellow: well met!" with those whose life is a practical insult to the crown rights of King Jesus. We must above all things prove ourselves loyal to our absent Lord, lest He appoint us our portion among His enemies.

I find that the original would suggest to anyone carefully reading it that they were to regard their master as *already returning*. This should be our view of our Lord's Advent; He is even now on His way here. No sooner had He risen from the grave than, practically, our Lord was coming back. Strange paradox! But His ascension into heaven was, in a certain sense, part of His coming back to us, for the way for Him, from the cross on earth to the crown of the whole earth, was *via* the New Jerusalem. He is coming now as fast as wisdom judges it to be right. I am sure our Savior will not delay a moment beyond what is absolutely needful, for

He loves the church which is His bride, and as her Bridegroom He will not delay the long-expected hour of their meeting, never to part again. *He* is ready; it is the bride that needs to make herself ready. Jesus desires to come; His heart is responsive to our cry when we say, "Come quickly!" He will come sooner than we think. We are bound to feel that He is at this moment on the road, and we are to live as if He might arrive at any moment.

We must trade on till our Lord has come. There must be no retiring from His business, even if we retire from our own; there must be no ceasing because we fancy we have done enough. Our rest will be when He comes, but till then we must trade on.

Let us labor as in His actual presence. How would you act with Jesus at your elbow? Act just so. He sees us as clearly as if His bodily presence were in our midst. Be awakened and inspired by the Redeemer's eye. Thus you will live in this trial state after the best possible manner.

IV. Now comes the sweet part of the subject. Note well THE SECRET DESIGN OF THE LORD. Did it ever strike you that this nobleman had a very kindly design towards his servants? Did this nobleman give these men one pound each with the sole design that they should make money for him? It would be absurd to think so. A few pounds would be no item to one who was made a king. No, no! It was as Mr. Bruce says, "He was not money-making, but character-making." His design was not to gain by them, but to educate them.

First, their being entrusted with a pound each was *a test*. This nobleman said to himself, "When I am a king I must have faithful servants in power around me. My going away gives me an opportunity of seeing what my servants are made of. I shall thus test their capacity and their industry, their honesty and their zeal. If they prove faithful over a few things they will be fit to be trusted with greater matters." The test was only a pound, and they could not make much mischief out of that, but it would be quite sufficient to try their capacity and fidelity, for he that is faithful in that which is least will be faithful also in much. They did not all endure the test, but by its means he revealed their characters.

It was also a *preparation* of them for future service. He would lift them up from being servants to become rulers. They were, therefore, to be put in a place of measurable responsibility, and to be made men of thereby. They were to be rulers over a very little—say a pound, and that which came of it, and this would be an education for them. In the process of trading they would be in training to rule. The best way to learn to be a master is to be first a servant, and the reason why some masters are hard and tyrannical is because they do not know the heart of a servant by experience. They know nothing of service, and so they have not the wisdom, the generosity, and the tenderness, which masters should show towards servants. So this nobleman was wise, he was at the same time testing and training his men.

Besides this, I think he was giving them a little *anticipation* of their future honors. He was about to make them rulers over cities, and so he first made them rulers over pounds. They had been servants, and taken orders from him every morning, but now they have no master to go to,

and must use their own discretion. They were in effect, in a small sphere, made into little kings. In all that country the citizens had rebelled, but there was a little kingdom of the nobleman's own servants, and these obeyed him, and did their best to maintain his interest in their little way. They were already made free, placed in a measure of authority, and made to know the sweets and the burdens of personal responsibility. Oh, you who work for God, when you are overseers of others for Him, when you win souls for Him, and when you conquer adversaries in His name you are already anticipating your eternal reward. We are fashioning our future position upon the anvil of our lives, for heaven, though it is a state and a place prepared for us by the Lord Jesus, lies also mainly in character. The man is more the source of joy than the streets of gold in which he will walk. If you hide your pound and neglect your Master's service here you are making for yourselves a dim and hazy future in that grand millennial reign of His. You that addict yourselves to your holy trade, and consecrate yourselves entirely to your Lord, shall have large honors when He comes to reign among His ancients gloriously.

For see, when he came to the man who had earned ten pounds, he gave him ten cities. Think of that! There is no proportion between the poor service and the rich reward. A pound is rewarded with a city. The rewards of the millennium will evidently be all of grace, because they are so incomparably beyond anything which the servants' earnings could have deserved. Their Lord was not bound to pay them anything; they were his bond-servants, but what he gave them was of his overflowing grace. I do not think that he who brought five pounds was in the least blamed. He may have been just as diligent as the other, but he had less capacity. But how he must have opened his eyes when, his master gave him five *cities*. Perhaps he wondered more than the first. Fancy if any one of us had been put to trade with a pound upon commission, and had received five cities for reward. The money earned would not buy the smallest house, and yet it brings in to the worker five cities! What surprise filled the heart of the recipient of such bounty! It never entered into his heart to envy the brother who had ten cities, for the five were so vast a recompense. He must have been carried away with rapture with the prospect before him. Though there may be degrees of glory, the only difference will be in the capacity of the blessed to contain it. All the vessels will be full, but they will not be all equally large; the man of the ten pounds will simply be a larger vessel, full to the brim, and the man with the five will be less capacious, but quite as full, to his own glad amazement and joyful bewilderment. However, let us go in for winning the ten pounds if we can. For our Lord's sake let us trade in spiritual things with all our hearts.

"But," says one, "where and what will these cities be?" It may be that all this will literally happen during the millennial period, but I do not know. When Christ shall come, the dead in Christ will rise first, and we read that "the rest of the dead lived not again till the thousand years were finished." There may be space during that era for all the special rewards of the gospel dispensation. It may also be, but I do not know, and so I cannot tell you, that we are in future dispensations, to fill unto other

worlds much the same office as angels fill to ours. Jesus has made us kings and priests, and we are in training for our thrones. What if in this congregation I am learning to proclaim my Master's glory to myriads of worlds! Possibly the preacher who is faithful here may yet be made to tell forth His Lord's glory to constellations at a later time. What if one might stand upon a central star and preach Christ to worlds on worlds instead of preaching Him to these two galleries and to this area! Why not? At any rate, if I should ever gain a voice loud enough to be heard for millions of miles, I would speak none other than those glorious truths which the Lord has revealed in Christ Jesus. If we are faithful here, we may expect our Master to entrust us with higher service hereafter; only let us see to it that we are able to endure the test and that we profit by the training. As our account comes out in the very little, so will it be with us on the grand scale of eternity. This puts another face upon the work of this lower sphere. Rulers over ten cities! Rulers over five cities! Brothers, you are not fit for such dignities if you cannot serve your Lord well in this world with the little He has entrusted to you. If you live wholly to Him here, you will be prepared for the glories unspeakable which await all consecrated souls. Let us go in for a devoted life at once! Time is so short, and the things we deal with are comparatively so small! We are soon coming out of the eggshell of time, and when we break loose into eternity, and see the vastness of the divine purposes, we shall be altogether amazed at the service bestowed, which will be the reward of service done. O Lord, make us faithful! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—LUKE 19:1-38.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—347, 356, 342.

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S. S.: OR, THE SINNER SAVED
NO. 1961

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 1, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone; as it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense: and whosoever believes on Him shall not be ashamed." Romans 9:30-33.

FOR several Sabbath mornings I have sought the comfort and edification of God's people, although I trust I have not, even in such discourses, overlooked the unconverted. How can we forget them while they are in such peril? At the same time, the main drift of the service has been for the people of God, and it will not be wise to continue long in that line. We must not forget the lost sheep; it were better that we left the ninety-nine than that we neglected the rambler. We must, therefore, this morning seek to go after that which is gone astray until we find it. Oh, that God the Holy Spirit would make every word to be full of His power! He can fill each sentence with celestial dynamite, an irresistible energy, which will blast the rocks of self-righteousness, and make a way for the gospel of the grace of God through the impenetrable barriers of sin. For that end I am anxious that, while I speak on God's behalf, the prayers of the faithful may bring down God's power, and make the feeble voice of man to be the vehicle for the omnipotence of God.

It is very necessary often to go over the elements—the foundation truths of the gospel. Schools may rise to the classics, but they can never dispense with the spelling book. All over the country there must be the repetition of the alphabet, and words of one syllable, or there will be no scholarship. I feel that it is necessary to give line upon line, precept upon precept, as to the first principles of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Multitudes of persons are in bondage, and will continue to be so until they hear a very clear and simple description of the way of salvation. This is the key of their liberty. You that know these first things must be willing often to hear them; indeed, I find that you are the people that never grow tired of viewing that stone which God has laid in Zion for a foundation, for it never becomes a rock of offense to you. To you the repetitions of Jesus are more acceptable than the novelties of human invention. The system and method of salvation, therefore, will come before you again this morning. Oh, that to some it may seem to be heard for the first time, though they may with the outward ear have heard "the old, old story" a

thousand times! Oh, that they may now understand it, grasp it, and find the blessing of it, and so rejoice in God their Savior!

Paul had two facts before him; the first was that wherever he went preaching Jesus Christ certain Gentiles believed the doctrine, and straightway became justified persons, receiving at once forgiveness of sin and a change of heart. He had been in Ephesus and Thessalonica, in Corinth and in Rome, and at his preaching of the word of life the heathen who were outside of the pale of true religious profession had believed in the Lord Jesus, and so had attained to righteousness, and proved that they had done so by their righteous, pure, devout lives. On the other hand, there was the sad fact that whereas he had usually commenced his ministry in the synagogues, and so had opened his commission by addressing the seed of Abraham, to whom belonged the covenants of promise, yet they had almost everywhere rejected the Messiah, and refused the grace of the gospel. At the same time, it was evident that they had missed the righteousness which they conceived they had obtained, for, as a nation, they were in bondage to superstitious prejudice, and were fallen low, both as to morality and spirituality, insomuch that they were correctly described by the prophet when he said, "Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodom and been made like unto Gomorrah." There were these two facts before the apostle's mind; the Gentiles, who had been far off, had attained to righteousness, and the Israelites, on the border of it, yet perished there, and did not attain to the law of righteousness. To this he calls our attention and I shall ask you to look, first of all, at *a wonder of grace,* "The Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness." Secondly, I shall ask you to note *a marvel of folly,* "Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness." And when I have done that, I shall have to throw my whole strength into *a discourse of affectionate concern* about those of you who, as yet, have not attained unto the righteousness which is of faith. Oh that you may see yourselves, and then see the Lord Jesus by the light of the Holy Spirit! Like the prodigal, may it be said of each one of you, "He came to himself," and then "he arose, and came to his Father."

I. First, I crave your earnest attention to A WONDER OF GRACE. *Certain men had attained to righteousness*. They had, so to speak, "put their hand upon righteousness." They had grasped the righteousness of faith, which is the righteousness of God. They could say, "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." These without boasting could declare that Jesus Christ was made of God unto them wisdom and righteousness. In them the righteousness of the law was fulfilled. They were at peace, for the fruit of righteousness is peace; they were grateful, earnest, devoted, zealous, and they yielded their members as instruments of righteousness unto God. The Lord had covered them with the righteousness of Christ, and had infused into them the righteousness of His indwelling Spirit. Saintly men and saintly women were produced among those who once had used "curious arts" and enchantments, in those in whom sin abounded grace reigned through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ. There were peo-

ple in the world whom God, the Judge of all, accepted as righteous. Now that alone is a great wonder, for we are all sinners both by nature and by practice, and it is as great a marvel as the making of a world, that anyone of our race should attain to righteousness. Sit down, Christian man, and rejoice in the righteousness which you have received by faith, and you will be filled with amazement. The more you consider the righteousness which you have received in Christ Jesus by your faith in Him, the more you will cry out, "Oh the depths!" It is indeed a miracle of love that we, who by nature were under the curse, have now obtained the blessing of righteousness, as it is written, "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."

The wonder grows when we consider that *these persons who had attained to righteousness had come to it under great disadvantages,* for they were Gentiles. The Gentiles were considered by the Jews to be off casts, and outcasts, aliens from the commonwealth of grace. They were given up to idolatry or to atheism, and the most degrading lusts were rife among them. They had gone very far from original righteousness. A true picture of the Gentile world in the days of Paul would have terribly dark colors in it; it would be injurious to morals to describe in public the details of the lives of the best of the heathen. If you speak of the manners of the common people, you must be prepared to hear of vices which crimson the cheek of modesty. There are virtues, for which the heathen had no name, and they practiced vices for which, thank God, you have no name. The Gentiles were filled with all unrighteousness, and therefore they were ignorant of the requirements of the law and of the holiness of God. The light which shone upon the seed of Israel had not yet dawned on them. There may have been here and there a chosen few, like Cornelius the centurion, and others, who followed the light which is found in nature and in the human conscience, and so welcomed all that they learned from Israel, but, taken in the bulk, John fitly described the Gentiles when he said, "The whole world lies in wickedness." The strange thing is that such originally were those men who attained unto righteousness. The gospel came into their streets, and at first they heard it with opposition, saying, "What will this babbler say?" Their attention was attracted, and they were willing to hear the preacher again concerning this matter. Conscience was awakened, and soon they began to inquire, "What must we do to be saved? "Having no righteousness of their own, and being convinced that they needed one, they fled at once to the righteousness which God has prepared in His dear Son for all who believe in Him, and multitudes believed and turned to God. Thus those who knew not the Lord became His obedient worshippers, and those who were far off were made nigh by faith.

Are there not persons here whose condition is somewhat similar to that of the Gentiles? You are not religious, you are not members of godly families, neither are you frequenters of our sanctuaries, but why should not you also attain to righteousness by faith? Wonders of grace are things which God delights in; why should He not work such wonders in

you? At any rate, while I preach I am exercising faith concerning you that you shall at once be brought to salvation and eternal life.

The marvel of grace in the case of these Gentiles was all the greater because, as the apostle says, *"They followed not after righteousness."* They had originally felt no desire after righteousness before God. Some of them were thoughtful, just, and generous towards men, but righteousness and holiness towards God was not a matter after which they labored. The Gentile mind ran more upon, "What shall we eat? What shall we drink?" than upon "What is righteousness before God?" Gold or glory, power or pleasure, were the objects for which they ran; but they ran no race for the prize of holiness. They were ignorant of such matters as salvation, reconciliation with God, the inward life, sanctification, and all the other mysteries and blessings of the covenant, and therefore they followed not after them. They were content, most of them, to live like the cattle that plowed their fields, or like the dogs that prowled through their streets; they followed the devices and desires of their own hearts. Yet when the gospel burst in upon the midnight of their souls they received its light with joy, and accepted the good news from heaven with much readiness of mind. They had not sought the Shepherd, but He had sought them, and laying them on His shoulders, He brought them to His fold. It was a wonderful thing that, though they did not follow after righteousness, yet they found it. They are like that Indian who, passing up the mountain side pursuing game, grasped a shrub to prevent his slipping, and as its roots gave way they uncovered masses of pure silver, and thus the richest silver mine was discovered by a happy accident by one who looked not for it. These Gentiles discovered in Christ the righteousness which they needed, but which they had never dreamed of finding. This reminds us of our Lord's own parable: the man was plowing with oxen, and all of a sudden the plowshare struck upon an unusual obstacle. He stopped the plow and turned up the soil, and lo! He found a crock of gold! This "treasure hid in a field" at once won his heart, and for joy thereof he sold all that he had, and bought the field. Grace finds men who otherwise would never have found grace. Oh, the glorious grace of God, which brings the righteousness of Christ full often to those who never sought it, to those who had no religiousness, nor even tendencies that way! Saul, the son of Kish, went to seek his father's donkeys, and found the kingdom, and even thus have careless and worldly persons been made to know the Lord when it seemed highly improbable that they would ever do so. This is a great wonder, for which all heaven rings with hallelujahs to God.

Observe that *these unlikely persons did really believe, and so attain to righteousness*. When the gospel came to them they heard it with deep attention. There was a something about it which powerfully attracted them. You know who has said, "I, if I am lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." This divine charm drew them to consider the doctrine, and when they came to understand it, they perceived that it suited their need as a shoe fits a foot. It revealed their secret needs and wounds, but it also provided for them, and so, having considered the thing, they accepted with joy the blessings brought to them in the gospel. They at once believed in the

Lord Jesus; the thing was done suddenly, but it was well done. Their first hearing of the gospel saved them. We read of one of them, that he had shut up the preacher in the prison, and had gone to bed, but in the middle of the night an earthquake shook the prison, and that night he not only became a believer, but he was baptized, and all his household. These Gentiles did not need hammering at so long as some of *you* do, they did not require the preacher to rack his brains to find fresh illustrations and arguments, and then labor in vain year after year. At the first summons they surrendered. They no sooner saw the light than they rejoiced in it. They rose at abound from depths of sin to heights of righteousness. Those who had been ringleaders in the service of the devil became zealots in the service of Jesus Christ. The change was as complete as it was startling—"they attained unto righteousness," they were accepted before God as righteous men.

The apostle asks us, "What shall we say, then?" We say this; *herein is seen the sovereign appointment of the Lord*. He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy. He will fulfill His promise to His Son, "Behold, You shall call a nation that You know not, and nations that knew not You shall run unto You because of the Lord Your God, and for the Holy One of Israel: for He has glorified You." Here I see the Almighty Lord of all speaking to the darkness, and saying, "Let there be light," and there is light. Here I see the Word of the Lord coming forth out of His mouth, and accomplishing the thing whereto He sent it. The voice of the Lord which breaks the cedars of Lebanon also breaks the hard hearts of men, "the voice of the Lord which makes the hinds to calve," creates new life in the minds of the ungodly. The gospel is full of power, and it works according to the eternal purpose of God. The calling of the Gentiles in Paul's day is only one illustration of the frequent action of sovereign grace.

This also is according to divine prophecy. What said the Lord by His servant Hosea? "I will call them My people, which were not My people, and her beloved, which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, You are not My people, there shall they be called the children of the living God." Thus spoke the prophet, and so it must be. The Lord has many more such chosen ones to call forth from their death in sin. I expect as I stand here that God's infinite power is about to save certain of you. I do not know to whom this grace will be vouchsafed, but I know that the Word of the Lord will not return unto Him void. He may bless the least likely of you. He may call the man who now says, "I do not believe a word of it." Friend, you do not know what you will believe before this day is over. I trust that God's power is going forth to bring you within the bounds of salvation. It may be that some persecuting Saul of Tarsus will at this hour cry, "Lord what will You have me to do?" And on the other hand, it may be that some young man who lacks only one thing will this day find it. So God does work in the majesty of His power that persons who have not sought after righteousness nevertheless are led to faith in Christ, and by that faith they are immediately made righteous before God. This is what we have reason to expect, for many promises declare that it shall be so. Did not

Isaiah boldly say, "I was found of them that sought Me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after Me"?

This is, in fact, the gospel of the grace of God. That God smiles upon worthy people and rewards their goodness is not the gospel. The gospel is that God has mercy upon the guilty and undeserving. The gospel gives us this "faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." It is not the gospel that you will be saved who do your best, and will, therefore, have some claim upon mercy. No, no! By such statements you sail upon quite another tack. The gospel declares to you that though you have done your worst, the Lord will yet have mercy upon you if you believe in the atonement of His dear Son. If you were turned upside down and shaken for a week, not even a dust of goodness would fall from some of you, and yet even you shall be made the children of God if you believe in Christ Jesus. Repent and be converted; believe in Jesus and live. That the guiltiest may yet attain to righteousness, this is the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which it is my delight to preach. Behold, I set before you an open door of grace, and beseech you to enter in just as you are. We come not to mend the garments of those of you who are clothed already, but to present the naked with the robe of Christ's righteousness. We come not here to search for your beauties, but to unveil your deformities, your wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores, and then to point you to the Lord Jesus, who can heal you, and cause the beauty of the Lord to rest upon you. We preach not merit, but mercy; not human goodness, but divine grace; not works of law, but wonders of love. This is the gospel of which the salvation of the Gentiles was a blessed result.

II. We see, in the second place, A MARVEL OF FOLLY, "Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness." *Multitudes have never yet found true righteousness*. I fear that many, of my present congregation are in the number; they are not righteous, though, perhaps, they trust in themselves that they are so. Their consciences are not at ease; they are conscious of serious shortcomings; they have not yet found a safe anchorage. I commend to their study the case of Israel.

In Paul's day *these people were, first of all, very advantageously placed*. They were of the chosen race of Israel. They had been born, as it were, within the visible church, and circumcised, and brought up to know the law of Moses, and yet they had never attained to righteousness. Like Gideon's fleece, they were dry while the floor around was wet. There are those present who were nursed in the lap of piety; from their babyhood they heard the name of Jesus, they have scarcely been a single Sabbath day absent from the courts of the Lord's house. They went from the Sunday school to the Bible class, and it was hoped that they would go from there to the church, but it has not proved so. Now that they have reached riper years they are still hovering around the gates of mercy, but they have not entered upon the way of life. My hearer, I am frightened for you, and such as you. I tremble for you who are so good, so religious, so zealous, and yet are not regenerate. You are the child of nature finely dressed, but not the living child of grace. You look somewhat like a

Christian, but as you are not converted, and have never become as a little child, you have not entered the kingdom of heaven. It is a misery of miseries that you should stand on such a vantage ground, as many of you do, and yet be lost. Shall it be so? Turn you, turn you, why will you die?

It was not merely that they had many advantages, but *these Israelites were earnest and zealous in following after the law of righteousness.* Alas! Many who have never forgotten a single outward rite or ceremony of the church, and are evermore zealous for taking the sacrament and regular attendance at their place of worship, are nevertheless quite dead as to spiritual things. Some even kneel down every morning and night and repeat a prayer, they pay everybody their own, they are always kind to their neighbors, and they do not refuse their help to the subscription list, and yet they are quite out of the running. Some of you know that it is so, you dare not die as you are; in fact, you can hardly go on living as you now feel. Nobody could put a finger upon an open fault in you, and yet you are like a rosy apple which is rotten at the core. You know it is so; at least, you have a shrewd suspicion that all is not right between you and God. You have no peace, no joy, and when you hear others rejoicing in the Lord you either think they are presumptuous, or else you envy them, as well you may. Thousands of people in England are perishing in the light, even as the heathen perish in the dark. Many are wrapping themselves up in their own righteousness, and are as sure to be lost as if the nakedness of their sin could be seen of all men. I pray you; take heed to yourselves, you that follow after the law of righteousness. It is concerning such as you that the apostle Paul had great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart. Remember, you may be in the visible church, and yet may be strangers to the grace of God. You may be earnestly seeking righteousness in the wrong way, and this is a terrible thing.

Notice that these people made a mistake at the very beginning; it may not seem a great one, but it was so in reality. *Israel did not follow after righteousness, but after "the law of righteousness."* They missed the spirit, which is righteousness, and followed after the mere letter of the law. To be really righteous was not their aim, but to do righteousness was their utmost notion. They looked at "You shall not kill," "You shall not commit adultery," "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy," and so forth, but to love God with all their heart was not thought of, and yet this is the essence of righteousness. They looked at the letter of the law, and were careful to pay tithe upon mint and anise, and to attend to all sorts of small points and niceties, but to cleanse the heart and purify the motive did not occur to them. They thought of what a man *does,* but they forgot the importance of what a man *is.* Love to God, and likeness to God, were forgotten in a servile attempt to observe the letter of the law. So we see everywhere, people nowadays consider what kind of dress a clergyman ought to wear on a certain day, and which position he should occupy at the communion, and what should be the decoration of the place of worship, and what should be the proper music for the hymn, and so forth, but to what purpose is all this? To be right in heart with God, to trust in His dear Son, and to be renewed in His image, is better than all rituals.

Among us there are certain people who are nothing if they are not orthodox; they make a man an offender for a word, and are never as happy as when they are up to their necks in controversy. In each case the external and the letter are preferred to the inward and the spiritual. O my dear hearers, escape from this error; be not so eager for the shell, as to lose the kernel; so zealous for the form of godliness, as to deny the power thereof!

What was the reason why these zealous Israelites did not attain to righteousness? *They went upon a wrong principle*. The principle of these Israelites was that of works. They said within themselves, "We must keep the law, and in that way we shall be saved." In this way no man was ever saved, nor ever will be. Listen diligently to what I now say. The principle of salvation by our own works *exalts man,* and you may be sure that it must be an error for that reason. On that principle you are your own Savior. Everything hinges upon what *you* do and what *you* feel and Jesus Christ is nowhere. If you were to get to heaven by this road, you would sing to your own praise and glory. This system puffs you up, and makes you feel what an important person you are to deserve so well of God. It smells of that pride which the Lord abhors.

While it thus lifts man up, *it altogether ignores the great fact that you have sinned already*. Are you going to be saved by your works? What about the past? If I am going to pay my way for the future, this will not discharge my old debts. What have you to say for your former sins and follies? Do you imagine that you can make up for wasted years by using the rest of life as you ought to do? If you do your best in the future you will do no more than you are bound to do; this will not remove your old sins. Why, man, if you could start afresh as a new-born babe, and keep God's law perfectly throughout all time, yet the faults of the past would remain like blots indelible. Sin is sin, and God will punish it, and all your future obedience can be no atonement for it.

Note again, that this principle of salvation by works, while it makes much of man, *makes nothing of God*. It shuts out both His justice and His mercy. Do you really know what you are? You think you are somebody, and can merit something of God, but this is a delusion. I will tell you where you are. You are already convicted of rebellion; you are "condemned already." Nothing that you can do can reverse that condemnation which is already passed upon you, and your only hope lies in the royal prerogative of God, who can grant a free pardon if He pleases to do so. You can never deserve pardon; it must be an act of pure grace. Nothing but the long-suffering of God at this moment keeps you out of hell. Yes, I mean you who think so much of yourselves. I mean you who set yourselves down among the naturally good. I would gladly strip you of your finery, and throw away the false jewelry with which you have decorated yourselves, for a self-righteous man's religion is nothing but a painted pageantry to go to hell in. Oh, how I loathe seeing the plumes and feathers of self-confidence, which are an awful mockery, the lying ensigns of a false hope, flaunted by a soul that is on its way to sure damnation! O presuming souls, may God in His mercy make you see where you are! Let your cry be, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Until

you have taken the sinner's place, you are in a false position, and God will treat you as one of those liars who shall not tarry in His sight.

Moreover, dear friends, the system of salvation by works *is impossible to you*. You cannot perfectly keep the law of God, for you are sold under sin. I remember when I resolved never to sin again. I sinned before I had finished my breakfast. It was all up for that day, so I thought I would begin the next day, and I did, but my failure was repeated. Who can get clean water from a polluted spring? You will never keep the commandment without spot; it is so pure, and you are so impure; it is so spiritual, and you are so earthy. "There is not a just man upon earth that does good and sins not."

But suppose you could outwardly keep the law of God out of a sense of obligation to do so, yet the work is not done unless you yourself are made right with God. Your heart must love God, as well as your hands serve Him. If you only obey Him from fear of hell and hope of heaven, what are you? Nothing but a mere hireling. This is not the filial nature of a child, whose service is all for love. As for myself, I serve God this day with my whole heart, but it is not from fear of hell. My sins are forgiven me, and there is no hell for me. Neither do I serve the Lord because I hope for heaven thereby, but because I love Him who loved me, and gave Himself for me. There is evidence of righteousness in this, but no claim of any. Mere obedience to the Lord, if there were no heart in it, would be a poor affair. We have many servants who regard their work as drudgery, and though they do their duties, they do them with no regard for our interests, but the old-fashioned servants were of another kind. If you have any such, you will prize one of such above a thousand others. They love their master, and they identify themselves with his interests. Old John did not need orders, he was a law to himself; he served from love. When his master one day spoke about their parting, he wanted to know where his master was going, for he had no idea of going himself; he was part and parcel of the household, and was worth his weight in diamonds. You may well say, "I would give my eyes to get such a servant as that." I dare say you would. Our Lord Jesus gave Himself that He might make such servants out of us. Mere work-mongering will never do this; it still leaves the man a self-seeker, a slave working under fear of the lash, with no delight either in his master or in his work. O my hearers, "you must be born-again," or you cannot attain to righteousness, and there is no being born-again on the principle of the works of the law; that must be a gift of grace, and it can only be given into that hand of faith which receives Christ Jesus the Lord.

Once more, *the full development of the unrighteousness of these zealous Israelites came when they stumbled at Christ*. "They stumbled at that stumbling stone." Jesus Christ came among them, and became to them a rock of offense. They seemed to stand upright until then, but when He came among them, down they went into actual rebellion against the Lord and His anointed. Yes, your moralists are the great enemies of the Cross. They do not want atonement; they can hardly endure the doctrine, "Washed in the blood!" They cannot bear the sound of the word; they need no washing. They have kept the law, and what do they lack? Jesus

came to proclaim salvation by grace, but these men spurn the idea of grace. When Jesus told them of a certain creditor who frankly forgave those debtors who had nothing to pay, such parables were worthless to them, for they were not in debt to God, but quite the reverse. The reception of returning prodigals might make a pretty picture, but it had no relation to them. They were not sinners like the publican, and they did not need to be taught, like the Samaritan woman, to look to Jesus for the living water. "He that believes on Me has everlasting life" was not doctrine that they cared to hear. They could see, and needed not to have their eyes opened; they were born free, and were never in bondage to any man; in fact, they were the whole who had no need of a physician. They regarded the mission of Christ as an insult to their virtues, and therefore they crucified Him. Self-righteousness is the enemy of the cross, it does despite to the blood of Jesus, it sets itself up in rivalry with the divine sacrifice, and hence it rejects the gospel, and rails at imputed righteousness. "They followed after the law of righteousness," but Christ, who was righteousness itself, they would have nothing to do with, for their proud self-conceit thought itself above all need of Him.

III. In the last place, I am to come to close-handed fighting. I must deliver A DISCOURSE OF AFFECTION. As I love you, I would have you saved at once. It is the first of May. Londoners in the olden time used to go into the country on the first of May to wash their faces in the dew. Oh, that God would make His heavenly dew to wash your hearts this May morning! Oh, that you may enjoy the perfume of the Plant of renown at this hour! Some Gentiles have attained to righteousness by faith, why should not you? Believe in Jesus, and His righteousness is yours; to you God imputes righteousness without works (Rom 4:6). Why do you not trust my Lord, my bleeding Lord, my risen Lord, my interceding Lord? There is no conceivable reason for doubting Him. Come and rely upon Him, and righteousness is yours. Did I hear you say, "But—"? Away with your buts; others have been just where you now are, and they have believed in Jesus, and have attained to righteousness, and why should not you? Try it. Believe, I pray you, and God's righteousness is yours. Why should you not believe? Do I hear you say, "I cannot feel"? Did I say anything about feeling? Salvation by feelings is only another form of salvation by works, and it is not to be thought of. Salvation is by Jesus Christ, and it is received by faith alone. It is bestowed as a free gift, and it must be received as a free gift, or not at all. Trust Jesus to save you, and you are saved; believe Him, and be happy. Take to yourself what is freely presented to you in the gospel. If you can believe, you are saved. I cannot help quoting my Brother Hill's expression the other day; "He that believes on Me hath everlasting life" (John 6:47). You know how he put it; "H.A.T.H. spells *got it."* So it does, it is a curious but a perfectly correct way of spelling it. If you take Christ to yourself, He will never be taken from you. Breathe the air, and the air is yours; receive Christ, and Christ is yours, and you have attained to righteousness.

Next, see why it is that you have failed up to now to find rest. You have been earnest and sincere for a great many years, and you have kept on hearing and reading, and after a fashion, you have even kept on pray-

ing, but all the while you have been on the wrong road. Suppose yonder young man should start with his bicycle to go to Brighton, and he should travel due north; he will never get there. The faster he travels the further he will go from the place. If you follow after righteousness by the works of the law, the more you do the further off you will be from the righteousness of God. It must be so. Hear a parable. Yonder is a river, deep and broad. You imagine that the proper way to cross it is to wade or swim through it. You will not hear of any other way. The king has built a bridge; it is open free and without toll; the passage is as safe as it is plain. You refuse to be beholden to His Majesty. You mean to get across by your own exertions. Already you are wet and cold, but you mean to persevere. You are nearly up to your neck in the stream, and the current is too strong for you. Come back, O foolish man, come back, and cross the river by the bridge. The way of faith is so safe, so simple, so blessed; do try it! Have you not had enough of self-saving? After years of struggling you are no forwarder, and have no more comfort; quit the struggle, and rest in the Lord Jesus. Give up your self-confiding folly, and confide in the Son of God, the bleeding Substitute for guilty men. May the blessed Spirit sweetly help you now to receive Jesus!

Do you not see, my friend, that in all your selfish trusting you are really fighting against your God? Jesus says, "Trust Me, I will save you," and you reply, "I prefer my own doings." Is not that a great insult to Jesus? Have you not attacked the great Father upon a tender point? May He not appoint His own way of saving you? He has chosen the way of grace through faith. What arrogance to refuse that way! God gives without money and without price, why do you provoke Him with your fancied merits? You are flying in the face of the great God, and therefore your very religion is a sin. Let me justify so strong a charge. Your very good works are evil works, because you are doing them to set aside the gift of God by Jesus Christ. The Lord appoints Jesus to be your righteousness, and you laboriously endeavor to manufacture a righteousness of your own. You reject the sacrifice of Calvary in which you are bidden to trust, and you virtually say that for you it is a needless thing, for you can reach heaven by your own doings and feelings. O sirs, if you could be saved by your own works, and your proud hopes could be fulfilled, then the death of our Lord would be proved to be a gross mistake. What need of the great sacrifice if you can save yourself? The cross is a superfluity if human merit can suffice. There was no need for the Father to put His Son to grief if, after all, men can work out a righteousness of their own. If works can save you, why did Jesus die? Do you see what you are driving at? Do you mean to trample under foot the blood of Jesus? I beseech you, abhor all notion of self-justification. Dash down the idol which would rival your Lord—

"Cast your deadly 'doing' down,
Down, at Jesus' feet;
Stand in Him, in Him alone,
Gloriously complete!"

"Well," says one, "you seem to know the ins and outs of a soul aiming at self-salvation." I do, for I long labored to climb up to heaven upon the treadmill of my own works. At length I grew weary, and gave myself up to

Jesus, that He might bear me there in His own arms. Will you not do the same?

Now, my hearer, it will be an awful thing for you to understand this way of grace, and yet to neglect it. How long am I to preach to some of you? How long am I to wear my heart out in crying, "Come to Jesus; believe in Jesus"? If anybody had said twenty years ago that yonder seatholder would still remain an unconverted man he would have replied "Impossible; I am near to the kingdom; I am almost persuaded, and before long I shall decide." Yes, you are persuaded on Sundays, but you forget it all on Mondays and all because faith is not exercised. You believe in faith, but you do not believe in Jesus. You know that Jesus could save you if you trusted Him, but you do not trust Him. Oh that this moment you would end this delay! To trust in Jesus is described in Scripture as looking. As the man bitten by the serpent looked to the serpent of brass hung high upon the pole, and as he looked healing and life came to him, so if you look to Jesus now you will be saved. I see God's only-begotten Son, who has deigned to become man for our sakes, and to die in our room and place, and from the cross I entreat Him to speak to you. Speak, O my Master! He does speak, and these are His words—"Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." Look, I pray you! Look and live!

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ROMANS 9.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—416, 554, 552.

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THE FRIEND OF GOD
NO. 1962

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 8, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"You, Israel, are My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham My friend."
Isaiah 41:8.

"And he was called the Friend of God."
James 2:23.

ABRAHAM was called the Friend of God because he was so. The title only declares a fact. The Father of the faithful was beyond all men "the Friend of God," and the head of that chosen race of believers whom Jesus calls His friends. The name is rightly given. We read that "whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof," and much more may we be sure that whatsoever name the Spirit of God has given to any man, that is his proper and right name.

James says not only that this was Abraham's name, but that he was called by it. The name does not occur in his life as given in the Book of Genesis, and it has been questioned whether it occurs anywhere else in Holy Scripture, for many have preferred to translate the word in Isaiah and in 2 Chronicles 20:7, as "lover," or, "beloved," rather than "friend." However this may be, it is quite certain that among the Jewish people Abraham was frequently spoken of as "the Friend of God." At this present moment, among the Arabs and other Muslims, the name of Abraham is not often mentioned, but they speak of him as *Khalil Allah,* or the "Friend of God," or more briefly as *El Khalil,* "the Friend." Those tribes which boast of their descent from him through Ishmael, or through the sons of Keturah, greatly reverence the patriarch, and are known to speak of him under the name which the Holy Spirit here ascribes to him. It is a noble title, not to be equaled by all the names of greatness which have been bestowed by princes, even if they should all meet in one. Patents of nobility are mere vanity when laid side by side with this transcendent honor.

I think I hear you say, "Yes, it was indeed a high degree to which Abraham reached; so high that we cannot attain unto it. It would be idle for us to dream of being accounted friends of God." My brethren, I entreat you, think not so. We also may be called friends of God, and the object of this morning's discourse will be to excite in you the desire to know this matchless friendship. Let me read to you the words of our blessed Lord in the fifteenth chapter of John, "You are My friends if you do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant

knows not what his lord does, but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of My Father, I have made known unto you." It is, then, within reach; Jesus Himself invites us to live and act, and be His friends. Surely, none of us will neglect any gracious attainment which lies within the region of the possible. None of us will be content with a scanty measure of grace, when we may have life more abundantly. I trust you are not so foolish as to say, "If I may but get to heaven by the skin of my teeth, I shall not care about what I am on the road." This would be wicked talk, and if you speak thus, I am afraid you will never get to heaven at all. He that is being prepared for glory is always hungry after the largest measure of grace. He who is born of God desires his Father's love while he is yet a child, and has no idea of waiting for it till he comes of age, and enters upon his estate. Let me have as much of heaven, even now, as I can have. Yes, let me now be the friend of God. The other day there landed on the shores of France a boat full of people soaked with rain and saltwater, they had lost all their luggage, and had nothing but what they stood upright in; they were glad, indeed, to have been saved from a wreck. It was well that they landed at all, but when it is my lot again to cross to France, I trust I shall put my foot on shore in a better plight than that. I would prefer to cross the Channel in comfort and land with pleasure. There is all this difference between being "saved so as by fire" and having "an abundant entrance ministered unto us" into the kingdom. Let us enjoy heaven on the road to heaven. Why not? Instead of being fished up as castaways, stranded upon the shores of mercy, let us take our passage on board the well-appointed Liner of Free Grace; let us, if possible, go in the first cabin, enjoying all the comforts of the way, and having fellowship with the great Captain of our Salvation. Why should we think it enough to be mere stowaways? I would stir you up, dear friends, at this time to aspire after the best gifts. Grow in grace! Increase in love to God, and in nearness of access to Him, that the Lord may at this good hour stoop down to us as our great Friend, and then lift us up to be known as His friends.

I have many things to say to you this morning, and therefore, I must speak upon each one with great brevity. I am half afraid that I may be driven to brevity which will render me a little obscure. I ask you first to notice *the title to be wondered at,* "Friend of God." When we have meditated and marveled, I shall then speak to you under a second head—*the title vindicated*—it was a fit and proper title for Abraham, and we can see it to be so. Thirdly, I shall speak of *the title sought after*. May we all win it and wear it! After all this, I shall conclude with a few words upon *the title used for practical purposes*. May the Holy Spirit help me graciously at this hour!

I. First, may we be divinely instructed while we look at the name, "Friend of God," and regard it as A TITLE TO BE WONDERED AT.

Admire and adore *the condescending God* who thus speaks of a man like ourselves, and calls him His friend. The heavens are not pure in His heart, and He charged His angels with folly, and yet He takes a man and sets him apart to be His friend. What is man, O Lord, that You are mind-

ful of him? Or the Son of Man, that You visit him? Who among our sinful race can be worthy of the friendship of Jehovah? Only His grace can make it possible for any man to walk with God in high companionship.

In this case the august Friend displays His pure love, since He has nothing to gain. Surely God does not need friends. You and I *need* friendship, we cannot always lead a self-contained and solitary life; we are refreshed by the companionship, sympathy and advice of a like-minded comrade. We are very foolish if we commit ourselves to a host of acquaintances, but we are wise if we have found a faithful friend and know how to make use of him. Friendship is one of the sweetest joys of life; many spirits might have failed beneath the bitterness of trial if they had not found a friend. No such necessity can be supposed of the all-sufficient God.

We know how sweet it is to mingle the current of our life with that of some choice bosom friend. Can God have a friend? Can He also find it in His heart to unbosom Himself to another? Can the secret of Jehovah be with a frail creature? Does the Holy One desire to commune outside of Himself? It cannot be that He is solitary; He is within Himself a whole, not only of unity, but of tri-personality—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and herein is fellowship enough. Yet, behold, in infinite condescension the Lord deigns to seek the acquaintance of His own creature, the love of a man, the friendship of Abraham. I dare not go so far in speech as my thoughts would lead me; it is certainly a great marvel that the Creator of the heavens and the earth should look to Ur of the Chaldees for a man, and should separate him to Himself, to tutor and train him till He made him His friend—an honor which even the cherubim and seraphim have never reached.

Friendship cannot be all on one side. In this particular instance it is intended that we should know that while God was Abraham's friend, this was not all, but Abraham was God's friend. He received and returned the friendship of God. From one point of view Abraham was always the object of God's pity and mercy, but by His grace the Lord lifted him also into another condition, in which he became the object of the Lord's satisfaction and delight. God gave Abraham His heart, and Abraham gave God his heart. They were knit together in love. To use expressive Scriptural words, the soul of Abraham was bound up in the bundle of life with the Lord, his God. Not only did the Lord speak to Abraham as He did to Moses, "face to face, as a man speaks unto his friend," but He continually treated him as His friend, and communed with him as such—

"Stupendous grace of the Most High!
What has the Lord on worms bestowed,
Called to the council of the sky,
And numbered with the friends of God!"

Friendship creates a measure of equality between the persons concerned. I say not that absolute equality is at all necessary to friendship, for a great king may have a firm friend in one of the least of his subjects, but the tendency is towards an equalizing of the two friends; the one comes down gladly, and the other rises up in sympathy. Friendship begets fellowship, and this bridges over the dividing gulf. There can be no

idea of equality between God the Lord, and man the servant; indeed, it is only as we see our true relation as servants that we can be friends. Did not Jesus say, "You are My friends, if you do whatsoever I command you"? We must keep our place, or we shall not be friends. Yet see how the Lord comes down to Abraham, and communes with him at his table, while He lifts up Abraham to His own state, so that he sees the things of God, yes, even sees with gladness the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. When we say of two men that they are friends, we put them down in the same list, but what condescension on the Lord's part to be on terms of friendship with a man! Again I say, no nobility is comparable to this. Parmenio was a great general, but all his fame in that direction is forgotten in the fact that he was known as the friend of Alexander. He had a great love for Alexander as a man, whereas others only cared for him as a conqueror and a monarch, and Alexander, perceiving this, placed great reliance upon Parmenio. Abraham loved God for God's sake, and followed Him fully, and so the Lord made him His *confidant,* and found pleasure in manifesting Himself to him, and in trusting to him His sacred oracles. O Lord, how excellent is Your lovingkindness, that You should make a man Your friend!

I want you also to note *the singular excellence of Abraham*. How could he have been God's friend had not grace worked wonderfully in him? A man is known through his friends; you cannot help judging a person by his companions. Was it not a great venture for God to call any man His friend? For, we are led to judge the character of God by the character of the man whom He selects to be His friend. Yes, and though a man with like passions with us, and subject to weaknesses which the Holy Spirit has not hesitated to record, yet Abraham was a singularly admirable character. The Spirit of God produced in him a deep sincerity, a firm principle, and a noble bearing. Although a plain man, dwelling in tents, the Father of the Faithful is always a right royal personage. A calm dignity surrounds him, and the sons of Heth and the kings of Egypt feel its power. His character is well balanced. He is what is commonly called an all-around man. He walks before God, and is perfect in his generation, so that God is not ashamed to be called his God. I might almost say of Abraham's general life that, like the Lord, he was light, and in him was no darkness at all; of course I only use the expression in the sense intended by our Savior, when He spoke of the whole body being full of light, "having no part dark" (Luke 11:36). Father Abraham is a man fit to be the head of the believing family. His quiet son Isaac is like a valley, above which his father rises like an Alp, in the greater strength of his character. He is equally superior to his notable grandson Jacob, great personality as Jacob is. There is a fuss, and worry, and worldly craft about Jacob, which somewhat beclouds his undoubtedly great faith, but this you do not see in Abraham; he moves majestically along his course, shining like the sun in mid-heaven, before whom even clouds are made into chariots of glory. I say not that Abraham was worthy to be called the Friend of God in the sense of merit, but I do say that the grace of God had made him fit to be a partaker of fellowship with the God of light.

While he was justified by his faith, the Lord's calling him just was also justified by his works. James asks, "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac, his son, upon the altar?" Indeed he was, by this great deed of obedience, proved to be in a right state before God. His justification was justified. God was just, even in a legal sense, in declaring such a man to be righteous, for righteous he evidently was. Oh that the sanctifying Spirit may prove in us the truth of our faith by the holiness of our works!

Follow me while I note some of the points in which this divine friendship showed itself. *The Lord often visited Abraham*. Friends are sure to visit one another. We read, "The word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision." "The Lord appeared unto Abram," and again, "The Lord appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and He sat in the tent door, in the heat of the day." Three mysterious persons came to Abraham, and he entertained them in his tent under the tree, and provided for them a banquet, and himself waited at the table. Was he not honored above all men to entertain God Himself? The Lord sojourned with the patriarch as in a strange land, and heard the prayers and praises of His servant day by day. On the other hand, Abraham was prompt to build an altar unto the Lord, and besides this he had his chosen spot for private communion with God, for we read, "Abraham got up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the Lord." Often did the great Lord and His trustful servant draw near unto each other.

In consequence of these visits of friendship paid to Abraham, *secrets were disclosed*. The Lord informed Abraham as to His design concerning the Canaanites, who were ultimately to be destroyed, but their iniquity was not yet full. He revealed to him the birth of Isaac, and His intent that the covenant blessing should run in the line of the child born according to promise, and when He had determined to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, the Lord said to Himself, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" I suppose it is but a gloss, but Philo quotes this text as from the Septuagint, and puts it thus, "Shall I hide this thing from Abraham My Friend?" The present copies of the Septuagint say, "Abraham, My servant," but the other reading is a very natural one. It was a special proof of divine friendship, that the Lord would not execute judgment till He had heard what the patriarch might say upon it. Abraham, on his part, had no secrets, but laid bare his heart to the inspection of his Divine Friend. Visits were received, and secrets were made known, and thus friendship grew.

More than that, *compacts were entered into*. On certain grand occasions we read, "The Lord made a covenant with Abram." Once with solemn sacrifice a light passed between the divided portions of the victims. At another time it is written that God swore by Himself, saying, "Surely, blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you." The two friends grasped hands, and pledged their faith. Here was a faithful God and faithful Abraham bound in an immovable covenant. God trusted Abraham, for He said, "I know him that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord."

And Abraham knew his God, and trusted Him without suspicion, and thus there was firm friendship between them.

This friendship resulted in *the bestowal of innumerable benefits*. The life of Abraham was rich with mercies. We read, "And Abraham was old, and well stricken in age: and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things." Friends bless their friends, or at least wish they could do so. Abraham's Almighty Friend denied him no good thing. Abraham was rich, but his riches were blessed; we may say of him, "The gold of that land was good." He was singularly favored in all things to which he set his hand. Jacob, comparing himself with his grandfather, said, "Few and evil are the days of your servant," and his life was certainly acted out upon a far lower level than that of the first of the three great fathers of the chosen seed. The Lord is a friend who can never know a limit in blessing His friends. Having loved His own He loves them to the end. To Abraham through the grace of his Divine Friend, difficulties were blessings, trials were blessings, and the sharpest test of all was the most ennobling blessing.

Since Abraham was God's friend, God *accepted his pleading, and was moved by his influence*. Friends ever have an ear for friends. When Abraham pleaded with God for Sodom, the Lord patiently listened to his renewed pleading. How instructive is that story of the patriarch's pleading for Sodom! How humbly he speaks!—"I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, even I that am but dust and ashes." Yet how boldly he pleads! He ventures to say, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" The strain of his pleading is worthy of special note. It was not an intercession for Sodom so much as an expostulation with God—friend with friend. If we were pleading for London we should naturally appeal to God's mercy, but Abraham takes the bolder course of pleading the divine justice. In fact, his plea is not only for Sodom, but for God Himself, "That be far from You to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from You." As much as if he were more earnest to prevent the name of God from being dishonored by what might look like an injustice, than he was even for the saving of the guilty people. This was a bold stroke. He pleaded rather as a friend of God than as a friend of Sodom, and the Lord recognized to the full the force of his friendly appeal. Lot was rescued, and Zoar was spared, in answer to that prayer; just as Ishmael had been endowed with earthly blessings in response to the pleading, "O that Ishmael might live before You!" and just as the household of Abimelech had been healed in answer to Abraham's supplication.

There was also between these friends *a mutual love and delight*. Abraham rejoiced in Jehovah! He was his shield, and his exceedingly great reward, and the Lord Himself delighted to commune with Abraham. The serenity of the patriarch's life was caused by his constant joy in God. I cannot now enter into this choice subject for lack of time.

Observe, however, that this friendship was maintained with *great constancy*. The Lord never forsook Abraham; even when the Patriarch erred, the Lord remembered and rescued him. He did not cast him off in old

age. Until he was laid in the Cave of Machpelah God was his God, yes, and He is his God at this day, for did He not proclaim Himself to Moses as the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob? Abraham lives and God is still his God. Constancy is also seen on the human side of this renowned friendship; Abraham did not turn aside to worship any false God, neither did the Lord turn away from the man of His choice.

More than that, the Lord kept His friendship to Abraham by *favoring his posterity*. That is what our first text tells us. The Lord styled Israel, even rebellious Israel "The seed of Abraham My friend." You know how David sought out the seed of Jonathan, and did them good for Jonathan's sake, even so does the Lord love believers who are the seed of believing Abraham, and He still seeks out the children of Abraham His friend to do them good. In the latter days He shall save the literal Israel; the natural branches of the olive, which for a while have been broken off, shall be grafted in again. God has not forgotten His friendship to their father Abraham, and therefore He will return in love to Abraham's seed, and again be their God.

Thus I have glanced at sufficient facts to cause this title of "The Friend of God" to be wondered at. You have all admired the friendship of Damon and Pythias, behold here a greater marvel—the friendship of the Lord God with Abraham, a friendship in which Abraham gave more than his own life in proof of his fidelity, and the Great God still surpassed Him in faithfulness.

II. And now let us notice THE TITLE VINDICATED. Abraham was the Friend of God in a truthful sense. There was great propriety and fullness of meaning in the name as applied to him.

First, *Abraham's trust in God was implicit*. To show what I mean, I will bring before you the patriarch Job. Now Job was a grand believer; under some aspects he has "attained to the first three," but yet Job had a controversy with God, and found it hard to think that the Lord dealt justly with him. He was able, despite all questions, to say, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him," but he was much tossed about and tumbled up and down in his soul, and those three friends of his suggested no end of doubts. Their philosophy worried him, and Job was not as fully established in the doctrine of divine sovereignty as he might have been. Abraham had no such controversy, "he staggered not." David, too, was sometimes plagued with unbelief, so that he almost came to infidel conclusions. He was perplexed to know how it was that the wicked prospered while he himself was chastened every morning. He descended into the mists of the valley, but Abraham habitually walked the hilltops. Bathing his forehead in the sunlight of Jehovah's love he dwelt beyond all questions and mistrusts. O happy man, to know no skepticisms, but heroically to believe! There is a blessed ignorance which my soul covets. To know is not always gain. Fool that I am, I have too often eaten the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. I wish that I could forget all that has ever been told me which suggests a doubt of my great Lord and His faithful word. I will forget, if I can, all the thoughts of man, for they are vain; I am determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ, and Him

crucified. Abraham possessed that higher knowledge which treads unbelief beneath its feet as unworthy even to be argued down. He was a perfect child towards God, and therefore a complete man. Except you are converted and become as little children you shall in no way enter into friendship with God, for this is God's chief requirement in His friends; that they shall entertain no doubts of Him, but unquestioningly believe Him. Abraham "staggered not at the promise through unbelief," for he knew that what the Lord had promised He was also able to perform.

Next, there was joined to this implicit trust a *practical confidence* as to the accomplishment of everything that God had promised. He went childless for many a day and the temptation came to him, and for a moment prevailed with him, that he must use human means to effect the divine promise, but even then he did not doubt that the promise world be effected. His great mistake showed plainly that he believed the promise would be fulfilled; the fault lay in his interference with the divine method of fulfillment. When he was commanded to slay his son he never doubted that God would keep His promise; he reckoned that God was able to raise up Isaac from the dead, from which he also received him in a figure. Faith is to credit contradictions, and to believe impossibilities, when Jehovah's word is to the front. If you and I can do this, then we can enter into friendship with God, but not otherwise, for distrust is the death of friendship. If the Lord brings a man near to Himself, it is absolutely needful that, at the very least, there should be perfect confidence on the man's part. "He that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." If you think God can lie, you cannot be His friend; you are dividing your interest from the Lord's interest, and committing a breach of friendship, when you distrust. Between man and man confidence may be unduly placed, but towards God you may carry it to the utmost, and know no hesitancy. Believe without limit, and then shall you enjoy fellowship with the Lord.

Next to this, *Abraham's obedience God was unquestioning*. Whatever God bade him do, he did it promptly and thoroughly. When the Lord said to him, "Get you out of your country, and from your kindred, and from your father's house, unto a land that I will show you," he went forth, not knowing where he went. And when the Lord bade him go to the unknown mountain, and offer up his son for a burnt-offering, he rose early in the morning, and through three days of sore travail he journeyed to the place where his faith must be tested. When both moral and parental instincts might have held him back, he went onward, feeling that it was not his to question when once the command was clear. Jehovah's will to him was law. Not everyone even yet has learned that it is God who is the author of all law, and that it is His will which makes a certain course to be right, and the contrary of it to be wrong. He was God's servant and yet His friend, therefore he obeyed as seeing Him that is invisible, and trusting Him whom he could not understand.

Abraham's desire for God's glory was uppermost at all times. He did not what others would have done, because he feared the Lord. I think that Abraham comes out grandly when he had pursued the kings who

had plundered the cities of the plain. He overcame them, and recovered all their spoils. When Melchizedek met him as the priest of the Most High God, Abraham at once gave him tithes of all, but when the king of Sodom proposed that Abraham should keep all salvage that he had taken, and only restore to him the persons who had been captured, it was grand of Abraham not to touch a particle of the prey, but to say, "I will not take from a thread even to a shoe lace, I will not take anything that is yours, lest you should say, I have made Abram rich." He did not want that a petty princeling, or indeed anybody, should boast of enriching Abraham; he trusted solely in his God, and though he had a perfect right to have taken the spoils of war which were his by capture, yet he would not touch them lest the name of his God should be in the least dishonored.

Abraham's communion with God was constant. O happy man, that dwelt on high while men were groveling at his feet! What bliss he knew in those morning communings with God! What peace he felt all day long in the tent and in the plain, since he walked before the Lord, and was perfect towards Him! Whether with the Bedouin or with his own servants, you see the man of God rather than the sheik, and the friend of God rather than the prince. Oh, that you and I may be cleansed to such a pure, holy, and noble life that we, too, may be rightly called the Friends of God!

III. Thirdly, dear friends, you will have patience with me while I stir you up to regard this name as THE TITLE TO BE SOUGHT AFTER. Oh, that we may get to ourselves this good degree, this diploma, as "Friend of God!"

Do you wish to be a friend of God? Well, then, first you must *be fully reconciled to Him*. Of course you cannot remain His enemy and be His friend—that is clear enough. If you are pardoned through the sacrifice of Jesus, if you are justified by His righteousness, if you are regenerated by His Spirit, you are no longer God's enemy, yet that will not entitle you to be called the friend of God. It will entitle you to call God your friend, and your helper, but you must go further than that, if you would be His friend. Love must be created in your heart, gratitude must beget attachment, and attachment must cause delight. You must rejoice in the Lord, and maintain close communion with Him.

To be friends, *we must exercise a mutual choice;* the God who has chosen you must be chosen by you. Most deliberately, heartily, resolutely, undividedly, you must choose God to be your God and your friend. Beloved, there can be no friendship between you and God without your own full consent, or without your ardent desire. What do you say to this? If sin is pardoned, all ground of enmity is gone, but now grace must come in to reign through righteousness unto eternal life, and bring you into a condition of tender love and fervent desire towards the Lord our God.

But you have not gone far enough yet. If we are to be the friends of God, there must be *conformity of heart,* and will, and design, and character to God. Can two walk together except they are agreed? Will God accept as His friend one who despises holiness, who is careless in obedience, who has no interest in the purposes of divine love, no delight in the gospel of Christ? Beloved, the Holy Spirit must make us like God, or else

we cannot be friends of God. We must love Jesus the Son, or we cannot love the Father. We cannot rise to the standard of friends of God if self is our ruling force; God is not selfish, and He is not the friend of the selfish. Unless we love what God loves, and hate what God hates, we cannot be His friends. Our lives must, in the main, run in parallel lines with the life of the gracious, holy, and loving God, or else we shall be walking contrary to Him, and He will walk contrary to us.

If we have got as far as that, then the next thing will surely follow—there must be *a continual communion*. The friend of God must not spend a day without God, and he must undertake no work apart from his God. Oh, to live with God, and in God, and for God, and like God! You cannot be a friend of God if your communion with Him is occasional, fitful, distant, broken. If you only think of Him on Sabbaths or at sacraments, you cannot be His friend. Friends love each other's society; the friend of God must abide in God, and walk with God, and then he shall dwell at ease. What do you say to this? Has the grace of God made your feet like hinds' feet to stand on such high places? He can do it. Let us seek after the blessing.

Brethren, if we are to be the friends of God we must be *copartners with Him*. He gives over to us all that He has, and friendship with God will necessitate that we give to Him all that we have. It has been well said that if God is ours we cannot be poor, because God has all, and we have all in having God. On the other hand, the cause of God should not be poor if we can make it rich, and His work should never be in straits if we can find supplies. If we are indeed the Lord's friends we count His cause our cause, His work our work, and we throw all that we have into a Joint Stock Bank with the Great All-in-all.

Friendship, if it exists, will breed *mutual delight*. I cannot explain to you the joy that God has in His people—we shall know that by and by, but He calls His church His Hephzibah and He says, "My delight is in her." I believe our Lord takes infinite delight in a soul which He has new-created, and which He has fashioned after His own likeness. He was glad to see man at the first, and yet afterwards it repented Him that He had made man, but the Lord is always glad to see the new-created man, and He never repents that He has made him upon the face of the earth. The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him. I am sure if we are God's friends our greatest joy is to draw near to God, even to God our exceeding joy. I have sometimes wished that I had nothing else to do but to dwell with God in prayer, praise, and preaching. If it were not for the thousand worries and cares which come to me in connection with the lesser matters which arise out of the weaknesses of His church and people, what a happy life mine would be! Indeed, I do not complain, but I only mean that holy service in constant fellowship with God is heaven below. Alas! One has to come down from the Mount of the Transfiguration and meet the lunatic child and the quarrelsome scribes at the bottom of the hill. Our delight is in God. "Yes, my own God is He." He is my all in all. Whatever comes from Him is perfumed with myrrh and aloes and cassia. Even His very threats ring like music in the ears of them that love

Him. There is nothing that He does but we will take delight in it. We come at length to love even the rod which He wields. The blows of such a faithful friend are infinitely better than the kisses of our deceitful enemy. The cross which Jesus lays upon us is a light burden, because we delight in Him. The God of love has our love, and He has become the light of our delight. He rejoices over us with singing, and we rejoice before Him with the voice of melody.

But, brothers and sisters, I do not mean to go any further, for we must not tell the secrets of love in the open streets. I see a curtain; a veil shrouding the holy of holies. I dare not lift that veil. Into the most holy place ordinary worshippers cannot come, neither can they look therein till the Lord anoints their eyes and purges their spirits. O Lord, reveal Yourself to the half-opened eyes of Your people. Within that curtain there are choice manifestations, and secret witnesses, and ravishments of supreme delight of which I must not speak, because I feel towards these things as Paul felt concerning that which he saw and heard in Paradise; he said it would be unlawful for a man to utter them. Beloved, may you know these special joys by personal experience, even as he did who is called "Friend of God!"

IV. I have done when I have said a word or two upon the last point, which is THE TITLE TO BE UTILIZED for practical purposes. The practical purposes are just these.

First, *here is a great encouragement to the people of God*. See what possibilities are before you. The other Sabbath morning I tried to say something about the *future* possibilities of saints, since he that was faithful with his pound was made a ruler over ten cities [*The Servants and the Pounds,* Sermon #1969, Volume 33.]. It does not yet appear what we shall be; we have not even the beginning of an idea of what we shall be in the next world if we are found faithful to our Master here, nor what the glory will be that shall transfigure us in the day of the coming of Christ, and during the thousand years of His glorious reign on the earth. But I want you now to notice the prize of your high calling in this life. You may become the friends of God, and may be so manifestly in league with Him that men may call you the friends of God. How few attain to this! Do you know one such person? Let your eyes travel over all the Christian people you know, and tell me how many might be called the friends of God. I know one such man; I will not mention his name. I fear he may not be long on earth, for he is well stricken in age. He is a man who has trusted God, walked with God, and been faithful to God, and has in consequence been greatly honored of God to carry on a vast work of usefulness. I wish I might grow to be like him, but I feel a mere babe in his presence. He is a rare man. Why are there not more such? Because God's arm is shortened? No, but because our iniquities hide Him from us. We might be and we ought to be, such men and women that those who know us at home and in business would discover us to be the friends of Jesus. I would like as a preacher to have it said of me that I maintained the glory of my Lord, and defended the doctrines of His cross, and was the friend of the old gospel while others were gadding after novelties. In some form or oth-

er we should aspire after this heavenly friendship. See the possibility that lies within your reach—and make it a reality at once.

Next, *here is solemn thought for those who would be friends of God.* A man's friend must show himself friendly, and behave with tender care for his friend. A little word from a friend will pain you much more than a fierce slander from an enemy. Remember how the Savior said, "It was not an enemy; then I could have borne it: but it was you, a man My equal, My acquaintance." "The Lord your God is a jealous God," and if He brings any of us so near to Him as to be His friends, then His jealousy burns like coals of juniper that have a most vehement flame. He will save you, brother, despite a thousand imperfections, but He will not call you His friend unless you are exceedingly careful to please Him in all things. Shall we draw back from the honor because of the responsibility? No, we delight in the responsibility; we thirst to be well-pleasing to God. Though our God is a consuming fire, we aspire to dwell in Him. To our new nature this fire is its element. Even now we pray that it may refine us, and consume all our dross and tin. We would gladly be baptized with the fire baptism. We wish nothing to be spared which ought to be consumed, or which can be consumed. We accept friendship with God on His own terms. I tremble while I speak. We are willing to bear anything which will make us one with God. The Spirit of God is the Spirit of judgment and the Spirit of burning; do you know what you ask when you pray to be filled with Him? I trust you will reply, "Be it what it may, I desire to feel that heavenly influence which can make me forever the friend of God."

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
JAMES 2:14-26; JOHN 15:9-17.**

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—220, 770, 811.

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THE SEARCH FOR FAITH
NO. 1963

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 15, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Nevertheless when the Son of man comes, will He find faith on the earth?" Luke 18:8.

IT is absolutely certain that God will hear the prayers of His people. From beneath the altar souls cry unto Him day and night to vindicate the cause of Christ, the cause of truth and righteousness, and to cast down His adversary; these shall be answered speedily. Here on earth, scant though the supplication may be, yet there is a remnant according to the election of grace, which cease not to implore the Almighty God to make bare His arm, and display the majesty of His Word. Though for wise and gracious purposes the answer to those prayers may be delayed, yet it is absolutely certain. Shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He keeps their case long in hand? Assuredly He will, for those prayers are inspired by the Spirit, who knows the mind of God; they are for the glory of God and of His Christ, and they are presented by our great High Priest. Long-suffering keeps back the advent and the judgment for a while, for the Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance, but He will not forever delay the long-expected end. The Lord Jesus Himself gives us this personal assurance, "I tell you that He will avenge them speedily." No doubt remains when Jesus says, "I tell you." The Lord will come, and according to His own reckoning, He will come *quickly*. His reckoning is according to the chronology of heaven, and this, the heirs of heaven ought gladly to accept; it is fit that we keep celestial time even now.

Brethren, let not your hearts fail you as to the ultimate issue of the present conflict. "The Lord shall reign forever and ever. Hallelujah." The idols He shall utterly abolish. Antichrist shall be overthrown; like a millstone cast into the sea, it shall fall and be no more. The heathen shall be our Lord's inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth shall be His possession. He must reign until all enemies shall be put under His feet. If the present contest should be continued century after century, be not weary. It is only long to your impatience; it is a short work to God. So grand a volume of the book as this, which contains the history of redemption, may well require a long time for its unrolling, and to such poor readers as we are the spelling of it out word by word may seem an endless task, but we shall yet come to its close, and then we shall find that, like the Book of Psalms, it ends in hallelujahs.

The matter to be questioned is not what God will do, but what men will do. Faithfulness is established in the very heavens, but what of faith-

fulness upon the earth? The part that God allots to us is that we believe His word, for so shall we be established. It is the child's part to trust his father; it is the disciple's part to accept the teaching of his Master. Alas! How little there is of it at this moment! Knowing the feebleness of the faith of those around Him, and foreseeing that future generations would partake of the same folly, the Savior gave utterance to this memorable question, "When the Son of man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?" God is faithful, but are men faithful? God is true, but do we believe Him? This is the point, and it is upon this that I shall speak this morning as the Holy Spirit shall help me.

I. I notice with regard to our text, first, that IT IS REMARKABLE IF WE CONSIDER THE PERSON MENTIONED AS SEARCHING FOR FAITH, "When the Son of man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?"

When Jesus comes He will look for precious faith. He has more regard for faith than for all else that earth can yield Him. Our returning Lord will care nothing for the treasures of the rich or the honors of the great. He will not look for the abilities we have manifested, or the influence we have acquired, but He will look for our faith. It is His glory that He is "believed on in the world," and to that He will have respect. This is the jewel for which He is searching. This heavenly merchantman counts faith to be the pearl of great price—faith is precious to Jesus as well as to us. The last day will be occupied with a great scrutiny, and that scrutiny will be made upon the essential point—where is there faith, and where is there no faith? He that believes is saved; he that believes not is condemned. A search warrant will be issued for our houses and our hearts, and the inquiry will be: Where is your faith? Did you honor Christ by trusting His word and His blood, or did you not? Did you glorify God by believing His revelation and depending upon His promise, or did you not? The fact that our Lord, at His coming, will seek for faith should cause us to think very highly of faith. It is no mere act of the intellect, it is a grace of the Holy Spirit which brings glory to God and produces obedience in the heart. Jesus looks for it because He is the proper object of it, and it is by means of it that His great end in His first advent is carried out. Dear hearers, conceive for a minute that our Savior is searching for faith now. "His eyes behold, His eyelids try, the children of men." This is the gold He seeks after amid the quartz of our humanity. This is the objective of His royal quest—"Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ?"

When our Lord comes and looks for faith, *He will do so in His most sympathetic character.* Our text asks not, "When the Son of *God* comes," but "When *the Son of man* comes, will He find faith on the earth?" It is peculiarly as the Son of man that Jesus will sit as a refiner to discover whether we have true faith or not. He also as the Son of man displayed faith in God. In the Epistle to the Hebrews it is mentioned as one of the points in which He is made like unto His brethren, that He said, "I will put My trust in Him." The life of Jesus was a life of faith—faith which cried, "My God, My God," even when He was forsaken. His was, on a grander scale than ours, the battle of faith in the great Father, waged against all the rebellions influences which were in array against Him. He knows what fierce temptations men experience, for He has felt the same.

He knows how want tries the faithful, and what faith is needed to be able to say, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God shall man live." He knows how elevation tests the soul, for He once stood on the pinnacle of the temple, and heard the infernal whisper, "Cast Yourself down: for He shall give His angels charge over You." He knows what faith means in contradistinction to a false confidence which misreads the promise, and forgets the precept altogether. He will not err in judgment, and accept brass for gold. He knows what it is to be tempted with the proffer of honor and gain, "All these things will I give You," said the fiend, "if You will fall down and worship me." He knows how faith puts all the glory of the world away with its one brave and prompt utterance, "Get you hence, Satan: for it is written, You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve." Beloved, when Jesus comes as the Son of man He will recognize our weaknesses, He will remember our trials, He will know the struggle of our hearts, and the sorrow which an honest faith has cost us. He is best qualified to put the true price upon tried faith, self-denying faith, and long-enduring faith. He will discern between the men who presume and the men who believe; the men who dote upon vain delusions, and those who follow the plain path of God's own word.

Further, I would have you note well that *the Son of man is the most likely person to discover faith if it is to be found*. Not a grain of faith exists in all the world except that which He has Himself created. If you have faith, my brother, the Lord has dealt with you; this is the mark of His hand upon you. By faith He has brought you out of your death in sin, and the natural darkness of your mind. "Your faith has saved you," for it is the candlestick which holds the candle by which the chamber of your heart is enlightened. Your God and Savior has put this faith in you. Now, if faith in every instance is our Lord's gift, He knows where He has given it. If it is the work of God, He knows where He has produced it, for He never forsakes the work of His own hands. If that faith is only as a grain of mustard seed, and if it is hidden away in the most obscure corner of the earth, yet the loving Jesus spies it out, for He has an intimate concern in it, since He is its author and finisher. Our Lord is also the sustainer of faith, for faith is never independent of Him upon whom it relies. The greatest believer would not believe for another moment unless grace was constantly given him to keep the flame of faith burning. Beloved friend, if you have had any experience of the inner life at all, you know that He that first made you live, must keep you alive, or else you will go back to your natural death. Since faith from day to day feeds at the table of Jesus, then *He* knows where it is. It is well for us that we have one looking for faith that, on account of His having created and sustained it, will be at no loss to discern it.

Besides, *faith always looks to Christ*. There is no faith in the world worth having, but what looks to Him, and through Him to God, for everything. On the other hand, Christ always looks to faith, there was never yet an eye of faith but what it met the eye of Christ. He delights in faith, it is His joy to be trusted; it is a great part of the reward of His death that the sons of men should come and shelter in Him. If faith looks to Christ,

and Christ looks to faith, He is sure to find it out when He comes, and that makes the text so very striking, "When the Son of man comes, shall *He* find faith on the earth?"

The Son of man will give a wise and generous judgment in the matter. Some brethren judge so harshly that they would tread out the sparks of faith, but it is never so with our gracious Lord, He does not quench the smoking flax, nor despise the most trembling faith. The question becomes most emphatic when it is put thus. The tender and gentle Savior, who never judges too severely, when He comes, shall even He find faith on the earth? What a sad and humbling question it is! He who is no morose critic but a kind interpreter of character, He who makes great allowances for feebleness, He that carries the lambs of faith in His bosom and gently leads the weak ones—when even He shall come to make a kindly search, will He be able to find faith on the earth? Unbelief is rampant indeed, when He who is omniscient can scarcely find a grain of faith amid the mass of doubt and denial! Ah me! That ever I should have to explain the question, "When the Son of man comes shall He find faith on the earth?"

Once more, I want to put this question into a striking light by dwelling on *the time of the scrutiny*. "When the Son of man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?" Look, brethren, the ages are accumulating proofs of the truth of Christianity, and the search takes place when this process has reached its climax. Whatever may be said about the present torrent of doubt, which no doubt is exceedingly strong, yet the reason for doubt grows weaker and weaker every year. Every mound of earth in the East contributes a fresh testimony to the accuracy of the Word of God. Stones are crying out against the incredulity of skeptics. Moreover, all the experiences of all the saints, year after year, are swelling the stream of testimony to the faithfulness of God. You that are growing grey in His service know how every year confirms your confidence in the eternal verities of your God and Savior. I know not how long this dispensation of long-suffering will last, but certainly the longer it continues the more wantonly wicked does unbelief become. The more God reveals Himself to man in ways of providence, the more base is it on man's part to belie His solemn witness. But yet, my brethren, at the winding up of all things, when revelation shall have received its utmost confirmation, even then faith will be such a rarity on the earth that it is a question if the Lord Himself will find it. You have, perhaps, a notion that faith will go on increasing in the world, that the church will grow purer and brighter, and that there will be a wonderful degree of faith among men in the day of our Lord's appearing. Our Savior does not tell us so, but He puts the question of our text about it. Even concerning the dawn of the golden age He asks, "When the Son of man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?"

I want you to notice *the breadth of the region of search*. He does not say; shall He find faith among philosophers. When had they any? He does not confine His scrutiny to an ordained ministry or a visible church, but He takes a wider sweep—"Shall He find faith *on the earth?"* As if He would search from throne to cottage, among the learned and among the ignorant, among public men and obscure individuals, and after all, it

would be a question whether among them all, from the pole to the equator, and again from the equator to the other pole, He would find faith at all. Alas, poor earth, to be so void of faith! Is there none in her vast continents, or on the lone islets of the sea? May it not be found in some of the countless ships upon the deep? What! Not upon the earth? Not with Jesus Himself to look for it?

I have tried to set forth the question as distinctly as I can, that it may have due effect upon your minds. It sounds through the chambers of my soul like the knell of many a merry hope and pleasant imagination. Lord, what is man, that centuries of mercy can scarcely produce a single fruit of faith among a whole world of the sons of Adam? When thousands of summers and autumns have come and gone, shall there be no harvest of faith upon the earth, except a few ears of corn, thin and withered by the east wind?

II. Let us somewhat change the run of our thoughts. Having introduced the question as a remarkable one, we will next notice that IT IS EXCEEDINGLY INSTRUCTIVE IN CONNECTION WITH THE PARABLE OF WHICH IT IS PART. It is wrong to use the Bible as if it were a box full of separate links, and not a chain of connected truth. Some pick sentences out of it as a crow picks worms out of a plowed field. If you tear words from their connection, they may not express the mind of the Spirit at all. No book, whether written by God or man, will bear to be torn limb from limb without being horribly mutilated. Public speakers know the unfairness of this to themselves, and Holy Scripture suffers even more. The connection settles the drift and directs us to the true meaning—a meaning which may be very different from that which it seems to bear when torn from its surroundings. Let us carefully note that this passage occurs in connection with the parable of the importunate widow pleading with the unjust judge, for it is to be interpreted in connection with it.

Hence it means, first of all: When the Son of man comes, shall He find upon the earth *the faith which prays importunately,* as this widow did? Now the meaning is dawning upon us. We have many upon the earth that pray, but where are those whose continual praying is sure to prevail? I thank God that the prayer meetings of this church are well sustained by praying men and women, but where are the Jacob-like wrestlers? I am afraid it cannot even be said of many churches that their prayer meetings are at all what they should be, for among many the gathering for prayer is despised and men say, "It is only a prayer meeting!" As if that were not the very crown and queen of all the assemblies of the church, with the sole exception of that for the breaking of bread. Brethren, I will not judge with severity, but where are those who offer effectual, fervent, much-prevailing prayer? I know that there are many here who do not neglect private and family devotion, and who pray constantly for the prosperity of the Church of Jesus Christ, and for the salvation of souls. But even to you I put the question: If the Son of man were now to come, how many would He find among us that pray with a distinct, vehement, irresistible importunity of faith? In the olden days, there was a John Knox, whose prayers were more terrible to the adversary than whole armies, because he pleaded in faith, but where shall we

find a Knox at this hour? Every age of revival has had its men mighty in prayer—where are ours? Where is the Elijah on the top of Carmel who will bring down the rain upon these parched fields? Where is the church that will pray down a Pentecost? I will not decry my brethren in the ministry, nor speak little of deacons and elders, and other distinguished servants of my Lord, but still, my brothers and sisters, taking us all round, how few of us know what it is to pray the heaven-overcoming prayer which is needful for this crisis! How few of us go again, and again, and again to God, with tears, and cries, and heartbreak, pleading as for our own lives for the increase of Zion, and the saving of the ungodly! If the Son of man comes, will He find much of such praying faith among our own churches? Ah me! That I should have to ask such a question, but I do ask it, hanging my head for shame.

The importunate widow waited with strong resolve, and never ceased through sullen doubt. If the judge had not yet heard her, she was sure he must hear her, for she had made up her mind that she would plead until he did. A waiting faith is rare. Men can believe for a time, but to hold out through the long darkness is another matter. Some soldiers are good at a rush, but they cannot form a square, and stand fast hour after hour. When the Son of man comes, will He find many who can believe in a delaying God, and plead a long-dated promise—waiting, but never wearying? When we have a revival, and everybody is crying "Hosanna!" certain eager folk are sure to be in the front, but when the popular voice growls out its "Crucify Him!" where are they? Where are even Peter, and John, and the rest of the disciples? Go, learn to plead on when no answer comes, and to press on when repulsed; this is the test of faith. It is so easy to be a believer when everybody believes, but to be a believer when nobody believes, and to be none the less a firm believer because nobody believes with you, this is the mark of the man valiant for the truth, and loyal to Jesus. Brethren, is it, after all, a matter of counting heads? Can you not dare to be in the right with two or three? Can you not be like rocks which defy the raging waves? Can you not let the billows of popular misbelief wash over you, and break and crash, and break and crash in vain? If these things move you, where is your faith? When the Son of man comes, how many will He find on the earth whose faith stands not in men, but in the witness of God?

The widow staked her all upon the result of her pleading with the judge. She had not two strings to her bow, she had but one resort in her trouble; the judge must hear her. She would lose her little property, and her children would die of starvation, if he did not hear her. He must hear her, about that she had no two opinions. What we need at the present moment is the man that believes God, and believes the gospel, and believes Christ, and does not care two pins about anything else. We need those who will stake reputation, hope, and life itself upon the veracity of God and the certainty of the everlasting gospel. To such the revelation of God is not one among many truths; it is the one and only saving truth. Alas! We have nowadays to deal with foxes with holes to run to in case they are too closely hunted. Oh, to have done with all glory but glorying in the cross! For my part, I am content to be a fool if the old gospel is fol-

ly. What is more, I am content to be lost if faith in the atoning sacrifice will not bring salvation. I am so sure about the whole matter, that if I were left alone in the world as the last believer in the doctrines of grace, I would not think of abandoning them, or even toning them down to win a convert. My all is staked on the veracity of God, "Let God be true, but every man a liar."

"When the Son of man comes, shall He find faith on the earth," such as He deserves at our hands? Do we believe in Jesus practically, in matter-of-fact style? Is our faith fact, and not fiction? If we have the truth of faith, have we the degree of faith which we might have? Just think of this, "If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove." What does this mean? Brethren, are we not off the rails? Do we even know what faith means? I begin sometimes to question whether we believe at all. What signs follow our believing? When we think what wonders faith could have done, when we consider what marvels our Lord might have worked among us if it had not been for our unbelief, are we not humiliated? Have we ever cut ourselves clear of the hamper of self-trustfulness? Have we ever launched out into the deep in clear reliance upon the eternal God? Have we ever quit the visible for the invisible? Have we clung to the naked promise of God and rested upon the bare arm of omnipotence, which in, and of itself, is more than sufficient for the fulfillment of every promise? O Lord, where are we? Where shall we find an oasis of faith amid this wilderness of doubt? Where shall we find an Abraham? Is not the question an instructive one when set in connection with the parable which teaches us the power of importunate prayer?

III. In the next place, our text seems to me to be SUGGESTIVE IN VIEW OF ITS VERY FORM. It is put as a question, "When the Son of man comes shall He find faith on the earth?" I think it warns us *not to dogmatize about what the latter days will be*. Jesus puts it as a question. Shall He find faith on the earth? If you say, "No," my dear friend, I shall be very much inclined to take the other side, and warmly plead the affirmative. I remember how Elijah said that he only was left, and yet the Lord had reserved unto Himself seven thousand men that had not bowed the knee to Baal. Nations that know not Christ shall run to Him, and the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. I venture to hope that when the Son of man comes He will find faith on the earth, but if you vehemently assert that it will be so, I shall be driven to advance the negative side with much apprehension that it may prove true. When our Lord was here before, He found little enough of faith, and He has distinctly told us that when He shall come the second time, men will be as they were in the days of Noah, "they did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark." I am inclined to take neither side. Let it remain a question, as our Lord has put it.

This question leads us to much holy fear as to the matter of faith. If our gracious Lord raises the question, the question ought to be raised. They say that some of us are old fogies, because we are jealous for the Lord of hosts. They say that we are nervous and fidgety, and that our fears are the result of advancing age. Yes, at fifty three I am supposed to be semi-

imbecile with years. If I were of their way of thinking, I do not suppose that this would occur to them. We fall into pessimism—I think that is the word they use; I do not know much about such terms. Surely the Savior was not nervous. None will dare to accuse Him of foolish anxiety, but yet He puts it, "When the Son of man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?" As far as my observation goes, it is a question which might suggest itself to the most hopeful persons at this time, for *many processes are in vigorous action with tend to destroy faith*. The Scriptures are being criticized with a familiarity which shocks all reverence, and their very foundation is being assailed by persons who call themselves Christians. A chilling criticism has taken the place of a warm, childlike, loving confidence. As one has truly said, "We have now a temple without a sanctuary." Mystery is discarded that reason may reign. Men have eaten of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil till they think themselves gods. Revealed truth is not now a doctrine to be believed, but a proposition to be discussed. The loving woman at Jesus' feet is cast out to make room for the traitor kissing Christ's cheek. Like Belshazzar, our men of modern thought are drinking out of the vessels of Jehovah's sanctuary in honor of their own deities. The idea of child-like faith is disdained, and he is regarded as the most honest man that can doubt the most, and pour most contempt upon the authority of the divine word. If this continues we may well say, "When the Son of man comes shall He find faith on the earth?" In some places the greatest fountain of infidelity is the Christian pulpit. If this is the case—and I am sure it is so—what must become of the churches and what must come to the outlying world? Will Jesus find faith in the earth when He comes?

In addition to many processes which are in action to exterminate faith, *are there not influences which dwarf and stunt it?* Where do you find great faith? Where is the preaching or the teaching that is done in full faith in what is preached and taught? It is no use flogging other people; let us come home to ourselves. My brothers and sisters, where is our own faith? It seemed almost a novelty in the church when it was stated long ago that Mr. George Mueller walked by faith in regard to temporal things. To feed children by faith in God was looked upon as a pious freak. We have come to a pretty pass, have we not, when God is not to be trusted about common things? Abraham walked with God about daily life, but nowadays, if you meet with a man who walks with God as to his business, trusts God as to every item and detail of his domestic affairs, persons look at him with a degree of suspicious wonder. They think he has grace in his heart, but they also suspect that he has a bee in his bonnet, or he would not act in that sort of way. Oh yes, we have a fancied faith, but when it comes to the stern realities of life where is our faith?

My brethren, why are you so full of worldly care? Why are you so anxious, if you have faith in God? Why do you display in worldly things almost as much distrust as worldly men? From what comes this fear? This murmuring? This worry? O my Savior, if You were to come, we could not defend ourselves for our wretched mistrust, our foolish apprehension, our lack of loving reliance upon You. We do not trust You as You ought

to be trusted, and if this is the case among those who are such great debtors to Your loving faithfulness, where will You find faith on earth? Where is that unstaggering faith which betakes itself to prevailing prayer, and so rises above the petty miseries of the hour, and the fears of a threatening future?

Do you not think that this, put in a question as it is, *invites us to intense watchfulness over ourselves?* Do you not think it should set us scrutinizing ourselves as our Lord will scrutinize us when He comes? You have been looking for a great many things in yourself, my brother; let me entreat you to look to your faith. What if love grows cold! I am sorry for it, but after all, the frost must have begun in your faith. You are not as active as you used to be, that is to be greatly regretted, but the streams run low because the wellhead is not as full as it was known to be; your faith is failing. Oh that your soul were fed upon divine realities! Oh that you had a vivid consciousness of the certainty of God's presence and power! When faith is strong, all the other graces are vigorous. The branches flourish when the root sucks up abundant nutriment, and when faith is in a healthy state, all the rest of the spiritual man will be vigorous also. Brethren, guard well your faith. My fear is that when Christ comes, if He delays much longer, He will find many of us faint because of our long waiting, and because of the disappointments which arise out of the slow spread of the gospel. The nations continue in unbelief. O Lord, how long! Because we have not accomplished all that we hoped to have done, we are apt to grow weary. Or perhaps when He comes He will find us sleeping for sorrow, like the disciples in the garden when He came to them three times and found them very heavy. We may get to feel so sad that the gospel does not conquer all mankind, that we may fall into a swoon of sadness, torpor of despair, and so be asleep when the Bridegroom comes. I fear most of all, that when Jesus comes He may find that the love of many has waxed cold because iniquity abounds. Warm-hearted saints keep each other warm, but cold also is contagious. When sin abounds saints may be able to stand against it, and yet it has a sad tendency to chill their faith. If the Master comes and finds us lukewarm, it will be a calamity indeed. The question stirs a bitter anguish in my soul. I trust it moves you also.

It is a question. I cannot answer it, but I open wide the doors of my heart to let it enter and try me. It acts like a fan in the Lord's hand to purge the floor. It sweeps away my self-confidence and leads me to watch and pray that I enter not into the temptation of giving up my faith. I pray that we may stand fast when others slide, so that when the Lord comes we may be found accepted of Him.

IV. I will close with this remark; my text is very IMPRESSIVE IN RESPECT TO PERSONAL DUTY. "When the Son of man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?" Let faith have a home in *our* hearts, if it is denied a lodging everywhere else. If *we* do not trust our Lord, and trust Him much more than we have ever done, we shall deserve His gravest displeasure. It will be a superfluity of naughtiness for us to doubt, for to some of us conversion was a clear, sharp, and distinct fact. The change made in our characters was so manifest that the devil himself could not make us

doubt it. We know that the misery we suffered under a sense of sin was no fiction, and that the peace we received through faith in Jesus was no dream. Why do we doubt? Since conversion some of us have been led in a strange way, and every step of it has shown us that the Lord is good and true, and ought to be trusted without stint. We have been sorely sick, and full of pain, and anguish, and depression of spirit, and yet we have been upheld, and sustained, and brought through. In great labors we have been strengthened, in great undertakings we have been supported. Some of you have been very poor, or your business has been declining, and emergencies have been frequent, and yet all these have proved the truth of God. Do not these things make it the more incumbent upon you to trust Him? Others of you have suffered sad bereavements, you have lost, one after another, the props of your comfort, but when you have gone to God He has heard your prayers, and been better to you than father, husband, or friend. It is down in your diary in black and white that His mercy endures forever, and you have said to yourself many times, "I shall never doubt again after this." Brethren, to us it ought to be impossible to mistrust, and natural to confide, and yet I fear it is not so. If after all this watering we grow so little faith, we may not wonder that our Lord said, "When the Son of man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?"

Some of us have been so familiar with dying beds, we have seen so many pass away in holy calm, and even with transporting triumph, that for us to doubt is disrespect to the memories of the saints. For us to doubt would be treachery to the Lord who has favored ourselves also with visits of His love. We may doubt the dearest ones we have, and that would be cruel, but we had better do that than cast any suspicion upon Him who has manifested Himself to us as He does not to the world. I speak not to you all, but I speak to those whom the Lord has specially favored, to whom He has revealed His secrets, and made known His covenant, for these to question His faithfulness is wickedness. What shall I say of His own elect, if they do not believe Him? If it were possible for you to quit your faith, you would crucify your Lord afresh. He must not be thus wounded in the house of His friends. No, go where you will, O unbelief, you shall not find willing lodgment in my heart. From my spirit you shall be banished as a detested traitor, for my Beloved is true, and I will lean upon Him.

I think I hear you say, "We are resolved upon it; we are called to have faith in our Lord, even if none else believe Him." Then look to it that you do not fail in these evil times. If you would keep your faith, settle it in your minds that the Holy Scriptures are inspired of the Holy Spirit, and so are our infallible rule of faith. If you give up that foundation you cannot exhibit faith worthy of the name. It is as clear as the sun in the heavens that a childlike faith in God as He is revealed is not possible to the man who doubts the revelation. You must accept the revelation as infallible, or you cannot unquestioningly believe in the God therein revealed. If you once give up inspiration, the foundations are removed, and all building is laborious trifling. How are the promises the support of faith if they are questionable? God can only be known by His own light, and if

we cannot trust the light, where are we? Next, settle it in your soul as to the Holy Spirit's dealings with yourself. He has renewed you in the spirit of your mind. At least, I ask the question—Has He or has He not? You were converted by a divine agency from your lost estate of sin, and brought by the same divine agency, into newness of life; were you or were you not? Unless you are quite certain about this, it is not possible for you to rise to any height of faith. You must know that God has come into contact with your soul, or else what have you to believe? Next to that belief, you must know your full pardon and sure justification through the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ your Lord. Believe in the precious blood; whatever else you doubt, believe in the merit of the great sacrifice of Calvary. Rejoice in your own acceptance through the sacrifice, seeing your whole faith rests therein. O brothers, our eternal hopes cannot be built on speculation; we need the revelation. We cannot fight the battles of life with probabilities; we need certainties for such a conflict. If God has not revealed fixed truth, you may go and think and dream, but if He has given us a clear revelation, let us believe it, and cease to imagine and invent. O sirs, if you must speculate, risk your silver and your gold, but I beseech you to lay aside all idea of speculating in reference to your souls. I want absolute certainties and unquestionable verities to bear me up when death's cold flood is rising up to my loins. Divine truths, as they are written in the Book, and brought home to the heart by the Holy Spirit, are sure standing ground for that faith which Jesus looks for. He looks for it in vain when men no longer accept His work as undoubted fact. Again, if you would have strong faith, never relax your confidence in the efficacy of prayer. This is essential to my text, for the widow used no other weapon than prayer in her importunity with the judge. She would not have persevered as she did in her pleadings if she had not felt morally certain that in the long run she would prevail. Brethren, believe that God hears your prayers, and that He will answer them. As for me, I do not need any argument to prove the influence of prayer with God. I have tried it, and do try it, till it is no longer an experiment. The man that habitually eats bread knows that he is nourished by it, the man that habitually lives by prayer to God knows that God hears him. It would be absurd to offer him evidence for or against the statement. If a person were to argue with me that there was no sun in the heavens, I am afraid I should laugh outright. If anyone said that he did not believe me to be alive, I do not know in what way I could prove it to him. Would it be lawful to kick him, by way of argument? When a man says, "I do not believe in prayer," I answer, "What if you do not? You are the only loser." That God answers prayer, is a living certainty to me, and I can say no more and no less. If you do not believe in prayer, assuredly the Lord will not find in you the faith of which our text speaks. If you regard it as a pious exercise which refreshes the devout but has no power whatever with God—well then, if all are of your mind, the Son of man will find no faith on the earth. Do not talk about believing, you know nothing of the matter.

If you do believe, believe up to the hilt. Plunge into this sea of holy confidence in God, and you shall find waters to swim in. He that believes

what he believes shall see what he shall see. No man was ever yet found guilty of believing in God too much. Among the high intelligences of heaven, no creature was ever censured for being too credulous when dealing with the word of the Most High. Let us believe implicitly and explicitly. Let us believe without measure and without reserve. Let us hang our all upon the truth of God. Let us aspire also to walk with God in the heavenlies, and become the King's Remembrancers. Let us seek grace to become importunate pleaders of a sort that cannot be denied, since their faith overcomes heaven by prayer. Oh, that I might have in my church many a prevailing Israel! Some here know what it is to be up early in the morning to besiege the throne of grace with all the power of believing prayer. How much I owe to these dear ones, eternity alone will declare! Oh, that we had many more intercessors, who would bear sinners on their hearts day and night, before the Lord, and like their Savior, would never rest till the Lord built up His church! Alas, for the rarity of such conquering faith! I question whether there are not Christian people here who have never heard a certain text which I am about to quote, and I am sure there are others who will shudder when they hear it, "Thus says the Lord, concerning the work of My hands, command you Me." "Surely that cannot be Scripture!" cries one. But it is so. Turn to Isaiah 45:11 and read it both in the Authorized and the Revised Versions. Can a man command the Lord? Yes, to believing men He puts Himself at their call, He bids them command His help, and use it as they will. Oh that we could rise to this! Is there such faith among us? If there is not, may our Lord Jesus, by His Spirit, work it in us for His own glory! Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
LUKE 17:20-37; 18:1-8.**

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—149, 12, 691.

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WHY IS FAITH SO FEEBLE?
NO. 1964

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 22, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And He said unto them, Why are you so fearful?
How is it that you have no faith?"
Mark 4:40.

LAST Lord's-Day morning our music was pitched upon a high key. We sought after great faith in the Master's name [Sermon #1963, Volume 33—*The Search for Faith*]. It struck me that I might, perhaps, have discouraged some of the feebler sort, and that, therefore, it would be fit this morning to follow up that sermon by endeavoring to encourage those of weak faith to exercise it until it becomes stronger, and also to invite those who as yet have no faith to venture in the direction of childlike trust.

With this brief introduction, let us come at once to our subject.

I should not wonder if the disciples considered that they had much faith in Jesus, their Master and Lord. They had been with Him all day listening to His teaching, believing it even when they did not understand it. They had afterwards gathered about Him in private to listen to His fuller explanations, and they were thankful to be favored with those expositions in which their Lord became their private tutor. I do not question that they each one of them esteemed himself a firm believer in Jesus. How could he tolerate a doubt? But, my brethren, we have none of us any idea how scanty our faith really is. When trial comes, the heap from the threshing floor becomes very small beneath the influence of the winnowing fan. After a day of calm service with Jesus a storm came on, and that storm tested their faith, and left so little of it, that Jesus said to them, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?" Remember that we have no more faith at any time than we have in the hour of trial; but all that which will not bear to be tested is mere carnal confidence. Fair-weather faith is no faith; only that is real faith in Jesus Christ which can trust Him when it cannot trace Him, and believe Him when it cannot see Him.

This storm was a special trial to the disciples, because it was so exceedingly severe. They had often been tossed upon that lake before, but this time the elements were moved to an excessive tumult; the winds poured down in all their force and fury. The war of nature raged around their devoted boat. When tribulation is heavier than usual, it is a serious test to faith. When we appear to be tried above the common measure of men, the weak ones are full of trembling, and even the strong fall upon their knees and cry, "Lord, I believe, help You my unbelief."

The storm was the more trying because it came upon them when they were in the path of duty. Their Master had bidden them cross the sea; they were not upon a holiday trip. They had not even followed the suggestion of a brother who had said, "I go a-fishing," but they were steering under their great Captain's orders. They were doing right, and suffering trouble in consequence. This has often perplexed good men. I have heard a believer say, "I prospered more before I was a Christian than I have since. Things went smoothly with me before I knew the Lord. How can these things be? The very fact of my endeavoring to do what is right, and laboring to maintain my integrity, has become the cause of my severest trial." This is no new thing upon the earth. The living child of God will have to swim against the stream. Not without fighting will he win his crown.

Moreover, it was an item which helped to try their faith, that the storm assailed them when Jesus was in the ship. Had the Lord been absent, they could have understood it, but He was in the vessel with them! How could the sea be so boisterous with Christ in the vessel? If I am out of communion with Christ, I can understand why I am chastened, but if I am walking in conscious nearness and fellowship with Him, and I am even then tried and perplexed, how can I account for it? Herein is the test of faith. "Whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives." This we forget, and fancy that trials must mean anger, when, indeed, they may be tokens and tests of love.

It may have seemed to them also, that the storm was very untimely, since there were with Jesus many other little ships, and all those boats were caught in the same storm. We are always anxious for those who come to hear the gospel, lest anything should prejudice them against it. The disciples may have feared that such ill weather would drive away from Christ those hearers who might otherwise have become converts. If they met with a storm so soon after rowing close to Jesus, they might judge Him to be another Jonah, and resolve to give the Galilean preacher a wide berth next time. I know how I like to see fine weather at an open-air service, and a continuance of it till the country people can get home, and I suspect that the disciples felt much the same. They did not wish their Lord to be looked upon as a stormy petrel, or a man of evil omen, and you know that superstition was strong in those days. Had you and I been there, we would have said, "Gracious Lord, let us have a calm, that those who have come to You in their boats may get home in comfort. Cause this wonderful service by the sea to end pleasantly, that the next time You come this way the people may gather in still larger numbers to hear You." Sometimes the strange occasion of the trial makes it harder to bear. Trial is never welcome, but sometimes it is peculiarly disagreeable.

See, my brethren, how these disciples came out of the tempest! They went into the trial well enough, but they were in an evil plight before long. We have seen a bird of glossy plumage, bearing half the colors of the rainbow on its breast, glorifying itself in the sunlight, and we have admired its beauty, but soon the heavens have poured down pitiless showers, and we have seen our brave bird in quite another form. Drip-

ping and draggled, he has sought ignominious shelter. You would hardly have known him to be the same creature, whose crowing challenged all his fellows; truly his glory had departed. Such are we, as a rule, after severe trial. We make a fair show in the flesh till we are tried, and then our feathers cling around us, and we droop and hide away, till our Master has to say to us, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?"

These two questions of the Master we will use this morning with a view to spiritual profit; may the Spirit of God make it so! First, we shall view the text as *the exclamation of pity,* "Why are you so fearful?" Secondly, we shall regard it as *the censure of love,* "How is it that you have no faith?" And thirdly, we shall consider it as *the inquiry of wisdom, "Why* are you so fearful? *How is it* that you have no faith?" May our threefold meditation richly profit us all!

I. We will first use the questions as THE EXCLAMATION OF PITY. The dear Master waking up from His sleep, calm as if it were a bright summer's morning, though it was the dead of night and the midst of a storm, looks upon them with wonder, finding them so strangely different from Himself, and He asks, in all the calmness of His own brave spirit, "Why are you so fearful?" He pitied them, and He pitied them, I think, for several reasons.

First, that *their fears had made them so unlike Himself*. They were His servants, and they should have been as their Master; they were learning of Him, and they should have put in practice the lessons of His example. He was delightfully quiet, and the contagion of His peace ought to have affected them. He was ever restful in Himself, and therefore He gave rest to those who came to Him, yet these were missing the blessing, and so He compassionately cried, "Why are you so fearful?" He marveled not that they were fearful in such a hurricane, but He was sorry that they were *so* fearful as to act as if they had no faith. They were little like Him as yet, although the great design of all His teaching was to make them like Himself. Our blessed Master must often look upon us, dear friends, with much pity, and grieve over us, that after being with Him so long—for some of us are getting grey in His service—we still fall so far short of His glory. We are predestinated to be conformed to His image, but the process is a slow one. After copying His handwriting our own writing is still greatly marred with crooks and turns. Each page of the copybook of life is marred with errors and blots; therefore the great Teacher pities His poor scholars. How is it that we are so fearful when Christ is so calm? Is this our imitation of Jesus? Our doubts, fears, alarms, and mistrusts of God, are these such as a follower of Jesus should exhibit?

He pitied them, next, because *it made them so unlike themselves*. They were men, but their fears unmanned them. They were fishermen, but you would have thought them mere landsmen if you observed their fears. Like frightened children they cried, "Master, care You not that we perish?" They were by no means overly wise, but now they were at their wits' end. When you and I get fearful, how foolishly we think and speak and act! We could have done well enough if faith had steadied us, but unbe-

lief makes us stagger, and reel to and fro. We could have weathered the storm had we not given way upon the point of confidence in God, but failing there, we became weak as water. How are the mighty fallen! Alas, the children of Ephraim, being armed and carrying bows, turn back in the day of battle! Those who once were patterns of courage become cowards when faith fails. Fathers in Israel act like babes in grace when faith ebbs out! Our Lord is grieved for us when He sees us fall so low that instead of being like Himself, we are not even like ourselves.

Jesus pitied them again, because *their fears made them so unhappy*. Terror was depicted on their countenances. They were white as a sheet when they saw that the boat could not be baled, but was evidently filling, and sinking. What caused their terror? Were they afraid of death? Their fears were causing them more pain than death itself could have cost them. We "feel a thousand deaths in fearing one." To die is nothing compared with fearing to die. All the agony of death lies in the foresight of it; death itself is the end of all agony! Death is not the storm, but the *quietus* of the disturbing elements. Through death souls enter into rest. The apostles were made wretched by their fears. I know some Christian people who suffer greatly from the same cause. I know a man who lives where I live, and stands in this pulpit where I stand, who has to confess his own faults this day, for he might enjoy unbroken peace were it not that in the care and labor of this great church, and all its various agencies, he looks to the difficulties and the necessities of the case, and to his own weakness, and then fears rush in. Beloved, we must not forever be thus childishly timorous. Let us strive after a courageous bearing. Let us crush the eggs of our woes while they lie in the nest of our unbelief. Our sorrows are mostly manufactured at home, beaten out upon the anvil of unbelief with the hammer of our foreboding. The Lord pardon us! Jesus pities us that we should lacerate ourselves by our needless fears, and miss the joy of a restful faith.

Again, the Master felt pity for them because *their fears made them so unkind*. Does unbelief make the timid unkind? I am sure it does. The disciples were ungenerous to their sleeping Master. If they had only considered a little, they would have said, "No, do not wake Him! He has had so weary a day. The cares of the world rest on Him, He is a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, if He can sleep, let Him sleep. Let us sooner suffer than disturb Him." If they must wake Him, might they not have addressed Him in fitter words? To say, "Master, care You not that we perish?" was fretful and wicked. It was enough to wound their Lord's tender heart to be thus spoken to. Our unbelief has a tendency to make *us* unkind also. We are not tender of others when we are disturbed about ourselves.

Here let me digress to teach a lesson of pitying love. It is well to recognize that sour speeches often proceed from a sad heart. It is wise to view ungenerous language as one of the symptoms of disease, and rather pity the sufferer than become irritated with the offensive speech. It is a pity to take much notice of what some sufferers say, for they will be sorry for it soon. If we knew the real reason for many a harsh word, our sympathy

would prevent even momentary anger. Our Lord did overlook the petulance of the apostles, for He did not say, "Why are you so unkind?" But He inquired, "Why are you so fearful?" In every case let us cure unkindness with double love. I heard yesterday of a wise old Welsh minister of a generous spirit, who was afflicted with a horrible deacon, and if a deacon is unkind, he can wound terribly. This deacon was most perverse and cruel, and tormented the old gentleman in all sorts of ways. At last the deacon fell sick, after having said certain dreadful things which were bitterer than even his usual gall and wormwood. The patient pastor soon went to see him, and on the road he bought some of the best oranges, and took them with him. "Brother Jones," he said, "I am sorry you are so ill. I have come to see you, and I have brought you a few oranges." Brother Jones was very much astonished at this kind act, and had not much to say on the matter. The minister gently talked on, and said, "I think it would refresh you to eat one of these. I will peel you one." So he went on with peeling the orange, and talked with him pleasantly. Then he divided the fruit very neatly, and handed the sick man a nice tempting piece in the gentlest possible manner. The bitter-spirited man ate it, and began to melt a little; the conversation became hearty, and the prayer was pleasant. Brother Jones was getting better in more ways than one. An outsider, who knew all about Brother Jones and his ill-humor, could hardly believe that the minister had acted thus to one who had opposed him constantly, and slandered him foully, and so he asked, "Did you really go and see that cruel old Jones?" "Oh yes," he said, "I went to see him; I was bound to do so." "And did you take him some oranges?" "Oh yes, I took him some oranges, I was glad to do so." "And did you sit down by his bedside, and peel him an orange?" "Yes, I peeled him an orange, and I was pleased to see him enjoy it, for I have learned, brother, that when a man is afflicted with a very bad temper, an orange is a good thing for him to take. At any rate, it is a good thing for me to give." The lesson is—if you wish to cure a man of ill-feeling, be very kind to him. View unkind and petulant speeches as symptoms of a disease for which the best medicine is not a dose of bitters, but an orange. Yet, beloved, if you have used such speeches yourself, do not repeat them. Cease from being so fearful, that you may cease from being so ill-humored. Our blessed Master did not find fault with the unkindness of His disciples, but He went to the root of the evil by silencing their fears. He said to them, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?"

Here you perceive our Lord's pity. I wish I could speak the words as He spoke them, and you would wonder at their surprising tenderness.

II. But now, secondly, these words were spoken also as THE CENSURE OF LOVE. They were intended to convey a measure of gentle rebuke to their mistrustful hearts.

Their unbelief was grievous to the Lord Jesus. They ought to have believed Him, and it was an injury to His perfect love that they should so readily mistrust Him, or even mistrust Him at all. How could they think that He would let them sink? He was in the vessel with them, did they suppose that, after all, He was a mere pretender to Deity, and that the

ship would go down with Him on board? Beloved, let us smite upon our breasts to think that we should ever have caused a pang of heart to that dear Lord who yielded up His life for our salvation. He must not be doubted any more, it is wanton cruelty. What if I call it "a superfluity of naughtiness" to doubt Him whose life and death are crowded with infallible proofs of His unchanging love to us?

Our Lord questioned His apostles thus, not only because their unbelief grieved Him, but because *it was most unreasonable*. The most unreasonable thing in the world is to doubt God. Faith is pure reason. That may seem a strange paradox, but it is literally true; nothing is so reasonable as to believe the word of God, who cannot err or lie.

The fears of the tempest-tossed disciples were unreasonable because they were contrary to their own belief. They did believe that Jesus was sent of God upon a glorious mission, how could that mission be accomplished if He was drowned? If they sank in the sea, He must sink, too, for they were embarked in the same boat. Ought not the faith they had in His divine mission to have kept them hopeful even in the worst moment of the storm? My brethren, be not inconsistent with what you do believe. Do not deny your own creed, however slender it may be, for that is irrational.

Moreover, their fears were opposed to their own experience; they had seen their Lord work miracles, and miracles for them, too. They had already beheld abundant proofs of His power and Godhead, and of His care on their behalf. Is not this true of us also? Has the Lord ever failed us? Has He not helped us to this day? Are you going to fly in the teeth of all your past experience? Is all that you have ever believed of God a fiction? Have you been under a gross delusion up to this day? You that are advanced in years, how can you doubt? With so many Ebenezers to look back upon, you ought to rise above all fear.

Their fears were altogether inconsistent with their observation. They had seen Jesus heal the sick and feed the multitudes. I am not quite sure how many of His miracles had already been worked before them, but certainly enough for their observation to compel them to believe that He was able to save them from death. How, then, could they doubt? But have not we, also, seen enough of the finger of God to be confident in the day of trouble? If we believe not, we dare not lay the blame upon the lack of evidence. To mistrust is irrational, because it is contrary to all the experience of our hearts, and the observation of our eyes.

Moreover, their unbelief was contrary to their common sense. Some people make a great deal of common sense, and well they may, for it is the most uncommon of all the senses. Was it reasonable for these men to think that He, who could foresee the future, would take them on board a ship when He foreknew that a storm would wreck them? Would so kind a leader have taken them to sea to drown them? Was it reasonable to think that He who was so favored of God would be left to perish? Would He have gone to sleep if they had really been in danger? Was it reasonable to believe that the King of Israel was about to be drowned, even He whom they knew to be the light of the world? Our unbelief, my brethren, seldom

deserves to be reasoned with. Our fears are often intensely silly, and when we get over them, and ourselves look back upon them, we are full of shame that we should have been so foolish. Our Lord kindly censured their unbelief because it was unreasonable.

In very truth their unbelief deserved censure, because *it sprang from low views of the Lord Jesus*. When they afterwards saw what wonders He worked upon the deep, they said one to another, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him!" Should they not have known that beforehand? If they had remembered it, could they have been so overwhelmed with fear? Oh that we thought more of Jesus! We cannot think too much of Him. If we took Him to be what He really is, if we regarded Him as most truly God, we would rest in Him, and say farewell to suspicions and complaints. If Jesus were greater in our esteem, our lives would be grander far.

Jesus censured His friends because *He foresaw that such unbelief as theirs would make them unfit for their future lives*. That ship was the symbol of the church of Christ, and the crew of the ship was the apostles of Christ. The storm represented in parable the persecutions which the church would have to endure, and they, if they were cast down as cowards in a storm on the paltry lake of Galilee, would be proving themselves altogether unfit for those more tremendous spiritual storms which in later years tossed the church, and mingled earth and hell in dire confusion. Peter and James and John and the rest of them were to steer the ship of the church of God through seas of blood, and to stand at the helm in the midst of hurricanes of error, and therefore fearfulness was a sad evil, because it would render them unfit for their solemn task. Jesus might have said to them, "If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, what will you do when you contend with horses? If these winds and waves have been too much for you, what will you do when you wrestle with principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places? If natural causes destroy your peace, how will spiritual influences distract you?" Brethren, our present trials may be a training ground for more serious conflicts. We do not know what we have yet to endure; the adversities of today are a preparatory school for the higher learning. If we do not play the man now, what shall we do by and by? If because of some little domestic discomfort we are ready to give up, what shall we do in the swellings of Jordan? If a little toil oppresses us, what shall we do when the death sweat trickles from our brow? My Christian brethren, let us attentively hear our Lord as He lovingly rebukes us; let us shake off our fears, and resolve that by His grace we will have no more of them, but will trust, and not be afraid. Oh, for calm hope, and a childlike repose on the love that cannot fail! I have hurried over ground where I might profitably have tarried, because I want to have an earnest word with you upon the third point.

III. We may now regard these words as AN INQUIRY OF WISDOM. It is always good to probe a sorrow to the bottom, if there is any hope of finding out its cause, and putting it away. If you are in fear you may rise above it by removing its cause. If there is clearly no reason for fear, you

will cease to fear, and if there is a cause for fearfulness, you can deal with it. My utterances will be as short as telegrams; please enlarge on them at your leisure.

"How is it that you have no faith?" This is the inquiry.

Is it lack of knowledge? If the disciples had known Jesus better they would have had no fear, but would have exhibited firm faith. Is it so with any of you? Are you badly taught in the gospel? Do you as yet know only half the doctrines? Have you a cloudy view of the covenant of grace, and of the great salvation which is wrapped up in the person of your Lord? If it is so, your quickest way to faith will be to read your Bible more, to study it with greater attention, and to hear the gospel more often. Come out to week-night services, and commune more with Christ in private. Spend three, four, five times the amount of time you now do in devotion, and so draw nearer to your Lord, entreating the Holy Spirit to lead you into all the truth. If you kill your fears and strengthen your faith, you will have invested your time admirably in acquiring more knowledge. Remember the words—"Acquaint yourself with God, and be at peace: for thereby good shall come unto you." Learn more of Jesus, and when you know Him better, the main causes of your fear will be removed.

Next, *is it lack of thought?* Did these good people know and yet forget? Did they fail to consider? Were they superficial in their thinking? Is that the reason why you, also, are so fearful and have so little faith? Are you a skimmer and not a digger? Are you content with the surface soil when nuggets of gold lie just below? Is it so? Do you think too little of the invisible and the eternal? Are your thoughts incessantly occupied with business, and is God thus shut out? Are you always using the muck rake of greed, and never using the telescope of faith? Are the abiding treasures covered up and buried amidst the seeming and shadowy things of time and sense? If so, mend your ways, my brethren. Mend them at once. Have more thought, more prayer—much more prayer, more praise—much more praise, more meditation, more calm investigation of your own heart, and more acquaintance with the things of God. Do you not think that you often might find the remedy for your fears in the direction of holy intimacy with unseen realities? Be these more true to you and the troubles of this life will sink into their proper places as light afflictions which are but for a moment.

The inquiry as to why we are so fearful may be helped by another question; *is it that our trials take us by surprise?* Perhaps the disciples reckoned that everything must be right, since they had Christ on board. Let us not indulge such a notion. Never let any affliction surprise you, for your Lord has told you, "In the world you shall have tribulation." If your children die, do not be surprised; shall mortal parents bring forth immortal offspring? If your riches disappear, do not be surprised—they always had wings; what wonder if they fly! If any other adversity happens to you, be not surprised, for "man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward." The Lord has told you before it come to pass, that when it is come to pass you may believe. Reckon upon tribulation, and then you will not

be overtaken by surprise or fret as though some strange thing had happened to you.

Why were they so full of fear? *Was it lack of simplicity of confidence?* Did they trust in their good boat, or feel that they were safe because of their seamanship? Perhaps not, but I am sure that we too often mingle reliance upon self, or upon some other arm of flesh, with our reliance upon our Lord. Good, easy men, we whisper to ourselves, "We can manage." Oh, yes, we have had trouble before, and we are persons of experience and shrewdness, and therefore we can see our way. Brethren, we are never as weak as when we feel strongest, and never so foolish as when we dream that we are wise. When you are "up to the mark" you will soon be down to the mark. When our confidence is partly in God and partly in ourselves, our overthrow is not far off. That angel, who stood with one foot upon the sea and the other upon the earth, would have been drowned if he had not been an angel. As you are not an angel, take care that you put both feet upon the *terra firma* of divine strength and truth. If you trust in yourself in the least degree, one link of the chain is too weak to bear you, and it is of no avail that the other links are strong. Is this the reason why you are so fearful, that your faith is alloyed with self-confidence?

Again, *was it absorption in their trial* which led to their excessive fearfulness? If they had described their case, they would, no doubt, have dwelt upon the darkness, the hideous "darkness which might be felt." They would have bidden us listen to the howling of the winds, and their terrific screams, like the neighing of wild horses maddened in fight. Mark how the wind descends in waterfalls from the hills, and forces the boat under water! And this, again, is resented by the sea, which hurls the frail vessel aloft, and tosses it to and fro with watery hands, as though it were a juggler's ball. The storm was very fierce, and the boat was very frail. Look how it is spun round and round in the whirlwind! Suppose we had urged them to be trustful and quiet, might they not have answered that we were not in their case, or we would not find it quite so easy to be calm? "Ah!" says one, "I have a wife and family at home who depend upon my fishing. How can I be calm when I think of them as widow and orphans? A man cannot afford to be drowned who has a household depending on him. It is all very well for you to talk, but you do not know what it is to be drenched to the skin and near to death." Well, brother, perhaps we do not, but this we do know, that when we fix our thoughts solely and alone on the winds and the waves and the wives, and all that, it is then that we are troubled. If we could put the master thought first, it would be different. The thought which covers all is that Jesus is with us. The winds blow, but Jesus is on board! The waves rage, but Jesus is on board! These poor sailors will not perish, for Jesus is on board! If they could have kept this cheering fact to the front, they would have banished their alarms, and like their Lord, they would have been grandly calm Instead of that, their brooding upon the present trial was too much for their faith, and they became childishly fearful.

Have I yet hit the nail on the head? If you have not found out the cause of your fearfulness I must leave you to look for it yourselves, and I trust you may discover it and destroy it at once. We must not continue to be of little faith. We must glorify our Lord by a believing confidence in Him, such as neither storm of sorrow nor tempest of temptation can shake.

I shall conclude by carrying this inquiry into another region for another purpose. In this congregation there are a considerable number of friends who are not yet believers in Jesus Christ, and I want to know from them this morning why they have no faith. I entreat them to help me in the inquiry, Why it is that they are still so fearful, still so undecided? My dear friend, you will need faith soon, for you will have to die. Whether you live in Christ or not, you will have to die, and dying is hard work to those who have no Savior. Perhaps before another Sabbath day you may be in the swellings of Jordan, and what will you do if you have no faith in Christ? Do you say that you desire to have faith? I am glad to hear it, but I should like to press this matter home, and to ascertain whether this desire is earnest, thorough, and hearty.

Do you know what it is that you desire? Are you in earnest to be saved? I do not mean, are you in earnest to escape from hell? That I should think is very likely, if you are in your senses, but are you in earnest to escape from *sin?* Do you want to be saved from the power of evil? Do you desire to be made good, and obedient, and true, and pure in life? If you do, then I would remind you that faith in Jesus is the only way of salvation, and I would press upon you eagerly to desire immediate faith. Yes, I would urge you now to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart.

"I want to believe," you say. Well, then, what is to hinder? If you cannot sit still in your seat, and make yourself believe all at once, yet there are ways to that end. If I were told that the King of Tartary was dead, and it was a matter of interest to me, I do not know whether I should be able to believe it or not, because I do not know anything about the King of Tartary, nor even whether there is such a person. If I wanted to believe the news, I would get the newspaper and read about it, and I dare say I should either believe it or disbelieve it within the next ten minutes. Knowledge and evidence lead up to faith. It is just the same with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith is the gift of God and the work of the Holy Spirit, but it comes to us in a certain manner. Consider a minute. *Consider who the Savior is*. He is God and man. He came down to earth on purpose to save sinners. Do you not think that this Divine Person can save you? Is He not able? Do you not think that this loving Man will receive you? Is He not willing to save? Well, then, trust Him. Next, *consider what Jesus did*. He lived on earth a life of labor and sorrow, and He died on the cross to make atonement for sin. Stand and look at Him as crucified for men. "He His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree." The greatest source of faith is the contemplation of the cross of Christ. Look to His agonies, and say to yourself, "I can believe that by the merit of such a wondrous death, endured by such a person as this, God can

justly forgive sin." Believe, then, for yourself, and see your own sins put away by the death of Christ. Will you also *consider what Jesus Christ is doing now?* He has risen from the dead, He has gone up into heaven; He is making intercession for transgressors—even for such persons as you are. Trust Him, then; trust Jesus because of what He is, what He has done, and what He is doing for sinners. Remember that this is the whole of the business, as far as you are concerned. You are to accept what the Lord Jesus presents to you. Accept Him. Yes, take Him to be your own. Look here. I turn to this friend behind me, and I say, "Will you take my hand?" [The preacher suited the action to the word, and his hand was readily grasped by one of the deacons.] See! He takes it freely. Jesus Christ is as free to every sinner that feels his need of Him as my hand was to my friend. He took my hand at once without question—will you not take Jesus? Take Him now. If you take Him, He is yours forever. Take His hand, and He will not withdraw it from your grasp. Oh that you would cry out, Lord I accept You!

Have you any doubts about the truth of the gospel? If so, I want to know what you think of us who preach to you. Do we deceive you? What do you think of your mother's confidence in Christ—is she also deceived? Those dear friends of yours, who died so happy in the Lord, were they all deceivers or deceived? No. You know that the Word of God is true. Then believe it. Believe it for yourselves, and it will be as true to you as it has been true to us. You cannot, I am sure, deny the Scriptures; you dare not say that the gospel is a forgery; it bears its own proof upon its forefront. Salvation by the substitution of our Lord is so grand an idea that no one could have invented it. It is self-evidently a divine fact. That God can be just, and yet pass by our sins, is a marvel past the conception of men; it could only have come from the heart of God. Believe it, then, accept it as being true, and trust yourself to it. May the Spirit of God lead you so to do!

If you are not believing in Christ, I should like to know why not. Is it that you are believing in yourself? If so, give up such folly. You cannot trust yourself and trust Christ too; away with all notion of such a conjunction. Hang up self-confidence on a gallows high as that whereon Haman was suspended, for it is an abominable thing.

Perhaps it is your great sin that leads you to despair of pardon. There is no occasion for such unbelief, for God is abundant in mercy, and the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. If you have great sin, remember that there is a great Savior. He that came to save us is the Son of God, and He laid down His life for us, and therefore, He can save to the uttermost. Instead of doubting, I pray you to glorify God by believing in the greatness of His salvation. It was a pleasure to me in years past to enjoy the friendship of Mr. Brownlow North. Before conversion he was a thorough man of the world, and I suppose, about as frivolous and dissipated as men of his station and character often are. After his conversion he began to preach the gospel with great fervor, and certain of his old companions were full of spite against him, probably considering him to be a hypocrite. One day when he was about to address a large congregation, a

stranger passed him a letter, saying, "Read this before you preach." The letter contained a statement of certain irregularities of conduct committed by Brownlow North, and it ended with words to this effect, "How dare you, being conscious of the truth of all the above, pray and speak to the people this evening, when you are such a vile sinner?" The preacher put the letter into his pocket, entered the pulpit, and after prayer and praise, commenced his address to a very crowded congregation, but before speaking on his text, he produced the letter, and informed the people of its contents, and then he added, "All that is here said is true, and it is a correct picture of the degraded sinner that I once was, and oh, how wonderful must the grace be that could quicken and raise me up from such a death in trespasses and sins, and make me what I appear before you tonight, a vessel of mercy, one who knows that all his past sins have been cleansed away through the atoning blood of the Lamb of God! It is of His redeeming love that I have now to tell you, and to entreat any here who are not yet reconciled to God, to come this night in faith to Jesus, that He may take their sins away and heal them." Thus, instead of closing the preacher's mouth by this letter, the enemy's attempt only opened the hearts of the people, and the word was with power. Oh that you, my dear hearers, would believe the Lord Jesus to be a real Savior of real sinners, and come to Him with all your sins about you! Do not hope because you think yourselves pure, but come to Jesus because you are impure, and need to be cleansed by Him. Cast yourselves at His dear feet at once. Take The Sinner's Friend to be your friend, because you are a sinner. Let the Savior be your Savior, because you need saving. God bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—MARK 4:21-41.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—917, 683, 555.

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GOD'S THOUGHTS OF PEACE, AND OUR EXPECTED END
NO. 1965

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 29, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." Jeremiah 29:11.

I HAVE already explained to you, while expounding the twenty-fourth and twenty-ninth chapters of this prophet that these words were written by Jeremiah in a letter to the captives in Babylon. A considerable part of the people of Israel was carried away by Nebuchadnezzar into a far country. They were exhorted by the prophet to build houses, form families, and to abide peaceably there till the Lord should lead them back at the end of seventy years. But at that time there was a general uneasy feeling among the Jews and other subjected nations, who did not rest quietly under the iron yoke of Babylon. They were plotting and planning continual rebellions, and certain false prophets in Babylon worked with them, stirring up the spirit of revolt among the exiles. Jeremiah, on the other hand, assured them that they had been sent of God into the land of the Chaldeans for good, bade them seek the peace of the city wherein they now dwelt, and promised them that in due time the Lord would again plant them in their own land.

A people in such a position as the Jews in Babylon were in danger in two ways; either to be buoyed up with false hopes, and so to fall into foolish expectations, or to fall into despair, and have no hope at all, and so become a sullen and degraded race, who would be unfit for restoration, and unable to play the part which God ordained for them in the history of mankind. The prophet had the double duty of putting down their false hopes, and sustaining their right expectations. He, therefore, plainly warned them against expecting more than God had promised and he awakened them to look for the fulfillment of what He had promised. Read the tenth verse, and note that pleasant expression, "and perform My good word unto you." At the present time the church has need of both admonitions. Expectations which are not warranted are being raised in many quarters, and are leading to serious delusions. We hear men crying, "Lo here!" and "Lo there!" This wonder and that marvel are cried up. It would seem that the age of miracles has returned to certain hot heads. Take no heed of all this. Go not beyond the record. On the other hand, we need to be urged to believe our Lord implicitly, and to hold on to His word with a strong, hearty, realizing faith, being assured that while God

will *not* do what we propose to Him, yet He will do what He has promised. False prophets will be left in the lurch, but the word of the Lord will stand.

This morning my desire shall be to comfort any of God's people who are in a state of perplexity, and thus are carried away captive. I would assure them of the Lord's kindness to them, and urge them to trust and not be afraid. God's thoughts towards them are good, though their trials may be grievous.

The text puts me upon two tracks. First, let us *consider the Lord's thoughts towards His people*. "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." Secondly, let us *consider the believer's proper attitude towards his Lord*. What should we think of our gracious God who thus unveils His heart to us?

I. First, then, dear friends, CONSIDER THE LORD'S THOUGHTS TOWARDS HIS PEOPLE.

It is noteworthy, first of all, that *He does think of them, and towards them*. Observe that this Scripture says not, "I know the thoughts that I *have thought* toward you." That would be a happy remembrance, for the thoughts of God concerning His people are more ancient than the everlasting hills. There never was a time when God did not think upon His people for good. He says, "I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you." But the point here brought forward is, that *He still thinks of them*. It would be possible for you to have thought out a plan of kindness towards a friend, and you might have so arranged it that it would henceforth be a natural fountain of good to him without your thinking any more about it, but that is not after the method of God. His eyes and His hands are towards His people continually. It is true He did so think of us that He has arranged everything about us, and provided for every need, and against every danger, but yet He has not ceased to think of us. His infinite mind, whose thoughts are as high above our thoughts as the heavens are above the earth, continues to exercise itself about us. "I am poor and needy," says David, "yet the Lord thinks upon me." We love to be thought of by our friends; indeed, thought enters into the essence of love. Delight yourselves this morning, O you who believe your God, in this heavenly fact, that the Lord thinks upon you at this moment. "The Lord has been mindful of us," and He is still mindful of us.

The Lord not only thinks *of* you, but *towards* you. His thoughts are all drifting your way. This is the way the south wind of His thoughts of peace is moving; it is towards you. The Lord never forgets His own, for He has engraved them upon the palms of His hands. Never at any moment does Jehovah turn His thoughts from His beloved, even though He has the whole universe to rule. He says of His church, "I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day."

This truth, although it is easily spoken, is not readily comprehended in the fullness of its joy, nor is it always believed as it should be. These people in captivity were likely to fear that their God had forgotten them;

hence the Lord repeats His words in this place, and speaks of thoughts and thinking three times. His words are so repeated as to seem almost redundant, out of a desire to make His people feel absolutely sure that not only did He act towards them, but that He still thought towards them. To the banished this would be a grand consolation. The Lord thought of them when they walked the strange streets of "the golden city," and heard a language which they understood not. He thought of them when they were buffeted as aliens by those who marched in the proudest pomp, and danced in cruel derision to the sound of their viols. The Lord thought of His exiles when their sole solace was solitude by the brink of the Babylonian canals, where among the willows they remembered Zion.

All that the Lord was doing towards them was done thoughtfully. His thoughts of peace, and not of evil, towards them, had suggested their captivity and the continuance of it for seventy years. If any of you are in trouble and sorrow today, do not doubt that this is sent you according to the thoughtful purpose of the Lord. It is in this fixed intent and thoughtfulness that the real character of an action lies. A person may happen to do you a good turn, but if you are sure that he did it by accident, or with no more thought than that wherewith a passing stranger throws a penny to a beggar, you are not impressed with gratitude. But when the action of your friend is the result of earnest deliberation, and you see that he acts in the tenderest regard to your welfare, you are far more thankful; traces of anxiety to do you good are very pleasant. Have I not heard persons say, "It was so kind and so thoughtful of him!" Do you not notice that men value kindly thought, and set great store by tender consideration! Remember, then, that there is never a thoughtless action on the part of God. His mind goes with His hand; His heart is in His acts. He thinks so much of His people, that the very hairs of their heads are all numbered, He thinks not only of the great thing, but of the little things which are incidental to the great thing, as the hairs are to the head. Every affliction is timed and measured, and every comfort is sent with a loving thoughtfulness which makes it precious in a sevenfold degree. O believer, the great thoughtfulness of the divine mind is exercised towards you, the chosen of the Lord. Never has anything happened to you as the result of a remorseless fate, but all your circumstances have been ordered in wisdom by a living, thoughtful, loving Lord.

Brethren, if I said no more you might go on your way rejoicing. Remember that the infinite God has thoughts of peace towards you, and your own thoughts will be thoughts of peace all the day.

To go a step further, let us next note that *the thoughts of God are only perfectly known to Himself*. It would be a mere truism for God to say, "I know the thoughts that I think toward you." Even a man usually knows his own thoughts, but the meaning is this; when *you* do not know the thoughts that I have towards you, yet *I* know them. Brethren, when we cannot know the thoughts of the Lord because they are too high for our conception, or too deep for our understanding, yet the Lord knows them. Our heavenly Father knows what He is doing, when His ways towards us

appear to be involved and complicated, and we cannot disentangle the threads of the skein, yet the Lord sees all things clearly, and knows the thoughts that He thinks towards us. He never misses His way, nor becomes embarrassed. We dare not profess to understand the ways of God to man; they are past finding out. Providence is a great deep. Its breadth exceeds the range of our vision, and its depth baffles our profoundest thought. "Your way, O Lord is in the sea, and Your path in the great waters, and Your footsteps are not known." When we are overwhelmed with wonder at what we see, we are humbled by the reminder, "Lo, these are parts of His ways; but how little a portion is heard of Him!" "Truly the things of God, knows no man, but the Spirit of God." God alone understands Himself and His thoughts. We stand by a powerful machine, and we see the wheels moving this way and that, but we do not understand its working. What does it matter? He, who made the engine and controls it, perfectly understands it, and this is practically the main concern, for it does not matter whether *we* understand the engine or not, it will work its purpose if he who has the control of it is at home with all its bands and wheels. Despite our ignorance, nothing can go wrong while the Lord in infinite knowledge rules over all. The child playing on the deck does not understand the tremendous engine whose beat is the throbbing heart of the stately Atlantic liner, and yet all is safe, for the engineer, the captain and the pilot are in their places, and well know what is being done. Let not the child trouble itself about things too great for it. Leave you the discovery of doubtful causes to Him whose understanding is infinite, and as for yourself, be you still, and know that Jehovah is God. Unbelief misinterprets the ways of God; hasty judgment jumps at wrong conclusions about them, but the Lord knows His own thoughts. We are doubtful where we ought to be sure, and we are sure where we have no ground for certainty, thus we are always in the wrong. How should it be otherwise with us, since vain man would be wise, and yet he is born like a wild ass's colt? We are hard to tame and to teach, but as for the Lord, "His way is perfect."—

"His thoughts are high, His love is wise,
His wounds a cure intend;
And though He does not always smile,
He loves unto the end."

Let us go a step further still; *The Lord would have us know that His thoughts toward us are settled and definite*. This is part of the intent of the words, "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord." Sometimes a man may hardly know his own thoughts, because he has scarcely made up his mind. There are several subjects now upon the public mind, concerning which it is wise to say little or nothing, because it is not easy to decide about them. Upon a certain matter one asks you this question, and another asks you another question, and it is possible that you have so carefully weighed and measured the arguments both *pro* and *con* that you cannot come to a conclusion either way. Your thoughts differ from day to day, and therefore you do not yet know them. You need not be ashamed of this; it shows that you have a just sense of your own imperfect knowledge. A fool soon makes up his mind, because

there is so very little of it, but a wise man waits and considers. The case is far otherwise with the only wise God. The Lord is not a man that He should need to hesitate, His infinite mind is made up, and He knows His thoughts. With the Lord there is neither question nor debate, "He is in one mind, and none can turn Him." His purpose is settled, and He adheres to it. He is resolved to reward them that diligently seek Him, and to honor those that trust in Him. He is resolved to remember His covenant forever, and to keep His promises to those who believe Him. His thought is that the people whom He has formed for Himself shall show forth His praise. The Lord knows them that are His; He knows whom He gave to His Son, and He knows that these shall be His jewels forever and ever. Beloved, when you do not know your own mind, God knows *His* mind. Though you believe not, He abides faithful, when you are in the gloom, He is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. Your way may be closed, but His way is open. God knows all when you know nothing at all. When Moses came out of Egypt, he had no plan as to the march of Israel. He knew that he had to lead the children of Israel to the promised land, but that was all. He probably hoped to take them by the shortest cut to Palestine at once. Their journey was far otherwise, but it was all prearranged by the divine mind. It was by no error that the tribes were told to turn and encamp before Pihahiroth, between Migdol and the sea. The Lord knew that Pharaoh would say, "They are entangled in the land, the wilderness has shut them in." There was no going back, for the Egyptians were there, and no going forward, for the Red Sea was there, but the Lord had the way mapped out in His own mind. He was not taken by surprise when the enemy said, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil," since for this purpose had He raised Pharaoh up, that He might show forth His power in him. The passage of the Red Sea was no hurried expedient; Jehovah knew what He would do. When our blessed Lord was surrounded by the hungry crowd, He asked His disciples, "How many loaves have you?" But "Jesus knew what He would do." He had His thoughts, and He knew them! "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world." "Many, O Lord my God, are Your wonderful works which You have done, and Your thoughts which are toward us." You have said, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure," and it is even so. Brother, you do not know what is to be done, but the Lord knows for you. O, body of Christ, let your head think for you! O, servant of Christ, let your Master think for you. "I know," says God "the thoughts that I think toward you."

Now we have advanced some distance into the meaning of our text, and we are prepared to go a step further, namely, that *God's thoughts toward His people are always thoughts of peace*. He is at peace with them through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. He regards them in Christ with perfect satisfaction. The Spirit of God speaks peace to their troubled conscience, and works in them the spirit of adoption and desires after holiness; thus the holy God is able to commune with them, and have thoughts of peace toward them. The Lord delights in them, He seeks their peace, He creates their peace, He sustains their peace, and thus all His

thoughts toward them are peace. Note well the negative, which is expressly inserted. It is very sweet to my own heart. It might have appeared enough to say, "My thoughts are thoughts of peace." Yes, it would be quite sufficient when all things are bright with us, but those words, "and not of evil," are admirably adapted to keep off the goblins of the night, the vampires of suspicion which fly in the darkness. When under affliction we are sorely depressed, and when conscience perceives that there are reasons why the Lord should contend with us, then the enemy whispers, "The Lord has evil thoughts toward you, and will cast you off forever." No, beloved, His thoughts are *not of evil*. Though the Lord hates your sin, He does not hate you. Though He is the enemy of your follies, He is your own firm friend; yes, He is all the truer friend, because He fights against your faults.

He would have you pure and holy; therefore does He bathe you in the rivers, and baptize you in the fires. Not in anger does He afflict you, but in His dear covenant love. The hardest blow that He ever laid upon His child was inflicted by the hand of love. You may rise from your bed in the morning to be chastised, and before you fall asleep in the night you may smart under the rod, and yet be none the less, but all the more, the favorite of heaven; therefore, beloved, lay hold upon the negative, "not of evil." God has no evil thought towards His chosen; He has no desire to grieve us, but to save us.

There shall not a hair of your head perish, but yet that head may ache with weariness. It is for good, and only for good, that God thinks of us, and deals with us. Oh, that we could settle this in our hearts, and have done with dark forebodings! Though your way may now lie through dark ravines where the crags rise so steep above you as to shut out the light of day, yet press onward, for the way is safe. Follow the Lord, for where the road is rough, you will be less likely to slip than in more smooth and slippery places. If the way is steep, you will the sooner ascend on high, or if your way inclines downward, you will the sooner feel the needful humiliation, and the more readily cease from yourself, and cast yourself upon your Lord. Though I am not yet so old and grey-headed as many here present, yet one thing I know, that God has done unto me good, and not evil, all the days of my life, and I bear my public witness at this hour, that in very faithfulness He has afflicted me, and not one good thing has failed of all that He has promised me!

No, His thoughts are "not of evil." The next time the devil comes to you with a dark insinuation, tell him that the Lord's thoughts are "not of evil." Drive him away with that. When he hisses his foul suggestions, say, "Not of evil," God cannot have an evil thought towards His own elect. He that gave His own Son to die for us cannot think anything but good towards us!

Once more, and then we shall have fully compassed this text. *The Lord's thoughts are all working towards "an expected end,"* or, as the Revised Version has it, "to give you hope in your latter end." Some read it, "a future and a hope." The renderings are instructive. God is working with a motive. All things are working together for one objective, the good

of those who love God. We see only the beginning; God saw the end from the beginning. We spell the alphabet out, Alpha, Beta, Gamma, but God reads all, from Alpha to Omega, at once. He knows every letter of the Book of Providence; He sees not only what He is doing, but what will come of what He is doing. As to our present pain and grief, God saw not these things exclusively, but He saw the future joy and usefulness which will come of them. He regards not only the tearing up of the soil with the plow, but the clothing of that soil with the golden harvest. He sees the consequences of affliction, and He accounts those painful incidents to be blessed which lead up to so much of happiness. Let us comfort ourselves with this. God meant in Babylon to prepare a people that should know Him, of whom He could say, "I will be their God, and they shall be My people." At the end of seventy years, He would bring these people back to Jerusalem like a new race, who, whatever their faults might be, would never again fall into idolatry. He knew what He was driving at in their captivity, and in our case the Lord is equally clear as to His purpose. We do not ourselves know, for "it does not yet appear what we shall be." You have never seen the Great Artist's masterpiece, you have seen the rough marble, you have marked the chippings that fall on the ground, you have felt the edge of His chisel, you know the weight of His hammer, and you are full of the memory of these things, but oh, could you see that glorious image as it will be when He has put the finishing stroke to it, you would then understand the chisel, and the hammer, and the Worker better than you now do! O brethren, we would not know ourselves if we could see ourselves as we are to be when the Lord's purpose is accomplished upon us! We know that we shall be like Him when we shall see Him as He is, but what is He like "as He is"? What is that glory of the Lord which is to be ours? We can picture Him in His humiliation, but what is He like in His glory? He is the first-born and we are to be conformed to Him. God is working, working, working always to that end, and so all His thoughts tend towards this expected end.

Here I pause to make a practical application. I may be addressing some person here who is in great distress under conviction of sin. You despair because the Lord is bringing your sin to remembrance, but indeed, there is no cause; the Lord is sending you into captivity for a purpose. You are being shut up by the law that you may be set at liberty by Christ; you are being stripped in order that you may be clothed, and you are being emptied that you may be filled. If you could see the end from the beginning, you would rejoice that you are made to know the burden of sin, for so shall you be driven to the cross to find rest from your load. This sorrow shall be the death of your pride and self-righteousness. By this way the Lord is working out for you "a future and a hope." When clean divorced from self, you shall be wedded to Jesus, and dowried with His salvation.

I am also probably addressing many a child of God who is vexed in daily conflict with his inward corruption. Alas! We find the old man yet alive within us. The old nature in the Christian is no better than the old man in the sinner; it is the same carnal mind which is enmity against

God, and is not reconciled, neither indeed can be. The new nature has a hard struggle to hold its own against this embodied death. We are, as it were, chained to a rotting carcass, and we cry, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me?" Now, do not despair because of this experience. It is better to mourn over imperfection than to be puffed up with the idle notion that there is no sin in you to be watched and conquered. Certain of the children of Israel remained with Zedekiah at Jerusalem, and boasted of their position, but they were none the better for their pretensions. You have been carried away into captivity, and you are sighing and crying because of indwelling sin, but the Lord's thoughts towards you are thoughts of peace, and not of evil, and He will "give you an expected end." You will come to true holiness by this painful process, and so shall you glorify God.

I may also be addressing some child of God in very deep trouble. Everything goes wrong with you, at home, in business, and perhaps in the church too. Very well, you will never have to raise that question, "How is it that I am not chastened?" That will never trouble you. Chastening for the present is not joyous; nevertheless afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness in them which are exercised thereby. Therefore gladly endure it. God's thoughts are towards you, for He is refining you; believe also that His thoughts are peaceable, and that He designs your highest good.

So far have I tried to justify the ways of God to men. May His own Spirit make you feel that the thoughts of the Lord are peace!

II. In the second part of my discourse I would ask you to CONSIDER THE PROPER ATTITUDE OF GOD'S PEOPLE TOWARDS THEIR LORD.

You will all agree with me when I say that *our attitude should be that of submission*. If God, in all that He does towards us, is acting with an objective and that objective a loving one, then let Him do what seems good to Him. Henceforth let us have no quarrel with the God of Providence, but let us say, "Your will be done." Who would not yield to that which works his health, his wealth, his boundless happiness? "My son, despise not you the chastening of the Lord, or faint when you are rebuked by Him: for whom the Lord loves, He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives."

Next, let our position be one of *great hopefulness,* seeing the end of God, in all He does, is to give us "a future and a hope." We are not driven into growing darkness, but led into increasing light. There is always something to be hoped for in the Christian's life. Let us not look towards the future nor regard the present with any kind of dread. There is nothing for us to dread—

"If sin is pardoned, I'm secure;
Death has no sting beside;
The law gave sin its damning power,
But Christ, my ransom, died."

The death of Christ is the death of evil to the child of God. Let us trust and not be afraid. Let us not be content with sullenly making up our minds to stoical endurance. We must not only bear the will of the Lord, but rejoice in it. It is a blessed thing when we come to rejoice in tribula-

tions, and to glory in infirmities. It is fine music when we can sing, "Sweet affliction."

"Hard work," says one. Yes, but it is worth the pains, for it secures perfect peace. If your will is brought to your circumstances, and if, better still, your will is brought to delight in God's will, then the fangs of the serpent are extracted. The sorrow is sucked out of the sorrow by the lips of acquiescence. When you can say, "Not my will, but Yours be done," you shall have your will. There is always something "better on before" for those who believe in Jesus. Be you sure of that—

"You fearful saints, fresh courage take,
The clouds you so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
With blessings on your head."

Welcome clouds, if showers of mercy are to come of them. God forbid we should always have sunshine, for that would mean drought. Let the clouds come if they bring a blessed rain.

Our relation to God should, next, be one of *continual expectancy,* especially expectancy of the fulfillment of His promises. I call your attention again to the tenth verse, "I will perform My good word toward you." I do so love that expression, we must have it for a text one of these days, "I will perform My good word toward you." His promises are good words; good indeed, and sweetly refreshing. When your hearts are faint then is the promise emphatically *good*. Expect the Lord to be as good as His good Word.

Brethren, do not heap up to yourselves sorrow, as some do in these days, by expecting that which the Lord has not promised. I earnestly warn you against those who have been led by a fevered imagination to expect, first, perfection in the flesh, and then perfection of the flesh, and then an actual immortality for the flesh. God will fulfill His promise, but He will not fulfill your misreading of it. I should not wonder if there should arise a race of people who will believe that they can live without eating, because it is said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God shall man live." If healed without medicine, why not fed without food? What absolute need of any visible means when God can work without them? Those who think it needful to lay aside all outward means in order to a true faith in God are on the way to any absurdity. Truly, if God had bidden me live without eating, I would fast at His command, and expect to live, but as He has not done so, I shall not presume. Faith that is not warranted by the word of God is not faith, but folly, and folly is not the faith of God's elect. The Lord will perform His own word, but He will not perform the delirious declarations of madmen. If it needs a million miracles to fulfill God's promises they shall be forthcoming, but we are not anxious for miracles, because our larger faith believes that the Lord can overrule the ordinary ways of providence to perform His good word, and bring us the expected end.

Again, beloved, our position towards God should be one of *happy hope as to blessed ends being answered even now*. In the twenty-fourth chapter we observe one of the ends of the Lord's sending His people into exile.

I noticed in the fifth verse that the Lord said, "So will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah." Their sorrow would bring about *the Lord's acknowledgment of them*. Thus do we, brethren, bear in our body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Affliction is the seal of the Lord's election. I remember a story of Mr. Mack, who was a Baptist minister in Northamptonshire. In his youth he was a soldier, and calling on Robert Hall, when his regiment marched through Leicester, that great man became interested in him, and procured his release from the ranks. When he went to preach in Glasgow, he sought out his aged mother, whom he had not seen for many years. He knew his mother the moment he saw her, but the old lady did not recognize her son. It so happened that when he was a child, his mother had accidentally wounded his wrist with a knife. To comfort him she cried, "Never mind, my bonnie bairn, your mither will ken you by that when you are a man." When Mack's mother would not believe that a grave, fine-looking minister could be her own child, he turned up his sleeve and cried, "Mither, mither, dinna you ken *that?"* In a moment they were in each other's arms. Ah, brethren! The Lord knows the spot of His children. He acknowledges them by the mark of correction. What God is doing to us in the way of trouble and trial is but His acknowledgment of us as true heirs, and the marks of His rod shall be our proof that we are not bastards, but true sons. He knows the wounds He made when He was exercising His sacred surgery upon us. By this also shall you yourself be made to know that verily you are a piece of gold, or else you would not have been put into the furnace. This will be one "expected end" of the Lord towards us; let us rejoice in it.

God's dealings with us work out *our good in every way*. The Lord said (Jer 24:5), "I have sent them out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good." We know that "All things work together for good to them that love God." Thus from day to day the Lord gives us "an expected end."

In the twelfth verse of the chapter from which we have taken our text, we see that *prayer is quickened* by the Lord's work towards them. "Then shall you call upon Me." Our troubles drive us to our knees. If it had not been for Esau, Jacob had never wrestled at Jabbok. I hope we usually go to our closets of our own accord, but often we are whipped there. Many of the most earnest prayers that ever rise to heaven come from us when we are in bondage under grief. Yes, yes, we must thank God that His trying ways with us have produced in us a prayerful spirit, and a full conviction that we do not pray in vain.

The Lord's end with us is also *our sanctification*. "And I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the Lord: and they shall be My people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto Me with their whole heart." See the value of sanctified afflictions! God grant that from day to day we may feel the expected ends of His corrections! O that we may *grow in grace,* and may *our graces grow!* May we increase in faith, and hope, and love, and patience, and courage, and joy! Surely our knowledge ought to widen out, our consecration should be confirmed, our insight should be clearer, our outlook steadier. We ought by all our experience to become

more Christ-like, better reflectors of the heavenly light, fitter temples of the Holy Spirit. Therefore let us be of good cheer, and rejoice that from day to day we receive the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls, and thus the Lord's end is being answered.

But to close. We have kept the best wine until now. The thoughts of God towards us are that He will give us "an expected end." *An end;* there is good cheer in that. We do not wish to remain here forever. We would be diligent in running the race, but we long for the end of it. I should be satisfied to preach here throughout all eternity if I might always bring glory to God, but yet I am glad that there is to be an end of preaching, and a season of pure praise. You, my brethren, love the Lord's work, but still you look forward to the time when you shall take your wage, and have done. It is a comfort that there is an end.

Blessed be God, *it is an expected end*. You ungodly people can only look forward to a *dreaded end;* an end of your foolish mirth, an end of your carelessness, an end of your boasting. You fear your end. But God will give His people an *expected* end. Suppose that end should be the coming of Christ! Oh, how we long for it! Oh that the Bridegroom would now appear! Oh that He would descend from heaven with a shout, and gather His chosen from the four winds of heaven! "Even so, come quickly!" That is our *expected end*.

If our Lord does not come, and we must be taken home by death, we feel no alarm in looking forward to that expected end. One by one our dear friends go home from this church. As I have often told you, there is never a week without some of our number being taken up. Although I have visited a large number of dying believers, I have never yet visited a member of this church who has expressed the least fear in their dying moments, or the slightest dismay in the hour of departure. It makes me feel happy to see how the brethren and sisters die; they pass away as if they were going to a wedding rather than to a tomb—as if it were the most joyful thing that ever happened to them to have reached their expected end. Doubts are all driven away when you see how believers die. Grace is given them, so that they surmount the weakness of the hour. The Lord Jesus in them triumphs over pain and death. Our venerable brother and elder, Mr. Court, who has just passed away at a great age, looked forward to his departure with peaceful hope. He used to speak of it as of a thing from which he had no shrinking. There was no discontent or murmuring about him; no feverish eagerness to quit the infirmities of this life, but, on the other hand, a happy foresight of his end, and a joyful expectation of it. Some of the Lord's saints have not yet received dying grace, but then they are not going to die yet. Brethren, saints are prepared to go before they go. Our Lord does not pluck His fruit unwisely. Foolish people may tear the green apples from the tree with a pull and a wrench, and bruise them as they throw them into the basket, but our Lord values His fruit, and so He waits until it is quite ripe, and then He gathers it tenderly. When He puts forth His hand, the fruit bows down to it, and parts from the bough without a strain. When the believer comes

to die, it will not be to an end which he feared, but to an end which he expected.

Brethren, when death is past, then comes that expected end which shall never end. What will the first five minutes in heaven be? There is a bigger question; what will thousands of years in heaven be? What will myriads of ages be? My disembodied spirit will at the first be perfectly happy in the embraces of my Lord, but in due time the resurrection day will dawn, and this body may rise again in full glory. Then there will be a re-marriage of soul and body, and we shall be perfected, even as our risen Lord. Oh, the glory of that expected end!

What will it be when our completed manhood shall be introduced to the society of angels, to the presence of cherubim and seraphim? What will it be to see Him whom we have loved so long? What to hear Him say, "Come, you blessed of My Father"? What joy to sit at His right hand! Yesterday my heart was ravished with that text, "They cast their crowns before the throne." If ever I am privileged to have a crown at all, how gladly will I lay it down at the feet of my Lord! Is not this your mind? How sweetly will we sing, *Non nobis, Domine!* "Not unto us, O Lord, but unto Your name give glory." Brethren, what singing it will be when we shall be loosened from the deadening influence of the flesh! How will we praise when we have done with these tongues of clay, which hamper us so much! I would speak greatly to my Lord's praise, but I fail. Strip me of this house of clay, and I will sing as sweetly as any of the birds of paradise that carol forever in the Tree of Life above. Do you not feel a longing to be up and away? Indulge those longings, for thus you will be drawn nearer to the understanding of the text—"to give you an expected end." All that you are suffering, all that you are enjoying, all that God sends you, has this one design, to make you fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.

Ending this discourse, I would ask you to pledge that you will meet me where glory dwells, in Emmanuel's land. We shall soon be with the angels. The Lord is thinking of us, and He is expecting us home. Our Lord Jesus is waiting for His wedding day, which is His expected end. "My soul, wait you only upon God, for my expectation is from Him."

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
JEREMIAH 24, 29.**

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—737, 734, 746.

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THE DEATH OF MOSES
NO. 1966

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 5, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord."
Deuteronomy 34:5.

WHAT an honorable title! Moses is distinguished as *"the servant of Jehovah."* He was this of choice, for he willed to be the servant of God rather than to be great in the land of the Pharaohs. Such he was most perseveringly throughout the whole of his life. Such he was most intensely, for he waited upon God for his directions, as a servant waits upon his master, and he endeavored to do all things according to the pattern which was shown him in the holy mountain. Though he was king in Jeshurun, he never acted on his own authority, but was the lowly instrument of the divine will. Moses was faithful to God in all his house, as a servant. You neither see him overstepping his office nor neglecting it. His reverence for the Lord's name was deep, his devotion to the Lord's cause was complete, and his confidence in the Lord's word was constant. He was a true servant of God from the time when he was appointed at the burning bush until the hour when he surrendered his keys of office to his successor, and climbed the appointed mountain to die. Oh that you and I may so live as to approve ourselves servants of God! Unto as many as have received Him our Lord Jesus has given power to become the sons of God, and this is our great joy, but as sons we aspire to serve our Father, even as His great First-born Son has done, who took upon Himself the form of a servant that He might accomplish His Father's good pleasure for His church. Let us with good will do service unto our Father who is in heaven, seeing it is but our reasonable service that we should lay out ourselves for Him who has made us His sons and daughters. Redeemed from the slavery of sin, let us, as the Lord's freemen, cry unto Him henceforth, "O Lord, truly I am Your servant; I am Your servant, and the son of Your handmaid: You have loosed my bonds."

But servant of God as Moses was, *he must die*. It is the common lot of men. Only two have passed out of this world into the abodes of glory without fording the stream of death. Moses is not one of the two. Even had he crossed the Jordan into Canaan, he would in due course have died in the land. We might have expected that he would live on till the people were settled in Canaan, but it seemed right unto the Lord God that on account of his one slip he should die outside of the Promised Land, like the rest of the people. Caleb and Joshua alone of all that generation who came out of Egypt were permitted to possess the land towards which they had journeyed for forty years. If that one offense lost

Moses the privilege of entering the earthly Canaan, there may have been still more powerful reasons why he should not enter the heavenly Canaan without experiencing the change of death. He must not make a third with Enoch and Elijah, but he must die and be buried. Such will probably be our lot in due season. Brethren, it may be that we shall not die; our Lord Jesus may come before we fall asleep, but if He does not come speedily, we shall find that it is appointed unto all men once to die. We shall pass from this world unto the Father by that common road which is beaten hard by the innumerable feet of mortal men. Since we must die, it is well to meditate upon the solemn future. Moses shall be our teacher in the art of dying. We will consider his decease, in the hope that so our fears may be removed, and our desires may be excited. There is a Pisgah where we must yield up the ghost, and be gathered to our fathers; may we climb to it as willingly as did Moses, the servant of God!

The manner of Moses' death is exceedingly remarkable. I suppose that no subject presents a finer field for oratory than the sublime decease of the prophet, but we have nothing to do with oratory, our objective is spiritual and practical profit. Poets might well expend their noblest powers in depicting this strange scene of the man of God alone on the mountain's brow, with the view of Canaan at his feet, and himself in holy rapture passing away into the eternal state. We are not poets, but simple believers, desiring to learn some holy lesson from the death of one whom, though the greatest of men, knew no higher honor than to be the servant of the Lord. Oh that the Spirit of grace and truth, who has come to us by Christ Jesus, may help us find instruction in the death of him who brought the law from the mouth of God to men!

I. We are told in the text that "Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord." This I shall read, first, as meaning that Moses died on Pisgah, ACCORDING TO THE WARNING OF THE LORD.

His death was long foreseen. Moses knew some time before that he must die without setting foot in Canaan. Read in the first chapter of Deuteronomy his own account of the sin of the people at Meribah, and the Lord's sentence there and then pronounced, "Surely there shall not one of these men of this evil generation see that good land, which I swore to give unto your fathers, save Caleb, the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him will I give the land that he has trodden upon, and to his children, because he has wholly followed the Lord." "Also," adds Moses, "the Lord was angry with me for your sakes, saying, You also shall not go in there."

His death outside of the Promised Land did not come upon him at all as a surprise. He had to see his sister Miriam, first of the great trio, fall asleep, and next, he was called to go up to Mount Hor and disrobe his brother Aaron of his priestly garments which he placed upon Eleazar, his son. Moses also had to see the whole of the generation that came out of Egypt with him buried in the wilderness. The ninetieth psalm is his, and it is a sort of a Death March, fit hymn for a nation whose track was marked by countless graves. Because of unbelief "their carcasses fell in the wilderness." Only Caleb and Joshua remained; the sole survivors of the great host which crossed the Red Sea. The Great Lawgiver had thus

abundant pledges of his own departure, and he must have had in his brother's death a rehearsal of his own. Have not we also had many warnings? Are we ready?

Concerning his death in the land of Moab, it is natural to remark that *it was exceedingly disappointing*. He had been for forty years engaged in leading the people to the land of promise; must he die when that country was within a day's march? It was his life's work, for which he had been prepared by forty years in Egypt, where he became learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and by another forty years in the solitary wilderness, where he kept sheep and held high fellowship with God. His third forty years had been spent in freeing Israel from Egypt, training them to become a nation, and conducting them to the land of promise; must he now expire before the nation entered in? What years his had been! What a life was that of Moses! How glorious was the man who had confronted Pharaoh, and broken the pride of Egypt! How tried and troubled a man had he been while called to carry all that nation in his bosom, and care for them as a shepherd cares for his sheep! His was a task that well-near broke him down, and had not the man Moses been made very meek by the indwelling Spirit of the Lord, and had he not also been graciously sustained by fellowship with God, his task had proved too heavy even for him. Yet, after all that toil in fashioning a nation, he must die before the long-expected conquest. It was a bitter disappointment when first the sentence pierced his heart. He had known one great disappointment before, for Stephen tells us, that when he smote the Egyptian, "he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not." Then, when his brethren had refused him, he fled into the land of Midian, a rejected leader, a patriot whose heroism had only brought forth from his countrymen the contemptuous question, "Who made you a prince and a judge over us?" But this denial of entrance into Canaan was a greater disappointment still. To have toiled so long, and to reap no harvest; to see the land, but not to enter it; to bring the tribes to the Jordan's brink, and then to die in Moab after all; it was a grievous disappointment. Brethren, are we ready to say as to our most cherished hope, "Your will be done"! Are we holding our life's dearest purpose with a loose hand? It will be our wisdom so to do.

Apparently it was a severe chastisement. His offense was but one, and yet it excluded him from Canaan. We have not time to describe in detail the sin of Moses. It would appear to have been a sin of unbelief occasioned by his feeling so intensely for and with the people. Moses was thoroughly knit to Israel. When they sinned he interceded as for himself. When Jehovah made him the offer that He would make of him a great nation, he declined it solely from his love for Israel. He lived for the nation, and for the nation he died. Remember how once he went so far as to say, "If not, blot me, I pray You, out of Your book which You have written." In every way he was of the people, bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh, Israel was hidden in his heart, and out of that master passion of sympathy with the people came the weakness which at last made him speak unadvisedly with his lips. They strove with God, and though Moses never yielded a point to them in that wielded contest, yet their unbelief so

far influenced him that he spoke in anger, and said, "Hear now, you rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?" Then "the Lord spoke unto Moses and Aaron, Because you believed Me not, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them" (Num 20:12). Three times in the Book of Deuteronomy Moses tells the people, "The Lord was angry with me for your sakes." It was not so much that which Moses did personally which involved him in judgment, but he suffered because of his being mixed up with Israel. As the Lord had spared the people before for Moses' sake, it became necessary that, when he in any measure shared in their great sin of unbelief, he should be chastened for their sake as well as his own. His faith had saved them, and now his unbelief, being backed by theirs, secures for him the sentence of exclusion from the land.

My brethren, when I think of this severity of discipline towards so faithful a servant as Moses, I do exceedingly fear and quake. Truly, "the Lord our God is a jealous God." We are sure that He is never unjust, we are sure that He is never unduly severe, we do not for a moment impugn the righteousness or even the love of our God in this or any other act, but He is terrible out of His holy places. How true it is that He will be sanctified in them that come near to Him! Behold and wonder! That highly-favored servant, Moses, though accepted always in the economy of grace, yet must he come under the rule of the house, and feel the chastising hand if he transgresses. Hence the sentence of exclusion is passed. As he had once joined that unbelieving generation by manifesting a measure of hasty unbelief, he must now share their doom, and die on Moab's side of Jordan. "Righteous are You, O Lord, and upright are Your judgments." Oh for grace to behave ourselves aright in Your house! Lord, teach us Your statutes, and keep us in Your way.

Beloved, *it seemed a great calamity* that Moses must die when he did. He was an aged man as to years, but not as to condition. It is true he was a hundred and twenty years old, but his father and his grandfather and his great grandfather had all lived beyond that age, two of them reaching a hundred and thirty-seven, so that he might naturally have expected a longer lease of life. This truly grand old man had not failed in any respect, his eye was not dim, neither had his natural force abated, and therefore he might have expected to live on. Besides, it seems a painful thing for a man to die while he was capable of so much work, when, indeed he was more mature, more gracious, more wise than ever. The mental and spiritual powers of Moses were greater in the latter days of his life than ever before. Notice his wonderful song! Observe his marvelous address to the people! He was in the prime of his mental manhood. He had been tutored by a long experience, chastened by a marvelous discipline, and elevated by a sublime communion with God, and yet he must die. How strange that, when a man seems most fit to live, it is then that the mandate comes, "Get you up into the mountain and die"!

Naturally speaking, it seemed a sad loss for the people of Israel. Who but Moses could rule them? Even he could scarcely control them. They were a heavy burden even to his meekness; who else could so successfully act as king in Jeshurun? Without Moses to awe them, what will not

these rebels do? It was a grave experiment to place a younger and an inferior man in the seat of power, when the nation was entering upon its great campaign. It would need all the faith and discretion of Moses to conduct the conquest of the country, and to divide their portions to the tribes. Yet so it must be; precious as his life was, the word went forth, "Get you up into the top of Pisgah: for you shall not go over this Jordan." Even thus to the best and most useful must the summons come. Who would wish to forbid the Lord to call home His own when He wills?

The sentence was *not to be averted by prayer*. Moses tells us that he besought the Lord at that time, "O Lord God, You have begun to show Your servant Your greatness, and Your mighty hand: for what God is there in heaven or in earth, that can do according to Your works, and according to Your might? I pray You, let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon." This was altogether a very proper prayer, he did not plead his own services, but he urged the former mercies of the Lord. Surely this was good pleading, and he might have hoped to prevail for himself, seeing he had formerly been heard for a whole nation. But no. This gift must be denied him. The Lord said, "Let it suffice you; speak no more unto Me of this matter." Moses never again opened his lips upon the subject. He did not beseech the Lord thrice, as Paul did, in his hour of trouble, but seeing that the sentence was final he bowed his head in holy consent.

Brethren, he had often asked a greater thing than this of the Lord his God. Once he had even dared to say, "I beseech You, show me Your glory," and he was heard even in that high request. The Lord placed him in the cleft of the rock, and made all His goodness pass before him. Yet now he begs for a comparatively small thing, and it is refused. What a mercy that it is in the small things of this life that our requests may be denied, but in the things which touch the kingdom of the Lord our prayer never returns empty! All heaven is open to our bended knee, though for wise ends and purposes a Canaan on earth may be closed against us. All-sufficient grace was given though the thorn was not removed; Moses the servant of the Lord died, but triumphed over death.

When I thought of the trial of Moses in being shut out of the land, I found myself unable to read the chapter which lay open before me, for I was blinded by my tears. How shall any of us stand before a God so holy? Where Moses errs how shall we be faultless? Never servant more favored of his Lord, and yet even he must undergo a disappointment as great as a rebuke for a single fault. The flower of his life is broken off from the stalk for one act of unbelief. To be exalted so near to God is to be involved in a great responsibility. A fierce light beats about the throne of God. He that is the King's chosen, admitted to continual communion with Him, must stand in awe of Him. Well is it written, "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling." An offense which might be passed over as a mere trifle in an ordinary subject, would be very serious in a prince of the blood, who had been favored with royal secrets, and had been permitted to lean his head upon the bosom of the king. If we live near to God we cannot sin without incurring sharp rebukes. Even the common run of the elect must remember that word, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you for all

your iniquities." Much more must the elect out of the elect hear such a warning. God did, in effect, say to Moses, "You only have I chosen of all mankind to speak with Me face to face, and therefore, since you have failed in your faith after such communion with Me, it behooves Me, in very faithfulness and love towards you, to mark your failure with an evident token of displeasure." The discipline of saints is in this life. I doubt not but many a man's life has come to an end when he wished it to be continued, and he has missed that which he has strived for, because of an offense against the Lord committed in his earlier years. We had need walk carefully before our jealous God, who will not spare sin anywhere, and least of all in His own beloved. His love to them never fails, but His hatred of their sin burns like coals of juniper. Foolish parents spare the rod, but our wise Father acts not so. Walk circumspectly, O you heirs of life eternal, for "even our God is a consuming fire." The Lord give us to feel the sanctifying power of this passage in the story of the great Lawgiver!

II. But now I have to conduct you to a second point of view. Moses, the man of God, died in the land of Moab "according to the word of the Lord," that is, ACCORDING TO THE DIVINE APPOINTMENT.

All the details of the death of Moses had been ordered of the Lord. Time, place, and circumstances were arranged by God. So, brethren, it is appointed unto us where we shall die, and when we shall die. We speak of certain persons as having "died by accident," and we sometimes bewail the deaths of Christian men as premature, but in the deepest sense it is not so. God has marked out for us the place where and the time when we must resign our breath. Let this suffice us. That which is of divine appointment should be to our contentment. We do not believe in the *Kismet* of blind fate, but we believe in the predestination of infinite wisdom, and therefore we say, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seems good to Him."

Moses died according to the divine appointment that is also *according to an appointment which is very general among God's people*. He died without seeing the full result of his life-work. If you look down the list of the servants of God you will find that the most of them die before the objective which they had in view is fully accomplished. It is true that we are immortal till our work is done, but then we usually think that our work is something other than it is. It never was the work of Moses to lead Israel into the Promised Land. It was his wish, but not his work. His work he saw, but his wish he saw not. Moses really did finish his own proper work, but the desire of his heart was to have seen the people settled in their land, and this was not granted him. Thus David gathered together gold and silver with which to build the Temple, but he was not to build it, Solomon, his son, undertook the work. Even thus great reformers rise and speak the truth, and cause colossal systems of error to tremble, but they do not themselves utterly destroy those evils. Their successors continue the work. Most men have to sow that others may reap. The prayer of Moses is fulfilled to others as well as to himself, "Let Your work appear unto Your servants, and Your glory unto their children." We must not hope to engross all things; let us be content to do our own part in laying the foundation upon which other men may build in due course. It is according to the divine appointment which links us with each other that

one plants and another waters, one brings out of Egypt and another leads into Canaan.

And I may here notice that Moses thus "died according to the word of the Lord," *for a deep dispensational reason*. It was not for Moses to give the people rest, for the law gives no man rest, and brings no man to heaven. The law may bring us to the borders of the promise, but only Joshua or Jesus can bring us into grace and truth. If Moses had given them Canaan, the allegory would have seemed to teach us that rest might be obtained by the law, but as Moses must be laid asleep, and buried by divine hands, so must the law cease to rule that the covenant of grace may lead us into the fullness of peace—

"Moses may lead to Jordan's flood,
But there surrenders his command;
Our Joshua must the waves divide,
And bring us to the Promised Land.
Trained by the law, we learn our place,
But gain the inheritance by grace."

Thus there was a mysterious reason why Moses should die in Moab, according to the eternal purpose of God. Not without such divine decree shall any other of the servants of the Lord depart out of the camp of Israel. We also shall in life and death answer some gracious purpose of the Lord. Are we not glad to have it so? Yes, Lord, Your will be done.

III. I have conducted you a little out of the dark now, and the sky is clearing around us. In the third place, Moses died ACCORDING TO THE LOVING WISDOM OF THE LORD. It was a fit thing, a wise thing, and a kind thing that Moses should not go over Jordan.

First, by so doing *he preserved his identity with the people for whom he had cared*. For their sakes he had forsaken a princedom in Egypt, and now for their sakes he loses a home in Palestine. He had suffered with them, "esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt," and he had been with them in all that great and terrible wilderness, afflicted in all their affliction, bearing and carrying them in God's name all his days; was it not fit that he should at last die with them? He had been all along the mirror of self-denial; neither for himself, nor his brother, nor his son had he sought honor; he lived only for others, and never for himself; and his death was agreeable with his whole life, for he leads others to the border of Canaan, but enters it not himself. He sleeps with the older nation; he ends his career on the hither side of Jordan, like all the generation which he had numbered when they came out from under the iron hand of the Egyptian tyrant. It seemed fit that one so identified with the people should say, "Where you die I will die." Are not we satisfied to take our lot with the holy men and women who already sleep in Jesus?

Moreover, Moses might be well content to die there and then, since he was thus *released from all further trial*. Surely he had known enough of sorrow in connection with that rebellious nation! Forty years was enough for a pastorate over a people so fickle and perverse. Surely he must have blessed the hand that removed his shoulder from the burden! His was no life of luxury and ease, but of stern self-denial, and perpetual provocation. What trial he endured! What self-restraint he exercised! What a lonely life he led! Are you surprised to hear me say that? With whom

could he associate? Even Aaron, his brother, was a poor comrade for such a man. Remember how he failed Moses, when that man of God was absent for forty days upon the Mountain with God? It was Aaron that made the golden calf, and this clearly proved his spiritual inferiority to Moses. The man of God had to watch even his brother who stood next to him. With whom could he take counsel? Who would talk with him as a friend? He dwelt apart, and shone as a lone star. It is significant that he died alone, for so had he lived. Aaron had tender attendants to disrobe him, he who put the vestments on most fitly aided to take them off, but the crown which Moses wore, God Himself had set upon his brow, and no human hand must remove it. Surely this burdened watcher of Israel must have been glad when his watch was over! Surely this lonely man, after one hundred and twenty years of service, must have felt it a happy release to be admitted to the glorious society of heaven! As Noah was a preacher of righteousness for one hundred and twenty years, and then entered into the ark, so Moses, after one hundred and twenty years of service, enters into his rest. Is it not well? Do you grieve that the battle is fought, and the victory is won forever? We also in our deaths shall find the end of toil and labor, and the rest will be glorious.

Remember, that by his so dying, in the next place he was *relieved from a fresh strain upon him,* which would have been involved in the conquest of Canaan. He would have crossed the Jordan, not to enjoy the country, but to *fight* for it; was he not well out of so severe a struggle? You think of the clusters of Eshcol, but I am thinking of the sieges and the battles. Was it so very desirable to be there? Would Moses really have desired that dreadful fray? Was it not a gracious act on the part of the Commander-in-Chief to relieve from his command a veteran who had already served through a forty years' war? The Lord would not put upon Moses a burden so little agreeable to his age and to his turn of mind as that of executing the condemned Canaanites. Joshua was naturally a man of war; let him use the sword, for Moses was abler at the pen. Recollect that the people of Israel were no better when they reached Canaan than when they were in the wilderness; they suffered defeat through unbelief, and they missed much of their inheritance through self-indulgence. Moses had seen enough of them on one side Jordan, without being troubled with them on the other. The Lord therefore graciously took His servant off the active list, and promoted him to a higher sphere. Let us not be distressed by the fact that He will one day perform the like kindness to us in our turn.

"But," you will say "surely it might have been as well if Moses had lived to have seen Joshua win the country." Would this have been desirable? Do active men find much delight in sitting still and seeing others take the lead? Moreover, had Moses lived, he would before long have felt those infirmities from which he had for one hundred and twenty years, been screened; is it so very desirable to survive one's powers, and to be a tottering old man amidst constant battles? Peace suits age, age agrees not with war's alarms. Had Moses remained the leader of the people, he might have injured the glory of his former days. Have we not seen aged men survive their wisdom? Have not their friends wished that they had closed their career long before? Have we not seen pastors, once able and

efficient, holding to their pulpits to the injury of the churches they once edified? Oh that man would have wisdom enough not to undo in their age what they have worked in their youth! Moses is removed before this evil can happen to him, and it is well.

"But," you say, "Perhaps he might have been there to watch with joy the victories of Joshua." Is that always an easy thing to one who has been in the front rank himself? At least, it is not an unmixed privilege; there is a mixture of trial in the blessing. Moses did not "lag superfluous on the stage." He did not survive his work. Who wishes to do so? He passed away on the crest of the wave before any ebb had set in, or any weakness had been discoverable. He died so as to be missed. Israel wept for him, and no man said that he had lived too long. That prayer of his, after all, was a mistake. What would have been the particular joy of merely treading the soil of Canaan? The land looked far more beautiful from Pisgah than it would have done had he stood by Jericho; assuredly at the present day you and I, who have never seen Palestine, have a much more delightful idea of it than those who have endured its noonday heats and midnight frosts. Moses had more joy in gazing upon it from above than in actually warring among its hills.

IV. I must hasten on to say that while the death of Moses thus exhibits the loving wisdom of God, the way in which he died abundantly displays THE GRACE OF GOD.

After Moses had been well assured that he must die, you *never hear a complaint of it,* or even a prayer against it. Remember, that he himself wrote the story, and it is charming to see how he recorded his own fault, his prayer to be allowed entrance into Canaan, and its denial; had he murmured he would have recorded this also. He seems to me always to write about Moses as if he were somebody he had known; he is strictly impartial in his praise or blame of himself. He calls himself "king in Jeshurun," he says that the man Moses was very meek, and yet he records his outbursts of anger. No man was ever less self-conscious or lived so little for himself, as Moses did; therefore, when once the Lord told him he must die, he acquiesced without a word.

Most fitly the old man immediately *called forth all his energies to finish his work*. You will find in the thirty-first chapter of the Book of Numbers that he took in hand a war, "And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites: afterward shall you be gathered unto your people" (Num 31:1, 2). He would die warring with Israel's adversaries, and obeying Israel's Lord. Certain ordinances to be observed in war he delivered to Eleazar, and he supervised the division of the spoils. Fearing lest the tribes which had settled east of Jordan might excuse themselves from future labors, he stirred up Reuben and Gad, and gained from them a promise to go over armed with their brethren till the whole land was conquered. Furthermore, he prepared his manuscripts, not for the press, but to be put away in the ark and to be preserved. He would have his testimony to future generations complete before his hand was paralyzed by death. He knew that he was to die, but he did not sit down and weep, nor sulk, nor give himself up to bitter forebodings of the hour of departure. He served his God with increased vigor, and was more than ever alive as life neared its close. Then he preached

his best sermon. What a wonderful sermon it was! How he poured out his heart in pleading with the people! The sermon over, he began to sing. The swan is fabled to sing but once, and that just before it dies; so did Moses at the last give us that famous ninetieth Psalm, the song commencing, "Give ear, O you heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass. Because I will publish the name of the Lord: ascribe you greatness unto our God." Moses had no time for poetry while his whole strength was needed in his government, but now he is about to die his frame of mind is ecstatic; prose will not content him, he must weave his thoughts into verse. In fine, all the faculties of his manhood were drawn out to their utmost in a final effort to glorify the Lord his God. Brethren, is not this a fine fruit of grace? Oh that we may bear it!

Then he gathered the tribes together and blessed them in prophetic words, pouring out his soul in benedictions. Having already cried to God about his successor, he laid his hands upon Joshua, and charged him, and encouraged him, and bade the people help him in all his service.

He did all that remained to be done, *and then went willingly to his end—*

"Sweet was the journey to the sky,
The wondrous prophet tried.
'Climb up the mount,' says God, 'and die';
The prophet climbed, and died.
Softly his fainting head he lay
Upon his Maker's breast;
His Maker kissed his soul away,
And laid his flesh to rest."

We, my brethren, also expect to die. Let us not fear it, but let us awaken ourselves to labor more abundantly; let us preach more boldly, let us sing more sweetly, let us pray more ardently. As flowers before they shed their leaves pour out all their perfumes, so let us pour out our souls unto the Lord. Let us live while we live, and dying, let us die unto the Lord. May our life-work close as sets the sun, looking greater when he sinks into the west than when he shines at full meridian height!

V. Now let us conclude by noticing, in the last place, that Moses died, "according to the word of the Lord," that is, ACCORDING TO THE DIVINE FAVOR.

His death leaves nothing to regret, neither is any desirable thing lacking. Failing to pass over Jordan seems a mere pin's prick, in presence of the honors which surrounded his departing hours. His death was the climax of his life. He now saw that he had fulfilled his destiny, and was not as a pillar broken short. He was ordered to lead the people through the wilderness, and he had done so. There they stood on the borders of their heritage, a people molded by his hand. By his instrumentality they were, so to speak, a regenerated race, far more fitted than their fathers to become a nation. The degrading results of long bondage had been shaken off in the free air of the desert. They were all young men, vigorous, hardy, and ready for the fray. It is grand to pass away while there is nothing of infirmity yet seen, nothing left undone, and nothing allowed to

fail through too long persistence in office. We may say of Moses that he did—

"His body with his charge lay down,
And cease at once to work and live."

Moreover, his successor was appointed, and was just below in the plain. It was not his son, but it was his servant who had become his son at length. He did not leave his flock to be scattered, his building to be thrown down. Happy Moses, to see his Joshua! Happy Elijah, to see his Elisha! No trembling, for the ark of the Lord mars such a departure. The succession of workers lies with the Master, not with the workers. We are to train men "who can teach others also," but our own special work we must leave with the Lord. Yet as Paul was glad for Timothy, so must Moses have rejoiced over Joshua, and felt in his appointment a release from care.

He died, moreover, in the best company possible. Some men expire most fitly in the presence of their children; their strength has laid in their domestic duties and affections, and their children fitly close their eyes, but for the man Moses there was no true kindred. You hear that he married an Ethiopian woman, but you know nothing about her. You know that he had sons, but you do not hear a word about them except their names; their father was too engrossed in honoring his God to crave office for them. As we have seen, he lived as to men, alone, and as to men he died alone. But God was with him, and in the peculiarly near and dear society of God he closed his life on the lone peak. If he suffered any weakness no mortal eye beheld it. So far as his people were concerned, "he was not, for God took him." Pisgah was to him the vestibule of heaven. God met him at the gates of Paradise.

As he died, the sweetness of his last thought was indescribable. Before his strengthened eye, there lay the goodly land and Lebanon. The Lord showed him all the land of Gilead unto Daniel. Yonder is Carmel, and beyond it he sees the gleam of the utmost sea. Through breaks of the mountains he sees Bethlehem and Jebus, which is Jerusalem. Then, like Abraham, he saw the Day of Christ, and by faith beheld the track of the incarnate God. Your land, O Immanuel, appeared before him, and he saw it in all its spiritual bearings. What a vision! Yet even this melted into a nobler view. As we have seen in our childhood by the light of the magic lantern one view dissolve into another, so did the lower scene gradually melt away into another, and the servant of the Lord found himself removed from the shadows which his eye had seen into the realities which eyes cannot behold. He had gone from Canaan below to Canaan above and from the vision of Jerusalem on earth to the joy of the City of Peace in glory. The Rabbis say that our text means that Moses died at the mouth of God, and that his soul was taken away by a kiss from the Lord's mouth. I do not know, but I have no doubt that there was more sweetness in the truth than even their legend could set forth. As a mother takes her child and kisses it, and then lays it down to sleep in its own bed, so did the Lord kiss the soul of Moses away to be with Him forever, and then He hid his body we know not where. Whoever had such a burial as that of Moses? Angels contended over it, but Satan has failed to use it for his purposes. That body was not lost, for in due time it appeared on

the Mount of Transfiguration, talking with Jesus concerning the greatest event that ever transpired. Oh that we also may pass away amid the most joyful prospects, heaven coming down to us as we go up to heaven! May we also attain unto the resurrection from among the dead, and be with our Lord in His glory!

Soon our turn shall come. Do we dread it? As we are favored to serve our Lord we shall be favored to be called home in due season. Let us always be ready, yes, joyfully ready. When we are dying we shall see not the land of Naphtali and Ephraim, but the covenant, and the infinite provisions of its promises will be spread out before our soul, as Canaan at the feet of Moses. Wrapt in happy enjoyment of precious promises, we shall with surprise find ourselves ushered into the place where the promises are all fulfilled—

"There shall we see His face,
And never, never sin,
But from the rivers of His grace,
Drink endless pleasures in."

To the believer it is not death to die. Since Jesus has died and risen again, the sting of death is gone, therefore let us prepare ourselves to climb where Moses stood, and view the landscape o'er. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
NUMBERS 20:1-13; DEUTERONOMY 3:21-28; 32:48-52; 34:1-12.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—912, 876, 875.

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PLAIN GOSPEL FOR PLAIN PEOPLE
NO. 1967

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 12, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For this commandment which I command you this day, it is not hidden from you, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? is it beyond the sea, that you should say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very nigh unto you, in your mouth, and in your heart, that you may do it." Deuteronomy 30:11-14.

OUR Lord Jesus Christ, in John's gospel, in the forty-sixth verse of the fifth chapter, says, "Moses wrote of Me." Hence we may safely interpret much that Moses said, not only of the law, but also of the gospel; indeed, the law itself was given primarily to drive men to the gospel, it was meant to show them the impossibility of salvation by their own works, and so to shut them up to a salvation which is available even for sinners. The types of sacrifice and purification pointed to the method of pardon for the guilty by faith and acceptance for sinners by a righteousness, not their own. This is certainly one of the passages in which Moses wrote of the Savior yet to come.

We are not, however, left to conjecture this, for the apostle Paul, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, has quoted this passage in the tenth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. He has given us a sort of paraphrase of it, not quoting it with verbal exactness, but giving its sense, and then inserting his own interpretation of that sense, which interpretation, seeing that he spoke under the direct influence of the Spirit of God, may be accepted as decisive. The Spirit of God best knew what He meant by the words which He spoke by Moses. Even if Moses himself may not altogether have meant the same, the Spirit's own meaning must stand. I believe, however, that Moses did intend that which Paul attributes to him, and that he saw in the whole revelation of God under the ancient dispensation the spirit, the essential spirit, of the gospel, which was more fully declared to us by our Lord Jesus Christ. In this instance he was not speaking of the law as given upon Sinai, if we view it as a covenant of works. I showed you this by reading the first verse of the twenty-ninth chapter, which is the preface to the passage now before us. There we read, "These are the words of the covenant, which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, *beside the covenant which He made with them in Horeb."* We must understand Moses to be speaking now of God's way of salvation as it is set forth in the types, and sacrifices, and ordinances of the Mosaic dispensation—which Paul calls, "the righteousness of faith." Paul interprets him

as speaking of the gospel itself, and using these remarkable words concerning salvation by grace.

What is meant by these words is this—that the way of salvation is plain and clear, it is not concealed among the mysteries of heaven, "It is not in heaven, that you should say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it?" Neither is it wrapped up among the profundities of deep, unrevealed secrecy, "Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it?" But the way of salvation is brought home to us, given to us in a handy form, and laid within grasp of our understanding; it is spoken to us in human language, and brought within the compass of human emotions. We can speak it with our mouths, and enjoy it with our hearts. It is a household treasure, not a foreign rarity. It is not so remote from us that only they can know it that travel far to make discoveries, neither is it so sublimely difficult that only they can grasp it that have soared to heaven and ransacked the secrets of the book sealed with seven seals. It is brought to our doors like the manna, and flows at our feet like the water from the rock. It is, as Moses says, "very near to us;" yes, very near to each one who hears the gospel, for Moses puts it in the singular, "It is very nigh unto *you,* in your mouth, and in your heart, that you may do it."

I. And so I begin my discourse this morning with this first head, THE WAY OF SALVATION IS PLAIN AND SIMPLE. You have neither to look skyward nor seaward to find it out; here it is before you, near as your tongue, inseparable from you as your heart. You have neither to rise to the sublime, nor sink to the profound, it lies before you an open secret. As says Moses in the last verse of the previous chapter, "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever."

I think *we might have expected this if we consider the nature of God,* who has made this wonderful revelation. When God speaks to a man with a view to his salvation, it is but natural that in His wisdom He should so speak as to be understood. It is not wisdom which leads teachers to become obscure, if they teach at all, they should adapt themselves to the disciple's capacity. No doubt some men have obtained a reputation for wisdom because they have not been understood, but this was fictitious, and unworthy of true men. If they had possessed the highest wisdom, they would have aimed at making matters clear when their objective was to instruct. As a general rule, when a speaker is not clear to his hearers it is because the thought is not clear to himself. This can never be supposed of Him who knows all things, and sees all things as they are. The only wise God abounds to us in all wisdom and prudence in His manner of imparting to us the knowledge of His will; teaching, He does teach, and explaining, He does clearly explain. There may be, and there is, a sinful dullness in the minds of sinful men, but there is no such obscurity in the revelation itself as to excuse men for this blindness. God, who is infinitely wise, would not give to us a revelation upon the vital point of salvation, and then leave it so much in the dark that it was impossible for common minds to comprehend it if they desired to do so.

God adapts means to ends, and does not allow men to miss of heaven from lack of plainness on His part.

We expect a plain and simple revelation, because God has made a revelation perfectly adapted for its end, upon which no improvement can be made. You must have noticed that when an invention first comes before the public eye, it is almost always complicated, and the reason for this lies in the fact that it is as yet in its infancy. As the invention is improved it is simplified. Almost every alteration in a piece of machinery which goes towards its perfecting, goes also towards making it simpler, and at the last, when the invention is complete, it is singularly simple. That which comes from the mind of God, being perfect, goes directly towards its desired end. I admit that certain parts of the divine revelation are hard to be understood, but these are intended for our education, that we may exercise our minds and thoughts, and may by the guidance of the Holy Spirit grow thereby. But in the matter of salvation, where the life or death of a soul is concerned, it is needful that the vision should be plain, and our wise and gracious Lord has condescended to that necessity. In all that concerns repentance and faith, and the vital matters of pardon and justification, there is no obscurity, but all is plain as a walking stick. He that runs may read, and he that reads may run.

You might have expected this from God, because of His gracious condescension. When He deigns to speak with a trembling seeker, it is not after the manner of the incomprehensible doctor, but after the manner of a father with his child, desirous that his child should at once know his father's mind. He makes the way so plain that the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein. He breaks down His great thoughts to our narrow capacities, He has compassion on the ignorant, and He becomes the teacher of babes. Truly the knowledge which the Lord our God imparts to us is in itself sublime, but His manner of teaching is gentle, for He comes with precept upon precept, and line upon line, here a little and there a little. He does not come down to us half-way, but He stoops to men of low estate, and while He hides these things from the wise and prudent, He reveals them unto babes, "Even so Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight."

Remember, my brethren, that our great Lord always takes care that there shall be no provision made for the pride of men. The pride of intellect He hates as much as any other pride. No flesh shall glory in His presence. He takes the proud in their own craftiness, while He lifts up the humble and the meek, therefore, we may expect that He will speak in terms that shall be open to shepherds and fishermen, whom others call unlearned and ignorant men, lest the wise men of this world should exalt themselves over the humbler sort. It is no design of the Lord God Almighty that a class of self-constituted superior persons should monopolize the blessings of the gospel through the truths of revelation being wrapt up in learned terms which the vulgar cannot understand. The various systems of idolatry endeavored to surround their false teaching with a mystic secrecy, but the word of our God is a revealer of things hidden from the foundation of the earth. We may be sure that when God deals with men He will do nothing which shall cause human wisdom to boast itself. None shall glory that, after all, their culture was the one thing

needful to make the gospel of God effectual. Philosophy shall not pitch its tent in Immanuel's land and cry, "I am, and there is none beside me." It is after the manner of God, who bows down to the humble and the contrite, that He should make His salvation the joy of the lowly. "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings have You ordained strength because of Your enemies." Those who know the living God do not wonder as they read such words as these, "For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For, after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

We might also expect simplicity when we remember the design of the plan of salvation. God aims distinctly by the gospel at the salvation of men. He bids us preach the gospel to every creature. It had needs be a simple gospel if it is to be preached to every creature. I thank God with all my heart that the sage is here put on a level with the child, for the gospel must be received by him as a little child receives it. If the grace of God is given to the least educated person in yonder village, he is as well able to receive the gospel as the most profound scholar in the university. Would any of you wish to have it otherwise? Could you be so inhuman? Must the gospel also be enclosed for an aristocracy? Must the cultured few be gratified at the expense of the ruin of the masses? God forbid. But it must be so unless the saving doctrine of the gospel can be perceived by the untutored many. Every generous heart delights to think that "the poor have the gospel preached unto them." Brethren, to save the many the truth must be very simple and easy to be understood, for the many are busy with needful labor. From morning to night their hands are going to earn the bread that perishes, their thoughts must largely be taken up with their daily toil. I grant you that many are too much engrossed with the poor cares of common life, but still, to a large extent, they will by needful occupations be shut out from close study and steady thought, and they must have a salvation which can be grasped at once, and held without the strain of perpetual debate. If men cannot be saved without weeks and months of careful study, they will certainly be lost. As good have no salvation as one which is beyond ordinary comprehension. Our working men need a gospel which can be heard and thought upon while they earn their daily bread. It should be clear as the sun, and simple as A B C, that they may see it, and then hold it in their memories. Give me a gospel which can be written in a line of a boy's copy book, or worked on a girl's sampler; a gospel which the humblest cottager may learn, and love, and live upon.

The mass of our fellow men are not only very busy, but from their poverty and other surroundings they never will attain to any high degree of education. We are thankful for all that is done by School Boards and other agencies, but these operate for the present world rather than for eternal and spiritual things. Men may learn all that books can teach them, and not be a jot nearer the knowledge of heavenly truth. Heavenly knowledge is of another sort, and is open to those who gain no certificates and pass no standards. Those who know their Bibles true, and find

therein the appointed Savior, have not reached that point by the learning of the schools, we may say of each one of them, "Blessed are you; for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you, but My Father which is in heaven." The word of life is meant for men as sinners, and not for men as philosophers, and hence the message is made plain and clear.

Moreover, we might expect the gospel to be very plain, because of the many feeble minds which otherwise would be unable to receive it. Remember the children. How glad we are that our boys and girls can know and receive the Savior who said, "Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not"! If in order to their salvation our children must all be learned divines, if they must understand the discussions of our monthly and fortnightly reviews before they can know the Lord, they are indeed in an evil case. Then might we close our Sunday schools, being convinced that the children must perish, or at least must wait until they reach a riper age. Would you have it so? O sirs! I am sure you would not; rather would you help to gather in the lambs.

Remember, also, that many return to feebleness of mind in their old age. How many who displayed considerable strength of intellect in middle life find their faculties failing them as their years multiply! We want a gospel which an old man can grasp when sight and hearing are failing him, when the memory is weakened, and the judgment is enfeebled. We want a gospel which can be laid hold upon in second childhood, otherwise our venerable sires will miss the staff on which they have leaned so long, and other aged persons who have reached the eleventh hour without faith in Jesus must be abandoned in despair. Would you have it so? There is not one among us that would so desire it.

Remember, once more, the many feeble intellects which are to be found on all hands—not imbecile, but still not intellectual; not without thought and reason, but yet with an exceedingly narrow range of understanding. Shall these be shut out by a complicated, philosophical gospel? We cannot think so. Rather do we bear testimony that we have known many persons strong in faith, giving glory to God, and well instructed in divine doctrine, although in the judgment of boastful wits they have been utterly despised. The gospel of our salvation saves the feeble-minded as well as the clever; it reaches the slow and dull as well as the quick and bright. Is it not well it should be so? The Lord has given a gospel which he may grasp who can scarcely grasp anything else. He has put before us a way of salvation, in which trembling feet may safely tread and find no cause of stumbling. Our gospel needs not that we soar upon wings of imagination up to the heaven of sublimity, nor dive with profound research into the unfathomable sea of mystery; the Lord has brought it near us, put it into our mouths, and laid it near our hearts, that we who are of the common sort may take it to ourselves and enjoy its blessings.

What think you, my friends, would become of the dying if the gospel were intricate and complex? How would even the saints derive consolation in death from a labyrinth of mysteries? We are called at times to visit persons who are in their last hours, passing to judgment without God and without hope. It is a sorrowful business. It is always a cause of trembling with us, when we have to deal with the impenitent upon the borders of the eternal world. But we would never visit another sick bed,

for we can never talk with another dying man with any hope, if we had not a gospel to take to such, which can be made plain even to those whose minds are bewildered amid the shadows of the grave. We need a gospel which a man may receive as he takes a draught of medicine, or, better still, as he takes a cup of cold water from the nurse at his bedside. We should expect, therefore, from the design of the gospel to save the many, and to save even the least intelligent of men, that it should be very simple, and so we find it.

Furthermore, dear friends, *we see that it is so, if we look at its result*s. "For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yes, and things which are not, to bring to nothing things that are." God's chosen are usually a people of honest and candid mind, who are willing rather to believe than to dispute. The Holy Spirit has opened their hearts; He has not made them subtle and quibbling. He has not put them upon the key of perpetual doubting, and coming at nothing, but He has tuned them to another note, namely, to incline their hearts and come unto the Lord Jesus, and hear that their souls may live. Hence it follows, that the mass of those who follow the Lord Jesus are not anxious to be numbered with the wise and the philosophical; they are content rather to be believers in revelation than proficient in speculation. To us the knowledge of Christ crucified is the most excellent of the sciences, and the doctrine of the cross is the loftiest of all philosophies. We had rather receive the word of our Lord as little children than be held in repute as "men of thought."

You shall find that those who have preached the gospel with the most acceptance, whatever their natural gifts and abilities, have almost always been persons who have preferred to use great plainness of speech. They have felt the gospel to be in itself so beautiful that to adorn it with meretricious ornament would be to dishonor it. They could say with Paul, "If our gospel is hid, it is hid to them that are lost." "We use great plainness of speech." We are not as Moses, who put a veil over his face. True servants of God take away every veil that they can remove and labor to set forth Christ evidently crucified among the people. The more they have done this, the more has God been pleased to own their message to the conversion of souls.

But, Beloved, I need not argue from what we expect or see, I bid you *look to the revelation itself,* and see if it is not near unto us. Even in the days of Moses, how plain some things were! It must have been plain to every Israelite that man is a sinner, otherwise why the sacrifice, why the purgations and the cleansings? The whole Levitical economy proclaimed aloud that man has sinned; all the Ten Commandments thundered out this truth! They could not avoid knowing it. It was plain also that salvation is by sacrifice. Not a day passed without its morning and evening lambs. All the year round there were special sacrifices by which the doctrine of atonement by blood was clearly declared. It was written clear as a sunbeam, "without shedding of blood there is no remission." Plain

enough also was the doctrine of faith, for each bringer of a sacrifice laid his hand upon the victim, confessing his sin, and by that act he transferred his sin to the offering. Thus faith was typically described as that act by which we accept the propitiation prepared of God, and recognize the God-given Substitute. It was also clear to every Israelite that this cleansing was not the effect of the typical sacrifices themselves, otherwise they would not have been repeated year by year and day by day, for as Paul well puts it, the conscience being once purged, there would be no necessity for further sacrifice. The remembrance of sin was made over and over again, to let Israel know that the visible sacrifices pointed to the real way of cleansing, and was meant to set forth that blessed Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world. In many ways the Jew was put off from resting in forms and ceremonies, and was directed to the inner truth, the spiritual substance, which is Christ. Equally clear it must have been to every Israelite that the faith which brings the benefit of the great sacrifice is a practical and operative faith which affects the life and character. Continually were they exhorted to serve the Lord with their whole heart. They were exhorted to holiness and warned against transgression, and taught to render hearty obedience to the commandments of the Lord. So that, dim as the dispensation may be considered to have been as compared with the gospel day, yet actually and positively it was sufficiently clear. Even then "the word was near" to them, "in their mouth and in their heart."

If I may say thus much of the Mosaic dispensation, I may boldly assert that *in the gospel of Christ the truth is now made more abundantly manifest*. Moses brought the moonlight, but in Jesus the sun has risen, and we rejoice in His meridian beams. Brethren, blessed are our eyes that we see, and our ears that we hear, things which prophets and kings in vain desired to see and hear. Now our Lord speaks plainly, and uses no proverb. In our streets we hear the gospel, and have no need to ride the sky or scour the sea to find it. This day we hear every man in his own tongue wherein he was born the wonderful works of God.

II. Secondly, THE WORD HAS COME VERY NEAR TO US. I want your earnest attention to this point. I beg those of you who are unconverted to hear with attention. To us all the gospel has come very near; to the inhabitants of these favored isles it is emphatically so. "The word is very near unto you, in your mouth." It is a thing which you can speak of; you have talked about it; you still talk of it. It is "familiar in your mouths as household words." Most of you are able to speak it to others, for you learned it in your catechisms, you repeated it to your Sunday school teachers. You sing it in your hymns; you read it in books, and tracts, and pamphlets, and you write it in letters to your friends. I am glad that you have it upon your tongues; the more it is so, the better; but how near it has come! Oh, that your tongue may also be able to say, "I believe it. I accept Jesus as my Savior. I avow my faith before men!" Then will it be nearer still. Oh, that God the Holy Spirit may graciously lead you to do so! The word of life is not a thing unknowable, and consequently unspeakable; it is a thing that can be spoken of by tongues like ours when we sit in the house or walk by the way. The great thought of God has come very near to us when it can be expressed in the speech of men. I

dare humbly, but boldly, to speak of my own ministry, and of you as my hearers that the word comes very near to you from this pulpit, for I have always aimed at the utmost plainness of speech and directness of address. There is not one among you but what may understand the gospel which you hear from me every Sabbath day. If you perish it is not for want of plain speaking. The word is on your tongue.

Moses also added, "and in your heart." By the heart, with the Hebrews, is not meant the affections, but the inward parts, including the understanding. My dear hearers, you can understand the gospel. That whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved, is not a dark saying. Salvation by grace through faith is a doctrine as plain as the nose on your face. That Jesus Christ gave Himself to die in the room and stead of men, that whosoever believes in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life, is a thing to be understood of the least educated under heaven. Moreover, the doctrines of the gospel are such that our inward nature bears witness to the truth of them. When we preach that men are sinners, your conscience says, "That is true." When we declare that there is salvation by sacrifice, your understanding agrees that this is a gracious mode by which God is just, and the justifier of him that believes. Even if you are not saved by it, you cannot help feeling that it is a system worthy of God that He should save, through the gift of His only-begotten Son as a sacrifice for sin. If you believe it, this gospel will appear so plainly true that every part of your nature will attest it. Many of us have accepted this way of salvation; now we love it and delight in it, and to us it seems the most simple, and at the same time the most sublime system that could be conceived of. Our heart drinks it in as Gideon's fleece drank in the dew. Our souls live on it, and in it, as the fish lives in the sea. We rejoice in the gospel as the flowers smile in the sun. How glad we are that we have not a gospel wrapped up in hieroglyphics, or entombed in cold metaphysics! It has entered our hearts; it dwells within us, and has become our bosom's Lord.

There are no difficulties and obscurities about the gospel except such as we, ourselves create. What we think to be its darkness is really our blindness. If you do not believe the gospel, why is it that you do not believe it? It is supported by the best of evidence, and it is in itself evidently true. The reason for your unbelief lies partly in the natural tendency of the human heart towards legalism. Human nature cannot believe in free grace. It is accustomed to buying and selling, and therefore it must bring a price in its hand; to have everything for nothing seems out of the question. The notion of a wage to be earned is natural enough, but that eternal life is the gift of God is not so readily perceived, yet so it is. I have heard that a missionary trying to make an Oriental understand salvation by grace, set it out in many ways to him and failed, until at last he cried, "Salvation is a *backsheesh* of the Almighty." Then the Eastern caught the idea. Eternal life is the free gift of God, which He bestows on men not because of anything in them, or anything that they have done, or felt, or promised, but because of His own infinite bounty, and the delight which He has in showing mercy. You cannot get the idea of grace into a natural man's head, it requires a divine surgical operation to open a way for this truth into our mercenary minds; yes it requires that we be made anew

before we will see it. That God freely forgives, and that He loves men solely and only because He is love, is a thought divinely simple, but our selfish prejudices refuse to accept it.

In many instances it is pride that makes the gospel appear so difficult. You cannot think that Jesus saves you, and that all you have to do is to accept His finished salvation. Like Naaman, you would prefer to do some great thing. You want to be something, do you not? Human nature craves to have a little hand in salvation—to feel something, to groan a certain time, or despair to a certain length, but when the gospel comes with the one message, "Believe and live," pride will not consent to be saved on such pauperizing terms. Yet so it is; accept it, and you have it; stretch out your hand and take what God most freely gives. The gospel itself is plain enough to a heart humbled by grace. When the scales of pride are removed from the eyes we see well enough. Alas for the unbelief that grows out of this pride, and out of our natural enmity against God! Man will believe anybody but his God. Any lie in the newspaper has legs with which to run round the world, but a grand truth that leaps from the lips of Jehovah Himself is made to limp in the presence of ungodly men. Unregenerate men cannot and will not believe their God. This is also caused by the love of sin. Those who do not wish to give up their favorite sins pretend the gospel is very difficult to understand, or quite impossible to accept, and so they excuse themselves for going on in their iniquity. After all, does any man really feel that it is right to throw the blame of his unbelief upon God? Do you dare to make the gospel the cause of your ruin? Do you ask pity for yourself, as if you could not help being an enemy to God, and a rejecter of His way of mercy? Do you murmur that you cannot see? Who has closed your eyes? There are none as blind as those who will not see, your blindness is willful. You do not understand; do you wish to understand? Nothing is as incomprehensible as that which we do not want to comprehend. If you do not desire to be reconciled to God, is it wonderful that you dream that God is unwilling to be reconciled to you? O soul, I beseech you, do not impute your damnation to your God, who in infinite goodness has brought His word so very near to you! Salvation is of the Lord, but damnation is of man only.

There I leave the matter. I can bring you to the water, but I cannot make you drink. May God the Holy Spirit apply to your hearts and consciences the important truth that, whether you enter it or not, "the kingdom of God has come near unto you!" O Lord, grant that none of these, my hearers, may put from them Your word, and count themselves unworthy of eternal life!

III. I close with this, that THE DESIGN OF THIS SIMPLICITY, AND NEARNESS OF THE GOSPEL IS THAT WE SHOULD RECEIVE IT. Observe how the text expressly words it—"The word is very near unto you, in your mouth and in your heart, *that you may do it."* "That you may do it." You, who have your Bibles open, will note that the twelfth verse finishes—"That we may hear it, and do it," The thirteenth verse also says, "That we may hear it and do it," that is twice; but when it comes to the third time, in the fourteenth verse, it is not, "That we may hear it and do it," but, "That we may do it." You have had enough of hearing, some of you; you have heard until your ears must almost ache with hearing. You

begin now to say, "It is the old story, we are always hearing that, and nothing else." Will you not go a step further, and be no longer hearers only? "Now, then, do it."

The gospel is not sent to men to gratify their curiosity, by letting them see how other people get to heaven. Christ did not come to amuse us, but to redeem us. His word is not written for our astonishment, but, "these are written, that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, you may have life through His name." Ever has the gospel a present, urgent, practical errand. It says to each man, "I have a message from God unto you." It cries, "Today!" and warns men not to harden their hearts. Observe again how the text puts its last address in the singular. You can *hear* it in the plural—"That *we* may hear it, and do it," but the actual *doing* is always in the singular—"That *you* may do it." I cannot come round to everybody in the Tabernacle, and take a seat by your side for a minute, but I wish I could do so, and put my hand on every unconverted person and say, "The word is very near unto you, in your mouth, and in your heart, that you may do it."

As the word of the Lord is not sent to gratify curiosity, so also it is not sent to coolly inform you of a fact which you may lay by on the shelf for future use. God does not send you an anchor to hang up in your boat-house, but, as you are already at sea, he puts the anchor on board for present use. The gospel is sent us as manna for today, to be eaten at once. It is to be our spending money as well as our treasure.

Oh, my hearer, as you are a dying man, I charge you to accept at once the present salvation, so that you may at once do what the word requires of you.

It is not even sent to you merely to make you orthodox in opinion as to religious matters, although many persons seem to think that this is the one thing needful. Remember, that perdition for the orthodox will be quite as horrible as eternal ruin for the heterodox. It will be a dreadful thing to go to hell with a sound head and a rotten heart. Alas! I fear that some of you will only increase your own misery as you increase your knowledge of the truth, because you do not practice what you know. God save us from dead knowledge, and give us the gracious action which is the fruit of knowing, "That you may do it!"

Oh, that I could forego language now, and that my *heart* could speak in some mysterious inward fashion to your hearts! Oh, that the Holy Spirit would now incline each of you to serious personal attention to this matter! Oh, my hearer, you have come here to listen to me "that you may do it!" Oh, that it may be done!

What is to be done? There are two things to be done. First, that you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior. Take Him to be your sacrifice, trust Him wholly and alone from this time forth as your ransom from sin. Take Him to be your Lord as well as your Savior, yield yourself up to Him as your prophet, priest and king. Let Jesus be your all in all, and be you wholly His. The second thing is that you confess your Lord with your mouth. Avow yourself to be a believer in Jesus, and a follower of Him. Do this in His own way, for He has said, "He that believes, and is baptized, shall be saved." But let your confession be sincere, do not lie to the Lord. Confess that you are His follower, because you are indeed so,

and henceforth all your life bear His cross and follow Him. This is what you are to do; to yield yourself up to Him whom God has appointed to save His people from their sins.

"But," says one "I thought that there was a certain experience." Indeed there is an experience, but all true experience ends in this, in leading the heart to accept Christ as its Savior. "But I thought," says another, "that you would dwell at length upon the work of the Holy Spirit." I rejoice in that work, and will tell you a great deal about it at another time, but the chief work of the Holy Spirit is to strip you of yourself, and bring you to receive that simple word of God which is the subject of this morning's discourse. "Well," says one, "I grant you that it is simple, I think it is even too simple." I know it, I know it. And because it is so simple, therefore you kick against it. What folly! Hence you need the Holy Spirit to bring you to accept it. Sometimes you quarrel because it is too hard, and next because it is too easy. This shows how hard and stubborn a thing is the will of man. Almighty grace is required to bring you to accept your own salvation. To lead you to take Christ to be your Savior needs a miracle of grace! Let Him save you, that is all, but this is too much for our proud self-confidence. Oh, strange resistance, proving the deep depravity of man's nature, that he will not yield even to this! Again I say, the difficulty is not in the gospel, but in the man, whose evil heart will not receive the choicest gift of heaven. If you are willing to have Christ, Christ is yours. The fact that you are willing to receive Him proves that He has come to you. Believe that He is yours, and be at peace. If you will now bow before the Christ of God, and take Him, henceforth, to be your Savior, you are saved. The simple act of trusting Jesus has brought your justification, and your open confession of Him in His own appointed way shall bring you a fuller realization of salvation. By coming out on the Lord's side, you shall gather strength to overcome the sins which now beset you, and you shall be helped to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, because God is working in you to will and to do of His own good pleasure.

I will preach the gospel once more, and I have done. The apostle Paul, thinking of what Moses said about going up to the sky or down to the sea to find the sacred secret, says in effect, "That is right, Moses, there was a necessity for someone to come down, and an equal necessity for someone to go up, but that necessity exists no longer."

The whole gospel lies in this—there was One in heaven at the right hand of the Father, very God of very God and in order to save you, poor lost and ruined sinner, this adorable Son of God came down, down, down to the manger, to the cross, to the grave, to the lowest parts of the earth, and down in grief, in rejection, in agony, in death. Because He came under the weight and curse of sin, He came down indeed! Because Jesus has come down thus, and borne the punishment of sin, he that believes in Him is justified. By that coming down of the Lord from heaven the sinner's sin is put away and the transgression of the believer is forgiven. Do you believe this? Do you believe that Jesus bore your sins in His own body on the tree? Will you trust to that fact? YOU ARE SAVED! *Doubt it not.*

So far this clears you of sin. But it was necessary that we should not merely be washed from sin—for that would leave us naked—but that we should be clothed with righteousness. To that end our Lord Jesus rose again, and so came up from the depth. When our Redeemer had finished His going down, and so had made an end of sin, He had yet to bring in everlasting righteousness, and so He returned by the way which He went. He rose from the tomb, He rose from Olivet, He rose until a cloud received Him out of His apostles' sight, He rose through the upper regions of the air, He rose to the pearl gate, He rose to the throne of God where He sits as one who has accomplished His service, expecting until His enemies are made His footstool. His resurrection has brought to light our righteousness, and has covered us with it, so that at this moment every man that believes in a risen Savior is robed in the royal robes of the righteousness of God. "If you believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved." O brothers, live because Jesus lives, rise because He has risen, sit in heaven because He sits in heaven.

"He that believes is justified," so says the Scripture. Do you see this? I believe it, I believe it with my whole heart, and therefore I confess it before this multitude with my mouth, and I am saved. Will you believe and confess. Oh, that the blessed Spirit may bring you to this, this is the entrance into the way of eternal life. This is the dawn of a day which shall never die down into darkness. May the blessed Spirit bring you to this faith, and this confession, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
DEUTERONOMY 30 ROMANS 10:4-10.**

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—916, 488, 495.

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JUBILEE JOY; OR, BELIEVERS JOYFUL IN THEIR KING
NO. 1968

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 19, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King."
Psalm 149:2

YOUR streets will ring with joyous acclamations when the Queen and court pass through them to the Abbey, and well they may! The jubilee of a good and great Queen is an event to be celebrated with enthusiasm. Our hearts are fully in accord with those who bless and praise God for His goodness to this country in giving us fifty years of the peaceful reign of Victoria.

God save the Queen! None pronounce these words with a more emphatic meaning and fervor than we do this day. We not only do not grudge our fellow countrymen all the joy they have in their Queen, but we share with them to the full their loyalty and gratitude. Had we known what some countries have known of tyranny, war, or anarchy, we should have a much more vivid sense of the benefits bestowed upon us through the long and happy reign of our well-beloved Sovereign. Let us take care to blend a holy gratitude to God with our fervent patriotism. Be it ours to praise and bless the God who has sent us these favors. Wishing boundless blessings upon our earthly Queen, we ascribe all her prosperity and ours to that higher King from whom all blessings flow. Religion must ever sanctify loyalty. It would be idolatrous to think of the human and forget the divine. "Why should the heathen say, Where is now their God?"

But, brethren, let us learn from the citizens of an earthly kingdom to rejoice in our heavenly King. Let us elevate our fervor into the higher sphere. There is another King, one Jesus, and as believers in Him, we are more truly citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem than of any city or country upon earth. Our divine Lord has called out believers from among the sons of men to make them a peculiar people, a nation set apart unto Himself. The text, under the term "children of Zion," indicates all who fear God, put their trust in Him, and yield joyful service to His crown. *Are we "children of Zion?"* Do we glory in the one living and true God? Are we loyal to His Anointed, whom He has set as King upon His holy hill of Zion? This is the question for each man's heart and conscience. We must be "born again" before we can be the happy subjects of the King of Kings, for He is King of a spiritual nation, and by nature men are not spiritual. The carnal mind is enmity against God, and to become His friends we must receive new hearts and right spirits. We must be born into His kingdom by a heavenly birth, by the work of the Holy Spirit upon us, and

the token of this new birth is a child-like faith in the Lord Jesus. Let us ask ourselves whether we have kissed the scepter of Jesus, the Anointed Son of God. Do we believe and trust in Him, who is Prophet, Priest, and King to His people? Is He our bosom's Lord, sole monarch of our hearts? If so, we are called upon by the words of the text to be joyful in our King.

There have been kings in whom nobody could be joyful, they have been tyrannical, cruel, selfish, and their rule has oppressed their people. England has no such burden to bear. Under God our forefathers delivered us from despotism, and our Queen has faithfully observed those covenants which harmonize monarchy with liberty. For this may God be praised! Looking, however, to the higher sphere, we are joyful that Zion's King is of such a sort that His government is an unmingled blessing. There are gods many whom the nations have set up over themselves, but in none of them can their votaries rejoice. The worship of these false deities is one of dread and terror, and their adoration is more fitly paid in dirges than in songs. Our God is known as "the blessed God." He would have His people happy, and by His grace He makes them so. We rejoice in our King, because our King makes us rejoice. He bids us "come before Him with thanksgiving, and show ourselves glad in Him with psalms," and we willingly do so, because He is "our exceeding joy." Blessed religion, in which happiness has become a duty! Such is the character of our God and King, that—

"His nature and His works unite
To make His praises our delight."

I pray that the Holy Spirit may shed abroad the perfume of the "oil of joy" this morning. May the beauties and glories of our King charm us into delightful praise! Away with care and sorrow! Away with doubt and despondency! Let us praise the Lord upon the loud cymbals, let us praise Him upon the high-sounding cymbals. I pray the Holy Spirit the Comforter to produce in us the fragrant spikenard of holy joy, and may that holy joy, like the precious ointment of the woman who loved much, be all poured upon the person of our Lord and King!

I. In order that we may carry out the exhortation of the text, LET US BEGIN BY FEELING THAT THE LORD JESUS IS OUR KING. Alas! Many who should be of a better mind are forgetful of this truth, they are not joyful in their King, for they have not yet learned His sovereignty.

Brethren, Jesus must have the pre-eminence among men, since *He is in person and character pre-eminent.* Who among the sons of the mighty can be compared unto the Lord? When the princes of the earth are gathered in their glory, which among them can be named in the same day with the Prince of Peace? Jesus is the best, therefore is He the chief. His person and character wear about them a superlative majesty; let every hand present a crown to Him. "He is the standard bearer among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely." Since the Lord Jesus has no equal or even rival, He is a born King, and were not men most blind and foolish, they would all salute Him with loyal homage. From every corner of the globe if men were unfallen, there would arise the cry—

"Bring forth the royal diadem
And crown Him Lord of all."

Our King not merely has the power but the right to reign, He is in Himself royal. As Saul, the first King of Israel, was head and shoulders above all other Israelites, so is our Lord and King higher than all others in an infinitely nobler sense, for in dignity of nature and glory of character He surpasses all. Let us distinctly recognize that Christ is infinitely above all others even of the saintliest, and wisest, and noblest. He is not one among many great teachers, He is Himself *the truth*. He is not one star in a constellation, but the one light from which all lights are kindled. As the sun at his appearing causes the stars to hide themselves for very shame, so does all excellence and honor veil before the superior brightness of our Lord Jesus. He alone can claim universal sovereignty by right of indisputable pre-eminence.

When we have remembered that He is thus the best and noblest, let us recollect that *to each believer He is a King to be obeyed*. He said, "You call Me Master and Lord, and you say well, for so I am." It is easy to think of Christ as a Savior, and yet to forget that He is Lord, but the thought is as evil as it is easy. The doctrine of justification by faith alone is a most important truth, it is the vital essence of the gospel, but it must never be dissociated from the fact that He who saves us must reign over us. When His blood cleanses us His love rules us. He saves us from our sins, thus recovering us from our rebellions and revolts into a happy loyalty, which finds its delight in obedience to the divine will. Those who would have Jesus for their Redeemer must—

"Know, nor of the terms complain,
Where Jesus comes, He comes to reign:
To reign, and with no partial sway,
Lusts must be slain that disobey."

Do any of you accept the promises of our Lord and neglect His precepts? This is to sin against Him in a grievous manner. You proclaim yourselves rebels, and yet wish to share in the pardon which He brings. Is not this to act the part of hypocrites? Is His cross precious to you? How can it be if you turn your back on His crown? For once I will reverse a time-honored motto, and say, "No crown, no cross." Jesus will not be your Savior if you refuse to let Him be your Sovereign. You cannot have half of your Lord. He must be to you *Christ*—the Anointed King, or He will not be *Jesus* the gracious Savior. Do not attempt to divide your Lord's offices. The robe of Christ is without seam, and if even the rough soldiers cried, "Let us not tear it," we earnestly beg you not to tear it. Let us accept sanctification as well as justification, righteousness as well as peace, the cleansing water as well as the pardoning blood. If we have a special joy in Jesus in any one capacity more than another, let us be joyful in Him as our King. It should be bliss to us to be subject to His holy rule. If there seems anything hard about His claim of absolute sovereignty over heart, and lip, and life, why then at the very outset we are disqualified from rejoicing in our King. Let us entreat His Spirit to bring us under the rule of grace, until we yield our members instruments of righteousness, and every thought is brought into captivity to Jesus' love. O my brethren, it will be heaven to us when Jesus reigns over our entire nature as Lord of all.

Further, let us follow this thought into a region where it is much needed. *Jesus is King in the midst of His church.* How often is this truth overlooked! There are disputes about what ought to be believed and practiced in the church, and those disputes are settled by a court of law, or by reference to the Book of Common Prayer. No, sirs, this is not according to the kingdom of heaven, we fear it reveals a sad disloyalty to King Jesus. Secular courts have no authority in the kingdom of Jesus. In His realm He is Himself the supreme head, and the Bible alone is the one law-book. Certain Christians are fond of deciding questions by the practice of the early church, but we know no authority in the practice of any church when it quits the faith once for all delivered to the saints. The acts of the Lord Jesus and His apostles are precedents enough for us. Certain churches refer to the minutes of deceased leaders, or to the decisions of councils, or to the theological systems of eminent reformers, but all this is forgetfulness of the one supreme authority. We have no king in the church but Christ. The crown rights of Jesus must not so much as be questioned, or all loyal hearts are wounded. I wish that with sound of trumpet we could again proclaim our King today. There is but one head of the church and that head is Jesus Christ. There is but one law-book in the church, and that is the Holy Scripture, inspired of the Spirit of God. There is but one supreme center of unity in the church, and that is the living God, of whom, and by whom, and through whom, are all things. The divisions and schisms of this day are mainly due to those secondary authorities within the church which have to a sad degree obscured the supreme authority of our Lord. Would to God we could come back once more to "one Lord," for then we should also come back to "one faith and one Baptism!" There can be no unity in the church except in Jesus, and in obedience to His undivided rule. It is only under the Lord's own King that the promise shall be fulfilled, "And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all."

The sovereignty of our Lord must be observed not only by the church as a whole, but by each individual member of the church. We must not go beyond our Lord's commands. We are not legislators, but subjects. Officers of the church are administrators of Christ's law under Him, but they must not be makers of laws, or creators of doctrines, nor inventors of ceremonies. We may not amend His statutes; no, we may not cross a "t" nor dot an "i" apart from Him. Let this be sounded everywhere as with a trumpet—Jesus Christ is the head of the church, and sole King in the midst of His people. Distinctly recognize this, or you cannot rejoice in your King.

Another truth is also too much overlooked, namely, that *Jesus Christ is head over all things for His church.* His kingdom rules over all. All power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth. In truth, He is the blessed and only Potentate. The kings of the earth wear their crowns and sway their scepters by license from His throne. Propose what they may, they shall only fulfill His secret purpose and will. Fear not because of the great ones of the earth, for you have as your friend One who is greater than all. You look at cabinets, and you are distracted; you think of em-

perors and princes, and you are bewildered as you observe the windings of their diplomatic devices. Be comforted. There is one whose counsel governs councils, and whose kingdom rules over kings. All things are committed unto Him by His Father, and without Him shall not a dog move his tongue. The Father has given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as He has given Him. He has put all things under His feet. Clothed with honor and majesty, He waits till His enemies shall be made His footstool. To this thought I call your minds once again, that you may be encouraged amid the conflicts of the hour, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," even as this day He gives it to His Son.

Jesus will be seen to be King in the day of His second advent. If you will listen, and your ears have been opened, you may hear this day the trumpet which announces His speedy arrival. "Behold the bridegroom comes; go you out to meet Him," is the voice of these latter days to a church that slumbers. Both wise and foolish virgins sleep. The midnight starts at this clarion note, "He comes! He comes!" "He shall reign in Mount Zion before His ancients gloriously." Behold He comes as King to judge the earth in righteousness, and His people with equity. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." We are to look for this, and to pray for this, saying every day in our prayers, "Your kingdom come. Your will be done in earth, as it is in heaven; for Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever."

O you saints, at this hour set your Lord on His throne! You have seen Him in His crimson vesture, bowing in the garden of His agony; you have seen Him "despised and rejected of men"; you have seen Him on the tree of doom. Dry your eyes. He is no more the "man of sorrows," nor the "acquaintance of grief"; heaven adores Him, He has gone up to His throne again amid the hosannas of the angels and the hallelujahs of the redeemed. Let us praise and adore Him this day. We sang "Crown Him, crown Him," but we thought not of any visible pageantry, we can make no gallant show for Him! What if we could? What honor could our pomp confer on Him? He, in Himself alone, far transcends all the splendor that ever was devised of the intellect, or pictured by the imagination. But you can crown Him in your hearts today as King. Salute Him with the intense devotion of your souls. Render Him those deep-throated praises of which we read in this psalm, if we note the margin—"Let the high praises of God be in their throats." My soul adores the Lord Jesus, and blesses Him with all her strength in fullness of delight. Let the children of Zion fully recognize their King, that they may be joyful in Him.

II. Secondly, LET US GO ON TO STUDY HIS ROYAL CHARACTER, that we may be helped to be joyful in Him. Was there ever such a Prince as our Emmanuel, if we think of His person, His pedigree, His descent, His nature? This King of ours is not only the flower and crown of manhood, but He is also very God of very God. He is God over all, blessed forever, the Son of the Highest. What a wondrous nature is that of Jesus, our Lord! Perfect manhood is in itself wonderful, we have never seen it, and never shall see it till we are taken up to behold Him as He is. Perfect humanity, as seen in the glorified Jesus, is the wonder of the skies. In the character of Jesus there is neither deficiency nor redundancy, He is

without spot, and without lack. In Him is perfect humanity, steeped in love. His life is love. He is love. He lives as the head of the new Covenant, as the second Adam, the Father of the new-born race. Think of Him in that light, and then link His humanity in your minds with His Godhead, without confusion of idea. In Jesus we do not see humanized Godhead, or deified manhood, but He is distinctly God and distinctly man, yet both of these are in one Person, and must neither be confounded nor severed. Was there ever such a King! Among the shining ones the brightest cannot be His comrade. "To which of the angels said He at any time, You are My Son; this day have I begotten You?" Though He is reckoned among men, and is thus said to be "anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows," yet to whom else but Him could it have been said, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever." "When Jehovah brings in the first-begotten unto the world He says, Let all the angels of God worship Him." Think of your King in His Person, and rejoice in Him. My words fail to express my inward joy in that divine Lord, who is not ashamed to call us brethren. I sit down at His dear pierced feet, now sandled with eternal light, and I feel a sweet content, yes, an overflowing joy. I see a world of wonders meeting in my Lord—heaven come down to earth, and earth raised up to heaven, and I am joyful in my King.

We further follow our Lord joyfully as we think of *His deeds of love to us*. Well may we be joyful in our King, since His loving-kindness to us has exceeded all bounds. The true splendor of kings lies not in what their people do for them, but in what they do for their people, and herein our Lord excels all the princes that ever lived. He took our nature, and was born a babe in Bethlehem. He did more than that, He lived among us, and bore the brunt of poverty, hunger, homelessness, contempt, and treachery. He died for us. Having given up for us His last garment, for they stripped Him at the cross, He then gave up Himself. With tenderness we can each say, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." How royal was His love when the cross was its throne! What a crown was that which was made of thorns! What a scepter was that which was held in His pierced hand! I call *this* real kingship. All else is mere stage-play. O sovereign love! Incarnate in Jesus, you are imperial! Behold your King! Not only does He bleed beneath the lash of man, but He also bows beneath the bruises of His Father's justice, and cries, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" I beseech you, O loyal hearts, by the bitterness of your King's agony, be joyful in Him! If He loved you so, can you refuse to rejoice in Him? He has poured out His heart for His people, that He might redeem them unto Himself; shall we not be glad in Him? Our acclamations shall all be given to Him who has proved His greatness and His goodness, not by a largess of gold, but by the gift of Himself.

When He had given this supreme proof of love, He was not satisfied yet. Having slept in the grave a while, He awoke, and left His sepulcher, but He did not leave His love, He arose to meet His followers, and nerve them for future service. After a while, when He had manifested Himself to them in most familiar ways, He rose to heaven, a cloud receiving Him out of their sight, then He changed His place, but He did not change His love. Ah, no! He went into heaven bearing the pledges of His affection in His hands, and feet, and side. He entered glory to carry on His intercession

within the veil. His royal life is now spent in pleading for transgressors. All His thoughts are of His people, all His power is for His people, all His glory is in His people. I pray you, think not of my Lord and King according to the measure of my faltering speech, but joy in Him according to that love of His which passes knowledge—

"Love which will not let Him rest
Till His people all are blest:
Till they all for whom He died
Live rejoicing at His side."

Let us think a moment further of *the glorious achievements of our King,* that we may the more fully be joyful in Him. This King of ours has fought for us, and won great victories on our account. Our King met the battalions of our sins in conflict. He encountered Satan, that tremendous foe. He fought hand to hand with death itself. The shock of battle was terrible. The sun was darkened, the earth shook, even the dead arose from their sepulchers to behold the war. Our hero stood alone, "of the people there was none with Him"; yet He trampled down all our enemies as the treader of grapes crushes the clusters in the winepress. Thus He made an end of sin, broke the head of the old dragon, and put death itself to death, and led our captivity captive. Behold He comes from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah, traveling in the greatness of His strength, mighty to save! Shall we not salute Him with hosannas? Will we not be joyful in Him? Daughters of Jerusalem, will you not go forth to meet Him, even as the maidens of old went forth to meet young David when he returned with Goliath's head? Will you not also sing, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." Remember how Miriam and the virgins sounded their timbrels at the Red Sea, and spoke saying, "Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously!" In like joyous manner sing unto the Lord your King, and magnify His name.

It should stir you to enthusiasm to think of *the principles of His government,* for they are fountains of peace and purity. Jesus founded His empire upon love, and His own self-sacrifice is the corner stone of that Imperial fabric. His action is always love, and His teaching is always love. As He loved us and gave Himself for us, so His golden rule is that we do to others as we would that they should do to us. This is sadly forgotten even by some who call themselves Christians, but if this principle once took possession of men's minds, we should have no schemes of the poor to rob the rich, and no greed on the part of the rich by which they grind down the poor. If our King were obeyed, man would no longer be man's worst enemy, but the bands of brotherhood would unite mankind in a league of mutual sympathy. If we heard our Lord say, "A new commandment I give unto you, That you love one another," and if we practiced that commandment, what a kingdom of heaven should we see upon the face of the earth! Let us trust and hope and pray that it may yet be so. Oh for the time when the Shepherd King shall judge the poor and needy, and break in pieces the oppressor! "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth." His blessed principles of truth and love should make His people joyful in Him.

I think I might appeal to every Christian here, and say, *you have personal reasons for being joyful in your King;* you love Him because He has

first loved you. He has been wondrously condescending to all His saints and to us among them. Many a time has He appeared unto us, and said, "I have loved you with an everlasting love." He has brought us into His banqueting house, and His banner over us has been love. We ought to be joyful in Him for His love to others, but if not, we should be worse than brute beasts if we did not rejoice in Him for His love to ourselves. O my brethren, be joyful in Him. What do you know about any other king compared with what you know of King Jesus? On His bosom you have leaned, and His secret is with you, He has kissed you with the kisses of His lips, and His love is better than wine to you. He is your husband, you are married unto Him, and He calls you His Hephzibah, and says, "My delight is in her." "The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him, in them that hope in His mercy," wherefore in such a condescending King let the children of Zion rejoice.

III. I shall not detain you long while I touch upon a third point—LET US MARK THE BENEFITS OF HIS REIGN, which entitle Him to our highest regard this day.

For, first, remember that the nation over which He reigns *He has created*. "Let Israel rejoice in Him that made him." There was no Israel till God made Israel Israel, and there was no church over which Christ could reign, till He made His own church. He is the Father of the age in which He is King, the Creator of His own empire. Most kings inherit what other swords have won, but Jesus Himself with His own blood has purchased a kingdom to Himself. Each one of us must own for himself, and all of us together unitedly, that He has made us, and not we ourselves; by His sovereign grace He has chosen, and redeemed, and called, and sanctified us, therefore will we be joyful in Him.

Brethren, while our King has created His own Kingdom, *He has also, sanctified and sustained that kingdom*. That there is a church in the world at all is due to Jesus. We had gone back to chaos and old night if it had not been that His light is never dim. He whose sovereign word said, "Let there be light," still bids the light abide in the church to lighten those who come into the world. Yes, we each of us live through Him if we live unto God. He says, "Because I live, you shall live also." The church as a corporate body would cease to be was He not its continual life and strength. Let the streams rejoice in the fountain, let the walls of the temple be joyful in the foundation.

We ought to rejoice today in our King, because *it is He that has saved us and given us peace*. In the days of Solomon Israel had such peace that every man sat under his own vine and fig tree. But oh the peace our greater Solomon has given us! I was as restless once as those ever-flying birds which hover over the waters of the Golden Horn at Constantinople. They are never seen to rest, and hence men call them "lost souls." Such was I! I found no place for the sole of my foot till I knew the Lord Jesus. My soul was a dread battlefield of conflicting thoughts, a very Esdraelon, trodden by innumerable hosts of doubts and fears, but when my King came, then the enemy fled, and I found rest and joy. He is our peace. Jesus has given us the true Sabbath. Crown Him, then, as Prince of Peace, you once weary spirits who now joyfully abide in Him.

But, beloved, time fails me to speak of all the benefits our King has brought us. Is there anything that is needful which He has not given? Is there anything that is good that He has withheld? Have we any virtue? Have we any praise? Then not unto us, not unto us, but unto His name be the glory. Nor is it alone in the past and in the present that we are debtors, we look forward to a future of obligations. He will keep us from all the power of the enemy. He will secure His Zion from invaders, and fill her with the finest of wheat. Forever and ever will He preserve us, and be our guide even unto death. Again we say hallelujah, as we think how He loves unto the end.

In due time, He will remove our Zion and all its inhabitants to the land of cloudless day and unwithering flowers. A little while, and we shall be translated to the place where there is no more death, neither sorrow nor sighing. Our King has great things in store for His church. His best will be last, and His last will be best. Glory dwells in Emmanuel's land. In Him we possess earth and heaven, time and eternity. All things are ours in our King. All heaven lies at our feet. O you chosen, lift up your eyes to the east and to the west, to the north and to the south, all this land is yours in Him who is your Lord and King. Know no boundary to your expectation, for such a King to a people so beloved will give a heritage which shall be forever, and the bliss thereof shall know no limit.

IV. Very briefly in the next place, LET US BE JOYFUL, IN THE CONTINUANCE OF OUR REDEEMER'S REIGN. Fifty years is a long time for Her Majesty to have reigned. May her days yet be many! Fifty years as we measure life, is a long space, but fifty years in the measurement of human history is far less, and fifty years as compared with eternity is nothing. King Jesus has a kingdom of which there shall be no end. This is our joy that *the ages past have not taken away from the length of His reign*. So much the less has any king to reign as he has already reigned, but it is not so with Him, for still is the voice heard, even the same voice that made the Red Sea resound—"The Lord shall reign forever and ever. Hallelujah." Let us this day be right glad concerning our King, since He only has immortality, and therefore He will live forever. He communicates that immortality to all His people, and thus He is the undying King of an undying kingdom. True we shall pass through that river which is named Death, but it is a misnomer, like the Jordan when Israel passed into Canaan, the Lord has rebuked it, and it is dried up. We shall pass through the valley of the shadow of death, and that is all, and thus we shall reach a higher stage of being, in which we shall be "forever with the Lord." Shall not those whom the King has made to live be joyful that their King lives and reigns world without end?

Brethren, *the age of our King has not enfeebled Him*. John in vision saw Him with His head and His hair "white like wool, as white as snow," but to His well-beloved spouse He is not grey with age, for she sings of Him, "His locks are bushy and black as a raven." He is as youthful and vigorous as ever. His age is eternity, and eternity has not the fretting tooth of time. He is the same Christ still, as mighty in power as when He routed the hosts of hell. Let us be joyful in our King.

As to His kingdom, there is no fear of its failing. The gates of hell shall not prevail against it. His kingdom is one and indivisible, and His throne

shall never be shaken. There is no dynasty to follow His dynasty; no successor to take up the crown of our Melchisedec. My immortal spirit rejoices in the hope of rendering endless homage to the eternal King. He lives and reigns, and we shall find it the bliss of our endless life to serve Him day and night in His temple. In prospect of such bliss let us bestir ourselves to rejoice in our King with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

V. Once more, being joyful in our King LET US OBEY HIM WITH DELIGHT. Let us weave delights into our duties. When Moses' mother made the ark in which she placed her darling boy, she worked it in this holy fashion; she took a bulrush and a prayer, and plaited them together; every bulrush had a fervent prayer twisted with it, and so the ark was made of the prayers of a mother and the rushes of the Nile. How could the child be otherwise than safe? Let us take into our hands a duty and a thanksgiving, a precept and a praise. Let us make up our whole life of the intertwisting of duty and delight. Let us be holy and happy. Let us turn obedience into gladness. That which otherwise were drudgery we will exalt to a priestly sacrificing as we serve the Lord with gladness and rejoice before Him.

What a joy it would be to me if this midsummer morning some of you who have never owned this King should *begin to do so!* This is a high day and a day of glad tidings; the trumpets of jubilee load the air with music. Our king will forgive your former rebellions if now you turn to Him. He proclaims, today a general amnesty to all rebels. This day He grants a jail delivery to all prisoners of hope. You who have revolted may come back again; He will receive you graciously, and love you freely. He sits upon His holy hill in Zion, and He cries to you, "If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land." "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little; blessed are all they that put their trust in Him."

It would be a joy to me, on this the day of my birth, if it might also be the birthday of many a precious soul among those who hear me. Why should it not be so? The King is among us, come and adore Him. You never had such a Master as He will be to you! He will make you happy in His love. Trust Him and live forever. Oh, that some *young* friend would listen to this call!

Some of you have known Jesus many years, and have been professors for a long time. Perhaps you are getting into rather a dull state of mind. All elder brothers have not a pleasing character; do not become like to him in the parable that envied the returning prodigal. What a wretched temper he showed! He said, "Lo, these many years do I serve you, neither transgressed I at any time your commandment: and yet you never gave me a kid that I might make merry with my friends." "Oh," you say, "we are not in that state of mind." I am glad to hear it, but lest you should in future fall into that state, I would advise you often to make merry with your friends. If that elder brother had, every now and then, held a grand merry-making with his friends, he would never have been able to make such a wretched speech. He was such a steady old plodder that he always kept to his work, and never had a thought about rejoicing in his home and his father. Work without joy is not good for us. What the old proverb says concerning "all work and no play," is true of all service and

no joy. I want the children of God to hold high festival at this time. Why should not we have our Jubilee as well as others? "Praise you the Lord. Sing unto the Lord a new song, and His praise in the congregation of the saints."

You have heard machinery at times complaining wretchedly; it has gone on with horrible grating and creaking. It has set your teeth on edge! Fetch the oil can! We must cure this jarring. Every now and then we need a few drops of the oil of gladness to make the wheels of our work move pleasantly. Men of the world teach us the value of joyous song. How readily the anchor rises when the sailors unite in cheery cries! Soldiers when weary on the march find their spirits revived when the band strikes up a stirring tune. Let it be so today. I would have you praise God with the sound of the trumpet. Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.

"Ah, dear minister!" you say, "you do not know what state of mind we are in; you do not know all our troubles, worries, frets, and weaknesses." Do I not know? I have been in that same oven. I know the secrets of your prison house. Dear brothers and sisters, let us not rob our King of His revenue because all things are not quite to our mind. Are we going to blame our Lord for the chastisement which our own sins require? We are never right with God unless we feel at peace with Him, no happy in Him. The right state of mind for a child is to be happy in his Father's love. It was well with Israel when "whatsoever the King did pleased all the people." It is well with us when we love Jesus so that He may even do whatever He pleases with us, and we will still exult in Him. May you come to this delightful state! The streams of our misery flow from the fountains of unhumbled self. When Jesus is so loved that His will is our will, then life on earth becomes like life in heaven. Reign, O Lord, reign absolutely, for so we see our murmuring and complaining slain, and these are the worst adversaries of our peace.

It is time to finish, and therefore I would invite all that love my Lord to proclaim a Jubilee for their Lord and King. Keep it after the best fashion. Endeavor to enlighten the world. Put candles in your windows. Illuminate all your streets. Let no sinner die in the dark. Publish the love of God to men. Light up your houses, all of you, with a holy cheerfulness and a clear confession of Christ. Hang out your flags of joy! You have them lying by, and the moths are eating them. Bring them out. Give the streamers of your mirth to the breeze! Tell all around you what God has done for you. Do not be ashamed to own your indebtedness to the love of God in Christ Jesus. You very retiring people, may I invite you to come out of your shells? You that have been slothful and cold of late, I pray you shake yourselves from the dust. At this time, when the pulse of the world beats fast, let yours be quickened. Begin this day something new for Jesus. I wish the church of God would think that Christ's Jubilee was indeed come, and so would kindle beacons upon every hill, till all the nations beheld the great light. Let the flame be seen across the sea! Let the whole earth be filled with His glory. "Arise, shine; for your light is come." May the divine Spirit come upon all His people at this hour, and move them to show their joy in their King by special deeds of love!

Lastly, if our king was here, and I was to say to Him, "How shall I close this sermon?" He would answer, "Tell them to honor Me by showing their love to the poor and needy." Our King is glorious in His gifts to men. I told you just now that the true splendor of a king lies in what he does for his people. I trust our Queen's Jubilee will be memorable for some illustrious deed of generosity. A great-hearted action is more worthy of acclamation than all the glitter of state. Some special gift to the poor and needy of this crowded city, some truly royal mindfulness of the sick poor, would be seasonable and commendable. I trust there will be no failure on this point, or some of us will feel that the pageant of the twenty-first is a vain show. It will be the best of Jubilees if the poor are largely thought of. Let them be thought of by all of us today. Let us give largely to the hospitals for Christ's sake. David, when he kept a high day, gave to every man a good piece of flesh and a flagon of wine, and thus sent them all home full and happy. If this cannot be done for all the poor, let it be abundantly done for the sick by our collection for the hospitals. Beds are empty from want of funds; shall they remain so? The sick poor are languishing; will you withhold your bounty? Children of Zion, honor your King by your generous gifts at this hour.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
PSALM 149 AND 150.**

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—335, 333, 417.

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PLEADING PRAYER
NO. 1969

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

"Remember the word unto Your servant, upon which You have caused me to hope."
Psalm 119:49.

THE one hundred and nineteenth psalm is a very wonderful composition. Its expressions are many as the waves, but its testimony is one as the sea. It deals all along with the same subject, and it consists, as you observe, of a vast number of verses, some of which are very similar to others, and yet throughout the one hundred and seventy-six stanzas the same thought is not repeated; there is always a shade of difference even when the color of the thought appears to be the same. Some have said that in it there is an absence of variety, but that is merely the observation of those who have not studied it. I have weighed each word, and looked at each syllable with lengthened meditation, and I bear witness that this sacred song has no tautology in it, but is charmingly varied from beginning to end. Its variety is that of a kaleidoscope; from a few objects a boundless variation is produced. In the kaleidoscope you look once, and there is a strangely beautiful form. You shift the glass a very little, and another shape, equally delicate and beautiful, is before your eyes. So it is here. What you see is the same, and yet never the same, it is the same truth, but it is always placed in a new light, put in a new connection, or in some way or other invested with freshness.

I do not believe that any other subject but a heavenly one would have allowed of such a psalm being written upon it, for the things of this world are soon spun out. Neither could such a handling have been given to the subject by any mind less than divine; inspiration alone can account for the fullness and freshness of this psalm.

The best compositions of men are soon exhausted; they are cisterns, and not springing fountains. You enjoy them very much at the first acquaintance and you think you could hear them a hundred times over, but you could not; you soon find them wearisome. Very speedily a man eats too much honey; even children at last are cloyed with sweets. All human books grow stale after a time, but with the Word of God the desire to know increases, and the more you know of it the less you think you know. The Book grows upon you; as you dive into its depths, you have a growing perception of the infinity which remains unexplored. You are still sighing to know more of that which it is your bliss to know.

This wonderful psalm, from its great length, helps us to wonder at the immensity of Scripture. From its keeping to one subject it helps us to adore the unity of Scripture, for it is but one. Yet, from the many turns it gives to the same thought, it helps you to see the variety of Scripture. How manifold are the words and thoughts of God! In His Word, just as in creation, the wonders of His skill are manifold indeed.

I admire in this psalm very greatly the singular amalgam that we have of testimony, of prayer, and of praise. In one verse the Psalmist bears witness, in a second verse he praises, in a third verse he prays. It is an incense made up of many spices, but they are wonderfully compounded and worked together, so as to form one perfect sweetness. You would not like to have one-third of the psalm composed of prayer—marked up to the sixtieth verse, for instance, and then another part made up exclusively of praise, and yet a third portion of unmixed testimony. It is best to have all these divinely-sweet ingredients intermixed and worked into a sacred unity, as you have them in this thrice-hallowed psalm. My text is a prayer, but there is testimony in it, and there is a measure of praise in it too. In this single text there is the same mixing up of sweet perfumes as there is in the whole psalm. May God give us grace to be in such a state of heart that we may enter into the prayer of the text! Wherein it bears grateful testimony, may we be able to join in that testimony! Wherein it praises God, may we also extol Him with all our hearts!

There are only two things that I can attempt to speak about at this time; I cannot bring forth from so rich a casket all its treasures. The first is, *the prayer,* "Remember the word unto Your servant, upon which You have caused me to hope," and secondly, *the plea of the prayer*. It is a three-fold plea, as I think—it is Your word, I am Your servant, and You have caused me to hope in it. Come, Holy Spirit, and bless our meditation!

I. First, then, THE PRAYER. David prays, "Remember the word unto Your servant."

"Remember." That prayer is spoken after the manner of men, for God cannot forget. It would be a very low conception of His omniscience if we imagined that anything passed away from His knowledge. *We* see things as they come one after the other in a procession, but God is in a position from which He sees all at once. A man traveling through England sees a portion at a time, but he that looks at a map sees the whole country present before him there and then. God sees everything as *now*. Nothing is past, nothing is future to Him. He sees things that are not as though they were, and the things that shall be as though they had been. God does not forget, and therefore the text speaks only in a certain restricted sense, and must be understood after the manner of men. Beloved, after what other manner could we speak? God has not taught us to speak after the manner of God. How could we? We are not divine. There is a language above, which Paul heard, of which he said that it was not lawful for a man to utter it. Men must speak after the manner of men, and each sort of a man must speak after his own manner. Do not therefore let us censure a young brother when he utters a prayer which is very natural

from him, though it sounds strange to us. Let us not condemn him because his language is not strictly accurate, for though it may jar upon our ear, the Lord may be well pleased with it. You are intelligent, and educated, and a full-grown Christian, and the childish language of a beginner may jar upon your ear, but you must bear the jarring, for the Lord bears much more from you and others of His children. If the language is natural to the new convert, and flows from his heart, he speaks after the manner and according to the manner of men, which manner is always faulty. *You* do no better if judged from God's point of view. We are far too apt to make men offenders for words. Certainly God might make the best of His servants, offenders for the best of their words if He pleased. In such a case as this He might have caught up His servant David sharply, and said, "Remember? Do you say *'Remember'* to Me? Do you imagine that I can forget? And do you take it upon yourself to speak unto the eternal God, and say to Him *'Remember'?"* Yet there is no fault found with that prayer. On the contrary, it is a prayer that the Holy Spirit Himself inspired, and the Holy Spirit has recorded it, and put it in this psalm as a pattern, that we may pray after the same fashion. I guarantee you that, if our prayers were gauged according to the standard of language which is used by angels before the eternal throne, they would seem very, very poor things, full of faulty expressions. But God does not measure them so, for though we speak after the manner of men, it is much to our comfort that God loves the manner of men, for it is the manner of His Only-begotten Son. It is thus that Jesus spoke, and the Lord, in our feeble tones, which in themselves might be open to censure, hears the language of the Son of man, and for His dear sake He does not condemn our speaking after the manner of men. He permits us so to speak, for He Himself knows how to read between the lines. He takes the meaning of our groans and tears, and when we fail to express ourselves suitably in words, He reads our hearts, and accepts our secret meanings. I think I am warranted in making these remarks upon this expression of the prayer, "Remember the word unto Your servant," and I hope they will furnish comfort to those of you who have very slender gifts of utterance when you approach the mercy seat.

I do not, however, conceal from myself the fact that *it is language which has some trace of unbelief in it.* Perhaps no unbelief was in the Psalmist's heart at the time, but it is language fit for the lip of one who has not always been at all times a firm and unstaggering believer. It does look as if the thought that the Lord might forget had crossed the pleader's soul. It looks as if, even though it had not been tolerated—for faith had cast it out—yet the suggestion had knocked at the door of the mind, saying—"My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God." We do not say to another person, "Remember," unless there is at least the apprehension of the possibility of forgetfulness. David could not quite mean, when he came to think it over, that he really thought that God would forget, but we usually speak in haste when we speak in unbelief, and then we do not measure what we say. Unbelief is the hurry of the soul. A regenerate soul sitting still, and correctly weigh-

ing the whole question between the eternal faithfulness of God and the passing troubles of life, cannot be long in coming to a confident conclusion. There is a hurry about our cares and anxieties, and in our hurry we are apt to rush to the foolish conclusion that the Lord may forget us. O poor worried child, if you are so foolish as to allow so absurd a fear to enter your bosom, your Father would sooner that you should express your apprehension to Him than hide it in your heart! A smothered fire is always dangerous. Rake it out. If you have the suspicion that you may be forgotten, pray right honestly, "Remember the word unto Your servant." These prayers are placed in Scripture on purpose that they may be expressions of what we are half afraid to express. The dread is really there, and God sees it, and He tutors us to give it vent. With groans that cannot be uttered, His Spirit helps us, but sometimes He helps us another way, namely, by helping us to utter those groans. He encourages us to express what at first we dared not utter. So we are helped to say, "Remember the word," though we blush to think that it ever should have occurred to us that God could forget.

Let us look at the prayer again, "Remember the word unto Your servant." *The intention of him who prayed this prayer was to ask God to remember His word by fulfilling it.* That is the real meaning of it, as when a servant sometimes says, "I hope you will remember me." Yes, we will remember him, but that is not quite what he means. Those who speak thus hope that we will give them some token of remembrance—some practical proof that we remember them. So does this prayer mean, "Lord, let me not only be in Your thoughts, but let me be in Your acts! You have promised to supply my needs; remember me by supplying my needs. You have promised to forgive my sin; remember me by giving me a sense of pardon. You have promised to help Your servant, and give me strength according to my day; remember Your word by fulfilling Your word, and granting strength to me according as I have need of it."

Now, beloved, this is very legitimate praying, in fact, it is the very essence of prayer to put God in mind of what He has promised. You can never pray an inch beyond the tether of the promise with any assurance of being heard. For my own part, I always feel on sure ground with God when I can quote His own words. I feel then that I may ask boldly, and I need not put in, "If it is Your will," and those other reservations, because, if His promise were not His will, He would not have spoken it. There is the promise in His word, and I know that He put it there as the index of what He intended to give and to do, and as an invitation to His child to plead with Him about those very things which He has so indicated, and say to Him, "Now, Lord, do as You have said." Therefore I follow the line the Lord has marked out for me, and I expect Him to do as He has said. It is a grand thing, when you are pleading with any man, to bring his own handwriting before him. You have then a hold upon him of the firmest kind. You have his promise in black and white, and he cannot run back from *that*. The intent of God in giving us the promise, as it were, in black and white, in His own handwriting, is that He may be inquired of by us to do those very things which He has engaged Himself to do. Un-

godly men cannot make out what prayer is. "Do you suppose," they say, "that you can change the will of God?" We reply to them—We never supposed anything of the kind, but we suppose that our prayer is the shadow of a coming blessing. As "coming events cast their shadows before them," so, when God is about to bless us, He moves us to pray for that very blessing. If it were possible to shut out the man's shadow, we could not expect the man to enter, and if it were possible to shut out prayer from our soul, we should feel at the same time that we had shut out the blessing.

Our Lord is pleased to duplicate His mercies. The blessing itself is great, but it is an equal blessing to be made to pray for it. It frequently does a child more good to get a favor from his father than the favor itself brings him. If the father sets him some little task to do, if he says, "Now, my child, prove to me that this will be a good thing," the mental exercise, the pleading, the asking, may be as useful in the child's education as the thing for which he asks. I say, again, our God doubles His blessings by making His servants pray for them. Prayer, then, is nothing more than this—my believingly remembering that God has promised a certain blessing and then my reminding Him that He has promised it. It is not supposable that He will forget, but He would have me act towards Him as if He might forget, in order that by such an exercise I myself may come to value the blessing, and may be stirred up to importunity and fervor. The prayer is a right one when we say, "Remember the word unto Your servant," it is, in fact, what God always intends prayer to be, a reminding our heavenly Father of His promises.

Sometimes this word "remember," is very fitly used, because *it seems to the mind that God is likely to remember something else which would be to our loss*. Suppose you and I have been walking contrary to God—and sometimes His people do walk contrary to Him—then the Lord may remember our sin, and He may begin to deal with us in a way of chastisement, and lay us very low. Then is the time to come in with this prayer, "Remember the word unto Your servant." It is as much as to say, "Albeit that my sins clamor in Your ears, and cry out that You should smite me, yet remember Your word of promise, of pardon, of pity, of power, and let me live. I admit, my gracious Lord, that if You do listen to the voice of my actions, they proclaim me to be most ungrateful. If You do listen to my feebleness in prayer, it will accuse me of want of earnestness, and therefore, You may be inclined to deny it to me. All my forgetfulnesses, and shortcomings, and transgressions, cry out against me; if You hear these, my Lord, You may well reach for the rod, and smite me again, and again, but oh, be deaf to these voices, and hear only the music of Your own word!—

'Not my sins, O Lord, remember,
Not Your own avenger be;
But, for Your great tender mercies,
Savior, God, remember me!'

Remember *Your* word, and forget *my* words. Remember the word whereon You have caused me to hope, and forget the things wherein I have

caused You to be angry. I know You might well remember my sins, as You did the sins of Israel in the wilderness, and say, 'They shall not enter into My rest,' but I beseech You do not so. You might hear my provocations and my unbeliefs, and say, 'You shall die in the wilderness,' but, O my God, as Moses pleaded Your covenant with You, so do I plead with You, not for my sake, but for Your word's sake, not for my sake, but for Your promise' sake, and Your covenant's sake. I beseech You, fail not Your servant, but bear with me still, till You shall bring me into the rest which You have promised me."

You see, then, the singular appropriateness of the expression, though at first it might seem to be a questionable one. "Remember the word unto Your servant." Brethren, the great mercy to us is, that *God has a very strong memory*. Towards His people He has a memory so strong that He has said, "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." What a strong memory that is which is stronger than the memory of a mother towards the babe at her breast! Oh, blessed memory of God! "Yet will I not forget you. Behold, I have engraved you," He says, "upon the palms of My hands." There is no forgetting a thing that is written on the palms of your hands. You cannot do any work but you see it there, and God cannot do any work without seeing His children's names. He can do no work of judgment without seeing their names, and therefore He spares His people. He can do no work of bounty but what their names are on His hands, and therefore He says, "Surely, blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you." His hands are branded with the names of His beloved, and it is not possible that He can forget them. The Lord has a loving memory. He cannot forget His own. Think of words like these—"I remember you, the love of your espousals," "O Israel, you shall not be forgotten of Me," "The Lord your God will not forsake you, nor forget the covenant of your fathers which He swore unto them."

And then, *our God has a long memory*. How many ages were it before Christ came, and yet His coming was always on the Lord's mind! The fullness of time had not yet arrived, and yet the Lord did not forget it, for no sooner did the clock strike than that very night—they did not wait till the morning—a multitude of the heavenly host recognized the sign, and their praise flowed forth in a cataract of delightful song, which filled the midnight air. They sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." Christ was born to the very moment when God decreed that He should be born. The weeks were ended, the dispensation closed, and lo, He came! God has a very exact and punctual memory. Recollect when Israel came out of Egypt *"the same day"* did the Lord lead them forth. The Lord glories in the exactness of the hour. I know some persons, who would never leave a bill unpaid for a day, and as for their rent, they are ready before twelve o'clock strikes, and they say, "My landlord has never had to wait. I was always at the door to the moment." You shall find that God, though He never is before His time, yet never is too late. He has a very exact memory—a memory about little

things, and about moments of time, and He keeps touch with His servants even to the jots and tittles of the word which He has given.

He has, beloved, *a very gracious memory* towards His people, because it is strong in certain matters, but in love He makes it very weak in other points. He says, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." He has forgotten their transgressions, and cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. All the strength of the Lord's memory that might have gone in the direction of noting our evil deeds runs the other way. He is all the more powerful to remember us for good because He will never remember our evil as long as He lives. Beloved, the Lord thinks upon you to do you good. Speaking after the manner of men, He schemes, and plots, and plans to do His people good. He says that He will bless us with His whole heart, and with His whole soul. That is a wonderful expression. Let me give you the precise text, "Yes, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with My whole heart and with my whole soul." Think of God blessing His people with His whole heart, rejoicing over them to do them good. "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous," and the heart of the Lord is occupied with the cases of His own people. Blessed be His dear name, we have very much to appeal to when we pray, "Remember the word unto Your servant, upon which You have caused me to hope."

II. The time flies too quickly and therefore let me mention, in the second place, THE PLEAS WHICH THE PALMIST USES.

The first is, "Remember *the word."* It is a blessed plea—the word, for by the word upon which God had caused His servant to hope is meant God's word. He never makes His people to hope in anybody else's word. It is in the Lord's word that the hope of His people finds support. Let us consider the power, the dignity, the glory of that word. This is the greatest of all grounds of assurance.

I have already said that you cannot have a greater hold upon a man than when you have his own word to plead. "Remember *the word."* God is sovereign. He has the right to do absolutely as He wills. "Who shall stay His hand, or say unto Him, What are You doing?" But God—let us speak with reverence—when He gives a promise, binds Himself with cords of His own making. He binds Himself down to such and such a course when He says that such and such a thing shall be. Hence, when you grasp the promise, you get a hold on God. Wondrous fact! Marvelous that we should be able, as it were, to move the arm that moves the stars, and to hold the King who holds the waters in the hollow of His hand! If You have His promise for it, God must give you the blessing, God can sooner cease to be than cease to be true. "He is not a man, that He should lie, neither the son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and shall He not do it?" There is nothing on earth; there is nothing in heaven, half as steadfast as the simple, naked word of God. How mighty is this plea, when you present before the Lord His own sacred word! It is a royal word. We do not expect kings to play fast and loose with words. They say, "If honor were banished from all the rest of mankind, it ought still to find a refuge in the breast of kings." But what shall I say of "the King eternal,

immortal, invisible"? Will He lie? Do You suspect the one "Blessed and only Potentate," the King of kings and Lord of lords? How you insult His majesty if you dream that He can falsify His solemn pledge, and break His word! "Where the word of a king is, there is power," because there is faithfulness at the back of it.

But it is more than a royal word, brethren. It is an irrevocable word. Man has to eat his words, sometimes, and unsay his say. He would perform his engagement, but he cannot. It is not that he is unfaithful, but that he is unable. Now this is never so with God. His word never returns to Him void. Go; find the snowflakes winging their way like white doves back to heaven! Go; find the drops of rain rising upward like diamonds flung up from the hand of a mighty man to find a lodging place in the cloud from which they fell! Until the snow and the rain return to heaven, and mock the ground which they promised to bless, the word of God shall never return to Him void. What He has promised shall be, and what He has revealed shall surely be accomplished, for be sure of this—God has never spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth, so as to revoke a single word which He has spoken aforetime. He has never disannulled one of His ordinances, or cancelled one of His promises. Stands the everlasting decree, firm as the throne of Jehovah and the promise is as unfailing as the decree.

Not only is it an irrevocable word, but it is an almighty word. Recollect, brethren, that by the word of God were the heavens made, and all the hosts of them, and it is by His word that all things consist. You and I are most foolish when we want something more to rest upon than the word of God. My great trouble in battling with anxious inquirers is that they demand needless evidences, and cry out for marks and tokens. And I have to put it to them very plainly—"Then I suppose God is a liar, and you will not believe Him unless He brings evidence to support His word. You are obliged to run out of doors to find proof of what He says, and you will not believe it unless you get that proof." It is too much so with us. I tell you, sirs, that the bare word of God is better than all the proofs, and evidences, and signs, and marks that could be heaped together throughout eternity, and what is more, I will say that, if all the marks, and tokens, and signs, and evidences, and promises, and oaths of men all said, "No," if God says, "Yes," His lonely "Yes" surpasses all the "Noes" and all the other denials that could possibly be gathered together. Our faith ought to give God credit for this, for the Lord God cannot be otherwise than true; we must not suppose such a thing. Unlimited faith is no more than God deserves. He cannot err or fail. "The heavens are not clean in His sight, and His angels He charged with folly," and He charged them with it not without reason, for all things compared with Him are folly, and the greatest of intellects are but fools compared with God. With Him there cannot possibly be a failure or a falsehood. Oh, that we had power to grasp His word as it ought to be grasped! Our hope lies there.

Are you hungry tonight? Has it even come to this? And have you God's promise that you shall be fed? Then you shall be fed, you shall be fed. The devil comes to you, and he says, "Yes, you may be fed, but you must

do a wrong action in order to get the food." He speaks to the Son of God again, and he says, "Command that these stones be made bread." Listen not to him, but believe God. Now is your time to glorify God. A faith that can believe over a hungry belly is faith indeed; yet it is only such a faith as is due to God. God will abundantly justify all the trust we repose in Him. Tell the devil, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." There is nutriment in God's word. There is everything in that word. The creature owes its power to bless and nourish to the will of God, and if the creature is absent, the will of God can still achieve its purpose by His word without the creature. I put this in a very strong light, but I am certain that I go no further than God's word will warrant. Oh for grace to plead the promise and to rest upon it!

Beloved when you are praying in time of trouble, what a blessed plea for you, "Lord, remember the word! You have said in Your word, 'When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you.'" He will remember it. You may forget the word of the Lord, but He does not, and when you plead it, the answer of peace shall come to your soul, "I do earnestly remember you still." Though the Lord chastens you, yet He does not forget you. His chastisement is proof that He thinks of you. He will not set you as Admah, nor make you as Zeboim, for everlasting love cannot forget the objects of its choice. He chooses us for His love, and loves us for His choice. Therefore, plead well His word.

The second plea lies in the words, *"Your servant."* "Remember the word unto Your servant." A man is bound to keep his word to anybody and everybody, but sometimes there may be special persons with whom a failure would be peculiarly dishonorable. Among the rest, a man must be true to his servant.

Notice, first, "Remember the word unto Your servant," means this, "Lord, it is Your grace that has made me Your servant. I was once an outcast. I was once Your enemy. Lord, I did not come to You, but You did come to me. I did not seek employment at Your hands; I was too wicked for that, but You did seek me. It was Your grace that made me Your servant. Now, Lord, have You brought me to be Your servant to put me to shame? You have done the greater thing for me, will You not do the less? To take me into Your service was great condescension on Your part; will You not grant me my rations? Will You not find me my livery? Will You not be gracious to me?" This is good pleading, is it not?

Again, here is a further plea. A servant has a claim upon his master. We dare say it very reverently, that we have a claim upon God when we are His servants. Of course, that claim is only such as He allows, and it is founded alone on grace, but still it is a strong plea with our gracious Master. He was thought to be an evil man who left his servant to perish when he was sick. He could do no more work, and so his cruel owner left him by the way to die. No good master would do that. Lord, will You do that with me? When I grow sick, will You forsake me? When I grow old, will You desert me? When I cannot speak in Your name any longer, will

You disown me? When I cannot stand any longer by reason of feebleness, will You throw me on one side? When I lie gasping upon my death bed, will You say, "I have had his best days, but I will leave him now"? The supposition would be blasphemous. It cannot be. O my brother, our God will not leave us! When the old man's heart cries, "O God, You have taught me from my youth, and hitherto I have declared Your wondrous works. Now also when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not." The Lord answers, "Even to your old age I am He; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you." Our heavenly Lord is not like that Amalekite master who left his Egyptian servant in the field because he was ill. Let us not imagine such a thing.

There is this further plea. If a man sets his servants such and such a work to do, is he not bound to find them the means of doing it? Only a cruel task-master compels men to make bricks, and gives them no straw to mingle with the clay. We are not dealing with Pharaoh, remember, we are dealing with Jehovah, who acts on quite another principle. Beloved, the Lord never sent any one of His soldiers to warfare at His own charges. How frequently, when my Master sends me to the front, I have to cry to Him, "Lord, grant me fresh supplies! Lord, send on the ammunition! I must have powder; I must have funds and grace, and guidance! Lord, send fresh men! Fill up the ranks as one after another falls on the field!" I find Him always ready with His reinforcements, and His succors, and His stores. There is no failure of commissariat with God. He takes good care of His fighting servants, and His suffering servants, His plowing servants, and His sowing servants, and so you would expect Him to do. A good master will not set his servant a hard task beyond his strength, and then refuse to lift a hand to help him. That would be far from the God of infinite mercy. Now, dear sister, you that have begun to teach in the Sunday school, and feel that you are hardly equal to it, the Lord will help you. Go on. Do not give up. You that have been trying to preach in the villages, but who do not see any good coming of it, and are half inclined to run away, stand to your guns. Cry to the Lord for more strength, and He will help you. And let this be the plea, "Lord, remember the word unto Your servant, for I am Your servant, Lord. I desire to be wholly Yours; I give myself to You, body, soul, and spirit, and my cry is, 'Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.' I am Your servant. My ear is bored to the doorpost, and I would never quit Your service, or labor for another." You know what the old man-servant said, in the olden time, when his master angrily said, "We must part, John." "I hope not, sir. Where are you going?" He had no intention to go himself. "Ah," said his master, "I do not intend to employ you any longer." The old servant is said to have answered, "Sir, if you have not a good servant, I know that I have a good master, and I do not mean to leave him. I cannot think of going away." It is a grand thing to feel that you are not going away from God—that you have such a good Master that you are going to cling to the posts of His door, and if He puts You out by the front door, You mean to come in at the back. Let the Lord do what He pleases, I am forever bound

to belong to Him only. Brother, resolve that if you cannot preach for your Lord, you will hear for Him, and if You cannot be a leader of the church, you will be a follower somewhere, but your Lord you will serve forever. This, then, is one of the pleas. "Remember the word unto Your servant."

The last plea I shall offer but a few words upon. *"Upon which You have caused me to hope."* Lord, I have been hoping on Your word and I have acted upon that hope; I believe the word to be true, and I have pledged the truth of it. That is good pleading. A man has given me a bill—not a transaction I ever have anything to do with, but suppose such a thing. Suppose I go and discount it, I say, "My friend, you must honor that bill because I have received the cash for it. Do not fail to meet it." It is as if we said to our God—"Lord, You have caused me to hope upon this promise of Yours. I have been raising present comfort upon the credit of it. I felt so sure that it would be fulfilled that I have taken it into the market, and I have been living upon its proceeds by hoping on it." See how David went and discounted the promissory note; he encouraged himself by it. Turn to the verses which follow my text and you will see. "This is my comfort in my affliction: for Your word has quickened me." He had been comforting himself by the promise, and if the promise failed, that comfort would turn out to be a sheer delusion. Will the Lord delude those who trust Him? Read the next verse, "The proud have had me greatly in derision: yet have I not declined from Your law." I stuck to Your doctrine, Your precept, Your promise; I declared Your word to be true; will You not keep it, and so vindicate my confident assurance? "I remembered Your judgments of old, O Lord; and have comforted myself." I have thus derived strength and establishment out of Your promises already. Will You allow the enemy to tell me that I have deceived myself? Will You revoke Your declarations? It cannot be. What is more, "Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage." I have been singing Your promise over. I feel so sure of it that, before it has been fulfilled, I have been singing about it. Lord, shall I be made a fool of by having sung for nothing? Again, "I have remembered Your name, O Lord, in the night, and have kept Your law." I rose in the night to bless You for Your promises. I sat up in my bed, and clapped my hands with delight, because You have given this promise, and laid it home to my heart. Shall it not come true? Ah, beloved! You may rest assured of this—your faith never went beyond the goodness of Your God, and it never will. If You believe great things of Him, He will do greater things than You believe. He will do exceeding abundantly above what You ask, or even think.

This is wonderfully blessed pleading. "You have caused me to hope; therefore, O Lord, remember Your word!" When I read how God kept His promise to His people of old, I said, "He will keep it to me," and when I remembered how He had kept other promises to me in past times, I said, "He will keep this, also." His former dealings have induced us to trust in Him. If He had not been so gracious to us on former occasions, we would never have expected to be heard this time, but His love in times past compels us to trust Him now. "Lord, You have caused me to hope: my hope is of Your creating, nourishing, and perfecting. I am justified in

hoping in You on this occasion from what You have done for me in days gone by. This hope of mine is the work of Your Holy Spirit in my soul. Can Your Holy Spirit make a poor soul hope for that which He will never receive? Can Your Holy Spirit tantalize me by exciting a hope which is never to be fulfilled? You have caused me to hope. It was Your word, and I was Your servant, and I believe Your word, and Your Spirit helped me to go from faith to hope, and now, when the windows of hope are opened, will You not be pleased to send in a messenger of grace and peace?" O needy child of God, go home, and plead in this fashion, and you shall not return empty!

Have you come into a position from which there seems to be no escape? Do not ask to escape, but cry, "Remember the word unto Your servant, upon which You have caused me to hope."

You, poor sinner over yonder, that has never found Christ, think of this gracious word, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." Lay hold on that loving declaration, and hope in it, and then say, "Lord, remember the word unto Your servant, upon which You have caused me to hope." The Lord bless you all, and give you a joyful hope in His sure promise, for His name's sake! Amen and amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
PSALM 119:49-64.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—191, 193, 733.

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LOVING PERSUASION
NO. 1970

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 26, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Persuading them concerning Jesus."
Acts 28:23.

WHEREVER Paul is, he has but one errand, and whenever Paul preaches, he has but one subject. Once at Athens, when he addressed the Areopagus, he seemed to wander a little from his main point, and no special good followed, but this experience bound him all the faster to the cross, for he afterwards said to the Corinthians, "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." The cross of Christ was his one theme. He henceforth hammered on the head of this one nail. Whatever faculty, ability, and power he had, he turned its whole current into this one channel, and cried, "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." Brethren, we have not strength enough for a dozen things, we have not even strength enough for two. What little vigor we have, let us use it all in one direction, let us say, "For me to live is Christ." You could not have dropped into Paul's lodging at any time during the two years that he was at Rome before the emperor liberated him, without hearing him preach of the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ. Every arrow in his quiver was aimed at the one target, and he knew how to hit the white of it each time. "This one thing I do," he said. His motto was—All for Jesus and for Jesus only.

This one topic the apostle brought forward in different ways. When addressing the chief men of the Jews in Rome, observe that he expounded, and testified, and persuaded. These three methods were needful among the people of those days, and they are the wisest that can be adopted to bring men to Christ even now. We must *expound,* set forth, explain, make clear the gospel. We must tell men what the Word of God means, in the plainest possible language, for they need to know what it is that the revelation from heaven has really declared. The more of true exposition the better. We must also *testify*. We must bear witness to the effect which the gospel has had upon our heart and life. The telling out of our personal experience is a means of grace to our hearers. Paul was known to describe his own conversion. He told the story of how the Lord appeared unto him on the way to Damascus, and he did this so often, that Luke and others, who were his companions, must have heard it several times. Indeed, it was a tale so worth the telling that none could weary of hearing it. Paul knew that personal witness-bearing has a great weight upon the minds of men, and therefore, he was not afraid of being

accused of egotism, for he knew that he did not preach himself, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and the narrative of his conversion was not intended at all to honor himself, but to glorify that blessed Christ, who out of heaven had spoken to him, and called him to be a chosen vessel to bear His word to the Gentiles. There is much force in such a personal testimony. Oh, that you and I, after having explained the gospel, may always be able to tell out something from our own experience which will prove it! Men love, when they hear of a medicine, to meet with a case of cure, and in the same way, when they hear of religion, they desire to hear from persons like themselves what that religion has done for them. Brethren, we should speak of Jesus in a happy, grateful, earnest manner, and commend him as a Savior to our fellow sinners. Yet this was not all, our apostle was not satisfied simply to expound and testify; his heart was full of love to his countrymen, and therefore, he *persuaded* them. He entreated, he besought, he implored his hearers to turn to the Lord Jesus Christ.

As Paul was speaking to Jews, he fetched the arguments of his persuasion from their own Holy Books. I have no doubt that he had spread out on the table before him the books of Moses, and the various rolls of the prophets, to these he continually referred his Jewish friends. We cannot this morning go into that argument, neither is there need, for you are not Israelites, and you are already well acquainted with that mode of argument. Paul must have been a master in that line of things. I think I hear him now explaining to them concerning Jesus as He appeared in Melchisedec; here was a wide subject. Hear him open up to them the justification of Abraham by faith, and then the allegory of Sarah and Hagar, and the two covenants. I should have liked to have heard him speak of Isaac and Ishmael, and of Jacob and Esau, and the electing love of God as seen in those memorable instances. With what rapture would Paul speak of the sacrifices, reminding them that "without shedding of blood there is no remission," and pointing them to the blood of sprinkling, which speaks better things than that of Abel! How he would then open up to them the meaning of the daily offerings, the mystery of the Day of Atonement, the sacred teaching of the entering in of the high priest within the veil! How earnestly would he remind his brethren that the continual repetition of the sacrifices was sure evidence that they had not made the consciences of the offerers clean from a sense of sin, or they would have ceased to be offered! How heartily would he direct their minds to that one sacrifice which Jesus presented once for all when He bowed His head in death! I think I can hear him turning to that memorable passage in Isaiah which so much engaged the attention of the Ethiopian eunuch, and opening up to his audience the person and suffering of the Lord Jesus, who was led as a lamb to the slaughter for our sakes, and for us was stricken, smitten, and afflicted. With such arguments men who believed those books to be inspired ought to have been convinced. It is clear that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah predicted in the Old Testament. Had not their hearts been so gross, their eyes so blind, and their ears so dull, they must have believed in Jesus, but as it was, many of the Jewish leaders went away in a pet, quarrelling with those who believed, and an-

gry with Paul. None are such bitter enemies of the cross as those who, by a firm resolve, determine to be blind to its glory and dead to its power.

Thus Paul, you see, in his pleading, adapted himself to his audience. He had acquired the knack of being all things to all men that he might save some. In pleading with Israel, for whose salvation his heart's desire and prayer ever rose to heaven, he followed the wisest and most hopeful course. He argued from what they did believe, he urged the truth they already knew as a reason why they should admit another truth, or, rather, let me say he showed them that the gospel of Jesus was involved and contained within those truths which were assuredly accepted among them. He spent the whole day at this, but at this time I shall not pursue his line of reasoning, because it is not needed among you, and you have need of persuasion of another sort. It would ill become me to beat the air, or exhibit before you a mimic combat with an absent adversary. No, my friends, I have before me another sort of people, whose condition needs another treatment. I long for your immediate conversion. With earnest prayer I have come hither, seeking with tears and entreaties to win men from destruction. Others have joined me in supplication, and therefore I look to the Holy Spirit for His gracious work, that my hearers may be convicted of sin and led to Jesus.

I. LET ME FIRST DESCRIBE THOSE WHOM WE WOULD PERSUADE. I will so picture you that some of you will see yourselves as in a mirror. I shall not talk to a people far away, but to you who sit before me this day.

I would persuade those persons who believe the truth notionally, and yet do not receive it in their hearts. It seems a strange thing that men should believe, and yet not believe. This peculiar form of unbelief is current among us at this day. It is strange that men believe the Bible, and even profess to believe it all, and yet they act as if it were all a dream. If we preach the deity of Christ, it is an easy task, for they never thought of questioning it. If we proclaim the need of the Holy Spirit in regeneration, they are agreed, for they never doubted it. Whatever doctrine it is that we can prove by the Word of God, they bow before it. They are not guilty of skepticism. Alas! They hardly give the matter thought enough to observe any difficulties. Avoiding the whirlpool of questioning, they run upon the rock of indifference. Their belief holds the truth as spices and linen preserve a mummy. The gospel is to them a dead monarch, honorably interred in the sarcophagus of their reverence. It has no more power over them than if they disbelieved it. As a medicine retained upon the druggist's shelf has no effect upon the body, so is the gospel stowed away in the minds of many so as to have no result in their lives. This must be a sad misuse of divine revelation. It cannot have been sent to us to be without effect. O my hearers, if you believe that Jesus is the Savior, why is He not *your* Savior? If you believe that repentance and faith bring salvation, why have *you* not repented and believed? If you believe that there is a God that hears prayer, why do you not pray? If you know that you must be born again, how is it you are content without the new birth? How is it that with regard to the hearing of the word you come and you go, not once nor twice, but year after year, and yet you are unmoved and unchanged? Age steals over some of you, and finds you not an inch in

advance of what you were in your youth. If you did not believe the Word of God, I could understand your conduct, but if you do believe it, why do you not receive it practically into your hearts? If you were awakened by a cry of fire, and you were sure that your own house was burning, I should expect to see you hurrying from the flame. I could understand you keeping to your bed if you were persuaded that the cry was the mere idle noise of boys in the street, but if you believed it to be a real alarm, I should be perplexed if I saw you seeking a little more sleep. If you were told that you had a disease about you which would soon bring you to your grave, and that a certain physician could work a speedy cure, if you did not believe the report, I should expect that you would suffer in the patience of despair, but if you did believe in the repute of the physician, and in the cures which he had worked, I should not be able to understand you if you did not go to him, and seek relief. O sirs, how is it that you are willing to continue in sin when Jesus is able to save unto the uttermost? How strangely you act! Alas! Human nature has become monstrous; it is false to its own instinct of self-preservation, and acts in a suicidal manner. Oh that you were wise! If Jesus tells you the truth, why do you not believe Him? If Jesus is Himself the truth, why do you not receive Him? Why do you need persuading to a course so proper, so reasonable?

Many need persuading, who intend soon to practice what they have believed, but the time has not fully come. You have a resolve in your heart that before long you will turn to Christ, but the unhappy thing is, that you have for many a day retained this resolve, and it has grown moldy within your bosoms. When we met you as a child you meant to love the Lord. When we conversed with you as young men and women you were very hopeful, and your parents felt that their prayers would soon be heard. You seemed so thoughtful and impressible, and you had such good intentions, that we all reckoned upon your speedily being decided. You are much older now, but you are not more advanced, still with you it is all intentions and intentions. I wish there could be a time fixed in your mind when it should be either “yes” or “no.” “How long halt you between two opinions?” How long shall Jesus be put off, and the world be served? Some of you are not a whit more hopeful than you were twenty years ago. Let me recall the expression; you are a deal more hopeless, for you are becoming gospel-hardened. Appeals which once pierced your hearts do not even wound you now. As water rolls down a marble slab and leaves nothing behind, so is it now with what you hear. The sword of the Spirit is as sharp as ever, but your heart has hardened like steel in the annealing. Oh, you that are forever resolving and resolving, and yet abide where you are—you are the people whom at this time I would persuade to decision!

Some have gone further still, for they are *earnestly seeking salvation, but they have chosen a wrong method of search, which can only end in disappointment*. I would gladly persuade them to leave off seeking the living among the dead. Salvation is by immediate trust in Jesus, but you want to feel up to a certain degree of anguish, or you want to change yourselves up to a certain point of excellence, in a word, you want to save

yourselves first, and then come to Jesus. You are trying to make the lantern shine before a candle is put in it. You want to renew your own nature, and then come to Christ for a new heart; you are not content to come to Jesus as sinners. All will be done for you if you will but put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, but this you fail to do. If I knew how to put the gospel more plainly than I do, God knows I would not be slack to do so, but yet, with all the plainness of our preaching, our hearers still persist in going about after this and that hope of their own, instead of at once accepting salvation by Jesus Christ. Oh, that you were so persuaded of the things concerning Jesus, as to lay hold of them at once! You need to be led to see that salvation is all finished, and that you have but to take it as a free gift. "Christ has died," and in that expression lies your life. Believing in Jesus, you have eternal life the moment you believe. You need to be persuaded to accept this as the present truth, the most precious truth you can ever hear. If you will receive it, happy will it be with you, but if you continue running here and there after salvation, and neglecting the Lord Jesus, you shall perish in your sins. Why will you pursue the will-o'-the-wisp, and shut your eyes to the daystar? Why will you follow the mirage, and leave the lone well in the desert whose sweet waters will forever remove your thirst? Oh, that you were rightly persuaded at this very moment!

One other class I should like to deal with this morning; I would gladly persuade *those who have tried a long time to do their best, and having never succeeded, are falling into a state of despair*. Theirs is not a painful despair; I wish it were so, but, alas! They have fallen into a lethargy, a paralysis of the mind with regard to heavenly things. "It is no good," they say, "I cannot get peace, I shall never find pardon. A child of God I cannot hope to be; I might as well expect to be a peer of the realm!" Therefore they sit down in sullen hopelessness. They mutter that if it is to be, and it will be, and it is of no use caring. They are rendered insensible by the frostbite of their horrible idea of fate. Oh, that they had been warmed by the sunlight of belief in a gracious predestination! Men die by insensibility as surely as by passion. I fear that some of you will never awake until in hell you lift up your eyes. I have had you laid on my heart, and the thought of your danger presses me down into the dust at this time. I feel but little joy, even in these jubilee times, when I think about those of you who are so near to the kingdom, and yet are aliens from it. I must persuade you with all my heart to come to Jesus, for if you perish in the light, you will perish with a vengeance. If you go down to destruction from the borders of salvation, it will be sevenfold destruction. If you die with Jesus weeping over you, as He did over Jerusalem, you will die horribly. If you sink down to hell with that word in your ears, "How often would I have gathered you, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not!" your sinking will be like that of a millstone in the sea. If you perish under a gospel ministry, it were better for you that you had never been born.

These are the people I long to persuade. O Divine Spirit, work through me at this time, and let the eternal purposes of love be fulfilled! O my

brethren in Christ, I entreat you, by the love of Jesus, strive together with me in your prayers for this blessing!

II. Our second point shall be, LET US PERSUADE THEM. But are we right trying to persuade men? Are not human hearts too hard to be broken by so feeble a hammer as our persuasion? Yes, I most solemnly believe they are, but that is not the question. "What is the use of persuading them, if you know that they will not be won by your persuasion in and of itself?" Well, brethren, I feel safe in doing what Paul did. I will not stop to solve difficulties, but merely say, Paul persuaded, and so will I. "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." "Oh," says one, "we may persuade awakened sinners, but not dead sinners!" But I reply that Paul persuaded these chief men of the Jews, some of whom never believed in Jesus, for their hearts were gross, and their eyes were blinded. Paul persuaded them, though they were judicially blinded. He knew that they were living men, and that they were possessed of reason, even though they had no grace, and so he appealed to what remained in them, and he persuaded them. Again I say, I will do what Paul did. But I know, as Paul also knew, that all the human persuasion in the world will fall short of the mark without divine power. I never dreamed that my persuasion was of the slightest avail without the Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit will cause the persuasion to reach the inward ear, then it will prevail, and not else, if He will drive home the persuasion so that it touches the heart which is encased in the fat of worldly pleasure, indifference, prejudice, and pride, then men will yield, and men will be persuaded indeed. But the Holy Spirit will do this! He has done it, He is doing it, He will do it, and therefore we persuade. Brothers, why should we not expect the Holy Spirit to display His power? We have sought it with fervent prayer. The preacher comes on this platform neither without his own prayers, nor without your prayers, and so we are persuaded that we shall have divine help. Therefore, O sinners, "as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be you reconciled to God"!

Once more, in the name of God, I return to the work to which God has ordained me. I would persuade you concerning Jesus. *To what shall I persuade you?* My dear hearers, I would persuade some of you *to think of Christ,* the Lord's anointed; to think of Jesus, the Savior. I would have you read about Him, and study His person, work, and character. Turn to the four evangelists, and see what He was, and what He did. Read carefully and reverently the inspired life of Jesus. Faith often comes to men when they are thinking about Christ. The cross not only claims faith, but creates it. To sit and see the Son of God die on the cross is the way to get faith. Some of you, perhaps, have been sitting still, and trying to believe. That is a very absurd thing to do, for faith is not a first effort of the mind, but it follows upon other states. Know what is to be believed, and why you are to believe it. Know who He is in whom you are to put your trust, and why He deserves to be trusted. Shut yourselves up a bit, read the Bible carefully, and then meditate, and meditate, and meditate. This is the way in which faith grows in the soul, even as plants spring from seed sown and watered. Faith comes by hearing or reading—the hearing or reading of the Word of God. "Incline your ear," says the Lord God, "and

come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live." May I not persuade you to think seriously and often about the way of salvation by Jesus Christ?

The next thing I would persuade you to is to *trust in Him*. Trust is the essence of saving faith. Faith is not merely believing facts, but trusting to a person. God has set forth Christ to be a propitiation for sin; He becomes to me my propitiation when I trust Him. Can you not trust Jesus? Is He not worth trusting? Where else can you trust? The moment you trust in Him you are saved. You know that; why not prove it true by personal faith? To trust is the meaning of that text, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all you ends of the earth." There is life in the glance of trust. You are living men when you look to Christ, or trust Him. "But," you say, "I do not feel—." Away with your "buts"! What have I said about your feelings? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." "He that believes on Him has everlasting life." Salvation lies in the simple act of trusting in your Savior. Oh, that I could persuade you to trust!

And when you have trusted Him, I need to persuade you concerning Jesus that you should *avow that trust*. The Lord puts it thus, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Be baptized, therefore, in obedience to His command. Come out boldly and say, "I am on the Lord's side." Do not attempt to go sneaking to heaven along some back lane, come into the King's highway, take up your cross, and follow Him. He that will not confess Him before men, Christ will not confess before His Father who is in heaven. What is there to be ashamed of in Jesus? If Christ is your Savior, the very least thing you can do is to say, "I am His disciple," and openly declare yourself on His side. He puts it so—"He that with his heart believes, and with his mouth makes confession of Him, shall be saved." I would persuade you to an open confession; may God the Holy Spirit lead you at once to the doing of it!

And if I were happy enough to persuade you so far, I would persuade you *to obey Christ throughout life*. "Whatsoever He says to you, do it." Seek to lead a holy, harmless, blameless life. Endeavor to avoid all sin, endeavor to copy the Son of God throughout your whole course, making Him your model and your Master, your leader and your Lord. Some of you who have openly confessed Him still need to be persuaded to a closer obedience. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." The way of complete obedience is the way of happiness, and many professors miss the joy of their Lord—I am half afraid they will miss His acceptance at the last, because they are not careful to walk in His ways, and to glorify His holy name by a holy life. I would persuade you then to think of Christ, to trust in Christ, to confess Christ, and to obey Christ.

What shall be my arguments? I can summon battalions of them *from Jesus Himself*. He is the Son of God; therefore, trust Him. He loves with a supreme love; shall we not love Him who first loved us? He died! Oh, by His agony and bloody sweat, by His cross and passion, I would persuade you to turn to Him! Every drop of blood of the great Substitute, every sigh and every cry of the Redeemer, is an argument with men that they should not neglect His salvation, but should come and trust Him. He is risen, and lives again; despise not the risen Savior; come and bow before Him who is proved to be the Son of God with power by His resurrection

from the dead. He has gone up into His glory. He sits at the right hand of God, obey Him, then, for all power is given to Him in heaven and in earth. He will shortly come, and you and I (in how short a time!) will have to stand before His judgment seat. Believe not those who would bid you trifle with a future state, and think little of the judgment to come. O men and women, a short time will swallow us all up in the grave, and we shall pass into another world, in little more than the twinkling of an eye we shall hear that last trumpet heralding the Judge! Then shall we hear the summons, "Come to judgment! Come to judgment! Come away!" Then I shall have to give an account of this morning's sermon. What a weight to have to preach to all of you, and to have your blood laid at my door if I preach not faithfully to you! O God Most Merciful, grant to all of us that knowing Christ will come, and come to judgment, we may lay this fact to heart, and be persuaded to put our trust in Him, who will otherwise pronounce upon us the sentence of eternal perdition!

I may summon another battalion of arguments *from your own state and need*. O sirs, you that are unconverted are yet in your sins, encrusted with years of gathered foulness! Your sins hang about you now like the white scales of leprosy; they are on your brows, and in your hearts. There is but one that can cleanse these defilements; it is Jesus. Why do you not fly to Him? Moreover, remember the sinfulness of your nature. You will go on to sin, your heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, you will not cease from sinning. Jesus alone can give you a new heart and a right spirit. He is the one physician able to cure your fatal disease. Will you not cry to Him, "Jesus, Emmanuel, heal me with a touch"? Will you refuse to be made whole? I pray you do not so.

Even now you are conscious of a wearisome restlessness; you are not happy, you have forebodings of an awful future. You know you are not at peace. From all the gay and gallant sights you have seen this week you have turned away sick at heart, you need something better, and more substantial. Be assured there is no rest for you but in Christ, He says to you, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Turn not away from the one and only rest of your souls, but this day accept Him, take His yoke upon you, and learn of Him, and you shall find rest unto your souls. As you love your souls, as you desire happiness here, as you desire blessedness hereafter, I beseech you to lay hold on eternal life in Jesus.

If I wanted more arguments there are many quarters from which they would come at my bidding. I would try to find them *in your hopes and fears*. I do not know to whom I may be speaking now, but, my friend; there is a glorious future before you if Christ becomes yours. Burdened sinner, there is a peace which passes all understanding if you will look to Jesus! O distracted, tempest-tossed soul, there is a haven of rest for you if you steer to Christ! I would gladly persuade you now to come to Him whose gift is heaven below and then heaven above. I myself have tried Him. Blessed was the day in which I fell into His arms. O happy hour in which I looked to Him and was lightened! Truly, my face is not ashamed, nor is my tongue ashamed of my Lord, nor is my understanding ashamed to believe His gospel, though all men should cast doubt upon it.

I have no other hope under heaven, no other joy in heaven, but my Savior and His infallible word. If you knew the comfort which my soul finds in Jesus you could not desire a better. O you young people, I would especially say to you—come early to Jesus, for they that seek Him early shall find Him with supreme delight! You will come to die soon; here is the antidote of death. The strongest and youngest will one day have to go upstairs and gather up his feet in the bed. Oh, what a comfort and joy it gives you in that hour to have the presence of your Lord! After death, comes the forever and ever. What bliss to be "forever with the Lord"! That endless fellowship with Jesus means an immeasurable weight of glory. Surely these arguments ought to prevail with you. They will, if your reason is made reasonable.

How ought I to plead with you when I have told you these arguments? I ought to plead with you in a manner far superior to that which I have yet reached. Alas! I cannot persuade you as I would. I think the preacher should feel a burning desire for his hearers' conversion, and even an intense anguish of heart for the immediate salvation of those to whom he speaks. To this I have attained; I long for your salvation most vehemently. I would say anything, and say it anyhow, if I could but win you to immediate faith in the Lord Jesus. The desire is so strong upon me that should I not succeed on this occasion, I will try again, and if, unhappily, I should fail again, I will continue at the work as long as you live and I am able to reach you. O my hearers, I cannot endure that you should die in your sins! I will go before God in secret, and lay your case before Him, and beg Him to interpose. We cannot let you be damned, my hearers. It is too dreadful. We cannot stand by and see you lost. If you are so insane as to refuse the Savior, those who have sober judgments will still continue to pray for you, and to weep in secret places because of your sins. If we cannot prevail with you for God, we will endeavor to prevail with God for you. I would have every person in this place act reasonably, righteously, truthfully, honestly to his own soul, and if he does so, he will be persuaded this day to believe in Jesus Christ the Son of God, and cast himself at His pierced feet.

III. Now I have to speak a few words upon another subject, with the same objective. It is this—LET US LAMENT THE FACT THAT OUR PERSUASIONS FAIL IN CERTAIN CASES. Paul found it so, and where this chief of apostles was baffled, can I wonder if I fail? The sower went forth to sow, he was a model sower, the Master put him in His parable as a pattern, he could not have sown better seed, nor have sown it better, and yet some of his seed fell on stony places, some fell by the wayside, and yet a third fell among thorns. Only one portion of what he sowed appears to have fallen upon good soil. Let me speak to those of you who will, I fear, be our failures. I grieve to think there should be any such. It is a sad business *in the present* for a man to be living without Christ. We pity abject poverty, but this is worse than the worst poverty. We are sorry for the friendless, but none are as forlorn as those who have not Jesus for a friend. No ignorance is as terrible as ignorance of the Savior; no blindness as deplorable as blindness towards the Lord Jesus. To live without Christ is not life, but a breathing death. You are in the heyday of your

youth, perhaps, and think that you are enjoying pleasure, but indeed it is not worth the name. You are eating husks and missing the kernels. Your mirth is as the crackling of thorns under a pot, it flares, and blazes up, but there is no heat in it; it dies down in a moment, and leaves nothing but a few ashes. If I had to die like a dog I should still wish to live the life of a Christian. Faith is good for this life. There is more solid joy in five minutes' fellowship with Christ than in a thousand years of reveling in the palaces of kings. You are a loser in a thousand ways by remaining an hour without Christ. It is a wretched business to be God's enemy, to miss rest of heart, and to be a stranger to the Holy Spirit.

It is a wretched business to be now neglecting the great salvation, but this is not all, your present hardness of heart reveals a good deal as to *your past life*. If you will not be persuaded of the things concerning Jesus, it shows that your heart and conscience have been injured by years of willful resistance to the power of truth. You have been stopping up your ears, and that is why you are so deaf. You have been sealing up your eyes, or you would not be so utterly blind. You have been hardening your heart against gracious appeals, or else you would not now be made of such hardened steel. Remember those years of broken Sabbaths, and see what they have done for you; they have blinded and hardened you. Remember the neglected house of God, and see how callous you have now become. Think of the times in which you have heard the gospel, and refused its tender warnings, instructions, and invitations, and see what has come of those refusals. You are now well-nigh insensible. Oh, that black, black past!

We are also fearful about you, because your past and present foretell *a future* of continued and increasing blindness, deafness, and insensibility. I fear for some of you that you have been judicially hardened by the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit, that you are also hardened by the terrible influence of Satan, and that you have also allowed the suicidal influence of self-will to sear your conscience, as with a hot iron. You are such a trifler that it is hard to get a serious thought into your mind; you are so fickle that none of our hopes concerning you are ever realized; you are so superficial that it is difficult to make any deep impression upon you. You crush beneath your feet the eggs of better things; you stifle the good thoughts which sometimes are born within you. Holy teachings fall upon your mind as sparks which drop into a pool of water. You have almost come to a condition of mind in which you are like a man covered with armor, from which the sharpest arrows glance off. O God, let it not be quite so, we beseech You, with anyone here!

This is all the sadder because it suggests such tremendous sin, and such overwhelming punishment. I cannot tell you what must be the doom of Sodom and Gomorrah, neither can you yourselves conceive its full horror. They gave themselves up unto unmentionable lusts, until at last God was so provoked that He would bear it no longer, and He resolved to destroy the filthy ones, and the place which they had polluted. He pulled up the sluices of His wrath, and cataracts of fire poured down from heaven upon the unclean ones. Heaven sent down fire and brimstone instead of silver showers. Then were the sinners burned up all of a

sudden, and not a wreck, either of the Sodomites or of their city, was left. This was an unparalleled instance of divine justice, for their sin had broken all bounds. What their doom will be in the day of judgement I leave you to imagine, but remember these words and weigh them well—"It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for you." Dear boy that you were upon your mother's knee, fair girl that you were in the Sunday school class, speaking so hopefully in your younger days, you will have to give an account for the delays which are ruining you. Hearer as you were, and as you are this morning, listening respectfully to God's ambassador—if you refuse the monitions of infinite love, what must become of you? Those were not my lips, remember, which first spoke those dagger-like words; they fell from the lips of the Prince of love who died for men. It is Christ Himself who said to those who heard His word and saw His mighty works, and yet refused to repent, "Woe unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for you."

Yes, I have endeavored to persuade you, and if I must labor in vain, I shall turn away with great reluctance, mourning that I may not be allowed to be a blessing to you. I quit you with lingering footstep, and bow regretfully before the Lord, crying, "Who has believed my report; and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Why will you die? Why will you rush upon such a destruction? Oh, that you were wise!

IV. But now, to change my strain that we may not finish upon so sad a note, LET ME PERSEVERE IN PERSUADING OTHERS. Notice that the apostle was not hindered in his work by sorrowing over those who rejected his persuasion, but he turned to others of whom he had better hope. Having spoken a solemn parting word, he said, "Be it known, therefore, unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it." To these Gentiles for two years Paul continued "preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ." He kept to his work, but he changed his audience. We also will preach the gospel to those who have not enjoyed Christian privileges. We preach Jesus to you who were not born of godly parents, nor brought up under Christian care. We preach free grace and dying love to you who hitherto have not attended the house of Prayer, nor cared to hear the word of everlasting life. If the moral refuse mercy, we declare it to the immoral. The Jews had been religious in profession, but as they refused Christ, our apostle preached Him to the Gentile population in Rome, which in Paul's day was worse than London, if worse can be. Rome was an infamous den of every, villainy beneath the sky, but Paul without hesitation preached Christ to all the Romans that he could reach; to soldiers, and to slaves, to Caesar's household, and to runaways. He believed in the adaptation of the gospel to the most degraded. With no weapon but the cross, he attacked a city sunk in idolatry and vice. So we also, when repulsed by you who think yourselves exceedingly respectable, turn with hope to those who have been drunks, swearers, thieves, harlots, and the like. To the chief of sinners we present the great salvation. To you is the word of this salvation sent. "Whosoever will let him take of the water of life freely." "Christ Jesus came into the world to

save sinners." "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men."

You far-off ones that dwell out of the reach of the common means of grace, the arm of mercy is stretched out to you. You who are not a people shall be made a people, and she that was not beloved shall be called the beloved of the Lord. Paul said of the Gentiles, "They will hear it," and we have the same confidence concerning many great transgressors. I thank God that those who never heard the gospel before have heard it in this great house, and have so heard it that they have at once yielded to its demands, and accepted its provisions. Many who have been without hope, and without God, and without fear of eternal things, have heard the doctrine of free, rich, sovereign mercy, and have turned at once from their sins, and laid hold upon the hope set before them.

Oh that more would come! They will come, "They will hear it." The divine purpose is that the Lord will provoke the outwardly religious by saving those who make no pretense of godliness. Because you were invited to the feast, and would not come, therefore the master of the house, being angry, issues a wider invitation, and gives the grand command, "Go out into the highways and hedges, and as many as you find compel them to come in." If *you* will not have salvation, others will. Christ shall not be disappointed, He shall not die in vain; His Spirit shall not strive without success. "A seed shall serve Him." Jesus shall have a people saved by His precious blood. I hope that many such are brought here this morning on purpose to be blessed. I hope they will leap forward to catch at the gracious message. Oh that some of them would cry out, "I believe, I trust, I rest in Jesus!" If it is so, go your way, God has saved you. If you believe that Jesus is the Christ, you are born of God. You have been worldly, sinful, abundantly wicked, yet, if you will have Christ now, have Him, and welcome. If you are now drawn towards Him, come at once and linger not. "For the Scripture says, Whosoever believes on Him shall not be ashamed." May His sweet love persuade you in the things concerning Jesus! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ACTS 28.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—450, 433, 385.

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THE BLOOD SHED FOR MANY
NO. 1971

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 3, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For this is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."
Matthew 26:28.

THE Lord Jesus Christ was then alive, sitting at the table, and yet, pointing to the cup filled with red wine, He said, "This is My blood, which is shed for many." This proves that He could not have intended that the wine was literally His blood. Surely it is no longer necessary to refute the gross and carnal dogma of transubstantiation which is obviously absurd. There sat the living Lord at the supper, with His blood in His veins, and therefore the wine could not literally be His blood. Value the symbol, but to confound it with the thing symbolized would draw into the idolatrous worship of a piece of bread.

Our Lord spoke of His blood as shed when as yet the nails had not pierced His hands and feet, and the spear had not broached His side. Is not this to be accounted for by the fact that our Lord was so taken up with the thought of our redemption by His death that He speaks of that as done which He was so resolved to do? Enjoying loving communion with His chosen disciples, He spoke freely; His heart did not study accuracy so much as feeling, and so, in speech as in feeling, He antedated His great work of atonement, and spoke of it as done. To set forth the future intent of the blessed ordinance of the Lord's Supper He must of necessity treat His death as an accomplished fact, and His complete absorption in His work made it easy and natural for Him to do so. He ignores moods and tenses, "His work is before Him."

By the use of such language, our Lord also shows us the abiding presence of the great sacrifice as a power and an influence. He is the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," and therefore He speaks of His blood as shed. In a few hours it would be literally poured forth, but long ages before, the Lord God had regarded it as done. In full confidence in the great Surety that He would never draw back from the perfect fulfillment of His engagements, the Father saved multitudes in virtue of the future sin-offering. He communed with myriads of saints on the strength of the purification which would in the fullness of time be presented by the great High Priest. Could not the Father trust His Son? He did so, and by this act set us a great example of faith. God Himself is in very deed the Father of the faithful, seeing that He Himself reposed the utmost confidence in Jesus, and because of what He would yet do in the pouring out of His soul unto death, He "opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers." What, my soul! Can you not trust the sacrifice now that it has been

presented? If the foresight of it was enough for God, is not the consummation of it enough for you? "Behold the Lamb of God," who even before He died was described as taking away the sin of the world; if this was so before He went to Calvary, how surely is it so now that He has said in verity and truth, "It is finished"!

Dear friends, I am going to preach to you again upon the cornerstone of the gospel. How many times will this make, I wonder? The doctrine of Christ crucified is always with me. As the Roman sentinel in Pompeii stood to his post even when the city was destroyed, so do I stand to the truth of the atonement though the church is being buried beneath the boiling mud showers of modern heresy. Everything else can wait, but this one truth must be proclaimed with a voice of thunder. Others may preach as they will, but as for this pulpit, it shall always resound with the substitution of Christ. "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Some may continually preach Christ as an example, and others may perpetually discourse upon His coming to glory, we also preach both of these, but mainly we preach Christ *crucified,* to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness, but to them that are saved Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

You have before you a cup, filled with wine, which Jesus has just blessed, and presented to His disciples. As you look into its rosy depths, hear Him speak of the cup as His blood, for thus He would teach us a solemn lesson.

I. Note, first, THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST. The vital importance of the great truth of the death of Christ as a vicarious sacrifice is set before us in this cup, which is the memorial of His blood shed for many.

Blood represents suffering, but it goes further, and suggests suffering unto death. "The blood is the life thereof," and when blood is too copiously shed, death is suggested. Remember that in the sacred supper you have the bread as a separate emblem of the body, and then the wine as a separate symbol of the blood, thus you have a clear picture of death, since the blood is separated from the flesh. "As often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you do show the Lord's death." Both acts are essential.

Upon the death of Christ you are invited to fix your attention, and upon that only. In the suffering of our Lord unto death we see the boundless stretch of His love. "Greater love has no man than this; that he lay down his life for his friends." Jesus could not be more loving to us than to yield Himself unto death, even the death of the cross. O My Lord, in Your bloody sweat, and in the piercing of Your hands, and feet, and side, I see the highest proof of Your love! Here I see that Jesus "loved me, and gave Himself for me." Beloved, I beg you to consider often and lovingly the sufferings of your Redeemer, unto the pouring out of His heart's blood. Go with Him to Gethsemane, and then to the house of Caiaphas and Annas, and then to Pilate's hall, and Herod's place of mockery! Behold your Lord beneath the cruel scourges, and in the hands of the executioners upon the hill of shame. Forget not one of the sorrows which were mingled in the bitter cup of His crucifixion—its pain, its mockery, its shame. It was a death reserved for slaves and felons. To make its deep

abysses absolutely bottomless, He was forsaken even of His God. Let the darkness of "Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabachthani," bear down upon your spirit till, as you sink in awe, you also rise in love. He loved you better than He loved Himself! The cup means love, even to the shedding of His blood for you.

It means something more. We have called our Lord, in our hymn, "Giver of life for life," and that is what this cup means. He gave up His life that we might live. He stood in our place and stead in the day of Jehovah's wrath, receiving into His bosom the fiery sword which was unsheathed for our destruction. The pouring out of His blood has made our peace with God. Jehovah made the soul of His only-begotten an offering for sin, that the guilty might be cleared. "He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." That is what the wine in the cup means; it means the death of Jesus in our stead. It means the blood poured out from the heart of the incarnate God that we might have fellowship with God, the sin which divided us being expiated by His death.

Our blessed Savior would have us hold His death in great reverence; it is to be *our chief memory*. Both the emblems of the Lord's Supper set forth the Savior's death. This peculiarly Christian ordinance teaches nothing if it does not teach this. Christ's death for men is the great doctrine of the church. We profess ourselves partakers of the merit of His death when we come to this table, our Lord's death is then remembered, shown, declared, testified, and trusted in. Evidently the Lord Jesus means us to treat the fact of His death, as a truth to be made preeminently prominent; He would not have instituted an ordinance especially to remind us of the shedding of His blood, if He had not regarded it as the forefront of His whole earthly career.

The other ordinance of our holy faith also sets forth our Lord's death. Are we not "Buried with Him by baptism into death?" Is not baptism an emblem of His being immersed beneath the waves of sorrow and death? Baptism shows us that participation in Christ's suffering by which we begin to live, the Lord's Supper shows us that participation in Christ's suffering by which that life is sustained. Both institutions point to His death.

Besides, beloved, we know from Holy Scripture that this doctrine of the death of Christ is the very core of Christianity. Leave out the cross, and you have killed the religion of Jesus. Atonement by the blood of Jesus is not an arm of Christian truth; it is the heart of it. Even as the Lord said of the animal, "The blood is the life thereof," so is it true of the gospel, the sacrificial death of Jesus is the vital point of our profession. I know nothing of Christianity without the blood of Christ. No teaching is healthy which throws the cross into the background. The other day, when I was inquiring about the welfare of a certain congregation, my informant told me that there had been few additions to the church, although the minister was a man of ability and industry. Furthermore, he let me see the reason for failure, for he added, "I have attended there for several years, and during all that time I do not remember hearing a sermon upon the sacrifice of Christ. The atonement is not denied, but it is left out." If this is so, what is to become of our churches? If the light of

the atonement is put under a bushel, the darkness will be dense. In omitting the cross you have cut the Achilles tendon of the church, it cannot move, nor even stand, when this is gone. Holy work falls to the ground; it faints and dies when the blood of Jesus is taken away. The cross must be put in the front more than ever by the faithful, because so many are unfaithful. Let us endeavor to make amends for the dishonor done to our divine Master by those who deny or dishonor His vicarious sacrifice; let us abide steadfast in this faith while others waver, and preach Christ crucified if all others forbear. Grace, mercy, and peace be to all who exalt Christ crucified!

This remembrance of the death of Christ must be *a constant remembrance*. The Lord's Supper was meant to be a frequent feast of fellowship. It is a grievous mistake of the church when the communion is held but once in the year, or once in a quarter of a year, and I cannot remember any Scripture which justifies once in the month. I should not feel satisfied without breaking bread on every Lord's Day. It has come to me even more often than once a week, for it has been my delight to break bread with many a little company of Christian friends. Whenever this Supper is celebrated, we declare that "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." We cannot think of that death too often. Never was man blamed in heaven for preaching Christ too much, no, not even on earth to the sons of God was the cross ever too much spoken of. Outsiders may say, "This man harps only upon one string." Do you wonder? The carnal mind is enmity against God, and it especially shows its hatred by railing at the cross. Saintly ones find here, in the perpetual monotony of the cross, a greater variety than in all other doctrines put together. Preach Christ, and Christ, and Christ, and Christ, and nothing else but Christ, and opened ears shall find in your ministry a wondrous harmony of linked sweetnesses, a charming perfectness of all manner of delicious voices. All good things lie within the compass of the cross; its outstretched arms overshadow the whole world of thought, from the east even unto the west it sheds a hallowed influence, meanwhile, its foot is planted deep in the eternal mysteries, and its top pierces all earth-born clouds, and rises to the throne of the Most High. Christ is lifted up upon the cross that He may draw all men unto Him, and if we desire to draw them, this must be our magnet.

Beloved, the precious blood of Christ should be had by us *in vivid remembrance*. There is something to me most homely about that cup filled with the fruit of the vine. The bread of the Supper is the bread of our common meal, and the wine is the usual attendant of feasts. That same pure blood of the grape which is set on our sacramental table I drink with my friend. Look at those ruby ruddy drops, suggesting your Lord's own blood. I had not dared to invent the symbol, nor might any man of mortal mold have ventured on such a thing, lest he should seem to bring that august death down to our lowly level, but in infinite condescension Jesus Himself chooses the symbol, and while by its materialism He sets forth the reality of the sacrifice, by its commonness He shows how freely we may partake thereof. He would not have us know Him after the flesh, and forget the spiritual nature of His grief, but yet He would have us know that He was in a real body when He bled, and that He died a real

death, and became most truly fit for burial, and therefore He symbolizes His blood, not by some airy fancy, or mystic sign, but by common wine in the cup. Thus would He reach us by our eye and by our taste, using two gates of our nature which lead up to the castle of the heart, but are not often the King's roadway thereto. O blessed Master; do You arrange to teach us so forcibly? Then let us be impressed with the reality of the lesson, and never treat Your passion as a thing of sentiment, nor make it a myth, nor view it as a dream of poetry. You shall be in death most real to us, even as is that cup whereof we drink.

The dear memorials of our Lord's blood-shedding are intended for *a personal remembrance*. There is no Lord's Supper except as the wine touches the lip, and is received into the communicant's own self. All must partake. He says, "Drink you all of it." You cannot take the Lord's Supper by deputy or representative; you must each of you approach the table, and personally eat and drink. Beloved, we *must* come into personal contact with the death of Christ. This is essential. We must each one say, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." In His blood you must be personally washed; by His blood you must be personally reconciled to God; through His blood you must personally have access to God, and by His blood you must personally overcome the enemy of your souls. As the Israelite's own door must be smeared with the blood of the Paschal lamb, so must you individually partake of the true Sacrifice, and know each one for himself the power of His redemption.

As it is personal, it is a charming fact that it is *a happy remembrance*. Our remembrance of Christ is chastened with repentance, but it is also perfumed with faith. The Lord's Supper is no funeral meal, but a festival; most fitly do we begin it with the giving of thanks, and close it with a hymn. It is by many called the "Eucharist," or the giving of thanks, it is not a fast, but a feast. My happiest moments are spent with the King at His table, when His banner over me is love. The death of Christ is a well-spring of solemn joy. Before our great Sacrifice died, the best token of His death was the blood of bulls and of goats. See how the victims writhe in death! The sacrificial knife does terrible work at the foot of the altar, it is hard to stand by and see the creatures bleed. After our Lord's death was over, the blood of animals was not the type, but the blood of the grape. That which was terrible in prospect is joyous in remembrance. That which was blood in the shedding is wine in the receiving. It came from Him with a wound, but it comes to us with a blessing. His blood is our song in the house of our pilgrimage, and it shall add the best music to our heavenly harmonies as we sing before the throne, "Unto Him that has loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood; to Him be glory forever and ever." If our Lord Jesus has made the memory of His love to be sweeter than wine, let us never turn from it as though it had become a distasteful theme. Let us find our choicest pleasures at the cross.

Once more, our Savior meant us to maintain the doctrine of His death, and the shedding of His blood for the remission of sins, even to the end of time, for He made it to be of *perpetual remembrance*. We drink this cup "until He comes." If the Lord Jesus had foreseen with approbation the changes in religious thought which would be brought about by growing

"culture," He would surely have arranged a change of symbols to suit the change of doctrines. Would He not have warned us that, towards the end of the nineteenth century, men would become so "enlightened" that the faith of Christendom must of necessity take a new departure, and therefore He had appointed a change of sacramental memorials? But He has not warned us of the coming of those eminently great and wise men who have changed all things, and abolished the old-fashioned truths for which martyrs died. Brethren, I do not believe in the wisdom of these men, and their changes I abhor, but had there been any ground for such changes, the Lord's Supper would not have been made of perpetual obligation. The perpetuity of ordinances indicates perpetuity of doctrine. But hear the moderns talk—"The Apostles, the Fathers, the Puritans, they were excellent men, no doubt, but then, you see, they lived before the rising up of those wonderful scientific men who have enlightened us so much." Let me repeat what I have said. If we had come to a new point as to believing, should we not have come to a new point as to the ordinances in which those beliefs are embodied? I think so. The evident intent of Christ in giving us settled ordinances, and especially in settling this one which so clearly commemorates His blood shedding, was that we might know that the truth of His sacrifice is forever fixed and settled, and must unchangeably remain the essence of His gospel. Neither nineteen centuries, nor nineteen thousand centuries, can make the slightest difference in this truth or in the relative proportion of this truth to other truths, so long as this dispensation lasts. Until He comes a second time without a sin offering unto salvation, the grand work of His first coming must be kept first and foremost in all our teaching, trusting, and testifying. As in the southern hemisphere the cross is the mariner's guide, so, under all skies, is the death of our Redeemer the polestar of our hope upon the sea of life. In life and in death we will glory in the cross of Christ, and never be ashamed of it, be we where we may.

II. Secondly, note well THE CONNECTION OF THE BLOOD OF CHRIST WITH THE COVENANT. Read the text again, "This is My blood of the new testament." The translation would be better, "This is My blood of the covenant."

What is this covenant? The covenant is that which I read to you just now in Jeremiah 31:33, "This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel. After those days, says the Lord, I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people." See also Jeremiah 32:40, "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts; that they shall not depart from Me." Turn also to Ezekiel 11:19, "I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh." Look in the same prophecy at 36:26, "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 an heart of flesh." What a Magna Charta is this! The old covenant says, "Keep the law and live." The new covenant is, "You shall live, and I will lead you to keep My law, for I will write it on your heart." Happy men who know their standing under this covenant!

What has the blood of Jesus Christ to do with this covenant? It has everything to do with it, for the covenant could never have been made apart from the blood of Jesus. Atonement was taken for granted in the establishment of the covenant. No one else could have stood as our representative, to fulfill our side of the covenant, except the Lord Jesus Christ, and even He could only have performed that covenant by shedding His blood. In that cup you see the emblem of the blood which made the covenant possible.

Moreover, the blood of Jesus makes the covenant sure. His death has fulfilled man's side of the covenant, and God's part stands sure. The stipulation of the covenant is fulfilled in Christ, and now the tenor of it is pure promise. Note how the "shalls" and "wills" follow each other in quick succession. An arrangement of absolute grace on God's part towards the undeserving sons of men is now in full action through the sacrifice of Christ.

This covenant of grace, when rightly understood, exerts a blessed influence over the minds of men conscious of sin. The chaplain of a jail, a dear friend of mine, once told me of a surprising case of conversion in which knowledge of the covenant of grace was the chief instrument of the Holy Spirit. My friend had under his charge a man most cunning and brutal. He was singularly repulsive, even in comparison with other convicts. He had been renowned for his daring, and for the utter absence of all feeling when committing acts of violence. I think he had been called "the king of the garrotters." The chaplain had spoken to him several times, but had not succeeded even in getting an answer. The man was sullenly set against all instruction. At last he expressed a desire for a certain book, but as it was not in the library, the chaplain pointed to the Bible, which was placed in his cell, and said, "Did you ever read *that* Book?" He gave no answer, but looked at the good man as if he would kill him. The question was kindly repeated, with the assurance that he would find it well worth reading. "Sir," said the convict, "you would not ask me such a question if you knew who I was. What have I to do with a Book of that sort?" He was told that his character was well known to the chaplain, and that for this very reason he recommended the Bible as a Book which would suit his case. "It would do me no good," he cried, "I am past all feeling." Doubling up his fist he struck the iron door of the cell, and said, "My heart is as hard as that iron; there is nothing in any book that will ever touch me." "Well," said the chaplain, "You want a new heart. Did you ever read the covenant of grace?" To which the man answered sullenly by inquiring what he meant by such talk. The chaplain replied, "Listen to these words—'A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.'" The words struck the man with amazement, as well they might; he asked to have the passage found for him in the Bible. He read the words again and again, and when the chaplain came back to him the next day, the wild beast was tamed. "Oh, sir," he said, "I never dreamed of such a promise! I never believed it possible that God would speak in such a way as that to men. If He gives me a new heart it will be a miracle of mercy, and yet I think," he said, "He is going to work that miracle upon me, for the very hope of a new nature is beginning to touch me as I never was touched before." That man became gentle in manner,

obedient to authority, and childlike in spirit. Though my friend has nothing left of the sanguine hopes he once entertained of converted criminals, he yet believes that in this case no observer could have questioned the thorough nature of the work, and yet the only means was the doctrine of the covenant. My rebellious heart is not affected by the fact that God commands me to do this or that, but when He declares free and full forgiveness, and goes on to promise love and favor, and renewal of nature, I feel broken down. How can I rebel against one who does such wonders in me, and designs such great things for me?—

"Dissolved by His goodness, I fall to the ground,
And weep to the praise of the mercy I've found."

How dear and precious this makes the blood of Christ, since it is the blood of the everlasting covenant! Coming under this blessed covenant, we henceforth adore the fullness of that grace which, at the cost of the most precious of all lives, has made this arrangement for unworthy men.

You will perhaps say to me, "Why did our translators use the word 'testament' in our Authorized Version?" They were hardly so wise as usual in this instance, for "covenant" is the better word of the two to set forth the original, but the idea of a testament is there also. The original may signify either or both. The word "settlement," which has dropped out of use nowadays, was often employed by our Calvinistic forefathers when they spoke of the everlasting arrangement of grace. The word "settlement" might take in both covenant and testament—there is a covenant of grace, but the covenant stipulation being fulfilled by our Lord Jesus, the arrangement becomes virtually a testament, through which, by the will of God, countless blessings are secured to the heirs of salvation. The blood of Jesus is the seal of the covenant, and transforms its blessings into bequests of love, entailed upon believers. The settlement or arrangement, by which God can be just and yet the Justifier of the ungodly, and can deal with believers, not on terms of law, but on terms of pure grace, is established by the sacrifice of our Lord. O my brethren, as God's covenanted ones, drink you of the cup with joy, and renew your pledge with the Lord your God!

III. A third point comes up in the text very manifestly: THE BLOOD HAS AN INTIMATE CONNECTION WITH REMISSION. The text says, "This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Jesus suffering, bleeding, dying, has procured for sinners the forgiveness of their sins.

Of what sins? Of all sins of every sort and kind, however heinous, aggravated, and multiplied. The blood of the covenant takes every sin away, be it what it may; there was never a sin believingly confessed and taken to Christ that ever baffled His power to cleanse it. This fountain has never been tried in vain. Murderers, thieves, liars, adulterers, and what not, have come to Jesus by penitence and faith, and through the merit of His sacrifice their sins have been put away.

Of what nature is the remission? It is pardon, freely given, acting immediately, and abiding forever, so that there is no fear of the guilt ever being again laid to the charge of the forgiven one. Through the precious blood our sins are blotted out, cast into the depths of the sea, and removed as far from us as the east is from the west. Our sins cease to be,

they are made an end of; they cannot be found against us any more forever. Yes, hear it, hear it, O wide earth! Let the glad news startle your darkest dens of infamy, there is absolute remission of sins! The precious blood of Christ cleanses from all sin; yes, turns the scarlet into a whiteness which exceeds that of the newly-fallen snow—a whiteness which never can be tarnished. Washed by Jesus, the blackest of sinners shall appear before the judgment seat of the all-seeing Judge without spot.

How is it the blood of Jesus effects this? The secret lies in the vicarious or substitutionary character of our Lord's suffering and death. Because He stood in our place, the justice of God is vindicated, and the threats of the law are fulfilled. It is now just for God to pardon sin. Christ's bearing the penalty of human sin instead of men has made the moral government of God perfect in justice, has laid a basis for peace of conscience, and has rendered sin immeasurably hateful, though its punishment does not fall upon the believer. This is the great secret; this is the heavenly news, the gospel of salvation that through the blood of Jesus sin is justly put away. Oh, how my very soul loves this truth. Therefore do I speak it in unmistakable terms.

And for what end is this remission of sins secured? My brethren, if there were no other end for the remission of sins but its own self, it would be a noble purpose, and it would be worth preaching every day of our lives, but it does not end here. We mistake if we think that the pardon of sins is God's ultimatum. No, no; it is but a beginning, a means to a further purpose. He forgives our sins with the design of curing our sinfulness. We are pardoned that we may become holy. God forgives the sin that He may purify the sinner. If He had not aimed at your holiness, there had not been so imperative a necessity for atonement, but to impress you with the guilt of sin, to make you feel the evil which sin has worked, to let you know your obligation to divine love, the Lord has not forgiven you without a sacrifice. Ah, what a sacrifice! He aims at the death of your sinfulness, that you may henceforth love Him, and serve Him, and crucify the lusts which crucified your Lord. The Lord aims at working in you the likeness of His dear Son. Jesus has saved you by His self-sacrificing obedience to justice that you may yield your whole soul to God, and be willing to die for the upholding of the kingdom of love and truth. The death of Christ for you pledges you to be dead to sin, that by His resurrection from the dead you may rise into newness of life, and so become like your Lord. Pardon by blood aims at this. Do you catch the thought? If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, God's intent is to make you like the Firstborn among many brethren, and to work in you everything that is comely and of good report. But this is not all; He has a further design to bring you into everlasting fellowship with Himself. He is sanctifying you, that you may behold His face, and that you may be fit to be a comrade of His only-begotten Son throughout eternity. You are to be the choice and dear companion of the Lord of love. He has a throne for you, a mansion and a crown for you, and an immortality of such inconceivable glory and blessedness that, if you did but form even a distant conception of it, no golden apple of earth would turn you aside from pursuing the prize of your high calling. Oh, to be forever with the Lord! Forever to behold His face! I fail to reach the height of this great argument!

See, my brethren, to what the blood of your Lord destines you. O my soul, bless God for that one cup, which reminds you of the great sacrifice, and prophesies to you your glory at the right hand of God forever!

IV. I cannot forget to notice, in closing, THE CONNECTION OF THE BLOOD WITH MEN. We are told in the text that this blood is shed *"for many* for the remission of sins." In that large word "many" let us exceedingly rejoice. Christ's blood was not shed for the handful of apostles alone. There were but eleven of them who really partook of the blood symbolized by the cup. The Savior does not say, "This is My blood which is shed for you, the favored eleven," but "shed for many." Jesus did not die for the clergy alone. I recollect in Martin Luther's life that he saw, in one of the Roman churches, a picture of the Pope, the cardinals, and bishops, and priests, and monks, and friars, all on board a ship. They were all safe, every one of them. As for the laity, poor wretches, they were struggling in the sea, and many of them drowning. Only those were saved to whom the good men in the ship were so kind as to hand out a rope or a plank. That is not our Lord's teaching, His blood is shed "for many," and not for the few. He is not the Christ of a caste, or a class, but the Christ of all conditions of men. His blood is shed for many sinners, that their sins may be remitted.

Those in the upper room were all Jews, but the Lord Jesus Christ said to them, "This blood is shed for *many,"* to let them see that He did not die alone for the seed of Abraham, but for all races of men that dwell upon the face of the earth. "Shed for many." His eye, I doubt not, glanced at these far-off islands, and at the vast lands beyond the western sea. He thought of Africa, and India, and the land of Sinim. A multitude that no man can number gladdened the far-seeing and foreseeing eye of the Redeemer. He spoke with joyful emphasis when He said, "shed for many for the remission of sins." Believe in the immeasurable results of redemption. Whenever we are making arrangements for the preaching of this precious blood, let us make them on a large scale. The mansion of love should be built for a large family. Let us not sing—

"We are a garden walled around,
Pray keep the walls most tight and sound."

Let us expect to see large numbers brought within the sacred enclosure. We must yet break forth on the right hand and on the left. The masses must be compelled to come in. This blood is shed for many. A group of half-a-dozen converts makes us very glad, and so it should, but oh, to have half-a-dozen thousand at once! Why not? This blood is shed "for many." Let us cast the great net into the sea. You young men, preach the gospel in the streets of this crowded city, for it is meant for many! You who go from door to door, do not think you can be too hopeful, since your Savior's blood is shed for many, and Christ's "many" is a very great many. It is shed for all who ever shall believe in Him—shed for you, sinner, if you will now trust Him. Only confess your sin, and trust Christ, and be assured that Jesus died in your place and stead. It is shed for many, so that no man or woman born shall ever trust Christ in vain, or find the atonement insufficient for him. Oh, for a large-hearted faith, so that by holy effort we may lengthen our cords, and strengthen our stakes, expecting to see the household of our Lord become exceedingly

numerous! He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied; by His righteousness shall He justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities. Dwell on that word "many," and let it nerve you for far-reaching labors.

V. Now note THE CONNECTION OF THE BLOOD WITH OURSELVES. Dear hearer, are you among the many? Why are you not? May His grace bring you to trust in Him, and you may not doubt that you are among the many. "Ah," you say, "that is what I am listening for! How can I partake in the effect of this sacrifice?" Do you see that wine cup which I set before you just now? How are you to enjoy that wine which fills the cup? Its ruddy drops; how are they to be yours? The matter is very simple. I think I see you take the chalice in your hand, and raise it to your mouth. You drink, and the deed is done. This is no mystery. Bread and wine are ours by eating and drinking, Christ is ours by our receiving Him. The merit of His precious blood becomes ours by that simple childlike faith which accepts Jesus to be our all. We say, "Here it is; I believe in it; I take it; I accept it as my own." It is yours. No man can take from you that which you have eaten and drunk. Christ is yours forever if you receive Him into your heart.

If you have any question as to whether you have drunk, I will tell you how to solve it—*drink again!* If you have been eating, and you have really forgotten whether you have eaten or not—such things do occur to busy men, who eat but little; if, I say, you would be sure that you have eaten, *eat again!* If you will be assured that you have believed in Jesus, *believe again!* Whenever you have any doubt about whether Christ is yours, take Him over again. I like to begin again. Often I find the best way of going forward is to go back to my first faith in Jesus and as a sinner renew my confidence in my Savior. "Oh," says the devil, "you are a preacher of the gospel, but you do not know it yourself." At one time I used to argue with the accuser, but he is not worth it, and it is by no means profitable to one's own heart. We cannot convert or convince the devil, it is better to refer him to our Lord. When he tells me I am not a saint, I answer, "Well, what am I, then? "A sinner," he says. "Well, so are you!" "Ah!" he says, "You will be lost." "No," say I, "that is why I shall not be lost, since Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and I therefore trust in Him to save me." This is what Martin Luther calls cutting the devil's head off with his own sword, and it is the best course you can follow.

You say, "If I take Christ to myself as a man takes a cup and drinks the contents, am I saved?" Yes, you are. "How am I to know it?" Know it because God says so. "He that believes in Him has everlasting life." If I did not feel a pulse of that life (as I did not at first), I nevertheless would believe that I had it, simply on the strength of the divine assurance. Since my conversion, I have felt the pulsing of a life more strong and forcible than the life of the most vigorous youth that ever ran without weariness, but there are times when it is not so. Just now I feel the heavenly life joyously leaping within me, but when I do not feel it, I fall back on this; God has said, "He that believes in Him has everlasting life." God's words against all my feelings! I may get into a fainting fit, and my circumstances may operate upon my heart, as this hot weather operates upon my body, and make me feel dull and sleepy, but this cannot make

the Word of God of no effect. I go back to the Book, and believe the bare Word of the Lord, "He that believes in Him *has* everlasting life." That is enough for me. I believe, and therefore I live. Our inward experience is fine corroborative evidence, but God's testimony is the best foundation our confidence can have.

I recollect a story told of William Dawson, whom our Wesleyan friends used to call Billy Dawson, one of the best preachers that ever entered a pulpit. He once gave out as his text, "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." When he had given out his text he dropped down to the bottom of the pulpit, so that nothing could be seen of him, only there was a voice heard saying, "Not the man in the pulpit, he is out of sight, but the Man in the Book. The Man described in the Book is the Man through whom is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." I put myself and you, and everybody else out of sight, and I preach to you the remission of sins through Jesus only. I would sing with the children, "Nothing but the blood of Jesus." Shut your eyes to all things but the cross. Jesus died, and rose again, and went to heaven, and all your hope must go with Him! Come, my hearer, take Jesus by a distinct act of faith this morning! May God the Holy Spirit constrain you to do so, and then you may go on your way rejoicing! So be it in the name of Jesus.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
MATTHEW 26:14-30; JEREMIAH 31:31-87.**

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—429, 296.

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A BIT OF HISTORY FOR OLD AND YOUNG
NO. 1972

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 10, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads."
Genesis 48:15, 16.

JOSEPH was one by himself. In Jacob's family he was like a swan in a duck's nest, he seemed to be of a different race from the rest, even from his childhood. He was the son of old age, the son of the elders, that is, a child who was old when he was young, in thoughtfulness and devotion. He reached an early ripeness, which did not end in early decay. In consequence of this, Joseph was one by himself in the peculiarity of his trials. Through his brothers' hatred of him he was made to suffer greatly and at last was sold into slavery, and underwent trials in Egypt of the severest kind. "The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him." But, brethren, see the recompense, for he had blessings which were altogether his own. "His bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob." He was as distinguished by the favor of God as by the disfavor of his brethren. When Jacob is old and about to die, he gave Joseph a blessing all to himself, in addition to that which he received with his brothers. In the forty-ninth chapter we read, "Gather yourselves together, and hear, you sons of Jacob: and hearken unto Israel, your father," and they did so, and received as a family such blessings as their father's prophetic eye foresaw, but before this, "by faith Jacob blessed the two sons of Joseph" at a private interview especially granted to them. Had not his tribulations abounded, his consolations would not so have abounded. Do you seem yourself, my friend, to be marked out for peculiar sorrows? Do the arrows of affliction make your life their target, and are you chastened above all other men? Do not be regretful, for the arrows are winged by covenant love, which designs by their wounds to prepare you for a special work which will lead up to a special benediction from your Father who is in heaven. The day will come when you will be grateful for every smart you now endure; yes, grateful for that bitter pang of unkindness from your brethren, though now it tortures your heart. The abundance of the revelation of God is usually joined with a thorn in the flesh either before or after it. Notwithstanding your grief, there shall yet be born to you, as to Joseph, a Manasseh, for God shall make you forget all your toil, and an

Ephraim, for God shall make you fruitful in the land of your affliction. You shall be blessed above all others. "Even by the God of your father, who shall help you; and by the Almighty, who shall bless you with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lies under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb: the blessings of your father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren." Surely it is good for a man that he bears the yoke in his youth; his shoulders shall be the better able to bear the government when God shall lay it upon them. Instructed by affliction, the man shall become a father to his people, and a comforter to the afflicted.

Our text tells us that Jacob blessed Joseph, and we perceive that *he blessed him through blessing his children,* which leads us to the next remark, that no choicer favor could fall upon ourselves than to see our children favored of the Lord. Joseph is doubly blessed by seeing Ephraim and Manasseh blessed. Dear young people, to whom I now speak, your fathers can say, "We have no greater joy than this; that our children walk in the truth." If any of you who are unconverted knew the deep searching of heart of your parents about you, I think you would not long be careless and indifferent about divine things, and if you could conceive the flashes of heavenly joy that would light up your parents' hearts if they saw you saved in the Lord, it would be an inducement to you to consider your ways, and turn unto the Lord with full purpose of heart. God Himself, next to giving to His chosen the covenant of grace, can do them no greater earthly kindness than to call their children, by His grace into the same covenant. Will you not think of this?

Those of us who are parents are bound to do our best, that our children may be partakers with us of the divine inheritance. As Joseph took Ephraim and Manasseh to see their aged grandfather, let us bring our children where blessings may be expected. Let us be careful of the company into which we take our sons and daughters. Let us never conduct them where they may receive harm rather than benefit. Carefully, lovingly, wisely, using no undue severity, let us guide them into likely places for the divine benediction, and encourage them to seek the blessing for themselves by the fact that their parents are seeking it for them. The father who will not seize every opportunity of getting a blessing for his Ephraim and Manasseh is not likely to see the lads seeking the blessing for themselves. Especially should this care be taken by parents who are growing rich, whose offspring will be tempted by this very fact to seek grander society than the poor people of God can afford them. I doubt not that these two sons of Egypt's prime minister were exposed to exceedingly great temptations. As the sons of a very wealthy and distinguished parent, their tastes might lie in an Egyptian direction. I believe that they were nevertheless greatly swayed to the right side, and led to worship the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, by the zeal of their father, Joseph, and by the recollection of the benediction of their dying grandfa-

ther. There is no trace of their having inclined to the religion of the king and the nobles of Egypt, but they adhered to the faith of their father. Oh that all the descendants of Puritan fathers might be steadfast to the pure truth of God in these evil days!

Furthermore, observe that *if we want to bless young people, one of the likeliest means of doing so will be our personal testimony to the goodness of God*. Young men and women usually feel great interest in their fathers' life story—if it is a worthy one—and what they hear from them of their personal experience of the goodness of God will abide with them. We all read biographies and we value the results of experience which we find there, but the biographies of our own relatives are peculiarly treasured, and when these biographies are not read, but spoken, what wonderful force they have! I recollect in my younger days hearing a minister, blind with age, speak at the communion table, and bear witness to us young people, who had just joined the church, that it was well for us that we had come to put our trust in a faithful God, and as the good man, with great feebleness and yet with great earnestness, said to us, that he had never regretted that he had given his heart to Christ as a boy, I felt my heart leap within me with delight that I had such a God to be my God. His testimony was such as a younger man could not have borne, he might have spoken more fluently, but the weight of those eighty years at the back of it made the old man eloquent to my young heart. We who are growing grey in our Master's service ought not to be backward to speak well of His name. Why, my brother, you will not be able to do so much good in heaven as you can on earth, for they all know about it up there, but men here need our witness to the God whom we have tried and proved. Let us make occasions in which we may speak well of the Lord, even the God who has fed us all our life long and redeemed us from all evil. This is one of the best ways in which to bless the lads. The benediction of Jacob was intertwisted with his biography; the blessing which he had himself enjoyed he wished for them, and as he invoked it he helped to secure it by his personal testimony.

One thing further; I want you to note, that *Jacob, in desiring to bless his grandsons, introduced them to God*. He speaks of "God before whom my fathers did walk: God who blessed me all my life long." This is the great distinction between man and man; there are two races, he that fears God, and he that fears Him not. The religion of this present age, such as it is, has a wrong direction in its course. It seeks after what is called "the enthusiasm of humanity," but what we want far more is enthusiasm for God. We shall never go right unless God is first, midst, and last. I despair for benevolence when it is not based upon devotion. We shall not long have love to man if we do not first and chiefly cultivate love to God. What our boys need in starting in life is a God; if we have nothing else to give them, they have enough if they have God. What our girls need in quitting the nurture of home, is God's love in their hearts, and whether they have fortunes or not, is a small matter. In fellowship with God

lies the essence of true human life; life in God, life by the knowledge of the Most High, life through the Redeeming Angel—this is life indeed.

Jacob died as one who had been delivered from all evil, yes, even the evil of old age. His eyes were dim, but that did not matter, for his faith was clear. I love to think that we are going where our vision of God will not be through the eye, but through the spiritual perceptions. These were brighter in Jacob in his old age than ever before, his faith and love, which are the earthly forms of those perceptions, were apprehending God in a more forcible manner than ever, and therefore signified little that the eyes which he would need no longer were failing him. We cannot say that he was in decay, after all, for he was losing what he only needed in this world of shadows, and was gaining fitness for the higher state. His gracious faculties grew as his bodily faculties declined, and therefore, he felt that his life was ending in a fullness of blessing such as he wished for the children of his dearest son. How ardently do I wish the like blessing for all the young people before me! The Lord God Almighty bless you! When your earth-born faculties fail you, may heavenly graces more than supply their place!

All this is introduction, so now we must come at once and plunge into the discourse, and I will be brief upon each point of it. Jacob's testimony, wherewith he blessed the sons of Joseph, has in it four points.

I. First, HE SPEAKS OF ANCESTRAL MERCIES; he begins with that "God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk." As with a pencil he sketches the lives of Abraham and Isaac. He does not fill in with coloring, but the outline is perfect, you see the two men in their whole career in those few words—"God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk."

They were men who recognized God and worshipped Him, beyond all others of their age. God was to them a real existence; they spoke with God, and God spoke with them; they were friends of God, and enjoyed familiar acquaintance with him. No agnosticism blinded their understandings, and deadened their hearts. They were worshippers of the one living and true God. Happy children who have such fathers! Happier children who are like such fathers!

They not only recognized God, but *they owned Him in daily life*. I take the expression, "God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did *walk,"* to mean that He was their God in common life. They not only knelt before God when they prayed, but they walked before Him in everything. When they went forth from their tents, and when they returned from their flocks, they walked before God. They were never away from His service, or without His presence. He was their dwelling place. Whether they sojourned under an oak or dwelt by a well, whether they entertained strangers or walked in the field to meditate, they lived and moved in God. This is the kind of life for you and for me; whether we live in a great house or in a poor cottage, if we walk before God we shall lead a happy and a noble life, whether that life is public or obscure. Oh that our young people would firmly believe this!

They walked before God, that is, *they obeyed His commands*. His call they heard, His bidding they followed. Abraham left country and kindred to go to an unknown land which God would show him; yes, more, he took his son, whom he greatly loved, and stood prepared to sacrifice him at God's command. Isaac also yielded himself up to be slain, if so Jehovah willed. To them the will of the Lord was paramount; He was law and life to them, for they loved and feared Him. They were prompt to hear the behests of God, and rose up early to fulfill them. They acted as in the immediate presence of the All-Seeing.

To the full *they trusted Him*. In this sense they always saw Him. *We* sometimes talk about *tracing* Him. We cannot trace Him, except as we trust Him, and because they trusted, they traced Him. Notwithstanding all the danger and difficulty of their pilgrim state, they dwelt in perfect security in an enemy's land, for the Lord had said, "Touch not Mine anointed, and do My prophets no harm." They were serene and tranquil because they walked before God, knowing Him to be their friend, and that He was their shield and their exceedingly great reward. For temporal things they had no anxiety for they lived upon the All-sufficient God. Therefore these two men, Abraham and Isaac, though much tried, led peaceful lives; they conversed with heaven while they sojourned on earth.

They enjoyed the favor of God, for this also is intended by walking before Him. His face was towards them; they sunned themselves in His smile. God's love was their true treasure. We read that God had blessed Abraham in all things, and of Isaac we hear even the Philistines say, "We saw certainly that the Lord was with you." God was their wealth, their strength, their exceeding joy. I say again, happy sons who have such ancestors! Happier still if they follow in their track!

So Jacob spoke of Abraham and Isaac, and so can some of us speak of those who went before us. Those of us who can look back upon godly ancestors now in heaven must feel that many ties bind us to follow the same course of life. Had they transgressed against the Lord our duty would have called us to quit the ways of the family, even as Abraham left his kindred who dwelt on the other side of the flood, but as their way was right, we are doubly called to follow it, because it is the good old way, and the way our godly fathers trod. *There is a charm about that which was prized by our fathers*. Heirlooms are treasured, and the best heirloom in a family is the knowledge of God. When I spoke, the other day, with a Christian brother, he seemed right happy to tell me that he sprang from a family which came from Holland during the persecution of the Duke of Alva, and I felt a brotherhood with him in claiming a like descent. I dare say our fathers were poor weavers, but I had far rather be descended from one who suffered for the faith than bear the blood of all the emperors within my veins. There should be a sacredness to you young people in the faith for which your ancestors suffered. Choose not the society of Egypt, and its wealth and honors, but keep to the stock of Israel, and claim the inheritance of Jacob as Ephraim and Manasseh did. Let it not be said that as your family increased in riches it departed from

the living God. Shall the goodness of God be perverted into a reason for apostasy?

The way of holiness in which your fathers went is *a fitting way* for you, and it is seemly that you maintain the godly traditions of your house. In the old times they expected sons to follow the secular calling of their fathers, and although that may be regarded as an old-world mistake, yet it is well when sons and daughters receive the same spiritual call as their parents. Grace is not tied to families, but yet the Lord delights to bless to a thousand generations. Very far are we from believing that the new birth is of blood, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man. The will of God reigns here supreme, and absolute, but yet there is a sweet fitness in the passing on of holy loyalty from grandfather to father, and from father to son. I like to feel that I serve God "from my fathers." I feel that it is right and comely that I should be found preaching out of my whole soul the same doctrine which my grandfather and my father preached, and equally fit that my sons should be found, as they are, preaching none other gospel than that which we have received—"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever." I say again, if our fathers were wrong we ought boldly to dissent from them, and obey God rather than man, but where they are right we are bound to follow them. I stood last Wednesday in a sort of dream as I gazed upon my much-beloved grandfather's place of sepulcher. I was encouraged by seeing the record of his fifty-four years of service in the midst of one church and people, and I rejoiced that, could he rise from the dead, he would find his grandson preaching that same old-fashioned and much-despised Calvinistic doctrine of the grace of God which was his joy in life and his comfort in death.

A godly ancestry *casts responsibility* upon young people. These Ephraims and Manassehs perceive that their fathers knew the Lord, and the question arises, Why should they not know Him? O my beloved young friends, the God of your fathers will be found of you and be your God. The prayers of your fathers have gone before you; let them be followed by your own. Be hopeful of being heard at that mercy seat where they found grace to help in every time of need. They died in the hope that you would fill their places; shall not their hopes become facts? Do I speak to some who have godly parents in heaven, and yet they are themselves pursuing the ways of sin or of worldliness? Registered upon that file are your mother's prayers. I trust they will yet be heard. Even now they stand like a hedge about you, making it hard work for you to go to hell. Will you force your way to perdition over a father's grave? Will you, by a desperate effort, push aside your pleading mother's form, and pursue your dreadful road to ruin? If so, you will involve yourselves in tremendous guilt. I beseech you hear the tender voice of love which now invites you to be blest.

A godly ancestry should invest a man's case with *great hopefulness*. May he not argue, "If God blessed my ancestors, why should He not bless me? If they sought mercy, and found it, why should He not me? My father and my mother were not perfect, any more than I am, but they had faith in God, and He accepted them and helped them. If I have faith in

God He will accept me, and be faithful to me. They were saved as sinners trusting in the blood of Jesus, and why should not I?" I beseech you put this argument to the test, and you will find it hold good.

II. Thus we have seen Jacob seeking to bless his seed by bearing testimony to the blessings which God had bestowed upon his house. Now he comes to deal with PERSONAL MERCIES. The old man's voice faltered as he said, "The God which fed me all my life long." The translation would be better if it ran, "The God which shepherded me all my life long."

He spoke of the Lord as his shepherd. Jacob had been a shepherd, and therefore he knew what shepherding included; the figure is full of meaning. There had been a good deal of Jacob about Jacob, and he had tried to shepherd himself. Poor sheep that he was, while under his own guidance he had been caught in many thorns, and had, wandered in many wildernesses. Because he would be so much a shepherd to himself, he had been hard put to it. But over all, despite his willfulness, the shepherding of the covenant God had been exercised towards him, and he acknowledged it. O dear saints of God, you to whom years are being multiplied, give praise to your God for having been your shepherd. You delight in the twenty-third Psalm, sing it sometimes with variations by using the past tense, "The Lord has been my Shepherd, and I have known no want. He has made me to lie down in green pastures; He has led me beside the still waters. Yes, though I have walked through the valley of the shadow of death in times of great darkness, yet I have feared no evil: for He has been with me, His rod and His staff have comforted me." Bear your witness to the shepherding of God, for this may lead others to become the sheep of His pasture.

This shepherding had been perfect. Our version rightly says that the Lord had fed Jacob all his life long. Take that sense of it, and you who have a daily struggle for subsistence will see much beauty in it. Jacob had a large family, and yet they were fed. Some of you say, "It is all very well of you to talk of providence who have few to provide for." I answer, it is better still to talk of providence where a large household requires large provision. Remember Jacob had thirteen children, yet his God provided them bread to eat and raiment to put on. None of that large company was left to starve. You think perhaps that Jacob was a man of large estate. He was not so when he began life. He was only a working man, a shepherd. When he left his father's house he had no attendants with camels and tents. I suppose he carried his little bit of provision in a handkerchief, and when he laid down that night to sleep, with a stone for his pillow, the hedges for curtains, the heavens for his canopy, and the earth for his bed, he had no fear of being robbed. God was with him, but apart from this, he had nothing to begin life with but his own hands. Whatever he received from his father Isaac afterwards, he had at first to fight his own way, but he knew no lack either at the beginning or at the end, for he could speak of the great Elohim as "the God which fed me all my life long." Hundreds of us can say the same. I remember one who came to be wealthy who used to show me with great pleasure the tree ax-

le of the truck in which he used to wheel his goods through the streets when he began in business; I liked to see him mindful of his original. Mind you do not go and say, "See how I have got on by my own talents and industry!" Talk not so proudly, but say, "God has fed me." Mercies are all the sweeter when seen to come from the hand of God.

But besides being fed Jacob had been *led,* even as sheep are guided by the shepherd who goes before them. His journeys, for that period, had been unusually long, perilous and frequent. He had fled from home to Padanaram; after long years he had come back to Canaan, and had met his brother Esau, and after that, in his old age he had journeyed into Egypt. To go to California or New Zealand in these times is nothing at all compared to those journeys in Jacob's day. But he says, "God has shepherded me all my life long," and he means that the great changes of his life had been wisely ordered. At home and in exile, in Canaan and in Goshen, God had been a shepherd to him. He sees the good hand of God upon him in all his wanderings, until he now finds himself sitting up on his bed and blessing Joseph through his sons. I am glad that he went into detail with these young men, for they needed to be confirmed in their fidelity to God. They were in a perilous condition, for they had the *entree* of the rank and fashion of Egypt, and were tempted to forsake the poor family of the Hebrews. Some of you young fellows begin where your fathers left off, and having the means of self-indulgence, you are apt to follow the fashions and frivolities of the period. Oh that the Holy Spirit may make you feel that you want God with you with wealth as much as your fathers needed God without wealth! You may come to beggary yet with all your inheritance if you cast off the fear of the Lord and fall into sin. You, who begin life with nothing but your own brains and hands, trusting in your father's God, shall yet have to sing as your fathers sang, "the God which fed me all my life long." Young men and young women beginning life, I charge you seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. It is not life to live without God; you miss the kernel, the cream, the crown of life if you miss the presence of God. Life is but a bubble blown up of toil and trouble without God. Life ends in blighted hope if you have not hope in God. But with God you are as a sheep with a shepherd—cared for, guided, guarded, fed, and led, and your end shall be peace without end.

III. Thirdly, bear with me while I follow Jacob in his word upon REDEEMING MERCIES. "The Angel which redeemed me from all evil." There was to Jacob a mysterious Personage who was God, and yet the Angel or messenger of God. He puts this Angel in apposition with Elohim, for this Angel was God. Yet was He his Redeemer. He saw Him doing the office of the next-of-kin; though God, He was his *goel,* and as his Kinsman, effected redemption for him. Jacob's faith enabled him, like Job, to know that his Redeemer lives. He saw that this covenant messenger had redeemed him from all evil, and he magnified the name of the Lord who revealed Himself in this Angel. When he was in his sorest straits, this Redeeming Angel always interposed. He fell into an evil state through the

influence of his mother, and he did Esau serious wrong. He fled for his life, and at that time there was a great gulf between him and God. Then that Angel came in, and bridged the gulf with a ladder by which he might rise to God. The kinsman, God, came in, and showed him how the abyss might be crossed, so that he might return to his God. When he was away in Padanaram he began to sink very low, while chaffering with churlish Laban. Then again the Angel came and said, "Get you out from this land, and return unto the land of your kindred." The Redeeming Angel held back wrathful Laban, and when Esau came to meet him in hot anger the Angel specially appeared to Jacob. The Angel wrestled, as a Man, with Jacob to get Jacob out of Jacob, and raise him into Israel. How marvelous was the redemption which was worked for him that night at Jabbok! Jacob came forth from the conflict limping, but he walked before the Lord far better than before. That same mysterious person had bidden him go down into Egypt with the promise that He would go down with him. It was the Angel of God's presence who held His shield over Jacob, and preserved him from all evil.

Brothers and sisters; let us also tell of the redeeming mercies of the Lord Jesus towards us. He redeemed us on the bloody tree, but He has also redeemed us from our death in sin. Do you remember the place and time when Jesus first met with you? Perhaps not. But blessed be the Redeeming Angel that quickened me into spiritual life! I recall the place and time with pleasure. He redeemed us also from despair; when, under a sense of sin, we could not dare to hope, He came to us and showed us our healing in His wounds and our life in His death. Afterwards, when our corruptions began to arise, and we had a hard battle to believe that such sinners were indeed saved, the Redeeming Angel confirmed our faith, and gave us inward strength. Do we not well remember when He said unto us, "I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you"? I want you to look back and remember the times when you were sick, and this Redeeming Angel so sweetly visited you that you were half afraid to get well, for fear you should lose His presence; your bed had become a throne to you.

You remember, too, when that pinch came in business, so that you could not see how to provide things honest in the sight of all men; then Jesus revealed His love and bade you think of the lilies and the ravens, which neither spin nor sow, and yet are clothed majestically and fare sumptuously. Many a time has the Lord delivered you because He delighted in you. When you were likely to fall into sin, when you were very wrong in spirit, He beheld you in pity, and restored your soul. Though you were so lukewarm that He was ready to spue you out of His mouth, yet He knocked at your door, and when you admitted Him He came in and supped with you, and your soul was soon on fire with love to Him. He restored your soul, and the love of your espousals came back to you. Blessed Redeemer, how graciously do You deliver! Oh that we more often thought of the interpositions of the loving Christ! He did not only redeem us when He died, but He redeems us still by His living power. This is the

sum of our life; the angel of the covenant has delivered us day by day, is delivering us, and will deliver us to the end. Do you wonder that we commend Him to our offspring, and desire to commit them to His loving care? Young friends who know not the Savior, I would gladly lead you to this Guardian Angel, this God-like Man who will save you from all evil from this day forth and forevermore.

IV. Now comes the last point—I do not know if anyone has gone to sleep in this close atmosphere, but if so, let him kindly wake up, for I have somewhat to say which will interest him. Jacob has spoken of ancestral mercies, personal mercies and redeeming mercies, and now he deals with FUTURE MERCIES, as he cries *"Bless the lads."* He began with blessing Joseph, and he finishes with blessing his lads. O dear friends, if God has blessed you, I know you will want Him to bless others. There is the stream of mercy, deep, broad, and clear; you have drunk of it, and are refreshed, but it is as full as ever. It will flow on, will it not? You do not suppose that you and I have dammed up the stream so as to keep it to ourselves. No, it is too strong; too full a stream for that. It will flow on from age to age. God will bless others as He has blessed us. Unbelief whispers that the true church will die out. Do not believe it. Christ will live, and His church will live with Him till the heavens are no more. Has He not said, "Because I live, you shall live also?" "Oh," you say, "but we shall not see such holy men in the next generation as in past ages." Why not? I hope the next age will see far better men than any of those who are with us at this time. Pray that it may be so. Instead of the fathers, may there be the children, and may these be princes before the Lord!

The stream of divine grace will flow on. Oh, that it may take our sons and daughters in its course! *"Bless the lads."* Sunday school teachers, is not that a good prayer for you? Pray the Lord to bless the lads and the lasses, because He has blessed you. There is the stream, it must flow somewhere; pray, "Lord, make it flow to my family, and to my class." For Your mercy's sake, gracious Lord, "bless the lads."

We need not say in what precise form or way the blessing shall come; let us leave it in all its breadth of inconceivable benediction. May the Lord bless our youth as only He can do it, and if He causes them to fear and trust Him, He will be blessing all of us, and blessing ages to come. Upon these Ephraims and Manassehs will depend the work of the Lord in the years to come. Therefore, with emphasis we pray, "Bless the lads." As for us, we are content to work on, saying, "Let Your work appear unto Your servants," but our anxious desire is that our children may reap the result of our labors, and therefore we add, "and Your glory unto their children."

In closing, I wish to bear a personal testimony by narrating an incident in my own life. I have been preaching in Essex this week, and I took the opportunity to visit the place where my grandfather preached so long, and where I spent my earliest days. Last Wednesday was to me a day in which I walked like a man in a dream. Everybody seemed bound to recall

some event or other of my childhood. What a story of divine love and mercy did it bring before my mind! Among other things, I sat down in a place that must ever be sacred to me. There stood in my grandfather's manse garden two arbors made of yew trees, cut into sugar-loaf fashion. Though the old manse has given way to a new one, and the old chapel is gone also, yet the yew trees flourish as aforetime. I sat down in the right hand arbor and I thought of what had happened there many years ago. When I was a young child staying with my grandfather, there came to preach in the village Mr. Knill, who had been a missionary at St. Petersburg, and a mighty preacher of the gospel. He came to preach for the London Missionary Society, and arrived on the Saturday at the manse. He was a great soul-winner, and he soon spied out the boy. He said to me, "Where do you sleep, for I want to call you up in the morning." I showed him my little room. At six o'clock he called me up, and we went into that arbor. There, in the sweetest way, he told me of the love of Jesus, and of the blessedness of trusting in Him and loving Him in our childhood. With many a story he preached Christ to me, and told me how good God had been to him, and then he prayed that I might know the Lord and serve Him. He knelt down in that arbor and prayed for me with his arms about my neck. He did not seem content unless I kept with him in the interval between the services, and he heard my childish talk with patient love. On Monday morning he did as on the Sabbath, and again on Tuesday. Three times he taught me and prayed with me, and before he had to leave, my grandfather had come back from the place where he had gone to preach, and all the family were gathered to morning prayer. Then, in the presence of them all, Mr. Knill took me on his knee, and said, "This child will one day preach the gospel, and he will preach it to great multitudes. I am persuaded that he will preach in the chapel of Rowland Hill, where (I think he said) I am now the minister." He spoke very solemnly, and called upon all present to witness what he said. Then he gave me sixpence as a reward if I would learn the hymn—

"God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform."

I was made to promise that when I preached in Rowland Hill's Chapel that hymn should be sung. Think of that as a promise from a child! Would it ever be other than an idle dream? Years flew by. After I had begun for some little time to preach in London, Dr. Alexander Fletcher had to give the annual sermon to children in Surrey Chapel, but as he was taken ill, I was asked in a hurry to preach to the children. "Yes," I said, "I will, if the children will sing 'God moves in a mysterious way.' I have made a promise long ago that so that should be sung." And so it was; I preached in Rowland Hill's Chapel, and the hymn was sung. My emotions on that occasion I cannot describe. Still that was not the chapel which Mr. Knill intended. All unsought by me, the minister at Wotton-under-Edge, which was Mr. Hill's summer residence, invited me to preach there. I went on the condition that the congregation should sing, "God moves in a mysterious way"—which was also done. After that I went

to preach for Mr. Richard Knill himself, who was then at Chester. What a meeting we had! Mark this! He was preaching in the theater! His preaching in a theater took away from me all fear about preaching in secular buildings, and set me free for the campaigns in Exeter Hall and the Surrey Music Hall. How much this had to do with other theater services you know—

"God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform."

After more than forty years of the Lord's loving-kindness, I sat again in that arbor. No doubt it is a mere trifle for outsiders to hear, but to me it was an overwhelming moment. The present minister of Stambourne meeting house and the members of his family, including his son and his grandchildren, were in the garden, and I could not help calling them together around that arbor, while I praised the Lord for His goodness. One irresistible impulse was upon me; it was to pray God to bless those lads that stood around me. Do you not see how the memory begat the prayer? I wanted them to remember when they grew up my testimony of God's goodness to me, and for that same reason I tell it to you young people who are around me this morning. God has blessed me all my life long, and redeemed me from all evil, and I pray that He may be your God. You that have godly parents, I would specially address. I beseech you to follow in their footsteps that you may one day speak of the Lord as they were able to do in their day. Remember that special promise, "I love them that love Me, and those that seek Me early shall find Me." May the Holy Spirit lead you to seek Him this day, and you shall live to praise His name as Jacob did.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—GENESIS 47.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—916, 214.

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GOD'S NEARNESS TO US
NO. 1973

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 17, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Though He is not far from every one of us."
Acts 17:27.

WHEN man disobeyed his God he died spiritually, and that death consisted in the separation of his soul from God. From that moment man began to think that God was far away, and this has since been his religion in all ages. Either he has said, "There is no God," or he has believed the visible creation to be God, which is much the same as having no God; or else he has thought God to be some far-away, mysterious Being, who takes no note of man. Even after obtaining a better conception of God, he has thought Him hard to find and hard to be entreated of. Because his own heart is far from God, he imagines that God's heart is far from him. But it is not so. The living God is not far from any one of us, for "In Him we live, and move, and have our being."

The nearness of God to man is a teaching of revelation. Look back to the record of the Garden of Eden, and see an early evidence there of God's nearness to man. Adam, having transgressed, hid himself among the trees of the garden, but in his hiding place God sought him, and the voice of the Lord God was heard, walking among the trees of the garden, and saying, "Adam, where are you?" Man will not seek God, but God seeks man. Though man's voice is not, "Where is my God?" yet God's voice is, "Adam, where are you?" All through history God has been familiar with man. He has spoken to him in many different ways, but principally through chosen men. One after another He has raised up prophets, and by their warning voices He has pleaded with men, and invited them to seek His face. His own voice might have caused dismay and distance, and so He has used human voices, that He might come nearer to the heart. All the history of the chosen nation, as we read it in the Old Testament, reveals the nearness of Jehovah; whatever we read upon the page, we know that within, above, or behind it, the Lord is near, even when He seems to have hidden Himself. In these latter days, the Lord has come nearer to us still, for He has spoken to us by His Son. The Son of God became the Friend of sinners; could He come nearer than that? The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among men, and men beheld His glory. Bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh is the Christ, and yet He is very God of very God. In Him God is next-of-kin to man, and manhood is brought near to the eternal throne. Christ Jesus is God and man in one person, and thus the closest union is formed between God and man. Ver-

ily, verily, the Lord God is not far from each one of us in His own dear Son.

Today, though Jesus has gone up on high, the Spirit of God abides in the midst of the church, and thus again the Lord is near. The Comforter is at work still; the Convincer still presses upon man's conscience sin, righteousness, and judgment to come. Still does the Holy Spirit work with the Word of God, directing His ministers so to speak that their hearers shall perceive a personality and pointedness in the word delivered. Oh, you that hear the gospel, be you sure of this, that the kingdom of God has come near unto you in a very special sense! I may say of you with an emphasis, "He is not far from any of you, and you are not far from the kingdom."

That God is near by His omnipresence and by His gracious dealings with men, is the clear teaching of the inspired volume. To the enlightened mind, God is evidently seen to be near in the works of nature. Whose voice was it that we heard last night thundering overhead? Who fashioned the drops of rain that refreshed the fields? Who breathed the gentle breeze which cooled and cheered the drooping flowers? Who has sent us this day so clear, so calm, so bright, "the bridal of the earth and sky"? Who is creating for us our harvests, and preparing food for man and beast? It is God that does this, doing it in ways beyond our comprehension, yet doing it before our eyes. There is no other force in the universe save that which is derived from God. There is no other life except the life which has leaped from the eternal self-existence. God is in all. Above us in the stars He shines, but He works also in the grass beneath our feet. Each dewdrop gleams His glory, and every grain of dust bears His impress. He is within us, keeping our hearts in motion, and around us, giving to the air we breathe its power to sustain life.

So also is the Lord very near in providence. Albeit that this godless age seeks to banish God, yet is He present in the transactions of every day. All things come of Him, both the little and the great. He ordains, and rules, or over-rules. Pestilence and famine, earthquake and hurricane, are His heavier treads, and days and nights, harvests and springtides, are His gentler footsteps. The events of history, whether on a large or small scale, betray an evident design and arrangement. All things work together, with singular accuracy and punctuality, to accomplish a lofty purpose. It is the fashion nowadays to say that these are *coincidences*. It is a pretty word for boys to play with. Some of us observe God's providences, and we are never without a providence to observe. We see the hand of God in daily life, and we are glad to do so, though we are laughed at as poor fools. Those who can see may well be content to bear the jests of the blind. In my own personal experience I have met with numbers of singular and special tokens of God's working in providence, some of which I would scarce dare to tell, because they might seem incredible. I remember preaching at Halifax, in a huge timber building which was erected for the purpose. During the previous day the snow fell heavily, and it lay deep upon the ground. Nevertheless, the people came in their thousands, and thronged the enormous edifice, and gratefully do I remember how they went away to their homes in safety. They had no

sooner cleared the building to the last man, than it fell in one gigantic ruin. Why had it not fallen when the crowds were there? In my joy that no one was harmed I thought that God was there, and I praised His holy name. Was that a piece of superstition?

Take another instance. I was one day in great perplexity upon a certain matter of great importance to the cause of God. I laid it before God in prayer, but still I did not see my way; I could get no direction or guidance. Having to preach in North London, a friend kindly drove me to the spot, and afterwards I asked Him to take me to the house of one of our people whom I wished to see. I scarcely noticed my way, till at last I found myself in a street unknown to me. I then said, "You are surely going wrong." "No," He said, "I am right enough." He was making for the private house of the person I had named, but I knew that he would at that time be at his office in the City, and I had intended to go there after him. We were on the wrong track, and so the horse's head was turned down a side street unknown to me, and as we passed along it, I saw the only man in all the world who could assist me out of my difficulty. How he came to be there I could not tell; how I came to be there I have already told you. Strangely had the Lord guided me, and the information guided the affair to a happy issue. God was near me. *Mere coincidences,* they tell me! *Mere coincidences!* Let me tell a true story. The other day I met with a series of similar "mere coincidences." I set out by railway to a certain town, and the train went on till we came to a junction, and I was bidden to change. By a strange coincidence another train had drawn up, and was going in the direction I desired. I had only time to cross a platform and take my place, and off it went. A few miles further again I heard a voice, saying, "Change here!" I changed a second time, and by another coincidence a train was just starting for my destination. When I reached the end of my railway journey another coincidence was in store for me, for a well-known friend was waiting with his carriage, and he took me to his house, where, by another coincidence, a dinner was ready. At the dinner there happened to be a dish upon the table intended for a person who did not eat meat. Was not this a special coincidence for me? I went to the chapel to preach, and I found it crowded with people anxious to hear; another coincidence, of course! Somebody cries, "You talk nonsense; it was all arranged." I confess I thought so. I am glad that you own the arranging hand, but, pardon me, I saw an arranging hand in the other cases also, and I think it was as clear in the other cases as in this. To the story of my journey you find a clue in a previous arrangement, and in the history of nations, and in the story of each human life, I also find a clue in the presence of a Divine mind which arranges all things. When human arrangement explains a series of events you admit it without question; why not admit Divine arrangement, since it equally well explains the great occurrences of history? Do you object? I fear it is that you resolve not to believe in the one case, while in the other, having no theory to maintain, you follow your natural common sense.

God is so near us that He hears the prayers of His people, and orders events in correspondence to those prayers. Do you doubt this? Do you tell me that the many answers to prayer which we joyfully narrate are

mere coincidences? I have hardly patience to answer you. Yet let me tell you of some strange incidents which happened to me yesterday. In the morning, when I came into my study, I needed to break my fast. I had scarcely wished it, before my breakfast was on the table. During the day I wished for a glass of water. In a few moments it stood by my side. I required someone to take a telegram to the post office for me. Lo! Presto! A suitable messenger appeared. Was this magic? The evening came on, and I desired to have the lamps lighted and the curtains drawn. In a few seconds my desire was accomplished. Were these matters "mere coincidences"? "No," cries one, "you rang the bell." Now I come to think of it, someone did pull at a handle, but I saw no bell. Yet you assure me that the ringing of a bell accounts for it all. I will not argue the point with you. Only when I yield to you, I want you also to yield to me when I tell you that we pray to the Lord our God, and that we receive answers to our prayers. Our daily experience is that prayer is answered by the Lord our God, for He is near to fulfill His promises, and to grant the petitions of them that put their trust in Him. You believe in the power of the bell, and we believe in the power of prayer. Our speaking to the living God is as much a fact and a reality to us as the ringing of a bell to you; why, then, do you heap scorn upon us? Why do you snuff us out with your big talk about *coincidences?* Scoff away! We shall not pray any the less so long as in our experience we find the Lord so swift to hear, so bountiful to bless. The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God," but even he is not so much a fool as he who, believing that there is a God, will not allow that He is near enough to hear and answer prayer. Oh, that my hearers who doubt the nearness of God would cry to Him, and see if He would not be found of them!

Beloved, the fact is that God is everywhere. He is so present in all places that He is especially near to each person. His circumference is nowhere, but His center is everywhere. God is as much with you as if there were no other person in the world. His being near to you does not make Him far off from another. This truth is high, and we cannot attain to it, but it is none the less sure. God is near each one of us, observing us with exactness, perceiving the secret intents of our hearts. He is near us, feeling for us, and thinking of us. He is near us in active energy, ready to interpose and help us. He is near us in all places, and at all times. By night and by day He surrounds us. At this moment, "surely God is in this place." Know it, and be filled with awe. I pray that, before the service is over, you may know it by feeling the power of His grace. In answer to prayer may the Lord's presence and power be with the words which I shall try to speak to you, though I speak in great feebleness.

First, I am going to address myself for a little *to those who only feel after Him,* but as yet have not perceived Him; and then I shall speak *to those who have found Him,* and who know by a sweet experience how near He is to His chosen.

I. TO THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE FEELING AFTER GOD I speak in deep earnestness. Like blind men who grope for the wall, you stretch out your hands to feel after Him. Rejoice, for He is not far from you!

What then? *How impious is sin* when seen in this light! You have transgressed the commands of the great King in the King's presence. When you blasphemed Him, you thought little of Him, but you spoke into His ear. When you ridiculed His ways and His people, you did it to His face. You insulted your Creator while His eyes were fixed on you. Did you dream that you were in the outskirts of His dominion, far off from His throne? And did you, therefore, take liberty to offend? O sir, you were mistaken; you rebelled in His courts! He heard your evil words; He noted down your unrighteous acts. Think of this, you that have never sought mercy at His hands; from your childhood until now you have lived under His close inspection. You have, perhaps, seen those hives which permit you, through a glass, to see all that the bees are doing. You have watched them busy in their cells. All the world is but a hive of this sort to the mind of God. You could not read the designs and intents of the bees, but the Lord has read your thoughts and imaginations. Would some of you have sinned as you have done if you had realized the Divine presence? Would you have dared to go to such lengths as you have gone, if you had seen Him as He has seen you? "Hush," they say, when they are speaking evil of any person, "here he comes." Why did you not "hush," since God was there? Servants who have wasted their master's time will hurry up when they see that he is near; how is it that you have not only loitered, but done mischief while your Master has been looking over your shoulder? How impious is that sin which is done despite the presence and observation of God!

Next, note *how profane is indifference!* To be indifferent to God when God is near in the glory of His majesty, and the riches of His love, is a sign of great hardness of heart. God is near, supplying you with breath, keeping you in life, and yet you care not! Holy men have trembled with awe in His presence, and you have trifled! How is this? If He had gone on a journey, and you had forgotten Him, there might be some little excuse, but with the Lord close to you, how could you ignore Him? Can I call this less than sheer profanity? If an angel in the presence of the Most High refused to adore; if a spirit before His burning throne maintained a sullen silence, we should count it unmistakable sedition; what is it in your case? What shall I say to those who here, in the presence of God, have lived ten, twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty years, and yet have never given their Lord a serious thought? Do you so lightly esteem your Maker? Is He not worth a thought? Will you neither bow your knee in homage, nor lift up your voice in thankfulness? O men and women, why do you act so unjustly, so ungratefully? What has God done that you should slight Him? How can you excuse yourselves, that you live and move in Him, and yet have no more care for Him than if there were no such being?

Furthermore, if God is so near, this shows *the evident impossibility of deceiving Him.* God is not mocked. Do you think that if you will go to God's house that will avail you, though you go not to God? Do you imagine that to repeat certain gracious words will suffice, though your heart is wandering on the mountains of vanity? Have you thought that to make a religious profession will be enough, and that God will be so duped, as to think you His servant and His child, if you take upon yourself the

names which belong to such relationships? Do you think that He can be deceived when He is near you, around you, and within you? Your heart is as open to Him as your book is open before you, and He reads you as you read the plainest print. How, then, can you deceive Him? Beware; I beseech you, of having any dealings with God but those which are in downright honesty. We must be true to the core before the All-Seeing One. A lie to our fellow men is meanness, but a lie to God is madness. What do you mean, you pretender to godliness, if your heart is not right with God? Do you think to play tricks with the only wise God? Can you cheat the eyes before which all things are naked and open? He besets you behind and before, and lays His hand upon you; He possesses your reins and searches your heart; be plain and sincere with Him, lest He smite you as He smote Ananias and Sapphira. Oh, that the words of Hagar in the wilderness would rise from every heart—"You God see me"! That God is as near to us as we are to ourselves should make us greatly ashamed, if in any way whatever, we seem to be what, in the depths of our being, we are not.

But, listen! This shows us *how vain is all hope of escape from God!* What if a man says there is no God! God *is* all the same. What if a man forgets God, and therefore ceases to tremble! There is as much cause for trembling as ever, and somewhat more. What if a man is able throughout life to shut his eyes to his lost estate, and at last dies without bands in his death—what of that? He cannot escape the judgment; he cannot flee from the far-reaching arms of justice. The Lord's impartial sentence will find him out, though he plunge into depths of darkness, or make his bed in hell. It was said once of the whole world that it was nothing better than a prison for the man that had offended Caesar and I may say of the great universe, however wide it is that it is but a narrow cell for the man who has offended God. Where can you fly, my hearer? Where can you hide? Neither mountains nor abysses can conceal you from those eyes of fire! If you had but half a grain of wit you would fall at the feet of your pursuer, and invoke His mercy! Confess your wickedness, and beg for pardon. Quit your sin, and be reconciled to your Judge through the death of His Son; then those eyes shall be suns of light to you, whereas now they are as flames of fire.

This is the solemn side of the matter, and I confess it is dark as the pillar of cloud when it turned its blackness on the Egyptians. Oh, this God! This God who is not far from us! What shall we do? We have provoked Him! He is angry with the wicked every day. His great long-suffering holds back the strokes of His justice, but they must come one day, for He will by no means spare the guilty. Oh, my ungodly hearer, you have sinned, and you are sinning in the presence of your God; I beseech you, think of this! You have been indifferent, and you are still indifferent, in the presence of One, who with a thought can wither you, and with a word can send you where hope can never come. Be warned, I pray you. May God bless this solemn warning to your soul's awakening!

There is a bright side to this great truth of the Divine nearness. If God is not far from each one of us, then *how hopeful is our seeking of Him!* If I seek God, and He is not far from me, I shall surely find Him. I have not

to climb to heaven or to dive into the abyss, for He is near! Oh, for faith to perceive Him! Where I sit, or stand, I may come to Him. If I seek Him He is seeking me for certain, or else I should never have sought Him. When the sinner seeks God and God seeks the sinner they will soon meet. Is it not written, "If you seek Him, He will be found of you"? "Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near." Omnipresence yields good cheer to those who are panting for their God.

How perceptible must repentance be! If God is near you, He sees that tear which just now scalded your cheek. He marks that sigh; He sees that heaving of the breast; that trouble of the soul He knows; that restlessness He sees. When I stand by a person who labors under emotion, I am not long before I sympathize with him; I cannot help it; God is much more tender-hearted than we are, and like a father pities his children, so He pities them that fear Him. If your heart is breaking, your God perceives it. If you are bewailing your sin, He hears it, and cries, "How can I give you up?" The sight of your tears has melted Him; the hearing of your sighs has moved His compassion. Doubt not this; you cannot have Him near and yet have Him callous, for His name is Love. He heard you, and He pitied you when yesterday in your chamber you were in an agony of shame and fear. He sees you at this moment in your loneliness and dire distress. A fugitive and a vagabond you may be, but yet the Lord is near.

Since the Lord is near to us, *how quick will He be to perceive our faith!* If you, this morning glance an eye to the cross, the Lord will see your eyes looking that way. He sees the feeble as well as the strong; if you have but a grain of mustard seed of faith He will at once discern it. When the messenger of the church cannot perceive it, and before the minister can detect it, God has seen faith. Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ? Do you trust yourself with Him? God has accepted your faith and He has said, "There is therefore now no condemnation." If He were far off your faith might be unnoticed, but being close at hand He sees the first glimmer of light within your mind. Though your trust is of the feeblest kind He accepts it and protects it.

If God is so near you, poor soul, *how readily He can reveal Himself to you!* I know how sadly you are urged to despair, and yet before that clock has finished the half-hour your despair may vanish. There is nothing between you and your Savior but your unbelief. Let unbelief go, and you shall see Jesus, to your heart's joy. A prisoner was taken out to die, and as he rode along in the death cart his heart was heavy at the thought of death, and none could cheer him of all the throng. The gallows was in sight, and this blotted out the sun for him. But lo, his prince came riding up in hot haste bearing a free pardon. Then the man opened his eyes, and as though he had risen from the dead, he returned to happy consciousness. The sight of his prince had chased all gloom away. He declared that he had never seen a fairer countenance in all his days, and when he read his pardon he vowed that no poetry should ever be dearer to his heart than those few lines of sovereign grace. Friends, I remember well when I was in that death cart, and Jesus came to me with pardon. Death and hell were before me, but I rejoiced exceedingly when I saw the

nail prints in His hands and feet, and the wound in His side. When He said, "Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you," I thought I never saw such loveliness before, and never heard such music in all my days. No, it was not mere thought, I am sure my judgment was right. Eternity itself shall never disclose anything to me more sweet. My pardoning Lord has no peer or rival. Oh, what a Christ is He who appeared to me, a guilty, condemned sinner, on the way to hell! Blessed be His name, He bore on the tree my curse, and shame, and death, and I am free! This is the manifestation which I desire for each of you, and since Jesus is near, how readily can He grant you the gift!

If the Lord is near, there is no reason why He should not grant pardon right now to all of you who seek it. Before the words I speak have reached your ear, God, in the person of His Son, may manifest Himself to you, and make your heart leap for joy. Do it, O Lord Jesus! Grant a vision of Yourself, good Lord; grant it now, and You shall have the praise. God often reveals Himself by men to men; why should He not speak to you through this sermon of mine? God often reveals Himself to men by the Scriptures. A precious text laid home to an aching heart will soon give it peace. Wherefore, be of good cheer, my hearer; God is near you, and therefore hope is near you. Believe in Jesus, and He will give you rest. He waits to be gracious; He looks out for objects of mercy. Be of good cheer, for Jesus of Nazareth passes by. Even at this hour He is near.

II. The time is too short; therefore I must turn at once to God's people, and speak to THOSE OF YOU WHO HAVE FOUND THE LORD. Brothers, you need not that I seek out choice words when I speak to *you*. You are soldiers, and you only want short sentences, such as captains give to the ranks. I say to you, redeemed by precious blood, and made sensitive to the all-surrounding God, note *how strictly God observes us!* Let us walk in His sight, let us live in His presence. I charge you, remember that the Lord your God is a jealous God. Under such weighty obligations to Him, and bound to Him by such marvelous ties of love, live—live obediently, live intensely, live with concentration of heart, and mind, and strength; live wholly unto Him. Being ever in His sight set Him always before you. Be your life such as life should be in the fierce light that beats about the throne of Deity. Oh, our poor lives! Our empty lives! God fill them and elevate them! May He help us to rise out of our dead selves by a sense of His living presence. If God's nearness does not make us cry to Him to make men of us, what will? O You who are so divinely near, draw our lives into Your life!

If God is not far from us, let us see *how readily He hears our prayers!* I am sometimes startled at the power of a feeble prayer to win a speedy answer. "Startled," you will say; why am I startled, for it is written, "Before they call, I will answer, and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." Yes, it is so written, but we do not always apprehend the fact. When the promise comes speedily to pass, have you never felt your flesh creep with a solemn awe in the presence of God, who has so remarkably drawn near at the voice of prayer? You turn aside from your business but a minute and pray, and you come back calm and composed. This is the finger of God. You do not leave the counter, but simply dart a glance heavenward,

and the thing you sought for is bestowed upon you. Is it not often so, my beloved? You know it is. Is it not easily accounted for by the fact that God is at your right hand, ready to be gracious? There is no need in every case to break the continuity of business, and to get away from the concerns of this life, for the Lord is in the shop, and in the barn, as well as in the closet. You are in the midst of a throng of wicked men, but God is there too, if His providence has called you into such company. The pressure of incessant occupation racks your mind, but it would be less if you felt that God is there to help and guide.

How simple is communion with the Lord when we know that He is near us! When you seek quietude for meditation, do you think it wonderful that you enter speedily into communion with God? Is He not waiting for you? If you go into the field with Isaac, God is there. Resort, therefore, to communion with God without doubt of obtaining it. Speak, for He hears; listen, for He speaks. Pray without ceasing, because God is near without ceasing. Pour out your heart before Him, for He is ever near to mark your heart's outpourings. It makes life a blessed thing when we remember that we spend it with God. We dwell in Him. It is not as if we were visitors, and had to make calls on God now and then, but He is our dwelling place. We have not to seek Him as though He had hidden Himself away, for He is the sun whose presence fills our life with strength and comfort. He is in us, and therefore with us. Therefore let us pray, and praise, and hold sweet communion with Him.

Further, dear brethren, if God is so near us, *how securely are we defended!* A Christian lady not long ago dreamed a dream which was not a dream, but fact. She saw herself as surrounded with God; encircled above, beneath, and all around, as with a blaze of light. Brilliance inconceivable made a pavilion for her, and while she stood in the midst of the glory she saw all her cares, and her troubles, and her temptations, and her sins, wandering about the outside of the wall of light, unable to reach her. Unless that light itself should open and make a way for them she was serenely secure, although she could see the perils which otherwise would destroy her. Is not the Lord a wall of fire round about us, and the glory in the midst? Is it not written, "He that dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty"? Evil shall not come near to him who is near to God. Go where we may, a more than royal guard surrounds us, for the Lord of Hosts is with us. Blind eyes, blind eyes, you see not the Infinite Protector! If our eyes were anointed, we should see the mountain full of horses of fire and chariots of fire round about us; no, better than horses, though they are of fire, we would see the omnipotent God to be our shield and buckler. I want you, dear people of God, to feel that you are never in real danger, because never far from God. How can he be in peril that the Lord keeps both night and day?

To the living God we look for life when threatened by the powers of death. You have a little fish in your hand; it will soon die if it remains there. It is newly taken from the stream; make haste to restore it to its element, and it will speedily recover. In the river it will find all it needs; even so, in God we have all we want. In God we dwell in all-sufficiency

and in perfect peace. As the dove in the dovecote, and the coney in the rock, and the chick beneath the hen, so do we dwell in God. Who is he that can harm us, since God is near?

If the Lord is thus near us, *how speedily He can renew our graces!* Alas! Our souls too often need restoring, but blessed be His name, He is at hand to renew our life. I confess with shame that I have felt dull and dead and heavy, and I thought it was the weather, or my bodily weakness, or some other matter, but whatever was the cause, I have only found one cure. As in a moment, quicker than the twinkling of an eye, I have been lifted into life, and love, and light, and energy; I have awakened in the night with all the bells of my soul ringing out peals of praise. I have said to myself, "What a strange creature I am! Now I can rejoice in my God; now I can pray with holy prevalence; now I can leap as a hart." Then I have wished to rush into the pulpit and preach straight away. I was all death before, and the Lord made me all life. Is not this to be expected since God is near to hear our moans? He speaks, and it is done. "His word runs very swiftly." By the exercise of faith the Lord enables us to overcome the body. Plato used to say that by thought the soul could get out of the body. I am not philosopher enough to know whether this is true or not; indeed, I never tried to quit my body, for I am afraid I might not find my way back again, but this I know, that by the spiritual life the spirit can rise above the body. Some grievous ache, some bitter pain has made you feel as if you did not care to live, and yet a flash of sacred joy has gone through you, and you have laughed at the pain, and have even been quickened by it. Pain is a rough barebacked steed which throws every common rider, but when he comes who is taught by the Spirit, he leaps upon it, rides it, and outstrips the wind. How many a grand thought has been the child of pain. Now, if God is with us we see how such a thing can be. Never despair while the living God is near. Believe in the living One, and touching the hem of His garment, the virtue of His life shall stream into your dying heart, "He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

I hear people sometimes talk about "the higher life." Happy is that man who obtained the highest life when he first believed in Jesus Christ. The Divine life is neither lower nor higher, but there are increasing degrees of its strength. These are all reachable; for God is near to help us. If God is near us, brothers, infinite resources are near us. We need not be unbelieving; we need not be sorrowful; we need not be afraid. We need not be the captives of sin; we are able to overcome it by the Divine help. We can master ourselves, for God is near us to give us the victory.

I do not think that any of you should go away today, saying, "I feel so dull, so stupid, so unspiritual." God is not far from any one of us, and His presence should remove these complaints. What does Jesus say? "I am the resurrection, and the life." You looked for a miracle. Behold your Lord! He is the miracle. Receive Him, and you have the resurrection and the life. What though you are in the grave, sheeted and bound; if Jesus is at the mouth of the sepulcher, at His bidding you shall quit the abode of death. Have hope, O Lazarus! For though you are dead and stinking, yet the Christ who calls you gives you life. Never, child of God, never think

that you cannot be filled with life and power. That cry of, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me?" is heard by your present God, and He gives you the victory through Jesus Christ.

Let me say once more, if God is so near us, *there is no reason why we should not speedily enjoy a manifestation of His glory.* Moses keeps the flock of Jethro. Poor comrades, those woolly sheep! He has led them to the back side of the desert. Poor region, it scarcely yields a blade of grass for sheep, and nothing for man. What can one expect in a howling wilderness? Stop; yonder is a bush! But what of that? No grapes or figs can be gathered there. A bird may rest in a bush, but not a man. Turn you aside, O Moses, for God can make that bush to be the throne of Deity! The commonplace can be made celestial, the despicable, divine. Though today, dear heart, in all your trouble and deadness of heart you will go to a home which is no home, yet since God is there He can appear to you in anything and everything. He can make the bush of your trouble to become the embodiment of His glory. He can manifest Himself to you as He does not to the world. Time was, they say, when God could be found under a tree, and by the brook, and near the town wall, and even in a furnace, and a lion's den, but men do not see Him now even in temples. Whose fault is this? It is the fault of our dull eye, and duller hearts. God is as near as ever. I see Him in this house of prayer. I pray that you may see Him, and then the spot whereon you now are will become holy ground to you throughout the rest of your life. In your quiet room this afternoon, there is no reason why a door should not be opened in heaven. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." He shows His glory to the meek and lowly. The recognized presence of God will make an attic as glorious as the Mount of Transfiguration. When Jesus is to us Emanuel, God with us, we see Him in His glory, for this is to see Him as He is.

This truth of the presence of God makes me feel happy with regard to this my much beloved church. I often fear lest we should not have conversions. I have feared lest coldness of heart should take hold of myself and you, and then this has been my comfort—the Lord is not far from any of us, and therefore He can use us, and work conversions in our midst. Brethren, He can incline the outsiders to come and hear the word, and when they hear it He can bless them, for He is not far from them. I read in the Life of John Wesley a story of Methodists meeting in a barn, and how certain of the villagers, who were afraid to break through the door, resolved to place one inside who would open the door to them during the service, that they might disturb the congregation. This person went in before service began, and concealed himself in a sack in a corner of the barn. When the Methodists began to sing, he liked the tune so well that he would not get out of the sack till he had heard it through. Then followed a prayer, and during that prayer, God worked on the man in the sack, so that he began to cry for mercy. The good people looked around, and were astonished to find a sinner in a sack seeking his Savior. The door was not opened to the mob after all, for he who intended to do so was converted. It does not matter why the people come to hear the gospel; God can bless them in any case. If Christ is preached, men will be

saved, even if they come to disturb. "Sir," said one to me, "I had been to bargain about a pair of ducks on Sunday morning, and I passed by the door, and I thought I would just look in. There and then the Lord met with me, and those ducks were forgotten, for I found a Savior." God is not far from any, and in answer to believing prayer He can deal with men and turn their hearts to Himself. Therefore, work on! Go round with your tracts this afternoon. God is not far away from those houses. Stand in the street corner and preach; God is not far away from those who pass by. Go to your Sunday school class, for God is not far from any one of the children. Work with cheerful hope, for the Lord is near you.

This presence of God which cheers in life, also sustains in death. He is not far from any one of us when all the world flies far away. This morning the end came suddenly to our friend Mr. Murphy. He hoped to preach this morning, but he is doing better work. His congregation is gathered expecting their pastor; may they find the Master with them, though the servant is gone! If God is always near, what does it matter whether we die or live? We would like to have our friends gathered about our bed to bid them farewell, but perhaps, it will not be so. It is of small moment, after all, since our God will be near. Our best Friend will be there; our Father will be there, for our God will be there. Go your way and make no bargain as to whether you live or die; only plead that promise, "Certainly I will be with you." God is with us now, and soon we shall be with Him. Until the day break and the shadows flee away, abide with us, O Lord. Amen, and amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 139.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—230, 185, 211.

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THE SUFFERING SAVIOR'S SYMPATHY
NO. 1974

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

"For in that He Himself has suffered being tempted,
He is able to succor them that are tempted."
Hebrews 2:18.

WE are told by the apostle in the fifth chapter that one special requisite in a high priest was that he could have compassion upon men. "For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: 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." You see God did not choose angels to be made high priests, because however benevolent they might be in their wishes, they could not be sympathetic. They could not understand the peculiar wants and trials of the men with whom they had to deal. Ministers who of God are made to be a flame of fire could scarcely commune familiarly with those who confess themselves to be as dust and ashes. But the high priest was one of themselves. However dignified his office, he was still a man. He was one of whom we read that he could lose his wife, that he could lose his sons. He had to eat and to drink, to be sick and to suffer, just as the rest of the people did. And all this was necessary that he might be able to enter into their feelings and represent those feelings before God, and that he might, when speaking to them for God, not speak as a superior, looking down upon them, but as one who sat by their side, "a brother born for adversity," bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh.

Now this is peculiarly so in the case of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is sympathetic above all. There is none as tender as He. He has learnt it by His sufferings, but He proves it by His continual condescension towards His suffering people. My brethren, we that preach the gospel, you that teach it in the Sunday school—you will always find your greatest power to lie in love. There is more eloquence in love than in all the words that the cleverest rhetorician can ever put together. We win upon men not so much by poetry and by artistic wording of sentences, as by the pouring out of a heart's love that makes them feel that we would save them, that we would bless them, that we would, because we belong to them, regard them as brethren, and play a brother's part, and lay ourselves out to benefit them. Now, as it should be in the under-shepherds, so is it in that Great Shepherd of the sheep. He abounds in tenderness, and though He has every other quality to make up a perfect high priest, though He is complete, and in nothing lacking, yet if I must mention one thing in which He far outshines us all, but in which we should all try to

imitate Him, it would be in His tender sympathy to those who are ignorant and out of the way, and to all those who are suffering and sorely distressed.

It is in the spirit of brotherly sympathy that I would endeavor to preach on this occasion as the Good Spirit shall help me. May I ask my brethren whose hearts are full of joy at this hour to be praying for others who have not that joy, and to be helping me in my endeavor to speak words of consolation to them? May the Holy Spirit, in answer to your prayers, make every sentence to be as wine and oil to the wounds of those who are left half dead in the King's highway! We have not to look far for "them that are tempted," for they are all around us, and deserve the thoughtful regard of each one of us. Do not overlook them, my happier brother, "considering yourself, lest you also be tempted."

In my text I think I see two things very clearly. *Jesus suffering,* "He Himself has suffered being tempted." *Jesus succoring,* "He is able to succor them that are tempted." And then I think I see a third thing most certainly there, namely, *Jesus sought after,* because in the word which is translated "succor" there is a latent meaning of crying. He is able to hear the cry of them that are tempted. It is a word that signifies a mother's quickness to answer her child's cry, and Jesus is able to answer our cry, therefore we ought to lift up that cry when our soul is in distress. It shall be the best thing seen in this Tabernacle tonight if the third thing be seen, namely, Jesus sought after by every weary, heavy-laden spirit. Why should it not be? Come, Holy Spirit, and create in each mourner the spirit of prayer and the grace of supplication!

I. First, then, and to begin, here is JESUS SUFFERING.

I call your attention, first, to *the feeling* that is here expressed, "in that He Himself has suffered being tempted." Many persons are tempted, but do not suffer in being tempted. When ungodly men are tempted, the bait is to their taste, and they swallow it greedily. Temptation is a pleasure to them; indeed, they sometimes tempt the devil to tempt them. They are drawn aside of their own lusts and enticed, so that temptation, instead of being suffering to them, becomes a horrible source of pleasure. But good men suffer when they are tempted, and the better they are the more they suffer. I know some children of God to whom temptation is their constant misery day and night. If it took the form of external affliction, they would bravely bear it, but it takes the shape of evil suggestions and profane insinuations, which leap into their minds without their will, and though they hate them with their whole heart. These suggestions continue to annoy some dear saints whom I know, not only daily, but nightly, and that month after month. These thoughts beset them as a man may be surrounded by swarms of gnats or flies, from which he cannot get away. Such brethren are tempted, and they suffer being tempted. Our Lord Jesus Christ enters into this trying experience very fully; because His suffering through being tempted must have been much greater than any suffering that the purest-hearted believer can know, seeing that He is more pure than any one of us.

It was a trying thing to the Blessed Christ even to dwell here among men. He behaved Himself with most condescending familiarity, but He

must have been greatly sickened and saddened by what He saw in this world of sinners. They were no fit company for Him, for their views of things and His were as different as possible, and they had no points of agreement in character with Him. They were as much company for Him as a patient may be to a surgeon; no, not as much as an imbecile may be to his teacher, or as a madman to his keeper; they could not come much closer until His grace changed and renewed them. Our Lord and Master had such a delicate sensitiveness of soul with regard to holiness, that the sight of sin must have torn Him as a naked man would be torn by thorns, and thistles, and briers. There was no callousness about His nature. He had not made Himself familiar with sin by the practice of it, as many have done; neither had He so associated with those who indulge in evil as to become Himself lenient towards it. We inherit the customs of our ancestors, and do not raise questions about that which has been commonly done; we begin at an evil point, and start from a wrong point in morals, but it was not so with our Lord, He had no original, or inherited, or birth sin; neither did He learn evil in His upbringing. We also commit sin through a comparative ignorance of its evil, but He knew the horror of it, He felt within His soul the shame, the wrong, the inherent baseness of sin against a holy law and a loving God. His infinite knowledge helped Him to understand and measure the heinousness and hell-desert of it, and hence, to be in contact with it must have been a perpetual sorrow to Him. He suffered in being placed where He could be tempted.

When sin actually assailed Him, and He was bidden to prove His Sonship by working a miracle to feed Himself, thus anticipating His Father's providence by a hasty act of self-seeking, how He must have loathed the suggestion! When Satan bade Him presumptuously cast Himself down from the temple's pinnacle, how He must have smarted at the horrible proposal! When the tempter hissed into His ear that abominable offer, "All these things will I give You, if You will fall down and worship me," it must have grieved the holy heart of Jesus most intensely. He could not yield to temptation, but He did suffer from it. He did not suffer from it morally, He was too pure for that, but He did suffer from it mentally because of His purity. His mind was grieved, and vexed, and troubled by the temptation that He had to bear. We specially see this when we find Him in the garden. There He showed His grief when He sweat as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground. In many other ways He endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, such multiplied temptations, that it is said and truly said, by the Holy Spirit in this verse, that He "suffered" being tempted.

Now, then, you poor creatures who can scarcely lift up your heads because of shame as you tremble at the memory of your own thoughts, come here, and meet with One who suffered being tempted! He knows how you are hunted by hell-dogs, go where you may; He knows that you cannot escape the presence of the tempter, and from His own experience He enters into your feelings to the full. He gives you a flood of sympathy in these deep distresses of your spirit, as you fight against Apollyon and agonize against temptation, for He suffered being tempted—

"Exposed to wounds most deep and sore,
The great Redeemer stood,
While Satan's fiery darts He bore,
And did resist to blood."

Let us meditate for a while upon *the fact* that our Lord was tempted, tempted up to the suffering point. I must not omit to mention the particular use here made by the Spirit of that word *"Himself."* It is not only in that *He* suffered being tempted, but you see that He *Himself* has suffered being tempted. That word is sometimes used to make passages emphatic. "Who His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree." We read again and again of Jesus Christ *Himself*, as if to show that the matters referred to were really, truly, personally, actually His. He *Himself* has suffered. All that there was in Him, that made up Himself, suffered being tempted. Survey this fact carefully. Our Lord was tempted by His circumstances, just as you are; yes, more than many of you are, for He felt the woes of poverty, and poverty at times carried to the extreme. "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has not where to lay His head." You are sometimes tempted with the thought that you will be out of house and home before long. Where will you find a nightly shelter? Jesus can sympathize with you. He also was weary with incessant labors. "Being wearied, He sat thus on the well." Weariness has its temptations. He that is weary is hardly in the condition to judge rightly of things. When we are weary, we are apt to be impatient, complaining, and hasty. If you are weary, and can scarcely keep your eyelids from dropping down, remember before you quite yield to fatigue that your Lord was weary too. Once "they took Him even as He was into the ship," and I think it must mean that He was too weary to go into the ship Himself, so that they took Him in His absolute exhaustion, and gently laid Him down, in the back part of the ship, placing His head upon a pillow. Do not blame yourself for feeling tired in the house of prayer, if after long watching or hard working you feel more fit for sleep than for a sermon. I shall not blame you, certainly, for I remember how little my Lord blamed the disciples when they fell asleep in the garden during His agony. He said, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak," and He never would have thought of so tender an excuse for their untender slumbers if His own flesh had not also been weak when He, too, was weary. So you see that the Lord knows from His own circumstances, what are the temptations of poverty and of weariness. He Himself was hungry. He Himself said, "I thirst." Everything round about Him contributed to fulfill the tale of His trials. He Himself was, above us all, "a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."

And then He Himself suffered from temptations arising from men. He endured sadly much from good men. It would seem that even His beloved mother tried Him. His mother was with His brethren when we read that they were without, desiring to speak with Him. Was it not at that time that they desired to take Him, for they said, "He is beside Himself"? The men of His own kindred thought that surely He was a man distraught, who ought to be put under restraint. "Neither did His brethren believe in Him."

His disciples, though He loved them so intensely, yet each one tried Him. Even John, the dearest of them all, must ask for places at the right and the left hand of His throne for himself and his brother James. Even Peter "took Him and rebuked Him." All the disciples were much of Peter's mind when He described Himself as about to be crucified and slain. Their spirit was often so worldly, so selfish, so foolish, as to greatly grieve their Lord and Leader. While He was the Servant of all, they were seeking who should have the pre-eminence. While He was seeking the lost, they were for calling fire from heaven upon rebels. They spoke unadvisedly with their lips, and committed their Master by their words. And you know how, worst of all, He had to complain in utmost bitterness of spirit, "He that eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me." So that from the circle of His own favored ones He gathered more thorns than roses. He received wounds in the house of His friends, even as you may have done. Herein you see His power to exhibit sympathy with us. He suffered just as we do. He "suffered being tempted" even by the failures of those whom He loved—

"If wounded love my bosom swell,
Deceived by those I prized so well,
He shall His pitying aid bestow,
Who felt on earth severer woe;
At once betrayed, denied, or fled
By those who shared His daily bread."

As for His enemies, need I speak about them? Did they not all tempt Him? Herodians and Sadducees—the openly skeptical; Pharisees and Scribes—the professedly religious, were equally His fierce foes. Those to whom He was a benefactor took up stones again to stone Him, and Jerusalem, over which He had wept, cried, "Crucify Him, crucify Him," and would not rest till He was slain. Ah, Lord! We have none of us such foes as You had. However cruel our adversaries, they are not so numerous or so fierce as Yours. Besides, they have some cause to hate *us,* but of Your enemies it is true that they hated You without a cause. They could bring no true charge against Him, and therefore they forged the cruelest of falsehoods, until their reproaches broke His heart. So you see how He was tempted, and how He suffered.

Moreover, it is a very wonderful fact—one could scarcely have imagined it—but the record is most clear—He was tempted of the devil; *He* was tempted of the devil. He in whom all evil is personified dared to stand foot to foot in single duel with Him in whom all goodness is concentrated. The fiend infernal dared to face the God incarnate. God in our mortal flesh encountered the devil in the wilderness of temptation. How could the fiend have ventured to assail our Lord? Truly Lucifer was lifted up to the extreme of pride when He dared thus to confront his Lord. But Christ was tempted of the devil early in His public career, and again near its close He exclaimed, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness." He seemed to hear the dragon's wings as they beat the midnight air, and He cried, "The prince of this world comes." Calmly He added, "And has nothing in Me," yet His heart grew chill in the hideous presence of the great adversary. It was nothing less than an agony in Gethsemane—a painful wrestling between Jesus and the powers of darkness. You that

are tempted of the devil; you that are troubled by mysterious whispers in your ear; you that, when you sing or pray, have a blasphemy suggested to you; you that even in your dreams start with horror at the thoughts that cross your minds, be comforted, for your Lord knows all about temptation.

Some of you do not understand this, and I hope you never may, but I am speaking with a purpose to others, to whom this is a life's gloom. To you, I say, you can enter into fellowship with your Lord in His being tempted of the devil; that which is incomprehensible to others is plain enough to you. Be of good cheer, for in this respect your Lord Himself has suffered being tempted—

"If aught should tempt my soul to stray
From heavenly wisdom's narrow way,
To fly the good I would pursue,
Or do the sin I would not do,
Still He, who felt temptation's power,
Shall guard me in that dangerous hour."

Once again; our Lord knew those temptations which arise out of being deserted by God. There come times to certain of us when our soul is cast down within us, when faith becomes feeble, and joy languishes, because the light of the divine countenance is withdrawn. We cannot find our God. We enter into the language of Job, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him! That I might come even to His seat." We cry with David, "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is your God?" Nothing chills the marrow like an eclipse of the great Sun, whose presence makes our day. If the Lord withdraws from us, then the strong helpers faint—

"He frowns, and darkness veils the moon;
The fainting sun grows dim at noon;
The pillars of heaven's starry roof
Tremble and start at His reproof."

In this great temptation our Lord has suffered His full share. He cried, "Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabachthani." There was condensed into that dying cry an infinity of anguish such as we cannot conceive of. Some of us know what the surface of this Black Sea is like, but we have never descended into its utmost depths as He did, and if we have done so, this is our comfort—that HE has been there. He has been to the very bottom of it. He has suffered being tempted even by that heaviest of all the trials which ever fall upon the sons of God. There is the fact.

I desire to go a step farther, to comfort you upon *the fruit* of all this, for though our Lord thus suffered being tempted, He suffered not in vain, for He was made perfect through His sufferings, and fitted for His solemn office of High Priest to His people. From that fact I want you to gather fruit, because our heavenly Father means to bless you also. We cannot comfort others if we have never been comforted ourselves. I have heard—and I am sure that it is so—that there is no comforter for a widow like one who has lost her husband. Those who have had no children, and have never lost a child, may talk very kindly, but they cannot enter into a mother's broken heart as she bows over yonder little coffin. If you have never

known what temptations mean, you make poor work when attempting to succor the tempted. Our Lord obtained a blessing from suffering temptation, and you may do the same. Brother, the Lord means to make of you a man that shall be used like Barnabas to be a "son of consolation." He means to make a mother in Israel of you, my dear sister, that when you meet with others who are sorely cast down, you may know how to drop in a sweet word by which they shall be comforted. I think you will one day say, "It was worth while to go through that sorrow to be enabled to administer relief to that wounded heart." Will you not comfort others when you are delivered? I am sure you will. You will be ready and expert in the sacred surgery of consolation. Therefore be content to suffer being tempted, and look for the comfortable fruit which all this shall produce in you.

So you have seen the feeling, and the fact, and the fruit. Now, what are the inferences to be drawn from this part of the subject? I must be short with them.

I want you that are tempted to draw the following inferences from the suffering and temptation of the Lord Jesus—

First, that *temptation to sin is no sin*. It is no sin to be tempted, for in Him was no sin, and yet He was tempted. "He suffered being tempted," but there was no sin in that, because there was no sin in Himself. You may be horribly tempted, and yet no blame whatever may attach to you, for it is no fault of yours that you are tempted. You need not repent of that which has no sin in it. If you yield to the temptation, therein is sin, but the mere fact that you are tempted, however horrible the temptation, is no sin of yours.

And in the next place, *temptation does not show any displeasure on God's part*. He permitted His Only-begotten Son to be tempted; He was always the Son of His love, and yet He was tried. "This is My beloved Son," said He at His baptism, and yet the next hour that Son was led of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. It does not even show displeasure on God's part that He permits you to be tempted; on the contrary, it may be consistent with the clearest manifestations of divine favor.

And again, *temptation really implies no doubt of your being a son of God,* for *the* Son of God was tempted, even the unquestioned Son of the Highest. The prime model and paragon of sonship, Christ Himself, was tempted. Then why not you? Temptation is a mark of sonship rather than any reflection thereupon.

Note, next, that *temptation need not lead to any evil consequences in any case*. It did not in your Lord's case lead up to sin. The Lord Jesus was as innocent in temptation and after temptation as before it, and so may we be through His grace. It is written by the beloved John concerning the man that is born of God that "He keeps himself, and that wicked one touches him not."

Moreover, *do not make it any cause of complaint that you are tempted*. If your Lord was tempted, shall the disciple be above his Master, or the servant above his Lord? If the Perfect One must endure temptation; why not you? Accept it, therefore, at the Lord's hands, and do not think it to

be a disgrace or a dishonor. It did not disgrace or dishonor your Lord, and temptation will not disgrace or dishonor you. The Lord, who sends it, sends also with it a way of escape and it will be to your honor and profit to escape by that way.

Far from your hearts be the idea that any temptation should lead you to despair. Jesus did not despair. Jesus triumphed, and so shall you, and therefore He cries, "In the world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." You are a member of His body, and when the Head wins the victory, the whole body shares the triumph. "Because I live," He said, "you shall live also," and so you shall; even in the poisonous atmosphere of temptation you shall be in health. They of old overcame through the blood of the Lamb, and you shall do the like. Therefore comfort one another with these words, "He Himself has suffered being tempted," for you who have His life in you shall first suffer with Him, and then reign with Him.

That is the first part of our discourse, and it is rich with comfort, if the Spirit of God shall but apply it to the tempted heart. I feel such a poor bungler; I have ointment here, and soft linen wherewith to bind on the healing ointment, but perhaps I have put it on too tightly, or too loosely, and if so, I may fail. O divine Comforter, undertake the work! It needs the pierced hands to fitly apply the sacred liniment.

II. But now I come, secondly and briefly, to notice JESUS SUCCORING. Jesus suffering is preparatory to Jesus succoring. Observe, then, "He is able to succor them that are tempted." In this we note *His pity that* He should give Himself up to this business of succoring them that are tempted. Have you a tempted friend living in your house? If so, you have a daily cross to carry, for when we try to comfort mourners we often become cast down ourselves, and the temptation is for us to get rid of them, or keep out of their way. Has it ever occurred to any friend here to say, "That good brother, who sits in the pew near me, is rather a burden to me. I have spoken to him several times, but he is so unhappy that he drags me down. I go out of another door now to get out of his way"? So might your Lord have done to the unhappy, and to you, if He had not been your Lord, but He is such a One full of pity that He seeks out those that are cast down; He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds. He lays Himself out to succor them that are tempted, and therefore He does not hide Himself from them, nor pass them by on the other side. What an example is this for us! He devotes Himself to this divine business of comforting all such as mourn. He is Lord of all, yet makes Himself the servant of the weakest. Whatever He may do with the strongest, He succors "them that are tempted." He does not throw up the business in disgust; He does not grow cross or angry with them because they are so foolish as to give way to idle fears. He does not tell them that it is all their nerves, and that they are stupid and silly, and ought to shake themselves out of such nonsense. I have often heard people talk in that fashion, and I have half wished that they had felt a little twinge of depression themselves, just to put them into a more tender humor. The Lord Jesus never overdrives a lame sheep, but He sets the bone, and car-

ries the sheep on His shoulders, so tenderly compassionate is He. Here is His pity.

The text, however, treats of *His fitness* also. He is just the very person to succor them that are tempted. I have been showing you this already. He has *the right*, acquired by His suffering, to enter in among sufferers, and deal with them. He is free of the company of mourners—

"When our heads are bowed with woe,
When our bitter tears overflow,
When we mourn the lost, the dear,
Then the Son of Man is near.
You our throbbing flesh have worn,
You our mortal griefs have borne;
You have shed the human tear,
Son of Man, to mourners dear."

He has the right to succor them that are tempted, for they are His own, since He has bought them with His blood. The feeble, the weak, the trembling, the desponding, are His care, committed to Him by God. He said, "Fear not, little flock," which shows that His flock is little and timid. He says, "Fear not, little flock," because they have great tendency to fear, and because He does not like to see them thus troubled. He has bought them, and so He has the right to succor them, and preserve them to the end.

But He has also *the disposition* to succor them. He obtained that tender temper through suffering, by being Himself tempted. The man that has seen affliction, when he is blessed of God, has the disposition to cheer those that are afflicted. I have heard speak of a lady who was out in the snow one night, and was so very cold that she cried out, "Oh, those poor people that have such a little money, how little fire they have, and how pinched they must be! I will send a hundredweight of coals to twenty families, at the least." But I have heard say that, when she reached her own parlor, there was a fine fire burning, and she sat there with her feet on the fender, and enjoyed an excellent tea, and she said to herself, "Well, it is not very cold, after all. I do not think that I shall send those coals; at any rate, not for the present." The sufferer thinks of the sufferer, even as the poor help the poor. The divine wonder is that this Lord of ours, "though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor," now takes a delight in succoring the poor. Having been tempted, He helps the tempted; His own trials make Him desire to bless those who are tried.

And then He has the special *ability*. "He is able to succor them that are tempted." I know certain good brethren whom I am very pleased to see, and I am very happy in their company, when I am perfectly well, but I do not enjoy their presence when I am ill. Thank you; no, I would rather not have their visits multiplied when I am not well. They walk heavily across the room; they have a way of leaving doors open, or banging them, and when they talk, they talk so loudly and roughly that the poor head aches and the sick man is worried. The things they say, though they are meant to be kind, are the sort of remarks that pour vinegar into your wounds. They do not understand the condition of a sufferer, and so they say all their words the wrong way upwards. If Christians are to be comforters, they must learn the art of comforting by being themselves tried.

They cannot learn it otherwise. Our Blessed Master, having lived a life of suffering, understands the condition of a sufferer so well that He knows how to make a bed for him. "What a strange thing to say!" cries one of my audience. Not at all. David says, "You will make all his bed in his sickness." He would not have said that, if the Lord did not know how to make a bed. There is a dainty way of beating up a pillow, and a peculiar art in shaking up a bed when the sick man is lifted out of it; yes, and there is a way of putting on every piece of covering so as to make it a comfort. By this figure we are taught that the Lord Jesus Christ knows how to deal with us in the weakness and pain of our affliction. He has become so good a Nurse, so divine a Physician, so tender a Sympathizer, because He has passed through our sorrows. "In all our affliction He was afflicted." "Himself took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses."—

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

He has a fitness for dealing with tempted ones.

Let me spend a minute or two in telling you *His methods* of succoring them that are tempted. He does it in many ways, and perhaps there may be many here who know more about those ways than I do.

Usually He succors the tempted by giving them a sense of His sympathy. They say, "Yes, my Lord is here. He feels for me." That is in itself a succor of no mean order.

Sometimes He succors them by suggesting to them precious truths which are the sweet antidote for the poison of sorrow. There is in the Bible a remedy exactly fitted for your grief if you could only find it. Sometimes you lose the key of a drawer, and you must have it opened, and therefore you send for the locksmith, and he comes in with a great bunch of keys. Somewhere among them he has a key that will open your drawer. The Bible contains keys that will open the iron gates of your trouble, and give you freedom from your sorrow. The point is to find out the right promise, and the Spirit of God often helps us in that matter by bringing the words of the Lord Jesus to our remembrance. We had never known the richness of the Word of God if it had not been that in our varied distresses the Lord has shown us how He foresaw all, and provided for all in the covenant of promise.

Sometimes the Lord succors His people by inwardly strengthening them. "Oh," one has said, "I am under a heavy trouble, but I do not know how it is, I can bear it much better than I thought I should." Yes, through grace, a secret divine energy is poured into the soul. We are treated, as Mr. Bunyan puts it, by secret supplies of grace imparted in a hidden manner. We are like yonder fire. One is throwing water on it, and yet it burns on. Behind the wall another is secretly pouring oil on the fire, so that it still keeps burning.

I have known the Lord bless His people by making them very weak. The next best thing to being strong in the Lord is to be extremely weak in yourself. They go together, but sometimes they are divided in experience. It is grand to feel, "I will not struggle any more. I will give all up, and lie passive in the Lord's hands." Oh, it is the sweetest feeling, I think, outside heaven! You may think it strange for me to say so, but I believe that,

as in the center of a cyclone there is a little spot where there is perfect calm, and as it is said that in the center of the greatest fire that ever burned there is a spot where no fire is raging, so there is in a deep sense of yielding up to God, in the very center of your pain, and your grief, and your misery, and your depression, a place of perfect repose when you have once yielded yourself fully up to God. I know this to be true, even though I may not be understood.

In these ways He that was tempted Himself succors those who are tempted.

III. I will close by thinking of JESUS SOUGHT AFTER. Let us seek Him. Come, you weary, heavy-laden, come to Him who is able to succor you. Do not stay away until you are a little comforted, but come in your despair. Do not wait until you have a little more faith, but come just as you are, and say to Him, "Dear Lord, You have felt all this and I lie down at Your dear feet! Do help me, I beseech You!" Let these few thoughts help to bring you now in prayer, and trust, and hope, to the feet of this Great High Priest.

First, *where else can you go?* Who can help a soul like you? Come to Him, then. Men are nothing; miserable comforters are they all. The cisterns are all broken; come to the fountain. Come to my Lord. Every other door is shut, but yet you may not despair, for He says, "Behold I set before you an open door."

Where better can you go? Do you want to find a friend able to help you? Do you really want a comrade that can be a brother to you? To whom should you go but unto your own Lord, the sympathizing Son of Man? To whom better can you go? Do you say that you are downcast? Do you tell me you are afraid you are no child of God? Never mind about that. Come as a sinner if you cannot come as a saint. Do you mourn that you have no good thoughts? Come and confess your bad ones. Do you lament that you are not broken-hearted for sin, as you ought to be? Come, then, to be broken-hearted. Do you mourn that you are unspeakably bad? Then, come at your worst. It is never a good thing if you want a surgeon, to say, "My bone is broken, but I shall not have it set until it begins to mend." Poor foolish thing! Go while it is broken. O perishing sinner! Cry to the Savior. Ask Him now to save you. Are you of all men the worst? Then go to Him who is the best. Remember He never did cast any one out. Never yet! Not one! I have declared this everywhere, and I have said, "If Jesus Christ casts any one of you out when you come to Him, pray let me know, for I do not want to go up and down the country telling lies." Again I give the challenge. If my Lord does cast out one poor soul that comes to Him, let me know it, and I will give up preaching. I would not have the face to come forward and preach Christ after that, for He Himself has said it, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out," and He would be a false Christ if He acted contrary to His word. He cannot cast *you* out; why should He? "Oh, but then I am so bad." So much the less likely is He to refuse you, for there is the more room for His grace.

"I am lost," said Mr. Whitefield's brother to the Countess of Huntingdon. "I am delighted to hear it," said the Countess. "Oh," he cried, "what

a dreadful thing to say!" "No," she said, "'for the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost,' therefore I know He is come to save *you."* O sinner, it would be unreasonable to despair. The more broken you are, the more ruined you are, the more vile you are in your own esteem, so much the more room is there for the display of infinite mercy and power.

Come then, just as you are, saint or sinner, whoever you may be. Have done with yourself, your good self and your bad self too, and say, "If I perish I will trust in Jesus." Trust in Jesus, and you cannot perish. If you perish believing in Jesus, I must perish with you. I am in the same boat with you. You may be a very seasick passenger, and I may be an able-bodied seaman, but if you are drowned, I shall be, for I cannot swim any more than you can. I depend upon the seaworthiness of this vessel of free grace in which we are embarked, and we must either reach the Fair Havens together, or sink together. You and I, poor broken-down one, oh, will we not sing when we get safe to land? Will we not sing? If we once get to heaven, will we not sing aloud, and clash the high-sounding cymbals with all our might? I will contend with you as to which shall praise God the most. You say that you will. I say that I shall. Will we not vie with each other, and with all the blood-redeemed ones, sing Hallelujah to God and the Lamb? If ever such sinners as you and I get inside the gates of heaven, we will give forth such outcries of holy joy and gladness as never came from angels' throats, but can only come from the lips of sinners bought with blood

The Lord, who succors the tempted, Himself bless and comfort you! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—HEBREWS 2.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—327, 330, 328.

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THE COVENANTER
NO. 1975

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JULY 31, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep His covenant and His testimonies."
Psalm 25:10.

THIS Psalm is intensely earnest. "Unto You, O Lord, do I lift up my soul." The sentences are ingots of gold. Every word is exceeding weighty with sense and sincerity. I take it that one reason for this weight is the fact that David was in affliction. He says, "I am desolate and afflicted. Look upon mine affliction and my pain." Pain is a great disenchanter. Flowery speeches suit the summer tide of our health, but we find them not in the winter of our grief. Pain kills fine phrases as a mighty frost kills butterflies and moths. You can play with religion until you are laid low, and then it becomes serious work. The romance of religion is one thing; the reality of it is another. It would be a great blessing to some if they were shriveled with a little pain, or else will they grow unbearable in their pride. The frog drinks, and drinks, and thinks he will soon swell into an ox; one single bitter drop is mingled with the stream, and he is back into a frog again. It is often the best thing that can happen to us that we should be reduced to our true selves, and not be left to strut about as noble somebodies. May our meditations this morning be solid, and leave on our minds no savor of unreality!

Mixed also with David's suffering there was a sense of sin. Read verse eleven, "For Your name's sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great." And again, in verse eighteen "Forgive all my sins." No man need have a worse trouble than conviction of sin. A thorn in the flesh is nothing to a thorn in the conscience. A sense of sin is another great disenchanter. This bursts the bubbles of conceit by thousands. When the heart is awakened, and sin is laid bare by the Spirit of God, so that we are truly humbled by it, life ceases to be sport, and an awful earnestness pervades our being. To carry burning coals in the bosom is nothing compared with bearing sin in an awakened conscience. There is no cheating your soul when sin lies hard on it, and no attempt is then made at dealing with God in a dishonest manner, but, crushed into the dust, we pine for a real atonement, and a real faith in it, and the true seal of the Spirit to make our pardon sure. When sin is truly felt, we come before the great Father, not with mimic sorrow, but with downright soul-weeping and heartbreaking, we cry to Him, "God be merciful to me a sinner." If we feel either of these two things, pain or sin—and who among us can hope to be without them at all times?—then shall we see the solemn side of life,

and look for those sure consolations by which we may be sustained. I hope that our subject of discourse today may help in that direction.

One other thing is notable about David in writing this Psalm; whatever his trouble might be, and however deep his sense of sin, he looked Godward always. He cries, "Unto You, O Lord, do I lift up my soul." "Remember me for Your goodness' sake, O Lord." In our text his mind dwells upon "the paths of the Lord." The ungodly fly away from God when He chastens them, but the saints kiss the chastening rod. The child of God goes home when it grows dark. We seek our healing from the hand which has wounded us. Which way do you look in a storm? If the Lord is now your haven, you shall fly to Him in the last dread storm, for that way your eye has turned these many years. If you look for everything to God you are looking out of the right window. When your eyes look toward the great sea of divine all-sufficiency you shall not look in vain. You may have to come again seven times before you see your deliverance, and when you see it, it may seem no bigger than a man's hand, but you shall not be ashamed in the end. I trust this mark and evidence of a child of God is upon many of you this morning, and if it is so, you are among the Lord's host whom I would call to the battle. With your eyes looking right on, and your eyelids straight before you, come with me to the rallying-place of the Lord of hosts.

In my text I see two things worth talking about. The first is, *the spiritual covenanter*—"such as keep His covenant and His testimonies," and secondly, here is *his notable experience*—"all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep His covenant."

I. Observe in the text the footprint of THE SPIRITUAL COVENANTER. You have all heard of the old Covenanters of Scotland, their decision of mind and force of character. Their theory of government for the kingdom of Scotland was quaintly unpractical, but it grew out of true and deep fear of the Lord. The Old Testament spirit in them was not enough tinctured with the meekness of the Lord Jesus, or they would not have touched the weapons of steel, but in this mistake they were very far from being alone. In my bedroom I have hung up the picture of an old Covenanter. He sits in a wild glen with his Bible open before him on a huge stone. He leans on his great broadsword, and his horse stands quietly at his side. Evidently he smells the battle afar off, and is preparing for it by drinking in some mighty promise. As you look into the old man's face you can almost hear him saying to himself, "For the crown of Christ and the covenant, I would gladly lay down my life this day." They did lay down their lives, too, right gloriously, and Scotland owes to her covenanting fathers far more than she knows. It was a grand day that in which they spread the Solemn League and the Covenant upon the tombstones of the old kirkyard in Edinburgh, and all sorts of men came forward to set their names to it. Glorious was that roll of worthies. There were the lords of the Covenant and the common men of the Covenant, and some pricked a vein and dipped the pen into their blood, that they might write their names with the very fluid of their hearts. All over England there were men who entered into a like solemn league and covenant, and met together to worship God according to their light, and not according to human order-books. They were resolved upon this one thing—that Rome

should not come back to place and power while they could lift a hand against her; neither should any other power in throne or Parliament prevent the free exercise of their consciences for Christ's cause and covenant. These stern old men, with their stiff notions, have gone. And what have we in their places? Indifference and frivolity. We have no Roundheads and Puritans, but then we have scientific dress-making, and we play lawn tennis! We have no contentions for the faith, but then our amusements occupy all our time. This wonderful nineteenth century has become a child, and put away manly things. Self-contained men, men in who is the true grit, are now few and far between as compared with the old covenanting days.

But I want to speak this morning, not of the old covenanters, but of those who at this day keep the covenant of the Lord. Would to God we had among us great companies of "such as keep His covenant, and remember His commandments to do them"! *The true covenanter is one who has found out God,* and therein has made the greatest discovery that was ever made. He has discovered, not only *a* God, but *the* living and true God, and he is resolved to be on living terms with Him for time and for eternity. He will henceforth never shut his eyes to God, for his longing is to see more and more of Him. He is determined to be right with God, for he feels that if he were right with all his fellow creatures and everything about him, yet if he were wrong with God he would be out of order in the main point. He has settled in his own soul that he will know the Lord, be right with Him, at peace with Him, yes, and in league with Him. It is not natural to men thus to cling to God, and seek after Him, but it has become natural to this man, so that he hungers and thirsts for the living God. By this very fact the man is ennobled; he is lifted up above the brutes that perish. A man capable of the idea of covenant with God, and taken up with a passion for it, must surely be born from above. There must be a divine nature within him, or he would not be drawn towards the divine One above him. It is even so; the Spirit of God has been working here.

Already, too, *this man has discovered another covenant, whose ruins lay between him and God, and block the road.* Turning to his Bible, the believer discovers that we were from the first under covenant towards God. He reads of the first covenant, the covenant with our first father, Adam, which was broken by his disobedience, whose fatal breach has brought upon us losses and woes unnumbered. This covenant the believer has not ignored, for he has felt his share in its failure, and come under the condemnation of it. His very desire to be right with God has brought home to him the judgment of the law; he has smarted under the lash of it, he has seen the Lord arrayed in robes of justice avenging the quarrel of His covenant, and he has said to himself, "What shall I do? The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good, but I am carnal, sold under sin." Brethren, we are condemned under the first covenant, not only by the act of our representative, but also through our personal endorsement of his rebellion by our own actual sin. That covenant, which should have been a covenant of life, has become a covenant of death to us. You know what I mean, for I speak to many who know, by deep personal experience, what it is to be the prisoners of the covenant,

shut up in soul despair, and numbered for destruction. You could not keep the law, you felt you could not, though you wished you could; the future was against you. As for former violations of the law, you could make no amends for them; the past was against you. Even then your inward corruptions were gnawing at your heart like the worm that never dies and the horseleech that is never satisfied; the present was against you. Yet despite all this, you still followed after the Lord, and could not live without Him.

This covenanter of whom I speak is one who has, through divine enlightenment, perceived a better covenant and sure salvation therein. He has seen in the Lord Jesus a second Adam, greater than the first, and he has heard the glorious Lord exclaim, "I have given Him as a covenant for the people." He has seen Jesus pledged unto God to make good the breaches of the broken covenant. The believer has seen the Son of God arrayed in blood-stained garments coming from Gethsemane; he has seen Him answering at the bar for the broken law, scourged with the chastisement of our peace, and bound with the bands of our condemnation. I say the believer has seen the beloved Surety of the New Covenant meeting the law's demands at Calvary, surrendering His hands to be nailed for our ill-doings, His feet to be fastened up for our wanderings, and His heart to be pierced for our wantonness. O my soul, have you not seen your Lord bareheaded amid the tempest of divine wrath for sin? Have you not heard Him cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me"? If so, you have seen how out of the old covenant the new was born, like life from between the ribs of death. Our soul has stood in the midst of the horrible tempest, half-blinded by the lightning, and deafened by the thunder; at last there has been a tear in the black mantle, and a shower of wondrous love has followed the black tempest, and a voice has been heard, sweeter than the harps of angels, saying, "It is finished." Thus have the Lord's covenanted ones come forth from under the old covenant into a covenant of grace, in which peace and joy abound. Now are we in happy league with God. Now we would think, and feel, and act, in harmony with God! Our covenant with Him shall compass all our life; we are His, and He is ours. "The Lord is my portion, says my soul," and on the other hand, "The Lord's portion is His people." Henceforth we would have no life except for the living God; He is our ambition and our expectation, our end and our way, our desire and our delight. He rejoices over us to do us good, and we rejoice ourselves in Him, and seek His glory.

The spiritual covenanter has the covenant with God written on the tablets of his heart. I have known believers when first converted follow a hint given them by Dr. Doddridge, in his "Rise and Progress of Religion," where he draws up a covenant which he invites the reader to sign. Some have executed a deed with great solemnity, and have also observed the day of its signature from year to year. Very proper, no doubt, to some natures, but I fear that to the more timid and conscientious such covenants are apt to cause bondage. When they find that they have not, in all things, lived up to their own pledges, they are apt to cut themselves off from all part and lot in the matter; this is the covenant of works, and not of grace, a covenant on paper, and not the covenant written upon the

heart and mind. The true covenanter wills the will of God. It is not merely that God commands him to do right, but he longs to do it. God's law is his love. That which is pleasing to God is pleasing to His people, because their hearts are made like His own. The divine likeness is restored by the Spirit of grace, and hence the will of the Lord is written out upon the new-born nature. Holiness is the passion of a true believer. He consents and assents to the law that it is good, and the divine life within him delights itself in the law of the Lord. This is the surest sort of covenant—this divine writing in the nature, according to that gracious promise—"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." "I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts." O happy man whose covenant with God is the covenant of his own desire, who wills and wishes and longs and labors to yield himself fully and wholly unto the law of his God!

This covenanting man does not regard himself any more as one by himself, for he is joined unto the Lord, and has entered into the closest fellowship with Him. None can separate him from God—the union is vital and complete. He has thrown his little all into God's great all, and taken God's great all unto himself to be his heritage forever, and now henceforth he is in God and God in him. You ask me what it is which thus binds the man to God. I answer; he feels that he is henceforth joined unto the Lord for many reasons, and among the rest because the Lord has *chosen him* to be His own. He is old-fashioned enough to believe that God has a choice in the salvation of men, and he perceives, because faith has been granted him, that the Lord has evidently chosen him unto salvation. He often cries, "Why me? Why me?" and yet knowing that those whom the Lord calls by grace He first predestinated thereto, he is not ashamed to believe in his election. Now the man that believes that God has chosen him, that is the man to enter into covenant with God, and to keep that covenant. He that is chosen of God chooses God, and chooses Him because he is chosen. The vows of God are upon him. Such amazing grace compels him to a consecrated life.

Moreover, in addition to the choice of God this covenanter sees a blood-mark upon his body, soul, and spirit. The *redemption* made on the cross, whatever its other bearings is seen by the believer to be especially for him. He cries, "For me the bloody sweat; for me the spitting and the scourging; for me the nails and the spear. Truly I am not my own, I am bought with a price." This blood-bought man feels that he cannot be as other men are; he must subscribe with his hand unto the God of Jacob, and own and confess that he belongs alone to the Lord. Others may be their own lords, but as for us, we have been redeemed, not with corruptible things as with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of the Son of God. O sirs, if you know your election and your redemption, you must and will dedicate yourselves unto the Lord by a covenant which cannot be broken. If the choice of the Father and the redemption of the Son do not supply us with a potent force towards holiness, what can do so? Well may we be the covenanted ones of God when we are thus distinguished.

Besides, the covenanting believer feels that he has been the subject of *a special call*. Whatever God may have done with others, he knows that

He has dealt specially with him in a way of grace and mercy. The Lord has said to him, "I have called you by your name; you are Mine." A voice has called him from his kindred and from his father's house as surely as Abraham was called. The Lord Himself has brought him out of darkness into marvelous light. Whatever the gospel may be to the congregation at large, it has been the power of God to him, for in it he has felt the touch of a hand unfelt before, and heard the sound of a voice unheard in all the days gone by. Omnipotent grace has awakened the echoes of his soul. "When You said, Seek you My face; my heart said unto You, Your face, Lord, will I seek." This special and effectual call is another mighty reason for entering into league and covenant with God. By that call omnipotent, O Lord, I render up myself to You. Let the world do as it wills, we cannot account for its folly, but as for us and our house we will serve the Lord. Our bonds of amity with the world are broken; let it do and say what it will, but to the Lord are we bound forever by that same power which has fetched us out of our former slavery. What with election, redemption, and calling, what more can we say?

Yes, I can say something more, for this true covenanter feels that he is now *united to God in Christ Jesus*. Matchless doctrine, unity with God through Jesus Christ! No man knows all the name and nature of the man quickened of the Spirit. You cannot tell from where he comes, or where he goes. We talk of aristocrats, but believers are the aristocrats of heaven and earth. We often hear the words "royalty" and "blood royal," the blood royal of the universe is in the man that believes in Jesus. He has made us unto our God, kings and priests. By virtue of our union with Christ we are one with God and partakers of the divine nature. The day shall come when all the baubles and trappings of courts shall be laid aside as faded tawdriness, but then the true dignity and honor of the twice-born, the quickened by the Holy Spirit, shall be truly seen. To be members of the body of Christ—this means glory indeed. To be married unto the King's Son, even to the Lord Jesus—this means such bliss as angels cannot reach. Do you wonder that because of such immeasurable privilege we make a sure covenant with God?

There are three or four things I would say briefly about this true covenanter; the Lord make each one of us to be of his stamp! You may know him by his attachment to the Lord Jesus, who is the sum, substance, surety, and seal of the covenant; as also by his *zeal for the gospel* through which the covenant is revealed to the sons of men. He will not hear anything which is not according to the old gospel, for he counts another gospel to be a pestilent evil. He is very fond of the word *"grace,"* and with the thing itself he is altogether enamored. The man that is in covenant with God cannot bear the idea of human merit—he loathes it, it raises his indignation. Have I not known some Christian people come out from hearing certain sermons with their souls on fire with holy wrath? I feel, in casting my eye over many modern writings, as if I had breathed poisonous gas, and was like to die. We cannot endure the smell of sacramentarianism, and priestism, and human righteousness. Others may feed on philosophical morality, but nothing but the grace of God will do for us. Cats and dogs may feed on any rubbish, but men of God must live on the grace of God, and nothing else. Our keeping the covenant and the

testimonies binds us to a firm adherence to the inspired gospel, and the grace of God which is the glory of it.

He who is indeed in covenant with God is known by his continual regard to the life, walk, and triumph of *faith*. He has faith, and by that faith he lives and grows. He is, and has, and does all things by faith, and you cannot tempt him away from that faith wherein he stands. Carnal sense and fleshly feeling are not able to tempt him from believing. The highest enjoyment proffered by a fancied perfection cannot charm him from standing by faith. "No," he says, "I must trust, or else it is all over with me. My element is faith, and as a fish out of water dies, so do I die, and all my covenanting with God dies too, unless I cling by faith to the promise of a faithful God." Though all men should live by sight and feeling, yet will not the true covenanter quit the hallowed way of faith in the Lord.

This covenanting man will also be known by his stern resolve to preserve the gospel in its purity, and hand it on to others. When the truth of God was made known to Abraham, it was committed to him and to his descendants as a sacred deposit, of which they were to be the guardians and trustees. It was theirs to keep that lamp burning by which the rest of the world would, in due time, be saved from darkness. At this hour the eternal truths of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ are given over to certain chosen men and women, to be preserved by them till the coming of the Lord. This keeping is to be accompanied with a constant proclamation, so that the truth may spread as well as live, and may go on conquering and to conquer. O you, who are the covenanted ones of God, let not His gospel suffer damage. I charge you that love the Lord to bind the gospel about you more firmly than ever. Bear aloft the standard of our grand army. The blood-stained colors of the cross; bear them to the front; spread them to every wind; uplift them on every hill! And if you cannot spread the truth, and are shut up to defend it then do so even to the death. Wrap the colors about your heart; be wrapped in them as in your shroud, if you cannot live bearing them as your flag! A true covenanter says, "Sooner death than false of faith." The crown of our Lord Jesus shall never suffer loss. We will do everything for Jesus. We will for His sake bear reproach, and for His sake labor to win souls unto God. We vow that He shall be glorified in our mortal bodies and that by some means His great name shall be made known to the ends of the earth. O my comrades! I am revived by the very thought of you. God has yet His faithful covenanters who have not bowed the knee to Baal, to whom the Lord is God and King forever and ever.

II. Under our second head let us now study THE COVENANTER'S NOTABLE EXPERIENCE. The text says, "All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep His covenant and His testimonies."

Observe, first, that *the Lord makes many approaches to covenanting men*. He does not leave them alone, but He comes to them, and manifests Himself to them. By the expression, "All the paths of the Lord," I learn that the Lord has many ways of drawing near to His chosen. Not in the public highways of grace only does He meet those with who He is on terms of peace, but in many private and secret paths. In a grass field a path is made by constant treading, and God makes paths to His people

by continually drawing near unto their souls, and communing with them. The Lord has many paths, for He comes to them from different points of the compass, according as their experience requires. He uses sometimes this way and sometimes another that He may commune with us. He will never leave His covenanted ones long alone. Often does He say, "Gather My saints together unto Me, those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice."

I like the word "paths," as we have it in our English version, for it seems to say that the Lord has walks of His own. He makes ways for Himself, and comes along them quietly, taking His people at unawares. On a sudden He whispers a word of heavenly promise, and then is away again. But He is not long gone; He makes another path, and comes to us with new unction and fresh revealings. His visits to us have been many and gracious. O my hearer, if you will give yourself to God, God will give Himself to you. Young man, I invite you to the grand destiny of one that shall henceforth live with God, to whom God shall manifest Himself. Will not this be a distinguished honor? Do not think it unattainable. God may be reached, if you will consecrate yourself to Him this day by a covenant of salt through Jesus Christ the ever-blessed sacrifice, you shall know the visitations of the Almighty; you shall, like Enoch, walk with God. Believe me, I speak truth and soberness. Between this place and the pearly gates the Lord will come unto you, yes, He will take up His abode with you. When you cannot get to Him, He will come to you, for He is a great path maker. His ways are in the sea, and He leaps over the mountains. He has a desire to the work of His hands, and that desire will break through stone walls to reach you. What a life is that to which the Lord makes innumerable paths! Happy shall he be who shall attain to it!

Note, next, that *all the dealings of God with His people are in a way of mercy*. "All the paths of the Lord are mercy." This is well, for the best of the saints will always need mercy. Those who keep His covenant are still kept by His mercy. When they grow in grace and come to be fully developed Christians, they still need mercy for their sins, their weaknesses, their necessities. The Lord exercises mercy to the most highly instructed believer, as well as to the babe in grace, mercy to the most useful worker as much as to the weariest sufferer. Thank God that His mercy towards us is forever.

That mercy will always be "tender mercy," abiding mercy, and abounding mercy. His mercy is constant as the day, fresh as the hour, new every morning. Mercy covers all. In every gift of providence and in every way of predestination mercy may be seen. It would be greatly to our advantage to think more of the mercy of God to us. So much of His mercy comes and goes without our noticing it. Shame that the Lord should thus be deprived of the revenues of His praise!

In the Hebrew I find the word here used is "wheel tracks," such ruts as wagons make when they go down our green roads in wet weather and sink up to the axles. God's ways are at times like heavy wagon tracks, and they cut deep into our souls, yet they are all of them mercy. Whether our days trip along like the angels mounting on Jacob's ladder to heaven, or grind along like the wagons which Joseph sent for Jacob, they are in each case ordered in mercy. I stand by the happy memories of a tried

past, as in summer weather I walk down a green lane, and as I look at the deep ruts which God's providence made long ago, I see flowers of mercies growing in them. All the crushing and the crashing, was in goodness. Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life. Yes, "all the days of my life," the dark and cloudy, the stormy and the wintry, as surely as in "the days of heaven upon the earth." Brethren, we may sing a song of unmingled mercy. The paths of God have been to us nothing else but mercy. Mercy, mercy, mercy, "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever."

The Psalmist says, "All the paths of the Lord are mercy *and truth."* That is to say, God has always shown the truth of His word. He has never been false to His pledges. He has done according to His word. Moreover, the blessings which God has promised have always turned out to be as He represented them. We have followed no cunningly devised fables. The blessings of grace are not fancies or frenzies, exaggerations or mere sentiments. The Lord has never fallen short of His promise. He has never kept His word to the ear and broken it to the heart. All the ways of God have not only been merciful and true, but they have been essential "mercy and truth." We have had truth of mercy; verity of mercy; substantial, solid, essential mercy. I have found no delusion in trusting in God. I may have been a dreamer in some things, but when I have lived unto God I have then exercised the shrewdest common sense, and have walked after the rule of prudence. It is no vain thing to serve God, the vanity lies on the other side. I know that many of you think that Christian experience leans to the region of sentiment, if not of imagination, but indeed it is not so. The surest fact in a believer's life is God's nearness to him, care for him, love to him. Other things are shadows or shinings which come and go, but the goodness of God is the substance, the truth, the reality of life. How I wish I could persuade you of this! But, alas, the carnal mind will not receive spiritual things; I may bear witness of that which I taste and handle, but you will not believe me. Divine Spirit, come and open blinded eyes.

To this rule there is no exception—"*All* the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep His covenant." They say there is no rule without an exception, but there is an exception to that rule. All God's dealings with His people are gracious and faithful. Sometimes the ways of God are full of truth and mercy manifestly—they have been so to me in many a notable instance. I hope I do not trouble you too often with personal experiences. I do not narrate them out of egotism, but because it seems to me that every Christian should add his own personal testimony to the heap of evidence which proves the truth of our God. If I tell you about John Newton, you answer, "He is dead," but if I tell you of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, he stands before you. Some ten days ago I was called to bear a baptism of pain. I had a night of anguish, and the pangs ceased not in the morning. How gladly would I escape from these acute attacks, but it seems I may not hope it! I felt worn down and spent. Far on in the morning my ever-thoughtful secretary came by my bedside, and cheered me greatly by the news that the letters brought tidings of considerable help to the various enterprises; in fact, there was far more coming in than is at all usual at this season. A legacy was reported of £500 for the

Orphanage and £500 for the College. Another will was mentioned in which the Orphanage was made residuary legatee. Living friends had also sent large sums as by a kind of concert of liberality. They did not know that their poor friend was going to be very ill that morning, but their Lord knew, and He moved them to take away every care from His servant. It seemed to me as if my Lord said to me, "Now, you are not going to fret and worry while you are ill. You shall have no temptation to do so, for I will send you in so much help for all My work that you shall not dare to be cast down." Truly in this the paths of the Lord to me were mercy and truth. Many and many a time have I been lost in wonder at the Lord's mercy to His unworthy servant. I bow my head and bless the name of the Lord, and cry, "Why this to me?" Ah, brethren! One can bear rheumatism or gout when mercy flows in as a flood. "Shall we receive good at the hands of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?" Seeing it all comes from the same hand, we should receive it with equal cheerfulness. Now will I suffer with patience and endure with tranquility, for the Lord has dealt graciously and tenderly with His servant. I have often found His consolations abound in proportion to my tribulations, insomuch that I am on the look-out for the mercy when I begin to feel the smart, even as a child looks for the sweet when he finds himself called upon to take medicine. Those more closely around about me say, "Now that you have a bad time of personal suffering you will see the Lord doing wonderfully for you," and they are not disappointed. Indeed, I serve a good Master; I can speak well of Him at all times, and specially do I find Him kind when the weather is rough around His pilgrim child! Have you not found it so in your way? Come, dear friends, you cannot speak this morning, for one is enough for a public assembly, but you can speak when you have had your dinners, and your children are round about you. Tell them how gracious God has been to you in your times of trouble. Exceedingly utter the memory of His great goodness.

Mark you, when we cannot see it, the Lord is just as merciful in His ways to us. We may not expect to be indulged and pampered by being made to *see* the mercy of God, like silly children that will be in a pet and a fume unless their father stuffs their mouths with sweetmeats, and their hands with toys. God is as good when He denies as when He grants, and though we often *see* the marvelous tenderness of our God, it is not necessary that we should *see* it to make it true. Our God is wise as a father, and tender as a mother, and when we cannot comprehend His methods we still believe in His love. This is not credulity, but a confidence to which the Lord is fully entitled; there can be no doubt about it, that "all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep His covenant."

I hear some say, "These things do not happen to me. I find myself struggling alone, and full of sorrow." Do you keep the covenant? Some of you professing Christian people live anyhow and not by covenant rule. You do not live to God, you do not keep His covenant, you do not observe His testimonies, you are not living consecrated lives; therefore, if you do not enjoy His mercy and His truth, do not blame the Lord. The text says, that all His paths are mercy and truth "unto such as keep His covenant;" remember the character, and do not expect the blessing apart from it. O

child of God, be you more careful to keep the way of the Lord, more concentrated in heart in seeking His glory, and you shall see the loving-kindness and the tender mercy of the Lord to you. God bless this feeble testimony of mine to all who are assembled here this morning!

I have this much to add to it—What a bliss it is to have entered upon the spiritual life, and to be in covenant with God! If there were no mercy joined to it of a providential character, it would nevertheless be the grandest thing that ever could happen to any one of us to be living onto God. I call all short of this *death,* and I know no other name for it. What solidity we have in godliness! It puts eternal rock beneath our feet. There are fascinating things in life about which you are almost afraid to inquire, for fear they should not prove to be what they seem. All earthborn joys are of this kind; their charms are on the surface, their beauty is skin deep. But in regard to the life consecrated to God by covenant, and then enriched by His mercy, you may pry, and dig, and search, and the more you do so, the more will you be certified that now you are in the land of realities. Though we do not *see,* yet we perceive with a perception clearer than sight, and we shall so perceive through life, and when they fling back those golden gates, and we peer into the spirit land, then shall we value most of all the life which observes the covenant, and is surrounded with mercy and truth. What a wondrous thing the life of a consecrated man will seem to be when it shall be viewed in its completeness, in the light of the eternal throne! Then will the embroidery of love be seen in its beauty, and the fabric of life will be owned to be worthy of a God. Things not seen as yet will be seen then, and things known in part will be seen in all their bearings. I suppose that one of the engagements of heaven will be to observe how kindly our God has dealt with us upon the road. At any rate, when we come to the glory land we shall only reckon that to have been true life which was spent in communion with God. Link us with God, and we live; divide us from Him, and we are dead.

I hear worldlings mutter—"What is the man thinking? We know nothing and care nothing about being in covenant with God." Truly you despise the life I set before you, but it is your own way of life which most deserves scorn, O you who live for gain or pleasure! I will sketch you with the pencil of truth. It is a country scene, and it passed under my own eye but a few hours ago. I sat by the stream, at a point where abundant springs poured forth new streams. It was a brook, wide but shallow, and the pure water glided along refreshingly under the overhanging boughs. Little children were there wading into the stream, and enjoying its cool waters. One of them was a true representative of your wealthy merchants. He went fishing with a bright green glass bottle, and his ventures were successful. Again and again I heard his voice ring out most joyously and impressively, "Look! Look! Here! Here! Such a big 'un! I have caught such a big 'un!" It was by no means a whale which he had taken, but a fish which might be half-an-inch long. How he exulted! "Such a big 'un!" To him the affairs of nations were as nothing compared with the great spoil which he had taken. That is the gentleman upon the Exchange, who has made that successful speculation. For the next few days he will astonish everybody as they hear that it was "such a big 'un!" Earth, and heaven, and hell, time and eternity, may all accept the go-by now that

the glass bottle contains its prey. I confess I was not carried away with admiration for the child's fortune; neither did I envy him the fullness of his satisfaction.

His brother, not far off, varied my picture for me; he was less richly endowed, and yet he had a very serviceable tin can, with which he fished most diligently. Soon I heard his voice pitched in another key, "Nasty little things! They won't come here! I can't catch 'em! They're good for nothing! I won't try any more." Then the impetuous genius threw his tin can with a splash into the water, and his enterprise was ended. That is the gentleman whose company has been wound up, or whose goods will not command a market. Things will not come his way. He cannot get on. He has made a failure of it, and is in the *Gazette*. All society is out of order, or he would have been sure to succeed. He is sick of it all for the present. You smile at my boys! O worldlings, these are yourselves! You are those children, and your ambitions are their stickleback fish—

"O happy man that lives on high,
While men lie groveling here."

Without God you are paddling in the brooklet of life, fishing for minnows. If you get a grip of God, because He has laid hold on you, O man there is then a soul in you; then have you come to be allied with angels and akin to seraphim. Apart from God you subside into shameful littleness. O Lord Jesus pity those who forget You! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 25.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—116 (SONG 2), 664, 663.

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LESSONS FROM THE CHRIST OF PATMOS
NO. 1976

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 7, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And He had in His right hand seven stars: and out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and His countenance was as the sun shines in his strength." Revelation 1:16.

WE have carefully read John's description of the manner in which his Lord and Master revealed His glory to him. The figure is colossal, and I had almost said inconceivable. It would be quite impossible to draw a picture from the apostle's words. If any artist were to try to set it forth with His pencil, the figure would be singularly grotesque, and strangely unlike the idea which John intended to convey. How could anyone picture the voice like the noise of many waters? Or depict the feet as if they burned in a furnace? To make the portrait technically accurate would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, and the draftsman would surely lose the spiritual ideal in endeavoring to give it shape. The fact is, that the details of this celestial vision are deeply instructive, but there is no impression left upon the mind by it as a whole—I mean no impression which a man could translate to his fellow. Probably the seer of Patmos was himself unable to form an idea of what he saw; we know that he swooned at the amazing sight. He was utterly overwhelmed, and though he wrote under divine command he wrote of things beyond himself, and beyond all human minds.

The impression produced by one part of the vision inevitably obliterates that of other parts. Take, for instance, the expression, "His eyes are as a flame of fire." Can you get the idea? Then add to it the further one—"His countenance," which of course includes the eyes, "is as the sun shines in his strength." You lose the brightness of the flames of fire in the superior glory of the sun; the eyes disappear as separate objects when the full countenance is seen in its overwhelming glory.

The vision is spiritual, and you can take each point in detail and learn from it, but it presents to us no resemblance such as can be drawn upon canvas; it is, as a whole, beyond the grasp of imagination. John might almost have said, after all he had seen, "I saw no similitude," for, what he did see, albeit it was a gathering up of rich and rare similitudes, could not be made into a single image which could be represented to the eye, or to the mind. In this I greatly rejoice, for in it I perceive the prudence of the only wise God our Savior.

The tendency of the human mind is to idolatry. When we do not seek after another god we are still tempted to worship the true God under some visible, tangible form, and this is directly opposed to the divine will. The leaning of our evil heart is towards some form, symbol, or imagery

which we judge may help our thought and intensify our worship. All this comes of evil, and leads to evil. Remember the stern command of God, never to be altered, "You shall not make unto you any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: you shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me, and keep My commandments." God is a Spirit, therefore He is not to be imaged, and we are not to use anything as a help towards our conception of Him, for it will be a hindrance, not a help. That which can be seen or touched is to be kept out of our worship of the invisible God, for there is really nothing to which we can liken Him; the very attempt at making a likeness in reference to Him is profanity. I know the common excuse; that men do not worship the image, but that by its means they are helped to worship God, but this is exactly what the second commandment forbids. Carnal objects are not helps to spiritual worship; they are snares to the mind, and lead the heart away from God. I feel my soul horrified, and my blood boiling with indignation, when I see in what are called Protestant churches, not only a material altar, which is treated with honor, but upon it a cross to which idolatrous reverence is evidently paid by those who bow as they pass before it. It is very usual nowadays to see also the *Agnus Dei,* or a small figure of a lamb, and this, like the figure of a calf among the Israelites, is viewed with devotion. Why, we are not only going back to Popery, we are reverting to Paganism! I do not care what shape your image takes, whether it is a cross, a crucifix, or an *Angus Dei;* if it is anything to be seen or handled, it is strictly forbidden in the worship of God.

Had the portrait of our Lord been a suitable subject for reverence—and I can conceive of nothing for which greater claim can be put in—we should have had His likeness preserved to us by the special care of the good Spirit, who is ever mindful of the edification of saints, but we have neither painting nor statuary of any authority, nor, indeed, any which can be supposed to depict His matchless form. If this best of images is denied us, let us not tolerate the idols of human invention. The hammers of iconoclasts might find good work in breaking those images in pieces which now pollute our churches. Take these things hence; they are not becoming in the house of God; they do not help us towards spiritual worship, but they become grievous offenses to a jealous God, who counts such worship a spiritual adultery by which His own worship is defiled.

Do not imagine that the Jews in the wilderness, when they made what Moses calls a calf, really intended to pay divine honors to the image of a bull. They had learned in Egypt that the bull was the most venerable of all symbols of Deity; it is the embodiment of strength, and therefore it appeared fit to represent the power of God. They said in effect—"We will adore the unseen power of God under the image of the useful and powerful ox," so they made an image of an ox out of their most precious things, and said, "These are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up out of Egypt." Moses did not treat this ritualism with respect, but with indignation. He calls the ox a calf, for it was newly born, and but little in stature.

He called it in grim ridicule "a calf," and therein he set us an example, for objects of idolatrous worship should be treated by us with scorn, lest in any degree we partake in the crime of idolatry. We must keep ourselves from idols. When the Philistines called their god the God of Flies, the Jews ridiculed him as the God of Dung, thus showing their abhorrence of the imaginary deity. I do not blame our Reforming and Puritan fathers that they used names of ridicule and contempt for those things which Romanism has degraded into idols, for even the most sacred things lose all sacredness when elevated into objects of adoration, whatever may be the motive which leads to so great a crime. I may admire the sincerity which kisses the wounds of the crucifix, but I must none the less abhor the idolatry of the deed, and feel a horror of the image. Did not Hezekiah break in pieces even the bronze serpent when it became an object of worship? He called it Nehushtan, that is, a mere bit of brass. If ever there was a piece of brass which deserved religious regard from men it was that bronze serpent, by which so many had been healed. When used aright it was God's channel of blessing, but when idolized it was broken in pieces as so much old metal. I feel glad, therefore, that even when the Lord Christ revealed Himself so specially to the mind of John it was in a spiritual and symbolic manner, and the wonderful similitudes used were of such a character that it is not possible to construct from them a figure which could be set up for purposes of worship.

My brethren, though we pay no homage to an outward and visible revelation, yet to Him who thus revealed Himself we ascribe all honor, and glory, and majesty, and power, and dominion, forever and ever. Unto Him whom as yet our eyes cannot see, unto Him who dwells in light unapproachable, very God of very God, even Christ Jesus our Savior, we pay the homage of our full and grateful hearts, not only now, but world without end.

Having thus removed your minds from any gross and carnal notion that our Lord is *actually* what this vision describes, I beg you to note that the spiritual teaching is all the more to be sought out and treasured up. I invite you to consider three of those similitudes by which the Lord Christ is set before us in this divine Revelation. They stand in very significant relationship the one to the other. "He had in His right hand seven stars: and out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and His countenance was as the sun shines in his strength." These are not only in one verse by the will of the translators, but they were intimately connected in the mind of John, and were intended to come to us together, blended and united.

I. Learn from the first sentence THE POSITION OF INSTRUMENTALITY IN REFERENCE TO OUR LORD JESUS—"He had in His right hand seven stars." The stars are said to be the angels, or messengers, or, as many conceive, the ministers whom God used as messengers to the churches, and from the churches to the outlying world. The word may mean the entire instructive and enlightening gift of the church, whether found in one person or in many. God has ordained that there shall be men anointed of His Spirit, who shall, beyond others, be the means of conversion and edification, and these are as stars in the sky of the church.

Note well, that *instrumentality is of temporary use, and is intended for the time of darkness*. Churches themselves are "golden candlesticks," and candlesticks answer their purpose best at night. When the sun is up, and the full day has come, do we need lamps? No, the church militant has her reason for existence upon earth in the fact of the surrounding darkness. The ministers of the gospel, what are they? Necessary to Christ? By no means, for the sun does not need the stars. They are necessary to the present darkness, with which they are to struggle as burning and shining lights until the Lord Himself shall shine forth in His glory. The Lord will use instruments till He Himself appears, but even those whom He calls "stars" are only the transient apparatus of a passing night.

This should make us think very humbly of ourselves, for, dear brethren, *this illustrates our weakness*. Were we lights of the first magnitude, the darkness would no longer remain. O stars! You by whom God shines! O stars! With your sparkling and far-reaching light, making glad the eyes of the benighted! What poor things you are, after all! For with all your shining it still remains night. Lamps of God though you are, you do but relieve the gloom which you cannot remove. If ministers were all they might be, there would soon be an end of them, but the fact of their continued necessity proves their weakness. O you that serve God best, remember that if you served Him better, the day would soon come when no man would say to his fellow, "Know the Lord," for they all should know Him, from the least to the greatest. Consider, then, that instrumentality at its best, when used in blessed unity, as a church, is no more than a lamp, or candle, and what can this do as compared with our Lord, who shines as the sun? Instrumentality, when specially selected, enlightened, and upheld, is but as a star, and what can a star do? Yes, what can the whole host of stars do, towards turning night into day? This is a good beginning for our consideration of instrumentality, since we are apt to grow proud, and this may teach us lowliness. Whatever honor God may be pleased to put upon His servants by calling them stars, it is evident that they are only needed because it is night, and that they are far too feeble to cope with that night, and turn its darkness into light.

Still, *instrumentality is honorably spoken of* by Him whose judgment is supremely wise. The Lord Jesus does not despise the agency which He employs. Those whose testimony He blesses for the salvation of men are compared to stars.

Stars are *guides,* and so are the Lord's true ministers. Some stars in yonder sky have done measureless service to wanderers over the trackless deep, and to those who have lost themselves in the labyrinths of the forest. That polestar has conducted many a slave to liberty. Happy have been the influences of the stars upon the hopeless who, being lost, have laid themselves down to die! Blessed are those men who, shining with the light of God, have turned many to righteousness; shall they not shine as the stars forever and ever? Are there not preachers of the word who have stood like that famous star "over the place where the young child was"? They have first led strangers to Jesus, and then have remained in faithful love shining over the place where the Lord abides. We preach Christ crucified; God forbid that we should preach anything else! We

point to Jesus, saying ever, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." Ours is, indeed, an honorable office, to guide wandering feet into the way of peace. Honored is the least in all our ministry if he may do this.

A certain star, the morning star, is also the *herald* of the day. All eyes are glad to see the morning star, because they know that the sun is ever near it. Happy messenger of God who has the sound of His Master's feet behind him! There have been men, and thank God there are such still, through whom God shines with rich promise of eternal day; their ministry heralds the coming of Christ to the heart. They preach so clearly of Him, that He is set forth evidently crucified in our assemblies. They hide themselves in their Lord. They have nothing to lift up but Christ, they bring nothing before men's minds but Christ, their one sole theme is Christ in His first coming cleansing His people from their sins, and Christ in His second coming bringing them home to His glory. Of such men it may be said, "He made the stars also," for those are God-made ministers, whose whole witness is for the glory of Christ Jesus.

It is an honorable comparison that the instruments of God's good pleasure have put upon them in being compared to stars, for the stars are the *comfort* and solace of the night. Well do men sing, "Beautiful star," for, amid the surrounding gloom, the twinkling light is a thing of beauty and a joy forever. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that brings glad tidings!" We do not rightly value the considerable amount of light which comes to the earth through the stars, but were they quite removed, we should soon find the thick darkness of night to be greatly intensified; it might even become like the darkness of Egypt that might be felt. In the same way we are apt to undervalue regular ministries which do not amaze us by any uncommon brilliance. We could not afford to lose these stars, however feeble their light. Let us thank God for the many ministries, gentle and obscure, which, nevertheless, keep the dense darkness from being utterly impenetrable. Despise not prophesyings. Thank God for all the agencies by which He works. He compares His faithful servants to stars; be sure that you think them heavenly bodies, bearing celestial light, shining from above. They are not as small as some think them, and they are not forgotten of Him who calls them all by their names, and leads them out.

Instrumentality is honorably placed, for we see the stars in the right hand of Him who is the First and the Last. God's ministers are stars; but not stars up yonder in the sky; they are stars held in the right hand of their great Lord. Oh, what a position is this! God's true servants are in the highest place! His right hand made them. None can make stars but the Maker of all things. It is God who makes ministers of Christ, and gives them light with which to shine. Because of this they are honorable in His esteem, and He places them in His right hand. Whatever some may think of faithful preachers, the Lord makes them the men of His right hand. They may be despised by those who oppose the Word, but they need not be ashamed, for while the right hand of God is their position, they are more honorable than the princes and kings of the earth. Dear servants of God, who are serving your Lord in great obscurity, twinkling feebly, and thinking that no one notices you, receiving no hon-

or from men, never mind, for if the Lord God has given you light, you are precious in His esteem, and He sets you not only *at* His right hand, but *in* it. You are where seraphim might wish to be.

See, also, how *true instrumentality is graciously sustained*. The chosen servants of the Lord are under special protection, for they shine in Christ's right hand. This is where the ministers of Christ need to be, for they stand in the front of the battle, and are in double danger. Their office has its temptations, and even their success has its perils. If you win souls for God, the devil will have a grudge against you. If you preach the word with power, all the hosts of evil will sharpen their arrows, and point their shafts at you. The stars of the churches have need to be in Christ's hand, for all the fiends of hell will puff at them. If they could make a star fall, how greatly would they rejoice! Glory be to Him who keeps them all. "For that He is strong in power; not one fails."

Our Lord Jesus holds the seven stars in His right hand. Does not this teach us the entire dependence of each one of us upon Him? Other stars may shine in their own natural spheres, but Christ's stars can only shine as He, by the constant outgoing of His strength, holds them up, holds them out, and holds them fast. They would cease to be stars if they were not in the Lord's hand. O my friends, who are working for the Lord in church, or mission hall, or Sunday school, place no reliance upon yourselves! Do not let your confidence lean upon your own natural abilities, or acquired knowledge, or garnered experience; let your dependence be alone upon that right hand which holds you up. The hand of the glorified Savior is worth depending upon. Behold an arm that never can be paralyzed, a hand that can never grow weary. Rely not on yourself in any measure or degree, but only upon that right hand of power and skill which will hold you up even to the end.

See, then, beloved, the special security of true instrumentality, for who can extinguish a star whose sphere is the right hand of God? I see the devil puffing against these stars until his cheeks are fit to burst, but he does not even make them flicker; what can harm those whom Jesus keeps? You know how some fine preachers have gone out in darkness, smoldering like candlewicks, filling the whole chamber of the church with a nauseous smell, and if professed ministers become unholy or untruthful, their end is sad for themselves and mischievous for all who are around them. May God save His church from the smoking flax of dying ministries. Blessed are they who, trusting in God, shine and shine on in His keeping. "Yes, they shall be held up." Did He not ordain for them a lamp which shall never be extinguished? Has He not put them where they must be safe?

Instrumentality of the right kind is wisely directed, for it is in the Lord's hand. This generation, like children playing in the marketplace, is not content with the moods and ways of the Lord's servants, but wisdom is justified of her children. The Lord sends by whom He will send. In wisdom and prudence He both kindles His stars and removes them, He arranges their places and their magnitude, their rising and their setting. "All His saints are in Your hand," O Lord Christ, but specially those through whom You speak with men! As the judges in Israel came and

went at the bidding of infinite wisdom, even so is it among the chosen ministers of the Lord Jesus.

Perhaps you think I am making too much of this subject, but I have no such desire. My design is very practical. The churches should pray that their risen Lord would give them more stars, and that He would uphold the stars that are already given, for there is unquestionably a very close connection between the prosperity of the churches and these stars. Whether it should be so or not is not the question, but the fact is unquestionable—very much depends upon the minister. If you have a warm-hearted, loving, zealous preacher of the gospel, you find before long earnest, hearty, godly, working people gathered about him, but where there is death in the minister—coldness, lukewarmness, want of zeal, and want of holiness, what do you see? Do not the pews reflect the dreary condition of the pulpit? Is it not so, that like shepherd like sheep? We act and react upon each other! Brethren, pray for us. It is my solemn conviction that one great need of the church at the present time is a more faithful ministry. We need fewer fireworks and more stars. One man whom God has given is worth a thousand that a college has made. When God takes a man and says, "Go and preach in the power with which I have endowed you," that man will accomplish what a host of learned and well-trained men would not dare to attempt. Why have we not more mighty preachers of the word? Because we do not pray for them. Some of our ministers are half afraid that such men should come, for fear they should find themselves outshone. What better gifts can Christ give the church with His own right hand than pastors and evangelists? The church will never make any great advance until once more God sends here and there, and in fifty places, men with burning hearts and with trumpet voices to proclaim the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. We need men that will not yield to the current of the times, nor care one jot about it, but will hold their own and hold their Master's Word against all comers, because the Lord of Hosts is with them, and the Spirit of God rests upon them. I would have you at this time realize the Christ with the seven stars in His hand, and I would have you pray, "Lord, fill Your hand with stars again. Light up the darkness of this period with flaming preachers of Your word to the praise of the glory of your grace." So much about the position of instrumentality; follow me now to kindred themes.

II. And now, in the second place, I want you to notice with great care THE PLACE OF REAL POWER. Note, the second of the three sentences—"And out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword." The sword-power, the war-strength of the church, does not lie in her ministers. The battle and the victory are not with them, but with their Lord. I have put them in their proper place; I have told you that they are stars, and I have reminded you of their usefulness; but the next symbol prevents your regarding them as forces to be relied on. We read, "Out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword." Not out of the stars, but out of our Lord's mouth goes the strength which wins the day!

The true power of the church lies in Christ personally. You may have all the stars that ever made bright the Milky Way with their combined sheen, but there is no power in them to kill evil, or conquer sin. The

stars of the church shine because God makes them shine. Their shining is not their own, it is borrowed light with which they are radiant. But the power that overcomes evil, wounds the hard heart, pierces the conscience and kills reigning sin, is of the Lord alone. "Out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword." Glory not, therefore, in men, for power belongs unto God. Boast not in the talent nor in the experience of the man of God, for he can neither kill nor make alive. The power of a church is the presence of her Lord. He has not deposited power in men, He retains it in Himself, and from Himself we must seek it. Behold the infinite resources of the church; all power is in Jesus, and Jesus is with His people.

The power lies in Christ's Word, "Out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword." Beloved, the power that wins souls is the word of God, not my explanation of it, nor yours; not my amplification of it, nor yours; not my illustration of it, nor yours. The power is not in the stars, but in the word which made the stars. God's word is the source of all things. Therefore reckon that every sermon is a wasted sermon which is not Christ's word; believe that all theology is rotten rubbish which is not the word of the Lord. Do not be satisfied with going to a place of worship and hearing an eloquent discourse, unless the sum and substance of it is the word of the Lord. My brothers and sisters, whether you teach children or their parents, do not think you have done any good unless you have taught the word of the Lord. For saving purposes we must have the Lord's word, and nothing else. It is not your word, O you most devoted soul-winners; it is not your word, O you most impassioned evangelists; it is not your word, O you most plaintive persuaders; it is the word of the Lord, and that alone, which will abide, and subdue all things to itself. The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon; we can do all things with it, we can do nothing without it.

And notice again, that it is not only His word, but *it is His word as He Himself speaks it.* Does Christ then still speak the word in the church? Yes! It is not the truth in the Bible alone which saves, it is that truth taken by the Holy Spirit, and vivified and laid home to the heart. It is not the letter of the word which Jesus spoke eighteen hundred years ago which works wonders, but it is that same word as He now delivers it into our ear and heart by His own living, loving, heart-subduing voice. *I* may speak Christ's words in vain, but *He* speaks to purpose. The sword in Peter's hand cuts off an ear, but the sword in Christ's mouth slays sin and subdues men to Himself. You have heard a sermon full of precious truth, and yet it has done you no good; at another time you have heard the same truth, and it has overwhelmed you by its hallowed power. What was this difference? Is it not that in one case it was God's word out of the preacher's mouth, and in the other case it was God's word out of His own mouth? Yes, every word is a keen sword to slay sin when Jesus speaks it. My soul melts in repentance when my Beloved speaks to me. Nothing can stand against the word of Jesus; He speaks, and it is done! O my brethren, I have no faith in my own preaching, but I have all faith in my Lord's speaking. His word shall not return unto Him void. Out of His mouth no syllable shall come in vain. I charge you, look away from us,

the twinkling stars, to our Lord, whose month is the conquering force of His church.

The word is in itself adapted to the divine end, for it is sharp and two-edged, and when it is spoken by the Lord, its adaptation is seen. The gospel is very sharp when the Spirit of God lays it home. No doctrine of men has such piercing power. Take care, O preacher, that you do not blunt the word, or try to cover over its edge, for that would be treason to the Lord who made it to be sharp and cutting. There is much about the true gospel which offends, and it should be our desire never to tamper with it, or to tone it down, lest we become enemies to the Lord's truth. Truth which is meant to offend human pride must be stated in its own way, even though seen to produce anger, and annoy self-righteousness. Doctrine which is cutting and killing must not be concealed or softened down. "He that has My word, let him speak my word faithfully, says the Lord." People are disturbed and troubled by the real gospel; under a false gospel they can sleep into destruction. Bring out the sword, it is made to wound, let it exercise its salutary sharpness. The gospel has two edges, so that none may play with it. When they think to run their fingers along the back of it they will find themselves cut to the bone. Whether we regard its threats or its promises, it cuts at sin. Whether we move it up or down, it makes great gashes in that which ought to be wounded and killed. Let us, therefore, know that the power of the church does not lie anywhere but in the word as Jesus Himself speaks it. Let us keep to His own pure, unadulterated, unblunted word, and let us pray Him to send it forth with power out of His own mouth into the hearts and consciences of men.

III. May the Holy Spirit fasten this on your memories! I must now conduct you to the third point, which is a very wonderful matter—THE SOURCE OF TRUE GLORY. The source of true glory in a church lies in her enjoying the countenance of her Lord. "His countenance was as the sun shines in his strength." When Jesus is pleased with the church, she enjoys noonday prosperity.

Brethren, endeavor to realize the idea of Christ's countenance shining as the sun. Let me then remind you of our former themes. Where are the seven stars? They are still in His hand, but I defy you to see them, for when the sun is once up, where are the stars? Ah, dear young people! When you first hear a minister preach with divine power he is everything to you; God enables him to bring light to your darkness, and for a season you rejoice in his light. When you get further on in the road, and come to see the Lord Jesus Christ Himself in the divine glory of His blessed person, then you will not glory either in Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, but you will glory in Jesus only. The stars are twinkling still, but you cannot observe them when the sun shines in noontide splendor, and so the human instrument is as useful as ever, but when Christ Himself is fully seen, the instrument takes a place far lower down. We are grateful for the stars, they have had blessed uses for our good, but we cannot mention them in the same day with the sun. Now that we have seen the Lord, we value His servants none the less, but still they are servants, and only servants, and He is Lord of all. An hour of Jesus is better than a year of

all the apostles. Personal communion with Jesus is far more powerful for our good than the best preaching in the world.

If you catch the idea of our Lord's countenance being "as the sun shines in his strength," let me ask you where is the sharp two-edged sword which came forth out of His mouth? You have not forgotten it, but at the same time it would be hard to discern it upon the face of the sun. When we enjoy Christ Himself, we do not think the less of His word, but it seems to be absorbed in Himself. He Himself becomes to us the *Logos,* the word. Even the gospel itself, glorious as it is, bears no other glory than that which we behold in the face of Jesus Christ. This is the glory which excels. This is the glory before which dispensations, and economies, and systems of truth appear to be mere reflections of that which is embodied and epitomized in Him. To see the face of our Lord and enjoy His love is to stand, like Milton's angel, in the sun.

I must hurry over places where I am tempted to linger. *To the saints the glory of Christ lies in Himself;* His own countenance is the center of glory. Consider the work which He has finished, and the reward with which His Father has glorified Him. Consider His divine nature, and the perfect manhood which He has taken into union with it. Consider all His infinite perfections, but especially His love, His boundless, changeless love to His people. This is the sun which makes our day, and fills us all with joy and gladness. What do we want more than His loving favor? I would to God that we were henceforth shut up to His praises, and were bound henceforth to see no beauties but those of our Lord. To think that He should love you, that He should so love you as to die for you, and that having died for you He should go up unto the Father for you, and fill all things for you, and reign in everlasting splendor for you; why, all this is a surpassing glory of love! If you once know that His countenance is towards you, then will you see such a glory in His grace and favor as you have never before imagined. Once behold the splendor of the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord, and you will henceforth need neither candle nor star, for the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus will be as seven suns to you.

Notice that *the favor of Christ, if it is enjoyed by a church, is effectual for all purposes*. Why do we crave for stars when the sun shines? In the absence of human instrumentality, the Lord Jesus will more than suffice. Even for those purposes for which the sword goes out of His mouth the Lord's countenance is enough. A sunstroke is as effectual for overcoming as the stroke of a sword. Let Christ shine in the church, and He will destroy His enemies with the brightness of His glory. Let Him shine in the church, and you will have all the warmth, and all the joy, and all the delight, that a church can desire. Let Him shine in the church, and you will have all the life, and all the growth, and all the sweetness, and all the mellowness, and all the perfectness, that even the garden of the Lord can yield. If our Lord is with us, delighting Himself in us, and countenancing our endeavors, we shall, as a church, prosper better than if we had the endowments of the State, the approbation of the wise, and the patronage of the great. To make the church of God the grandest instrumentality conceivable, all that is needed is, that she shall please her Lord in all things, and therefore shall walk in the light of His countenance. "Lord,

lift you up the light of Your countenance upon us." "Cause Your face to shine, and we shall be saved." "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Your countenance." What a light it is! In the sun's beams we find the most needful and indispensable gifts, and in our Lord Jesus we find all things for time and for eternity. When the Sun of Righteousness arises, He brings healing in His wings. Then we are made strong, so that we go forth and grow up like calves of the stall. Let the Lord show us His face, and we have reached the height of our desires.

Yet note well that the brightness of our Lord cannot be measured; *neither could His glory be endured of mortal men* if once it were fully revealed. "His countenance was as the sun shines in his strength." John therefore could not gaze upon that countenance, but fell at His Lord's feet as dead. It would be a dangerous thing for you to stand still and attempt to gaze upon the sun. To turn a telescope full upon the sun, and place your eye to the glass, would be the extreme of folly. Our eye must be shielded, or it cannot look on the sun. And beloved, if the Lord Jesus were to manifest Himself to us as He really is, in all His unveiled majesty, we should die with excess of joy. If He were to turn the whole stream of His love into our hearts, our frail bodies would be unable to bear the blissful excitement which would follow upon such a heavenly discovery. You do know something of Him, and you are pining to know more, and well you may, for your life lies that way, but still, He must always be the best judge of how much He shall reveal, for "He knows our frame, He remembers that we are dust." He holds Himself in reserve until we are prepared to receive the amazing bliss of His glorious manifestation. Perhaps even in eternity He will have to hide Himself somewhat, for there is in Him such greatness that our littleness would fail before Him were His glory all revealed. Oh, cry to Him to show Himself to you, but still do not marvel if He answers you, "You cannot see My face and live." That holy man, Mr. Walsh, when the Lord revealed Himself to him, was obliged to cry, "Hold, Lord! Remember I am but an earthen vessel, and if I have more of this delight I must die." One said he would like to die of that disease, and I am very much of his mind. They say, "See Naples and die." But to improve on it, another said, "See Naples and live," and truly this is the better sight of the two. I would gladly see my Lord so as to live to His praise. Oh, for such a vision as should shape my life, my thought, my whole being, till I became like my Lord! Oh, to see Him so as to be changed into His image from glory unto glory! Perhaps some of us may even die in this sweet fashion, by the Lord's letting in of His glory upon our souls in such a torrent that we shall be washed away into the bottomless sea of infinite delight. He may be pleased to pull up the sluice gates, and let the sea of glory in upon the marshy places of our dying hours. The little river of our life goes rippling down towards the sea, and in our closing hour its stream runs low; just then the tide from the shoreless sea comes up the river to meet the stream, and then the riverbed is filled by the fullness of the ocean. You shall realize that parable when heart and flesh are failing, and the Lord comes in to be your portion forever.

Yet once again, brethren, if Christ's face is so bright, then *we know where to trace all the light and all the glory that we have ever seen or known*. Is there any beauty in the landscape? It is the sun that makes it beautiful. Is there any brightness in any object round about us? It is the sun that makes it bright. If it were dark, you would behold no scenery, and observe no beauty. Darkness is the grave of beauty, and the absence of Jesus would be the end of all human virtue. Is there any sweetness, excellence, holiness, goodness, grace, about anything on earth? It comes from Jesus only. Attribute it to Him, then, and bless His name.

Rejoice also, you that behold His face, and live in communion with Him, for *your faces, also, will shine*. You may look at yonder seven stars very long before you are made to reflect their light, but, dear friends, if you see Jesus, and abide in the light of His countenance habitually, your faces, your characters, your lives, will grow resplendent, even without your knowing it. We read that Moses knew not that his face shone; all saw it but himself. The sons of men will wonder where you have been to have gathered such brightness. I know some few men and women who seem to carry about with them the fragrance of the ivory palaces; there is a perfume about their words, their actions, and their very selves. All nostrils do not enjoy the aroma of holiness, but the heart of the spiritual man is refreshed thereby. One cries, "From where came this perfume? Oh, that I had it! Oh, that such fragrance was shed abroad in my life!" I have heard that in the old times, when they would attract doves to a certain pigeon house, they took certain birds and smeared their wings with a costly perfume, and sent them forth. Other pigeons were so delighted with their sweetness that they followed them to the dovecotes. Oh, that you and I may be so sweetened by dwelling near to Christ that others may come with us to see Jesus and His love! At any rate, may we so look on the Well-beloved that our own faces may shine, and others beholding our brightness shall glorify our Father which is in heaven!

God bless you, beloved. I wish we were in a better frame of mind for hearing and preaching. Truly this great heat and my own painful infirmity remind me of our Lord's words, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Nevertheless, may our Lord reveal Himself to us according to the greatness of His compassion. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—REVELATION 1.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—417, 337.

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THE BLIND BEGGAR OF THE TEMPLE, AND HIS WONDERFUL CURE
NO. 1977

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 14, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. When He had thus spoken, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the Pool of Siloam (which is by interpretation, Sent). He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing."
John 9:5-7.

OUR Savior had been dealing with the Jews and the Pharisees, who had bitterly opposed, and even taken up stones to cast at Him. He felt much more at home when He could fix His eyes upon poor necessitous beings, and bless them with healing and salvation. It is the lot of some of us to be often in controversy with the carnal professors of the present day, and it is a great relief to us to get away from them and their stones, and find out individual sinners, and preach to them in the name of God the gospel, which spiritually opens the eyes of the blind.

At the gate of the Temple sat a blind beggar, who must have been a notable character, for he was possessed of remarkable shrewdness and mother wit. From having long been there he must have been well known to all who regularly frequented the temple, and to the wider circle of those who came from far to the great yearly gatherings. This man could not see Jesus, but, what was better, Jesus could see him; and we read in the opening of the chapter, "As Jesus passed by, He saw a man which was blind from his birth." Many other blind men there were in Israel, but Jesus saw this man with a special eye. I think I see the Savior standing still, and looking at him, taking stock of him, listening to his quaint speeches, noting what kind of man he is, and exhibiting special interest in him. This morning there is one in the Tabernacle who cannot see Jesus, for he has no spiritual eyes, but I am convinced that my Master is now looking at him, searching him from head to foot, and reading him with discerning eye. He is considering what He will make of him by and by, for He has the great and gracious intent that He will take this sinner, who is spiritually like the blind beggar, and enlighten him, and give him to behold His glory. I suppose that the blind beggar of the temple hardly valued sight, for he had been blind from his birth. Those who have seen must greatly miss the light of day, but those who have never possessed sight at all can hardly have an idea of what that sense must be, and therefore it cannot be so great a deprivation to them. The person I am searching for at this time has no idea of the joy of true religion, for he has no sense of spiritual life and light; he has never seen as yet, and

therefore he does not know his own misery in being blind. He has been blind from birth, and in all probability he is content to be so, for he does not know the delight which waits upon heaven-illumined eye. Spiritual things to him are an unknown region, of which he has no conception. He is here at this time, yet he is not looking for salvation, nor desiring it, but Jesus knows the value of sight, He knows the glories which heavenly light would bring home to the mind, and He will not be narrowed in His action by human ignorance, but will dispense His bounty according to His own mind, which is large as the boundless sea.

This beggar did not pray for sight, at least, it is not recorded that he did so. He was a beggar, it was his trade to beg, but among all his petitions he did not ask for sight. Yet Jesus gave him sight. Know you not that glorious declaration of free grace, "I am found of them that sought me not"? Is it not a wonderful thing that Jesus does often come to those who sought not for Him? He comes all of a sudden to them in the sovereignty of His infinite compassion, and before they have begun to pray for the blessing, He has bestowed it upon them. His free love precedes their desires for it. When they wake up to a consciousness of the value of salvation they find themselves in possession of it, and so their first prayers are mingled with praises. I am persuaded that there are some before me now who are like the man born blind; they do not know what they want, they are not yet aware of the value of the blessing, and consequently they have not sought it, but today they are going to receive it.

There was this circumstance in favor of the blind beggar that he was in the way where Jesus was likely to go, for he was at the temple gate. My friend, you too are on hopeful ground at this time, for you are found in the place where my Lord has often been, and where He is very likely to come again. We have prayed Him into this house hundreds of times, and we have done so this morning. He has been glorified in this Tabernacle, and His friends have so welcomed Him, that here He delights to come. Oh that, as Jesus passes by, He may stand still, and look on you with eyes of infinite mercy!

What was our Lord doing? Truth to tell, He was under a divine compulsion; He said, "I must work the works of Him that sent Me." He was looking out for material to work upon—material in which the works of God should be made manifest. Here was the very man, prepared for Christ as clay is prepared for the modeler. Let him receive his sight, and all Jerusalem would see the work of the Lord, and even dwellers in far-off lands would hear of it. This blind beggar was the very person the Savior was looking for. My Master walks up and down these aisles, and He finds a great many who can see, or who think they can. These He passes by, for "the whole need not a physician." But as He goes along He comes at last to a poor dark creature, hopelessly, helplessly blind from his birth, and He stops and says, "This is the man; there is room for a miracle here." It is even so, O Lord. In those empty sockets, or in those withered eyeballs, there is space for healing power to exhibit itself; in that hard heart and stubborn will there is room for renewing grace. The necessities of the sinner are the opportunities of the Savior, and you, poor, guilty, lost, and ruined sinner, you are the raw material for Christ's grace to work upon; you are the very man His forgiving love is looking for.

You who cannot see spiritual things, you who scarcely know what heavenly sight can mean, and hardly have a desire to know, you are the very person in whom there is elbow room for omnipotent grace, space and scope for the matchless skill of our Savior's love. My Lord stops and looks at you. "This will do," He says, "This is the kind of man I want; here I can work out My mission and life-purpose. I am the light of the world, and with this darkness I will deal, removing it at once." O Lord Jesus, You are in the highest heaven now, and yet You hear Your servants' prayers from this poor earth. Come into this tabernacle, and repeat the wonders of Your love! We do not ask You to open the natural eyes of the blind, but we ask You to give spiritual sight to the inly blind, understanding to the erring, and salvation to the lost. Prove Yourself to be the Son of the Highest by saying, "Let there be light." These poor blind ones do not pray to You, but *we* ask grace for them, and surely Your own heart prompts You to answer us. Come at this hour and bless them, to the praise of the glory of Your grace!

This case of the blind beggar is eminently instructive; and therefore, let us get at it at once, in the hope that while we are considering the model case, we may see it repeated in spiritual form in our midst. Holy Spirit, bless our discourse to that end.

I. First, in this man's healing, and in the salvation of every chosen soul, we shall see THE GREAT HEALER CONSPICUOUS. If any one among us shall ever be saved, the Savior will be made great thereby. If we are pardoned we shall not be honored by the forgiveness, but the royal hand which signed and sealed the pardon shall be greatly extolled. If our eyes are opened, we shall not be made famous for sight, but He that opened our eyes will be made illustrious by the cure. It was thus in this case, and rightly so.

To begin with, in this man's mind, as soon as ever he received sight, *"a man that was named Jesus" came to the forefront*. Jesus was to him the most important person in existence. All that he knew of Him at first was, that He was a man that was named Jesus, and under that character Jesus filled the whole horizon of his vision. He was more to him than those learned Pharisees, or than all his neighbors put together. Jesus was exceeding great, for He had opened his eyes. By and by, fixing his mind upon that figure, he saw more in it, and he declared, "He is a prophet." He boldly said this when he was running great risks by doing so. To their faces he told the carping Pharisees "He is a prophet." A little further on he came to this, that he believed Him to be the Son of God, and worshipped Him. Now, my dear friend, if you are saved by Jesus, your star must set, but the star of Jesus must rise and increase in brilliance till it becomes no more a star, but a sun, making your day, and flooding your whole soul with light. If we are saved, Christ Jesus must and will have the glory of it. None on earth or in heaven can rival Jesus in the esteem of souls brought from darkness to light; He is everybody to them. Do you dislike this? Do you want a share of the spoils, a fragment of the glory? Go your way and be blind, for your condition can never be altered while you refuse to honor the Savior. He that opens a man's eyes deserves grateful praises forevermore.

After this man had received sight *his testimony was all of Jesu*s. It was Jesus that spat, it was Jesus that made the clay, it was Jesus that anointed his eyes. So will it be in your mind with the gospel of your salvation; it will be "Jesus only." It is Jesus who became the surety of the covenant, Jesus who became the atoning sacrifice. Jesus is the Priest, the Interposer, the Mediator, and the Redeemer. We know Jesus as Alpha, and Jesus as Omega. He is the first, and He is the last. In your salvation there will be no mistake about it, and no mixture in it; you will have nothing to say about man, or man's merit, or man's will, but on the head which once was wounded with the thorns, you will put all your crowns. Jesus did it, did it all, and He must be praised.

It is to be noted that *the authority of Jesus issued the saving command*. "Go, wash." These were not the words of Peter, or James, or John, but the words of Jesus, and therefore the man obeyed them. The gospel message, "Believe and live," is not obeyed till you perceive that it is proclaimed by the supreme authority of King Jesus, the Savior. O sirs, He that bids you believe is that same Lord who can and will give you healing through your obedience to His command. Trust because He bids you. The warrant of the gospel is the authority of Christ. Obey His command, and you have obtained His salvation. The success of the gospel command is produced by Him that spoke it. It is effectual because it comes forth from His mouth. "Where the word of a king is, there is power," and the gospel is the word of the great King, and therefore those who listen to it find it to be the power of God unto salvation.

This man, when he had received sight, attributed it most distinctly and undividedly to Jesus. He said expressly, "He has opened my eyes." Whenever he delivered his testimony, whether to his neighbors or to the Pharisees, there was no uncertain sound about it; he had been enlightened by Jesus, and by Jesus alone, and to Him he gave all the glory, and he was right in doing so.

Come, then, lend me your ears. Oh, you who would find light this morning, give me your thoughts at this moment! Endeavor to realize that Jesus Christ is a living and acting person. He is not dead; He has risen long ago. Being alive, and exalted to the highest heavens, He is clothed with infinite power and majesty, and is mighty to save. In a spiritual way, He is among us still, working according to His gracious nature. To us He is not an absent Christ, nor a sleeping Christ, but He is doing still what He did when He was on earth, only He now works in the spiritual as once He worked in the physical world. He is now present to save, present to open the eyes of the spiritually blind, present to bless you to whom I speak.

Understand that He is looking upon you at this moment. Standing in front of you, His shadow is now falling upon you. He is considering your case. Are you praying? He is hearing. Has it scarcely got so far as a prayer? Is it but a desire? He is reading that desire; as it passes like a shadow across the camera of your soul He is thinking upon you. At this moment He is able to say the word that shall take the film from your eyes, and let in the everlasting light of grace. Do you believe this? If so, then cry to Him—"Lord, grant me to receive my sight." He will hear you. Perhaps while I am speaking He will send the light. To your intense delight

you shall find yourself in a new world. Escaping from darkness, you shall enter into His marvelous light.

Realize, further, that the great change that you need in order to salvation is beyond all mortal power. You cannot effect it yourself, nor can all "the help of men and angels joined" effect it for you. It is even beyond your own conception. As a carnal man, you do not know what spiritual things are, and you cannot fashion an idea of them. A dead man cannot know what life is. Truly, if he could live again, he would have some knowledge of life derived from his former life, but as to you, it would be all novel and strange, for you have never lived unto God. You cannot conceive what heavenly sight is, for you were born blind. May the Lord do a new thing in you at this moment, and bring you into a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness!

Remember that you must have this miracle worked upon you. If the blind man had remained blind, he might have continued a tolerably happy beggar. He seems to have had very considerable mental resources, and he might have made his way in the world as well as others of the begging confraternity. But *you* cannot be happy or safe unless the Lord Jesus opens your eyes. There remains for you nothing but the blackness of darkness forever, unless light from heaven visits you. You must have Christ, or die. Here is the blessedness of it, that at this moment He is still in the midst of us, able to save to the uttermost, and willing now to repeat the miracles of His mercy to those who will trust in Him to do so. I think I can almost hear the prayer struggling in your bosom. Silent, and unclothed in words, it sits on your lips. Let it speak. Say, "Lord, open my eyes this day." He will do it! Blessed be His name! He has come on purpose to open the eyes of the blind.

II. Having spoken upon the great Healer, as He stands conspicuous in the miracle, I would now conduct your thoughts, in the second place, to THE SPECIAL MEANS OBSERVABLE in the miracle. Jesus could have healed this man without means, or He could have healed Him by other means, but He chose to work the cure in a manner which to all ages will remain a grand sermon, an instructive parable of grace. He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. This is a picture of the gospel.

It meets with many modern criticisms. In the first place, the mode of cure *seems very eccentric*. Spat and made clay with the spittle and the dust! Very singular! Very odd! Thus odd and singular is the gospel in the judgment of the worldly-wise. "Why," says one, "it seems such a strange thing that we are to be saved by believing." Men think it so odd that fifty other ways are invented straightway! Though the new methods are not one of them worth describing, yet everybody seems to think that the old-fashioned way of "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ" might have been greatly improved upon. The way of justification by faith is peculiarly open to criticism, and is about the last that this wise world would have selected. Yet, eccentric as it may seem for Christ to heal with spittle and dust, it was the best and wisest way for His purpose. Suppose instead thereof He had put His hands into His pocket and had taken out a gold or ivory box, and out of this box He had taken a little crystal bottle? Suppose He had taken out the stopper, and then had poured a drop on each of those

blind eyes, and they had been opened, what would have been the result? Everybody would have said, "What a wonderful medicine! I wonder what it was! How was it compounded? Who wrote the prescription? Perhaps He found the charm in the writings of Solomon, and so He learned to distil the matchless drops." Thus you see the attention would have been fixed on the means used, and the cure would have been ascribed to the medicine rather than to God. Our Savior used no such rare oils or choice spirits, but simply spat and made clay of the spittle, for He knew that nobody would say, "The spittle did it," or "It was the clay that did it." No, if our Lord seems to be eccentric in the choice of means, yet is He eminently prudent. The gospel of our Lord Jesus—and there is but one—is the wisdom of God, however singular it may seem in the judgment of the worldly wise. It may be thought strange, but it is the sum of all wisdom, and those who try it find it to be so. It would be impossible to improve upon it. Its adaptation to man's case is marvelous; its suitability to its design is matchless. It blesses man, while it gives all glory to God. No one makes the gospel a rival to Christ, but in every case by the gospel the power which blesses men is manifested as the power of God.

In the next place, the means may appear to some *offensive to the taste*. Oh, I think I see some of the fine gentry! How they turn up their noses as they read, "He spat"! "He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle"! It turns the stomachs of those delicate ones! So is it with the gospel. The Agags who go delicately do not like it. How the men of "culture" sneer at the gospel for which our fathers died! Hear how they decry the ever-blessed word of our salvation. They say that it is only fit for old women and idiots, and such fossils of the past ages as the preacher who is now addressing you. We are all fools except these men of progress, and our gospel is disgusting to them. Yes, but stop a minute, and disgust may cease. In the miracle before us, the means made use of was spit; but from whose mouth? It was the mouth of Jesus, which is most sweet. No fragrant perfume, made of the rarest spices, can ever equal the spittle of that divine mouth of His! Clay! What if it is clay? Clay made by the spittle of the mouth of the Son of God is more precious than "the terrible crystal," or the rarest powders of the merchant. Thus is it with my Master's gospel; it is offensive to those who are proud of themselves; it is offensive to carnal reason, to the idiotic self-complacency of those who, considering themselves to be wise, have become otherwise, but to you that believe He is precious; how precious no tongue can tell—

"What if we trace the globe around,
And search from Britain to Japan,
There shall be no religion found
So just to God, so safe for man."

The gospel is still to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness, but unto us who are saved it is "Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

It is further objected that the Lord healed this man in such *a commonplace way!* To spit and make clay of the spittle, why, anybody could do that! Why not have used an imposing ceremonial? Why not practice an eclectic method? If it had been one of the doctors of the age, he would have made a great performance of it. His prescription would have been a treat for learned men. Did you ever read Culpepper's "Herbal"? I hope

you have never taken any of the medicine which that learned herbalist prescribes. In one mess you will find a dozen articles, each one of them monstrous, and in many a prescription you will find a score or more of herbs most curiously compounded. Such were the prescriptions of still earlier times. If they did no good, they did at least bewilder the patient. And now today what is the new gospel that is proposed to us? It is the gospel of "culture." Culture! This, of course, is the monopoly of our superiors. It is only to be enjoyed by very refined persons, who have been to college, and who carry inside of them a whole university, library and all. The gospel, which is made to be plain enough for wayfaring men, is for that reason despised. That Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners is too commonplace a teaching. That He bore our sins in His own body on the tree is rejected as an outrageous dogma, unfit for this intelligent age! Oh yes, we know the men and their contemptuous leer. Yet commonplace as our Lord's medicine was, it was unique. All the philosophers of Greece, and all the wise and rich men of Rome, could not have compounded another dram of this healing application. Only the Christ possessed that matchless spit; only His fingers could make that special clay. Even thus, if the gospel should seem commonplace, it is to be remembered that there is not another like it! Tell me, you that are wise, can you find anything that will bear comparison with it? Christ in the sinner's stead, made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him; can you match this? Jesus redeeming His people from the slavery of sin; you may call it a mercantile atonement, if you please, and grow black in the face in your rage at the substitutionary sacrifice, but you cannot equal it. The more abundant your ridicule of the gospel, the more shall we cling to it, and the better shall we love it, for the very spittle of Christ's mouth is dearer to us than the deepest thoughts of your most profound philosophers.

I think I hear another objector say that the remedy was *quite inadequate*. Clay made out of spittle would be positively inert, and could exercise no healing power upon a blind eye. Just so, we are prepared to hear all this. The clay alone has no efficacy, but when Jesus uses it, it will answer His purpose. The man, after he had washed the clay into the pool, came seeing. The gospel may appear as if it could not renew the heart and save from evil. To believe in the Lord Jesus Christ seems an unlikely means of producing holiness. Men ask, "What can evangelical preaching do to put down sin?" We point to those who were once dead in sin, who are made alive by faith, and thus we prove the efficacy of the gospel by facts. "Oh," they say, "can faith transform the character? Can belief subdue the will? Can trust conduct the mind to a high and elevated life?" It does so, and though in theory it appears inadequate, yet as a matter of fact it has made men into new creatures, and has turned sinners into saints.

Another wise gentleman judges that clay upon the eyes would even be *injurious*. "To stick clay over a man's eyes would not make him see, it would add another impediment to the light." So have I even heard it said, that to preach salvation by faith is against good morals, and may even encourage men in evil. Blind bats as they are, can they not see, that the case is the very reverse? How frequently by the gospel are harlots made

chaste, thieves made honest, drunks made sober! By this very gospel of faith which they say is against good morals the best of morals are produced. Why, in the next breath they denounce believers as Puritans, too precise and religious by half. Nothing creates so many good works as that gospel which tells us that salvation is not of works, but of the grace of God.

Another objector declares that our Lord's way of cure was *opposed to the law*. Here is this "man named Jesus" actually making clay or brick-earth on the Sabbath. Was not this a shocking infringement of the law? It is insinuated that our gospel of faith in Jesus makes men think lightly of the law. We preach against the idea of merit, and we say that good works cannot save men, and therefore we are charged with lowering the dignity of the law. This is not true, for our gospel establishes the law and fosters true obedience. When the Savior said, "Go, wash," and the blind man went and washed, the Lord Jesus had taught him obedience, even the best kind of it—namely, the obedience of faith. Even so, though we are apparently in conflict with the law when we declare that by the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified, yet we establish the law, for faith brings with it the principle and mainspring of obedience. To trust God is the very essence of obedience. He that believes in Jesus has taken the first step in the great lesson of obeying God in all things. To see how Jesus suffered the law's penalty, and how He honored the law for us, is to see that which makes the law most glorious in our esteem.

So, I would say in leaving this point; do not quibble at the gospel. We sometimes tell servants that it is never wise to quarrel with their bread and butter. I would earnestly say to every anxious spirit: Do not quarrel with the gospel of salvation. If you are in a right state of mind as to your condition, I am sure you will not. When I found the Lord I was driven into such a corner, that whatever salvation might have been, I would have had it on God's terms without a question. If you are the man that I am looking for, if you want to receive spiritual sight, you will make no conditions with Jesus, you will not ask for a perfumed ointment for your eyes, but you will gladly accept an anointing with clay from your Savior's hands. Whatever the Lord prescribes as the way of salvation you will joyfully accept. In that cheerful acceptance lies a great part of the salvation itself, for your will is now at one with God.

Let us pray the Holy Spirit to reveal to our hearts the gospel, and to make us love it, receive it, and prove its power.

III. I would now lead you a step further. THE PLAIN COMMAND IS MOST NOTEWORTHY. Our Lord said to His patient, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam." The man could not see, but he could hear. Salvation comes to us, not by sight of ceremonies, but by hearing the word of God. The ears are the best friends the sinner has remaining to him. It is by Ear-gate that the Prince Immanuel comes riding into Mansoul in triumph. "Hear, and your soul shall live."

The command was *exceedingly specific*—"Go, wash in the pool of Siloam." So is the gospel exceedingly specific—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." It is not: Do this or that work, but believe! It is not: Believe in a priest, or in any human being, but in Jesus. If this man had said, "I will wash in Jordan, for it was there that Naaman

lost his leprosy," his washing would have been useless. It was a little, insignificant affair, that pool of Siloam, whose waters flowed softly; why must he go there? He did not ask for reasons, but he at once obeyed, and in obeying he found the blessing. My hearer, you have to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. There are not twenty things to be done, but only this one. The very longest form of the gospel runs thus, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved," the faith is to be openly confessed by obedience to the Lord's prescribed baptism, but the first matter is the faith. "He that believes on Him has everlasting life." This is very specific! You can make no mistake in the matter.

It was also *intensely simple*. "Go, wash in the pool." Go to the pool, and wash the clay into it. Any boy can wash his eyes. The task was simplicity itself. So is the gospel as plain as a walking stick. You have not to perform twenty genuflections or posturings, each one peculiar, nor have you to go to school to learn a dozen languages, each one more difficult than the other. No, the saving deed is one and simple. "Believe and live." Trust, trust Christ; rely upon Him, rest in Him. Accept His work upon the cross as the atonement for your sin, His righteousness as your acceptance before God, His person as the delight of your soul.

But the command was also *distinctly personal*. "Go, wash." He might not send a neighbor or a friend. His parents could not go for him. It would have been idle for him to have said, "I will pray about it." No, he must go, and himself wash in the pool. So, too, the sinner must himself believe in Jesus. Hear me, dear friend; only your own faith will answer the purpose, your own eyes need opening, and therefore you must yourself go and wash in the pool in obedience to Jesus. You must personally believe unto eternal life. You get into the notion, some of you, that you may sit still and hope that God will save you. I have no authority to encourage you in such a rebellious inactivity. Jesus bids you go and wash and how dare you sit still? When the father comes to receive his prodigal child he finds him on the road. He was yet a great way off when his father saw him, but his face was turned in the right direction, and he was making the best of his way to the father's house. He says to you, "Awake, you that sleep, and arise from the dead and Christ shall give you light." Up with you, Man! Up with you! The pool of Siloam will not come to you, you must go to it. The waters will not leap out of their bed and wash your eyes, but you must stoop to them, and wash in the pool until the clay is gone and you see. It is a very personal direction; mind that you treat it so.

It was a direction which *involved obedience to Christ*. Why must I go there, and wash there? Because He tells you. If you want Jesus to save you, you must do as He bids you. You must take Jesus to be your Lord if you take Him to be your Savior. Dear heart, yield to Jesus Christ this morning. Never servant had such a Master. You may well bow down and kiss those dear feet which were nailed to the cross for you. Yield yourselves to the rule of Jesus at once. The act of faith is the more acceptable because it is the heart's obedience to Jesus. Submit to Him by faith, I beseech you.

The command was for the time present. Jesus did not say, "Go, wash in the pool tomorrow, or in a month's time." If the beggar had been blind

inwardly as well as outwardly, he might have said, "My blindness brings me in money. I will make a little more as a blind beggar, and then I will have my eyes opened." He valued sight too much to delay. Had he delayed, he would have remained blind till Doomsday! If any of you think it would be inconvenient to be converted at once, I have no hope of you. I can preach to you no salvation but a present one. He, who will not be saved today, will not be likely to be saved at all. Go, blind beggar, go and be blind forever unless you will have sight today. It may be "now or never" with you. Today is the day of salvation; tomorrow is but the devil's net. You will be hopelessly lost if you continue to delay.

The command in the blind man's case was very noteworthy—"Go, wash," and so is the spiritual command which is its parallel, "Believe in the Lord Jesus." O souls, hear the word which bids you trust the Savior. He cries, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." Oh, may God help you to do so at this very instant! Will you not? Blessed Spirit, lead them to do so, for Jesus' sake!

IV. I come, in the close of the discourse, to invite you to see THE DELIGHTFUL RESULT CERTIFIED. I think I see this man, attended by his neighbors, going to Siloam. They had seen Jesus place the clay upon the man's eyes, and they had heard Him say, "Go to Siloam." They volunteer to go, and act as guides to the blind. Curiosity inspires them. He reaches the pool. He goes down the steps. He is close to the water. He stoops his head. He washes his eyes. What will come of it? The clay is gone, but what else has happened? Suddenly the man lifts up his face and cries, "I see! I see!" What a shout went up from them all. "What a wonder! What a marvel! Hosanna! Blessed be God!" The man cries, "It is true, I have washed, and I can see!"

This man could see at once. He washed, and his blindness was gone. Eternal life is received in a moment. It does not take the tick of a clock to justify a sinner. O soul, the moment you believe, you have passed from death to life. Quick as a flash of lightning the effectual change is worked, the eternal life enters and casts out death. Oh, that the Lord would work salvation now! This man could see at once. We read of another blind man that he first saw men as trees walking, and only after a time saw every man clearly, but this man saw clearly at once. Oh that you who hear me this day would believe, and live at once!

This man knew that he could see. He had no question about that, for he said, "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." Possibly some of you have been decent people all your lives, and yet you do not know whether you are saved or not. This is poor religion. Cold comfort! Saved, and not know it! Surely it must be as lean a salvation as that man's breakfast when he did not know whether he had eaten it or not. The salvation which comes of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is conscious salvation. Your eyes shall be so opened that you shall no longer question whether you can see. He could see, and he knew that he could see. Oh, that you would believe in Jesus, and know that you have believed and are saved! Oh, that you might get into a new world, and enter upon a new state of things altogether! May that, which was totally unknown to you before, be made known to you at this hour by Almighty grace.

And *other people perceived that he could see*. They could not make it out. Some said, "This is he," but others would only say, "It is like him." A man with opened eyes is very different from the same man when he is blind. If we were to take any friend we know who has no eyes, and suddenly eyes were to be placed in his countenance, we should probably find his expression so altered that we should hardly think him the same person, and therefore the cautious neighbors only said, "He is like him." Yet they were all of them sure he could see. None of the Pharisees said to him, "Are you sure you can see?" Those twinkling eyes of his, so full of fun and wit, and sarcasm, were proofs most plain that he could see. Ah! Your friends at home will know that you are converted if it is really so; they will hardly need telling, they will find it out. The very way you eat your dinner will show it. It will! You eat it with gratitude, and seek a blessing on it. The way you will go to bed will show it. I remember a poor man who was converted, but he was dreadfully afraid of his wife—not the only man in the world that is in that fear—and therefore he was fearful that she would ridicule him if he knelt to pray. He crept upstairs in his stockings that he might not be heard, but might have a few minutes' prayer before she knew he was there. His scheme broke down. His wife soon found him out. Genuine conversion is no more to be hidden than a candle in a dark room. You cannot hide a cough. If a man has a cough, he must cough, and if a man has grace in his heart, he will show grace in his life. Why should we wish to hide it? Oh, may the Lord give you such an eye-opening this day that friends and relatives shall know that your eyes have been opened!

Observe that the restored one *never lost his sight again*. This man did not become blind again. Christ's cures are not temporary. I have heard of many cases of late of people who have been exceedingly happy because they fancied that they were perfectly restored. The cure lasted a week, and then they were as bad as ever. Fancy can do great things for a season, but Christ's cures last forever. Never an eye that Christ opened ever went blind again. We believe in being born again, but not in becoming unborn. I know that whatsoever the Lord does shall be forever. O my friends, I have nothing to preach but eternal salvation! Come to Christ, and He will work in you an effectual cure. Trust Him wholly, for in Him there is everlasting life.

This man, when he received sight, *was willing to lose everything in consequence*. The Jews cast him out of the synagogue, but when Jesus found him the man did not fret about the Jews. I think I can see his face when Jesus found him, how happy he was as he worshipped his benefactor! "Poor soul, poor soul, you have been cast out of the synagogue!" "Oh," he says, "don't pity me. They may cast me out of fifty synagogues now that Christ has found me. What care I for synagogues now that I have found the Messiah? When I was in the synagogue I was a blind man, and now I am out of the synagogue, but I have my sight." When you become a Christian the world will hate you and revile you, but what of that? Some will have no more to do with you. This may be the best turn they can do you. We had a lady of title in our membership once, and a very gracious sister she was. I had some little fear about her at first, lest the great ones should draw her away from the truth. Soon after her

baptism, she remarked that a certain noble family had given her the cold shoulder, and others who were very intimate had ceased to call. She took it as a matter of course, and only remarked that it made her own course all the more easy, for she had not now the pain of hearing their ungodly conversation, or even the responsibility of severing the connection. The world has done its best for the child of God when it has cast him out. Its excommunications are better than its communications. The outside of the world's house is the safest side of it for us. That we love the brethren, and that the world hates us, are two good evidences of grace for which a man may be grateful. "Let us go forth unto Christ outside the camp, bearing His reproach."

What a wonderful thing the Lord Jesus had done for this man, and what a wonderful thing He is prepared to do for all who trust Him! It had been a work of creation. The man's eyes were no eyes, Jesus created sight in them. To heal a limb is one thing, but to make an eye, or to enable that which was only the mere fashion of an eye to become an organ of perception, is a greater thing by far. To save a soul is a work of creation. We are created anew in Christ Jesus. It was also a work of resurrection. Those eyes had been dead, and now the Lord Jesus raised them from the dead. The Lord God Almighty can work creation at this moment, He can produce resurrection this day, and why should He not? This day we commemorate both of these divine works. This first day of the week was the beginning of the creation of God. It is also the day in which our Lord rose from the dead, as the first fruits of them that slept. This Lord's Day commemorates the beginning of creation and of resurrection. Let us pray the Almighty Lord to manifest among us the works of God this day. O Lord, regenerate, illuminate, pardon, and save those who are here present, and thus glorify Your Son! Amen, and amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 9.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—916, 502, 505.

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TRUST
NO. 1978

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 21, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"That we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom you also trusted, after that you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation."
Ephesians 1:12, 13.

IT appears from the preceding verse that the predestinating purpose of God deals not only with salvation as a whole, but with the details of it; it includes faith as well as salvation, which comes of faith. "Being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who works all things after the counsel of His own will, that we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ." The trust is appointed as well as the justification; the means as well as the end. We are not ordained to be saved apart from faith, but those who are predestinated to eternal life are ordained to receive it through faith in Christ Jesus. What God has joined together let no man put asunder.

Beloved friends, I would have you notice in this verse the remarkable object which is set before us as the grand design of predestinating grace. Observe the singular expression of the apostle—"That we should *be* to the praise of His glory." Observe that He does not say, that we should *sing* to the praise of our glorious God, though we will do that; nor that we should *suffer* to His praise, though we would not refuse to do that; nor that we should *work* to His praise, though by grace we will do that, but "that we should *be* to the praise of His glory." The very being of a believer is to the praise and glory of God. It is written, "Whether you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God," but this is still more comprehensive, you are to *be* to His glory, your very existence is to *praise* Him. Your being which is now turned into well-being is to glorify the God of grace. When in the quiet of the garden I have looked upon the lilies standing erect in their marvelous beauty, and I have realized our Master's words, that Solomon in all His glory was not arrayed like one of these, then I have said to myself, "What do these to the glory of God?" Quickly my heart has answered, "They exist to show forth the glory of their Creator," by merely standing where they are, they yield praise to the Lord, their very being is worship. Even those flowers which are born to blush unseen of men do not bloom in vain, they do not waste their sweetness, though they pour it on the desert air, for God is in the lone places, and beholds with joy His own handiwork. God is glorified by the being of that which He makes, and especially by the being of that which

He has a second time created by the power of His grace, according to His purpose through faith. Is it not enough result of being if we are to His praise?

Beloved; see the importance of that trust which is so constant an item in the purpose of God when He causes us to be to the praise of His glory. Unless we have trusted in Christ we are not living to the praise of God, but when we have come by faith into the place wherein we ought to stand, then is our very being unto the praise of His glory. In Christ our very existence glorifies God, and it is faith which consciously places us in Christ. Concerning that trust, or if you will—for the original bears that translation—that hope, which is so essential to the fulfillment of the purpose of God—concerning that trust I am about to speak this morning. May the praise of His glory be promoted by what I am enabled to say!

I. Our first point will be that TRUST IN CHRIST IS THE CONSTANT MARK OF THE SAVED. "That we should be to the praise of His glory who first trusted in Christ, in whom you also trusted." I care not whether you read it "trusted" or "hoped," the idea will still be the same. Trust in Christ, or hope in Christ, is the distinguishing token of God's people.

It was the mark of the apostles. It was necessary to an apostle that he should have seen the Lord, for he was to bear personal witness to that which he had seen with his eyes, and looked upon and handled, but this alone was not sufficient, for many saw the Lord and remained in unbelief, enemies of the cross of Christ. These could not have been apostles, since they did not trust in Jesus. The apostles were those who, with an inner as well as an outer eye, had seen the Lord, and had trusted themselves wholly to Him as their Leader, Master, Teacher, and Savior. There were no apostles worthy to be called apostles who did not trust in Christ. Truly Judas bore the name, but his Lord said of him, "One of you is a devil." He, who is sent of Christ as His witness, first trusts in Christ.

This was also the mark of the first converts, *the chosen from among the Jews*. These had the honor to be the elder born—these who first trusted in Christ. Some of them had the advantage of having trusted in Him before His actual advent, for they were looking for the hope of Israel, and earnestly expecting the coming of the Messiah. Before our Lord appeared at the waters of Jordan, and was pointed out by John the Baptist as "the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world," there were hearts that believed in Him, and eyes that looked for Him. Still, whether they were Jewish believers, looking for His advent, or not, this was the mark of their being truly saved—that they trusted in Jesus, when He was revealed as the Anointed of the Lord. The best instructed Jew could not find eternal salvation apart from his putting his trust in Jesus Christ the Son of God.

Now, dear friends, *this was the mark of those who were first saved by the great Redeemer,* and I want you to notice how the Holy Spirit sets them in a class by themselves. He makes a distinction between those who first trusted and those who trusted afterwards, because it is a noteworthy honor to have been among the first that trusted Christ. It is a privilege to be led by Jesus, to trust Him first in order of time by begin-

ning in your earliest youth. Happy are those who enter the Lord's vineyard amid the dews of the morning, for these redeem years of time from the bitter servitude of sin, and turn them to blessed account in the delightful service of the Lord Jesus. Such are usually distinguished in the church; early piety makes eminent piety, early consecration often leads to abounding usefulness. The Lord evidently delights to be found in a high degree of those who seek Him early. They come to Him first, and He remembers the kindness of their youth, and the promptness with which they obeyed His call. It is also a great privilege to be called first out of a family or a neighborhood. Perhaps some of you live where there are none who believe in Christ; may the Lord grant you this high favor to be the leader of your household and your district as a believer! May the shower of grace fall first on you, and then bless all those who are round about you! Possibly in your family you do not know of one who has passed from death to life—may you be the first fruits out of spiritual death! I have often observed that where God begins with a family, He goes on with a family. He makes one or two to be the first fruits, and then He considers the lump as also holy, and goes on to bless the rest of the household. Even in nations I scarcely remember a nation or people that have ever received Christ which has been quite left without His blessing throughout after centuries; the fire which the first live coals had kindled has never absolutely been quenched. Therefore, I admire the grey fathers of the past, the pioneers of the army of the Lord. Paul mentions with respect those who were in Christ before him, and so should we honor those who led the way for us by first trusting in Christ. I greatly esteem in my own mind those first believers who were not borne in by the throng of others, but went forward alone. I compare them to the first navigators upon an untried sea, the men who first sailed out of sight of shore, greatly venturing. To be first in perceiving that Jesus of Nazareth was the Anointed of the Lord was no small thing, for none of the princes of this world had any idea of that great fact. These were in truth the "men of light and leading," the foremost minds of their age, peasants and fishermen though they were. These were the first swallows heralding a glorious summer-tide. These were the first songbirds waking the morning to behold the newly-risen sun. It is a patent of nobility to be numbered with these. I would put a holy ambition into the hearts of those who are young, and others who belong to ungodly families, suggesting to them that they should be among their households those "who first trust in Christ." In the history of your tribe you will have an honored place as the first who brought salvation to your house. But, whether you are first or last, if you are saved at all it will be through trust in Christ. Come young, come old, you will still be saved alone by trusting Christ. Come as the leader of your family, or come as the last left out in the cold, you will still have to come by a simple trust and reliance upon the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the one sole way of salvation.

Now, as this was the mark of the elder born, the text goes on to tell us that *it was the mark of the younger born,* "In whom you also trusted, after that you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation." The

Ephesians did not see the Christ, they never listened to the melodious tones of His voice, nor looked into His beloved countenance, but they were converted by hearing the report of Him. They were brought into salvation afterwards, but still it came to the same thing, they received like precious faith with those who in former days had obtained eternal life. Those to whom I now speak trusted in Christ after they had heard the word of truth. Note the expression. It is the word of *the* truth—the most important and vital of all truths. Nothing but truth can truly renew the heart. Falsehood works to evil; only truth works towards righteousness. We heard the word of the God of truth, and it came to us as the word of God; it came with the force of truth, carrying conviction with it, and it came as the word of God, exercising a divine power over our nature, and hence it was that we came to trust in Christ. My unconverted hearer; if you desire to have faith in Christ, listen to the truth, and to the truth only. Shut your ears to error, and hold yourselves only ready to hear the glorious gospel of the blessed God. "Faith comes by hearing," but that hearing must be the hearing of the word of God. It is by the hearing of the word of the truth that men come to trust in Christ, but trust in Christ they must, or they will perish. He is the sole Rock on which we must rest; the one Foundation laid for us to build upon.

The apostle also says to these Ephesians, "You heard the gospel of your salvation." O delightful word! The gospel, the glad tidings! The glad tidings of salvation! Yes, more, the glad tidings of *your* salvation! The gospel brings to us a personal deliverance. We heard Christ preached, and we saw that He had salvation for us. Another man's Savior brings us little joy, but salvation for ourselves is good news indeed. Joyful was the day when my heart said, "Blessed be God, I need salvation, and it is joyful tidings to me that there is an atoning sacrifice by which my sin is put away! I can be reconciled to God through the death of His Son, and in Christ Jesus I can be accepted and beloved of the Lord." By such reflections we were led to a simple and hearty trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. That trust is the broad arrow of the King, set upon all His royal possessions. Where that trust is found, that soul is God's possession; where it is lacking, that soul still lies in the arms of the wicked one. This trust, of which some make so little, is, nevertheless, the distinguishing and the discriminating mark by which we must discern between him that fears God and him that fears Him not.

Note, before I leave this portion of the subject, that, *trust in Christ is of the same nature in all believers*. It is not the same in degree, or in constancy, or in energy, but yet it is the same faith. "You received like precious faith," said Peter. Paul's faith and your faith are the same faith if your faith is true faith. The faith of Abraham and the faith of a little child who has newly believed in Jesus are the same faith. A diamond is a diamond whatever its size may be, and so little faith and great faith are of the same essence. Whether it is a grain of mustard seed or a mountain-moving faith, it is still faith of the operation of God, faith in the same object, and faith working to the same end. Hence John, speaking to his converts, prays, "That you may have fellowship with us: and truly our fel-

lowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." If you are a believer, you have a right to the same fellowship with God as the apostle had, you have the same perfect cleansing by the precious blood, you have the same adoption, the same regeneration, you stand in the same place of love and acceptance, you shall be blessed with the same blessings on earth, and you shall enter into the same joy at the right hand of God. See, then, dear friends, that trust in Christ is the invariable and the infallible mark of the saved ones.

II. Secondly, THIS TRUST IS NO EMPTY NOTION. The trust in Christ which saves the soul is no idle sentiment, but a strong, vital, active principle, having a living and conquering power within it. It is of the operation of the Spirit of God, and hence it is a living and incorruptible seed, which lives and abides forever.

True trust in Christ is an entire reliance upon Him. This day, if you trust Christ, you rest the whole weight and stress of your soul's affairs upon Him. Looking at your sin and your sinfulness, looking at the past, the present, and the future, looking at death and at judgment, you deliberately believe that Christ is equal to every emergency, and you just cast yourself entirely and without reserve upon Him to save you, and to keep you saved forever. No other trust is worth a pin except this. It must be an absolute severance from all reliance upon your past merit, or upon your present resolutions, or upon your future expectations of what you shall be or shall do. You must have done with all other trust if Christ is your confidence. Your motto must be, "Jesus only." In this lifeboat you must swim to glory, but all other you must cast away. Another reliance would be as a weight about your loins to sink you in the sea of despair. O my hearer, have you such a simple, unadulterated trust as this?

A saving trust leads us to accept Christ in all His offices. He is to us not only Priest to put away our sin, but Prophet to remove our ignorance, and King to subdue our rebellions. If as Priest He purges the conscience, as Prophet He must direct the intellect, and as King He must rule the life. We must yield our will to Christ's will that henceforth every thought may be brought into captivity to His holy sway. There is no wholehearted trust in Christ unless Christ is taken as a whole. You cannot have half a Christ and be saved, for half Christ is no Christ. You must take Him as He is revealed in Scripture, Jesus Christ the Son of God, the Savior of men, very God of very God, the faithful and true Witness, your Guide, your Lord, your Husband, your everything. Do you trust Him so? If not, you have not trusted Him at all. This is the trust which brings salvation with it—an entire reliance upon an entire Savior so far as you know Him.

This trust includes obedience to Him; we have not trusted Him at all unless we are prepared to accept His commands as the rule of our lives. The ship is on fire; the bales of cotton are pouring forth a black, horrible smoke; passengers and crew are in extreme danger, but a capable captain is in command, and he says to those around him, "If you will behave yourselves, I think I shall be able to effect the escape of you all." Now, if they trust in the captain they will do precisely as he orders. No sailor or

engineer will refuse to work the pumps, or to prepare the boats, neither will any passenger disobey a rule. In proportion to their confidence in their leader will be the alacrity with which they obey him at once. They believe his orders to be wise, and so they keep to then. Neither their fear, nor their rashness, will lead them to rush to and fro contrary to his bidding if they have a firm trust in him. When the boats are lowered, and are bought one by one to the ship's side, those who are to fill them wait till their turns come, in firm reliance upon the captain's impartiality and prudence. They will get into the boats or they will wait on board, for they consider that his orders are dictated by a better judgment than their own. So far as each man and each woman firmly believes in the superior officer, discipline will be maintained. Do you not see this?

Obedience is the necessary outcome of true and real faith, and there is no trust where there is no obedience. Some of you fancy that you are to trust Christ, and then do what you like. You believe a lie, for such is not the teaching of God's word. The faith which saves is a faith which obeys. Learn this from the sermon of last Sabbath morning [*The Blind Beggar of the Temple and His Wonderful Cure*—Sermon #1977.] Jesus becomes the Physician of the blind man, and puts clay on his eyes, and then He bids him go and wash in the pool of Siloam, and he shall see. If he had refused to go and wash, he would not have received sight. Do not tell me you have trusted for sight; you cannot have done so, unless you go and wash in the appointed pool. We must follow Christ's directions, if we would receive Christ's promises. Trust in Christ implies a yielding up of all that we have and all that we are into Christ's hands. We must be to Him as the wax to the seal, or the clay to the potter. There must be an unreserved submission to His supremacy. O you seeking sinner, will you submit to this? Are you full of self-will and pride? Then these must be taken from you. If you do heartily accept the Lord Jesus as your Lord and King, you have the faith which saves; but if not, what faith have you that is worth the having?

Trust in Christ leads to an open following of Him. Trust is not lame, but it walks in the footsteps of him it relies upon. If the Lord's way is the way of the cross, you will nevertheless follow it, because you will know it to be the right way, since He leads therein. He that is ashamed to confess Christ has good reason to fear that he is not trusting Him. How can I be trusting Him of whom I am ashamed? If I am not on His side in the great battle of life, how can I say that He is my confidence? He declares that he that is not with Him is against Him. How can I trust Him, and yet be against Him? If I refuse to have my name recorded on the muster-roll of His army below, how dare I hope that it is written in the Lamb's book of life above? If I refuse to accept Jesus as my Captain, how can I claim Him as my Savior? A hearty trust in Christ involves an honest confession of Him. "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." "He that with his heart believes, and with his mouth makes confession of Him, shall be saved." Thus the matter is put in Scripture. Will you come out, then? Will you come out on His side? If you will, then you have saving trust. If you

will truly, and fully, and wholly decide for Christ, and live for Christ, then you have the trust which is the mark of His elect.

This trust will lead a man to labor to suffer for Christ as need occurs. The true truster considers it to be real gain to lose for Jesus. He reckons that toil unrewarded of men is the best rewarded form of labor when it is accepted of the Lord. It is enough wage to be permitted to serve the Lord Christ. This is faith; this which counts all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, this which has respect unto a future recompense when the Lord shall come in His kingdom, but looks not for honor among men or any other form of reward here below. True trust cleaves to Christ when the many turn aside, for it knows that He has the living word, and none upon earth beside. My hearer, if you have a real trust in Christ, you will follow His teachings though all the world should run madly after new opinions; you will stand by His truth though you are called a fool for your steadfastness; and you will not be ashamed though no one should keep you in countenance. If you are trusting in Christ, you will spend your life for Him, and reckon it to be the best way of using your existence. God grant us to have more and more of this trust!

That trust which lives on men's lips and never affects their hearts is a deadly delusion. He that says, "I believe," and then never lives according to that belief, is a deceiver, and will find himself deceived if he looks for salvation in such a faith. That presumptuous trust, which indulges in sin and boasts of forgiveness in Christ, is, in itself an aggravation of a sinful life, and will involve its possessor in increased condemnation. Hang up on the gallows of infamy that evil confidence which is in league with unholiness. The conceit of safety while we love sin is a mockery of God's salvation, the base counterfeit of the coin of heaven. God alone gives the faith which works by love and purifies the soul; all other faith is spurious and ruinous.

True trust rejoices in the hope which Christ inspires. It looks for His coming and His glory, His reign and His heaven. It is full of hope; that living, lively, life-giving hope which sustains the heart. This trust has a window of hope through which light comes into the heart in the darkest hours. It lives and triumphs in the future through trusting the promise of Christ Jesus.

If we have such trust as this we shall constantly meet with something whereon to exercise it. God never leaves true trust without work to do. It is not a presentation sword to be worn only on high days and holidays, neither is it like the old armor in the Tower of London, hung up to be looked at; no, true trust is for everyday wear and use, and between here and heaven it will be tested in every conceivable way. That sword will snap if it is not a true Jerusalem blade, and that armor will be pierced if it is not of proof, able to endure the battleaxe of fierce temptation. In a thousand fields our trust will be tried before we shall be able to sheathe the sword and enjoy the triumph. It is in this way that trust in Christ is made by our God to work to the praise of the glory of His grace. Trust in Christ brings to God greater glory than anything else we can produce. "What shall we do," said one, "that we may work the work of God?"

meaning thereby a God-like work, a work so great as to bear a heavenly name. Jesus answered, "This is the work of God; that you believe on Jesus Christ whom He has sent." Dear friend over yonder, you cannot build a row of almshouses to the glory of God, but you can trust Christ with all your heart to the glory of God. You cannot stand up and deliver an eloquent oration to God's praise, but you can by divine grace, pursue a life of faith, and thus praise Him. You cannot be a hero in fight, and turn to flight the armies of the alien, but by trust in Jesus, exercised in prevailing prayer, you can win great victories to the praise of His glory. Walk humbly with your God, in patience possess your souls, and with an unstaggering faith embrace the promises and you shall be found in that cloud of witnesses who are ennobled of God Most High. The Lord grant us, then, to have this trust, which is more than mere notion or sentiment—but a divine principle created by the Holy Spirit.

III. Thirdly, THIS TRUST IN CHRIST IS HIS DUE. There came to me the other day a young man who wished to speak with me about his soul troubles, and he began thus, "Dear sir, I cannot trust Christ." To which I answered, "Have you found out something fresh in His character? Has He ceased to be trustworthy? Pray let me know all about it, for it is a serious matter to me; I have trusted Him with everything I have for time and for eternity, and if He is not fit to be trusted I am in a terrible case." He looked at me, and he said, "I will not say that again, sir, I see I have made a mistake. Truly the Lord Jesus is in every way trustworthy." "Well, then," I said, "Why cannot you trust Him?" I left Him with that unanswerable question. A man is certainly able to trust one whom he regards as trustworthy. My young friend saw that at once, and asked me further. "But may I trust Christ to save me? Am I permitted to trust my soul with Him?" I said to him, "Is not this the command of the gospel: Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved? And are you not warned that if you do not believe in Him you will be damned? How can we doubt that we are permitted to do that which is commanded us of the Lord? I am to preach the gospel to every creature, and this is the gospel—'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved!"' He said, "So, then, if I trust Christ He will save me?" And I replied, "Certainly He will; He is the Savior of all them that put their trust in Him. He says, 'Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.' It is written, 'He that believes on Him has everlasting life,' He that trusts in Jesus is saved." He thanked me, and saying that he had found out the secret, he went on his way rejoicing. I told Him the gospel; he received it, and he entered into rest. I hope I may be equally successful with my hearers at this time. May the Holy Spirit work with me in this case also! I have been talking about faith, and I trust I have not darkened counsel by words without knowledge. It is simplicity itself, but we are exceedingly apt to becloud it. To trust Christ is to find salvation. He that sincerely relies upon Jesus is saved. Now, concerning this trust, I say that this is our Lord's due.

Observe, first, that we are bound to trust Him from *His very name*. His name is, "Christ," that is, the "Anointed." God has sent Him, God has commissioned Him, God has equipped Him, He is the anointed of God;

dare I distrust Him? An ambassador from heaven, with the divine warrant at His back, known to speak in the name of the Lord God, how dare I say I have no confidence in Him? By the glorious name of Christ I claim for Him that you who seek salvation should trust Him implicitly, and trust Him at once.

Remember, next, *His glorious person*. He who is set forth as the object of saving trust is none other than the Son of God. In His Godhead and in His humanity, yes, in His undivided person, He claims your trust. Can you not trust Him that made heaven and earth, without whom was not anything made that was made? Can His power fail you? Can His wisdom mislead you? Can His mind change toward you? Can He be unfaithful? The Son of the Highest, can you not trust Him? Away with the impertinence of mistrust! Can you doubt the Holy and the True? Dare you doubt the Lamb of God? Be not so foolhardy as thus to defy the incarnate Son of God, and treat Him as though He could deceive you.

Next, trust Him, because of *His matchless character*. Have you ever heard of such another as the Christ of God? Among the sons, no one is like to Him—

"All hail, Emmanuel, all divine,
In You Your Father's glories shine
You brightest, sweetest, fairest one
That eyes have seen or angels known."

He is all goodness, the fullness of love, and the pattern of tenderness. He is always true, and always faithful. By that blessed character which He bears, which I am sure you would not for a moment question—a character which even infidels have been forced to admire—I pray you trust Him! Let it not be a question with you, "How can I trust Him?" Say rather, "How can I distrust Him?" What reason can you have for doubt? What excuse for mistrust?

Remember next, *His work and especially His death*. Here is immovable ground for my claim that you should trust Him. Jesus loved men so as to die for them, how can we doubt His love? I do not know how it is with you, but I lose the power to doubt when I realize Christ crucified. That crown of thorns hedges my mind around, and shuts out mistrust. His five wounds kill my suspicions and my fears. A crucified Savior is the life of faith, and the death of unbelief. Can you stand and view the flowing of the Savior's precious blood upon the tree of doom, and not trust Him? What more can He do to prove His sincerity than to die for us? His life is the mirror of love, but in His death the sun shines on it with a blaze of glory so that we cannot steadily look into its brightness. Behold how He loved us! Oh, believe in the crucified Christ, for this is no more than His right and due!

Besides, *He lives, and He has gone up into glory with the same purpose of grace upon His heart*. When men change their places, they often change their minds, but He that loved us when He was despised and rejected, loves us now that He is highly exalted. He is not like the chief butler, who forgot in the palace the promise which he made in the prison. The love of Calvary is with the Lamb in the midst of the throne. On earth He bleeds, in heaven He pleads. You sinners come and trust the ever-

living Christ, for He makes intercession for transgressors! I stand here this morning, and I say to all of you in this house that I claim your confidence in the Lord Jesus. I do not humbly ask for it as a beggar asks for alms; I demand for the Christ of God that you put your trust in Him. God has set Him forth to be a propitiation for sin, that through faith in His blood every one that believes in Him should be saved. I demand your trust in the name of God. Christ deserves it at your hands, and you cannot refuse it without doing Him a gross injustice. I beseech you do not make God a liar, yet, according to the apostle John, "He that believes not has made Him a liar, because he believes not in the Son of God." If Christ were here this morning, standing on this platform, and you saw His pierced hands, and the wound in His side, you would be ready to fall down and worship Him; you can worship Him better still by trusting Him in His absence. "Blessed are they which have not seen, and yet have believed." Trust is among the most sublime forms of adoration. A childlike, tearful, broken-hearted, sincere trust in Christ is a hallelujah unto His name. If you would crown Him, you need not go far for a coronet; your trust is the best diadem you can bring Him. Trust Him, then, at this moment, and thus bow at His feet with cherubim and seraphim. But again I say, do not insult Him by saying that you cannot trust Him. I should think it hard if any of my acquaintances said to me, "Sir, I cannot trust you." It would be a cruel cut. I would inquire of him, "What have I done to merit this? When have I been untrue?" It would be too unkind a stab if it came from one whom I had aimed to benefit. Do not crucify the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame.

O my hearers, I have chosen an old theme this morning, and I have been studiously simple in my style, for my heart longs to bring you to trust in Jesus! I have no desire to be thought a fine preacher. I want to save your souls. This trust is the vital point; do not slight it. Oh that you would believe on the Lord Jesus Christ! If you believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. This is the way of salvation, and it is very plain. God help you to run in it! Lay aside pride and self-confidence, and trust wholly in Jesus, and this will be better than all tears, and despairs, and resolves, and efforts. Fall back into the arms of redeeming love. Lean your whole weight on Jesus. Take your soul to Christ as you take your money to your banker, and leave it in His hands. He will keep it until that day when, at His appearing, you shall appear with Him in glory.

IV. I close by noticing, in the fourth place, what I have already insisted upon, that THIS TRUST IS IN EVERY CASE THE INSTRUMENT OF SALVATION.

Trust is selected by God as the instrument of salvation, and it is not selected arbitrarily, but with great wisdom and prudence. When a man trusts Christ, *by his trust he is brought into mental and spiritual contact with Christ,* and there is a more hopeful influence about that contact than in anything which a man will resolve to do or ever perform in his own strength. It is a grand thing for a man to be elevated above self-confidence, and brought to rely upon such a one as the Son of God. Thus

he is made to feel that he must look to someone greater and better than himself, and he is brought to own that he is a feeble and dependent creature. I think I see in this consideration an adaptation in faith to be the means chosen of God in the matter of salvation.

Moreover, faith is no doubt selected by God to be the means of salvation, because *it never robs God of His glory*. If you and I are to be saved, we shall be saved by God and by His grace alone. Now if the appointed way of salvation leaves something for us to do in order that we may be saved by God, we shall in all probability attribute our salvation to that something, and forget the Lord. If we are bidden to trust, there will be no temptation in that direction, for we cannot rely upon our trust, since its very essence lies in depending upon Christ alone. Trust ascribes salvation to Him who saves. Faith never seeks honor for herself; she is a self-denying grace. Christ says, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace," and by this saying He crowns faith, and He does so because faith crowns Him.

Trust, again, is selected as the instrument of salvation because *it has wonderful power over the heart of God*. Marvelous is the influence of trust. I have in the past illustrated this to you by the power which faith has over us, mortal men. I will venture to tell you an old story, which you have heard from me before. I cannot remember anything better, and you must bear with a repetition. I once lived where my neighbor's garden was only divided from me by a very imperfect hedge. He kept a dog, and his dog was a shockingly bad gardener, and did not improve my beds. So one evening, while I walking alone, I saw this dog doing mischief, and being a long way off I threw a stick at him, with some earnest advice as to his going home. This dog, instead of going home, picked up my stick and came to me with it in is mouth, wagging his tail. He dropped the stick at my feet, and looked up to me most kindly. What could I do but pat him and call him a good dog, and regret that I had ever spoken roughly to him? Why, it brings tears into my eyes as I talk about it! The dog mastered me by his trust in me. The illustration is to the point. If you will trust God as that dog trusted me, you will overcome. God will be held by your trust in such a way that He could not smite you, but must accept you for Jesus' sake. If you do trust Him, you have the key of His heart, the key of His house, the key of His heaven. If you can trust your God in Jesus Christ, you have become a son of God. I see a philosophy in the choice of faith; do not you?

But then faith operates also to salvation by *the effect it has on the character*. When I doubt God, then I follow my own judgment and do what I please, but when I trust Him wholly, and know Him to be my Father and my Friend, then I yield my will to Him naturally, not as a matter of constraint, but with great joy. And is it not a wonderful thing, that this simple trust turns the whole current of our life, and changes the entire color and complexion of our thought? Wisely is it ordained to be the instrument of salvation, since it touches the mainspring of our being, and makes that which was erratic and rebellious become orderly and obedient.

Moreover, brethren, trust saves us, because *it grasps the promises of God, and pleads them*. It says to God, "You have promised this, therefore I pray You do as You have said." The God of truth cannot lie, and therefore, He must keep His word. Trust pleads the sacrifice of Jesus, and says—"Lord, the blood of Your Son was shed for the remission of sins, therefore, I pray You let my sins be remitted. You have said that You have laid on Him the iniquity of us all, I pray You let me be unburdened of my load, because You have laid it on Him." Trust must save, for it has all the promises of the covenant at its back, and the Christ of the covenant at its side, exhibiting His own precious blood. How can trust but save the soul when God declares it shall do so?

In our most honest hours we are driven to faith for our comfort. If in our prosperity our eyes wander to other confidences, in our distress they come back to Christ and His cross. When the head is aching, and the heart is throbbing, and the death-sweat lies on the brow, none of us dare look to works, or feelings, or sacraments, but we cry—

"Hold You Your cross before my failing eyes."

The wounds of Jesus are the ultimate hope of the forlorn. When the soul is about to quit the body, the most eminent preacher, the most earnest worker, the most devout thinker, asks that he may see Jesus, and be washed in His blood and covered with His righteousness. I dare not trust all the heaped up merits of all the saints, but I dare trust the Lord Jesus Christ. Sinner as I am, I am assured of salvation through the sinner's savior. If I had as many souls in this one body as there are souls in this house of prayer I dare trust them all with Christ. If all the sins ever committed by all the men that ever lived since time began were all heaped upon my one guilty head I dare trust Jesus Christ to cleanse me from them all. O come, dear hearts, and trust my Lord! He cannot fail you. According to your faith be it unto you. You shall be able to live graciously, and to die calmly, if your trust settles itself upon Jesus, the Christ, the anointed of the Lord. Before yet the harvest is past and the summer is ended trust Christ, and live. O Holy Spirit, by Your secret workings upon the heart, lead all these thousands to trust in the Lord Jesus! Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—EPHESIANS 1.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—909, 531, 559.

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TRUST
NO. 1978

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 21, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"That we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom you also trusted, after that you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation."
Ephesians 1:12, 13.

IT appears from the preceding verse that the predestinating purpose of God deals not only with salvation as a whole, but with the details of it; it includes faith as well as salvation, which comes of faith. "Being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who works all things after the counsel of His own will, that we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ." The trust is appointed as well as the justification; the means as well as the end. We are not ordained to be saved apart from faith, but those who are predestinated to eternal life are ordained to receive it through faith in Christ Jesus. What God has joined together let no man put asunder.

Beloved friends, I would have you notice in this verse the remarkable object which is set before us as the grand design of predestinating grace. Observe the singular expression of the apostle—"That we should *be* to the praise of His glory." Observe that He does not say, that we should *sing* to the praise of our glorious God, though we will do that; nor that we should *suffer* to His praise, though we would not refuse to do that; nor that we should *work* to His praise, though by grace we will do that, but "that we should *be* to the praise of His glory." The very being of a believer is to the praise and glory of God. It is written, "Whether you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God," but this is still more comprehensive, you are to *be* to His glory, your very existence is to *praise* Him. Your being which is now turned into well-being is to glorify the God of grace. When in the quiet of the garden I have looked upon the lilies standing erect in their marvelous beauty, and I have realized our Master's words, that Solomon in all His glory was not arrayed like one of these, then I have said to myself, "What do these to the glory of God?" Quickly my heart has answered, "They exist to show forth the glory of their Creator," by merely standing where they are, they yield praise to the Lord, their very being is worship. Even those flowers which are born to blush unseen of men do not bloom in vain, they do not waste their sweetness, though they pour it on the desert air, for God is in the lone places, and beholds with joy His own handiwork. God is glorified by the being of that which He makes, and especially by the being of that which

He has a second time created by the power of His grace, according to His purpose through faith. Is it not enough result of being if we are to His praise?

Beloved; see the importance of that trust which is so constant an item in the purpose of God when He causes us to be to the praise of His glory. Unless we have trusted in Christ we are not living to the praise of God, but when we have come by faith into the place wherein we ought to stand, then is our very being unto the praise of His glory. In Christ our very existence glorifies God, and it is faith which consciously places us in Christ. Concerning that trust, or if you will—for the original bears that translation—that hope, which is so essential to the fulfillment of the purpose of God—concerning that trust I am about to speak this morning. May the praise of His glory be promoted by what I am enabled to say!

I. Our first point will be that TRUST IN CHRIST IS THE CONSTANT MARK OF THE SAVED. "That we should be to the praise of His glory who first trusted in Christ, in whom you also trusted." I care not whether you read it "trusted" or "hoped," the idea will still be the same. Trust in Christ, or hope in Christ, is the distinguishing token of God's people.

It was the mark of the apostles. It was necessary to an apostle that he should have seen the Lord, for he was to bear personal witness to that which he had seen with his eyes, and looked upon and handled, but this alone was not sufficient, for many saw the Lord and remained in unbelief, enemies of the cross of Christ. These could not have been apostles, since they did not trust in Jesus. The apostles were those who, with an inner as well as an outer eye, had seen the Lord, and had trusted themselves wholly to Him as their Leader, Master, Teacher, and Savior. There were no apostles worthy to be called apostles who did not trust in Christ. Truly Judas bore the name, but his Lord said of him, "One of you is a devil." He, who is sent of Christ as His witness, first trusts in Christ.

This was also the mark of the first converts, *the chosen from among the Jews*. These had the honor to be the elder born—these who first trusted in Christ. Some of them had the advantage of having trusted in Him before His actual advent, for they were looking for the hope of Israel, and earnestly expecting the coming of the Messiah. Before our Lord appeared at the waters of Jordan, and was pointed out by John the Baptist as "the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world," there were hearts that believed in Him, and eyes that looked for Him. Still, whether they were Jewish believers, looking for His advent, or not, this was the mark of their being truly saved—that they trusted in Jesus, when He was revealed as the Anointed of the Lord. The best instructed Jew could not find eternal salvation apart from his putting his trust in Jesus Christ the Son of God.

Now, dear friends, *this was the mark of those who were first saved by the great Redeemer,* and I want you to notice how the Holy Spirit sets them in a class by themselves. He makes a distinction between those who first trusted and those who trusted afterwards, because it is a noteworthy honor to have been among the first that trusted Christ. It is a privilege to be led by Jesus, to trust Him first in order of time by begin-

ning in your earliest youth. Happy are those who enter the Lord's vineyard amid the dews of the morning, for these redeem years of time from the bitter servitude of sin, and turn them to blessed account in the delightful service of the Lord Jesus. Such are usually distinguished in the church; early piety makes eminent piety, early consecration often leads to abounding usefulness. The Lord evidently delights to be found in a high degree of those who seek Him early. They come to Him first, and He remembers the kindness of their youth, and the promptness with which they obeyed His call. It is also a great privilege to be called first out of a family or a neighborhood. Perhaps some of you live where there are none who believe in Christ; may the Lord grant you this high favor to be the leader of your household and your district as a believer! May the shower of grace fall first on you, and then bless all those who are round about you! Possibly in your family you do not know of one who has passed from death to life—may you be the first fruits out of spiritual death! I have often observed that where God begins with a family, He goes on with a family. He makes one or two to be the first fruits, and then He considers the lump as also holy, and goes on to bless the rest of the household. Even in nations I scarcely remember a nation or people that have ever received Christ which has been quite left without His blessing throughout after centuries; the fire which the first live coals had kindled has never absolutely been quenched. Therefore, I admire the grey fathers of the past, the pioneers of the army of the Lord. Paul mentions with respect those who were in Christ before him, and so should we honor those who led the way for us by first trusting in Christ. I greatly esteem in my own mind those first believers who were not borne in by the throng of others, but went forward alone. I compare them to the first navigators upon an untried sea, the men who first sailed out of sight of shore, greatly venturing. To be first in perceiving that Jesus of Nazareth was the Anointed of the Lord was no small thing, for none of the princes of this world had any idea of that great fact. These were in truth the "men of light and leading," the foremost minds of their age, peasants and fishermen though they were. These were the first swallows heralding a glorious summer-tide. These were the first songbirds waking the morning to behold the newly-risen sun. It is a patent of nobility to be numbered with these. I would put a holy ambition into the hearts of those who are young, and others who belong to ungodly families, suggesting to them that they should be among their households those "who first trust in Christ." In the history of your tribe you will have an honored place as the first who brought salvation to your house. But, whether you are first or last, if you are saved at all it will be through trust in Christ. Come young, come old, you will still be saved alone by trusting Christ. Come as the leader of your family, or come as the last left out in the cold, you will still have to come by a simple trust and reliance upon the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the one sole way of salvation.

Now, as this was the mark of the elder born, the text goes on to tell us that *it was the mark of the younger born,* "In whom you also trusted, after that you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation." The

Ephesians did not see the Christ, they never listened to the melodious tones of His voice, nor looked into His beloved countenance, but they were converted by hearing the report of Him. They were brought into salvation afterwards, but still it came to the same thing, they received like precious faith with those who in former days had obtained eternal life. Those to whom I now speak trusted in Christ after they had heard the word of truth. Note the expression. It is the word of *the* truth—the most important and vital of all truths. Nothing but truth can truly renew the heart. Falsehood works to evil; only truth works towards righteousness. We heard the word of the God of truth, and it came to us as the word of God; it came with the force of truth, carrying conviction with it, and it came as the word of God, exercising a divine power over our nature, and hence it was that we came to trust in Christ. My unconverted hearer; if you desire to have faith in Christ, listen to the truth, and to the truth only. Shut your ears to error, and hold yourselves only ready to hear the glorious gospel of the blessed God. "Faith comes by hearing," but that hearing must be the hearing of the word of God. It is by the hearing of the word of the truth that men come to trust in Christ, but trust in Christ they must, or they will perish. He is the sole Rock on which we must rest; the one Foundation laid for us to build upon.

The apostle also says to these Ephesians, "You heard the gospel of your salvation." O delightful word! The gospel, the glad tidings! The glad tidings of salvation! Yes, more, the glad tidings of *your* salvation! The gospel brings to us a personal deliverance. We heard Christ preached, and we saw that He had salvation for us. Another man's Savior brings us little joy, but salvation for ourselves is good news indeed. Joyful was the day when my heart said, "Blessed be God, I need salvation, and it is joyful tidings to me that there is an atoning sacrifice by which my sin is put away! I can be reconciled to God through the death of His Son, and in Christ Jesus I can be accepted and beloved of the Lord." By such reflections we were led to a simple and hearty trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. That trust is the broad arrow of the King, set upon all His royal possessions. Where that trust is found, that soul is God's possession; where it is lacking, that soul still lies in the arms of the wicked one. This trust, of which some make so little, is, nevertheless, the distinguishing and the discriminating mark by which we must discern between him that fears God and him that fears Him not.

Note, before I leave this portion of the subject, that, *trust in Christ is of the same nature in all believers*. It is not the same in degree, or in constancy, or in energy, but yet it is the same faith. "You received like precious faith," said Peter. Paul's faith and your faith are the same faith if your faith is true faith. The faith of Abraham and the faith of a little child who has newly believed in Jesus are the same faith. A diamond is a diamond whatever its size may be, and so little faith and great faith are of the same essence. Whether it is a grain of mustard seed or a mountain-moving faith, it is still faith of the operation of God, faith in the same object, and faith working to the same end. Hence John, speaking to his converts, prays, "That you may have fellowship with us: and truly our fel-

lowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." If you are a believer, you have a right to the same fellowship with God as the apostle had, you have the same perfect cleansing by the precious blood, you have the same adoption, the same regeneration, you stand in the same place of love and acceptance, you shall be blessed with the same blessings on earth, and you shall enter into the same joy at the right hand of God. See, then, dear friends, that trust in Christ is the invariable and the infallible mark of the saved ones.

II. Secondly, THIS TRUST IS NO EMPTY NOTION. The trust in Christ which saves the soul is no idle sentiment, but a strong, vital, active principle, having a living and conquering power within it. It is of the operation of the Spirit of God, and hence it is a living and incorruptible seed, which lives and abides forever.

True trust in Christ is an entire reliance upon Him. This day, if you trust Christ, you rest the whole weight and stress of your soul's affairs upon Him. Looking at your sin and your sinfulness, looking at the past, the present, and the future, looking at death and at judgment, you deliberately believe that Christ is equal to every emergency, and you just cast yourself entirely and without reserve upon Him to save you, and to keep you saved forever. No other trust is worth a pin except this. It must be an absolute severance from all reliance upon your past merit, or upon your present resolutions, or upon your future expectations of what you shall be or shall do. You must have done with all other trust if Christ is your confidence. Your motto must be, "Jesus only." In this lifeboat you must swim to glory, but all other you must cast away. Another reliance would be as a weight about your loins to sink you in the sea of despair. O my hearer, have you such a simple, unadulterated trust as this?

A saving trust leads us to accept Christ in all His offices. He is to us not only Priest to put away our sin, but Prophet to remove our ignorance, and King to subdue our rebellions. If as Priest He purges the conscience, as Prophet He must direct the intellect, and as King He must rule the life. We must yield our will to Christ's will that henceforth every thought may be brought into captivity to His holy sway. There is no wholehearted trust in Christ unless Christ is taken as a whole. You cannot have half a Christ and be saved, for half Christ is no Christ. You must take Him as He is revealed in Scripture, Jesus Christ the Son of God, the Savior of men, very God of very God, the faithful and true Witness, your Guide, your Lord, your Husband, your everything. Do you trust Him so? If not, you have not trusted Him at all. This is the trust which brings salvation with it—an entire reliance upon an entire Savior so far as you know Him.

This trust includes obedience to Him; we have not trusted Him at all unless we are prepared to accept His commands as the rule of our lives. The ship is on fire; the bales of cotton are pouring forth a black, horrible smoke; passengers and crew are in extreme danger, but a capable captain is in command, and he says to those around him, "If you will behave yourselves, I think I shall be able to effect the escape of you all." Now, if they trust in the captain they will do precisely as he orders. No sailor or

engineer will refuse to work the pumps, or to prepare the boats, neither will any passenger disobey a rule. In proportion to their confidence in their leader will be the alacrity with which they obey him at once. They believe his orders to be wise, and so they keep to then. Neither their fear, nor their rashness, will lead them to rush to and fro contrary to his bidding if they have a firm trust in him. When the boats are lowered, and are bought one by one to the ship's side, those who are to fill them wait till their turns come, in firm reliance upon the captain's impartiality and prudence. They will get into the boats or they will wait on board, for they consider that his orders are dictated by a better judgment than their own. So far as each man and each woman firmly believes in the superior officer, discipline will be maintained. Do you not see this?

Obedience is the necessary outcome of true and real faith, and there is no trust where there is no obedience. Some of you fancy that you are to trust Christ, and then do what you like. You believe a lie, for such is not the teaching of God's word. The faith which saves is a faith which obeys. Learn this from the sermon of last Sabbath morning [*The Blind Beggar of the Temple and His Wonderful Cure*—Sermon #1977.] Jesus becomes the Physician of the blind man, and puts clay on his eyes, and then He bids him go and wash in the pool of Siloam, and he shall see. If he had refused to go and wash, he would not have received sight. Do not tell me you have trusted for sight; you cannot have done so, unless you go and wash in the appointed pool. We must follow Christ's directions, if we would receive Christ's promises. Trust in Christ implies a yielding up of all that we have and all that we are into Christ's hands. We must be to Him as the wax to the seal, or the clay to the potter. There must be an unreserved submission to His supremacy. O you seeking sinner, will you submit to this? Are you full of self-will and pride? Then these must be taken from you. If you do heartily accept the Lord Jesus as your Lord and King, you have the faith which saves; but if not, what faith have you that is worth the having?

Trust in Christ leads to an open following of Him. Trust is not lame, but it walks in the footsteps of him it relies upon. If the Lord's way is the way of the cross, you will nevertheless follow it, because you will know it to be the right way, since He leads therein. He that is ashamed to confess Christ has good reason to fear that he is not trusting Him. How can I be trusting Him of whom I am ashamed? If I am not on His side in the great battle of life, how can I say that He is my confidence? He declares that he that is not with Him is against Him. How can I trust Him, and yet be against Him? If I refuse to have my name recorded on the muster-roll of His army below, how dare I hope that it is written in the Lamb's book of life above? If I refuse to accept Jesus as my Captain, how can I claim Him as my Savior? A hearty trust in Christ involves an honest confession of Him. "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." "He that with his heart believes, and with his mouth makes confession of Him, shall be saved." Thus the matter is put in Scripture. Will you come out, then? Will you come out on His side? If you will, then you have saving trust. If you

will truly, and fully, and wholly decide for Christ, and live for Christ, then you have the trust which is the mark of His elect.

This trust will lead a man to labor to suffer for Christ as need occurs. The true truster considers it to be real gain to lose for Jesus. He reckons that toil unrewarded of men is the best rewarded form of labor when it is accepted of the Lord. It is enough wage to be permitted to serve the Lord Christ. This is faith; this which counts all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, this which has respect unto a future recompense when the Lord shall come in His kingdom, but looks not for honor among men or any other form of reward here below. True trust cleaves to Christ when the many turn aside, for it knows that He has the living word, and none upon earth beside. My hearer, if you have a real trust in Christ, you will follow His teachings though all the world should run madly after new opinions; you will stand by His truth though you are called a fool for your steadfastness; and you will not be ashamed though no one should keep you in countenance. If you are trusting in Christ, you will spend your life for Him, and reckon it to be the best way of using your existence. God grant us to have more and more of this trust!

That trust which lives on men's lips and never affects their hearts is a deadly delusion. He that says, "I believe," and then never lives according to that belief, is a deceiver, and will find himself deceived if he looks for salvation in such a faith. That presumptuous trust, which indulges in sin and boasts of forgiveness in Christ, is, in itself an aggravation of a sinful life, and will involve its possessor in increased condemnation. Hang up on the gallows of infamy that evil confidence which is in league with unholiness. The conceit of safety while we love sin is a mockery of God's salvation, the base counterfeit of the coin of heaven. God alone gives the faith which works by love and purifies the soul; all other faith is spurious and ruinous.

True trust rejoices in the hope which Christ inspires. It looks for His coming and His glory, His reign and His heaven. It is full of hope; that living, lively, life-giving hope which sustains the heart. This trust has a window of hope through which light comes into the heart in the darkest hours. It lives and triumphs in the future through trusting the promise of Christ Jesus.

If we have such trust as this we shall constantly meet with something whereon to exercise it. God never leaves true trust without work to do. It is not a presentation sword to be worn only on high days and holidays, neither is it like the old armor in the Tower of London, hung up to be looked at; no, true trust is for everyday wear and use, and between here and heaven it will be tested in every conceivable way. That sword will snap if it is not a true Jerusalem blade, and that armor will be pierced if it is not of proof, able to endure the battleaxe of fierce temptation. In a thousand fields our trust will be tried before we shall be able to sheathe the sword and enjoy the triumph. It is in this way that trust in Christ is made by our God to work to the praise of the glory of His grace. Trust in Christ brings to God greater glory than anything else we can produce. "What shall we do," said one, "that we may work the work of God?"

meaning thereby a God-like work, a work so great as to bear a heavenly name. Jesus answered, "This is the work of God; that you believe on Jesus Christ whom He has sent." Dear friend over yonder, you cannot build a row of almshouses to the glory of God, but you can trust Christ with all your heart to the glory of God. You cannot stand up and deliver an eloquent oration to God's praise, but you can by divine grace, pursue a life of faith, and thus praise Him. You cannot be a hero in fight, and turn to flight the armies of the alien, but by trust in Jesus, exercised in prevailing prayer, you can win great victories to the praise of His glory. Walk humbly with your God, in patience possess your souls, and with an unstaggering faith embrace the promises and you shall be found in that cloud of witnesses who are ennobled of God Most High. The Lord grant us, then, to have this trust, which is more than mere notion or sentiment—but a divine principle created by the Holy Spirit.

III. Thirdly, THIS TRUST IN CHRIST IS HIS DUE. There came to me the other day a young man who wished to speak with me about his soul troubles, and he began thus, "Dear sir, I cannot trust Christ." To which I answered, "Have you found out something fresh in His character? Has He ceased to be trustworthy? Pray let me know all about it, for it is a serious matter to me; I have trusted Him with everything I have for time and for eternity, and if He is not fit to be trusted I am in a terrible case." He looked at me, and he said, "I will not say that again, sir, I see I have made a mistake. Truly the Lord Jesus is in every way trustworthy." "Well, then," I said, "Why cannot you trust Him?" I left Him with that unanswerable question. A man is certainly able to trust one whom he regards as trustworthy. My young friend saw that at once, and asked me further. "But may I trust Christ to save me? Am I permitted to trust my soul with Him?" I said to him, "Is not this the command of the gospel: Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved? And are you not warned that if you do not believe in Him you will be damned? How can we doubt that we are permitted to do that which is commanded us of the Lord? I am to preach the gospel to every creature, and this is the gospel—'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved!"' He said, "So, then, if I trust Christ He will save me?" And I replied, "Certainly He will; He is the Savior of all them that put their trust in Him. He says, 'Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.' It is written, 'He that believes on Him has everlasting life,' He that trusts in Jesus is saved." He thanked me, and saying that he had found out the secret, he went on his way rejoicing. I told Him the gospel; he received it, and he entered into rest. I hope I may be equally successful with my hearers at this time. May the Holy Spirit work with me in this case also! I have been talking about faith, and I trust I have not darkened counsel by words without knowledge. It is simplicity itself, but we are exceedingly apt to becloud it. To trust Christ is to find salvation. He that sincerely relies upon Jesus is saved. Now, concerning this trust, I say that this is our Lord's due.

Observe, first, that we are bound to trust Him from *His very name*. His name is, "Christ," that is, the "Anointed." God has sent Him, God has commissioned Him, God has equipped Him, He is the anointed of God;

dare I distrust Him? An ambassador from heaven, with the divine warrant at His back, known to speak in the name of the Lord God, how dare I say I have no confidence in Him? By the glorious name of Christ I claim for Him that you who seek salvation should trust Him implicitly, and trust Him at once.

Remember, next, *His glorious person*. He who is set forth as the object of saving trust is none other than the Son of God. In His Godhead and in His humanity, yes, in His undivided person, He claims your trust. Can you not trust Him that made heaven and earth, without whom was not anything made that was made? Can His power fail you? Can His wisdom mislead you? Can His mind change toward you? Can He be unfaithful? The Son of the Highest, can you not trust Him? Away with the impertinence of mistrust! Can you doubt the Holy and the True? Dare you doubt the Lamb of God? Be not so foolhardy as thus to defy the incarnate Son of God, and treat Him as though He could deceive you.

Next, trust Him, because of *His matchless character*. Have you ever heard of such another as the Christ of God? Among the sons, no one is like to Him—

"All hail, Emmanuel, all divine,
In You Your Father's glories shine
You brightest, sweetest, fairest one
That eyes have seen or angels known."

He is all goodness, the fullness of love, and the pattern of tenderness. He is always true, and always faithful. By that blessed character which He bears, which I am sure you would not for a moment question—a character which even infidels have been forced to admire—I pray you trust Him! Let it not be a question with you, "How can I trust Him?" Say rather, "How can I distrust Him?" What reason can you have for doubt? What excuse for mistrust?

Remember next, *His work and especially His death*. Here is immovable ground for my claim that you should trust Him. Jesus loved men so as to die for them, how can we doubt His love? I do not know how it is with you, but I lose the power to doubt when I realize Christ crucified. That crown of thorns hedges my mind around, and shuts out mistrust. His five wounds kill my suspicions and my fears. A crucified Savior is the life of faith, and the death of unbelief. Can you stand and view the flowing of the Savior's precious blood upon the tree of doom, and not trust Him? What more can He do to prove His sincerity than to die for us? His life is the mirror of love, but in His death the sun shines on it with a blaze of glory so that we cannot steadily look into its brightness. Behold how He loved us! Oh, believe in the crucified Christ, for this is no more than His right and due!

Besides, *He lives, and He has gone up into glory with the same purpose of grace upon His heart*. When men change their places, they often change their minds, but He that loved us when He was despised and rejected, loves us now that He is highly exalted. He is not like the chief butler, who forgot in the palace the promise which he made in the prison. The love of Calvary is with the Lamb in the midst of the throne. On earth He bleeds, in heaven He pleads. You sinners come and trust the ever-

living Christ, for He makes intercession for transgressors! I stand here this morning, and I say to all of you in this house that I claim your confidence in the Lord Jesus. I do not humbly ask for it as a beggar asks for alms; I demand for the Christ of God that you put your trust in Him. God has set Him forth to be a propitiation for sin, that through faith in His blood every one that believes in Him should be saved. I demand your trust in the name of God. Christ deserves it at your hands, and you cannot refuse it without doing Him a gross injustice. I beseech you do not make God a liar, yet, according to the apostle John, "He that believes not has made Him a liar, because he believes not in the Son of God." If Christ were here this morning, standing on this platform, and you saw His pierced hands, and the wound in His side, you would be ready to fall down and worship Him; you can worship Him better still by trusting Him in His absence. "Blessed are they which have not seen, and yet have believed." Trust is among the most sublime forms of adoration. A childlike, tearful, broken-hearted, sincere trust in Christ is a hallelujah unto His name. If you would crown Him, you need not go far for a coronet; your trust is the best diadem you can bring Him. Trust Him, then, at this moment, and thus bow at His feet with cherubim and seraphim. But again I say, do not insult Him by saying that you cannot trust Him. I should think it hard if any of my acquaintances said to me, "Sir, I cannot trust you." It would be a cruel cut. I would inquire of him, "What have I done to merit this? When have I been untrue?" It would be too unkind a stab if it came from one whom I had aimed to benefit. Do not crucify the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame.

O my hearers, I have chosen an old theme this morning, and I have been studiously simple in my style, for my heart longs to bring you to trust in Jesus! I have no desire to be thought a fine preacher. I want to save your souls. This trust is the vital point; do not slight it. Oh that you would believe on the Lord Jesus Christ! If you believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. This is the way of salvation, and it is very plain. God help you to run in it! Lay aside pride and self-confidence, and trust wholly in Jesus, and this will be better than all tears, and despairs, and resolves, and efforts. Fall back into the arms of redeeming love. Lean your whole weight on Jesus. Take your soul to Christ as you take your money to your banker, and leave it in His hands. He will keep it until that day when, at His appearing, you shall appear with Him in glory.

IV. I close by noticing, in the fourth place, what I have already insisted upon, that THIS TRUST IS IN EVERY CASE THE INSTRUMENT OF SALVATION.

Trust is selected by God as the instrument of salvation, and it is not selected arbitrarily, but with great wisdom and prudence. When a man trusts Christ, *by his trust he is brought into mental and spiritual contact with Christ,* and there is a more hopeful influence about that contact than in anything which a man will resolve to do or ever perform in his own strength. It is a grand thing for a man to be elevated above self-confidence, and brought to rely upon such a one as the Son of God. Thus

he is made to feel that he must look to someone greater and better than himself, and he is brought to own that he is a feeble and dependent creature. I think I see in this consideration an adaptation in faith to be the means chosen of God in the matter of salvation.

Moreover, faith is no doubt selected by God to be the means of salvation, because *it never robs God of His glory*. If you and I are to be saved, we shall be saved by God and by His grace alone. Now if the appointed way of salvation leaves something for us to do in order that we may be saved by God, we shall in all probability attribute our salvation to that something, and forget the Lord. If we are bidden to trust, there will be no temptation in that direction, for we cannot rely upon our trust, since its very essence lies in depending upon Christ alone. Trust ascribes salvation to Him who saves. Faith never seeks honor for herself; she is a self-denying grace. Christ says, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace," and by this saying He crowns faith, and He does so because faith crowns Him.

Trust, again, is selected as the instrument of salvation because *it has wonderful power over the heart of God*. Marvelous is the influence of trust. I have in the past illustrated this to you by the power which faith has over us, mortal men. I will venture to tell you an old story, which you have heard from me before. I cannot remember anything better, and you must bear with a repetition. I once lived where my neighbor's garden was only divided from me by a very imperfect hedge. He kept a dog, and his dog was a shockingly bad gardener, and did not improve my beds. So one evening, while I walking alone, I saw this dog doing mischief, and being a long way off I threw a stick at him, with some earnest advice as to his going home. This dog, instead of going home, picked up my stick and came to me with it in is mouth, wagging his tail. He dropped the stick at my feet, and looked up to me most kindly. What could I do but pat him and call him a good dog, and regret that I had ever spoken roughly to him? Why, it brings tears into my eyes as I talk about it! The dog mastered me by his trust in me. The illustration is to the point. If you will trust God as that dog trusted me, you will overcome. God will be held by your trust in such a way that He could not smite you, but must accept you for Jesus' sake. If you do trust Him, you have the key of His heart, the key of His house, the key of His heaven. If you can trust your God in Jesus Christ, you have become a son of God. I see a philosophy in the choice of faith; do not you?

But then faith operates also to salvation by *the effect it has on the character*. When I doubt God, then I follow my own judgment and do what I please, but when I trust Him wholly, and know Him to be my Father and my Friend, then I yield my will to Him naturally, not as a matter of constraint, but with great joy. And is it not a wonderful thing, that this simple trust turns the whole current of our life, and changes the entire color and complexion of our thought? Wisely is it ordained to be the instrument of salvation, since it touches the mainspring of our being, and makes that which was erratic and rebellious become orderly and obedient.

Moreover, brethren, trust saves us, because *it grasps the promises of God, and pleads them*. It says to God, "You have promised this, therefore I pray You do as You have said." The God of truth cannot lie, and therefore, He must keep His word. Trust pleads the sacrifice of Jesus, and says—"Lord, the blood of Your Son was shed for the remission of sins, therefore, I pray You let my sins be remitted. You have said that You have laid on Him the iniquity of us all, I pray You let me be unburdened of my load, because You have laid it on Him." Trust must save, for it has all the promises of the covenant at its back, and the Christ of the covenant at its side, exhibiting His own precious blood. How can trust but save the soul when God declares it shall do so?

In our most honest hours we are driven to faith for our comfort. If in our prosperity our eyes wander to other confidences, in our distress they come back to Christ and His cross. When the head is aching, and the heart is throbbing, and the death-sweat lies on the brow, none of us dare look to works, or feelings, or sacraments, but we cry—

"Hold You Your cross before my failing eyes."

The wounds of Jesus are the ultimate hope of the forlorn. When the soul is about to quit the body, the most eminent preacher, the most earnest worker, the most devout thinker, asks that he may see Jesus, and be washed in His blood and covered with His righteousness. I dare not trust all the heaped up merits of all the saints, but I dare trust the Lord Jesus Christ. Sinner as I am, I am assured of salvation through the sinner's savior. If I had as many souls in this one body as there are souls in this house of prayer I dare trust them all with Christ. If all the sins ever committed by all the men that ever lived since time began were all heaped upon my one guilty head I dare trust Jesus Christ to cleanse me from them all. O come, dear hearts, and trust my Lord! He cannot fail you. According to your faith be it unto you. You shall be able to live graciously, and to die calmly, if your trust settles itself upon Jesus, the Christ, the anointed of the Lord. Before yet the harvest is past and the summer is ended trust Christ, and live. O Holy Spirit, by Your secret workings upon the heart, lead all these thousands to trust in the Lord Jesus! Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—EPHESIANS 1.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—909, 531, 559.

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THREE SIGHTS WORTH SEEING
NO. 1979

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 24, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when you received the word of God which you heard of us, you received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually works also in you that believe. For you, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus: for you also suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews."
1 Thessalonians 2:13, 14.

PAUL seems very much at home when he is writing to the church at Thessalonica. In his letters to that favored people he unveils his inmost feelings. He is rather apt to do so when he feels himself quite at ease, for Paul is by no means a man shut up within himself, who is never at home to anyone. When he is battling with an ungrateful people he keeps himself to sharp words and strong arguments, but when he is writing to a loving, attached, affectionate church, he lets them have the key of his heart, and he lays bare before them his secret emotions. I feel as if we were interviewing Paul tonight—as if we were all sitting in a room with him, and Silas, and Timothy, and were hearing their private conversation. We have come to a roundtable conference with them, and we are listening to their talk about the ministry which God had committed to them. Even in these two verses we hear of how these holy preachers loved the gospel, told out the gospel, and saw that gospel take hold of their hearers' hearts.

They were not obliged to be reticent about their own conduct or their experience with the Thessalonian friends; they were able to tell the story of their transactions with the church of Thessalonica from the very beginning. It is a happy thing to be the pastor of a church where one may wear his heart upon his sleeve. In certain positions prudence demands that we keep ourselves to ourselves until we know more of the character of those who surround us. This is by no means pleasant; indeed it is a painful thing to go through life like a man in armor, who scarcely dares to move a single plate of steel, lest somebody should wound him in an unguarded place. One is glad to know that on the face of this earth there is a church where the minister feels himself as much at home as a brother among brethren, and as safe as a father among his sons, since he is not afraid of being misunderstood. It is my joy that for many years I have found such a place of peace, so that I can say with the Shunammite, "I dwell among my own people." To return to our text; we find the apostle at home, telling out his thoughts in the freest manner. Indeed, he seems to me to show us three sights of the most interesting kind, which

it will be pleasing and profitable for us to consider with care. I shall try to speak upon these three things, one after the other.

The first is, *ministers giving thanks*. "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing." Then we have the cause of it, which brings up a second beautiful sight, namely, *hearers receiving the word*. Paul speaks of them thus, "When you received the word of God which you heard of us, you received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually works also in you that believe." In these words we find a window into the heart of the Thessalonian Christians, and what we see is like a cabinet of jewels. Then we have a third thing which is exceedingly interesting, namely, *new converts exhibiting the family likeness,* turning out to be very like the believers of older churches. Born many miles away from Judea, with a sea dividing them from the first country where the gospel was preached, yet these Thessalonian Gentiles, when converted, looked wonderfully like the converts from among the Jews—"For you, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus: for you also have suffered like things from your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews."

I. To begin, then, we are asked out to a little social party. We are placed in a corner of a cozy room where we have license and favor to gaze upon MINISTERS GIVING THANKS.

Paul, Silas, and Timothy make up a little meeting. No doubt the Lord is with them, for they form what He has made a quorum. They are within the number to which the promise is made, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." These three godly ministers are holding what, if I use a Greek word, I may call a holy eucharistical service—a service of thanksgiving. "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing." It is a pleasant sight to see anybody thanking God, for the air is heavy with the hum of murmuring, and the roads are dusty with complaints and lamentations. It is a delightful vision to see hard-working, earnest ministers of Christ met together and occupying their time with thanksgiving, for many waste their hours in speculations, doubts, and discussions. Let us turn aside and look into their smiling faces! It will do us good to see who these good men were, and how they came to be in this thankful condition.

And first, I would remark that *this thankfulness of theirs followed upon sore travail*. It is of no use for you to say, "I shall thank God for a harvest," if you neither plow nor sow. You will have no harvest without labor and patience. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy," but if there is no sowing and no tears there is no promise of any kind of reaping. I have known young preachers envy those who have had many converts, and I do not wonder that they should, but if they themselves desire to be greatly useful and successful, they must go the same way to work that others have done. In the cause and kingdom of Christ, although the race is not to the swift, it certainly is not to the sluggish, and although salvation is not of him that wills nor of him that runs, it certainly is not of him that does not will and does not run. We may sit and sigh as long as we like, but we shall see no result from lethargy. Dead bees make no honey either in the land of grace or of nature. Neither is anything worked by merely tucking up your sleeves, and making a brave show. We may plot and we

may plan, we may propose and we may expect, but expectations and proposals will fall to the ground like apple-blossoms that have never knit unless we stir ourselves up in the name of God, and throw all the strength we have into the work of faith and labor of love. We shall fail unless we cry for much more strength than nature will yield us. With a vehemence that will not take a denial, we must plead with the Lord until we prevail, for in this matter "the kingdom of heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force." Yes, Paul, and Silas, and Timothy, you would not be sitting together thanking God, if you had not for many a day put your shoulders to the wheel. If you had not labored night and day, if you had not exercised much labor and travail, and been willing to impart to the people, not only the gospel, but even your own lives also, you would never have rejoiced together in the way you have described. Ministers giving thanks to God are ministers who have worked.

And this work of theirs had been backed by holy living, for the apostle is bold to declare, "You are witnesses and God also, how holily and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you that believe." Brethren, we shall not win success unless we hunt for it by careful lives. You wish to see your Sunday school class converted. You are anxious to be blessed in your tract-district. You want to see that little mission hall crowded, and souls converted. Begin by looking to your own life. As the man is, depend upon it, so will his life-work be. There will not come out of any one of us that which is not in us. You must fill the pitcher, or you cannot go round and fill the cups of those who thirstily ask you for water. That which you would impart of grace or life must be in yourself first; and when God has worked it in you, then it shall be yours to work out. The water of life must be placed in you to be a well of living water, springing up, and then the word shall be fulfilled in you—"Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." Personal piety is the backbone of success in the service of God. You can be sure of that. Our mistakes and blunders in the work itself usually originate in faults in the closet, faults in the family, faults in our own souls. If we were better, our works would be better. If we walk contrary to God, He will walk contrary to us.

We cannot be too careful of our conduct if we aspire to be used of the Lord. Though the Lord is jealous of all His servants, He is especially jealous of those whom He honors in service. "Be you clean that bear the vessels of the Lord." That which He might have passed over in one of His common servants He will not wink at in those whom He largely blesses. Therefore, dear friends, let us remember that rejoicing servants of God must be holy servants of God. They shall not give thanks for the purity of their people unless they have set a holy example themselves. This renders all work for Christ a very solemn thing. May we always think it so, and never go to it in a trifling spirit, but with many cries to the Holy One of Israel that He would make and keep us clean and bright as vessels fit for the Master's use!

You see, dear friends, that these three brethren, who met together, and were thanking God, were men who had worked, and who had lived holily, but further notice that, when they congratulated each other, *this mode of expressing their joy by thankfulness prevented their falling into anything like self-laudation*. Neither Paul, nor Silas, nor Timothy, had

anything whereof to glory, and they did not meet together either for self-glorification, or for mutual admiration. They glorified God, and thanked Him without ceasing. Let us copy the example of these holy men. Brother, be much in thanking the Lord. If you have had, one soul converted by your teaching, thank God. If in your class in the Sabbath school, or if in your own family at home, you have had one conversion, thank God. I am afraid that we fail in thankfulness. We pray for blessings, and forget to praise for them. We are not grateful enough. I was chiding myself last Tuesday. I think that I selected twenty-eight persons whom I could venture to propose for church fellowship out of many who came. What a number it was! I felt when the day was over very weary with the blessed service, and then I chided myself that I had permitted weariness to come in when I should rather have been praising and blessing God. I could not help my weakness, and yet I thought my gratitude ought to have borne me above it. Oh, I recollect the day when I would have given my eyes—yes, given my head—for twenty-eight converts! I feel that I would sacrifice my all for such a blessing even now. To think that God should send so many in one week, and give me evidence that there are plenty more to follow! Was not this a delight? They keep coming to confess Christ in great numbers still. We ought to be very joyful for this. The whole church should bless God for so many, and pray for more. If it were one soul saved by twenty years' work, we ought to feel that we could dance for joy, and count the service to be as nothing, but hundreds added to the church should carry us up to the third heaven of delight. As Jacob forgot all his toils when at last he could call the beloved Rachel his own, so should we count nothing hard, laborious, or trying, so long as souls are saved. Oh, to bring souls to God! Whenever we think of it, or see it done, let us say, like these three holy men, "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing."

Notice that *this thankfulness was of a social kind*. "Thank *we* God." They all joined in it. Why, if there is a soul saved anywhere, we ought all to thank God for it! I hope that over at Walworth Road this week there may be some brought to Christ by their special meetings, and if they are so brought, glory be to God. What does it matter which church they join? We hear of God blessing Mr. Moody or somebody else right away in America. Glory be to God for it! The success of any church is our success. It is all in the family. Let us praise God for it. But some are accustomed to look with a rather jealous eye at God's blessing other denominations, or other preachers. Let us fight against this spirit. O brethren, those of us who have had the most of God's blessing, what a mercy it would be if we were cut out altogether by better and more useful men! Let our star cease to shine if brighter stars will but shine, and more souls see the blessed light. Do not those of you whom God has blessed feel that you would gladly get out of the way, and leave a clear road for somebody else, if the Lord would use them more than you? If you do not feel so, I am afraid that the Master will put you out of the way because you are not completely absorbed in His glory. When we are up to the neck in consecration, we are willing to be made nothing of, if God can be glorified thereby. When we cannot be content to see Christ glorified by

others and ourselves laid on the shelf, there is a little bit of self left, and we must try to get rid of it.

At any rate, let us rejoice with those that do rejoice, and triumph in the success of our brethren. Be it ours to make joint-stock in praising God for all that He works by us all! What a sweet thing it would be if we more often met together when God blessed us, and said, "For this cause we thank God"! We ought all to join in the hallelujahs of the church over souls saved by grace. We must not waste our time in allotting the success to this man, or to that man. Let us at once give all the glory to God. One cries, "It was Timothy that did it." "Oh, no!" says another, "Silas is the man that brought me to Christ." "Ah!" says another, "but I like to hear Paul. He is the master preacher. That young Timothy—why, he is nothing, and Silas is nowhere by the side of Paul." Such comparisons are odious. This kind of talk is evil, for all God's servants belong to you all, and you must get all the good you can out of them, but to compare and to contrast them is to trifle. Let ministers discourage such vain talk among their people by their hearty love to each other. It is good for God's servants to get together, and to make a common heap of their spoils, and send up a joint thanksgiving for the joint results of their joint labor. "For this cause thank *we* God without ceasing." Yes, and we do, my brethren! I can see some here tonight who I know join with me in thanksgiving, as I join heartily with them whenever I think of them. I will bless and praise God for His exceeding mercy in saving souls by them, and by me, and by all His workers.

One thing more is to be noticed: *this was a continual thanksgiving day*, for the apostle says, "For this cause also thank we God *without ceasing."* Our gratitude to God should be as lasting as life, as constant as the bounty to which it bears witness. Our American friends have one Thanksgiving Day in the year, but it was Thanksgiving Day all the year round with Paul and Silas and Timothy when they thought of the Thessalonians. They felt as it they never could leave off thanking God for the Thessalonians, for they knew by sad experience that all churches were not of the same happy kind. There were those Corinthians, forever quarrelling and thus grieving the apostle. "Never mind," he says, "we will thank God for the Thessalonians." Oh, but there are those Galatians! They have gone off the line, bewitched by Judaizing teachers. They have wandered into "modern thought," and left the old orthodox faith. "Yes," says the apostle, "those Galatians are a burden to me, but then, blessed be God for the Thessalonians." So I think we ought to bless God for those that are kept, for those that are true, and for those that are faithful, and when our harp is made to hang upon the willows because of part of the work which is barren and unfruitful, yet let us not cease to praise and bless the Lord our God for that part of the work which prospers. Let us magnify Him for those that are brought to know His name. "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing because you received the word of God."

This spirit of thanksgiving tends to make us stronger and stronger for labor in days to come. Yes, let us sing unto the Lord instead of sighing unto ourselves! Let us not rob Him of His revenue of praise even in our most desponding moments. "Although my house is not so with God, yet

has He made with me an everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure." What if Satan does not appear to fall from heaven? What if the devils do not seem to be subject unto us? Yet let us rather rejoice because our names are written in heaven. O child of God, fall back upon what the Lord has done, and this shall make you encounter every difficulty with a brave heart! What the Lord has done is but a token of what He is going to do. Let us hold the fort, and look for better times. Never let us dream of fainting or retreating. Do not say, "I will give it up because of the Galatians." No, but go at it again because of the Thessalonians. Do not say, "I am worried and wearied with the Corinthians." No, but with your heart full of joy, persevere in your Master's service, because many Thessalonians have received the word, not as the word of man, but as the word of God. Hallelujah, there is still something to sing about! Bring out the trumpets; we are not yet silenced, nor shall we be while the Lord lives. The walls of Jericho will be more likely to fall before our trumpets than our trembling.

So I have painted for you an ancient interior—you can see those three good men singing together to the praise of God as they think of their Thessalonian converts.

Ah, my hearers, you could make some of us very happy! If you gave your hearts to the Lord, how you would cheer and comfort us! And some of you that do love the Lord would do us a world of good if you would come and tell us what the Lord has done for your souls. If you have been blessed, do not hide it. If you do, you will rob us of our wages, for our wages come to us very much through our knowing that God has blessed our ministry. Think of this, and treat us fairly and kindly, even as we have sought your good. I, for one, have had such weary times of wolf hunting that I should be heartily glad to have the quiet joy of watching the young lambs, and noting the growth of the sheep.

Now we leave the ministers, and think of the people.

II. The second sight which we have to look at is, HEARERS RECEIVING THE WORD. Let us keep close to the text. "When you received the word of God which you heard of us, you received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually works also in you that believe."

Notice, first, *these people received the word of God*. They were willing to hear it, they were anxious to hear it, they heard it, and they were attentive in the hearing of it. They lent a willing ear and a ready mind. They did not quibble, and dispute, and question, but they received the word of God. Happy preacher who has such people to deal with! If we have them not, let us work on till we gather them. Whether they will hear or whether they will forbear, let us tell the people our Lord's message. But if God favors us with receptive hearers, let us be instant in season and out of season. A good bit of soil like that ought to be most diligently plowed and sown. Thank God, there are, I trust, many here who have received the word of God so far, that they are willing to learn, and anxious to know its meaning, and to feel its power! Among you our labor is lightened by hope, and cheered with expectation.

But next, *these people had doubly received the word of God;* at least, the word is twice mentioned in our version. "When you received the word

of God which you heard of us, you received it." In the Greek those are two different words altogether. The second "received" might, perhaps, better be read "accepted." I do not think that I should be straining a point if I read it, "You welcomed it." They first received it by eagerly hearing it. They wanted to know what it was all about, they were attentive to it, and wanted to understand it. When they had heard it they rejoiced, and said, "Oh, yes, yes, yes, this is the very thing we want!" They embraced it. That word will do—they *embraced* it. They put their arms around it, and would not let it go. They were hospitable to the gospel, and said, "Come in, you blessed of the Lord; come and live in our hearts!" They assented and they consented to the word of the Lord. They first appreciated the gospel, and then they apprehended it by faith. They were like the man that was hungry in a foreign land, and he could not make the people quite understand, but as soon as they brought an article of food which he liked he fell to directly, and made them comprehend that he would be glad of more of that sort of thing. By his hearty reception of what they brought, the hungry man said plainly, "Bring some more of that." So we have a people about us, thank God, that are looking out for the gospel! They are always willing to hear it if men will but preach it, and when they do get it they mean business, and feed upon the word with hearty appetite. How glad I am to feed men that will eat! It is a pleasure indeed. The spiritually hungry welcome heavenly food, they take it into themselves, and receive it as the bread their soul craves after. Oh, what a mercy it is when sermons are preached which feed souls, and souls hear so as to feed thereon! It is a happy day when a full Christ and empty sinners meet. Now, I am persuaded, dear friends, that, if any of you do not know the gospel—really do not know it—and yet are heavy of spirit and cannot rest, and are unhappy, it will be a very blessed thing for you to find out what the gospel is. I am pretty sure that many of you are in such a condition that as soon as you really know that the doctrine proclaimed to you is God's gospel, you will receive it into your very souls, and say, "There is none like it. That is the very thing we have been looking after all our lives." I think I hear one of you say, "I have been hunting after this for years. I did not know that there was anything like it, but it suits me to a turn. It fits me as a key fits a lock; it enters every ward of the lock of my soul as if it were made for me." Brethren, I bear witness that when I received the gospel of Jesus Christ, it seemed to me as if Jesus Christ had made the gospel on purpose for me, and for me only. If there had been nobody else in the world, and Jesus had made a gospel for me only, it could not have been more adapted for me. His gospel exactly suited that poor sinner who, on one snowy morning, looked to Him and was lightened. My dear hearer, *you* will find Jesus the very Savior for you. "But I am an out-of-the-way sinner," cries one. Have you never heard of Him who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on those that are out of the way? What a wonderful text that is for you—you out-of-the-way ones! He can have compassion on those that are out of the way. There is a remedy in the gospel for your disease. For the particular shape your malady has taken the Lord has a special eye. His Son, Jesus, has a plaster suited for your peculiar sore, a medicine adapted to your

peculiar need. May the Holy Spirit bring you to receive it as these Thessalonians did!

And then, if I may trouble you to look at the text again, you will notice that the word *"it"* is in italics, and so is the word *"as."* Let me read the text again, "When you received the word of God which you heard of us, you received not the word of men." You see I have left out the "it" and the "as" because they are not really there, though they are correctly added by the translators as giving the meaning of the apostle. Verbally they are not in the text. I take the sentence out of its connection, and say that *these Thessalonians received not the word of men*. And I like them for that. Oh, but there were very learned men in those days! When Paul was on the earth, and a little before his day, some of the greatest natural minds that ever existed were in Greece teaching the people. Yet the Thessalonians were in such a state that they received not the word of men. They did not listen to Plato, or accept Socrates, for there was a something about them which made them hunger for more than the philosophers could bring them. God's elect are of that mind. You may know the Lord's sheep by the fact that "a stranger they will not follow: for they know not the voice of strangers." They will not receive the word of man; it is too light, too chaffy, too frothy for them. You may put it before them in the daintiest guise, illustrate it with poetry, and prove it by the fictions of science, but they will not feed on such wind. They receive not the word of men; they will not have it; they want something more substantial.

To come back to our translation, *they received not the gospel as the word of men*. In these days there are some who receive the gospel, but they receive it as the word of men. This is their spirit—"Yes, I know that such is the view that is held by Mr. Black, but there is another view held by Dr. White, and another view is upheld by Professor Gray. All these different 'views' are supposed to be very much upon a par." Beloved friends, this is not our way; there is the truth of God, and there is a lie, and I want you always to feel that there is a solemn difference between the true and the false, and that no lie is of the truth. "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God." If one says, "Yes," and the other says, "No," it cannot be that they are both true. Salvation is of grace, or else of works; it cannot be of both. Salvation is the work of God or else of man; it cannot be a joint-stock-company affair. There is truth, and there is error, and these are opposite the one to the other. Do not indulge yourselves in the folly with which so many are duped—that truth may be error, and error may be truth; that black is white, and white is black, and that there is a whitey-brown that goes in between, which is, perhaps, the best of the whole lot.

There is an essential difference between man's word and God's word, and it is fatal to mistake the one for the other. If you receive even the gospel as the word of man you cannot get the blessing out of it, for the sweetness of the gospel lies in the confidence of our heart that this is the word of God. You fall back upon Holy Scripture in the grief of an aching heart, but you cannot rest, however soft the pillow of the promise may seem to be, till you can surely say, "I know that it is of God." If you have even a shadow of a doubt about it, comfort oozes out. The life of comfort flies before doubt, even as love is said to fly out the window when want

comes in the door. Prick the heart—yes, with but a needle's point—and life will go; and prick the heart of faith—yes, even with the smallest doubt, and the life of joy is gone! The joy of faith, and the strength of faith, yes, and the life of faith, is gone when you distrust the word of the Lord!

Are we then infallible? No, but the Book is. Do we infallibly understand the Book? No, but the Spirit of God will teach us what He Himself means, and of those truths which He teaches us we get so firm a grip that we say, "No, no; I am never going to argue about this any more! This is proved to my heart and soul beyond all further question. It is woven into my experience. It has stamped itself on my consciousness. It has done that for me which no lie could do. This is the revelation of God, and I will die sooner than I will ever, by any action of mine, permit a doubt to be cast upon it." Brethren, do you accept the word of God as Infallible? Thus have I learned the gospel of Christ. Have you learned it in this fashion? Then you have received the gospel aright, but not else.

To receive the gospel as the word of man is not to receive the gospel, but to receive it as a revelation from God, true, sure, infallible, so as to risk your whole soul on it, and to feel that there is no risk—this is to receive the gospel in truth. After this manner we receive it with the deepest reverence; not as a thing that I am to judge, but as that which judges me; not as a matter of opinion, but as a sure truth with which I must make my opinion agree. It makes all the difference whether we rule the truth or the truth rules us. The reverent obedience of the understanding to the word of the Lord is a great part of sanctification.

To receive the gospel as the word of God is to receive it with strong assurance. Other things *may be* true, but this *must be* true. Other things may be questioned, but this must be implicitly believed. This gospel of Jesus Christ is of God as surely as you live, and you have not received it at all if you do not know it to be the word of God.

It is to receive it with obedience, because it comes with authority; to say, "This I must yield to. Other truths I may be master of, but this is master of me. Other truths I may or may not hold—they may not be of sufficient importance for me to bow before them, but this truth has God Himself enshrined within it, and therefore I cannot be disobedient to the heavenly vision." With man's statements we are men, but before God's truth we are converted into little children. Is this so with you?

This gospel, if it is received as the word of God, comes with power. Yes, do not let us be misunderstood; the power we mean is by no means a common thing! It is not the force of persuasion, nor the energy of rhetoric; it is divine power—the finger of God. There is still in the world a miraculous force—the divine energy of the Holy Spirit. It does not give us to speak with tongues, neither do we hear it in rushing, mighty wind, but it is as unmistakable to those who have it as if it did come with such extraordinary signs. Sometimes a truth has been borne in upon my soul—and I doubt not you can say the same—with an inward evidence which is beyond all argument for force and certainty. Though it is not logic, we are surer than if conquered by reasoning. We prefer it to the demonstrations of mathematics so far as our own assurance is concerned. In my own case, I could not see, but I did more than see; my inner soul without eyes

beheld the essential principle of the truth. I did not touch it, and yet my inner soul handled it, tasted it, fed on it. It went into the secret spring-head and well-spring of my being, and became one of its first principles. If any man said that the Lord Jesus was not able to save, and that His gospel was not true, I snapped my fingers at him. I could not stop to answer him, because he seemed to be willfully denying self-evident fact, and there is no answering such folly. For a man to tell me that the gospel is not true, when the Spirit seals it on my heart, is all in vain. He might as well tell me that there was no light when I stood gazing on a landscape in the brightness of the sun, or assure me that there was no such thing as air when the strong north wind was on my cheeks. He might as well tell me that there was no nutriment in food when I had just lost my hunger, and felt refreshed by what I had eaten. There are some things that we have no patience to argue about; we have done with discussion concerning them.

If you do not know spiritual things, ask God to let you know them. But you are out of court as a witness; you cannot prove a negative, nor can your negative disprove our positive. We cannot argue with you who are dead in sin, and have not received as yet spiritual senses. What can you know? Why should we dispute with the blind concerning colors? How can we discuss music with the deaf?

"Oh," says one, "but I do not believe in your spiritual experience!" I did not say you did; on the contrary, I expected you *not* to believe in it. But what does that prove? Why, only that you have no spiritual perception! That you have not perceived spiritual things is true, but it is no proof that there are none to perceive. The whole case is like that of the Irishman who tried to upset evidence by non-evidence. Four witnesses saw him commit a murder. He pleaded that he was not guilty, and wished to establish his innocence by producing forty persons who did not see him do it. Of what use would that have been? So, if forty people declare that there is no power of the Holy Spirit going with the word, this only proves that the forty people do not know what others do know. If there are four of us that do know it—well, we shall not cease our witness. We receive God's word as the word of God, because it comes to us with that power which effectually works in them that believe. It works in us a horror of sin, a detestation of self-confidence, and an aspiration after holy and heavenly things. It works in us love to God and good-will to men. It works in us aspirations after the divine. It works in us victory over evil from day to day, and while it does that, the proof of it is within us. The witness and seal of the truth of the gospel are within our own character and being, and we cannot therefore give up our confidence. People who have come to this pass make glad their ministers. Paul, Silas, and Timothy are all happy men when surrounded by hearers who have received the gospel in all its divine authority and power.

III. Now my time has gone, otherwise my third point would have been a very interesting one. These three men are rejoicing in CONVERTS WHO ARE EXHIBITING A FAMILY LIKENESS.

I only call your attention to the fact that the apostle says, "You, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus." Here are people converted in Judea, and they are of a

strongly Jewish type; quite another set of people over at Thessalonica become converted to Christ, and though they are thoroughly of the Greek type, they are very much like the converts in Judea. They know nothing about the law of Moses, they have been heathens, worshipping idols, and yet, when they are converted, the strange thing is, that they are exceedingly like those Jews over yonder, to whom idolatry was an abomination. Greek believers are like Hebrew believers. They have never spoken to one another, and nobody has been there to tell them the peculiarities of Christians, and yet a family likeness is distinctly visible. Were you never startled with this, that if, in the preaching of the gospel today, we were to bring to the Lord Jesus a person of high rank, and another of the very lowest extraction, they have the same experience, and upon the greatest of subjects they talk in the same way? "Oh, but," you say, "They pick up certain phrases." No, no! They differ in speech; the likeness is in heart and character. I frequently meet with converts who have not attended this place of worship more than half-a-dozen times, but they have been converted, and when they come to tell the story of their inner life you would suppose that they had been born and bred among us, and had learned all our ways, for though they do not use the phrases which we use, yet they say the same things. The fact is, we are all alike lost and ruined, and we are born again in the same way, and we find the Savior in the same way, and we rejoice in Him when we do find Him after much the same fashion, and express ourselves very much after the same style. Believers differ in many things, and yet they are alike in the main things. There are no two exactly alike in all the family of God, and yet the likeness to the Elder Brother is to be seen more or less in each one.

It is to me one of the evidences of the truth and divine nature of the work of grace in the heart, that if you take an African Khoikhoi in his village hut, and he is converted, and you take a university man, who has won all the degrees of learning, and he is converted, yet you would not know the tribesman from the Doctor when they begin to talk about the things of God. The Khoikhoi's English may be broken, but his theology is sound. The uneducated man's words may limp, but his heart will leap. Ruin, redemption, and regeneration are the chief subjects in every case. When I am talking sometimes with young converts, and they put their statements oddly and ignorantly, I am reminded of Father Taylor, when he was getting old. The old man sometimes lost the thread of his discourse, and whenever he did so, he used to say, "There, I cannot find the end of that sentence, but I am bound for the kingdom! Brethren, I am bound for the kingdom!" Off he went to something else, for though he could not complete the paragraph he was bound for the kingdom. Some brethren and sisters cannot see to the end of their own experience, but they are bound for the kingdom. They cannot put this and that together to make it ship-shape, but you can see that they are bound for the kingdom. There is the same tear of repentance, the same glance of faith, the same thrill of joy, the same song of confidence; each one according to his measure enjoys the same life, if he is indeed bound for the kingdom. The babe is like the man, and the man reminds you of the babe. We are one spirit in Christ Jesus.

I will not enlarge, except to say that it makes us sing for joy when we can see in ourselves a likeness to the children of God. We, too, resemble the early saints in our experiences. Opposition and tribulation come to us in our measure as they did to them. There are the same afflictions, the same persecutions, the same trials, wherever the work of Christ goes on, but there is the same mighty God to carry on the work of grace, and the same promises of grace to be fulfilled to every believer.

Dear friends, are you believers in the Lord Jesus Christ? If you are, joy and rejoice with me; but if you are not, oh, how I wish you were! Whatever comforts of life you enjoy, you are missing the only thing that makes life worth having. If you are not yet resting on Christ Jesus, you have not yet found out the kernel of the nut. You are boring away at the hard shell of life, and unless you turn to Christ you will die worrying and wearying over the shell and you will never taste the sweet kernel. If you did but know our Lord Jesus, if you did but trust Him, if you did but find salvation in Him, then you would find that if earth cannot be heaven, it can become marvelously like it. The earnest of our everlasting inheritance may be enjoyed even here. Would God you would seek my Lord and Master, for if you seek Him He will be found of you! What a pleasure it would be if everyone at this time would receive the gospel as the word of God! Spirit of God, grant that it may be so, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
1 THESSALONIANS 1.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—433, 483, 331.

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FOLLY OF UNBELIEF
NO. 1980

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, AUGUST 28, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Then He said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken."
Luke 24:25.

THE two disciples who walked to Emmaus and conversed together, and were sad, were true believers. We may not judge men by their occasional feelings. The possession of gladness is no clear evidence of grace, and the existence of depression is no sure sign of insincerity. The brightest eyes that look for heaven have sometimes been holden so that they could not see their heart's true joy. Be not cast down, my brethren and sisters, if occasionally the tears of sadness bathe your cheeks. Jesus may be drawing near to you, and yet you may be troubled by mysteries of grief.

The Lord Jesus Christ came to the two disciples, and took a walk of some seven miles with them to remove their sadness, for it is not the will of our Lord that His people should be cast down. The Savior does Himself that which He commanded the ancient prophet to do. "Comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God. Speak you comfortably to Jerusalem." Thus He spoke and thus He acts. He was pleased when He went away to send us another Comforter, because He wishes us to abound in comfort, but that promise proves that He was, and is, Himself a Comforter. Do not dream, when in sadness, that your Lord has deserted you; rather reckon that for this very reason He will come to you. As her babe's cry quickens the mother's footsteps to come to it more speedily, so shall your griefs hasten the visits of your Lord. He hears your groans; He sees your tears—are they not in His bottle? He will come to you as the God of all consolation.

Observe that, when the Savior did come to these mourning ones, He acted very wisely towards them. He did not at once begin by saying, "I know why you are sad." No, He waited for them to speak, and in His patience drew forth from them the items and particulars of their trouble. You that deal with mourners, learn hence the way of wisdom. Do not talk too much yourselves. Let the swelling heart relieve itself. Jeremiah derives a measure of help from his own lamentations; even Job feels a little the better from pouring out his complaint. Those griefs which are silent run very deep, and drown the soul in misery. It is good to let sorrow have a tongue where sympathy has an ear. Allow those who are seeking the Lord to tell you their difficulties; do not discourse much with them till they have done so. You will be the better able to deal with them, and they will be the better prepared to receive your words of cheer. Often, by fac-

ing the disease of sorrow the cure is half effected, for many doubts and fears vanish when described. Mystery gives a tooth to misery, and when that mystery is extracted by a clear description, the sharpness of the woe is over. Learn, then, you who would be comforters, to let mourners hold forth their wound before you pour in the oil and wine.

Learn also a sacred lesson, O you mourners! It is well for you, when you are pouring out your griefs, that you do so before the Lord. These two troubled wayfarers, though they knew it not, were telling their sorrow to Him who best of all could help them to bear it. You may tell your friends, if you will, and it will be some relief to you, but if you seek the throne of grace, and make the Redeemer your chief confidant, your relief will be sure. Get you alone; shut the door; bow there apart from the disciples, and say, "Jesus, Master, I would tell You that which saddens me! O great High Priest, who was compassed with infirmities, You will understand me better than my nearest friend, and I would place myself beneath Your care!" How great the privilege, that we have access with boldness to the ear and heart of Jesus our Lord!

Again, learn another point of wisdom. When our Lord had heard their statement of distress He might immediately have comforted them; a word would have done it. Did He not say, "Mary," and did she not at once turn and say, "Rabboni" with ecstatic delight? He went more wisely to work than to administer hurried consolation; He rather rebuked than encouraged them. He began by saying, "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!" Observe that I quote the Revised Version, for the Authorized is too harsh. Our Lord did not call them *fools,* but foolish persons. The difference is rather in the manner than in the sense. He chided them; gently, but still wisely. He let them know that their unbelief was blameworthy, and He called them foolish for indulging it. O beloved brother, if your Master chide you, do not doubt His love! If, when you go to Him in grief, He answers you roughly, it is His love scarcely disguised, which thus seeks your truest welfare. If you believe in your Lord, you will reply, "Master, say on." If He calls you foolish, you will wonder that He does not say something worse of you, and in any case you will trust Him after the manner of Job when He said, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

Especially observe that our Savior's rebuke was aimed at their unbelief. Unbelief, which we so often excuse, and for which we almost claim pity, is not treated by our Lord as a trifle. It is for this that He calls them foolish; it is about this that He chides the slowness of their hearts. Do not let us readily excuse ourselves for mistrust of God. If we ever doubt our gracious Lord, let us feel ourselves to be verily guilty. Regard unbelief as a fault rather than a weakness. Brace yourselves to seek a braver and more constant faith than you have reached as yet. Why should we go on blundering, and misjudging, and therefore fretting when a little consideration will set us right, and at the same time cause us to honor our Lord, and to be ourselves filled with joy and peace through believing?

I am going to handle this rebuke as God the Holy Spirit shall help me; first addressing it *to the true believer,* and secondly, *to the seeker*. I shall have to bring forth some bitter things which will act as a tonic, but by giving tone to your system, they will, in the end, remove your fears better

than sweeter matters would have done. Hear then our Lord say, "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!"

In speaking to believers, I would have them observe that our Lord rebuked their unbelief under two heads; first, *as being folly,* and secondly, *as arising from slowness of heart.*

I. First, then, UNBELIEF IS FOLLY. Not to believe all that the prophets have spoken, and not to draw comfort out of it is great folly. Folly! Note the word. "O fools! O foolish men!" It is folly such as makes the tender Jesus cry out.

It is folly because it arises from lack of thought and consideration. Not to think is folly. To give way to sadness, when a little thought would prevent it, is foolishness. Is it not? If these two disciples had sat down and said, "Now the prophets have said concerning the Messiah that He shall be led as a lamb to the slaughter, and thus was it with our Master," they would have been confirmed in their confidence that Jesus was the Messiah. If they had said, "The prophet David wrote, 'They pierced My hands and My feet,'" they would have recognized in this their crucified Lord. And if then they had turned to the other passages of the prophets in which they speak of Messiah's future glory, they would have been refreshed with hope. In the Scriptures they would have found types, and figures, and plain words, in which the death and the rising again, the shame and the glory of Christ are linked together, and His cross is made the road to His throne. Had they compared the testimony of the holy women with the prophecies of the Old Testament, they would have obtained ground of hope. The women reported that the body was no longer in the tomb, and that they had seen a vision of angels, who said that He was alive; two apostles went to the sepulcher, and gave a like report; and this tallied with the Lord's own words, in which He made Jonah His type, because he came up from the deep on the third day. But they forgot the Scriptures; they did not think of that great source of hope. Their eyes were dimmed with tears, so that they did not see what was plain before them. How many precious texts have you and I read again and again without perceiving their joyful meaning, because our minds have been clouded with despondency! We take the telescope, and try to look into heavenly things, and we breathe upon the glass with the hot breath of our anxiety till we cannot see anything, and then we conclude that there is nothing to be seen. Do you not think, beloved, you that are depressed and sorrowing today, that if you thought more of the promises revealed in God's Word, you would soon see things differently, and would rise out of your downcast condition? You put your Bibles away, and read nothing but the roll of your troubles. There are no handkerchiefs for the tears of saints like those which are folded up within the golden box of God's Word. He who inspired this volume is "The Comforter," will you not apply to Him in your dark hours? O you, whose melancholy arises from forgetfulness of the words of your heavenly Father, of the tender Savior, and of the divine Spirit, I beseech you be more considerate! Think of God's providence, His unchanging love, His power, His faithfulness, His mercy. Think of the promises, and as you handle them by thought, they will exhale a sweet perfume which will delight you. Holy thought will charm you

out of your griefs. But what folly it is that, for want of thought, we should bow our heads like the bulrush, when, like the sunflower, we might look at the light till we became little suns ourselves!

Unbelief is folly *because it is inconsistent with our own professions*. The two disciples professed that they believed in the prophets, and I have no doubt that they did so. They were devout Jews who accepted the Holy Books as divinely inspired, and therefore infallible, and yet now they were acting as if they did not believe in the prophets at all. Are we not often found guilty of like inconsistency? O brethren, it is one thing to say, "I believe the Bible," but it is quite another thing to act upon that belief! We have more of seeming faith than of real faith. That Book is true, and every promise in it is true, and I know and believe that it is so, and yet, when I come to the test, how much of faith evaporates, and how sadly my fluttering heart proves that my belief was more in fancy than in fact! There is more infidelity in the best believer than he dreams of. We think we believe in the whole, and yet, when it comes to the detail, and we have to deal with this promise and with that as a matter of fact in everyday life, we have to light a candle, and sweep the house, to find our faith. What folly this is! If the Word of the Lord is true, it is true, and we ought to act upon it, if it is not true, why do we profess to believe it? That which is unquestionably true will bear all the strain and pressure which life and its trials may put upon it, and it is for us to act upon this belief. Brethren, it ill becomes us to play at believing; let us have our wits about us, and make serious business of that which is not sent to delude us, but soundly to instruct us. The Word of the Lord is in harmony with His providence, and as we believe Him as to the one, we must trust Him as to the other. We may safely rest the weight of our body and soul, our present and future, upon the sure promise of a faithful God, and we are bound by our profession to do so. It is folly to call ourselves believers in the Bible, and then to doubt and distrust.

Folly, again, is clearly seen in unbelieving sadness, because *the evidence which should cheer us is so clear*. In the case of the brethren going to Emmaus they had solid ground for hope. They speak, to my mind, a little cavalierly of the holy women as "certain women." Yet there were no better disciples in the world than those women. They were surely the best of the chosen company—Mary and the Magdalene. Even the testimonies of Peter and John, the very chief of the apostles, are not sufficiently valued, for they speak of "certain of them which were with us." I say not they speak disrespectfully, but there is a slurring of their witness by casting a doubt upon it. Concerning these godly women, they leave an impression on my mind as if they had said, "Women will talk, and these women said that they had seen a vision of angels, which said that He was alive." It is rehearsed as hearsay of a hearsay; they said that they had seen those who had said. If they had been pushed to the point, the two disciples would not have allowed that the Magdalene and the other women, or Peter, or John, were unworthy of credence, and yet they were by their sadness acting as if the witnesses were mistaken. If those who were at the empty sepulcher were to be believed, why did they doubt? The evidence which they themselves detail, though we have it only in brief in this place, was conclusive evidence that Christ had left the tomb,

and yet they doubted it. Now, dear friends, you and I have had superabundant evidence of the faithfulness of God, and if we are unbelieving, we are unreasonable and foolish. At least, I stand here to confess that whenever I doubt my God it is on my part a superfluity of naughtiness. I have never had any reason to distrust Him. These many years that I have trusted in Him He has never failed me once. Experienced Christians, how can you waver in your confidence? If we disbelieve, is it not folly? If the Savior does not call us fools, we are forced to call ourselves so.

We could not suppose that the promise, covenant, and oath of God could fail. The supposition cannot be tolerated for an instant. Thousands of souls are resting everything upon the faithfulness of God, and desire no other security, but if God is unfaithful, what will become of them? If the foundations are removed, what can the righteous do? Then they that have fallen asleep in Christ have perished, or, even if they are in heaven, what security have they there if God can change? I feel quite safe on board the ship of the covenant, for all the saints are floating in this one vessel. If God fails, then we all fail together, and that is an end of faith, and hope, and all things. Therefore, let us not be so foolish as to sin against the light of clear truths. Let us believe what we have known, and tasted, and handled. Let past experience anchor us firmly as to future circumstances.

Unbelief is folly, because *it very often arises out of our being in such a hurry*. They said, "Beside all this, this is the third day." I know that they had expected great things on that third day, and were justified in expecting them, but still, the day was not yet over, and they were in as great a fever as if it were past a month ago. Although the Savior had said that He would rise on the third day, He had not said that He would appear to them all on the third day. He told them to go into Galilee, and there they should see Him, but that meeting had not yet come. "He that believes shall not make haste," but they that do not believe are always restless. Well is it written, "You have need of patience." God's promises will be kept to the moment, but they will not all be fulfilled today. Divine promises are some of them bills which are payable so many days after sight, and because they are not paid at sight we doubt whether they are good bills. Is this reasonable? Are we not foolish to doubt the sure handwriting of a God that cannot lie? Because the Lord has not carried out your interpretation of His promise in the way of your own dictation, therefore you question His truthfulness! If the vision tarries, will you not wait for it? It will come in its own appointed time; would you have it hurried on for you? What next? Shall the sun and moon be quickened in their pace to suit your rashness? Must God Himself alter His purposes at your bidding? Truly, things have come to a pretty pass! Are you man or God? If you are a man, wait God's time, and in your patience possess your soul. If you do not, but, like a fretful child, must have everything now, or else cry and fight, you deserve the rod, and well may the Lord say to you, "O foolish one!"

Yet, again, I think we may well be accused of folly whenever we doubt, because *we make ourselves suffer needlessly*. There are enough bitter wells in this wilderness without our digging more. There are enough real causes of sorrow without our inventing imaginary ones. I believe that the

sharpest griefs in the world are those that men make for themselves. No asp ever stung Cleopatra as terribly as that which she held to her breast herself. Certain of our friends spend all their days in stitching away to make themselves garments of sackcloth. I have seen the cobbler with his lap stone cobbling up a trouble, and he has done his work so well that the shoe has pinched his foot for many a day. It seems a pity, does it not? Yet, brethren and sisters, we have those about us who are great adepts at self-worrying. When you were boys, I do not suppose you ever went into the woods to find a stick for your father to beat you with, but you have done so again and again since you have been men, and the more is the pity that you should be so foolish. If these two travelers had considered and believed, they would have known that Christ was risen from the dead, and as they walked along to Emmaus, if indeed they had ever taken that walk at all, their faces would have brightened at the prospect of soon seeing Him they loved so well.

I want you to notice yet further that it was folly, but *it was nothing more*. I feel so thankful to our Lord for using that word. Though we ought to condemn our own unbelief with all our hearts, yet our Savior is full of tenderness, and so freely forgives, that He looks upon our fault as folly, and not as willful wickedness. He does not take our doubt as an affront, but He calls it folly. He knows that it is true of His children, as it is of ours, that folly is bound up in the heart of a child. He puts that down to childish folly which He might have called by a harsher name. I am sure that any dear, obedient child will feel thankful if his father calls his fault by the lighter name of folly, because it will prove that he loves him, and will endeavor to teach him better. It was not wicked rebellion; there was no enmity in it. They loved their Lord, though they feared He had not risen from the dead. I do not want you to draw undue comfort from this gentle word, but yet I would have you lose none of the cheer it is meant to convey. You that are vexed at your own doubts are not to come to the conclusion that the Lord utterly rejects you. He discriminates between the folly of a child and the wickedness of a rebel; He knows what is in your heart, and knows that you are His. You are like a ship that is well anchored, and though the tide is rushing in, and makes your vessel roll from side to side, so that you stagger, yet the vessel is not loosed from its moorings, neither are you in any danger. Your faith is fixed on Christ, and this anchor holds you; though you are tossed about a little, you will suffer no shipwreck because of sin, but much sea-sickness because of folly. So much concerning unbelieving sadness as folly.

II. In the second place, our Lord rebuked them for SLOWNESS OF HEART TO BELIEVE.

This is an evil greatly to be fought against, but it is by no means a rare sin among the people of God. Let me try and bring home the charge made by our Lord against the two disciples, since I fear it applies to us as much as to them. Our hearts are full often sluggish in believing; at least, mine is so, and I suppose we are much alike.

First, we are slow in heart to believe our God, for *we are much more ready to believe others than to believe Him*. I am often amazed with the credulity of good people whom I had credited with more sense. Credulity towards man and incredulity towards God are singular things to find in

the same person. We cannot help seeing in the daily papers how easily people are duped. Get up a prospectus, and a list of names as directors, including a titled pauper, and you can bring in money by the wagonloads. The confidence trick can still be successfully performed. One impostor lived for months by calling at the door of guileless old people in almshouses, and telling them that a cousin in America had died, and left them a fortune, but it was essential that fees should be paid at the government offices, and then the legacy would at once be handed over. Times after times the money has been scraped together, the rogue has gone his way, and no more has been heard of the cousin in America. There are so many simpletons about that rogues reap harvests all the months of the year. And yet the God of truth is doubted! Yet the incorruptible Word is mistrusted! This makes our slowness of heart in believing God all the more sad a sign of our inward depravity of nature. We *can* believe, for we believe in man. In the course of our lives we are fools enough to believe in men to our cost; in fact, it is not easy to rise out of this snare, and yet we are slow at heart to believe our God. Oh, my brethren, can we excuse ourselves? The Lord forgive and cleanse us! Let us henceforth accept every syllable of God's Word as infallible, while we turn our unbelief towards man and his philosophies and infidelities!

Is it not clear that we are slow of heart to believe, since *we judge this of others when they are mistrustful?* When we see our brethren in trial desponding and distrusting, we are very apt to think them needlessly dull, and sinfully slow to grasp the promise, and yet, if we come into the same case, we are by no means better than they. That which we censure, we commit. The beam is in our own eye as well as the mote in our brother's eye. You have come home from visiting a friend who was distressed at heart, and you have said, "I cannot make her out, I have put the promises before her, but she is so foolish that she refuses to be comforted." Yes, and from this learn what you may be! Within a month's time, you may be sinking in the same mire. An evil heart of unbelief is to be found in many a breast where its existence is least suspected. But if we see the folly of others, will we not confess our own? Dare we commit what we condemn? Did you ever say of Job, "It was a pity that after all his patience, he spoke so bitterly, and cursed the day of his birth"? I wonder how many of us would have been any better than Job. I dare not hope that I should have been worthy to unloose the laces of his shoes. If I had been bereaved as he was, and tortured with like burning boils, and worst of all, irritated by critics with their cruel candor and malignant sympathy, I could not have behaved so grandly as he did. Let us not severely judge others. They ought to believe, of course; they ought to be more cheerful, they ought not to let their burdens crush them so completely, but when we also are tempted shall we be so very much superior? I fear not. Let us see ourselves in the weakness of our brethren, and confess that the Savior's words are true; we are "slow of heart to believe."

There is another point in which we are very slow of heart to believe, namely, that *we do believe, and yet do not believe*. We must be very slow of heart when we say "Yes, I believe that promise," and yet we do not expect it to be fulfilled. We are quick of mind to believe mentally, but we are slow of heart to believe practically. The very heart of our believing is slow.

Our dear friend, Mr. George Mueller, whom may God long preserve, says that one of his objectives in journeying about, at his advanced age, from church to church, is to try and lead God's people to real faith in the promises of God. He says, "As for fifty-seven years I have seen how very little *real* trust in the living God there is (generally speaking), even among true Christians, I have sought, in these my missionary tours particularly, to strengthen their faith, because, in the course of my pastoral labors, the blessed results of *real* confidence in God on the one hand have come to my knowledge, and the misery of distrusting Him on the other." Mr. Mueller's objective is a very desirable one, but what fools we must be that this should be necessary! There are plenty of people who believe God after a superfine kind of fashion up there on the edge of the moon, or "at the back of the north wind," but they do not believe the Lord in their shops, or on their beds, or in their kitchens; they cannot believe as to bread, and cheese, and house rent, and clothes. They talk about believing in the Lord for eternity, but for this day and next week they are full of fear. True faith is everyday faith. The faith of the patriarchs was a faith which dwelt in tents, and fed sheep. We want a faith which will endure the wear and tear of life—a practical, realizing faith, which trusts in God from hour to hour. Oh, to be delivered from shams, and windbags, and to believe God as a woman believes her husband, or a child believes its father! I hear of writers of "the realistic school," we want believers of the realistic order. We need faith in which there is backbone and grit. We are sham believers, and so we lead sham lives. The promises of God speak to us as Jesus spoke to His disciples when He rose from the dead; each one cries, "Handle Me, and see." God's words are not chaff, but wheat; not wind, but bread. We are slow of heart because, while we think we believe all that God says to us, it often turns out that our believing is all a puff.

These two disciples must have been slow of heart to believe, again, because *they had enjoyed so much excellent teaching,* and they ought to have been solid believers. They had been for years with Jesus Christ Himself as a tutor, and yet they had not learned the elements of simple faith. "Oh," you say, "they were very slow!" Are not you the same? How many years have you been with Jesus? Perhaps for even thirty years, He has Himself taught you, has He not? Let me remind some of you of the remarkable events of your lives. What wonderful providences you have seen! What singular deliverances you have experienced! What divine upholding you have enjoyed! What heavenly consolations you have received! If you doubt the Savior, you may well be called "slow of heart to believe." After what you have experienced, my brother, the shadow of a doubt should never fall upon you! Have you not said many times, in the flush of your gratitude for some signal favor, "There, I can never doubt my Lord again"? You were foolish when you made that boastful observation, but you are more foolish still for running back from it. You have passed through the Red Sea, and with your timbrel in your hand you have sung unto the Lord, and yet, perhaps, after a short march, you have tasted the bitter waters of Marah, and opened your mouth in murmuring. Only God is wise, and we are fools. He alone has understanding, and we are "slow of heart."

Once more, these two disciples were very slow of heart to believe, because *there is so much in the Word which ought to have convinced them.* See how the Savior puts it—"Slow of heart to believe *all* that the prophets have spoken." What a mighty "all" that is! Brethren, are you half aware of the treasure hidden in the field of Scripture? Are you as familiar with your Bibles as you should be? If so, you will join with me in speaking of Scripture as having almost a redundance of confirmatory testimony. There is rock enough here for us to build upon. We have here, not only precept upon precept, but promise upon promise, and all these confirmed by pledge, and oath, and covenant of the Lord God Almighty. The teaching of Scripture is so full, so varied, so convincing, that we are indeed, slow of heart if our faith is not firm and immovable. Brethren, a lack of familiarity with the Word of God is very often the seed-plot of our doubts! Half our fears arise from neglect of the Bible. Our spirits sink for want of the heavenly food stored up in the inspired Volume. God forbid that you should fly to light literature to give your mind a boost! Go to the solid literature of the promises, and be established with food more suitable for an immortal soul. Like Luther, say, "Come, let us sing a psalm, and drive away the devil." There is no enchantment for the casting out of evil spirits like a resort to the divine Word. When you see more of what God has revealed, you will rise out of your doubts and fears, and your slowness of heart to believe will depart from you.

Before I leave this point, I beg you to notice that the Savior does not say that they were "hard of heart," but "slow of heart." I like to notice that. When He is most severe, He is still tenderly discriminating. "Slow of heart" we are, but there is no enmity in our heart towards Him. It is slowness, and that is bad enough, but our Lord graciously helps our pace. Our face is in the right direction, and our feet are going the right way, but we are slow in heart, and lame in faith. As David spared Mephibosheth, and admitted him to his table, though lame in both his feet, so the Lord loves us, and communes with us, slow of heart though we are. It is bad to have a slow heart, very bad, but it would be much worse to have an unrenewed heart. With all our doubts and fears, we have no longer a heart of stone, but a heart of flesh, which mourns because of its sinful unbelief. The Lord knows the difference between the sin of hating the truth and the folly of doubting it. Strive against this slowness of heart, but still let not Satan come in as an accuser, and condemn you as though you were not a child of God at all.

So there I leave it. There is the Master's gentle rebuke, not meant to discourage you, but to encourage you. He calls you foolish in order that you may be so no longer. Believe, and this shall be your wisdom.

III. Will the Lord's people kindly pray for me while I now speak *to the unconverted?* Ask that I may have God-speed while I try and speak to those who are seeking the Lord, and have not yet believed in Him. I want to say to them just this, "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe!" Some of you are really seeking the Lord, but you say that you cannot believe, though you long to believe. You are not like the spider, whose motto is, "I get everything out of myself." You do not hope to spin salvation out of your own heart, but you own that salvation must be through faith in Christ. So far so good, but how is it that you do not at once believe?

You say you cannot. How is it that you cannot believe in Jesus? He commands you to believe in Him, and promises that you shall be saved. Trust Him, and you shall live as surely as His Word is true.

Listen! This unbelief proves you to be foolish and slow of heart, for *there are other parts of His Word which you easily believe*. If there is a threat or a condemnation, you believe it. If there is a text that speaks of judgment to come, you believe it. You have a quick eye for anything which reads hard and looks dismal. Have I not seen you reading the Word, and stopping at a passage, and saying, "Alas! This makes my case hopeless. I have sinned the sin that is unto death"? You believe in more than God has said, for you read your own thoughts into God's Word, and make it say more than it means. You are ready enough to take in the hard things, but the gracious promises of the loving Christ you will not believe. How can you justify this? How foolish you are! The promises are in the same Book as the threats, and if you believe the one, believe the other. Certainly, the cheering words come from the same inspiration as the depressing ones; if you believe that which looks dark, believe that which looks bright.

Next, you are very foolish, because *your objections against believing are altogether poor and puerile*. I should think I have heard hundreds of them in my time, but out of all the objections raised by troubled souls against believing in Jesus, there is not one worthy of serious discussion. One man cannot believe in Jesus because he does not feel humble enough; as if that affected Christ's power to save. If he felt more humbled, then he could believe in Jesus. Would not that be just believing in himself, and trusting in his own humility instead of trusting in Christ? One man cannot believe in Christ because he is not like a certain great saint. Does he expect that he is to be like a great saint when he first comes to Christ? Has not Christ come to save sinners? Another says he cannot believe because he has not felt the terrors of the law and the dread of hell. Does he think that his terrors are to save him? Would his dreads and horrors help Christ to save him? Would he not be trusting his terrors, and not Christ? The Lord Jesus says, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." The gospel is to be preached to every creature and every creature that believes it shall be saved; but these people back out of it, and begin hammering out reasons for their own destruction. A sadly suicidal business this! Let the devil invent reasons for my not being saved; it is not a business which can bring me any form of good. Nothing can stand against the promise of God; He commands me to believe on His Son Jesus, and I do believe, and I am saved, and shall be saved, despite all the objections which may be raised by carnal reason.

Though you find it so hard to believe Christ, *you have found it very easy to believe in yourself*. Not long ago you were everybody, and now you cannot believe that Christ is everybody. You thought you were very good, you were wonderfully easy in your own mind when you ought to have been afraid. What! Was it easy to believe your poor self, and can you not believe the faithful word of a good and gracious Savior who says that if you trust Him you shall be saved?

Moreover, *you are very apt now to believe Satan* if he comes and says that the Bible is not true, or that Jesus will not accept you, or that you have sinned beyond hope, or that the grace of God cannot save you. Of course, you believe the father of lies, and you go mourning and moping, when you might at once go singing and dancing if you would believe your Savior. Jesus bids you trust and live and Satan says it is of no use your trusting; you believe Satan, and treat your Lord as if He had intended to deceive you. "O fools, and slow of heart!"

Then you know *how ready you are, you seekers, to stop short of Christ.* If you hear a sermon and get a little melted, and go home and pray a bit, you get quite easy and say, "Now I am on the road." Why, your melting and your praying are not the road to heaven; Jesus says, "I am the way." You are not on the way till you get to Him. You have been in gracious company, and singing holy hymns; you feel quite good, and are highly pleased with yourselves. What right have you to be restful even for a moment? How dare you linger till you have reached the city of refuge, which is Jesus Christ? Till you believe in Christ you have no right to a single moment's peace, or hope, or joy, and yet you do get a sort of peace and a kind of hope, which are only sparks of your own kindling which will die out in blackness. Because you are content to trust in something short of Christ, I say to you—Why not rest in Jesus? O fools, and slow of heart! Refuges of lies you fly to, but the true refuge of the finished work of Jesus Christ you do not accept? Why is this?

And then some of you are foolish and slow of heart because *you make such foolish demands upon God.* You would believe if you could hear a voice, if you could dream a dream, if some strange thing were to happen in your family. What! Is God to be tied to your fancies, that you will not believe Him unless He does this and that extravagant thing? If He chooses to bring some to Himself by extraordinary means, must He do the same with you, or else you prefer to be cast into hell? Surely you are mad. Who are you that you are to dictate to the Lord, and say He shall do this, or that, or else you will refuse to believe Him? And so you will trample on the blood of Jesus, and turn your back upon the kingdom of heaven, unless an angel is sent to you, or you hear a voice from heaven! O fools, and slow of heart, to make these irrational demands upon the ever-blessed God!

You are foolish and slow of heart because, to a great extent, *you ignore the Word of God and its suitability to your case.* If a soul in distress will take down the Bible, and turn it over, he need not look long before he will light upon a passage which describes himself as the object of mercy. "The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick; I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Does not that fit you? "Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake His way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." Does not that fit you? "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Does not that apply to you? Why, if you will but look through the Word, you shall find passages so pertinent to your condition that, as a key fits a lock, they will seem made for you! Those two disciples did not, for a

while, see how the prophets met the case of the crucified and risen Christ, but as they did see it, their hearts burned within them. As you also see how God has provided for your condition in His Word, in His covenant, in His Son, your sadness will flee away.

I close with this one word of warning to those of you who are distressed in heart, and are falling into the habit of looking for reasons why you should *not* believe in Christ. I do pray you to leave off this silly practice. Before this evil becomes chronic with you, quit it as a deadly thing. People can reason themselves down, but they cannot reason themselves up again. If you see a door open, in God's name hasten in, for one of these days you may be so blind as never to see an open door again. Seize this opportunity, and while Christ stands and says, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden," come along with you. If you sit down to argue against Christ, He may allow your conclusions to stand to your own destruction. Those who are so foolish as to find twenty unhallowed reasons today will be foolish enough to find two hundred such reasons next year. A man may act the cripple till he grows hopelessly lame. Mind what you are doing. You may lock a door, and open it again for many a year, but one of these days you may so hamper the lock that it will not open again. Oh, that you may at once believe in Jesus Christ unto eternal life!

I have come to this pass myself—if I perish, I will perish believing in Jesus. If I must be lost, I will be lost clinging to His cross. Can any man be lost there? No, "fools and slow of heart" though we may be, we know that none shall perish who come to Christ, for that would greatly dishonor the Savior's name. God bless you! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—LUKE 24:13-35.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—
676, PSALM 42 (VER. 1), 191.

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

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GOD THE WONDER-WORKER
NO. 1981

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 4, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"To Him who alone does great wonders: for His mercy endures forever." Psalm 136:4.

BELOVED, when we get into God's world of wonders, we have range enough. Which way shall I turn? On what subject shall I speak? If I turn to nature, it teems with wonders. Altering a little the language of Coleridge I would say, "All true science begins with wonder, and ends with wonder, and the space between is filled up with admiration." If we turn to Providence, the history of the nations, the history of the church, what centuries of wonders pass before us! It is said that wise men only wonder once, and that is always, fools never wonder, because they are fools. The story of the church is a constellation of miracles. I cannot venture upon themes so vast as Creation and Providence. Shall we turn to the works of grace, the wonders of Redemption? If we consider the glory of grace surrounding the cross, which is the wonder of wonders, we are upon a boundless ocean. Here is sea-room indeed, we are at no loss for a subject, but we are lost in the subject. Now are we where the height, and depth, and length, and breadth are each immeasurable. It was said of Dr. Barrow that he was an unfair preacher, because he exhausted every subject he touched, and left nothing for anyone else to say. I would like Dr. Barrow to try my text, and I am sure for once he would have to vary his style. He would only be able to suggest to us what might be said by ten thousand preachers all occupied ten thousand years upon this one theme.

"To Him who alone does great wonders: for His mercy endures forever." I feel inclined to bow the knee instead of opening the mouth and to ask you rather to meditate in the silence of your hearts than to listen to my scanty speech. Happily, the text assists me, for it suggests that I narrow my theme to the consideration of wonders of mercy, and that I then narrow it again to present wonders of mercy, for the text is in the present tense—"To Him who alone *does* great wonders," that is to say, is doing them now. Only, then, of marvels of mercy shall I speak at this time, and I shall endeavor, as far as possible, to direct your thoughts to present wonders of mercy. I say, as far as possible, for it must necessarily be that we link with the present both the past and the future, because they are all of one, for God lives in all the tenses at once.

I. Our first head shall be this—GOD IS WORKING WONDERS OF MERCY NOW. "To Him who alone *does* great wonders: for His mercy endures forever." It is enduring now, and is in the present tense forever.

Wonders are things out of the common, unusual things, extraordinary things. Usually they are unexpected; we wonder at them partly because they are novel and surprising. They take us aback; they are things which we looked not for. When they come they astonish us, and put us both in a muse and in a maze. We look, and look, and look, and cannot believe our eyes; we hear, and hear, and scarcely believe our ears. Great wonders, even when we grow accustomed to them, still continue to excite admiration, and frequently they cause us to praise the worker of them, as it is written, "Sing unto the Lord; for He has done marvelous things."

I believe that today God is doing great wonders in saving great sinners. It is a wonder that God should touch a sinner at all, yes, that He should even look at him. A sinner is such an evil thing, his sin is so vile, so foul, that holiness cannot take any pleasure in him. He who fails to obey his Maker is creation's blank, creation's blot, and it is a wonder that his Creator should think of him with patience. But that God should call the sinner with the voice of love, and bid him return and find favor is a wonder. That when he does not return at the gracious bidding the Lord should draw him with bands of love is more wonderful still! The Lord takes more trouble with a sinner than it cost Him to make a world; He could complete the globe in six days, but it often takes many years to bring a sinner to repentance, and to perfect his salvation. The abounding of divine wisdom, and prudence, and long-suffering, and patience are needed to work salvation. The Lord, travailing with compassion goes about to compass the salvation of the greatly erring one. He is still doing great wonders in changing depraved natures, breaking hard hearts, subduing obstinate wills, enlightening darkened judgments, and winning rebellious minds. Spiritual miracles Jesus is working still, and of this fact many of us are instances in our own persons, and also eyewitnesses of the like wonders worked on others. Blessed be God; we still see with wonder sinners saved by the marvelous grace of God. The riches of His mercy are still displayed in the salvation of the lost.

Nor less may the wonders of the Lord be seen in the preservation of those who believe on His name. A true believer's life is a mystery to himself and to others. Concerning the wind, you cannot tell from where it comes, or where it goes, "so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." We are men wondered at. Do you not wonder, my brother, that you are still a Christian? Faith is so contrary to nature that its existence in the heart is like a spark burning in the sea. Faith is so much attacked, especially in this evil day, that, it is like a candle kept alight in a cyclone. Yet you have not drawn back unto perdition! Still, though faint, you are pursuing. Truly if you had been mindful of the country from which you came out, you would have had many opportunities to return. Satan's chariots and his horses have waited upon you with many invitations to ride back into the land of your former slavery if you had a mind to go. Alas! The evil heart of unbelief has lusted for the leeks and garlic and onions many a time. Kept alive with death so near; you are a standing wonder to yourself. What great things the Lord has done for you! How He has led you, instructed you, helped you, comforted you! All these as I mention them

will wake up many admiring memories, and cause you to cry, "The Lord has done great things for us, whereof we are glad."

To me, also, it is a great wonder that God should use any of us; we seem so unfit for His holy purposes. Can He write with such a pen as I am upon the fleshy tablets of men's hearts? What! Can He paint a fair picture of holiness in the characters of my hearers with so poor a brush as I am? Then indeed He does great wonders. That which God does by our instrumentality at any time, if, indeed, it is for His glory, should fill us with astonishment. When Saul, who formerly persecuted the saints, saw saints made under his ministry, he was drawn out in wondering adoration as he wrote, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given."

The Lord God does wonders still by maintaining His church and the cause of truth in the midst of the world. Read through history, and you meet with periods when the light seemed quenched, but then suddenly it burned with superior luster. Remember the Reformation, and the revival of the last century. When spiritual life seemed almost extinct, there came times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. It will be the same at this dark hour. All the devils in hell can never quench the light of truth. They may do all they can in union with all the wise men of the world to put down the old gospel of the cross, but even though they should slay it and bury it, it would rise again. When the voices which have been lifted up against the gospel shall have been silenced forever, the Word of the Lord shall sound forth to the ends of the earth. God is still doing great wonders in the maintenance of His despised gospel, and in the keeping alive of those spiritual doctrines which the carnal mind hates as much today as it ever did.

Now, dear brethren, why may we expect the Lord to still do wonders? I answer, first, because *His word raises our expectations*. Surely the Lord will not cease to work wonders, and descend to the commonplace; for this Book, talks of great things and marvelous things. Does He not say concerning His great grace, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts"? Have we not many passages of Scripture which run in this wise—"Though your sins are as scarlet they shall be as white as snow"? The universe is challenged by the question, "Who is a God like unto You, that pardons iniquity, and passes by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage?" Hear our Lord speak and invite the laboring and heavy laden to His rest. Hear Him declare that "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." Hear how His apostles declare that "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." Paul, that chief of sinners, sets himself forth as the type and pattern according to which God will work in the after ages. This inspired Book does not promise us small things. It is not pitched in a low key. Concerning the multitudes that will be saved in the latter days, it speaks in grand terms, saying, "Nations that knew not You shall run unto You." We have so much to this effect that I will not stay to quote the passages, only of this we are sure, that one day we shall hear the glorious shout, "Hallelujah! for the

Lord God omnipotent reigns." Anyone who is familiar with Holy Scripture will expect that God will continue to work wonders in the realm of grace.

But, beloved, we have something more than words. *God has evidently made preparations for doing great things*. When He made the covenant of grace to be the very soul and center of all His acts, when He put it first, and last, and midst, He did not intend little things. Jehovah does not swear by Himself about trifles, nor lift His hand to heaven concerning small matters. The very existence of the everlasting covenant is the sure prophecy of grace on a grand scale, grace magnified to the astonishment of all intelligent beings. When the glorious Son of the Highest came from heaven, and veiled His Godhead in human flesh, He had designs of a majestic character. An incarnate God forebodes great grace to our humanity. And when as God and man, in one person, our Lord Jesus suffered shame, and spitting, and scourging, and condemnation, and bowed Himself at last to death, the result of all His passion cannot mean the salvation of a few, or a questionable salvation for many. It must foretell a sure salvation for a multitude of great sinners. Stupendous guilt is intended to be washed away by the blood of so divine a sacrifice. If our Lord Jesus Christ is to receive a reward commensurate with His accomplished work, we may safely look for things which shall amaze the world. Such a feast as I see spread within the royal halls of grace is not intended for a handful of guests. When oxen and fatlings are killed, to provide such abundant meat the host must have an eye to vast numbers of guests of voracious appetite. The provision of grace in Christ Jesus is so abundant that it must be meant for a wonderful assembly of needy souls. Come you, and try the freeness and fullness of Christ, and see if you are refused.

Furthermore, when I reflect that the Holy Spirit has come down from heaven, and that He has never left us, but abides with His church to carry out the purposes of grace by convincing men of sin, and glorifying Christ, I am encouraged to look for great things. The Holy Spirit is not here in vain. He intends to do great things. If the biggest blasphemer out of hell were reported to be saved today, I should not find it difficult to believe the news. If, in this house, there should be one who has denied the Deity of our Lord, and has cast off all fear of God, and consequently has plunged into the worst forms of sin, I can readily hope that the Lord may pass by all his transgressions, and make him one of His most earnest servants. It would be a wonder, it may seem to be an impossibility, but this is no reason why it should not be done. God has made preparation for producing this kind of wonder. Faith is led confidently to expect what reason would never suggest.

When I see, in addition to the covenant, the Christ, and the Holy Spirit, all the preparations of the Lord's effectual power for the coming of the Lord, for His glorious reign upon the earth, and for the eternal glorification of the redeemed, I am assured in my own soul that the Lord is working upon a wonderful scale, whether we see it or not. Between now and the consummation of all things, wonders are to be common. The pathway of grace shall blaze with splendor. I invite you to enlarge your hope concerning Him who alone "does great wonders: for His mercy endures forever."

Dear friends, we are not left to promises and preparations. *Our faith is continually refreshed by new facts*. I have the great happiness of frequently seeing very extraordinary instances of God's grace among sinful men. I will not relate even one of them, but my memory is stored with them. Often my eyes are filled with tears when I grip the hand of a convert who but a little while ago was a blasphemer and injurious, a Sabbath breaker, a drunkard, and sunk in every form of uncleanness. When I see such a man converted, renewed and made holy, because the Lord has met with him and revealed Himself to him through the preaching of the word, my eyes are filled with tears of wondering joy. When I find that such a poor testimony as I am able to bear is made by God's grace effectual to work a total change of nature, I am overwhelmed with wondering and grateful emotions. To see the Lord lift wretches from the dunghill and set them among the princes of His people causes us to hold up our hands in joyful astonishment, and ascribe all praise "To Him who alone does great wonders: for His mercy endures forever."

The joy is that you and I assembled here this morning either are, or may be, personal instances of the wonder-working power of God. O my hearer, if you will now in your great sin accept great mercy, you may have it! If you will come with all your evil habits binding you, and ask to be set free from them, the great Redeemer will break those manacles from your wrists, and give you a glorious liberty. Is not our Lord named Jesus because He shall save His people from their sins? If you are the greatest sinner out of the bottomless pit, if you will look to Christ upon the cross, and trust in Him alone, you shall be born again, you shall pass from death unto life, and your many sins shall be forgiven you. Some of us are always wondering why the Lord loved us, why He bought us, why He sought us, and why He continues to acknowledge us and our heart's desire is that all of you who come to this house of prayer may become similar wonders of divine grace. The Lord grant that the wonders may begin this morning. We are assured that among us upon whom the ends of the earth have come, "the Lord does great wonders." Did I hear anyone say, "Truly, if I were converted it would be a wonder"? Yes, you are excellent raw material for God to work upon in the creation of a wonder. Did I hear another say, "A person is here this morning that, if he were saved, would be a wonder, indeed"? Pray for him, then. Pray at once, distinctly, for him, in the glad hope that he will be another wonder. The God of infinite mercy looks out for room for His grace to work in, and space for almighty love to display its power. Your necessity, feebleness, and emptiness, are the space in which infinite mercy finds elbowroom for its energy. He "who alone does great wonders," looks for the greatly guilty and the greatly needy, that in them He may reveal His grace. Oh, that my heart was enlarged, and my mouth was opened fitly, to encourage you who think you are beyond the bounds of divine mercy! Oh, think not that the grace of God can never come to you! The Lord delights in mercy. He loves to do that which is unexpected by the heart of man. He delights in surprising men with His grace, and getting to Himself renown by His love. He will, for His own name's sake, do great wonders of mercy. Because no reason can be found in men themselves, the Lord resolves to find it in Himself,

and therefore He lavishes His grace that His glory may be wondered at, both in heaven and in earth.

II. I pass on to another phase of the same thought, for upon this one thought I mean to harp at this time, so that this one note shall linger in your ears for many a day. Our first head has been that God is working wonders of mercy; our second point is that THESE WONDERS ARE STILL GREAT, "To Him who alone does *great* wonders."

We have heard of wonders that were not great, for they were not even true. The magicians of Egypt withstood Moses with their enchantments, and false prophets have much relied upon tricks and deceptions. Antichrist to this day is prone to use lying wonders. But God's wonders are real, they are truly wonderful, and are not mere pretences. Neither nature, nor providence, nor grace lends any countenance to mere outside appearance; the deeper you go in God's wonders, the more wonderful they are. That which the Lord does is peculiarly, His own. Even as the magicians said, "This is the finger of God," and ceased from their conjuring. They had touched upon the inimitable, and were forced to pause.

Many apparent wonders can be explained, and henceforth, the wonder is gone. Certain nations wonder at an eclipse, which to the astronomer is a very simple affair. Now, you cannot explain away election, redemption, regeneration, and the pardon of sin; these great wonders of almighty love are all the greater the more you know of them. Many wonders, also, are diminished by familiarity. Well do I remember as a child being taken to see the first train drawn by a steam engine to our town; I greatly wondered, but I have now ceased to wonder at such an ordinary sight. I remember a viaduct, which to my juvenile mind was stupendous; I have seen it since, and it is by no means one of the wonders of the world. The wonders of grace are such that the more you see them the more your wonder grows. In these cases it is ignorance which does *not* wonder, but knowledge marvels exceedingly. Those who are most familiar with the Lord think the most of Him and of His grace. The wonders of divine grace are so great that they can never be eclipsed by any greater marvels. No one will ever tell us a more marvelous story than the life and death of our Lord for sinful men. In the gift of Jesus Christ the infinite God has outdone all His previous acts. This is the greatest wonder that angels ever heard of; they desire still to look into it. This is in words and sense, the climax of all miracles—"God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." When you and I have, for millions and millions of years, realized what divine mercy means, my conviction is that we shall wonder more at the Lord's grace than we do now. Salvation is an exceedingly *great* wonder, like the great mountains, or the great sea. The lovingkindness of the Lord is immeasurable. "Now," cries someone, "you speak about wonders; if I were to be converted it would not only be a wonder, but a *great* wonder." That is why I expect it, for the Lord still takes pleasure in performing great wonders! "Oh, but I am such a devil in sin! I have gone to the brink of hell. It is impossible that I should be forgiven." That is why I expect to see such pardons given. Unconquerable mercy will, I trust, take up the challenge of your sin. The Lord is at home

with great things. You and I are often overbalanced with small affairs, but the Lord's element is greatness. See Him making worlds, striking them off like sparks from the anvil of His creating power! Miracles are commonplace with God. His is essential and unrivalled greatness. "The nations are as a drop of a bucket: He takes up the isles as a very little thing." The Lord grants great forgiveness to great sinners, and takes pleasure to work great transformations in those who were soaked through and through with sin.

Why does God work great wonders of grace? I answer, *because He is great and greatly wonderful*. He acts according to His nature when He does great wonders. He is so wonderful a God that no one has ever formed an adequate conception of Him. We do not understand God, nor can we comprehend Him. We know that there is such a one and we love and praise Him, but to say that we understand God as a man is understood by his fellow, would be very far from the truth. Ten thousand minds, educated to the highest, and even filled with the Holy Spirit, if they could unite their largest ideas, could not compass the infinite Jehovah. You have filled so many little cups with the waters of the sea, but you are as far off as ever from having taken up the great deep. It is but natural that the Infinite One should do great wonders. The Lord is inconceivably great, and therefore we are unable to imagine a limit to what He may do in a direction so much His own as that of mercy, since God is love. Assuredly, to be great in everything is after the manner of the great Lord; He does greatly pardon, greatly renew, greatly love, greatly bless, greatly glorify. Oh, that we would believe Him to be great, then should we with Mary sing, "My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit does rejoice in God my Savior."

Do not despondingly imagine that God will allow His wonders to dwindle down as the world grows old. "Oh," you say, "He did great wonders in the olden times, but He is not of that mind now." Is that your God? My God is the same; He faints not, neither is weary. He still does great wonders. Jehovah who divided the Red Sea is our God forever and ever; He could divide the Atlantic if He willed it, and would do so if it were needful for the fulfillment of His gracious purposes. The God who fed His people in the wilderness may not cause manna to fall from heaven today, but He will none the less give food unto His people. "Your place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks; your bread shall be given you, and your waters shall be sure." The Lord can do as much today as He did in the elder ages; yes, we may look for greater things than these. I do not believe that God's music is now marked with *diminuendo,* but I see *crescendo* on the score; it grows in volume and in force as the ages roll along. The Lord leads our wondering minds on from height to height, and reveals to us more and more the glory of His power.

This leads me to believe that *the Lord Jesus will yet save greater sinners than He ever did save,* if such sinners there be. Our Lord celebrated His entrance into Paradise by the salvation of a thief, and soon after His resurrection He restored Peter. He will always be saving thieves, and restoring backsliders. He went after Saul of Tarsus, who was both a persecutor and a blasphemer, and He means always to be saving sinners of

that kind. That Philippian jailer, converted at the dead of night, is but a specimen of the sort of hard, rough, cruel brutes that He will still subdue by His mighty grace. The Lord will go on to save great sinners, for He has put His hand to the plow of grace and He will not look back—

"Jesus reigns on Zion's hill,
He receives poor sinners still."

The most guilty and most hardened, and most daring of rebels are welcome to come to Jesus and look to Him and live. How pleased I am to preach this gospel! Oh, that I could preach it better! I expect the Lord to go on saving great sinners by these words of mine, and this shall be to the praise of the glory of His grace.

We may expect the Lord to forgive great sins, such as murders, adulteries, robberies, blasphemies and sins unmentionable. Mercy gets to itself renown when it annihilates giant sins; then we sing of Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, overthrown by the Lord, whose mercy endures forever. His mercy is not an atom less than it used to be, for it endures forever. The ocean of today is as full as when Jonah went down into its deeps; the sun of today is as bright as when it shone on Lot entering Zoar, and the grace of God is as full, as broad, as deep, as omnipotent, as when our Savior dwelt among men, and said to one and another, "Your sins are forgiven you."

The Lord is also doing great wonders in displaying great condescensions to those who believe on His Son Jesus Christ. It would be a great wonder if the Lord should meet with *us* today and make our hearts leap for joy; but, unworthy as we are, He is ready to do so. It would be a great wonder if He were to restore our backslidings, and heal the bones which are broken by our sins, but He waits to act as our soul's surgeon. It would be a great wonder if He was to enter in and sup with us, and we with Him, but He even now knocks at the door of our hearts with that design. The Lord's bosom may still be leaned upon; we may still lean on our Beloved; He will still kiss us with the kisses of His mouth. The Lord still dwells with the humble and contrite, for this great wonder of condescension still delights Him.

The Lord is working great wonders of delivering grace. Are any of you in great trouble or great danger? The Lord that delivered David out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paws of the bear, and from the hand of the uncircumcised Philistine, will deliver you also with a great deliverance. He that saved Daniel in the den of lions, and brought him out unharmed, even He that walked with the holy children in the burning fiery furnace, is the same God still. He can, He will, He does deliver. You shall see His great wonders if you will but trust in Him. You that are tossed about and sorely pained with the present state of the Church of God, you may look for wonders of grace. I expect our Lord to do great wonders at this time by sending us great revivals of religion, or in some other way making bare His holy arm. What shall withstand Him if He does but awake Himself! In former ages the light has burned very low, and then the Lord has trimmed the lamp. The Lord has spoken, and great has been the multitudes of them that have published His word. Then "kings of armies did flee; and she that tarried at home divided the spoil." It shall be so still.

Oh, You that do great wonders, fight for Yourself this day, and make the adversaries of Your truth melt away. Let us pray for the visitations of the Holy Spirit, but never let us give way to doubt, even for a moment. "Therefore will not we fear, though the earth is removed, and though the mountains are carried into the midst of the sea. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." Now we have got some good way into our text—"To Him that does great wonders" be glory forever and ever.

III. The third point is this—THESE GREAT WONDERS ARE WORKED BY GOD ALONE. He *alone* does great wonders. Lay emphasis heavily upon the word "alone."

My brethren, there are deeds of kindness which you could not expect anyone else to do. The most forgiving of human spirits can never pardon as God does. You, poor sinner, have been measuring God's corn with your bushel, and therefore you conclude that He cannot forgive you, but His long-suffering and grace are greater than yours. If you had offended others as you have offended God, you might safely come to the conclusion that forgiveness would be out of the question, but the Lord in mercy far outruns all others. None can forgive and forget as the Lord does. It was never heard of, that one could pass over such offenses and rebellions as God does freely blot out. The Lord can do, and is daily doing, such acts of love and mercy as would be looked for in vain among men and angels. Believe that God is more able to forgive than you are able to believe. Have you written it down among your sadly sure conclusions that you are certain to be lost? The God of All grace delights to contradict our despairs. He will disannul your covenant with death, and deliver the lawful captive from the hand of the destroyer. He will interpose in an unheard-of manner. He says, "Behold, I will do a new thing." He will do that which we looked not for, and thus make us own that He alone does great wonders. God's grace is unique. To whom will you liken Him? In this He is seen to be God alone. None can approach Him, so as to be mentioned in the same day. He does for us exceedingly abundantly above what we ask or even think. Ah, poor desponding soul! You had a dream. Did you not dream that you were a child again, and could begin life once more? You woke up and cried, "Ah me! This will never be true. I wish it were." It can be true. The Lord can make you to become a little child again by being born again. It is hard, I know, for you to believe it, but nothing ought to be hard to believe concerning the God whose mercy endures forever. He alone, Himself, and by Himself, can perform prodigies of love.

When it is said that He does these great wonders "alone," it means that He does them when nobody can help Him. My friend, you cannot do anything; you are now reduced to utter impotence, under a sense of sin. You fear that you cannot even believe, or feel, but the Lord is all-sufficient, and He alone does great wonders. He can do all for you, and work all in you. What strange creatures we are! We feel that we must try to help God. What folly is this! O poor creature of a day, did you help Him to make the world? Where were you when the mountains were brought forth? O feeble creature what can you do? Can you help Him in providence? He asks no aid from you. I have known some poor souls complain that they cannot feel their nothingness, and they fancy that if

they felt their nothingness, Christ could then save them. This is odd, is it not? Here is a man who must necessarily help God by his nothingness! Out of the way with you! You do but block the road! Stand aside, and let grace work! What can you do? Do you reply, "I must believe and repent?" I know you must, but—

"True belief, and true repentance,
Every grace that brings us nigh,
Without money,
Come to Jesus Christ and buy."

Jesus Christ comes to save you just as you are, and His salvation comes to you where you are. When they make railways in England they usually carry them sufficiently far from a town to give work to an omnibus. Seldom does the station stand near the house where one wants to go. The railway to heaven is of another sort; it comes to your door. Jesus comes where you are, and meets your actual condition. Though you lie at death's door, Christ comes as the resurrection and the life. Though you pine in the vestibule of hell, almighty mercy comes to free you from condemnation. In your spiritual helplessness and hopelessness, Jesus comes to you, saying, "Trust Me now to be all in all to you." Praise Him who alone, without your puny aid, or the aid of a priest, or the aid of mortifications and penances, can remove your sins, and make you pure and holy. His own arm brings salvation to those who trust Him, and He alone does great wonders.

When the Lord uses means in the salvation of a soul, He takes care that nobody shall praise the means or ascribe the salvation to the agent. He has many ways with His most useful servants of making them keep their places, and you will notice that as soon as ever any one of them begins to grow rather large in his own esteem, he is usually met with weakness and barrenness. We must, brethren, keep self out of the way. We must put ourselves absolutely into God's hands, that He may use us in the winning of souls, and then we must send the great *I* down, down, down, till it is buried out of all remembrance. They tell us that when you go fishing it is wise to stand back and keep yourself out of sight as much as possible. The fish that see *you* will not take the bait. The Lord will not do great wonders in company, but alone. His servants must not set up to be masters, or they will be sternly rebuked. On the throne of grace, God will brook no rival. If we are to see Jesus increase we must decrease. If Christ goes up, self goes down. The Lord says, "My glory will I not give to another." We shall be made to forget the minister, and every other worker, and recognize the fact that the Lord alone does great wonders.

O brethren, when I think of what the Lord has done for some of us by forgiving and saving us, how His glorious name rises and fills the whole heaven! God is not to be compared with any; they vanish as He appears. The Father is everything; He alone does great wonders when He receives the returning prodigal. The Son of God who bore our sins in His own body on the tree is everything to us, and He alone is The Wonderful. When we shall see Him it will be as the Lamb in the midst of the throne. We shall give no praise for our salvation to any, but Himself and that divine Spirit who regenerates us. Beloved, we rely on no influences of any

sort save that almighty influence which proceeds from the Holy Spirit. "He alone does great wonders."

This should be a great comfort to those of you who are not yet saved. If I were in your condition I would try to catch at the text this morning. God Himself is able to save. Trust Jesus and live.

Here also is comfort for children of God who are exercised concerning the state of the churches. Be encouraged, for the Lord who alone does great wonders is equal to the emergency. Perhaps He will strip us still more; perhaps He will take away every able man that now preaches the gospel, and when our Calvins and Luthers and Zwinglies are all dead, then, maybe, He alone will do great wonders. Be it so, if so it pleases Him, for He must have all the glory. The extremity of the church shall be the opportunity of God. But man of God rest you sure that His everlasting purposes will stand, and His divine covenant of mercy will endure forever.

IV. I close with my last head—upon which I will speak briefly. Beloved, if you know anything about these wonders, these great wonders, these wonders in which God stands alone, then remember that FOR THESE WONDERS HE IS TO BE PRAISED. This verse is an ascription of praise. "To Him who alone does great wonders: for His mercy endures forever." It means—to Him be thanks and praise and power and honor and majesty forever and ever. Oh, that we could fill the universe with praise!

Wonder is a sort of praise; it is the chaos out of which a world of praise is to be made. Sit you still and silently meditate on the greatness and goodness of God until you are overcome with admiration, and then you will adore. Our wonderment should always blossom into thanks. Holy wonder is like sweet incense, but love must set it on a blaze with a burning coal of gratitude. "O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good: for His mercy endures forever."

If you will begin to praise the Lord for His great wonders of mercy, I will tell you what will happen to you. First, we shall find *His nature revealed to us*. "O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good." We shall begin to see the essential goodness of God, and then we shall the better understand the manifestations of it as seen in ten thousand ways. This is something to learn. We learn through the habit of praise to know in a measure what God is.

Next, while praising Him for His wonders, you will learn to *adore His Godhead*. "Give thanks unto the God of gods." It is a grand thing to be deeply impressed that God is God. Has He not said, "Be still and know that I am God"? We do not know what God is, but we know that He is God; we cannot comprehend Him, but we apprehend this much—that He is God. It is the greatest thought a man can ever think when He thinks that God is God. I would have you praise Him until you know that He is God, for you will treat Him as He should be treated when you distinctly recognize the glory of His Deity.

If you will keep on praising Him for His wonders, you will come to *know somewhat of His sovereignty*. "O give thanks unto the Lord of lords," for He rules over all things, both in heaven and in earth, and in all deep places. I reverently adore and heartily love the doctrine of the

sovereignty of God. Those words which are terrible to the ungodly are sweet to him who knows the love of God—"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy; I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." We can trust our God with unlimited power, and with the right to do whatever He wills, and it is a part of our worship that we should never question whatever He may do. "It is the Lord; let Him do what seems Him good."

Still, when you praise God for the wonders He has worked for you, and for others, let the climax of your praise be this; that *"His mercy endures forever."* Magnify with all your faculties of mind and heart; with memory, and hope, and fear, and every emotion of which you are capable, the changeless mercy of God. He is always merciful, or full of mercy. He always will be so. You have a God of immutable goodness; rejoice in Him at all times, and under all aspects. When you think upon His terrible justice, doubt not His mercy. Pharaoh is cast into the Red Sea, but Jehovah's mercy endures. He slays mighty kings, but "His mercy endures forever." Yes, when you see hell engulf the impenitent, and you think with solemn awe of the dread punishment necessary to sin, rest assured that this alters not the fact that God is love, and that "His mercy endures forever." There must be no collision in your thoughts between His justice and His mercy; they are both divine and they both endure forever. Do you say "Hallelujah!" even when you see His wrath. Accepting His mercy in Jesus, praise Him; resting in that mercy, praise Him; hoping in that mercy, that it will follow you all the days of your life, praise Him. By and by, brothers and sisters, we shall know more of His eternal mercy, and then we shall praise Him in loftier strains. Shall we ever need a sweeter song than this—"To Him who alone does great wonders: for His mercy endures forever"? As we shall hear the harpers harping with their harps, and see the holy ones casting their crowns before Him on the glassy sea, shall we not chant this *great Hallel*—"To Him who alone does great wonders: for His mercy endures forever"? The Lord bless you ever! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 136.

**HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—
136 (SONG 1), 117, 136 (SONG 2).**

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LOVE AT ITS UTMOST
NO. 1982

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 11, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you: continue you in My love." John 15:9.

IN the love of Christ we find our best joy. The pastures of the Great Shepherd are wide, but the sweetest grasses grow close to His pierced feet. The love of Jesus is the center of salvation; it is as the sun in the midst of the heavens of grace. I trust that while I lead your meditations this morning towards this golden theme you will be able to enter in spirit into the heart and soul of it. Paul said, when he spoke of marriage, "Behold, I show you a mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church." There is always much that is mysterious here, but it is ever the mystery of love. You believe in this love; you know it; you have tasted it, and therefore, I speak to an audience who will appreciate the subject, however faulty may be my handling of it.

Oh, for a higher experience! May the Lord at this hour conduct us into His banqueting house, and rejoice us with His love, which is better than wine! Many of us will bring to the feast a keen appetite; this is all we can contribute, and even that is a gift of love. Oh, that we may have a quick eye to see the beauties of the Lord, and a discerning heart to perceive how His love to us enhances all His charms!

The love of Christ to His people is the sweetest, fullest, and most profitable theme that a preacher can bring before his people, and it is always a suitable and seasonable subject, whatever the condition of the congregation may be. But we greatly need the aid of the Holy Spirit to prepare our minds for the enjoyment of this truth. It is one thing to hear the outward sound of love; it is another thing to feel an inward sense of it. It is pleasant to hear the rippling of the brook, but if you are dying of thirst that silver music will not refresh you if you are unable to drink of the stream. Come, Holy Spirit, come! We beseech You, take of the things of Christ, and glorify Him by revealing them to our inmost souls!

I. We will plunge into the subject at once. Here is our first exhortation; LET US UNQUESTIONINGLY BELIEVE THAT JESUS LOVES US. That is to say, if we are indeed *in Him*, He loves us infinitely. Our Lord is speaking here, not of His general love of benevolence, but of that peculiar and special affection which He bears to His own, of whom He says, "I have chosen you out of the world." If we are in Him, as the branches are in the vine, and if we prove the reality of that union by bringing forth the fruits of grace to His glory, then we are the objects of the Savior's peculiar love.

He speaks to us as a church and to each one personally, and says, "As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you." O my hearer, does He speak thus to you? Have you taken hold of Christ by faith? Has He saved you? Is your life derived from Him? Is He your hope, your joy, your all? If this is so, then doubt not that He speaks to you with His own lips as well as out of this book of record. As truly as if He stood at your side and grasped your hand, and spoke, with His eyes looking into your eyes with tenderness of love, He says to you, "As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you: continue you in My love."

That He truly loves us, we may confidently believe, for He Himself is at pains to assure us of it in so many words. He does not leave it to an inference, although the inference might be safely drawn from the ten thousand love-deeds of His life and death, but He deliberately declares His love, "As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you." Do you doubt His words?—words spoken in the solemn night of His agony, and registered in the volume of inspiration? Does not your heart respond to Him, as He says, "I have loved you"? Do you not answer, "Yes, Lord, it is true indeed! There is little need for You to tell me this with Your lips, for You have assured me of it by Your wounds. I know that You love me. Oh, that I loved You better in return!"

As if to confirm us in our belief beyond all wavering, and to lead out our hearts to behold the largeness of His affection, He quotes a parallel to His love of the most extraordinary kind. He looks not to the loves of earth, but to the greatest love of heaven, and says, "As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you." Beloved, you do not, dare not, could not, doubt the love of the Father to His Son. It is one of those unquestionable truths about which you never dreamed of holding an argument. Our Lord would have us place His love to us in the same category with the Father's love to Himself. We are to be as confident of the one as of the other. What a wonderful certainty is conveyed to us by this token! The Father regards with boundless love the Son, with whom He is in essential union, since they are one God, and as surely as this is the case, so surely does Jesus love the people whom He has taken into marriage union with Himself forever. Doubt not; it would be a sort of blasphemy to doubt after such a pledge as this. Think of it, and let your assurance become doubly sure.

Behold the course and proof of our Redeemer's love! *He chose us in love*. The reason of His choice was love. Remember how He puts it in the seventh chapter of Deuteronomy? God there speaks of His choice of Israel, "You are a holy people unto the Lord your God: the Lord your God has chosen you to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The Lord did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because you were more in number than any people; for you were the fewest of all people: but because the Lord loved you." He loved you because He loved you. Election is based upon affection, and that affection is its own fountain. The whole system of divine love springs from the love of God, and from nothing else. Jesus loves us because He is Love. If I must add anything to that statement, it will suffice me to quote the Well-beloved's own words; when He thanked the Father that He had

hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes, He said, "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Your sight." O believer, Jesus loved you before the world began, and all because He would love you. He loved you in order that He might manifest His love to you. He loved you in order that you might be conformed unto His image, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren, and that thus we might share His nature and His character and His Father's love, and so draw nearer and nearer to Him in ever-growing fellowship of affection. See the love which is its own cause spending its own self, and by its own efficacy working out its gracious purposes, every one of which is as full of love as the love which designed it.

Having thus chosen us for love, so great was the love of our Lord that *He became man for love of us*. He "counted it not robbery to be equal with God," but became man that He might carry out His purposes of love to us. It is written, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and shall cleave to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh," and this has its highest exemplification in Christ, who left His Father that He might become one flesh with His church. He took our nature, that so He might be able to do for us, and suffer for us, what else He could not have done and suffered. By thus talking upon Himself our nature He established a nearer union and a sweeter fellowship with His beloved church than could otherwise have existed. If He had never become the Babe of Bethlehem, and the man of Nazareth, how could He have been made in all points like unto His brethren? Think what that love must have been which brought the Lord of glory from the highest heaven to become the Man of sorrows for our sakes!

Having become a man for us, we remember that *Jesus died because of lov*e. "Greater love has no man than this; that a man lay down his life for his friends." That laying down of life in our Lord's case was specially a proof of love, for He died voluntarily; there was no necessity upon Him, as upon us, to die. Other men, if they died for us, would but pay the debt of nature a little before its time, but Jesus died who needed not to die, so far as He Himself was concerned. He died also amid circumstances of pain, and shame, and desertion, which made that death peculiarly bitter. The death of the cross is to us the highest proof of our Savior's infinite love to us. He must die the death of a felon, between two thieves, utterly friendless, the object of general ridicule, and this He must do as bearing our sins in His own body. All this makes us say, "Behold how He loved us!" O Beloved! Can we doubt Christ's love, since He laid down His life, "the just for the unjust, to bring us to God"?

It was *because of this love*, remember, dear child of God that *the Lord made you live*. I cannot quote at full length that memorable passage in the sixteenth chapter of Ezekiel, but there you have our condition represented as that of a deserted infant cast out to die, unwashed, unswaddled, bleeding itself to death in filth and misery, and it is written that when the Lord passed by, He said unto that infant, "Live." Even thus did He speak to us, and we lived, and rose out of our misery. He declares that the time when He thus passed by was "a time of love." Shall I not

touch your hearts when I remind you of the Lord's time of love to you? Remember your cast-out condition, your helpless distress, your hopeless ruin. You lay between the very jaws of death, and no one eye pitied you; you did not even pity yourself. Jesus looked on you long before you looked to Him. He spoke to you before you spoke to Him. He said, "Live!" and you did live, but before that you were dead in trespasses and sins. Then He washed, clothed, beautified, and adopted you. He made a wretched foundling to be joint-heir with Himself. O love! Matchless love! We owe our spiritual life to love, and therefore as long as we live we will praise the Lover of our souls!

Inasmuch as we are, by nature, at a distance from God, we needed *to be brought near*. We have been brought near to Him by love. Jeremiah has a famous passage—"The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you." Do you remember when the bands of a man were fastened around you, and you felt the cords of love drawing more and more forcibly? You could not tell why you were so singularly inclined to better things, but it was so. In yourself you were at first lifeless as a log, but soon you began to feel a yielding, yes, and an inclination, and at last that stubborn will relented, and new desires took the place of former aversions. Then you ran in the way in which you were drawn; your will had at last been made truly free, so that you delighted in the will of God. Love did all this. Love was more than conqueror, for it did not vanquish the enemy by force, but turned him into a grateful friend. By the recollection of those drawings which have not ceased even now, let us believe in the love of Jesus. Do you not feel Him drawing you even as you sit in this house of prayer? Then under a present sense of His love cry out, "The love of Christ constrains us." I charge you; have no doubt about the love of your divine Lord which even now is working within you.

Time would fail me if I were to go into all the fruits of the love of Christ to you. For love He has forgiven you! Have you ever forgotten the blotting out of your iniquities by that hand of love? For love He has fed you day by day with the best of spiritual meat. "You are complete in Him." All your needs His love has supplied; there are shoes for your pilgrimage, armor for your warfare, strength for your labor, rest for your weariness, and comfort for your sorrow. No good thing does His love withhold. You have an inward satisfaction in Christ which all the world could not produce. Moreover, He has led you through this wilderness life in safety to this day. In dark and devious roads He has been near you; His rod and His staff have comforted you. You have not gone astray, and that not because there was not the spirit of straying in you, but because the great Shepherd has kept you in His paths. How often has He succored you, and delivered you! How graciously has He helped your weakness, enlightened your darkness, allayed your fears, renewed your hope, and above all preserved you from sin! As I look back upon my own life, I am filled with adoring thankfulness. I know that the retrospect which each one of you is looking upon is very much the same. Surely, goodness and mercy have brightened all the days of our lives. Each day has been so

wonderful, that if we had only lived that one day, we should have had cause to praise the Lord forever and ever. When all the days are "threaded on time's string," what a bracelet of mercies they make! What shall I say of my Lord's love? If I liken it for height to the mountains, I see Alps piled on Alps. "Your mercy, O God, is in the heavens." If I liken it for depth to the sea, I am again lost in the comparison, I can only cry, "O the depths!" As to counting the gifts of His love, if we think of them, they are more in number than the sands of the sea. Let us not doubt His love, for that would be wanton cruelty, but sitting down in stillness of mind let our hearts quietly beat time to this one sentence; He loves me—He loves me. More surely than parent or child, or husband or wife, or the best tried friend, Jesus loves His blood-bought ones! O my soul, He loves you! Be you always ravished with His love.

Yet I must not quite close the list till I remind you that you are now this very day in union with Him. You are laid on Him and cemented to Him as a stone is built upon the foundation. You are also joined to Him vitally as the branch is to the stem, and as the member to the body. You are, moreover, joined to Him by living, loving, lasting union, as the bride is united to the bridegroom. You are identical with your covenant Head today in the purposes of God. God has dealt with Him as though He had sinned your sin, and now He deals with you as though you had worked His righteousness. In the purposes of God you are wrapped up with the Lord Jesus Christ. Herein is love! The future of Jesus is to be your future; you are to be with Him where He is. When Luther was in his worst troubles a friend came in to see him, and noticed that he had written upon the wall in big letters the word, "Vivit!" He inquired of Luther what he meant by "vivit"? Luther answered, "Jesus lives, and if He did not live I would not care to live an hour." Yes, our life is bound up with that of Jesus. We are not called upon to live of ourselves, that would be death, but we have life and all things in union with Him. This is love indeed, which rests not till it is one with its object. O you unconverted ones, how can you live apart from Christ? To live one hour apart from Christ is to live in infinite peril, since in that hour you may die, and pass beyond the realms of hope.

O beloved, you that love Him, are one with Him by an infinite and indestructible union! "Who shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" This eternal oneness is the security both of grace and glory to us. Certain of our dear brethren and sisters have lately gone up the shining road. We might envy them if we did not know that even here we have the Lord's love to cheer us. Let us love Jesus for His love to our brethren, for now they share His throne, lie in His bosom, and are indulged with a vision of His glory. We also are on our way to the wedding feast; let us keep our lamps burning. Comfort yourselves with the divine hope of everlasting joy. His love which came to us from heaven to earth will bear us up from earth to heaven. Heart cannot conceive what love has laid up for those whom it has chosen.

II. But I cannot proceed further after this fashion; I must now exhibit my theme in another light. LET US MEDITATE CONTINUALLY UPON

THE LOVE OF CHRIST. I would help your meditations by giving a few hints. Do not think that I am preaching, but consider that you are alone in your chamber, and that I am speaking through a telephone to you. Let me vanish, and let Jesus stand before you.

Meditate upon the love of Christ to you. *It is a love ancient and venerable, tried and proved.* He loved you when you were not, He loved you when you were, but were not what you should be. He has loved you into spiritual being; He has loved you so as to keep you in that being. He loved you so as to suffer and to die, and He loves you so as to permit you to suffer for His sake. He has loved you so well as to bear with your ill manners, your shortcomings, and your transgressions, your coldness, your backsliding, your lack of prayer, your hardness of heart, your little love to your brethren, and all the other sins of which I will not now accuse you, for it is a time of love. He has loved you right on without pausing or slackening. Some of you have known His love these twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years; yes, some of you even more than that. It is no new thing with us to sing, "Jesus loves me." All this while He has never failed us once, nor done us an ill turn. The kindest husband that ever lived may sometimes be faulty, but this husband of our souls overflows with divine affection every day, and all the day. We could not find fault or flaw in His love, if we were to try. Doubtless, in the future we shall have to make continued trial of His love, but we are sure it will endure every test. We may have rough ways to traverse, but He will tread them with us, and we shall lean upon our Beloved. We may be very sick and faint, but He has borne our sicknesses, and will sympathize with us. He has said, and we believe it, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." His promise is, "Certainly I will be with you. Even to your old age I am He; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you." The longer we live the more abundant evidence shall we receive of that love of Christ, which at this moment is assuredly ours. At this moment we believe in this love as implicitly as yonder babe believes in its mother's love, and stretches out its little hands to be embraced in those dear arms. Is it not so, dear friends? Do you not lean on the bosom of your Lord, without a shadow of mistrust, and do you not there find your fears all laid asleep? What love is this!

Remember also in your meditation, that *His love to you has been most free.* It was unbought, and even unsought. In Hosea it is written, "I will love them freely." and surely, if ever there was a case in which that verse was transparently true, it is in my case. Was it not so in yours? What was there in you that could have won His love? If He could see any beauty in me, it must have been first in His own eyes. They say that love is blind, and certainly, though our heavenly Bridegroom is not blind, yet He was somewhat kinder still, for He saw our deformities of sin and folly, and yet He loved us notwithstanding all. He saw our iniquities, and then He cast them into the depths of the sea. Jesus, lover of my soul, You love me, and that love is free indeed! How could You be enamored with such a one as I am? It could only be because You love those who most need Your love, and can least repay it. Inasmuch as it is even so, what shall I do but admire and adore? Brethren, let us muse and meditate, and pray,

and praise, and wonder, and worship Him whom, having not seen, we love. Let us love Him because He first loved us. Beholding the generous upbringing of a love which we could not deserve and would not seek, let us freely love in return.

This love, of our Lord's, so free, so full, so forceful, was and is *most amazing*. We shall never hear better or more surprising news than this, that Jesus loves us. Nothing more surprising ever came to me than to learn "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." Others may, perhaps, see what is worked by the Lord's grace in us, and this may make them the less astonished at the Lord's love towards us, but we know ourselves, and see our blemishes as well as our beauties, and therefore we know that there is nothing lovable in us by nature. When we see our Lord's beauty we see nothing but deformity in ourselves. The more we perceive His love the more do we abhor ourselves because of our own want of love to Him, and because of the defilements into which we have fallen. We are amazed at our sin, but more amazed at His love. We shall go on reading in the golden Book of Christ's love throughout all eternity, and the longer we study it the more we shall be astonished that the Holy and the Glorious and the Ever-blessed should ever have espoused in love such insignificant, polluted, and fickle-hearted creatures as we are.

The love of Jesus is love *most practical*. Christ loves not in word only, but in deed and in truth. There is a greater force to my mind in Christ's deeds of love than in all the words which even He could have uttered. His deeds emphasize His words. Words cannot to the full express the mind of love; language filters from the lips, while feeling gushes from the heart. Jesus has written out His love in living characters. O Master! Never man spoke like You, and yet that was Your most eloquent discourse when You did say but little, but did stretch Your hands to the cross, that they might be nailed there. Then did You pour out Your heart, not in oratory, but in blood and water. Jesus has given to us His crown, His garments, His body, His soul, His life, Himself. Said I not well that His is practical love? It is love full of tenderness, rich in bounty, lavish in thoughtfulness, firm in constancy, strong as death, mightier than the grave.

Think, again, that *it was personal love*. The Lord Jesus Christ loves each one of His people as much as if He had not one more. All the heart of Christ goes out to each one of us. The great sun shines today on this round earth, and while it pours its limitless flood of light on all, that one tiny daisy, as it bathes in the brightness, is able to say, "The sun is all mine." Though there are myriads of flowers in the meadows and the gardens, yet this one flower may freely possess all that the sun can give, or rather all that the little flower can receive, as much as if it were the only flower that blooms. So Jesus is to me, to you, to each one of us, all our own, neither lose we anything by the fact that He is all the own of so many millions. No, we gain by His being thus possessed by so many brethren, for we find our bliss repeated in the happiness of all whom Jesus loves as He loves us. In the text we read, "So have I loved you." Mark how the two personal pronouns "I" and "you" stand with nothing but "love" between. The Lord Jesus, His own self, delighted in us, even in us

who are not worthy to be named in the same day with Him. Glory be to His holy name forever!

The pith of our text lies in this, that to make us know a little of how much He loves us; our Lord has paralleled His love to us with the Father's love to Him. What kind of love was that? Here we get into deep waters. Each thought is an abyss. We know that the Father loved the Son *without beginning,* even from eternity. It is not conceivable that there ever was a period when the Father did not love His Son, neither is it conceivable by those who read this Book of the Lord aright that there ever could have been a time when Jesus did not love His people. This love constrained Him in the council chamber of eternity to become the surety of the covenant for those His Father gave Him. In that time before time began, the Lord's love went forth, for His goings forth was of old, from everlasting. Not when we began to love Him, nor even when we began to be, did the love of our redeeming Lord commence its divine history, but from of old, before the earth was. Some of you dote upon antiquities, but this to me is the most precious of all ancient things—the everlasting love of Jesus.

We also feel sure that the Father loves the Son *without end.* There cannot come an hour when the Father will banish the Son from His heart. Till then Jesus will never cast off His people. The unchanging Christ of God will never cease to love His redeemed, for the Father will never cease to love Him. Has He not said, "I have engraved you upon the palms of My hands. 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"?

Beloved, we must not fail to note *the intimacy of this love,* for Jesus said, "I and My Father are one." Even such is His love to us; it is intimate in character, for Jesus says, "I in them, and You in Me, that they may be made perfect in one." Jesus has made Himself one with His people. He loves them with a marvelous intimacy, so that in loving them He loves Himself, for He has made them to be "members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." I go further; our Lord loved us better than He loved Himself, for they truly said of Him, "He saved others; Himself He could not save." His mighty love made Him to be a sacrifice for His people, that He might redeem them from under the curse of the law.

It is a love, in fact, *immeasurable;* there is no boundary to it. The Father must love the Son inconceivably. As God Himself is incomprehensible, so is the love of the Divine Persons to each other. Jesus also loves His chosen without limit. He loves unto the end with a love which has no end. We can only become conscious of a limited portion of that love, but it is not limited in itself. To this ocean there is neither shore nor bottom. Jesus loves omnipotently, everlastingly, and infinitely.

His love is also *immutable,* like that of His Father to Him. Change is unknown to the heart of Jesus. He cannot love us more, and He will not love us less. I spoke of the ocean just now, but it was a faulty emblem, for it ebbs and flows, while our Lord's love is always at the full.

Now the point I want to bring you to is this—remember that the Father's intimate and infinite and unchanging love to His Son did not prevent His Son from being "a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;" did not prevent His having to say, "I have not where to lay My head;" did not prevent His bloody sweat in Gethsemane. "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered." Even He had to cry, "If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me," and to add, "nevertheless not as I will, but as You will." Do you think that you will be excused the bitter cup? You in your prayers have said, "My Father, if You love me let me not be poor, let me not be bereaved, let me not be laid aside, let me not be evil spoken of." You know not what you ask. You pray against promotion when you pray against affliction. It was needful for the greater glory of the Mediator, in His complex person as God and Man, that He should greatly suffer and give Himself a ransom for many, and therefore the love of the Father did not withhold the wormwood and the gall. And now for other purposes known to the wise heart of Jesus it is needful that you, His disciple, should be made to drink of His cup, and to be baptized with His baptism, and He will not deny you the privilege. You must be made a partaker of Christ's sufferings, that you may the better have fellowship with Him in the highest form of His glory. Therefore, believe that Christ loves you when He afflicts you that He loves you when He declines to remove the cup of trembling from your lips. You would decline the high honors He intends you, but His love forbids the heavy loss. If we are to reign with Him we must first suffer with Him, and so His love urges us on to the suffering out of a high regard for our eternal welfare. O you that are shrinking from the cross, are you willing to forego the crown? Surely you are not so foolish. Therefore, be sure that these griefs are needful for you, that your soul may be enlarged and enabled to contain more of delight and of bliss in Christ Jesus your Lord throughout eternity. To spare you that pin's prick today would be to make you a loser throughout the endless ages, therefore, lift up your finger to the needle, and be ready to endure the sharp point for an instant, seeing it is the trifling penalty of your rank as a follower of the Crucified. "These light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," why, then, do we draw back from them?

God grant us grace to meditate much upon this love of Jesus Christ to us paralleled only by the Father's love to Him, and meditating, may we become content to have fellowship with Christ in His sufferings that we may partake in His glory!

III. Bear with me while I come, in the third place, to say, LET US EXPERIENCE AND ADMIRE THE POWER WHICH THIS LOVE HAS OVER US. I asked you to forget me just now, and to regard me as a mere telephone, but now I desire to retire altogether, that only Jesus may rule in your mind and heart in the fullness of His power. What can be more powerful than this love? What can be operative in so many ways and in such varied methods? Happy is the man who is evermore under the spell of its power!

The love of Christ received into the heart *acts as a catholicon*. The old doctors searched for many a day to find a universal remedy. They sought in vain, yet here we have it. Christ is all medicine for all ailments, but He is vastly more than that. He heals and He fills; He fills and He beautifies; He beautifies and He confirms; He confirms and He perfects. So wondrously does His love work on men. Let the love of Christ be believed in and felt in your hearts, and *it will humble you*. Proud self goes out when sweet love comes in; the flesh dies through the power of that love on which the spirit lives. Can I be proud when my Beloved unveils to me His love which passes knowledge? Impossible! No, I feel ready to sink into the ground when I see His glories, "My soul melted while my Beloved spoke." Brethren, the love of Christ is such a torrent, that when it floods the soul it carries self before it.

Love has also a melting influence. The hammer of the law breaks, but the heart, when thus broken, is like a broken flint, every bit of which is still flint. When the love of Jesus performs its office, it dissolves us, turning the flint into flesh. An old divine says that when the law creates repentance the tears are hard as hailstones in the sinner's eyes, and I believe it is so, but when the gospel makes us repent, our weeping is as the dew of the morning. What a blessed softness grace produces! How tender is the heart which Jesus touches with His pierced hand!

This love of Christ, how *consoling* it is to mourning hearts! This is the best candle for one who is lying in bed in the dark. Oh, you Much-Afraids and Desponding-Ones, who are hardly able to enjoy my subject this morning, I would gladly lift you up and cheer you by this sweet love, for indeed it is a balm for you. Do not turn away from this heavenly cordial. Do not try to doubt; you can scarcely do so when you think of our Redeemer's love! What! Desponding? When your Beloved gives you the kisses of His lips, and says, "I have loved you with an everlasting love"? If His presence does not cheer you, surely heaven itself would not make you glad, for what is heaven but the full enjoyment of His love?

The love of Jesus has *a cleansing and sanctifying power*. To kill the love of sin, live in the love of Christ. He whom Christ loves hates sin. We begin to say within ourselves—What shall I quit for Christ? What shall I do for Christ? The love of Jesus shed abroad in the soul has a sanctifying savor; it perfumes the heart with holiness. His love is as a fire of odoriferous woods; it consumes sin, and gives forth a fragrance of virtue. No furnace ever purifies our heart like the love of Jesus, which burns like coals of juniper. The way of love is the road to perfectness. Jonathan will not offend the David whom he loves. A heart enamored of the holy Jesus will be very jealous lest it grieve Him by sin.

A sweet sense of Christ's love also *strengthens us*. Love is strong as death, and it makes us strong for the duties of life. Those holy women in Scotland tied to stakes to be drowned by the incoming tide, what made them so brave in their confession of loyalty to Jesus? What but a sense of His love to them? Feeble men and women were cast to the lions in the Roman amphitheater; did you ever hear that they cowered before the wild beasts, or asked mercy of the cruel crowd that sat around, and gazed on

their agonies? Ah, no! Christ's soldiers never tremble, and if you ask the secret of their courage, it is that He loves them, and they cannot but be bold for His dear sake.

This it is, too, that *makes us tender to others* and compassionate for this poor, ruined world. If any of you want to love the souls of men, learn how Christ loved *you*. You will love the vilest for His sake. If you would have eyes with which to weep over this sinful city, see how Jesus wept for *you*. If you would be prompt at all times to help the needy and succor the afflicted, keep close to the side of your gentle, tender, compassionate Lord, and as you feel His love to you, you will feel pity for others.

It is this that *inflames men with a true zeal for God* and for the good of men. Some hardly know what it is to be zealous, but there are a few saints yet remaining who are like pillars of flame from morning till night. We have some among us; my fear is lest they consume themselves and are gone before others have caught the flame. Would you know the secret of that holy flame which sits upon some apostolic men? The love of Jesus is that heavenly fire; they burn with love as they think of Him whose love made Him a whole burnt offering for them.

This love *fills believers with delight*. If you would be always happy, sustain your mirth upon the spiced wine of His pomegranate. He loves me; He loves me, O joyous thought! Such an assurance creates a Paradise in a prison, and a heaven in heaviness.

Now I invite you, in conclusion, dear friends, to enter into this love of Christ by personal enjoyment. Wade into this river of the water of life. Do I hear you cry, "It is up to the ankles"? Go deeper, brother! "It is up to the knees." Go deeper, brother! Think more of divine love; value it more; live upon it more; trust it more! "Sir, it is up to my loins." Go deeper, brother! Thank God when it begins to lift you from your feet and bear you up above all earthly things. When you cannot touch the bottom rejoice. When you must swim, be happy to cast yourself upon the blessed flood. It cannot drown you; these are not waters to sink in, but "waters to swim in." Be you as a bird in the air, a fish in the stream, an angel in heaven; let the love of Christ be your element; to you let love and live be the same word. You cannot think too much of Christ's love. The wise man says, "Eat not too much honey," but you cannot enjoy too much of the love of Christ. Get absorbed into it; be swallowed up in it till it is "no more I but Christ that lives in me."

And when you are once immersed in this love, continue in it. Christ does not love you today and cast you away to-morrow. Shall your faith be inconstant when His faithfulness is so abiding? How is it that you today are so happy in the Lord, and tomorrow will be so dreary? Are you up on Sunday and down on Monday? Is your God only the God of the Sabbath, and not of the whole week? What! Is Christ a Sunday Christ, and not a Monday Christ? And is His love a Sabbath theme, and not an inspiration for Tuesdays and Wednesdays? Beloved, this must not be. Why, it is a childish thing—I retract the word as dishonoring to dear children—it is a foolish thing to be warm with this love today, and then to be cold tomorrow. Surely near such a fire we ought to be always warm. Abide in His

love. Jesus Christ would have His people remain in a high, happy, holy, heavenly condition. Do you say you think it is impossible? I do not agree with you. Enoch walked with God for many a year, till at last he walked away with God. Try after continued communion. Too often we get up to the top of the hill, and slide down again like boys at play. Come, come; this will never do. Let us keep up to the height which we reach. If I climb to the top of a hill I am by no means able to boast, for at once I see another hill beyond, which I had not before perceived. I aspire to climb that new summit, and I doubt not that if I attain it, I shall there spy another, and so on till the end. It is never ours to write the word "finality." *Higher and holier* is still our watch word. But why must we come down into the marshes again? What can be the good of rushing out of the sunshine of Christ's love into the fogs of distrust? To where we have attained, let us abide in it, and seek grace to go on to something more. Does not our Lord intend this when He says, "Continue you in My love"? "Oh," says one, "you set us a hard task." No, brother, I have set before you a pleasant privilege, but I admit that you will not reach it by your own power, and as you are in yourself. But I am not talking to you as you are in yourself. I am talking to you as you are in Christ, and as you are in Christ all power is given to you. Exercise that power. Henceforth instead of singing a song which breaks up into verses with groans between, let us chant a Psalm that goes right straight on, and has in every verse the joyous stanza, "His mercy endures forever." My Beloved is mine and I am His, and till the day breaks and the shadows flee away my soul shall feast upon His love and joy and rejoice in Him. God help you to do this for His name's sake! Oh, unconverted hearers, do you not wish to taste our joys? Come as you are, and trust in Jesus, and they shall be yours. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 15.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—916, 798, 792.

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HOW HEARTS ARE SOFTENED
NO. 1983

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 18, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And I will pour on the house of David, and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, 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 first-born. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadad Rimmon in the valley of Megiddo." Zechariah 12:10, 11.

HARDNESS of heart is a great and grievous evil. It exists not only in the outside world, but in many who frequent the courts of the Lord's house. Beneath the robes of religion many carry a heart of stone. It is more than possible to come to baptism and the sacred supper, to come constantly to the hearing of the Word, and even, as a matter of form, to attend to private religious duties, and yet still have an unrenewed heart, a heart within which no spiritual life palpitates, and no spiritual feeling exists. Nothing good can come out of a stony heart; it is barren as a rock. To be unfeeling is to be unfruitful. Prayer without desire, praise without emotion, preaching without earnestness—what are all these? Like the marble images of life, they are cold and dead. Insensibility is a deadly sign. Frequently it is the next stage to destruction. Pharaoh's hard heart was a prophecy that his pride would meet a terrible overthrow. The hammer of vengeance is not far off when the heart becomes harder than an adamant stone.

Many and great are the advantages connected with softness of spirit. Tenderness of heart is one of the marks of a gracious person. Spiritual sensibility puts life and feeling into all Christian duties. He that prays feelingly prays indeed; he that praises God with humble gratitude, praises Him most acceptably, and he that preaches with a loving heart has the essentials of true eloquence. An inward, living tenderness, which trembles at God's word, is of great price in the sight of God.

You are in this matter agreed with me, at least, I know that some of you are thoroughly thus minded, for you are longing to be made tender and contrite. Certain of you who are truly softened by divine grace are very prone to accuse yourselves of being stony-hearted. We are poor judges of our own condition, and in this matter many make mistakes. Mark this; the man who grieves because he does not grieve is often the man who grieves most. He that feels that he does not feel is probably the most feeling man of us all; I suspect that hardness is almost gone when it is mourned over. He who can feel his insensibility is not insensible.

Those who mourn that their heart is a heart of stone, if they were to look calmly at the matter might perceive that it is not all stone, or else there would not be a mourning because of hardness. But whether this is so or not, I address myself to all of you whose prayer is for godly sorrow for sin. It is written in the covenant of grace, "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh." I pray that this may be fulfilled in you even now. The object of this sermon is to show how this tenderness is to be obtained, and how an evangelical sorrow for sin can be produced in the heart, and maintained there. I would set forth the simple method by which the inward nature can be made living, feeling, and tender, full of warm emotions, fervent breathings, and intense affections towards the Lord Jesus Christ. While I speak, I beseech you to pray, "Create in me a tender heart, O Lord, and renew within me a contrite spirit."

It will be instructive to keep to the words of the text. This passage is peculiarly suited to our purpose, and it will add authority to that which we teach. Observe that holy tenderness *arises out of a divine operation.* "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications." Secondly, *it is actually worked by the look of faith,* "And they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him." And thirdly, the tenderness which comes in this way *leads to mourning for sin of an intense kind,* "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 first-born. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadad Rimmon in the valley of Megiddo."

I. First, note that, THE HOLY TENDERNESS WHICH MAKES MEN MOURN FOR SIN, ARISES OUT OF A DIVINE OPERATION. It is not in fallen man to renew his own heart. Can the adamant turn itself to wax or the granite soften itself to clay? Only He that stretches out the heavens and lays the foundation of the earth can form and reform the spirit of man within him. The power to make the rock of our nature flow with rivers of repentance is not in the rock itself.

The power lies in the omnipotent Spirit of God, and it is an omen for good that He delights to exercise this power. The Spirit of God is prompt to give life and feeling. He moved of old upon the face of the waters, and by His power order came out of confusion. That same Spirit at this time broods over our souls, and reduces the chaos of our natural state to light and life and obedience. There lies the hope of our ruined nature. Jehovah who made us can make us over again. Our case is not beyond His power. Is anything too hard for the Lord? Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? He can change the nether millstone into a mass of feeling, and dissolve the northern iron and the steel into a flood of tears. When He deals with the human mind by His secret and mysterious operations, He fills it with new life, perception, and emotion. "God makes my heart soft," said Job, and in the best sense this is true. The Holy Spirit makes us like wax, and we become impressible to His sacred seal. Remember, you that are hard of heart, that your hope lies this way; God Himself, who melts the icebergs of the northern sea, must make your soul yield up its hardness in

the presence of His love. Nothing short of the work of God within you can effect this. "You must be born again," and that new birth must be from above. The Spirit of God must work regeneration in you. He is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham, but until He works you are dead and insensible. Even now I perceive the goings forth of His power; He is moving you to desire His divine working, and in that gracious desire the work has already begun.

Note next, that as this tenderness comes of the Spirit of God, so *it also comes by His working in full co-operation with the Father and with the Son*. In our text we have all the three persons of the divine Trinity. We hear the Father say, "I will pour upon the house of David the spirit of grace," and that Spirit when poured out leads men to look to Him whom they pierced, even to the incarnate Son of God. Thus the Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son, fulfils the purpose of the Father by revealing the Son, and thus the heart of man is reached. The divine Father sends forth the Holy Spirit, and He bears witness to the Son of God, and so men come to mourn for sin. We believe in the three persons of the blessed God, and yet we are equally clear that God is one. We see the divers operations of these three divine persons, but we perceive that they are all of one, and work to the self same end, namely, that grace may reign by delivering us from our natural impenitence, and by causing us to sorrow because we have sinned. The Holy Spirit works not without the Father and the Son, but proves Himself to be in full union with both by His operations upon the soul of man. Do not think, therefore, when you feel the Holy Spirit melting you, that the Father will refuse you; it is He that sent the Holy Spirit to deal with you. Imagine not that you can feel repentance for sin and bow in sorrow at the Savior's feet, and that Jesus will reject you, for it is He who sent the Spirit of grace to bring you to repentance, and make you mourn because of the ill which you have done. The glorious one God, who made the heavens and the earth, is dealing with your heart if the Holy Spirit is now working in you as "the spirit of grace and of supplications."

This operation is an unseen secret work. You cannot perceive the work of the Spirit by the senses of the flesh; it is spiritually discerned. When the Spirit of God was poured out at Pentecost, there were divers signs attendant thereupon, such as rushing mighty wind, and cloven tongues as it were fire, but these were outward signs only, the Spirit Himself is inward and secret. The Spirit is as the wind, invisible save by its effects. The Holy Spirit comes as the dew which in soft silence refreshes the tender herb. Not with sound of trumpet or observation of man does the Spirit perform His gracious deeds. His working is one of the secrets and mysteries which no man can explain to his fellow. He that feels the movement of the Holy Spirit, knows that a singular work is going on within him, but what it is, or who it is that works it, he knows not. Do not, therefore, expect to be informed when the Spirit is upon you. Marvel not if it should so happen that He is dealing with you now, though you know it not, "For God speaks once, yes twice, yet man perceives it not." The operations of the Holy Spirit are consciously perceived by the human

heart, but they are not always attributed to their right cause. Many a man, to use the words of our hymn—

"Wonders to feel his own hardness depart."

He does not know how his new tenderness has been produced. He finds himself anxious to hear and understand the gospel, and he feels that the gospel affects him as it never did before, but he does not perceive those "invisible" cords of love which are drawing him towards his Savior. Before long he will cry, "This is the finger of God," but as yet he perceives not the divine cause. It is well set forth by Mr. Bunyan in his parable of the fire which burned though a man tried to quench it. There was one behind the wall who secretly poured oil upon the fire. He himself was unperceived, but the fire burned because of what he poured on it. You can see the flame, but you cannot see the hidden One who ministers the fuel. The Spirit of God may work in you, my dear hearer, this morning, but it will not be with special token of marvel, or voice, or vision. Not with earthquake, nor wind, nor fire will He come, but with "a still small voice." He may deal with many of you at once, and yet none may see it in his fellow. I expect that He will work upon many at this time, for much prayer has been put up that the Lord Jesus may be glorified in our midst.

But the secret operation of the Spirit is known by its effects, for *it is sweetly productive*. We read in the text of "the spirit of grace and of supplications," which must mean that the Spirit produces graciousness and prayerfulness in the soul upon which He works. The man is now willing to receive the grace or free favor of God; he ceases to be proud, and becomes gracious. He is put into a condition in which God's grace can deal with him. As long as you are self-righteous, God cannot deal with you in the way of favor; you are upon wrong ground, for you are making claims which He cannot possibly allow. Mercy and merit can no more blend than fire and water. You must be willing to receive as a free favor what God will never give you if you claim it by right. When you are made conscious of sin, then forgiveness can be granted. When you are malleable under the hammer of God's Word, then will He work His work of love upon you. When you lay your own righteousness aside, and take up the cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner," then shall you go to your house justified. It needs the Spirit of grace to give us grace to receive grace. We are so graceless that we will not even accept grace till God gives us "grace for grace"—grace to accept grace. Blessed is the hour when the Spirit of God comes to us as the Spirit of grace, and works in us that graciousness which makes us value and seek after the free grace of God in its further forms. Grace itself clears out a space in the heart for grace to enter and carry on its work.

It is also said that the Lord will pour out "the spirit of supplications." This is the creation of desires and longings which express themselves in prayer. When the Holy Spirit works savingly upon the heart, then the man begins to approach the mercy seat with frequent and fervent supplications. The words may be broken and confused, but what are words? Sighs, tears, heaving of the breast, and upward glances of the eye—these are true prayers, and are very prevalent with God. Brethren, we poor preachers cannot make men pray. We can produce a Book of Common

Prayer, and read it to them, and get them to utter the responses, but we cannot make them pray by this means; the Spirit of God is still needed. The child may be taught a form of prayer at its mother's knee, and he may repeat it daily till he is old, and yet he may never have prayed in all those years. Only the Spirit of God can produce the smallest atom of prayer. I tell you, there was never a prayer on earth that God could accept, but what first came down from heaven by the operation of the Spirit of God upon the soul. But here is the point; have you this "Spirit of supplications" this morning? Are you groaning, crying, sighing—"Lord, save, or I perish; give me Christ, or else I die"? Well then, I trust you have come under the sacred outpouring promised in the text—"I will pour upon the house of David, and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications."

All this leads on towards the tenderness which begets mourning for sin. Again, I say, this is the point from which help must come for the sinner. You that have been striving to feel, and yet cannot feel, and do not feel—you should look to the strong for strength, and to the living for life. He who in the day of his creation breathed into the nostrils of man the breath of life, so that he became a living soul, can infuse the new life into you, and give you with it all the feeling which is natural thereto. Think much of the Holy Spirit, for He can make you live in the truest sense. It is God's to give you a tender heart, not yours to create it within yourself. Do not attempt first to renew your heart, and then to come to Christ for salvation, for this renewal of heart is salvation. Come you as you are, confessing all your hardness, your wicked, willful obduracy and obstinacy, confess it all, and then put yourself into the hands of the Spirit, who can remove your hardness at the same time that grace removes your guilt. The Holy Spirit can make your heart as tender as the apple of the eye, and cause your conscience to be as sensitive as a raw wound, which feels the slightest touch. God grant us grace to deal with Him about these things, and not to be looking to ourselves. As well hope to extract juice from the stones of the seashore, as spiritual feeling from the carnal mind. He who can make the dry bones live, and He alone, can make the hardened mourn over sin.

II. But now I come to the core and center of our subject; THIS TENDERNESS OF HEART AND MOURNING FOR SIN IS ACTUALLY WORKED BY A FAITH-LOOK AT THE PIERCED SON OF GOD. True sorrow for sin comes not without the Spirit of God, but even the Spirit of God Himself does not work it except by leading us to look to Jesus the crucified. There is no true mourning for sin until the eyes have seen Christ. It is a beautiful remark of an old divine, that eyes are made for two things at least; first, to look with, and next, to weep with. The eyes which look to the pierced One are the eyes which weep for Him. O soul, when you come to look where all eyes should look, even to Him who was pierced, then your eyes begin to weep for that for which all eyes should weep, even the sin which slew your Savior! There is no saving repentance except within sight of the cross. That repentance of sin which omits Christ is a repentance which will have to be repented of. If such sorrow may be called repentance at all, it is only as wild grapes are yet called grapes, though

they have in them none of the qualities and virtues of the clusters of the true vine. Evangelical repentance is acceptable repentance, and that only, and the essence of evangelical repentance is that it looks to Him whom it pierced by its sin. Sorrow for sin without faith in Christ is the hard bone without the marrow; it kills, but never blesses. It is a tempest of the soul with thunder and lightning, but no rain. God save us from remorse! It works death.

Mark you, *wherever the Holy Spirit does really come, He always leads the soul to look to Christ*. Never yet did a man receive the Spirit of God unto salvation, unless he received it to the bringing of him to look to Christ and mourn for sin. Faith and repentance are born together, live together, and thrive together. Let no man put asunder what God has joined together. No man can repent of sin without believing in Jesus, nor believe in Jesus without repenting of sin. Look, then, lovingly to Him that bled upon the cross for you, for in that look you shall find pardon, and receive softening. How wonderful that all our evils should be remedied by that one sole prescription, "Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth"! Yet none will look until the Spirit of God inclines them so to do, and He works on none to their salvation unless they yield to His influences and turn their eyes to Jesus.

Note well that *this look to the pierced One is peculiarly dear to God*. Observe the change of the pronoun in the middle of the verse, "They shall look upon *Me* whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for *Him."* The *Me* and the *Him* refer to the same person. I lay no special stress upon this, and I do not attempt to *prove* any doctrine from it, but certainly it is remarkable that when we read this verse with defined views as to the oneness of Christ with God, and the union of God and man in one person in the Lord Jesus, we find the pronouns perfectly correct, and understand why there should be *"Me,"* in one case, and *"Him,"* in another. If you adopt any other theory, then the passage would seem to be a jumble of words. It is instructive to note that the Lord, instead of saying, "They shall look upon Him whom they have pierced," cannot keep Himself in the third person, but bursts upon the scene in His own individuality. Either you have here the Father regarding Himself as pierced in His Son, or the Lord Jesus Christ Himself speaking in the spirit of prophecy of Himself, and personally noting those looks of faith and penitence which are fixed upon His sacred person. He has such a delight in those looks of believing sorrow, that He mentions them as having personally beheld them, "They shall look upon *Me* whom they have pierced." Nothing pleases Jesus more than the faith-looks of His people. In every stage of their history the glances of believers' eyes are very precious to Him. "You have ravished My heart, My sister, My spouse; you have ravished My heart with one of your eyes," says the Bridegroom in the heavenly canticle. Surely the first glance of a tearful, penitent eye to Christ is very dear to Him. He says, "I have seen him and observed him." Nobody sees our look of faith but Himself, and it is not needful that anyone else should see it; is it not a matter between our own soul and our Lord? He foresaw that look, and in this verse uttered a prophecy concerning it, and He looks back upon it with pleasure, keeping it before His mind as a part of His satisfaction for

the travail of His soul. The looks of faith and the tears of repentance are precious jewels to our Lord Jesus. He rejoices so much when one sinner repents that the angels see His joy. O dear hearts, if this morning, in those pews, you look to Christ believingly, accepting Him as God's salvation, then is the promise fulfilled before the eyes of Him who spoke it, and said, "They shall look on Me whom they have pierced." He will be glad of your faith; He invites it, He accepts it, He rewards it. "They looked unto Him and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed." Looking unto Jesus we receive joy, and we give Him joy. As He delights in mercy, so He delights in those who come to Him and accept His mercy. He was lifted on a cross to be looked at, He was nailed there that He might be a perpetual spectacle, and His heart was pierced that we might see the blood and water, which are our double cure.

The look which blesses us so as to produce tenderness of heart is a look to Jesus as the pierced One. On this I want to dwell for a season. It is not looking to Jesus as God only which affects the heart, but looking to this same Lord and God as crucified for us. We see the Lord pierced, and then the piercing of our own heart begins. When the Lord reveals Jesus to us, we begin to have our sins revealed. We see who it was that was pierced, and this deeply stirs our sorrow. Come, dear souls, let us go together to the cross for a little while, and *note who it was* that there received the spear-thrust of the Roman soldier. Look at His side, and mark that fearful gash which has broached His heart, and set the double flood in motion. The centurion said, "Truly, this was the Son of God." He who by nature is God over all, "without whom was not anything made that was made," took upon Himself our nature, and became a man like ourselves, save that He was without taint of sin. Being found in fashion as a man, He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. It is He that died! He who only has immortality condescended to die! He was all glory and power, and yet He died! He was all tenderness and grace, and yet He died! Infinite goodness was hung upon a tree! Boundless bounty was pierced with a spear! This tragedy exceeds all others! However dark man's ingratitude may seem in other cases, it is blackest here! However horrible his spite against virtue, that spite is most cruel here! Here hell has outdone all its former villainy, crying, "This is the heir; let us kill Him." God dwelt among us, and man would have none of Him. So far as man could pierce his God, and slay his God, he went about to commit the hideous crime, for man slew the Lord Christ, and pierced Him with a spear, and therein showed what he would do with the Eternal Himself, if he could come at Him. Man is, at heart, a deicide. He would be glad if there were no God; he says in his heart, "No God," and if his hand could go as far as his heart, God would not exist another hour. This it is which invests the piercing of our Lord with such intensity of sin; it meant the piercing of God. But why? Why and wherefore is the good God thus persecuted? By the loving-kindness of the Lord Jesus, by the glory of His person, and by the perfection of His character, I beseech you be amazed and ashamed that He should be pierced. This is no common death! This murder is no ordinary crime. O man, He that was

pierced with the spear was your God! On the cross behold your Maker, your Benefactor, your best Friend!—

"Alas! and did my Savior bleed?
And did my Savior die?
Would He devote that sacred head
For such a worm as I?"

Look steadily at the pierced One, and *note the suffering* which is covered by the word "pierced." Our Lord suffered greatly and grievously. I cannot in one discourse rehearse the story of His sorrows; the griefs of His life of poverty and persecution; the griefs of Gethsemane, and the bloody sweat; the griefs of His desertion, denial, and betrayal; the griefs of Pilate's hall, and the scourging, and the spitting, and the mockery; the griefs of the cross, with its dishonor and agony. The sufferings of our Lord's body were only the body of His sufferings—

"'Twas not the insulting voice of scorn
So deeply wrung His heart;
The piercing nail, the pointed thorn,
Caused not the saddest smart:
But every struggling sigh betrayed
A heavier grief within,
How on His burdened soul was laid
The weight of human sin."

Our Lord was made a curse for us. The penalty for sin, or that which was equivalent thereto, He endured. "He His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree." "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed." Brethren, the sufferings of Jesus ought to melt our hearts. I mourn this morning that I do not mourn as I should. I accuse myself of that hardness of heart which I condemn, since I can tell you this story without breaking down. My Lord's griefs are untellable. Behold and see if there was ever sorrow like unto His sorrow! Here we lean over a dread abyss and look down into fathomless gulfs. Now we are upon great waters, where deep calls unto deep. If you will steadfastly consider Jesus pierced for our sins, and all that is meant thereby, your hearts must relent. Sooner or later the cross will bring out all the feeling of which you are capable, and give you capacity for more. When the Holy Spirit puts the cross into the heart, the heart is dissolved in tenderness. *Crux in corde,* as the old preachers used to say, this is the source of godly sorrow. The hardness of the heart dies when we see Jesus die in woe so great.

It behooves us further to *note who it was that pierced Him*—"*They* shall look on Me whom *they* have pierced." The "they," in each case, relates to the same persons. We slew the Savior, even we, who look to Him and live. If a man were condemned and put to death, you might inquire who it was that slew him, and you might be told that it was the judge who condemned him, but that would not be all the truth. Another might blame the jury who brought in the verdict of guilty, or the executioner who actually hanged him, but when you go to the root of the matter you would find that it was the man's crime which was the real blameworthy cause of his death. In the Savior's case sin was the cause of His death. Transgression pierced Him; but whose transgression? Whose? It was not His own, for He knew no sin, neither was guile found on His lips. Pilate

said, "I find no fault in this man." Brethren, the Messiah was cut off, but not for Himself. *Our* sins slew the Savior. He suffered because there was no other way of vindicating the justice of God and allowing us to escape. The sword which otherwise had smitten us was awakened against the Lord's Shepherd, against the man that was Jehovah's fellow. Truly may we sing—

"'Twas for my sins my dearest Lord
Hung on the cursed tree,
And groaned away a dying life
For you, my soul, for thee.
Oh, how I hate those lusts of mine
That crucified my God;
Those sins that pierced and nailed His flesh
Fast to the fatal wood!
Oh, if my soul were formed for woe,
How would I vent my sighs!
Repentance should like rivers flow
From both my streaming eyes."

If this does not break and melt our hearts, let us *note why He came into a position in which He could be pierced by our sins*. It was love, mighty love, nothing else but love which led Him to the cross. No other charge can ever be laid at His door but this, that He was "found guilty of excess of love." He put Himself in the way of piercing because He was resolved to save us. He loved us better than He loved Himself. And shall we hear of this, and think of this, and consider this, and remain unmoved? Are we worse than brutes? Has all that is human quit our humanity? If God the Holy Spirit is now at work, a sight of Christ will surely melt our heart of stone.

Furthermore, notice that *looking to the pierced One causes mourning in every case*. All hearts yield to this. Under the power of the Holy Spirit *this works efficaciously of itself*. Nothing else is needed. "They shall look upon Me," and "they shall mourn." Faith in Christ is sufficient for the production of acceptable and deep repentance; this, and this only, without mortifications and penances.

Let me also say to you, beloved, that *the more you look at Jesus crucified, the more you will mourn for sin*. Growing thought will bring growing tenderness. I would have you look much at the pierced One, that you may hate sin much. Books which set forth the passion of our Lord, and hymns which sing of His cross, have ever been most dear to saintly minds because of their holy influence upon the heart and conscience. Live at Calvary, beloved, for there you will live at your best. Live at Calvary, and love at Calvary, till live and love become the same thing. I would say, look to the pierced One till your own heart is pierced. An old divine says, "Look at the cross until all that is on the cross is in your heart." He further says; Look at Jesus until He looks at you. Steadily view His suffering person until He seems to turn His head and look at you, as He did at Peter when he went out and wept bitterly. See Jesus till you see yourself; mourn for Him till you mourn for your sin.

The whole of this subject leads me to observe that the conversion of the Jews will come from a sight of the crucified Messiah. I conclude from this text that Israel will be brought to know the Lord, not by a vision of

Christ in His glory, but by a sight of Christ in His humiliation. "They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and shall mourn for Him." But I also conclude that this holds good of all mankind. By the preaching of Christ crucified will their hearts be broken. The cross is God's hammer of love, with which He smites the hearts of men with irresistible blows. Men tell us we should preach Christ as an example. We do preach Him as an example, and rejoice to do so, but we can never allow that view of our Lord to overshadow our preaching of Him as a sacrifice for sin. He suffered in the room, and place, and stead, of guilty men, and this is the gospel. Whatever others may preach, "We preach Christ crucified." We will ever bear the cross in the forefront. The substitution of Christ for the sinner is the essence of the gospel. We do not keep back the doctrine of the Second Advent, but first and foremost, we preach the pierced One, for this it is that shall lead to evangelical repentance, when the Spirit of grace is poured out. O brethren, whatever else you preach, or do not preach, preach Christ crucified! Jesus Christ my Lord as crucified is my main topic, and shall be till I die. I trust you feel a pleasure in thinking of the Lord Jesus in any character in which He is revealed, but yet the cross is that whereon He is most lifted up, and this is the chief attraction for sinful men. Though it is to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, it is still the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes.

III. My time is nearly over, and therefore I must only for a minute touch upon the surface of my third subject; THE SIGHT OF CHRIST CRUCIFIED WILL PRODUCE A MOURNING FOR SIN OF A VERY THOROUGH CHARACTER. It will be *immediate*. If the Spirit of God grants us an inward sight of Christ, we shall bleed inwardly at once. The sentences are fast joined together—"They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn." How rapidly the Spirit of God often works! "His word runs very swiftly." With a single blow of grace the bars of iron are broken. Saul of Tarsus was foaming at the mouth with rage against Jesus of Nazareth and His disciples, but a flash and a word changed him. "Why do you persecute Me?" showed him the pierced Lord, and "Lord, what will You have me to do?" was his speedy answer. One glimpse at Christ will make yonder stubborn sinner bow the knee. Look on him, Lord!

This mourning, according to our text, is *refined and pure*. They shall mourn for *Him,* they shall be in bitterness *for Him*. For Jesus they sorrow rather than for themselves. Sin is not mentioned in these verses, and yet the sorrow is all concerning sin. The grief for sin itself, is overborne and compassed about by the greater grief occasioned by the sad results of sin upon the person of the pierced One. Sin is grieved over as it is against the Lord; even as David cries, "Against You, You only, have I sinned." The mourning of a penitent is not because of hell; if there were no hell he would mourn just as much. His grief is not for what sin might cost him, but for what it has cost the Substitute. He bemoans himself thus, "Oh, how could I have pierced Him! How could I have wounded the Beloved? Lover of my soul, how could I have pierced You?" True penitents smite upon their breasts as they behold their Savior bleeding on the tree. This

is the sense of sin which is the mark of God's electing love, the token of the effectual calling of His grace.

In this mourning there is *a touching tenderness*, "They shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." It is not a son lamenting for a father, for there the grief might be as much for the loss of the father's care and help as for the father himself, but in the case of a father mourning his young son, the father is not supposed to lose anything but his boy; his grief is for the child himself. Mourning for a son is caused by a peculiarly pure and unmixed love. Somewhat that is of the earth, earthy, may enter into the mourning for a wife, but for his son a father laments with a love which none may question. For an only son the mourning is bitter indeed, and for a first-born it is as gall and wormwood. The Israelite was especially sensitive concerning the death of his offspring. To lose his first-born was as when a nation loses its prince. To lose his only son was to quench the light of the house. The old man mourns, "I am as good as dead. I am blotted out of the book of the living, for I now have no son to bear my name. The lamp has gone out in my tent, for my son, my only son, my first-born, has gone down to the gates of the grave!" The case was hopeless for the future; none remained to continue his family among those who sit in the gate, and the old man tore his clothes and wept sorely. It is a bitter mourning which we have when we see Jesus slain by our sins. Were it not for the consequences which grace has caused to flow therefrom, our sorrow would be hopeless and helpless, for we feel that in killing Jesus we have destroyed our best, our only hope, our one and only joy. His death was the hiding of the sun and the shaking of the earth, and we feel it to be so within our own souls. All that is worth having is gone when Jesus is gone. When God's only Son, His first-born, dies, we sympathize with the great Father, and feel ourselves bereaved of our chief joy, our hope, our delight.

This sorrow is *intense*. The word "bitterness" is used twice. Sorrow at the foot of the cross is sorrow indeed, sorrow upon sorrow, grief upon grief. Then we have bitterness and bitterness, bitterness upon bitterness, the bitterness of bitterness. Thank God, it is a healthy tonic; he that has tasted this bitterness may say, "Surely the bitterness of death is past."

And this kind of mourning is *very extraordinary*. The prophet could not recollect any mourning which he had ever heard of that was like it, except the lamentation of the people for the death of Josiah. Then all Judah mourned, and Jeremiah wrote sad dirges, and other prophets and poets poured forth their lamentations. Everywhere throughout the land there went up an exceedingly great and bitter cry, for the good king had fallen, and there were no princes of like mind to follow him. Alas, poor nation! It was your last bright hour which saw him ride to the battle; in his death your star has set! In the valley of Hadad Rimmon the mourning began, but it spread through all the land. The fatal fight of Megiddo was wailed by every woman in Jerusalem. Bravely had Josiah kept his word, and sought to repel the Egyptian invader, but the hour of Judah's punishment was come, and Josiah died. A mourning as sincere and deep comes to us when we perceive that Jesus died for us. Blessed be His

name; the joy that comes of it when we see sin put away by His death, turns all the sorrow into joy.

This mourning is *personal grief;* every man repents apart, and every woman apart. It is a private, personal grief; it is not produced by the contagion of example, but by the conviction of the individual conscience. Such sorrow is only to be assuaged by Jesus Christ Himself when He is revealed as the salvation of God.

Brethren, I am conscious that I have not preached as I ought to have preached this morning. I have been mastered by my subject. I could sit down alone and picture my divine Master on the cross. I delight to do so. It is my comfort to meditate on Him. I see Him hanging on the tree, and I carefully survey Him, from His head encircled with the thorns, down to His blessed feet, made by the nails to be fountains of crimson blood. I have wept behind the cross at the marks of the dread scourging which He bore; and then coming to the front I have gazed upon His pierced hands, and lingered long before that opened side. Then I feel as if I could die of a pleasing grief and mournful joy. Oh, how I then love and adore! But here before this crowd I am a mere lisper of words—words which fall far below the height of this great argument. Ah me! Ah me! Who among the sons of men could fitly tell you of His unknown agonies, His piercing anguish, His distraction and heart-break? Who can fully interpret that awful cry of "Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabachthani? My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Alone I can hide my face and bow my head, but here what can I do? O Lord, what can Your servant do?—

"Words are but air, and tongues but clay,
And Your compassions are divine."

I cannot tell of love's bleeding, love's agony, love's death! If the Holy Spirit will graciously come at this time, and put me and my words altogether aside, and set my Lord before you, evidently crucified among you, then I shall be content, and you will go home thoughtful, tender, hating sin, and therefore more deeply happy, more serenely glad than ever before. The Lord grant it for His name's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
ZECHARIAH 11:3; 12.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—296, 284, 290.

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MAN, WHOSE BREATH IS IN HIS NOSTRILS
NO. 1984

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

"Cease you from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for of what account is he?"
Isaiah 2:22.

MAN, especially since the fall, is a very unspiritual creature. His disposition is animal. He is made up, as the old writers used to say, of soul and soil. Alas, the soil terribly soils his soul! "My soul cleaves to the dust" might be the confession of every man in one sense or another. We bear the image of the first Adam, who was of the earth, earthy; earthy enough are we.

One consequence of the prevailing materialism of our corrupt nature is our craving for something tangible, audible, visible, as the object of our confidence. We want something which can be touched, heard, seen, or felt; we cannot be content with that which appeals only to the soul or the spirit. It seems as if man is so unspiritual that he cannot believe in a spiritual God, and yet any other than a spiritual God is an absurdity. Man cannot see God, therefore he will not trust in Him. He cannot hear His voice; therefore he will not attend to the movement of the Holy Spirit upon his soul. Humanity is carnal, sold under sin, infected with idolatry, and this fact remains true in a measure even of the regenerate. Their old nature is not other than it was, save that it is held in check by the new nature. So long as sin remains in us—and this will be so long as we are in this body—our tendency will be to be weary of God, who is a Spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth. We seek after something to worship, something to love, something to rely upon, which is so near akin to the coarser part of our nature that we may commune with it through the senses. It is sad that it should be so, but it has ever been so throughout the history of man, and sad traces of it are to be seen even in the history of God's own church.

Man is by nature an idolater. Under the most favorable circumstances he flies to his idols, even as the dog seeks after carrion, or the vulture hastens to its prey. The Lord's people, Israel, were delivered out of Egypt with a high hand and with an outstretched arm, and by many signs and tokens God's presence among them was abundantly certified. This was a noble beginning. The circumstances which afterwards surrounded them were especially helpful. They were placed in the wilderness, where, if they lived at all, they must live through the special protection and provision of God, for they reaped no harvests, and they gathered into no barns; the bread they ate fell from heaven, the water they drank came from a rock

which had been smitten by command of God through the rod of Moses. All day long they were sheltered from the burning sun by a canopy of clouds, and at night the canvas city was made bright with that same canopy turned into a flame of fire. They were in the wilderness alone, and apart; shut out from the rest of the world, surrounded as it were by the Lord Himself, who was a wall of fire round about them, and the glory in their midst. Nothing could have been more favorable for faith in God. Yet they must have a god that they can see. "Make us gods to go before us," cried they with such furious clamor that Aaron yielded to their evil desires, and made them the image of an ox. Behold the people of God, whom He had brought out of Egypt, bowing before the image of an ox that eats grass—an image which Moses in sarcasm styled a calf. They turned the glory of the invisible God into that of a brute beast, and said—"These are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt." Then they degraded themselves, and laid their manhood prostrate on the ground in adoration of the image of a bull. How is humanity fallen!

For century after century this was always the tendency of Israel, the most spiritual race of men upon the face of the earth. This race, educated by miracle and instructed by revelation, continually went aside after the gods of the heathen. Abraham among his own descendants after the flesh had few who were like him in his high spiritual faith. The world of spiritual realities seems to be too bright, too holy for the best of such gross and carnal beings as we are.

The people of Isaiah's day were like the rest of their race; they showed their unspiritualness and their inability to walk in the light of the Lord by making their own *wealth* their chief confidence. We read at verse seven—"Their land is also full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures," and then it is added, "Their land is also full of idols." Alas! This idolatry of wealth is common among God's people even at this day. "Give us this day our daily bread" is a prayer which falls far short of the general desires even of Christian people. Our demands are for luxuries, and plenty of them. Many would be coming down in the world very terribly if they had to receive from hand-to-mouth fashion—day by day their daily bread. Yet the Lord Jesus has put these words into our mouth. The providence of God is to some professing Christians a mere dream; they cannot rest till they have something more substantial to rely upon than the care of heaven. You think I am sarcastic; is it not true? See how your professed believers hunger to make sure of the main chance; as eagerly as the merest worldlings they scrape and they hoard. I have not a word to say against that Scriptural prudence which bids us, like the ant, lay by in store for wintry times, but I speak of the hunger to be rich, and of the selfish expenditure which forgets entirely that our substance is to be used for the glory of God, and that we are only stewards. I ask again, do not many slave, and hoard, and grasp as if there were no promise in the Scriptures of temporal provision from God's own right hand, and no exhortation to lay up our treasures in heaven? Are we liars? Do we say that all that we are and have is the Lord's, and do we af-

ter saying this live for ourselves, as if there were no redemption and no hereafter? That there should be need for the preacher to raise such questions is an indication that there is a common tendency to worship wealth, or at least to regard it as a substantial support.

Nations also, like the Israelite people, are apt to idolize *power*; yes, even power in the form of brute force. We read—"Their land is also full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots." Cavalry and war chariots were as much in repute in that age on land as ironclads are at this day upon the sea, and Israel trusted to these. Jehovah was the guardian of His people; the Lord of hosts is His name. He alone was a match for Egypt and Babylon, but the kings of Israel and Judah did not think so. They could not feel secure without great armies; they must multiply their horses and their chariots. They forgot that "a horse is a vain thing for safety," they knew not that in the Lord alone is the salvation of His people. The same feeling crops up among God's people at this day. We pine for visible power, it may be physical or mental, as the case requires, but we thirst to have it available, embodied in some human form. We cannot rest upon God alone and feel that when we are weak we are strong. The Lord takes no pleasure in the strength of the horse or in the legs of a man, but His people often do. Eloquence, cleverness, intellect—these are still the idols which the church dotes upon; she has not yet understood the words, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord." Still we make too much of the instrument and too little of the Divine Worker; still is there more expected from music, architecture, and oratory, than from the simple gospel and the attendant working of the Holy Spirit. How hardly can men be brought to trust in the invisible God! Alas! It is still true, "Their land is also full of idols: the mean man bows down, and the great man humbles himself." O Church of God, how long will it be before you believe your God?

These people, in the heat of their idolatry, set up *many idols*. They made anything into a god. He that was so impoverished that he could not make a god of silver would make an idol out of a tree which would not rot, and having carved and gilded it, he prostrated himself before it. To what a height of folly has a man come when he can do this! You tell me that this idolatry is confined to heathen countries. Alas! It is not so; idolatry is common even here. "Little children, keep yourselves from idols," is a text that still needs to be preached from—yes, to be preached in Christian congregations, for idols will intrude themselves into the sanctuary of the Lord. The forms and shapes of modern idols are many and crafty. We see no elephant-headed deity such as is the fear of the Hindus, and no absurd fetish such as the African dreads, but more dangerous, because more subtle and secret, forms of idolatry are allowed to remain in our midst. Oh that the Lord would in His people fulfil the word, "The idols He shall utterly abolish"!

May we not easily make idols of *ourselves?* Almost before we are aware of it, we may be thus debased. What more degrading than for a man to worship himself! We read of some whose god is their belly; this is the grosser part of self. What heathen ever worshipped his own belly? Yet we

all too much trust in ourselves at times—what is this but idolatry? Do we not seek ourselves in a measure—is not this idolatry? Do we not reverence our own achievements and attainments—in what does this differ from idolatry? Gods many and many lords have men made unto themselves. Like a child that must have a toy, man must have a visible trust and confidence. For this purpose, "he has sought out many inventions." He will even worship reptiles of the river, and plants of the garden, rather than be without a visible deity. Alas, poor foolish creature!

I need not enlarge upon this. You all know how true it is that, one way or another, man gets away from the spiritual life which would make God everything to him, and he wanders into the sensual region, where he either finds another god, or else allows some symbol or priest to stand between him and God. So sadly through sin is our nature twisted and biased, that we seem to be under the witchery of idolatry.

As I have already said, there is nothing more absurd in the history of human nature than the fact that man is apt to trust in man. To worship something superior to myself is bad enough if it is not God, but to begin to put my dependence upon a man like myself or upon myself, and so to allow man, who at the best is a sorry creature, to take the place of God, is indeed a wantonness of evil. Do you wonder that God has pronounced a curse upon this provoking folly, this insult to His divine majesty? Hear the words of this anathema, "Cursed be the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm." The sin is none the less accursed because of its commonness. That which God blesses is blest indeed, and that which He curses is cursed with an emphasis. Concerning that sin so common and so accursed I have to speak at this time. May the Lord bless the word that we may be kept from the transgression! Here is the text; "Cease you from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for of what account is he?"

We will handle the text thus—First, *What is man?* Answer; "His breath is in his nostrils." Secondly, *What is to be our relation to man?* "Cease you from man." And thirdly, *Why should we cease from him?* It is answered by another question, "For of what account is he?" This puts the question; What is there in him or about him that renders him a proper object of reverence or confidence? May the Holy Spirit send us a profitable meditation!

I. Our first inquiry is, WHAT IS MAN? This question is asked many times in Scripture, and it has been frequently answered with a copiousness of instruction. David even asks of heaven, "Lord, what is man?" I will not, however, go over all that wide expanse of thought which the Bible puts before us, but simply answer the inquiry from the point of view of our text.

What is man? *He is assuredly a very feeble creature*. He must be weak, for, "his breath is in his nostrils." We measure the strength of a chain by its weakest link. If other links are strong, yet if one is ready to snap, we judge that the whole chain is far from strong, and is not to be depended upon. See, then, how weak man is, for he is weakness itself in a vital point. He has bones that may be hard and durable, and he has many a strong sinew, tough and wiry, as we sometimes say, but there is a weak

point about him which is found in a matter on which his life depends, namely, his breath. And what is our breath; a vapor which we scarcely see ourselves—a thing so unsubstantial that when we have it we scarcely see it, and yet when we lose it life is gone from us. Our earthly existence depends upon our breath, and that breath is mere wind. How feeble must that creature be whose vitality rests on a foundation as airy and unsubstantial as mere breath! A vapor is not more fleeting. We talk of strong men. Is any man strong? We speak of the strength of our constitutions; how is that strong which depends upon a puff of air? It is a marvel that so frail a life is not sooner ended. That we live is miraculous; that we die is but natural. Readily enough may that house fall which is built, not on sand, but on air. Dr. Watts has well said—

"Our life contains a thousand springs,
And fails if one is gone;
Strange that a harp of a thousand strings
Should keep in tune so long!"

Dust we are, and that dust hastens to dissolve, and so to return to the kindred dust of the earth. Under our feet are our graves, and above us are the stars which will soon look down upon our silent tombs. The trees cast their leaves, but they grow green, again; we shed our life's glories once and they return no more. Thus the trees outlive us, and beneath their shade we are reminded that man is far more frail than the tree which he fells with the axe. Yes, the very grass which he mows outlives the mower. Man is a mere shadow; we have scarcely time to say that he is before he is not. Are we not foolish if we place our reliance upon such a feeble creature, so weak that his breath, his unsubstantial breath, is essential to his life? Who are you, O man that trusts in man? If you have half a grain of wisdom left, how can you quit the ever-living God and put your reliance upon a poor creature that is as the grass that today is and tomorrow is cast into the oven? Go, rest on a reed, or ride on a moth, or build on a bubble, but rely not on a man.

Moreover, *man is a frail creature,* for his strength must be measured by his fleeting breath, and that breath is in his nostrils. It seems as though his life in his breath stood at the gates, ready to be gone, since it is in his nostrils. The text says not that his breath is in his lungs, deep, hidden below, but in his nostrils—at the door, in the most exposed part of the face, at two open portals which can never be shut; as if it meant to secure an easy exit at any moment. Brethren, there are ten thousand gates to death. One man is choked by a grape seed, another dies through sleeping in a newly whitewashed room; one receives death as he passes by a reeking sewer, another finds it in the best kept house, or by a chill taken on a walk. Those who study neither to eat nor to drink anything unwholesome, nor go into quarters where the arrows of death are flying, yet pass away all of a sudden, falling from their couch into a coffin, from their seat into the sepulcher. The other day one of our own brethren sat down in his chair to sleep a moment, but it was his last sleep. Another stumbled in his own room, never again to rise; these men were apparently in good health. Life is never sure for an instant. How can we place our trust in a creature which is so soon gone? Shall we make the insect of an

hour the object of our fond affection and our chief dependence? How can we be so foolish as to trust our treasure in a purse made of such a spider's web? The vault should be fit for the treasure, do you mean to trust your soul's confidence to a man that shall die—that may die in an hour? I asked, "What is man?" But before the question is answered, I have to ask, "Where is he?" He is gone like a watch in the night. How can we make a dying man the object of a living trust? "Cease you from man, whose breath is in his nostrils."

Man is a weak and frail creature; *he is also a dying creature*. Need I further enlarge upon this? To our sorrow, many of us know that it is so. Some of you had fathers of your flesh, but they passed away and you were fatherless before you could earn your bread. Had not God preserved the orphan, you had been miserable indeed. Some of you once leaned upon a manly arm and looked up into the smiling face of a husband, but the dear one has been laid in a grave wet with floods of tears; it is well for you that your Maker dies not. There are those here who once enjoyed dear friendships; these seemed essential to your lives, but ruthless death has torn Jonathan away from David. It has come closer, and stolen the child from its mother, and the wife from the husband. Man is ever dying while he lives. Oh, set not all your love, or much of your confidence, or any of your worship upon a creature that will soon be worms' meat.

Contemplate the dead! What do you think now of your idol? You who could sit down by the hour together and revel in the sight and company of your beloved object, what think you now of that which you doted on? If you could see it uncovered after a few days you would say, "Deliver me from this noisome smell, this horrible corruption, this dreadful mass of decay!" How could you ever be as vain and foolish and bereft of reason as to make a thing that comes to this your trust and confidence? The prophet says, "Who are you, that you should be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and forgets the Lord your Maker, that has stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth?" In this he rebukes our fears, but equally rebukes our carnal trusts.

But I think that the text also reminds us that *man is a very fickle creature*. His breath is in his "nostrils." That is where he wears his life, and this hints to us that he is sadly changeable. As his breath is affected by his health, so is he changed. Today he loves, and tomorrow he hates; he promises fair, but he forgets his words. He swears that he will be faithful unto death, but soon he betrays the confidence reposed in him. No dependence can be wisely placed in him. O man! O woman! Change is written on your brow. The lapse of years alters you; yes, the flight of days and hours suffices to transform you! We may better trust the winds and waves than you! David said in his haste, "All men are liars." That may not be quite true, and may bear the mark of hasty judgement, but it is a rough-hewn truth, which is far more accurate than flattering compliments. David might have deliberated, and then have said very much the same thing with great certainty. In some senses the broad verdict is correct as it stands, for if we make an arm of flesh our trust, to whomsoever

that arm belongs, we shall find that we have rested on a broken reed. In the time of our calamity, when we most need help, we shall find that mortal assistance is either gone through falsehood, or is incompetent through feebleness. Then shall we know the curse of trusting in man, whose breath is in his nostrils. Who will stand by us when we are slandered? Does not winter make all the swallows take to their wings? Who can help us when the soul is in despair? O my brothers! Who can help us when our spirit is wounded, when the arrows of grief pierce our heart? Who can help us when we come to die? When the mysteries of eternity darken around us, and we quit the light of day, what friend or fond one can be at our side as we enter the unknown land? There are certain points of life in which every man must tread a lonely pathway. We then need God, and if we have made a god of any man, what shall we do? Ah me! What reason we have to look to Him who is ever the same! Remember how He says, "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed."

If you read the chapter through, you will also find that man is *a trembling creature,* a cowardly creature, a creature indeed that, if he were not cowardly, yet has abundant reason to fear. Read from the nineteenth verse, "They shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His majesty, when He arises to shake terribly the earth. In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats; to go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His majesty, when He arises to shake terribly the earth." Think of the days of divine wrath, and especially of the last dread day of Judgement, and of the dismay which will then seize upon many of the proud and the great. Are you going to make these your confidants? Are you going to give up Christ for the sake of the smile of these who will wail in terror when He comes? Is it so, that for the sake of some young man or woman who loves not God, and one day must tremble before the coming Judge, you will let your Lord and Savior go? It is concerning such a temptation as this that the text thunders at you, "Cease you from man, whose breath is in his nostrils," who will fear and fly and lose his breath in very dread at the appearing of the Lord. Cease to regard these as the fond objects of your love and trust, lest the curse of God should lie upon your soul throughout eternity. O my hearers hearken to this!

So much concerning what man is, according to our text. Is it not a powerful argument against placing man where God alone should be?

II. Secondly, WHAT IS TO BE OUR RELATION TO MAN, or what does the text mean when it says, *"Cease you from man"?*

It implies, does it not, that we very probably have too much to do with this poor creature man already? We cannot "cease" from that with which we have nothing to do. The text implies that in all probability we have entered into connections with man which will need changing. We may even need to reverse our present conduct, break up unions, cancel alliances, and alter the whole tenor of our conduct.

"Cease you from man" means, first, *cease to idolize him in your love*. Do any of you idolize any living person? Answer honestly. It is very common to idolize children. A mother, who had lost her babe, fretted and rebelled about it. She happened to be in a meeting of the Society of Friends, and there was nothing spoken that morning except this word by one female friend who was moved, I doubt not, by the Spirit of God to say, "Verily, I perceive that children are idols." She did not know the condition of that mourner's mind, but it was the right word, and she to whom God applied it knew how true it was. She submitted her rebellious will, and at once was comforted. Cease you from these little men and women, for, though you prize them so, they are of the race from which you are to cease. Cease you from them, for their breath is in their nostrils, and indeed it is but feebly there in childhood. A proper and right love of children should be cultivated, but to carry this beyond its due measure is to grieve the Spirit of God. If you make idols of children you have done the worst you can for them, whether they live or die. Cease from such folly.

I will not go into the many instances in which men have been idolized politically, or idolized by a blind following of their teaching. You can idolize a minister, you can idolize a poet, you can idolize a patron, but in so doing you break the first and greatest of the commandments, and you anger the Most High. He declares Himself to be a jealous God, and He will not yield His throne to another. Upon any who are thus erring, let me press the text home, "Cease you from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for of what account is he?"

Next, "Cease you from man," *cease to idolize him in your trust*. There is a measure of confidence that we may place in good and gracious men, for they are worthy of it, but a blind confidence in any man is altogether evil. I care not who he may be, you cannot read his heart, and some of the greatest deceptions that have ever been worked in this world have been accomplished by persons who seemed to be self-evidently honest and sincere. I remember conversing with a person who was concerned in one of the great speculations which brought loss and ruin to many, and as I looked into his honest face and heard his open-hearted talk, I said to myself, "This is not a man who is capable of robbery. He is a plain, blunt, farmer-like sort of man, who might even be the victim of the confidence trick." I afterwards learned that this is the usual style of the man who puffs a company, or betrays a trust. Of course if a man looks like a thief, you button up your pockets, and smile if he invites you to take shares, but you are off your guard when the man appears to be the embodiment of simple honesty. The woman in the omnibus who picks your pocket looks like the last person to be capable of such a thing, and this is why she is able to do it. Transfer this knowledge to other matters, and it may save you sorrow. If you get to trusting anybody with a blind confidence beyond what you ought to give, and especially if you trust your soul with any priest or preacher, whoever he may be, you are a fool, and your folly may turn out to be an everlasting mischief, which can never be undone. Hear this, and learn what God would teach you, "Cease you from man,

whose breath is in his nostrils: for of what account is he?" Do not idolize man by laying yourself at his feet, or following him in the dark, for it will not only be in itself a folly, but it will bring you under the curse of my text.

Cease to idolize any man by giving him undue honor. There is an honor to be paid to all, for the apostle says, "Honor all men." A measure of courtesy and respect is to be paid to every person, and peculiarly to those whose offices demand it, therefore is it written, "Honor the king." Some, also, by their character, deserve much respect from their fellow men, and I trust we shall never refuse "honor to whom honor is due," but there is a limit to this, or we shall become sycophants and slaves, and what is worse, idolaters. It grieves one to see how certain persons dare not even think, much less speak, till they have asked how other people think. In some congregations there are weak people who do not know whether they have liked the sermon till they have asked a certain venerable critic to whom they act as echoes. The bulk of people are like a flock of sheep; there is a gap, and if one sheep goes through, all will follow. If the ringleader should happen to be an infidel or a new-theology man, so much the worse; if he should happen to be orthodox, it is much better in some ways, but then it is a pity that people should follow the truth in so thoughtless a manner. Public opinion is a poor substitute for conscience, and is no substitute at all for righteousness and truth. Because the general opinion bids you bow down before this man or that, will you do so? Will you forget God, and conscience, and right, and truth, and ask another man to tell you when you may breathe? God's people should scorn such groveling. If the Son shall make you free, you will be free indeed. Jesus loves that the soldiers in His host should acknowledge His supremacy, but once owning Him as Lord, He would have them feel that no man or set of men shall draw them away from His word, either in doctrine or in precept. Worship is for God only; render it to Him, and "Cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils."

Equally does the text bid us *cease from the fear of man.* Oh, how many are kept from doing right through some man or some woman, wealthy relative or influential friend! Are there not men in workshops who join with others in their vulgarity because they are afraid to speak out lest they should be laughed at and marked as hypocrites? Are there not persons in well-to-do circles who must attend a certain place of worship because all the respectable people go there? No matter which way conscience would take them, they are bound to follow the fashion; the fear of men is upon them. They do not want to be despised and remarked upon. But, my dear friends, if any of you are doing wrong under fear of men, do not excuse yourselves, but at once obey the word which says, "Cease you from man, whose breath is in his nostrils." Who are you that you should set man before God? Is not this a grievous presumption? The fear of God ought so to be before your eyes that the fear of man will not weigh with you in the least. "I fear man," said one, "but I fear God infinitely more"; this was near the mark. Our Lord said, "Fear not him that can kill the body, but afterwards has no more that he can do; but fear Him who can

cast both body and soul into hell; yes, I say unto you, Fear Him." Dismiss the craven fear which would make you false to your convictions in any degree, and thus "cease from man."

Once more, *cease from being worried about men*. We ought to do all we can for our fellow men to set them right and keep them right, both by teaching and by example, but certain folks think that everything must go according to their wishes, and if we cannot see eye to eye with them, they worry themselves and us. This is not right, and that is not right, and indeed nothing is right but what is hammered on their anvil. Let us please our neighbor for his good, for edification, but let us not become men-pleasers, nor grieve inordinately because unreasonable persons are not satisfied with us. To our own Master we stand or fall, and interfering brethren must be so good as to remember that we are not their servants, but we serve the Lord Christ.

Moreover, brethren, let us not be unduly cast down if we cannot set everybody right. Truly, the body politic, common society, and especially the church, may cause us great anxiety, but still the Lord reigns, and we are not to let ourselves die of grief. After all, our Lord does not expect us to rectify everything, for He only requires of us what He enables us to do. We are not magistrates, nor dictators, and when we have done our best and kept our own garments clean, and given earnest warning, and cried unto God by reason of the evil of the times, then this word comes in, "Cease you from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for of what account is he?"

"But they say." What do they say? Let them say. It will not hurt you if you can only gird up the loins of your mind, and cease from man. "Oh, but they have accused me of this and that." Is it true? "No, sir, it is not true, and that is why it grieves me." That is why it should not grieve you. If it were true it ought to trouble you, but if it is not true let it alone. If an enemy has said anything against your character it will not always be worth while to answer him. Silence has both dignity and argument in it. Nine times out of ten if a boy makes a blot in his copybook and borrows a knife to take it out, he makes the mess ten times worse, and as in your case there is no blot after all, you need not make one by attempting to remove what is not there. All the dirt that falls upon a good man will brush off when it is dry, but let him wait till it is dry, and not dirty his hands with wet mud. "Cease you from man, whose breath is in his nostrils."

Brethren in Christ, let us think more of God and less of man. Come; let the Lord our God fill the whole horizon of our thoughts. Let our love go forth to Him; let us delight ourselves in Him. Let us trust in Him that lives forever, in Him whose promise never fails, in Him who will be with us in life, and in death, and through eternity. Oh that we lived more in the society of Jesus, more in the sight of God! Let man go behind our back, and Satan too. We cannot spend our lives in seeking the smiles of men, for pleasing God is the one objective we pursue. Our hands, and our heads, and our hearts, and all that we have and are, find full occupation for the Lord, and therefore we must "Cease from man."

Cease you from man because you have come to know the best of men, who is more than man, even the Lord Jesus Christ, and He has so fully become the beloved of your souls, that none can compare with Him. Rest in Christ as to your sins, and cease from priests. Rest, also, in the great Father as to your providential cares; why rest in men when He cares for you? Rest in the Holy Spirit as to your spiritual needs; why do you need to depend on man? Yes, throw yourself wholly and entirely upon the God all-sufficient, El Shaddai, as Scripture calls Him. Some read it, "The many-breasted God," who is able to supply from Himself all the needs of His creatures. He will do for us exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or even think. "O rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him," and cease you from man. That was a wise and tender word of our Savior to the woman who had washed His feet. He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven you," and then, as they began to quibble at her, and talk about the expense and the waste of the ointment, He added to her, "Your faith has saved you; *go in peace,"* as much as to say, "They are going to have a discussion about you, but you go out of earshot of it. They are going to criticize what you have done, do not tarry to hear them, but go home. I have accepted you; let that be enough for you; never mind *them*. Do not want to know their opinions." Oftentimes to a child of God it is the best advice that can be given—"Go in peace." Certain doubters are about to argue; let them argue to themselves, but you go in peace. Why do you want to know the last new doubt? Would you like to taste the last new poison? "Prove all things," but when it has been proved to be evil, have done with it. You do not want to hear that which can only tend to stagger your faith and defile your conscience. You have heard enough of that stuff already; go in peace. When men begin to quibble at Christ and the doctrines of grace, cease from them. Steal away to Jesus in private prayer. Five minutes' communion with your Lord will be worth five years of this idle talk. Go in peace, and "Cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils." Do you hear that one professor declare that there is no God, and another that there is no providence, and another that there is no atoning sacrifice, and another that there is no hereafter? Now that we know that a mad dog is about, let us keep out of his way. It does not matter who he is; we have nothing to do with him. When a thief meets me, I need not stay even to say, "Good night" to him. Cease you from such a man, for the very breath of his nostrils breathes death to that which is good.

III. We finish with that last question; WHY ARE WE TO CEASE FROM MAN? The answer is, *because he is nothing to be accounted of*. Begin, dear brethren, by ceasing from yourselves. Every man must cease from himself first, and then he must cease from all men, as his hope and his trust, because neither ourselves nor others are worthy of such confidence. "For of what account is he?" If his breath is in his nostrils, see how short his life is, "Of what account is he?" If his breath is in his nostrils, see how weak he is, of what account is he? If his breath is in his nostrils, see how fickle he is, of what account is he?

What figure shall I put down for man? Some men would wish to have themselves written down at a very high figure, but a cipher is quite suffi-

cient. Write man at nothing, and you are somewhat above the mark. For of what account is he? Compared with God man is less than nothing and vanity. Reckon him so, and act upon the reckoning. If there were no men on the face of the earth, how would you live? If God alone filled all your thought and all your heart, how would you live? Live just so. Then if there are a thousand million men upon the face of the globe—and there are more—they will not sway you. If the city teems with them, and if the forum is disturbed with their noise, and if they ride up to the capitol in triumph, what of that? We have ceased from them, and we shall never have cause to regret it, for they will be no loss to us. If we try to reckon up what the loss might be if we lost their aid, it comes to nothing, for of what account is he? Cease from them and go straight on in the path of faith and duty, resting in God and believing in Him. Care nothing for the vanity of vanities, but trust in the Verity of verities, even God Himself.

This is a special subject, and someone will say, "Can such a text as this be useful for the ungodly?" Yes, it hits the nail on the head. Some of you have been trying to save yourselves. "Cease you from man." You have been looking to your feelings, you have been looking to your works, you have been looking to this and that of your own; cease you altogether from that evil man—yourself. For of what account is he?" Some of you have kept back from Christ because you have made much of this poor nobody that is crushed before the moth, this worm of the earth, this mere vapor. Now, rise above your dead selves and think more of God. Believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, and may His Holy Spirit help you now to come and commit your souls into the hands of the risen Redeemer, even unto Him who is able to save you and keep you to the end. God so help you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ISAIAH 2.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—63 (SONG 3), 688, 39.

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THE CHILD OF LIGHT WALKING IN DARKNESS
NO. 1985

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 25, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Who is among you that fears the Lord, that obeys the voice of His servant, that walks in darkness, and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God."
Isaiah 50:10.

SEE how the Lord inquires for His people? In every congregation He asks this question, "Who is among you that fears the Lord?" These are the wheat upon the threshing floor. As to the thoughtless, "What is the chaff to the wheat? says the Lord." The Lord's heart is towards the hearts that fear Him, and He makes inquiry concerning them, because He loves them, and cares for them, and helps them in their day of trouble.

Observe how clearly the Lord describes His own people. The description is brief, but remarkably full, "Who is among you that fears the Lord that obeys the voice of His servant?" Holy reverence within the heart, and careful obedience manifested in the life, these are the two infallible marks of the true man of God. He fears his God, and therefore he obeys that heavenly messenger whom God has sent. No servant of God has such authority over us that we are bound to obey Him in all things, except One, that *Servus servorum*, that Servant of servants, who was also *Rex regum,* the King of kings. It is the mark of the child of God that he has a holy awe of the Father, and that he pays gracious obedience to the Son of God. The Lord knows them that are His, and from that perfect knowledge He draws this short but sufficient outline of the character of His own. May holy fear and constant obedience be in us and abound!

Note that the Lord not only makes an inquiry of these people, but He takes note of their condition. He is not indifferent to their state. When they walk in darkness He is with them, and when they have no light He still beholds them. The Lord is very sensitive to the sorrows of His chosen, and very quick to help them. When He finds them walking in darkness He graciously counsels and advises them, that so He may most effectually help them. Thus says the gracious Lord to the benighted one, "Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." That same God who says of His vineyard, "I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day," also spies out His children in the dark, and looking upon them with an eye of tender love, He directs their course. This is the word of wisdom by which He

directs each one of them through the darkness, "Let Him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God."

To come at once to the text without further preface, I shall notice, first, *what is this condition* in which some of God's people are found? They walk in darkness, and have no light. Secondly, *what is there to trust to when a man is in such a condition?* All is dark, and there is no light, and he is then bidden to trust. What is there to trust to? Thirdly, *why should we thus trust?* What is the warrant for trusting at such a time? And fourthly, *what will come of such a trust?* If a man really exhibits confidence in God when he has no light, what will be the end of his confidence?

I. First, then, WHAT IS THIS CONDITION INTO WHICH A CHILD OF GOD MAY COME? The person described is one that fears the Lord, and obeys the voice of His servant, yet "walks in darkness, and has no light."

To many who know nothing of Christian experience *this condition might seem to be a surprising one*. Shall the child of light walk in darkness? The normal condition of a child of God is to walk in the light, as God is in the light, and to have fellowship with Him; how comes he, then, to have no light? He that believes in the Lord Jesus Christ has passed from darkness to light, and he shall never come into condemnation; how, then, does he come into darkness? In the darkness of sin and ignorance we no longer walk, but with the darkness of trouble and perplexity we are sometimes surrounded. The Lord is our light and our salvation, and therefore we do not walk in that darkness wherein the prince of darkness rules supreme, but yet at times we are in the gloom of sadness, and we see no light of consolation. It is not always so. Many Christian people go on year after year in uninterrupted sunshine, and I do not see why we should not all look upon continued joy in the Lord as possible to ourselves. Why should not our peace flow on like an ever-widening river? Those of you who are always bright need not be afraid of your gladness. O Lord! We are now and then in the dark, but we do not wish others to be so. Spiritual darkness of any sort is to be avoided, and not desired, and yet, surprising as it may seem to be, it is a fact that some of the best of God's people frequently walk in darkness; yes, some of them are wrapt in a sevenfold gloom at times, and to them neither sun, nor moon, nor stars appear. As the pastor of a large church, I have to observe a great variety of experiences, and I note that some whom I greatly love and esteem, who are, in my judgement among the very choicest of God's people, nevertheless, travel most of the way to heaven by night. They do not rejoice in the light of God's countenance, though they trust in the shadow of His wings. They are on the way to eternal light, and yet they walk in darkness. Heirs of a measureless estate of bliss, they are now without the small change and spending money of comfort which would make their present existence delightful. It is idle to attempt to judge a man's real character before God by his present state of feeling. You may be full of mirth, and yet it may be the crackling of thorns under a pot, which is noisy for the time, but is soon over. On the other hand, you may be bowed down with sorrow, and yet it may only be that "light affliction which is but for a moment," which works out, for you "a far more exceed-

ing and eternal weight of glory." We should have thought, judging after the manner of men, that the good were always happy, as one of our children's songs so positively declares. When first brought home to the great Father, we thought that henceforth it would be all music and dancing and fatted calf, world without end. But it is not so; we have heard the elder brother's ungenerous voice since then, and we have found out many things which we wish we could forget. We dreamed that the year would be summer throughout all its months; the time of the singing of birds was come, and we reckoned that it was to continue through the year. Alas! The birds have ceased their songs, and the swallows are pluming their wings to depart, and in a few days we shall be walking among the falling leaves, and preparing our winter garments with which to meet the biting frosts. We have not found perfect bliss beneath the moon. If instead of judging by the sight of our eyes we had turned to the records of the family of God, we should long ago have been enlightened of our ideal heaven below. It is written, "Whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives." Between the head of the way and the Celestial City the road is rough and the nights are long. They that go on pilgrimage tell us of the Delectable Mountains, and they dilate upon the glittering hilltops of glory which they have seen from afar when gazing from Mount Clear, but they also warn us of the Hill Difficulty, and especially of the Valley of the Shadow of Death, through which all those must force their way who are resolved to go on pilgrimage to the City of God. Be not, therefore, surprised as though some strange thing had happened unto you, if you find yourself in darkness, for this text warns you of what you may expect. We may fear God and carefully obey His servant, and yet we may be out after dark and find the streets of daily life as foggy and obscure for us as for others.

This condition is a severe test of grace. Now we shall see how far the man's courage is of the right sort. Darkness is an evil that our soul does not love, and by it all our faculties are tried. If you are in your own house in the dark it does not matter, though children do not like to be put to bed in the dark even in their own little room, but if you are on a journey and you come to a wild moor, or a vast forest, or to terrible mountains, it appalls you to find that the sun is setting, and that you will be abroad in the dark. Darkness has a terrible power of causing fear; its mystery is an influence creating dread. It is not what we see that we dread, as much as that which we do not see, and therefore exaggerate. When darkness lowers down upon the believer's mind it is a great trial to his heart. He cries, "Where am I? And how did I come here? If I am a child of God, why am I thus? Did I really repent and obtain light so as to escape the darkness of sin? If so, why am I conscious of this thick gloom? Did I really joy in Christ and think I had received the atonement? Why, then, has the sun of my joy gone down so hopelessly? Where are now the loving-kindnesses of the Lord?" The good man begins to question himself as to every point of his profession, for in the dark he cannot even judge his own self. What is worse, he sometimes questions the truth which he has before received, and doubts the very ground on which his feet are resting. Satan will come in with vile insinuations questioning everything, even as he ques-

tioned God's Word when he ruined our race in the garden. It is possible at such times even to question the existence of the God we love, though we still cling to Him with desperate resolve. We undergo a life and death struggle while we hold on to the divine verities. We are at times sorely put to it, and scarcely know what to do. Like the mariners with whom Paul sailed, we cast four anchors out of the stern, and look for the day. Oh, that we could be certain that we are the Lord's! Oh, that we could apprehend the sure promises of the Lord, and our portion in them! For a while the darkness is all around us, and we perceive no candle of the Lord, or spark of experimental light with which to break the gloom. This darkness is very trying to faith, trying to love, trying to hope, trying to patience, trying to every grace of the spiritual man. Blessed is the man who can endure this test.

While it is thus trying, *it is also very sorrowful*. It is a pleasant thing for the eyes to behold the sun, and a painful thing to be without it. We are in heaviness at such times. The darkness which is spoken of in the text includes providential trial of many sorts. At the present moment many of God's people are in the dark in reference to their temporal circumstances. Business used to prosper, and things went well with them, but everything runs the other way at this season. They were not ambitious to accumulate great riches, they were perfectly satisfied if they had bread to eat, and raiment to put on, but now even this seems to be denied them. They are out of work, or business is gradually dying out, and their means of support will soon disappear. This is a new trial for those who have hitherto had abundance, and naturally it makes them walk in darkness. Oh, you that have a superfluity of this world's goods, you little know the darkness which comes over the hearts of God's servants when they are not able to provide things honest in the sight of all men, and are afraid that the Lord's name will be evil spoken of because they cannot meet their engagements. When parents look at their dear children, and wonder where the next meal of bread will come from, times are dark indeed. Still, mark you, this is not *the* darkness—the darkness which might be felt. Many of God's people, by reason of a strong faith, are happier in their adversity than they were in their prosperity. I have known them ride on the crest of the wave which threatened to wreck them. They have also rejoiced in tribulations also, finding that in them the Lord blesses them with special favor.

The real darkness has come when our evidences of grace are no longer visible, and conscience pronounces an adverse verdict. As the Psalmist says, "We see not our signs." The marks of grace are hidden. Self-examination fails to reveal to the conscience the infallible marks of the Holy Spirit's work within the soul, and then the child of God feels that he is in an evil case. While I know I am the son of God I am undismayed, but when my sonship is in doubt I am distressed indeed. If a clear sense of God's love is also withdrawn from the soul darkness follows. He that used to rejoice in that love which passes knowledge now feels his heart to be as hard as a stone, without tender emotion, and almost without living desire. To be dull, and dead, and stupid, and unfeeling, is sad indeed to one whom before could dance for joy. To have the life and energy of grace

decline is a grievous matter; better to see the flock cut off from the fold than grace from the heart. At such times the Holy Spirit seems to suspend His comforting and quickening operations, and in that case the outward means are of small avail. We read the Bible, and we are not cheered by the promises; we attend public services, and the silver bells of the sanctuary seem to have lost their music. The rain does not fill the pools, and when the cisterns are empty, what is the good of them? The Holy Spirit is leaving us for a while, that we may know what poor things we are apart from Him, and how useless are ordinances without His divine presence in them. At such times Satan is sure, coward as he is, to avail himself of his opportunity. When he finds us in the dark lane, he falls upon us like a cutthroat. When the Lord is manifestly with us, he sulks off, but when he sees that darkness is round about us, he seeks to drive us from our faith. "This is your hour," said Christ, "and the power of darkness," and we have had to say the same. Satan makes earnest use of his hour, and it is no fault of his that we do not die in the dark, and utterly perish from the way. Let it be clearly known that some of us who can this day speak with fully assured confidence, have, in days gone by, been sorely shaken, and have cried unto the Lord out of the low dungeon. Every particle of the faith which I have this day in the Lord my God, has passed through fire, and through water. This flaming torch of confidence which burns before you this day was lighted for me when I was in darkness. Though we joy before the Lord as with the joy of harvest, yet we look back upon the time when we went forth weeping, bearing precious seed. All are not equally made to sorrow, but many of us are familiar with the wine of astonishment. Surely, at some time or other, all the children of God walk in darkness.

Perhaps the worst feature of this darkness is that *it is so bewildering*. You have to walk, and yet your way is hidden from your eyes. This is hard work. God will help His children, will He not? Yes, that He will, but we cannot see how! We look upward, and see no twinkling star; downward, and do not even find a glowworm. Surely, we shall see a candle in some window! But no! We are lost in a dark forest. Have we not somewhere about us a match that we can strike? We fumble for it; we find it, it is damp, we have no light. The question that now chills the heart is—how can God deliver me? We do not see how He can make a way of escape. What simpletons we are to fancy that if *we* do not see a way of deliverance God does not see one either! If you have ever steamed up the Rhine, you have looked before you, and it has looked as if you could go no further; the river seemed to be a lake; great mountains and vast rocks blocked up all further advances. Suddenly there has been a turn in the stream, and at once a broad highway has been before you, inviting you to enter the heart of the country. Perhaps in providence you are in one of those parts of the river of life where no progress appears possible. You are quite blocked up, and this causes you darkness of mind. Cease from this unbelieving bewilderment. Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him, and He shall give you your heart's desire.

Worse still is that bewilderment which comes upon us in the darkness as to what we ourselves ought to do. Men of God know, as a broad prin-

ciple, that they are to do right, but the question is, what is right? Which of many courses should I take? We beg the Lord to make our path straight, but we cannot discover the road. We look for a signpost which we had seen long ago, but it is gone; we hasten to a friend, but he is as much perplexed as we are. This suspense is the hardest part of the ordeal. Not to see our way; no, not to see a foothold for the next step, is a specially trying position. If we knew what to do, or what to prepare for, we would gird our loins for the occasion, but knowing nothing, we are shut up, and cannot go forth.

Yet you notice in the text that *this does not absolve us from daily duty*. The text says, "If he *walks* in darkness, and has no light." The walk has to be continued, though the light has departed. When it is quite dark, it is safe to sit down till the day dawns. If I cannot sleep, at any rate I can quietly rest, till the sun is up. He that believes shall not make haste, and in the dark it is best to tarry till the day dawns and the shadows flee away. That was a grand word which the Lord gave to Moses, "Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord." But what if you cannot stand still? What if you may not remain where you are? Something has to be done, and done at once, and thus you are compelled to walk on, though you cannot see an inch before you. What but a divine faith can do this? Here lies the stress of the difficulty; inaction might be simple, but activity in the dark, this must be the Lord's doing, and we must cry to Him to work this work in us.

But enough of this; I have given you a picture which some of you will recognize as a portrait of yourselves. Personally I have often passed through this dark valley; there is a bog on the right hand, and a deep gulf on the left, and all along the murky way, the howling of the dogs of hell, and the hissing of evil spirits, are never out of one's ears, and worst of all, the whispers of the fiend make you think his vile suggestions to be your own thoughts. The sword in the hand becomes useless, for in the dark you do not know where to strike, and no weapon remains except that of All-prayer. To walk on all through the night, and not to see a step before you, is anxious work, and yet thousands of God's pilgrims who are now yonder among the shining ones, praising and blessing His holy name, have traversed this dreadful road. Lord, help us when we also penetrate its blackness!

II. But now, secondly, I am going to turn to a practical part of this matter—WHAT IS THERE TO TRUST TO WHEN YOU ARE IN SUCH A CONDITION AS THAT? What is there to trust to? Well, says the text, "Let him trust in the name of the Lord," or, as it should be read, "in the name of Jehovah."

What is there to trust in *the name of Jehovah?* It is, *"I Am,"* and signifies His existence. This is a fine foundation for trust. Your friend is dead, but Jehovah is still living as the "I AM." Those who could have succored you have forsaken you, but He says, "I am with you." Trust in Him, for He is, and ever will be. He says to you, "Be still, and know that I am God."

The name of the Lord contains within it immutability. The Lord calls Himself, "I am that I am"—the unchanging God! Remember how He said,

"I am the Lord, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed." When you cannot see an inch before you, trust in Him that is, that was, and is to come. He is our dwelling place in all generations. He is the "same yesterday, today, and forever," and therefore our confidence in Him should not abate. Here is a Rock under your feet. If you trust in an unchanging God, whose love, and faithfulness, and power cannot be diminished, however dark your way may be, then you have a glorious object for your faith to rest upon!

But we understand by the name, *the revealed character of God*. When you cannot see your way, then open this Book and try to find out what sort of God it is in whom you trust. See what He did in the ages past; see what He has promised to do in all time present. Behold His infinite love in the gift of His dear Son. Think of all the immeasurable blessings which He has prepared for them that love Him, which He has laid up for the golden age. As you remember what the Lord is, and how He deals with His people, you will find light springing up in the midst of the thick darkness. What a joy it must have been to Moses when God proclaimed before him the name of the Lord! Moses had asked to see God's glory, and we read, "The Lord passed by before him: and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." As you study the glorious character of the Lord God, whose mercy endures forever, I think you will find your spirit rising above the floods of your trouble, and floating joyously upon the waters even as the ark of Noah in the day of the deluge. The name of the Lord is a strong tower. "They that know Your name will put their trust in You."

By "the name of the Lord" is also meant *His dear Son,* for it is in Jesus Christ that Jehovah has proclaimed His name. Jesus says, "He that has seen Me has seen the Father." When it is dark around you and within you, then get to your Savior, and think of Him, and all His sorrow and His victory. Picture Him before your eyes bleeding His life away upon the cross for you, offering Himself up a glorious Sacrifice to put away your sin, and as you hear His cries, and perceive the flowing of His blood, you will gain comfort and joy such as will turn your darkness into day.

It is also good, dear Friends, when you are thinking of the name of the Lord, to remember that to you it signifies *what you have seen of God in your own experience*. This is His memorial or name to you. A grand thing it is, when at present you have no consolation, to recollect the consolation you enjoyed in years gone by. Oh the days when He did help us! When His arm was made bare on our behalf! I recollect that morning, you recollect it too; when the Lord brought you up out of the horrible pit. You said, "Blessed be His glorious name! What a deliverance I have had! I shall never doubt Him again!" O poor stupid, you are doubting Him now! But why? Do you not think that if you would revive those songs, of the Red Sea, when you sang, "Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously," you would be ashamed to doubt the Lord today? Did not Israel pass through the sea on foot, even in the darkness of the night, when Pharaoh could not see his way? The Lord God Himself in the pillar of fire was the light of His people, but apart from that they had no other light,

and it is so with you, all other light is gone, but Jehovah is with you, therefore be not afraid—

"His love in time past forbids us to think
He'll leave us at last in trouble to sink;
Each sweet Ebenezer we have in review
Confirms His good pleasure to help us quite through."

"Let him trust in the name of the Lord."

But, furthermore, the text says, "Let him rely upon his God." Let him lean upon his God; make God his stay, his prop, his rest. This is a variation from the former sentence. He was to trust in the name of Jehovah, but now he is to *lean upon "his God."* You have taken God to be your God, have you not? If so, He has also taken you to be His own. There is a covenant between you; lean on that covenant. Treat it as a valid covenant in full force. Surely you are not dealing with a liar. That covenant of the Lord which was sealed and ratified by an oath—surely you do not think little of it? Well, now, lean wholly and fully upon Him who is your covenant God. Brethren, I am often brought to this pass that I say to myself—"Lord, if these Scriptures are not indeed a revelation of God, and inspired, then it is all over with me, for I have no other hope." But if this Book is a faithful record of what God has said to me—and I am sure it is—then I cannot too confidently rest in what He has here recorded. I will prove the truth of His gospel. I will rely upon His promise with all my might. I have never yet hung a weight upon God's promise too heavy for it to bear. I have never trusted God in prayer with a confidence beyond what I have known Him to justify. Up to now we have used tests innumerable and proofs superabundant, and we find the old Book to be true. As silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times, so have we found the promises and the covenant of God. Therefore I say to you, in the language of the text, if you walk in darkness, and have no light, trust in the name of the Lord, and stay yourself upon your God.

III. Thirdly and with great brevity, WHY SHOULD WE TRUST GOD AT SUCH TIMES? If the Lord has taken away the light, and is trying us so severely, why should we trust Him now? I answer, *if you do not trust Him now, you will have cause to suspect whether you ever did trust Him at all.* When your children were about you, and you were healthy, honored, and prospering, you said, "I have faith in God." Was it faith if it departs from you now that your children are buried, your home is desolate, and you are sick, and old, and poor? Was it faith in God at all? Was it not a cheerfulness which arose out of your surroundings? If you cannot bear to be stripped as Job was, have you the same precious faith with that man of God? Fair weather faith is a poor imitation of the real grace. I entreat you to play the man, and say, "Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him," for if you cannot do so, your strength is small and your faith is questionable.

You are bound to trust in the Lord now in the time of darkness because *His promises were made for dark times.* When a shipwright builds a vessel, does he build it to keep it upon the stocks? No, he builds it for the sea and the storm. When he was making it he thought of tempests and hurricanes; if he did not, he was a poor ship builder. When God made you a believer He meant to try you, and when He gave you the

promises, and bade you trust them, He gave such promises as are suitable for times of tempest and tossing. Do you think God makes shams like some that have made belts for swimming, which were good to exhibit in a shop, but of no use in the sea? We have all heard of swords which were useless in war, and even of shoes which were made to sell, but were never meant to walk in. God's shoes are of iron and brass, and you can walk to heaven in them without their ever wearing out, and His lifebelts, you may swim a thousand Atlantics upon them, and there will be no fear of your sinking. His word of promise is meant to be tried and proved. O man, I beseech you do not treat God's promises as if they were curiosities for a museum, but use them as everyday sources of comfort. Trust the Lord whenever your time of need comes on.

Besides, notice that *here a permit is especially issued for you, to allow you to trust in God in darkness*. Thus says the Lord, *"Let him trust*." Satan says he shall not trust, but the Lord says, "Let him trust," and if the Lord gives us permission to trust we will not suffer the world, the flesh, or the devil to keep us back from our privilege. "Let him trust" is our divine warrant for reposing on the Lord, and we mean to use it. This is the password which lets us through the gates of the promise into the royal chamber of rest.

More than this, *I understand this verse to be a command to trust in the name of the Lord*. It is an order to trust in our God up to the hilt, for it bids us *stay* ourselves upon our God. We are not fitfully to trust, and then to fear, but to come to a stay in God, even as ships enter a haven, cast their anchors, and then stay there till the tempest is past. Let us say, "This is my last dependence; this is my stay, and here I will remain forever." O brothers and sisters, we often act very foolishly, for we try to get a stay within ourselves. Did you ever hear of a captain of a vessel driven about by rough winds that wanted anchorage and tried to find it on board his vessel? He desires to place his anchor somewhere on board the ship where it will prove a holdfast. He hangs it at the prow, but still the ship drives; he exhibits the anchor upon deck, but that does not hold the vessel; at last he puts it down into the hold, but with no better success. Why, man alive, anchors do not hold as long as they are on board a ship. They must be thrown into the deep, and then they will get a grip of the sea bottom, and hold the vessel against wind and tide. As long as ever you have confidence in yourselves, you are like a man who keeps his anchor on board his boat, and you will never come to a resting place. Over with your faith into the great deeps of eternal love and power, and trust in the infinitely faithful One: Then shall you be glad because your heart is quiet. Stay yourself upon your God, because He commands you to do so. Do not dare to hesitate.

Look, sirs! If you do not rely upon God in the dark, *it would seem as if, after all, you did not trust God, but were trusting to the light,* or were relying on your own eyesight. Too often we think we believe, but all the while we are miles off from believing. Unless we trust in God alone, and in God wholly, we do not trust Him at all. Faith is the opposite of sight. When a man sees he has no need of faith. Blessed is he to whom God Himself is all the light he needs.

Do remember one thing more, that you and I, in times of darkness, may well trust in God that He will not fail us, for *our blessed Lord and Master was not spared the blackest midnight that ever fell on human mind*. He, too, cried out, "What shall I say?" Distraction seized upon His mind, also, and He was exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death. Do you expect that you shall be treated better than the Head of the house, the "first-born among many brethren"? If He trusted in God and was delivered, do the same and you shall follow in His footsteps into the brightness of the light, even as you have followed those footsteps into the blackness, and the darkness.

IV. So I finish with this last point; WHAT WILL COME OF IT IF WE DO TRUST IN GOD IN THE DARK? Now, whether you are saint or sinner, I want you to lend me your ears for a minute or two while I try to show what will come of trusting in God when you have nothing else to trust to.

In the first place, *such a faith will glorify God*. It does not glorify God to trust Him when you have a thousand other props and assistances. No, we glorify Him when we trust His bare arm. It honors God when in darkness, despondency, and despair we can bravely say, "Still I believe Him. I take hold upon His strength in the midst of my feebleness. If I perish, I perish, but I know He will not let me perish trusting in Him." The cherubim and seraphim glorify God with their endless songs, but not more than a poor downcast soul can do when in its distress it casts itself on God alone. See what you can do! Will not this argument move you to trust, to trust even now, when all things seem to go awry? Some of you can sincerely say, "We would gladly do or suffer anything to glorify God." Well, do this; believe in the Lord, and in Jesus Christ, whom He has sent.

In the next place, it is true that very likely through this darkness of yours *you will be humbled*. Walking in darkness and seeing no light, you will form a very low idea of yourself, and this will be a choice blessing. We undervalue humility, but it is one of the most golden of the graces. Perhaps some of us need humbling more than any other operation of the Holy Spirit. I believe that those who despond and despair are all the happier when humility has had her perfect work upon them. We are so great! So big! That letter "I"—there seems to be a kind of sarcasm in the form of it; it is such a straight, unbending letter, it never bows its knee or its back! Perhaps our darkness is sent to us to make our pride stoop towards the ground, while it gropes its way. Deliverance from pride will be a lasting gain to us. O my friend, you are getting good by the painful process which reveals to you your littleness. Do not fret because you now see your folly, your helplessness, your emptiness; all this will be a mine of wealth to you.

Next to that, if you can trust God in your trial, *you will prove and enjoy the power of prayer*. The man that has never needed to pray cannot tell whether there is anything in prayer or not. You that have always had your bread every morning scarcely know the value of that request, "Give us this day our daily bread," but there are poor people here at this hour to which that petition is peculiarly sweet. He that has prayed for his breakfast values the providence which sent it. If you were never in your

life in any sort of trial, what do you know you about prayer? Why, then, do you speak lightly of that which you understand not? He that has carried his need to the Lord—a great and urgent need which could not have been supplied by all the world besides—he, I say, who has gone with that need to his heavenly Father, and pleaded the promise, and obtained a heavenly reply, he is the man who can witness that verily there is a God that hears prayer. Those philosophers that sneer at prayer, what do they know about it? They are strangers to prayer, and therefore unable to judge its power. Suppose a dozen of them should swear that they have prayed, and that God has not heard their prayers, we should believe it, and we should also come to the conclusion that prayers from men of their order ought not to be heard. Surely he that comes to God must believe that He is, and these gentlemen will not even accept that point as certain. But when we pray, and the Lord hears us, can any form of argument disprove a fact? A fact will stand against all reasoning; it is an unyielding rock, against which the waves of skepticism hurl themselves in vain. Brethren, it is the prayer in the dark which brings us most light when we perceive that it is surely heard. How could you pray, O man, if you had all your desires fulfilled without making request unto God? If you had nothing to pray for, how could you prove the efficacy of prayer? If you are so wise, and good, and great that you can do without God, go and do without Him if you dare. But the poor and needy will still be glad to cry unto Him. May God empty you, and drive you in agony to your knees, then shall you be able to test whether He is a God that hears prayer or not!

If in your darkness you will go to God and trust Him, *you will become an established Christian*. Yours will not be that timid bulrush faith which bows before every wind; you will be rooted and grounded in assurance of faith. These trials of yours will help to root you fast in the good soil of confidence in God. In days to come you will bless God for the clouds and the darkness, since through them your tried faith grew into strong faith, and your strong faith ripened into full assurance. Doubtless faith will make our nights the fruitful mothers of brighter days.

And let me close by saying, that by and by—and perhaps much sooner than we think—*we shall come out into greater light than we have as yet hoped for*. Perhaps half-a-mile ahead you will find light springing up, even light which has long ago been sown for the righteous. Your weeping is nearly over; joy comes in the morning. You shall sit down and say, "I did not think the day would break so soon, but now the sun is up, I perceive that even in the night I have been preserved from a thousand dangers, and I have passed safely where none but the Lord Himself could have held me up."

Brethren, let us even now sing unto the Lord a new song, for He has done marvelous things. He has led the blind by a way that they knew not. He has given us treasures of darkness. He has turned our mourning into dancing. He has made us glad in His name. Praise to Him forever, yes, praise forevermore.

How loudly some of us will sing when once we get to heaven! When we leap ashore upon the golden strand how we will magnify that omnipotent

love which kept us from ten thousand devouring waves! Surely in the heavenly choirs certain voices reach to higher notes than all others, for they have known the heights and depths of love divine. There will be a fullness, roundness, and sweetness of tone about certain voices which shall make them notable among the celestials, even as Heman, and Asaph, and Ethan were notable among the sweet singers of Israel in the temple below. Who are these, and from where did they come? Surely the one answer will be, "These are they that came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

Therefore be of good cheer, O you people of God who walk in darkness, for you will have a full reward.

And you poor troubled ones, who have as yet no hope, and are afraid that God has cast you away forever, come and rest in Jesus Christ this morning. Trust in Jesus, and defy the darkness and the devil who rules over it. As soon as you dare to trust in Christ Jesus our Lord your salvation is secured. Do but trust, and your Savior is bound to answer to your trust, and make it good by saving you. The Lord bless you for Jesus' sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ISAIAH 1.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—181, 689, 691.

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THE CHILD OF LIGHT WALKING IN LIGHT
NO. 1986

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 2, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin."
1 John 1:6, 7.

THE apostle warns us against *saying* more than we have made our own by experience. He hints at the solemn difference between empty profession and gracious reality. To have fellowship with God is a great matter, but merely to *say* that we have fellowship with Him is a totally different thing. John warns us that if we *say* that which our characters do not support, we lie. He leaves it just so, without a word of softening or excuse. Between saying and being, between saying and doing, there may be all the difference in the world. There is a tendency among men, if there is a good experience, to say that they possess it; if there is a high privilege of grace, to say that they are enjoying it. What a folly is this! It is akin to madness. To unsound minds a precious original suggests a desire to fashion an imitation. To the untruthful mind the genuine is an invitation to be the counterfeit. Let us be upon our guard that we do not flatter ourselves into saying more than is true. Let us not stretch our arm beyond our sleeve, nor boast beyond our line. Every profession will be tried with fire; let us, therefore, see to it that we put in no claim which will not endure the severest test.

There were certain in John's day who said, "We have fellowship with God." How they had come by it they did not explain; perhaps they claimed to have reached it by philosophical speculation, by exact reasoning, or by long-continued meditation. Whatever the road, they said that they had reached the city of God, and were in communion with the Great Being. John saw that they walked in darkness, rejecting the light of divine revelation from above and the pure light of the Holy Spirit within; he also saw that they themselves were not true, and that their lives were not pure, and therefore he warned them that they were speaking and acting a lie. Their life was a lie, for they were not walking in the truth, and their profession that they had fellowship with God was another lie, for God can have no fellowship with falsehood. "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all," and therefore, He cannot hold any communion with darkness. John draws the lines very tightly, and judges with unflinching fidelity; he is not inclined to the boasted charity of latitudinarianism, but he

curtly dismisses false claims with that plain word "lie." The disciple whom Jesus loved spoke like the Son of Thunder that he was, when he had to deal with shams. It is the part of true love to be honest and to expose that which would be injurious to those it loves. He who will gloss over a falsehood loves but in word only. Learn, then, that if men boast of fellowship with God, and do not receive the revelation of His word, they lie, and know not the truth.

Let us now speak of the real thing, the fellowship with God which comes of walking in the light. The Christian life is described as walking, which implies *activity*. Christian life feeds upon contemplation, but it displays itself in action. Fellowship with God necessitates action, since to be with God we must "walk with God." The living God is not inactive, motionless, and aimless. "My Father," says Jesus, "works hitherto, and I work." Chiefly in the character of active workers or in that of willing sufferers we must maintain fellowship with God. Walking implies activity, but it must be *of a continuous kind*. Neither this step, nor that, nor the next, can make a walk. We must be moving onward and onward, and remain in that exercise, or we cease from walking. Holy walking includes perseverance in obedience, and continuance in service. Not he that begins, but he that continues is the true Christian; final perseverance enters into the very essence of the believer's life; the true pilgrims of Zion go from strength to strength. From strength to strength, did I say? This suggests that walking implies *progress*. He that takes one step and another step, and still stands where he was, has not walked. There is such a thing as the goose-step, and I am afraid many Christians are wonderfully familiar with it; they are where they used to be, and are half inclined to congratulate themselves upon that fact, since they might have backslidden. They have not advanced in the heavenly pilgrimage, and how can they be said to walk? My hearer, is your life a walk *with* God and *towards* God? If so, our subject has to do with you. May the Spirit of all grace lead us into the heart of it!

The things we shall consider this morning will arise out of the text in the following order: First, *the light of our walk,* "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light." Secondly, *the communion of our walk:* "we have fellowship with one another." Thirdly, *the glory of that communion:* "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin."

I. Consider, first, THE LIGHT OF OUR WALK. True believers do not walk in darkness; they have found the road, and they see it before them. They know whom they have believed, and why they have believed, and so they go forward intelligently. How unhappy are those who are sure of nothing but a groping for the way, and wander in endless circles of hope and fear! True believers walk onward, because a light shows them their path, and makes them sure of safety and progress. What is meant by walking in the light? It is somewhat singular that last Sunday morning our subject was "The Child of Light walking in Darkness" [Sermon #1985]. That darkness is very different from the darkness with which we deal this morning. Children of light may for a time walk in the darkness of sorrow, but from the darkness of untruthfulness, ignorance, sin, and

unbelief they have been delivered. In these respects the darkness is past, and the true light now shines. Moral darkness is contrary to their newborn nature; they cannot endure it. We must distinguish between things that differ, between the darkness of sorrow and the darkness of sin. A metaphor may be used for many purposes, and that of darkness has a wide range of meaning.

What is this light, then, in which the Christian walks? I answer; first, *it is the light of grace*. In our natural state we are in darkness, and under the dominion of the Prince of Darkness. The apostle says of us Gentiles, "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." When the grace of God comes, the day-spring from on high visits us. The Holy Spirit brings us out from under the dominion of the old nature by creating within us a new life, and He brings us out from under the tyranny of the Prince of Darkness by opening our eyes to see and our minds to understand celestial truth. The opening of our blind eyes and the pouring in of the light of truth are from the Lord. This is a work in which He is as fully seen in the glory of His Godhead as when in the natural creation He said, "Let there be light," and there was light. The entrance of God's word into the mind by the power of the Holy Spirit gives us light as to ourselves, our sin, and our danger. With this comes light as to the way of salvation through Jesus Christ, and light as to the mind of God concerning our sanctification. True knowledge takes the place of ignorance, and a desire for purity becomes supreme over the love of sin. Paul says, "You were sometime darkness, but now are you light in the Lord." We accept the revelation of God in the inspired Book; by the attending witness of the Holy Spirit it becomes a revelation of God to our own hearts, and thus all our position—our past, present, and future—is set in a new light. With the driving out of our natural darkness old things pass away, and with the coming in of the divine light all things become new. Blessed is that man to whom the eternal light has come by the effectual working of the Spirit of God, who brings to us the light wherein we see God, and Christ, and life everlasting! This is the secret beginning of all our light, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

The result of this light is seen in various ways. It causes deep sorrow in the beginning, for its first discoveries are grievous to the conscience. Light is painful to eyes long accustomed to darkness. Soon the light brings great joy, for the soul perceives deliverance from the evils which it mourned. Thus light and gladness in the end go together, as it is written, "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." Always, in each condition, you observe conspicuously that the light of grace is seen as *the light of sincerity*. Until grace comes into our souls we have no heart for the things of God. We may be fussily religious so far as to be attentive to every outward form of worship, but there is no heart-work, no light of truth in all our devotion. But when once the divine light comes in then we become intensely real in our dealings with God. Hypoc-

risy and pretence fly before sincere belief and feeling. "Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners," no longer passes our lips flippantly and thoughtlessly, but we are indeed miserable on account of sin. When we seek for mercy we mean it, and do not play at confession and repentance. Our eye is single, and our whole body is full of light; we see what we are doing, and awake ourselves to do it in earnest. We know what we are praying about, and there is no question as to the deep sincerity of our cries and tears. We desire with the whole force of our nature to find pardon and acceptance through the precious blood of Christ. We do not merely say that we desire salvation and eternal life, but we feel that we must have them, and cannot be denied. We cease from playing fast and loose with God. We no longer hesitate between two opinions, but one thing we seek after, desiring it of the Lord; we would be right with God in all respects. The man that is walking in the light is thoroughly sincere. The shadows of pretence have been chased away; he is in downright earnest in all that he does. O my hearers, many of you have never come so far as this, though this alone is not far. By being in a place of worship you show an outward respect to divine things, but are you worshipping God? Did you worship Him just now in the prayer and in the praise? You are listening to me while I talk of the highest things that ever occupied the human mind, but do you long to be a partaker of these things? Do you hunger and thirst after righteousness? Those who are walking in the light are free from pretence, and are living in real earnest; is it so with you? Contentment with unreality is a sign of dwelling in darkness. Careful keeping up of shams, diligent puffing out of wind-bags, and constant creation of make-believes—all this is of the night and its dreams, but to be what you seem to be, to be true in all the phases of your life, this is surely seen in those who walk in the light of God. What can God have to do with shams? What cares He for empty professions? Everything must be true which is to come under His eye.

Next to sincerity I regard *a willingness to know and to be known* as an early result of walking in the light of God. The ungodly come not to the light, lest their deeds should be reproved. There are matters about which they desire no light, but rather say, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of Your ways." Where ignorance affords them a present peace they count it folly to be wise. Alas! It is too commonly the case that men have no inclination to obtain a knowledge which might involve humiliation, repentance, and a retracing of steps. "Let well enough alone," they cry. How many will say, "Well, we have been Christians after our own way for a good many years, why need we question ourselves?" They look upon a faithful preacher with suspicion; he comes a deal too close to home. When he begins to deal with the heart and conscience, they look at him as if he were a dog, hunting about for a rat. Truly the emblem is not so very unlike, for wherever there is a self-satisfaction which is afraid of light, we suspect that the rat of hypocrisy is not far off. Beloved, we must not rest content with anything which will not bear the light of day. A religion which we will not submit to the test of self-examination cannot be worth much. No one is afraid to have a genuine sovereign submitted

to any test; it is the coiner who is afraid. "Look!" says a man, "I hold a certain creed; my grandmother held it, it has come down to me as an heirloom. You invite me to examine that creed by the Word of God, but I would rather not. I am not disposed to learn anything which might cause me to change. If you speak too strongly I shall go and hear somebody else, for I cannot bear to be disturbed." This is a foolish prejudice, is it not? Yes, and it may prove the man's ruin. This is the kind of thing that makes a man go out angrily from a sermon, and say, "I will not listen to that man again; he is too personal, and too severe." No, friend, can anyone who loves your soul be too severe? Do you wish to be flattered? Do you not know that plain-dealing is more precious than rubies? Would you not say to your physician, "Put me under the severest examination, and let me know the truth"? Would you pay him a fee that he might deceive you? As to your soul, do you not desire to know the very worst of your case? If you would rather be comfortable than be safe, then you and I are not of one mind, for I want to walk in the light, free from deception, knowing truly and thoroughly my own place before the heart-searching God. I would rather not cry, "Peace, peace," where there is no peace. The comfort which grows out of delusion I do not desire. Brethren, we must build on truth, and nothing else but truth.

When men walk in the light they cease to take things for granted, and look below the surface. Certain things have been labeled with the mark of truth, and have passed current, but men who are in the light disregard the labels, and look at the goods themselves. We cannot afford to risk our souls on hearsays; we need personal knowledge. For one, I desire a salvation which will bear the test of the closest examination. I would be saved in such a way that I am neither afraid of conscience, nor of death, nor of the judgment seat of God. I would be saved in the light. I would be known and read of all men, and I would know even as I am known. We wish to conceal nothing; we can conceal nothing, "for all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." We would lay bare our bosoms and sincerely cry, "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."

A still surer evidence of grace is the *mind's perception of revealed truth and its obedience to it*. Then has true light shone on a man's walk when he perceives the truth revealed by the Holy Spirit in sacred Scripture, and receives it into his heart with a child-like spirit. He that receives Christ also receives Christ's words, and the doctrine which we believe is by no means a matter of indifference. Whatever may be said, brethren, we have received a revelation from God, which we know to be "the faith once for all delivered to the saints." The Lord God has broken through the veil of silence, and has manifested Himself to the sons of men. Through the darkness of their minds the carnal cannot see what God has revealed; neither will they believe His truth. The truth of God is spiritual, and the natural man is carnal, and therefore the natural wan will not receive the teaching which comes from God. By this test shall you know whether the true light is shining upon you: Do you believe what God has

revealed in His word? Or are you your own teacher—maker of your own faith? He cannot be a disciple who does not learn, but invents. Do you hear the teaching of the Lord Jesus, and believe it? I repeat it, you must not only *say* that you believe it, but you must indeed and of a truth believe the things which God has revealed. By this shall you know whether you are a child of light, or a child of darkness. Are the doctrines of grace essential verities with you? Whatever God has said about sin, righteousness, judgment to come, are you ready to accept it at once? Whatever He has revealed concerning Himself, His Son, His Holy Spirit, the cross, life, death, hell, and the eternal future, do you believe it unfeignedly? This is to walk in the light. All other teaching is darkness.

How many correct and amend, and so betray the gospel! They take the garment of truth, and dip it in the blood of their own thought, till it is so distained that they might almost say unto God Himself, "Do You know whether this is Your Son's coat or not?" If you are one of those who would twist the Scriptures, and force your own meaning on them, you are not in the light. If you would make them mean other than what God intended them to mean, you are in the darkness, however learned a philosopher you may be. He only is in the light that distrusts his own wisdom, and bows before the wisdom which comes from above. If you will sit at Jesus' feet like a child, and hear His words and learn of Him, then has the true light shone upon you, for He is the light that lights every man that comes into the world. The Holy Spirit comes not to help us to think out a system of belief of our own, but to lead us into all truth, by taking of the things of Christ and showing them to us.

Brethren, there is a truth and there is a lie, and no lie is of the truth. Can light commune with darkness, or truth with falsehood? I make no claim of implicit faith for what *I* say. God forbid that I should ever become so presumptuous, for that were a sort of blasphemy. But I claim implicit faith for what *God* says. Believing the gospel to be the revelation of God, I claim for it implicit faith. Believing the Lord Jesus to be an infallible teacher, I claim immediate faith in all that He has said. If this implicit faith is refused, it is because there is no light in you. To walk in the light is to know, to love, and to live the truth. To walk in the light of God is to receive our instruction from God. To me the end of all controversy is "Thus says the Lord." Only let me know that the Lord has said this or that, and though the revelation should seem impossible to believe, and though it should come into conflict with all my previous notions, I will bow before it without a question. "The Lord has said it," stands to us instead of all reason, and argument, and evidence; yes, we believe God in the teeth of supposed evidence and reason, saying, "Let God be true, but every man a liar." God will not have fellowship with us if we reject His light, but on the ground of absolute truth He can and will meet us. If we come unto the light and believe His witness to the truth, then are we where God can walk with us, and where the precious blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin.

This, beloved brethren, leads to *a transparency and simplicity of character*. Walking in the light produces Israelites indeed, in who is no guile.

Those who are full of deceit and craftiness upon any subject are not walking in the light of God. God will not have fellowship with any whose minds are crooked and deceitful. Some persons are so warped that nothing is straight to them; their minds seem to see things crookedly; long practice in untruthfulness has given them an evil bias. This is not the case with the man in whom the light of grace is shining. The man who does in reality what he seems to do; the man who says what he means, and means what he says; the man who is truthful, artless and sincere in all his general dealings both before God and man, he it is whose conduct leads us to hope that the light of grace shines within.

This is very evident in *the man's cessation from all guile towards himself*. Remember how David pronounces him blessed "in whose spirit there is no guile." He knew painfully what it was to be full of guile. See him! He has gone astray most grievously. His mind is in the dark. What does David do? There is a foul sin committed; he tries to make himself believe that it is not so very horrible; he labors to hoodwink his conscience. His sin is likely to be seen, and he tries to cover it. He brings back Bathsheba's husband. When Uriah declines to go to his house he must be made drunk. The design has failed. David is afraid, but he is not penitent, on the contrary, he hastens to still greater crime. Uriah is in the wars, and there he is wantonly exposed to death, and is slain in battle. His death is ascribed to the fortune of war. David did not see that it was murder, for he was not walking in the light. He was still in darkness, and therefore he kept all this while acting a deceitful part with his God and his own conscience. His conduct would not bear the light, and so his one idea was to keep out of the light. How changed was all this after Nathan had said to him, "You are the man"! When the light of heavenly conviction had penetrated the night of his soul, he made no more excuses, He practiced no more subterfuges. He stood in the light, ashamed and confounded. Amazed at the sight of his sin, he abandoned all idea of covering it, and fled at once to the mercy of God crying, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness." In the sobbing and sighing of the fifty-first Psalm he lays bare his heart, and in the plainest terms he cries, "Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, the God of my salvation." He is in the light now, for deceit has gone, and now God can speak comfortably to him, and wash him and make him whiter than snow.

The man, who is walking in the light, as God is in the light, is full of *abhorrence of sin*. Sin is practical falsehood; it is moral darkness. The man that abhors evil and injustice, the man that would do good if it cost him his earthly all; the man that would not do wrong though the world should be his reward for doing it—this is the man that walks in the light, and he is the man that shall have fellowship with God, and a sense of cleansing from sin. We cannot attach too great importance to the condition of our minds in reference to sin, for if we wink at it, or take pleasure in it, or persistently practice it, we are abiding in the darkness, and we are under the wrath of God. John says, "Little children, let no man de-

ceive you: he that does righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous." Forget not this practical truth.

I fear I have scarcely brought out the fullness of the meaning. They that are in the light will know what I mean; those who are in darkness cannot imagine what life in the light must be.

II. I come, secondly, to THE COMMUNION OF OUR WALK. Those who are in the light shall not be alone. God Himself will be with them, and be their God. The words, "we have fellowship with one another," constitute a wonderfully condescending expression. John would not have dared to coin such an expression; it must have been minted for him by the Spirit from above. Think of God and His people having mutual communion! What honor! What joy is this! Thus is the mischief of the Fall removed, and Paradise is restored.

God in the light and man in the light have much in common. Now are they abiding in one element, for they are dwelling in one light. Now are they both concerned about the same thing, and their aims are undivided; God loves truth, and so do those who are renewed in heart. It has come to pass that the great Lord and His enlightened ones see things in the same light. God with His great vision beholds more than we can, yet He does not see more than the truth, and we with our narrow perceptions see the truth, and falsehood we cannot tolerate. Now we can speak with God, seeing we speak truth, and He can converse with us, seeing we are ready to hear the truth. In prayer and praise we are no longer false, and therefore the Lord can hear us. His word falls also upon an honest mind, and so its meaning is perceived. Now also we can act together; the great God and His poor feeble children are striving together for truth and righteousness. Our poor little work He might overlook if He were not so good, but being infinitely condescending, He works through us whenever He sees that our work is done in truth. If our works were works of darkness, He could not co-operate with us, but now that we walk and work in the light, He is able to make us laborers together with Himself.

Now we partake with God in sympathy, having a fellow-feeling with Him. Does the great Father mourn His prodigal child? So do we mourn over sinners; do we see Jesus weeping over Jerusalem? So do we mourn for the perishing who will not be saved; again, as God rejoices over sinners that repent, so do we rejoice in sympathy with Him. By coming into the light of love as well as into the light of knowledge we have received power to enter into sympathy with God. Is not this a very wonderful thing? But it is as clear and true as it is wonderful. We would gladly bring the whole world into the light. We daily pray, "Your kingdom come, Your will be done." Our will has grown to be like God's will according to its measure, seeing we have come into the same light as that in which God dwells.

Do you know, dear brothers and sisters, by experience what it is to be honestly dealing with eternal things, to be no longer playing, and toying, and counterfeiting, but to be in real and blessed earnest with God and spiritual facts? Then you have come into fellowship with the great God, for He is in earnest, and in Him there is no trifling or make-believe, but

He is acting with intense reality, acting with His whole heart in His contention against sin, His desire for the glory of His Son, His purpose for the salvation of His people.

III. But now I come, in the third place, to that which strikes me most in the text, and it is this—THE GLORY OF THIS COMMUNION, "We have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." Here am I a poor creature reading this text. I find that it is possible for men to walk in fellowship with God, the great and ever-blessed. I rejoice to learn this, and my heart responds, "If there is any fellowship with God to be known, I will know it. If I can be reconciled to God, and be at friendship with Him, I desire it beyond everything. But how can these things be? I see that a great stone lies at the door. I cannot get out of my prison to begin this walk, because this great stone of sin shuts me in." Then the Lord comes in, and He says, "I saw that this hindrance was in your road, and so in this very verse I have shown you how I have taken it away." Precious words! The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. I gather from the way in which this sentence grows out of the text that this very thing, which looks as if it were the death of all communion with God, is made by infinite grace to be a wide and open channel of communion with Him. This stone is rolled away from the door of the sepulcher, and the angel of communion sits down upon it as on a throne. God justifies His people in broad daylight, in a way which defies inspection, and then, by the very method of clearing away their sin, He enters into the nearest and dearest fellowship with them.

To begin with, *here is sin!* What an evil thing it is! How our soul hates it! It is uncleanness to us; a loathsome and abominable evil. You that are in the light know how every beam of light makes you see more of the heinousness, blackness, and accursed nature of sin. Even to feel a tendency towards it in your members makes you groan out, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me?" Listen! You are having fellowship with God in this. In Him is no sin, but in Him is great abhorrence of sin. If you hate sin, God hates it also, and herein you are agreed. The very thought of iniquity, uncleanness, or falsehood, is abhorred of God. His holy nature detests it, and in proportion as you feel the same loathing and detestation, you have fellowship with God. This comes to you by walking in the light, as God is in the light. "Horror has taken hold upon me," says David, "because of the wicked that forsake Your law." David was as much in fellowship with God in that horror of sin as he was another day when he could speak of God as his exceeding joy, and rejoice in the mercy which endures forever. Yes, beloved, our horror for sin drives us into fellowship with the great Father in that loathing of sin which made Him hide His face from His Only-begotten because the sin of man had been made to meet upon Him.

Let us go a step further. Sin being once perceived, the next step is that it should *be gotten rid of*. "Ah," you say, "I wish I could be cleansed from it; cleansed from all of it, but how can this be? It is not possible for me to purge away my sin." I thought I heard you singing just now—

"Could my tears forever flow,
Could my zeal no respite show;
All for sin could not atone,
You must save, and You alone."

This also is God's thought about sin; He knows how hard it is to remove its pollution. He saw that nothing of ours could remove the horrible blot. Brethren, I know of a surety that all the waters of all the seas might be reddened by my scarlet sin, and yet they could not wash out the fatal stain. Not even the fires of hell could burn out the defilement of sin. In this persuasion we have fellowship with the pure and holy God, who saw that there was no means of removing sin but one; He must deliver up His own Son to death, or the sin of man could never be purged away. The sacrifice of the Only-begotten is the unique hope of sinners. The laying of our iniquity upon Him who deigned to be the great scapegoat of His people is the sole means for the taking away of the sins of the world. That inward persuasion of the impossibility of the purgation of sin by any doings or feelings of our own, and the consequent perception that in Christ only lies the help of men, has brought us through the light of truth to walk in fellowship with the thrice holy God.

Now go a step further. *The glorious Son of God condescends to become the atonement for sin.* He is taken to the tree; our sins are made to meet upon His blessed head, and there He dies the just for the unjust. He was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Standing by the tree of doom, we look up to that blessed Savior with all-absorbing admiration and love. We admire Him as the masterpiece of divine wisdom, grace, power, and truth, and admiring, we love Him; we pledge ourselves to Him. Herein we have entered into fellowship with the great Father indeed and of a truth, for the Father loves His Son infinitely; He greatly delights in Him. No thought of Christ that the most rapturous enthusiast ever had can reach half way to God's thoughts of Christ. See how holy Bernard seems to go into a delirium of love when he talks about his divine Master! O Bernard, you cannot tell how the Father loves Jesus, how He delights in His sacrifice, how He takes pleasure in His exaltation! In the putting away of sin by the blood of Jesus the Father has an infinite content, and so have we. Beloved, we rejoice in the divine satisfaction for sin; it is a well of divine delight to us. This satisfaction is not accomplished by anything being hushed up and concealed, but, walking in the light, as God is in the light, we have fellowship with God in the one glorious sacrifice. Suppose I could persuade myself that sin is a trifle, I should not be walking in the light, and I should have no fellowship with God. Suppose I said, "Pooh, pooh! Sin can easily be forgiven, I am sure it requires no atonement," I would not be walking in the light, and I should have no fellowship with God. Suppose I said, "Though Jesus died, His death was only the close of His life, and no special reference need be made to it as a sacrifice for sin"? I should not be walking in the light, and I would have no fellowship with God.

A step further. Beloved, many of us have come to Jesus Christ by faith; we have looked to Him, and have accepted Him as our Savior *cleansing us from all sin.* Joy, joy, joy forever; the brightest day that ever

dawned on us was that day when we saw all our sins numbered on our blessed Scapegoat and carried away into the wilderness of forgetfulness! When God saw the blood of old He passed over Israel, for His justice was satisfied, and it is so with Jesus. How glad and content we are to see how Jesus finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness! Brethren, the death of Jesus is a cleansing from sin which will bear the light; it is no hole and corner business, no winking at evil, no suspension of law, no making out that sin is no sin. No, the debt is acknowledged, and what is better far, it is paid. The guilty are punished in their substitute, and in Him are thus justly set free. We shall all appear before the judgment seat, and I am glad it is so, for the stain of our sin is so effectually removed by the blood of Jesus that we are clean every whit, and even the eye of divine justice will see no spot in us. We rejoice in perfect whiteness, for the Lord has made us whiter than snow. Yes, we have fellowship with God in this cleansing, for God accepts us in the Beloved. God that made Him to be the Lord our Righteousness, God Himself justifies us in His Son. He will in the last great day make the whole universe a witness to the righteousness of the salvation of believers. All intelligences shall see that in Christ all who are in Him are truly justified, and most justly saved. How the Lord God and His people will have fellowship in their common joy in the work and person of Jesus, as they see the perfection of it, and the way in which all sin is removed by it! Our salvation in Christ is in the light in the most eminent degree; it will bear the full, fierce light of Sinai to be turned upon it, and yet no flaw will be found in it. This is wonderful! This is glorious! Do you wonder that God is well pleased in Him! And are not we well pleased! Blessed be His name. Do you not see how we thus have fellowship one with another. Oh, that I had strength to set forth before you the thoughts which fill my soul!

Brethren, we are now at one with God in His master purpose. Was it not in His heart to create beings with which He might have fellowship? He made the heavens and the earth, He made the angels, He made all things, but He could find no companionship in all these things. Our Lord, like Adam, found no help-meet for Himself in any of the creatures He had made. He desired to produce and bring to Himself an order of beings that could be glorified without danger of pride, who could think and feel as the First-born would do; in fact, would become the friends of the Son of God. How were these creatures to be produced? Not by an immediate fiat of creation. Angels He could speak into being by a word, but in the constitution of these beings there would need to be an experience and a discipline to fit them for their lofty position. Their model was to be the Son of Jehovah's love. He was to be the First-born among many brethren. It was needful for these creatures to know sin, and yet to hate it more fully than if they had never known it, to know the love of God, and to be bound by it forever to an unsinning obedience, which would fill them with boundless happiness. Behold the process by which this new creation, this new order of creatures should come forth. Consider the processes by which the Fall, the incarnation, the Cross, and the new

birth work out the sacred result! When you have read the past in this light, then, gaze into the future. Now we see how throughout eternity we shall walk in the light, as God is in the light, and have fellowship one with another—fellowship culminating in Jesus Christ the Only-begotten, and the cleansing from all sin by His blood. The blood-washed are to be the friends of God, with whom He shall speak face to face, as He speaks with no angel or seraph. With these He will dwell, and He will be their God, and they shall be His people, and in them and through them He will make known the glories of His Son to wondering worlds. This great purpose has been worked out to a considerable extent by the Lord's having already made us to walk in the light, as He is in the light, and by washing us in the precious blood, but it does not even yet appear what we shall be. This much we practically seek after; therefore we live for Christ! Therefore our chief glory is the cross! Therefore our perfection of glory for ourselves is to see Jesus glorified! The torrents have swept us away! We are no longer bound to this earth! We are borne along by the irresistible force of eternal love! God has achieved His purpose in our blood-washed souls; walking in the light we are now in harmony with His master purpose, and we cry—"Father, glorify Your Son!"

I am done, but oh, I wish that all your hearts were brought into the light of God at this moment! Oh, that you would quit the dark ways of self-righteousness, carelessness, thoughtlessness, and sin, and come into the light of truth! Oh, that the light may come to you as to Saul of Tarsus, and at once transform you! May the Spirit of God bring you to know God and His Son Jesus Christ, whom to know is life eternal.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 JOHN 1, 2.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—425, 484, 289.

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"BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD"
NO. 1987

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 16, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"The next day John saw Jesus coming unto him, and said, Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." John 1:29.

JOHN the Baptist's one business was to bear witness to Christ. He was the morning star which heralds the rising sun. When the sun appeared he had no more reason for shining. You cannot account for John except by Jesus; the one reason for John's existence is Jesus. I wish it might be so with us, may we be able to say, "For me to live is Christ." May our life be such that it cannot be understood apart from Jesus; take Him away, and our whole character would become an inexplicable mystery. I am afraid that some professors could be easily interpreted apart from Christ, perhaps could be better accounted for if there were no Christ, but if we are like John, true witnesses to Jesus, we shall find in Jesus the conscious purpose of our being, and His glory will be the clue to all the windings of our lives. For this purpose were we born, and for this end have we come into the world, that we may bear witness to the Lord Jesus Christ. Search and look my brethren, whether it has been so with you.

When our Lord was thus set forth by John, it is well to note the special character under which He was declared. John knew much of the Lord Jesus, and could have pictured Him in many lights and characters. He might especially have pointed Him out as the great moral example, the founder of a higher form of life, the great teacher of holiness and love, yet this did not strike the Baptist as the head and front of our Lord's character, but *he proclaimed Him as one who had come into the world to be the great sacrifice for sin.* Lifting up his hand and pointing to Jesus, he cried, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." He did not say, "Behold the great Exemplar," no doubt he would have said that in due season. He did not even say, "Behold the king and leader of a new dispensation," that fact he would by no means have denied, but would have gloried in it. Still, the first point that he dwells upon, and that which wins his enthusiasm is: "Behold the Lamb of God." John the Baptist views Him as the propitiation for sin, and so he cries, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world."

My brethren, we may depend upon it that this must be a very practical truth, for John was pre-eminently practical. What is the sum and substance of his teaching but, "Repent. Bring forth fruits meet for repentance. The axe is laid unto the root of the trees"? He has a word for everybody that comes; even the Roman soldiers are told to be content with

their rations. John is no theorist or quibbler about dogma; he deals with life and character, and demands works meet for repentance, yet he makes a great point of our Lord's being the sacrifice for sin. This indeed is the text of his life-sermon. Rest assured that there is something wonderfully practical about that truth and those who becloud it under the notion of being practical are laying aside the best instrument of doing good to men. For the reformation of manners and the overthrow of evil, and the setting up of the kingdom of righteousness throughout the world, there is no truth like that which reveals Jesus as the sacrifice provided by God for removing the sin of men. The stern Baptist, the true Elijah, who grappled hard with sin, and laid the sword of repentance to its throat, saw that nothing could be done unless he pointed out the Lamb of God, by whom the world's sin is taken away. When repentance is the sermon, Jesus must be the text, and the substance of the discourse. He puts life, power, energy into what otherwise would be a dead moral essay. O you, who would save men from sin, take care that you preach the great sacrifice for sin. It is clear that this doctrine has to do with repentance, for the apostle of repentance introduced it; he whose first word was "Repent," brought forward Jesus as the great Sin-Bearer, for he saw what I wish all would see, that there is a very intimate connection between the creation, growth, and purity of repentance and the sin-bearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Brethren, the fact is, the more we have to do with penitent sinners, the more we feel the need of a sin-bearer. O you that have never sinned, and are wrapped up in your own self-righteousness, you imagine that you can enter heaven by your own works; the bearing of sin by the Lamb of God does not seem to you at all needful, but if you once dwelt, as John did, in the midst of a burdened people, who came lamenting and confessing their sins, you would feel that nothing could bring them into reconciliation with God but faith in the appointed atonement. "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world," is the text which evangelists love, because without it they cannot face the troubled ones who throng around them.

My brethren, in proportion as you wisely love your fellow men you will prize the sacrifice for sin. Your practical dealing with a perishing people will make you prize the Savior. Oh, what should I do if I were sent to preach to this vast throng, and had no sin-offering to declare to you! Might I not break my heart before a task so useless, so cruel, as to, have to denounce sin and yet to have no pardon to declare, and consequently no hope? Now that I can tell of One who bore in His own body on the tree the transgression, iniquity, and sin of men, I find my task a solemn one, but certainly not hopeless, nor even dreary. Happy indeed am I to be permitted to set forth so blessed a salvation. Blessed are the lips which are allowed to cry, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." You see, then, that the practical character of John's mission made him all the more at home in setting forth the sacrificial character of our Lord.

If John the Baptist had not felt that the character of our Lord, as a sin-offering, was the chief matter, he might have fitly pointed Him out as an example at the time when he delivered the words of our text. The Sav-

ior had not yet revealed to anyone the fact and meaning of His future death; His Passion was as yet a thing in the dim future, while His life was just blossoming out into public observation. He had newly left the holy quiet of the parental roof at Nazareth, and the charm of early holiness was on Him. Should not the world now mark Him, that His example might be known throughout its entire length? In His retirement His conduct had been such, that the austere and devout Baptist had noticed it, and had felt bound to acknowledge that his younger relative was a worthier person than himself, saying, "I have need to be baptized by You." But John does not seem, when he beholds the Lord after His baptism, to think of His godly life already commenced, nor of that holy life which he could foresee in Him, but he fastens his eye upon the sacrificial character of that wondrous personage, and dwells on that alone, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God." Brethren, that age needed an example as badly as ours does, but it needed a Savior still more, and John sees first that which is first. Let me add that the time was doubly opportune for dwelling upon our Lord's example, since He had just returned from His famous temptation in the wilderness, wherein He had rehearsed His life-struggles. You cannot, in reading the narrative, piece in the forty days' temptation in the wilderness anywhere else but just here. We read that our Savior, after His baptism, was led up immediately into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil. Tempted He was, but He yielded in no point. In the threefold battle He vanquished the power of darkness at every point, and now, armed for the fray, in mail which He had tried and proven, the champion stood before John, and it would not have been singular had the man of God cried out, "Behold the perfect One, in whom the prince of this world has no place. Copy His supreme example." But no, the great Baptist's eye rests not on that; the blood and wounds of the passion are before his mind's eye, and beyond all else he sees the sacrificial character of the wondrous Being who now stands in the midst of the throng. The fact that He is the appointed victim for human sin enwraps the whole soul of the preacher, and he cries, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world."

Brethren, I desire to be in the same case with John the Baptist. I would have my thoughts of Christ concentrated upon His atoning death, henceforth and evermore. During the little time in which I may be spared to lift up my voice in this wilderness, I would bear witness to the Lamb of God. The years may be short in which I may guide this flock, but around the cross shall be to me forevermore the place of green pastures, and from the sacrifice of our Lord shall flow the still waters. Many others are dealing with other aspects of our Lord's work; some, I doubt not, faithfully, and others with evil intent; I may very well leave them to do their best or their worst, for at least one may be allowed to be baptized for the Crucified, separated unto the cross, dedicated to the atonement by blood. I know no atonement but substitution, no substitute but Christ. "Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." To the declaration of that fact I set myself apart to life's end.

I. To come still closer to our text, I would have you notice, in the first place, that JOHN SET FORTH CHRIST AS A SACRIFICE WITH EVIDENT PERSONAL PERCEPTION OF THE FACT. When a man says, "Behold!" he

sees something himself, He sees that something with clearness, and he desires you to see it, and therefore he cries, "Behold! Behold!" John had from his birth been ordained to be the herald of the Christ, but he evidently did not know who the Lamb of God might be. As a babe he leaped in the womb when he came near to the mother of our Lord, but yet he did not know Jesus as the Lamb of God. He says, "I knew Him not." Some suppose that John and Jesus had never met during their early years, but I find it hard to believe. I see quite another meaning here. John knew Jesus, but did not know Him as the Sin-Bearer. I think he must have known the life of the holy child, his near relative, while He grew in favor both with God and man, but he had not yet seen upon Him the attesting seal which marked Him as the Son of God. John admired the Lord's character very much, insomuch that when He came to be baptized by him, John said, "I have need to be baptized of You." Yet John says, "I knew Him not." He knew Him as one of high and holy character, but as yet he saw not the token which the Lord God had secretly given to his servant, for he saw not the Spirit of God descending and resting upon Him. John shrewdly suspected that Jesus was the Son of the Highest, of whom he was the forerunner, but a witness must not follow his own surmises, however correct they may be. John, as the Lord's servant, did not dare to know anything of his own unguided judgement; he waited for the secret sign. Certain preachers tell their people anything they invent out of their wonderful brains, but the true servant of God has no business to put forth his own thoughts or opinions, but he must wait for a word from God. The message should come straight from the Master, "Thus says the Lord." John, though he saw about this wondrous Jesus such marvelous traits of character that he was sure He was much greater than himself, yet says, "I knew Him not." He would know nothing but as it was revealed to him by the Lord God who sent him.

But when at last he received that personal token, when he plunged our blessed Master into the waters of the Jordan, and saw the heavens opened and the Dove descend, and heard the voice saying, "This is My beloved Son," then he knew Him, and was henceforth sure. When he afterwards spoke he did not say, "I think this is the Lamb of God," or, "I am under the impression that this is the Son of God." No, he boldly cried, "Behold Him! See for yourselves. This is the Lamb of God! I speak with the accent of conviction; nothing can shake me. The Master has given the sign, and henceforth I bear confident witness. Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world."

Henceforth to John the Baptist, the Lord Jesus Christ was more than He appeared to be to any others. To those who looked at the Savior, He would have seemed to be a plain, humble Jew, with nothing particular to mark Him out, except it were the gentleness of His demeanor, and a certain heavenliness of carriage, but to the Baptist He was now before all, and above all. When a person was to be baptized, he confessed his sins to John, but when Jesus came with no sins of His own to confess, *did He whisper in John's ear, "I bear the sin of the world"?* I think He did, but in any case, this was true to the Baptist's mind, and to him Jesus was henceforth the matchless sacrifice, the one atonement for human sin.

This was an extraordinary truth to John. It took a miracle of grace to make a Jew see, "The Lamb, which takes away the sin *of the world."* The Jew thought that the sacrifice of God must be for His chosen people only, but John saw beyond all bounds of nationality and restrictions of race, and clearly perceived in Jesus "the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." Remember that John was of priestly race, he was familiar with lambs for sacrifice. But as a priest he never saw a lamb for sacrifice in a place far off from the consecrated shrine. There was only one altar, and that was at Jerusalem, and there the lamb of sacrifice must be, and not by Jordan's lonely stream. Yet John saw, in a place never dedicated in any peculiar manner to the service of God, the one great sacrifice standing in the midst of the people. "Behold," he says, "this is the Lamb of God." See how well the Lord had taught him, and how fully he had broken away from natural prejudices!

Beloved, I pray that each one of us may know for himself Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. You were brought up as children to believe that Jesus is the Lamb of God, but all revelation in the Book must again be revealed to the heart, or it will not be really known and perceived. For the life of the truth to enter into our life it must become a matter, not of head-creed only, but of heart-belief. That Jesus is the substitutionary sacrifice, the propitiation for our sins, the expiation for our iniquity, must be taught us by the Holy Spirit. I can truly declare among you that I do not preach this doctrine of vicarious sacrifice as one among many theories, but as the saving fact of my experience. I must preach this or nothing. I know nothing among you save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified, because I have neither hope nor comfort outside of the great atoning sacrifice. He was made sin for us, even He who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. "He was made a curse for us, as it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree." I pray that each one of God's people may have a clear knowledge of Christ as the sin-bearing Lamb, and have it written on his individual consciousness, for then nothing will shake him out of it. When men find their own deliverance from sin, and their own peace with God flowing out of the atoning sacrifice, this great truth becomes a part of their inward experience, and it can never be torn from them. O my brother, when the great sacrifice has saved you, you will never be able to doubt it; you will sooner doubt your own existence than doubt this blessed fact, that He bore our sin in His own body on the tree, and that through Him we are reconciled unto God. It was a matter with John of personal perception.

II. Let us advance a little. JOHN SET FORTH OUR LORD AS EMPHATICALLY THE SACRIFICE, "Behold *the* Lamb of God." This is more than John would have said of all the lambs that he had ever heard or read of since the first appointment of sacrifice. He remembered the firstling of the flock which Abel offered, and the sacrifice of a sweet savor which Noah presented; he knew the sacrifices of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; he was familiar with the lamb of the Paschal supper, and those of Israel's high festivals. He remembered the thousands of offerings that had been presented by David and by Solomon, and by other kings in the great national acts of worship, but passing them all by as if they were all mere

shadows, he points his finger to the man Christ Jesus, and he says of Him, "This is THE Lamb of God."

In this I think the Baptist comprehended everything that went before. There was *the daily lamb* of which I read to you in the commencement of the service, from Exodus 29. There had been slain before the Lord a lamb every morning, and a lamb every evening, all the year round throughout the centuries of Israel's history. Always and ever the continual sacrifice of the lamb was the symbol of Jehovah's dwelling with His people. But John puts his finger down upon a single sacrifice, and says, "This is *the* Lamb." All the other daily lambs had been but prefigurations of this. "Behold the Lamb."

Let me also call your attention to another wonderful lamb, *the Paschal lamb*, slain on the night when Israel went up out of Egypt, when each Hebrew smeared the lintel and side-posts of his door with blood, and the sight of that blood sufficed for the deliverance of the family, according to the word of Jehovah, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." These Passover lambs were many and sacred to every Jewish mind, but John passes them all over, and says, "Behold *the* Lamb of God."

Do you not think he also had in his mind *the lamb spoken of by Isaiah,* the great evangelical prophet? Had he not in his memory that famous passage, "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter"? John the Baptist cries, "This is He of whom the prophet spoke, Behold the Lamb of God."

Yes, and if John's eyes had been turned to the future as well as to the past, so that he could have looked down the centuries, and shared the visions of the seer of Patmos, he would have seen *the Lamb in the midst of the throne,* and have heard the song unto Him that was slain, but after seeing all the visions of the coming glory of the Lamb, he would still have kept his finger pointed towards the blessed Christ of God standing among the people, and would have said, "Behold *the* Lamb." All that you read of sacrifice and sin-bearing in the Old or the New Testament, all that you have ever heard, or ever shall hear, of the putting away of sin, if it is true, is all centered in this line, "Behold the Lamb." It is a great thing when we can focus our testimony upon a single point. Let every servant of God do so, and bear his witness that there is none other name given among men whereby we must be saved. There is no other purgation for sin in the whole universe save that great sacrifice which takes away the sin of the world.

III. We will go a step further again; JOHN, IN DESCRIBING OUR LORD JESUS IN HIS SACRIFICIAL CHARACTER, WAS VERY EXPLICIT IN DECLARING HIM TO BE THE SACRIFICE OF GOD. He says: "Behold the Lamb *of God."* These words contain a great depth of meaning. "The Lamb of God." Did not the Baptist thus recall the day when Abraham walked with Isaac towards the mount that God had told him of? "And Isaac said to his father, My Father, behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham answered, My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for the burnt offering." John, standing centuries after, seems to say, "Now is the saying of the Father of the faithful fulfilled. Behold how God provides! Behold the Lamb of God." Under the old Jewish dispensation, if a man sinned, he said to himself, "I must go and find a lamb," and he went out to his own flock, or else to his

neighbor, and he bought a lamb. That was his lamb which he brought for his own trespass. But you and I have not to go and find a lamb, God has provided a lamb already, and we have only to accept the Lamb of God. And is it not a wonderful thing, that He against whom all sin was leveled, Himself provided the sacrifice for sin? Behold the sin *of man* and the Lamb *of God*. Jesus is the Father's best beloved, His choice one, His only one, and yet He delivered Him up for us all, and God's Son became God's Lamb. O my Father, my Father, do I sin, and do You find the sacrifice? But if a sacrifice must be found by the Father, why was it found so near His heart? He could find the sacrifice for sin nowhere but in His own bosom. He had but one Son, His Only-begotten, and "God so loved the world, that He gave His Only-begotten Son." Jehovah gave His only Son to be a sacrifice! Let heaven and earth be filled with astonishment. Beloved, if you think of it, who else could have provided a sacrifice for the sin of the world? None will pretend to such ability. And when God Himself provided a sacrifice, what other could He have found but His coequal Son? Who else could render the honor which was due to the broken law? Who else could offer to divine justice the vindication which it demanded? Justice must be violated, or else man must perish forever; there remained no way of escape from this dilemma until the Son of the Highest condescended to become a sacrifice, and put away sin by His own death. So, you see, the Lord must Himself provide the sacrifice, and that sacrifice must be His Only-begotten Son.

I do not think I can preach more, for a faintness has come over me, nor is there need for more if you will but chew the cud of this one precious truth; Jesus is the Lamb which God provided, and He is the Lamb which God Himself presented at the altar. Yet I must rouse myself to say a little more. Who was it that sacrificed the Lamb of God? Who was the priest on that dread day? Who was it that bruised Him? Who put Him to grief? Who caused Him the direst pang of all when He cried, "Why have You forsaken Me?" Was it not the Father Himself? This was one point in the hardness of Abraham's test—"Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and offer him for a sacrifice." He must himself officiate at the sacrifice. This the great Father did! He is the Lamb, the Lamb of God. And now today the bright side of this truth remains. He is the Lamb that God always accepts, must accept, glories to accept. Bring you but Jesus with you, and you have brought God an acceptable sacrifice. You cannot fail to be forgiven, when you come pleading the name of Jesus. If you should bring the fattest of your flock, and the choicest of your herd, you might hear God say, "I will not accept your sacrifice"! But when you bring God's own sacrifice, He cannot reject you. You are accepted in the Beloved; there is such acceptance of Christ with God that it overlaps your unacceptableness, it covers your sin, it covers *you,* it makes you to be dear to the heart of God.

Thus far have we come with this blessed text, even unto "waters to swim in." "Behold the Lamb of God."

IV. Lend me your ears a little longer while in the fourth place I show you that JOHN SET FORTH THIS BLESSED SAVIOR AS BEARING AND BEARING AWAY OUR SIN. You that have the Revised Version will please notice that the Revisers follow the Authorized Version in the body of the

translation, and say, "Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world," but they have done wisely by putting in the margin, "bears the sin." Both meanings are here. In order to the bearing away of sin, there must first be the bearing of it. The Lord Jesus both took sin and took it away. Dwell for a minute on the first fact that sin was actually laid on Christ. I saw the other day, among the abominations of the Stygian Bog, across which I have been compelled to gaze of late, such a foul teaching as this—that the transference of sin is immoral. Yet is not Scripture full of it? "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Sin was borne by Christ; yes, actually borne by Him, "He Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree." They may make what they like of it. I am not going to explain or apologize, but I say without hesitation that the sin of the world was laid upon Christ, and He bore it, and bore it away. The heaviest thing in the universe is sin; the earth has been known to open beneath the unbearable load of it. Neither angels nor men can stand under the load of sin; it sinks them lower than the lowest hell. When sin was laid upon the Lamb of God, He bore it, but He sweat as it were, great drops of blood, and He was exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death. To have borne up *the weight* of the world would have been nothing compared with bearing *the sin* of the world.

The best of all is, however, that our Lord did not only bear the load, but He took it away. "He takes away the sin of the world." The sin which was laid upon Christ did not remain there, He took it away—it remains no more. We read in Scripture many things about sin, as that God forgives it, blots it out, forgets it, casts it into the sea, puts it behind His back, and a great many other expressive figures, but this is in some respects the best of them—He takes it away. Blessed be His name. My hearer, if you believe in Jesus you need not ask, "Where is my sin?" Jesus took it away. By bearing it He bore it away. It is gone, gone forever—it is utterly abolished. "The day comes when the sins of Jacob shall be sought for, and they shall not be found; yes they shall not be, says the Lord." Our glory is that by the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross sin was made an end of. He finished transgressions, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness. This is a gospel worth believing, worth living for, worth dying for. Let all teaching be accursed that comes in opposition to it. This is heaven to a soul whose sins are dragging it down to hell; sin can be forgiven, for Jesus is "the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." What a sight is this to see! Those eyes can never be sore again that have once seen sin put away by Jesus.

V. I must, however, call your attention to another point, which is that JOHN REPRESENTS OUR LORD AS REMOVING SIN CONTINUALLY. "Behold the Lamb of God which *takes* away the sin of the world." Behold the sin of the world as one huge mass, and Jesus deals with it as a whole, and takes it away. John does not speak in the past tense, or in the future, but He speaks in the present—"He *takes away* the sin of the world." Our Savior's atoning sacrifice, though it was but once offered, is perpetual in its effect. He must die at a certain point of time, and there were reasons why His death should have taken place at the particular moment when it did, yet time does not enter into the essence of it. The sacrifice might have been offered a million years ago, and as the Lamb of

God He would still take away sin or the actual sacrifice might further have been postponed, if infinite wisdom had so chosen, and yet the Lamb of God would now have taken away sin. The date of His death is not the question; His sacrifice is effectual before and after the event. Our Savior was the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world, in the purpose, and covenant, and thought of God. His sacrifice saved Adam, and Noah, and Moses, and David, and all the saints, before the name of Calvary had become illustrious. Before He died He stood before John the Baptist, as taking away the sin of the world, and now today, though His death is a matter of 1800 years ago, He still "takes away the sin of the world." In His person He was ever the Sin-Bearer, and through His death He puts sin away forever. By one sacrifice He has forever put away sin. His eternal merits forever remain a sweet savor unto the Lord God, and forever remove the foul offense of human transgression. As the Great Purifier He continually takes away and will continue to take away the sin of the world.

Blessed be God, I have a Savior today as fresh and full of power as if He had been crucified this very morning for my sin. He is now as able to save me as if He were at this hour on the Cross. Those dear wounds of His in effect perpetually bleed; in His case the print of the nails is the token of an inexhaustible fountain of merit, which is always flowing forth for the removal of my guilt, eternally efficacious, ceaselessly sin-cleansing. This is where we rest. It is the grandest fact in the history of all ages that Jesus takes away the sin of the world. We do not know what happened before this solar system was created, and we do not need to know. We cannot prophesy what is going to happen when yon sun and moon and stars shall disappear like transient sparks from the anvil of power, but there never will be any new fact which can equal this first of truths—that the Son of God assumed human nature, and in that nature bore sin and bore it away. This is the truth to be looked at beyond all others, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world."

Although I am too weak to preach to you as I desire, I feel great joy for myself in looking to the Sin-Bearer who has taken away my sin. How I wish that all of you felt the same! This is the pith and the marrow of my theology. But you must take the Lamb of God for yourselves; you must know Him for yourselves, you must believe in Him for yourselves, and He will surely take away that sin which now burdens you. He will take it right away, so that it shall never burden you again. He will blot it out; it shall cease to be; you shall be no more under condemnation, but shall be free from it forever. God help you to know Jesus, of whom I speak to you!

VI. The last point is this—JOHN WITNESSED TO THE ALL-SUFFICIENCY OF THE DIVINE SACRIFICE, "Which takes away the sin of the world." No other in all the world can take away sin but the Lamb of God. There is no sin which He cannot take away. There is no limit to the value of His great sacrifice; He takes away the sin of the world. There is no other sin-bearer, no other atonement, no other satisfaction. No purgatory in the present or in the future can avail to take away sin. No supposed remedial pains in hell are possible; neither lapse of years, nor bitterness of regret, can take away sin; Jesus takes away the sin of the world, and beside Him there is no other.

Mark you, "He takes away the sin *of the world";* all manner of sin that was ever done in the world, by all sorts of men, of all races, in all places. He removes sins of long duration, of aggravated criminality, of crying heinousness; any sin that can be compassed within the bounds of the world, Christ takes away. O repenting sinner, though your sins should be as many as the hairs of your head, and each one as black as the midnight of Tophet, yet Christ takes away each sin. Though you should have cursed God and slain your fellow men, yet such sin as this comes within the range of "the sin of the world." Even as another text puts it, "God so loved the world, that He gave His Only-begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life," so is this text to be understood! Jesus so takes away the sin of the world that whosoever believes in Him shall no longer be guilty of sin, but shall be forgiven, and be justified before God. Do you hear this? There is nothing in this text to shut any man out of mercy. Behold, I set before you an open door. There is everything in my text to induce every one of you who is conscious of guilt to come to the Lord Jesus, and accept Him as your substitute and sacrifice. Christ shall take away no man's sin that does not believe in Him. Christ has so taken away sin that whosoever believes in Him shall live. If you will come now and lay your hand on this divine sacrifice you shall find it all-sufficient, whatsoever the nature of your guilt may be. O delightful gospel! How sweet to preach it!

I have done when I have said this. John the Baptist appears to me to have relieved his mind by the utterance of my text. He was full of weariness because of the scribes and Pharisees, doctors and doubters who had been warring around him. He had been put on the defensive, and had been harried with innumerable questions. First one and then another; this question and that question, and now John ends the wordy duel by pointing to one whose presence was joy to his heart. There stands the Savior, and John stops his argument, and cries, "There He is! Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." It is to me a supreme joy to turn aside from those who becloud the everlasting gospel, to leap out of the midst of controversy and to cry to you with exultation—Jesus is the Son of God; He is the sacrifice for sin, He takes it away. Believe on Him and live. There is more joy in one sermon than in years of disputation. Oh, that everyone in this congregation might believe in Jesus and live! What a refreshment it is to the preacher's mind to get to his message at last, to get away from the bamboozlement of those who confound plain truth, and to come to matter-of-fact dealing with eternal salvation. There, let them question and quibble—the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanses us from all sin.

With what certainty the Baptist speaks! He does not for a moment hesitate, or speak with cautious reserve. No debate disturbs the foundation of his confidence. Before his eyes he evidently sees the Sin-Bearer, and he bids others see Him as he sees Him. To him no doubt remains, for he had seen the heavens opened above the head of Jesus, and he had heard the voice of God Himself, saying, "This is My beloved Son." Dear friends, the marks which prove our Lord Jesus to be the vicarious sacrifice for sin are as clear to me as ever they were to John the Baptist. I dogmatize, because I feel more than sure as to my Lord's being the great

sacrifice for sin. I could not doubt this doctrine if I were to try to do so. My hope, my joy, my very being hinge on my Lord's substitution. This truth is woven into the warp and woof of my being. Jesus suffered in my stead. A leader in the religious world tells us that we have not yet obtained a satisfactory theory of the atonement. Let him speak for himself. Thousands of us know what we believe, and know what Jesus did for us. Where has the man lived? What comfort in life and death is there for one who cannot see clearly this first of truths? I thank God I have a definition of the atonement which is to me most clear, sure, and full of comfort. Here it is—"He His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree." I can live by that, and I can die by that. I am sick to death of the ever-repeated hypocrisy about "theory of the atonement," I have no theory, for I believe in atonement itself. God keep us steadfast in the faith once delivered to the saints, and our consolation will abound.

And yet, once more, there seems to be a deep anxiety on John's part in the words of my text. He says, "Behold the Lamb of God." And he does so for the sake of those around him. We do not desire others to believe with us because we need them to keep us in countenance. John was not a man cut out of brown paper, in the same shape as thousands of others, but he was an original, self-contained individual. He knew how to see the Lamb of God for himself, whether other people did or did not see Him. When I preach to you the doctrine of the vicarious sacrifice, it is not because I am unable to believe this truth alone. Long ago I ceased to count heads. Truth is usually in the minority in this evil world. I have faith in the Lord Jesus for myself, a faith burned into me as with a hot iron. I thank God, what I believe I shall believe, even if I believe it alone. If I am the last man to glory in the substitution of the Lord Jesus, I shall count myself honored to bear His cross alone. But there is great love to his fellows in the heart of every man who has seen the Lord Jesus Christ as bearing sin. That great deed of love makes the beholder feel that he would have all men look and live. Were you ever half-starved, and did you find bread? Then I know you pitied your famishing brother. Our very instincts lead us to spread the blessing which we have received. Even dogs would do that. A poor dog had his broken leg healed at the hospital, and not many weeks after he brought another lame dog to the same house of mercy. We also long to see men come to Christ, because we have had our broken hearts healed by His tender hand. We love because He first loved us. Brethren, I was ready to perish under a sense of sin; I was all but damned; I felt the wrath of God surging in my soul like a sea of fire, I found no relief or comfort. Even the Word of God did not cheer me. They told me of believing in Jesus, but till I learned that this Jesus was God's great appointed sacrifice for sin I saw nothing in Him to cheer me. When I learned that He had borne the penalty and satisfied justice, then I found out the glorious secret, and my conscience was at rest. Conscience within us reflects, as in a mirror, the facts of the case as God sees them. God causes an awakened conscience to require that which His justice requires. The demand of the conscience is the echo of the demand of the divine government. Conscience requires atonement because the necessity of the case and the nature of God require it. When I learned that there was such an atonement provided, oh, then I rested most

sweetly! I wish you all did so. You that have no atoning sacrifice to plead, how can you bear the weight of your sins? What will you do with them when the death-damp is on your brows? You for whom, according to your own creed, no debt was paid, no penalty endured, how will you answer Justice in her great and terrible day? Believers look to Jesus as discharging all their debt, and they are not afraid of the day of account. But where will you look? Oh, what will you do? Do not remain without faith in Him who stood in the sinner's stead His work is exactly what your mind wants to give it peace. The satisfaction of Jesus will give your mind satisfaction, and nothing else will. Conscience, like the horse-leech, cries, "Give, give," and it will never cease its cravings till it meets with Christ, whose one full satisfaction will content it forever.

"Behold the Lamb of God." I shall meet you all in the Day of Judgment, and I tremble not to do so, for I have told you all the truth of so far as I know it. If you reject the sacrifice for sin, I cannot help it! But, I beseech you, receive it and find that the Lamb of God has taken away your sin. Go in peace. The Lord go with you. Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
EXODUS 29:38-46; ISAIAH 53; JOHN 1:19-51.**

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—412, 331, 416.

At this time Mr. Spurgeon would remind his friends that his College, Orphanage, and other institutions need to be remembered. Mr. Spurgeon has been laid low by severe pain, and very soon he must go abroad to rest; it would tend greatly to help his recover, and enable him to derive full benefit from his holiday, if the coffers of these institutions were at once filled up. Then could the weary sufferer go in peace. Direct, C. H. Spurgeon, Westwood, Beulah Hill, Upper Norwood.

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THE BLOOD OF SPRINKLING AND THE CHILDREN
NO. 1988

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 23, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said unto them, Draw out and take you a lamb according to your families, and kill the passover. And you shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the basin; and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning. For the Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the Lord will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you. And you shall observe this thing for an ordinance to you and to your sons forever. And it shall come to pass, when you be come to the land which the Lord will give you, according as He has promised, that you shall keep this service. And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean you by this service? that you shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when He smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses."
Exodus 12:21-27.

I WANTED, dear friends, earnestly wanted, to continue the subject of last Lord's-day morning, for I felt it important that we should bear again and again our witness to the doctrine of the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus Christ our Lord. But, at the same time, I promised that I would endeavor to keep "the feast of the children," and have a sermon which should be specially addressed to Sunday school teachers. I could not preach a school sermon at the appointed time, so as to open your children's week, but thought a discourse might come in none the less suitably if I brought up the rear by closing your meetings. How am I to fulfill both my purposes? I think the subject before us will enable me to do so. We shall preach of the sprinkled blood and of Jesus the great sacrifice for sin, and then we shall press upon all who know the value of the great redemption that they teach the young in their earliest days what is meant by the death of Jesus and salvation through His blood.

The Paschal lamb was a special type of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are not left to gather this from the general fact that all the ancient sacrifices were shadows of the one true and real substance, but we are assured in the New Testament that "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Cor 5:7). As the Paschal lamb must be without blemish, so was our Lord, and its killing and roasting with fire were typical of His death and sufferings. Even as to time, our Lord fulfilled the type, for the time of His crucifixion was the Passover. As the impression answers to the seal, so does the sacrifice of our Lord correspond with all the items of the ceremonial

Passover. We see Him "drawn out" from among men, and led as a lamb to the slaughter; we see His blood shed and sprinkled; we see Him roasted in the fire of anguish; by faith we eat of Him, and flavor the feast with the bitter herbs of penitence. We see Jesus and salvation where the carnal eye sees only a slaughtered lamb, and a people saved from death.

The Spirit of God in the ceremonial Passover lays special emphasis upon *the sprinkling of the blood*. That which men so greatly oppose, He as diligently sets forth as the head and front of revelation. The blood of the chosen lamb was caught in a basin, and not spilled upon the ground in wastefulness, for the blood of Christ is most precious. Into this bowl of blood a bunch of hyssop was dipped. The sprays of that little shrub would hold the crimson drops, so that they could be easily sprinkled. Then the father of the family went outside, and struck with this hyssop the lintel and the two side posts of the door, and so the house was marked with three crimson streaks. No blood was put upon the threshold. Woe unto the man that tramples upon the blood of Christ, and treats it as an unholy thing! Alas! I fear that many are doing so at this hour, not only among the outside world, but among those who profess and call themselves Christians.

I shall endeavor to bring forward two things. First, *the importance attached to the sprinkled blood,* and secondly, *the institution connected with it,* namely, that the children should be instructed in the meaning of sacrifice, so that, they also may teach their children, and keep alive the memory of the Lord's great deliverance.

I. First: THE IMPORTANCE ATTACHED TO THE BLOOD OF SACRIFICE is here made very plain. Pains are taken to make the sacrifice observable, yes, to force it upon the notice of all the people.

I note, first, that *it became and remained the national mark*. If you had traversed the streets of Memphis or Rameses on the night of the Passover, you could have told who were Israelites and who were Egyptians by one conspicuous token. There was no need to listen under the window to hear the speech of the people within the house, nor to wait till any came into the street so that you could observe their attire. This one thing alone would be a sufficient guide—the Israelite had the blood mark upon his doorway, the Egyptian had it not. Mark you this is still the great point of difference between the children of God and the children of the wicked one. There are, in truth, but two denominations upon this earth—the church and the world; those who are justified in Christ Jesus, and those who are condemned in their sins. This shall stand for a never-failing sign of the "Israelite indeed"; he has come to the blood of sprinkling, which speaks better things than that of Abel. He that believes in the Son of God, as the one accepted sacrifice for sin, has salvation, and he that believes not in Him will die in his sins. The true Israel are trusting in the sacrifice once offered for sin; it is their rest, their comfort, their hope. As for those who are not trusting in the atoning sacrifice, they have rejected the counsel of God against themselves, and thus have declared their true character and condition. Jesus said, "You believe not, because you are not of My sheep, as I said unto you," and lack of faith in that shedding of blood, without which there is no remission of sin, is the damning mark of one who is a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel. Let us make no

question about it, "Whosoever goes onward and abides not in the teaching of Christ, has not God." (See 2 John 9 in the Revised Version). He that will not accept the propitiation which God has set forth must bear his own iniquity. Nothing more just, and yet nothing more terrible, can happen to such a man than that his iniquity should not be purged by sacrifice nor offering forever. I care not what your supposed righteousness may be, nor how you think to commend yourselves to God, if you reject His Son, He will reject *you*. If you come before God without the atoning blood, you have neither part nor lot in the matter of the covenant inheritance, and you are not numbered among the people of God. The sacrifice is the national mark of the spiritual Israel, and he that has it not is an alien; he shall have no inheritance among them that are sanctified, neither shall he behold the Lord in glory.

Secondly, as this was the national mark, *it was also the saving token*. That night the Angel of Death spread His wings on the blast, and as He flew down the streets of Egypt He smote high and low, the first-born of princes and the first-born of beasts, so that in every house and in every stall there was one dead. Where He saw the blood-mark He entered not to smite, but everywhere else the vengeance of the Lord fell on the rebellious. The words are very remarkable, "The Lord will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you." What holds back the sword? Nothing but the bloodstain on the door. The lamb has been slain, and they have sprinkled their houses with the blood, and therefore they are secure. The sons of Jacob were not richer, nor wiser, nor stronger, nor more skilled than the sons of Ham, but they were redeemed by the blood, and therefore they lived, while those who knew not the redeeming token died. When Jericho fell down, the one house that stood was that which had the scarlet line in the window, and when the Lord visits for sin, the man that shall escape is he who knows Jesus, "in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sin according to the riches of His grace."

I call your very special attention, however, to the words that are used in the twenty-third verse, "The Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the Lord will pass over the door." What an instructive expression! "When *He* sees the blood." It is a very comforting thing for you and for me to behold the atonement, for thus we gain peace and enter into rest. But, after all, the grand reason of our salvation is that the Lord Himself looks upon the atonement, and is well pleased for His righteousness' sake. In the thirteenth verse we hear the Lord Himself say, "When I see the blood I will pass over you." Think of the holy eyes of God being turned to Him that takes away the sin of the world, and so fixed on Him that He passes over us. He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, but He looks upon the face of His anointed and forgives the sin. He accepts us with our sacrifice. Well does our hymn-writer pray—

"Him and then the sinner see;
Look through Jesus' wounds on me."

It is not *our* sight of the sprinkled blood which is the basis of salvation, but *God's* sight of it. God's acceptance of Christ is the sure guarantee of the salvation of those who accept His sacrifice. Beloved; when your eye of

faith is dim, when your eyeballs swim in a flood of tears, when the darkness of sorrow hides much from your vision, then Jehovah sees the blood of His Son and spares you. In the thick darkness, when you cannot see at all, the Lord God never fails to see in Jesus that with which He is well pleased, and with which His law is honored. He will not suffer the destroyer to come near you to harm you, because He sees in Christ that which vindicates His justice and establishes the needful rule of law. The blood is the saving mark. At this moment this is the pressing question for each one in the company gathered in this house: Do you trust the divine propitiation or do you not? Bring to me what you will to prove your own personal excellence. I believe in no virtue which insults the Savior's blood, which alone cleanses us from all sin. Rather confess your multiplied transgressions and shortcomings, and then take heart and hope, for there is forgiveness large and free for the very chief of sinners, through Him who has made peace by the blood of His cross.

O my hearer, guilty and self-condemned, if you will now come and trust in Jesus Christ, your sins, which are many, shall be all forgiven you, and you shall love so much in return, that the whole bent and bias of your mind shall be turned from sin to gracious obedience. The atonement applied to the conscience saves from despair, and then acting upon the heart it saves from the love of evil. But the atonement is the saving sign. The blood on the lintel and on the two side posts secured the house of the poorest Israelite, but the proudest Egyptian, yes, even Pharaoh on the throne, could not escape the destroyer's sword. Believe and live. Reject the atonement and perish!

Note, next, that *the mark of the blood was rendered as conspicuous as possible*. The Israelites, though they ate the Paschal lamb in the quiet of their own families, yet made no secret of the sacrifice. They did not make the distinctive mark upon the wall of some inner chamber, or in some place where they could cover it with hangings, that no man might perceive it, but they smote the upper part of the doorway and the two side posts of the door, so that all who passed by the house must see that it was marked in a peculiar manner, and marked with blood. The Lord's people were not ashamed to have the blood thus put in the forefront of every dwelling, and those that are saved by the great sacrifice are not to treat the doctrine of substitution as a hole-and-corner creed, to be secretly held, but not openly avowed. The death of Jesus in our room and place and stead is not a redemption of which we are ashamed to speak in any place. Call it old-fashioned and out of date, our critics may, but we are not ashamed to publish it to the four winds of heaven, and to avow our confidence in it. He that is ashamed of Christ in this generation, of him will Christ be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father, and all His holy angels with Him. There is a theology abroad in the world which admits the death of Christ to a certain indefinable place in its system, but that place is very much in the rear; I claim for the atonement the front and the center. The Lamb must be in the midst of the throne. Atonement is not a mystery to be scarcely spoken of, or if spoken of at all, to be whispered. No, no, it is a sublime simplicity, a fact for a child to know, a truth for the common people to rejoice in! We must preach Christ crucified whatever else we do not preach. Brethren, I do not think

a man ought to hear a minister preach three sermons without learning the doctrine of atonement. I give wide latitude when I say this, for I would desire never to preach at all without setting forth salvation by faith in the blood of Jesus. Across my pulpit and my tabernacle shall be the mark of the blood, it will disgust the enemy, but it will delight the faithful. Substitution seems to me to be the soul of the gospel, the life of the gospel, the essence of the gospel, therefore must it be always in the front. Jesus, as the Lamb of God, is the Alpha, and we must keep Him first and before all others. I charge you, Christian people, do not make this a secondary doctrine. Keep your perspective right, and have this always in the foreground. Other truths are valuable, and may most worthily be placed in the distance, but this is always to be in the foreground. The center of Christianity is the cross, and the meaning of the Cross is substitution—

"We may not know, we cannot tell,
What pains our Jesus bore,
But we believe it was for us
He hung and suffered there."

The great sacrifice is the place of gathering for the chosen seed; we meet at the cross, even as every family in Israel met around the table whereon was placed the lamb, and met within a house which was marked with blood. Instead of looking upon the vicarious sacrifice as placed somewhere in the remote distance, we find in it the center of the church. No, more; it is the vital, all-essential center, that to remove it is to tear out the heart of the church. A congregation which has rejected the sacrifice of Christ is not a church, but an assembly of unbelievers. Of the church I may truly say, "The blood is the life thereof." Like the doctrine of justification by faith, the doctrine of a vicarious sacrifice is the article of standing or falling to each church; atonement by the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ means spiritual life, and the rejection of it is the reverse. Therefore, we must never be ashamed of this all-important truth, but make it as conspicuous as possible. "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."

Further, the sprinkled blood was not only most conspicuous, but *it was made very dear to the people themselves by the fact that they trusted in it in the most implicit manner*. After the doorposts had been smeared the people went inside their houses, and they shut the door, never to open it again till the morning. They were busy inside; there was the roasting of the lamb, the preparing of the bitter herbs, the girding of their loins, the getting ready for their march, and so forth, but this was done without fear of danger, though they knew that the destroyer was abroad. The command of the Lord was, "None of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning." What is going on in the street? You must not go to see. The midnight hour has come. Did you not hear it? Hark, that dreadful cry! Again a piercing shriek! What is it? The anxious mother asks, "What can it be?" "There was a great cry in Egypt." The Israelites must not heed that cry so as to break the divine word which shut them in for a little moment, till the tempest was passed. Perhaps persons of doubtful mind, during that dread night, may have said, "Something awful is happening. Hear those cries! Listen to the tramping of the people in the streets, as they hurry to and fro! It may be there is a conspiracy to

slay us in the dead of night." "None of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning" was sufficient for all who truly believed. They were safe, and they knew it, and so, like the chicks beneath the wings of the hen, they rested in safety. Beloved, let us do the same. Let us honor the precious blood of Christ not only by speaking of it boldly to others, but by a calm and happy trust in it for ourselves. In full assurance let us rest. Do you believe that Jesus died for you? Then be at peace. Let no man's heart fail him now that he knows that Jesus died for our sins according to the Scriptures. Let the cross be the pillar of our confidence, unmoved and immovable. Do not be agitated about what has been or what is to be; we are housed in safety in Christ Jesus both from the sins of the past and the dangers of the future. All is well, since love's atoning work is done. In holy peacefulness let us proceed with our household work, purging out the old leaven and keeping the feast, but let no fear or doubt disturb us for an instant. We pity those who die without Christ, but we cannot quit our Lord under the pretence of saving them; that would be folly. I know there are terrible cries outside in the streets—who has not heard them? Oh, that the people would but shelter beneath the blood-mark! It pierces our heart to think of the doom of the ungodly when they perish in their sins, but, as Noah did not quit the ark or Israel leave her abode, so our hope is not larger than the cross will warrant. All who shelter beneath the blood of the atonement are secure, and as for those who reject this great salvation, how shall they escape? There are great and sad mysteries in this long night, but in the morning we shall know as much of God's dealings with men as it will be good for us to know. Meanwhile, let us labor to bring our fellows within the pale of safety, but yet let us be ourselves peaceful, composed, restful, and joyful. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." "And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." Possess your souls in patience. Oh, rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him. Feed upon the Lamb, for His flesh is meat indeed. That same Jesus who has preserved your life from destruction will be the sustenance of that life evermore. Be happy beneath the saving blood-mark. Make a feast of your Passover. Though there is death outside, let your joy within be undisturbed.

I cannot stay long on any one point, and therefore notice, next, that *the Paschal blood shedding was to be had in perpetual remembrance*. "You shall observe this thing for an ordinance to you and to your sons forever." As long as Israel remained a people, they were to keep the Passover; as long as there is a Christian upon earth the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus must be kept in memory. No progress of years or advance of thought could take away the memory of the Paschal sacrifice from Israel. Truly it was a night to be remembered when the Lord brought out His people from under the iron yoke of Egypt. It was such a wonderful deliverance, as to the plagues which preceded it, and the miracle at the Red Sea which followed it, that no event could possibly excel it in interest and glory. It was such a triumph of God's power over the pride of Pharaoh, and such a manifestation of God's love to His own people, that they

were not merely to be glad for one night, nor for one year, nor even for a century, but they were to remember it forever. Might there not come a time when Israel would have achieved further history? Might not some grander event eclipse the glory of Egypt's overthrow? Never! The death of Egypt's first-born and the song of Moses at the Red Sea must remain forever woven into the tapestry of Hebrew history. Evermore did Jehovah say, "I am the Lord your God, which have brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." Beloved, the death of our Lord Jesus Christ is to be declared and showed by us until He comes. No truth can ever be discovered which can put His sacrificial death into the shade. Whatever shall occur, even though He comes in the clouds of heaven, yet our song shall be forever, "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood." Amid the splendor of His endless reign He shall be "the Lamb in the midst of the throne." Christ as the sacrifice for sin shall always be the subject of our hallelujahs, "For You were slain." Certain vainglorious minds are advancing—advancing from the rock to the abyss. They are making progress from truth to falsehood. They are thinking, but their thoughts are not God's thoughts, neither are their ways His ways. They are leaving the gospel, they are going away from Christ, and they know not where. In leaving the substitutionary sacrifice, they are leaving the sole hope of man. As for us, we hear the Lord saying to us, "You shall observe this thing for an ordinance to you and to your sons forever," and so we will do. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever," is our boast and glory. Let others wander where they will; we abide with Him who bore our sins in His own body on the tree.

Notice next, dear friends, that when the people came into the land where no Egyptian ever entered, they were still to remember the Passover. "It shall come to pass, when you have come to the land which the Lord will give you, according as He has promised, that you shall keep this service." In the land that flowed with milk and honey there was still to be the memorial of the sprinkled blood. Our Lord Jesus is not for the first day of our repentance only, but for all the days of our lives; we remember Him as well amid our highest spiritual joys as in our deepest spiritual griefs. The Paschal lamb is for Canaan, as well as for Egypt, and the sacrifice for sin is for our full assurance as well as for our trembling hope. You and I will never attain to such a state of grace that we can do without the blood which cleanses from sin. If we should ever reach perfection, then would Christ be even more precious than He is today, or, if we did not find Him so, we might be sure that our pretended attainment was a wretched delusion. If we walk in the light as God is in the light, and have constant fellowship with Him, yet still the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

Moreover, brethren, I want you to notice carefully that *this sprinkling of the blood was to be an all-pervading memory*. Catch this thought; the children of Israel could not go out of their houses, and they could not come in, without the remembrance of the sprinkled blood. It was over their heads; they must come under it. It was on the right hand and on the left; they must be surrounded by it. They might almost say of it, "Where shall we go from Your presence?" Whether they looked on their own doors, or on those of their neighbors, there was the same threefold

streak, and it was there both by day and by night. Nor was this all, when two of Israel married, and the foundation of a family was laid, there was another memorial. The young husband and wife had the joy of looking upon their first-born child, and then they called to mind that the Lord had said, "Sanctify to Me all the first-born." As an Israelite he explained this to his son and said, "By strength of hand the Lord brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage, and it came to pass, when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that the Lord slew all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both the first-born of man, and the first-born of beast, therefore I sacrifice to the Lord all that opens the matrix, being males, but all the first-born of my children I redeem." The commencement of every family that made up the Israelite nation was thus a time of special remembrance of the sprinkling of the blood, for then the redemption money must be paid, and thus an acknowledgment made that they were the Lord's, having been bought with a price. In many ways, and everywhere present, the people were reminded of the need of sacrifice. To the thoughtful, every going down of the sun reminded them of the night to be remembered, while the beginning of each year in the month Abib brought home to them the fact that the beginning of their nation dated from the time of the killing of the lamb. The Lord took means to keep this matter before the people, for they were wayward, and seemed bent upon forgetting, even like this present age.

In the thirteenth chapter, in verse nine, we read, "It shall be for a sign unto you upon your hand, and for a memorial between your eyes." And again, in verse sixteen, we read, "And it shall be for a token upon your hand, and for frontlets between your eyes: for by strength of hand the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt." By this is meant that they were henceforth to do everything with regard to redemption, and they were henceforth to see everything in connection with redemption. Redemption by blood was to consecrate each man's hand, so that he could not use it for evil, but must employ it for the Lord. He could not take his food, or his tool, in his hand, without remembrance of the sprinkled blood which had made his food and his labor a blessing. All his acts were to be under the influence of atoning blood. Oh, what service you and I would render if it were always redeemed labor that we gave! If we went to our Sunday school class, for instance, feeling, "I am bought with a price," and if we preached with redeemed lips the gospel of our own salvation, how livingly and lovingly we should speak! What an effect this would have on our lives! You would not dare, some of you, to do what you now do, if you remembered that Jesus died for you. Many a thing which you have left undone would at once be minded if you had a clearer consciousness of redeeming love. The Jews became superstitious, and were content with the letter of their law, and so they wrote out certain verses upon little strips of parchment called "tephillin," which they enclosed in a box, and then strapped upon their wrists. The true meaning of the passage did not lie in any such childish action, but it taught them that they were to labor and to act with holy hands, as men under overwhelming obligations to the Lord's redeeming grace. Redemption is to be our impulse for holy service, our check when we are tempted to sin. They were also to wear the memory of the Passover as frontlets between their eyes, and you

know how certain Jews actually wore phylacteries upon their foreheads. That could be no more than the mere shell of the thing; the essence of the command was that they were to look on everything in reference to redemption by blood. Brethren, we should view everything in this world by the light of redemption, and then we shall view it aright. It makes a wonderful change whether you view providence from the standpoint of human merit or from the foot of the cross. We see nothing truly till Jesus is our light. Everything is seen in its reality when you look through the glass, the ruby glass of the atoning sacrifice. Use this telescope of the cross, and you shall see far and clear; look at sinners through the cross; look at saints through the cross; look at sin through the cross; look at the world's joys and sorrows through the Cross; look at heaven and hell through the cross. See how conspicuous the blood of the Passover was meant to be, and then learn from all this to make much of the sacrifice of Jesus, yes, to make everything of it, for Christ is all.

One thing more; we read in Deuteronomy, in the sixth chapter, and the eighth verse, concerning the commandments of the Lord, as follows, "And you shall bind them for a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. And you shall write them upon the posts of your house, and on your gates." See, then, that the law is to be written hard by the memorials of the blood. In Switzerland, in the Protestant villages, you have seen texts of Scripture upon the doorposts. I half wish we had that custom in England. How much of gospel might be preached to wayfarers if texts of Scripture were over Christian people's doors! It might be ridiculed as Pharisaical, but we could get over that. Few are liable to that charge in these days through being too religious. I like to see texts of Scripture in our houses, in all the rooms, on the cornices, and on the walls, but outside on the door—what a capital advertisement the gospel might get at a cheap rate! But note, that when the Jew wrote upon His doorposts a promise, or a precept, or a doctrine, he had to write upon a surface stained with blood, and when the next year's Passover came round he had to sprinkle the blood with the hyssop right over the writing. It seems to me so delightful to think of the law of God in connection with that atoning Sacrifice which has magnified it and made it honorable. God's commands come to me as a redeemed man; His promises are to me as a blood-bought man; His teaching instructs me as one for whom atonement has been made. The law in the hand of Christ is not a sword to slay us, but a jewel to enrich us. All truth taken in connection with the cross is greatly enhanced in value. Holy Scripture itself becomes dearer to a sevenfold degree when we see that it comes to us as the redeemed of the Lord, and bears upon its every page marks of those dear hands which were nailed to the tree for us.

Beloved, you now see how everything was done that could well be thought of to bring the blood of the Paschal lamb into a high position in the esteem of the people whom the Lord brought out of Egypt, and you and I must do everything we can think of to bring forward, and keep before men forever the precious doctrine of the atoning sacrifice of Christ. He was made sin for us though He knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

II. And now I will spend a short time in reminding you of THE INSTITUTION THAT WAS CONNECTED WITH THE REMEMBRANCE OF THE PASSOVER. "It shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean you by this service? that you shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover."

Inquiry should be excited in the minds of our children. Oh, that we could get them to ask questions about the things of God! Some of them inquire very early, but others of them seem diseased with much the same indifference as older folks. With both orders of mind we have to deal. It is well to explain to children the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, for this shows forth the death of Christ in symbol. I regret that children do not more often see this ordinance. Baptism and the Lord's Supper should both be placed in view of the rising generation, that they may then ask us, "What mean you by this?" Now, the Lord's Supper is a perennial gospel sermon, and it turns mainly upon the sacrifice for sin. You may banish the doctrine of the atonement from the pulpit, but it will always live in the church through the Lord's Supper. You cannot explain that broken bread and that cup filled with the fruit of the vine, without reference to our Lord's atoning death. You cannot explain "the communion of the body of Christ" without bringing in, in some form or other, the death of Jesus in our place and stead. Let your little ones, then, see the Lord's Supper, and let them be told most clearly what it sets forth. And if not the Lord's Supper—for that is not the thing itself, but only the shadow of the glorious fact—dwell much and often in their presence upon the sufferings and death of our Redeemer. Let them think of Gethsemane, and Gabbatha, and Golgotha, and let them learn to sing in plaintive tones of Him who laid down His life for us. Tell them who it was that suffered, and why. Yes, though the hymn is hardly to my taste in some of its expressions, I would have the children sing—

"There is a green hill far away,
Without a city wall."

And I would have them learn such lines as these—

"He knew how wicked we had been,
And knew that God must punish sin;
So out of pity Jesus said,
He'd bear the punishment instead."

And when attention is excited upon the best of themes, let us be ready to explain the great transaction by which God is just, and yet sinners are justified. Children can well understand the doctrine of the expiatory sacrifice; it was meant to be a gospel for the youngest. The gospel of substitution is a simplicity, though it is a mystery. We ought not to be content until our little ones know and trust in their finished sacrifice. This is essential knowledge, and the key to all other spiritual teaching. May our dear children know the cross, and they will have begun well. With all their getting may they get an understanding of this, and they will have the foundation rightly laid.

This will necessitate your teaching the child his need of a Savior. You must not hold back from this needful task. Do not flatter the child with delusive rubbish about his nature being good and needing to be developed. Tell him he must be born again. Don't bolster him up with the fancy of his own innocence, but show him his sin. Mention the childish sins

to which he is prone, and pray the Holy Spirit to work conviction in his heart and conscience. Deal with the young in much the same way as you would with the old. Be thorough and honest with them. Flimsy religion is neither good for young nor old. These boys and girls need pardon through the precious blood as surely as any of us. Do not hesitate to tell the child his ruin; he will not otherwise desire the remedy. Tell him also of the punishment of sin, and warn him of its terror. Be tender, but be true. Do not hide from the youthful sinner the truth, however terrible it may be. Now that he has come to years of responsibility, if he believes not in Christ, it will go ill with him at the last great day. Set before him the judgment seat, and remind him that he will have to give an account of things done in the body. Labor to awake the conscience, and pray God the Holy Spirit to work by you till the heart becomes tender and the mind perceives the need of the great salvation.

Children need to learn the doctrine of the cross that they may find immediate salvation. I thank God that in our Sunday school we believe in the salvation of children as children. How very many has it been my joy to see of boys and girls who have come forward to confess their faith in Christ! And I again wish to say that the best converts, the clearest converts, the most intelligent converts we have ever had have been the young ones, and instead of there being any deficiency in their knowledge of the Word of God, and the doctrines of grace, we have usually found them to have a very delightful acquaintance with the great cardinal truths of Christ. Many of these dear children have been able to speak of the things of God with great pleasure of heart, and force of understanding. Go on, dear teachers, and believe that God will save your children. Be not content to sow principles in their minds which may possibly develop in later years, but be working for immediate conversion. Expect fruit in your children while they are children. Pray for them that they may not run into the world and fall into the evils of outward sin, and then come back with broken bones to the Good Shepherd, but that they may by God's rich grace be kept from the paths of the destroyer, and grow up in the fold of Christ, first as lambs of His flock, and then as sheep of His hand.

One thing I am sure of, and that is, that if we teach the children the doctrine of the atonement in the most unmistakable terms, we shall be doing ourselves good. I sometimes hope that God will revive His church and restore her to her ancient faith by a gracious work among children. If He would bring into our churches a large influx of young people, how it would tend to quicken the sluggish blood of the supine and sleepy! Child Christians tend to keep the house alive. Oh, for more of them! If the Lord will but help us to teach the children we shall be teaching ourselves. There is no way of learning like teaching, and you do not know a thing till you can teach it to another. You do not thoroughly know any truth till you can put it before a child so that he can see it. In trying to make a little child understand the doctrine of the atonement you will get clearer views of it yourselves, and therefore I commend the holy exercise to you.

What a mercy it will be if our children are thoroughly grounded in the doctrine of redemption by Christ! If they are warned against the false gospels of this evil age, and if they are taught to rest on the eternal rock

of Christ's finished work, we may hope to have a generation following us which will maintain the faith, and will be better than their fathers. Your Sunday schools are admirable, but what is their purpose if you do not teach the gospel in them? You get children together and keep them quiet for an hour-and-a-half, and then send them home, but what is the good of it? It may bring some quiet to their fathers and mothers, and that is, perhaps, why they send them to the school, but all the real good lies in what is taught the children. The most fundamental truth should be made most prominent, and what is this but the cross? Some talk to children about being good boys and girls, and so on, that is to say, they preach the law to the children, though they would preach the gospel to grown-up people! Is this honest? Is this wise? Children need the gospel, the whole gospel, the unadulterated gospel, they ought to have it, and if they are taught of the Spirit of God they are as capable of receiving it as persons of ripe years. Teach the little ones that Jesus died, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. Very, very confidently do I leave this work in the hands of the teachers of this school. I never knew a nobler body of Christian men and women, for they are as earnest in their attachment to the old gospel as they are eager for the winning of souls. Be encouraged, my brothers and sisters; the God who has saved so many of your children is going to save very many more of them, and we shall have great joy in this Tabernacle as we see hundreds brought to Christ. God grant it, for His name's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
EXODUS 12:21-36; 13:1-10; 14-16.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—414, 370, 281.

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NO. 1989

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

"Behold, He comes with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen."
Revelation 1:7.

IN reading the chapter we observed how the beloved John saluted the seven churches in Asia with, "Grace and peace be unto you." Blessed men scatter blessings. When the *benediction* of God rests on us we pour out benedictions upon others.

From benediction John's gracious heart rose into *adoration* of the great King of Saints. As our hymn puts it, "The holy to the holiest leads." They that are good at blessing men will be quick at blessing God.

It is a wonderful doxology which John has given us, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." I like the Revised Version for its alliteration in this case, although I cannot prefer it for other reasons. It runs thus: "Unto Him that *loves* us, and *loosed* us from our sins by His blood." Truly our Redeemer has loosed us from sin, but the mention of His blood suggests washing rather than loosing. We can keep the alliteration and yet retain the meaning of cleansing if we read the passage, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us." *Loved* us, and *washed* us; carry those two words home with you, let them lie upon your tongue to sweeten your breath for prayer and praise. "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us, be glory and dominion forever and ever."

Then John tells of the dignity which the Lord has put upon us in making us kings and priests, and from this he ascribes royalty and dominion unto the Lord Himself. John had been extolling the Great King, whom he calls, "The Prince of the kings of the earth." Such indeed He was, and is, and is to be. When John had touched upon that royalty which is natural to our divine Lord, and that dominion which has come to Him by conquest, and by the gift of the Father as the reward of all His travail, he then went on to note that He has "made us kings." Our Lord's royalty He diffuses among His redeemed. We praise Him because He is in Himself a king, and next, because He is a king-maker, the fountain of honor and majesty. He has not only enough of royalty for Himself, but He hands a measure of His dignity to His people. He makes kings out of such common stuff as He finds in us poor sinners. Shall we not adore Him for this? Shall we not cast our crowns at His feet? He gave our crowns to us;

shall we not give them to Him? "To Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." King by Your divine nature! King by filial right! King-maker, lifting up the beggar from the dunghill to set him among princes! King of kings by the unanimous love of all Your crowned ones! You are He whom Your brethren shall praise! Reign forever and ever! Unto You be hosannas of welcome and hallelujahs of praise. Lord of the earth and heaven, let all things that be, or ever shall be, render unto You all glory in the highest degree. Brethren, do not your souls take fire as you think of the praises of Immanuel? Gladly would I fill the universe with His praise. Oh for a thousand tongues to sing the glories of the Lord Jesus! If the Spirit who dictated the words of John has taken possession of our spirits, we shall find adoration to be our highest delight. Never are we so near to heaven as when we are absorbed in the worship of Jesus, our Lord and God. Oh, that I could now adore Him as I shall do when, delivered from this encumbering body, my soul shall behold Him in the fullness of His glory!

It would seem from the chapter that the adoration of John was increased by his *expectation* of the Lord's second coming, for He cries, "Behold, He comes with clouds." His adoration awoke his expectation, which all the while was lying in his soul as an element of that vehement heat of reverent love which he poured forth in his doxology. "Behold, He comes," he said, and thus he revealed one source of his reverence. "Behold, He comes," he said, and this exclamation was the result of his reverence. He adored until his faith realized his Lord, and became a second and nobler sight.

I think, too, that his reverence was deepened and his adoration was rendered more fervent by his conviction of the speediness of his Lord's coming. "Behold, He comes," or is coming; he means to assert that He is even now on His way. As workmen are moved to be more diligent in service when they hear their master's footsteps, so, doubtless, saints are quickened in their devotion when they are conscious that He whom they worship is drawing near. He has gone away to the Father for a while, and so He has left us alone in this world, but He has said, "I will come again and receive you unto Myself," and we are confident that He will keep His word. Sweet is the remembrance of that loving promise. That assurance is pouring its savor into John's heart while he is adoring, and it becomes inevitable, as well as most fit and proper, that his doxology should at its close introduce him to the Lord Himself, and cause him to cry out, "Behold, He comes." Having worshipped among the pure in heart, he sees the Lord; having adored the King, he sees Him assume the judgement seat, and appear in the clouds of heaven. When once we enter upon heavenly things we know not how far we can go, nor how high we can climb. John who began with blessing the churches now beholds His Lord.

May the Holy Spirit help us reverently to think of the wondrous coming of our blessed Lord, when He shall appear to the delight of His people and the dismay of the ungodly!

There are three things in the text. They will seem commonplace to some of you, and indeed, they are the commonplace of our divine faith, and yet nothing can be of greater importance. The first is, *our Lord Jesus comes;* "Behold He comes with clouds." The second is, *our Lord Jesus Christ's coming will be seen of all,* "Every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him." And in the third place, *this coming will cause great sorrow*, "All kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him."

I. May the Holy Spirit help us while, in the first place, we remember that OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST COMES!

This announcement is thought worthy of a note of admiration. As the Latins would say, there is an *"Ecce"* placed here—*"Behold,* He comes." As in the old books the printers put hands in the margin pointing to special passages, such is this "behold!" It is a *Nota Bene* calling upon us to note well what we are reading. Here is something which we are to *hold* and *behold*. We now hear a voice crying, "Come and see!" The Holy Spirit never uses superfluous words, or redundant notes of exclamation; when He cries, "Behold!" it is because there is reason for deep and lasting attention. Will you turn away when He bids you pause and ponder, linger and look? Oh, you that have been beholding vanity, come and behold the fact that Jesus comes. You that have been beholding this, and beholding that, and thinking of nothing worthy of your thoughts, forget these passing sights and spectacles, and for once behold a scene which has no parallel.

It is not a monarch in her jubilee, but the King of kings in His glory. That same Jesus who went up from Olivet into heaven is coming again to earth in like manner as His disciples saw Him go up into heaven. Come and behold this great sight. If ever there was a thing in the world worth looking at, it is this. Behold and see if there was ever glory like unto His glory! Hearken to the midnight cry, "Behold, the Bridegroom comes!" It has practically to do with you. "Go you forth to meet Him." This voice is to you, O sons of men. Do not carelessly turn aside, for the Lord God Himself demands your attention; He commands you to "Behold!" Will you be blind when God bids you behold? Will you shut your eyes when your Savior cries, "Behold"? When the finger of inspiration points the way, will not your eyes follow where it directs you? "Behold, He comes." O my hearers, look here, I beseech you.

If we read the words of our text carefully, this "Behold" shows us first, that *this coming is to be vividly realized*. I think I see John. He is in the spirit, but all of a sudden he seems startled into a keener and more solemn attention. His mind is more awake than usual, though he was always a man of bright eyes that saw afar. We always liken him to the eagle for the height of his flight and the keenness of his vision, yet all of a sudden, even he seems startled with a more astounding vision! He cries out, "Behold! Behold!" He has caught sight of His Lord. He says not, "He will come by and by," but, "I can see Him; He is now coming." He has evidently realized the Second Advent. He has so conceived of the second coming of the Lord that it has become a matter of fact to Him; a matter to be spoken of, and even to be written down. "Behold, He comes!" Have you

and I ever realized the coming of Christ so fully as this? Perhaps we believe that He will come. I should hope that we all do *that*. If we believe that the Lord Jesus has come the first time, we believe also that He will come the second time, but are these equally assured truths to us? Perhaps we have vividly realized the first appearing; from Bethlehem to Golgotha, and from Calvary to Olivet we have traced the Lord, understanding that blessed cry, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world!" Yes, the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. But have we with equal firmness grasped the thought that He comes again without a sin-offering unto salvation? Do we now say to each other, as we meet in happy fellowship, "Yes, our Lord comes"? It should be to us not only a prophecy assuredly believed among us, but a scene pictured in our souls, and anticipated in our hearts. My imagination has often set forth that dread scene, but better still, my faith has realized it. I have heard the chariot wheels of the Lord's approach, and I have endeavored to set my house in order for His reception. I have felt the shadow of that great cloud which shall attend Him, dampening the ardor of my worldliness. I hear even now in spirit the sound of the last trumpet, whose tremendous blast startles my soul to serious action, and puts force into my life. Would God that I lived more completely under the influence of that august event!

Brothers and Sisters, to this realization I invite you. I wish that we could go together in this, until as we went out of the house we said to one another, "Behold, He comes!" One said to his fellow, after the Lord had risen, "The Lord has risen indeed." I want you tonight to feel just as certain that the Lord is coming indeed, and I would have you say as much to one another. We are sure that He will come, and that He is on the way, but the benefit of a more vivid realization would be incalculable.

This coming is to be zealously proclaimed, for John does not merely calmly say, "He comes," but he vigorously cries, "Behold, He comes." Just as the herald of a king, prefaces his message by a trumpet blast that calls attention, so John cries, "Behold!" As the old town crier, was known to say, "O yes! O yes! O yes!" or to use some other striking formula by which he called upon men to note his announcement, so John stands in the midst of us, and cries, "Behold, He comes!" He calls attention by that emphatic word "Behold!" It is no ordinary message that he brings, and he would not have us treat his word as a commonplace saying. He throws his heart into the announcement. He proclaims it loudly, he proclaims it solemnly, and He proclaims it with authority, "Behold, He comes."

Brethren, no truth ought to be more frequently proclaimed, next to the first coming of the Lord, than His second coming, and you cannot thoroughly set forth all the ends and bearings of the first advent if you forget the second. At the Lord's Supper, there is no discerning the Lord's body unless you discern His first coming, but there is no drinking of His cup to its fullness, unless you hear Him say, "Until I come." You must look forward, as well as backward. So must it be with all our ministries; they must look to Him on the cross and on the throne. We must vividly realize

that He, who has once come, is coming yet again, or else our testimony will be marred, and one-sided. We shall make lame work of preaching and teaching if we leave out either advent.

And next, *it is to be unquestionably asserted*. "Behold, He comes." It is not, "Perhaps He will come," nor, "Perhaps He may yet appear." "Behold, He comes" should be dogmatically asserted as an absolute certainty, which has been realized by the heart of the man who proclaims it. "Behold, He comes." All the prophets say that He will come. From Enoch down to the last that spoke by inspiration, they declare, "The Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints." You shall not find one who has spoken by the authority of God, who does not, either directly or by implication, assert the coming of the Son of man, when the multitudes born of woman shall be summoned to His bar, to receive the recompense of their deeds. All the promises are travailing with this prognostication, "Behold, He comes." We have His own word for it, and this makes assurance doubly sure. He has told us that He will come again. He often assured His disciples that if He went away from them, He would come again to them, and He left us the Lord's Supper as a parting token to be observed until He comes. As often as we break bread we are reminded of the fact that, though it is a most blessed ordinance, yet it is a temporary one, and will cease to be celebrated when our absent Lord is once again present with us.

What, dear brethren, is there to hinder Christ from coming? When I have studied and thought over this word, "Behold, He comes," yes, I have said to myself, indeed He does; who shall hold Him back? His heart is with His church on earth. In the place where He fought the battle He desires to celebrate the victory. His delights are with the sons of men. All His saints are waiting for the day of His appearing, and He is waiting also. The very earth in her sorrow and her groaning travails for His coming, which is to be her redemption. The creation is made subject to vanity for a little while; but when the Lord shall come again the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. We might question whether He would come a second time if He had not already come the first time, but if He came to Bethlehem, be assured that His feet shall yet stand upon Olivet. If He came to die, doubt not that He will come to reign. If He came to be despised and rejected of men, why should we doubt that He will come to be admired in all them that believe? His sure coming is to be unquestionably asserted.

Dear friends, this fact that He will come again, *is to be taught as demanding our immediate interest*. "Behold, He comes with clouds." Behold, look at it; meditate on it. It is worth thinking of. It concerns yourself. Study it again and again. "He comes." He will so soon be here that it is put in the present tense, "He comes." That shaking of the earth, that blotting out of sun and moon, that fleeing of heaven and earth before His face—all these are so nearly here that John describes them as accomplished. "Behold, He comes."

There is this sense lying in the background—that *He is already on the way*. All that He is doing in providence and grace is a preparation for His coming. All the events of human history, all the great decisions of His august majesty whereby He rules all things—all these are tending towards the day of His appearing. Do not think that He delays His coming, and then all of a sudden He will rush here in hot haste. He has arranged for it to take place as soon as wisdom allows. We know not what may make the present delay imperative, but the Lord knows, and that suffices. You grow uneasy because nearly two thousand years have passed since His ascension, and Jesus has not yet come, but you do not know what had to be arranged for, and how far the lapse of time was absolutely necessary for the Lord's designs. Those are no little matters which have filled up the great pause; the intervening centuries have teemed with wonders. A thousand things may have been necessary in heaven itself before the consummation of all things could be arrived at. When our Lord comes it shall be seen that He came as quickly as He could, speaking after the manner of His infinite wisdom, for He cannot behave Himself otherwise than wisely, perfectly, divinely. He cannot be moved by fear or passion so as to act hastily as you and I too often do. He dwells in the leisure of eternity, and in the serenity of omnipotence. He has not to measure out days, and months, and years, and to accomplish so much in such a space or else leave His lifework undone, but according to the power of an endless life He proceeds steadily on, and to Him a thousand years are but as one day. Therefore be assured that the Lord is even now coming. He is making everything tend that way. All things are working towards that grand climax. At this moment, and every moment since He went away, the Lord Jesus has been coming back again. "Behold, He comes!" He is on the way! He is nearer every hour!

And we are told that *His coming will be attended by a peculiar sign*. "Behold, He comes *with clouds."* We shall have no need to question whether it is the Son of man who has come, or whether He is indeed come. This is to be no secret matter; His coming will be as manifest as yonder clouds. In the wilderness the presence of Jehovah was known by a visible pillar of cloud by day, and an equally visible pillar of fire by night. That pillar of cloud was the sure token that the Lord was in His holy place, dwelling between the cherubim. Such is the token of the coming of the Lord Christ—

"Every eye the cloud shall scan,
Ensign of the Son of man."

So it is written, "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." I cannot quote at this time all those many passages of Scripture in which it is indicated that our Lord will come either sitting upon a cloud, or "with the clouds," or "with the clouds of heaven," but such expressions are abundant. Is it not to show that His coming will be *majestic?* He makes the clouds His chariots. He comes with hosts of attendants, and these of a nobler sort than earthly monarchs can summon to do them

homage. With clouds of angels, cherubim and seraphim, and all the armies of heaven He comes. With all the forces of nature, thundercloud and blackness of tempest, the Lord of all makes His triumphant entrance to judge the world. The clouds are the dust of His feet in that dread day of battle when He shall ease Him of His adversaries, shaking them out of the earth with His thunder, and consuming them with the devouring flame of His lightning. All heaven shall gather with its utmost pomp to the great appearing of the Lord, and all the terrible grandeur of nature shall then be seen at its full. Not as the Man of sorrows, despised and rejected of men, shall Jesus come, but as Jehovah came upon Sinai in the midst of thick clouds and a terrible darkness, so shall He come, whose coming shall be the final judgment.

The clouds are meant to set forth the *might,* as well as the majesty, of His coming. "Ascribe you strength unto God: His excellency is over Israel, and His strength is in the clouds." This was the royal token given by Daniel the prophet in his seventh chapter, at the thirteenth verse, "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven." Not less than divine is the glory of the Son of God, who once had not where to lay His head. The most sublime objects in nature shall most fitly minister to the manifest glory of the returning King of men. "Behold, He comes," not with the swaddling bands of His infancy, the weariness of His manhood, the shame of His death, but with all the glorious tapestry of heaven's high chambers. The hanging of the divine throne room shall aid His state.

The clouds, also, denote *the terror of His coming to the ungodly*. His saints shall be caught up together with Him in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, but to those that shall remain on earth the clouds shall turn their blackness and horror of darkness. Then shall the impenitent behold this dread vision—the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven. The clouds shall fill them with dread, and the dread shall be abundantly justified, for those clouds are big with vengeance, and shall burst in judgment on their heads. His great white throne, though it is bright and lustrous with hope to His people, will with its very brightness and whiteness of immaculate justice strike dead the hopes of all those who trusted that they might live in sin and yet go unpunished. "Behold, He comes. He comes with clouds."

I am in happy circumstances tonight, because my subject requires no effort of imagination from me. To indulge fancy on such a theme would be a wretched profanation of so sublime a subject, which in its own simplicity should come home to all hearts. Think clearly for a moment, till the meaning becomes real to you. Jesus Christ is coming, coming in unknown splendor. When He comes He will be enthroned far above the attacks of His enemies, the persecutions of the godless, and the sneers of skeptics. He is coming in the clouds of heaven, and we shall be among the witnesses of His appearing. Let us dwell upon this truth.

II. Our second observation is this; OUR LORD'S COMING WILL BE SEEN BY ALL. "Behold, He comes with clouds, *and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him*."

I gather from this expression, first, that *it will be a literal appearing, and an actual sight*. If the Second Advent was to be a spiritual manifestation, to be perceived by the minds of men, the phraseology would be, "Every mind shall perceive Him." But it is not so; we read, "Every eye shall see Him." Now, the mind can behold the spiritual, but the eye can only see that which is distinctly material and visible. The Lord Jesus Christ will not come spiritually, for in that sense He is always here, but He will come really and substantially, for every eye shall see Him, even those unspiritual eyes which gazed on Him with hate, and pierced Him. Go not away and dream, and say to yourself, "Oh, there is some spiritual meaning about all this." Do not destroy the teaching of the Holy Spirit by the idea that there will be a spiritual manifestation of the Christ of God, but that a literal appearing is out of the question. That would be altering the record. The Lord Jesus shall come to earth a second time as literally as He has come a first time. The same Christ who ate a piece of a broiled fish and of a honeycomb after He had risen from the dead, the same who said, "Handle Me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see Me have"—this same Jesus, with a material body, is to come in the clouds of heaven. In the same manner as He went up He shall come down. He shall be literally seen. The words cannot be honestly read in any other way.

"Every eye shall see Him." Yes, I do literally expect to see my Lord Jesus with these eyes of mine, even as that saint expected who long ago fell asleep, believing that though the worms devoured his body, yet in his flesh he would see God, whom his eyes should see for himself, and not another. There will be a real resurrection of the body, though the moderns doubt it; such a resurrection that we shall see Jesus with our own eyes. We shall not find ourselves in a shadowy, dreamy land of floating fictions, where we may perceive, but cannot see. We shall not be airy nothings, mysterious, vague, impalpable, but we shall literally see our glorious Lord, whose appearing will be no phantom show, or shadow dance. Never day more real than the day of judgement; never sight more true than the Son of man upon the throne of His glory. Will you take this statement home, that you may feel the force of it? We are getting too far away from facts nowadays, and too much into the realm of myths and notions. "Every eye shall see Him," in this there shall be no delusion.

Note well that *He is to be seen of all kinds of living men;* every eye shall see Him; the king and the peasant, the most learned and the most ignorant. Those that were blind before shall see when He appears. I remember a man born blind who loved our Lord most intensely, and he was known to glory in this, that his eyes had been reserved for his Lord. He said, "The first whom I shall ever see will be the Lord Jesus Christ. The first sight that greets my newly-opened eyes will be the Son of man in His glory." There is great comfort in this to all who are now unable to behold the sun. Since "every eye shall see Him," you also shall see the King in His beauty. Small pleasure is this to eyes that are full of filthiness and pride; you care not for this sight, and yet you must see it whether you please or do not please. You have up to now shut your eyes to good

things, but when Jesus comes you *must* see Him. All that dwell upon the face of the earth, if not at the same moment, yet with the same certainty, shall behold the once crucified Lord. They will not be able to hide themselves, nor to hide Him from their eyes. They will dread the sight, but it will come upon them, even as the sun shines on the thief who delights in the darkness. They will be obliged to own in dismay that they behold the Son of man; they will be so overwhelmed with the sight that there will be no denying it.

He will be seen of those who have been long since dead. What a sight that will be for Judas, and for Pilate, and for Caiaphas, and for Herod! What a sight it will be for those who, in their lifetime, said that there was no Savior, and no need of one, or that Jesus was a mere man, and that His blood was not a propitiation for sin! Those that scoffed and reviled Him have long since died, but they shall all rise again, and rise to this heritage among the rest—that they shall see Him whom they blasphemed sitting in the clouds of heaven. Prisoners are troubled at the sight of the judge. The trumpet of assize brings no music to the ears of criminals. But you must hear it, O impenitent sinner! Even in your grave you must hear the voice of the Son of God, and live, and come forth from the tomb, to receive the things done in your body, whether they were good or bad. Death cannot hide you, nor the vault conceal you, nor rottenness and corruption deliver you. You are bound to see in your body the Lord who will judge both you and your fellows.

It is mentioned here that *He will especially be seen by those that pierced Him*. In this is included all the company that nailed Him to the tree, with those that took the spear and made the gash in His side; indeed, all that had a hand in His cruel crucifixion. It includes all of these, but it comprehends many more besides. "They also who pierced Him" are by no means a few. Who have pierced Him? Why those that once professed to love Him, and have gone back to the world. Those who once ran well, "What hindered them?" And now they use their tongues to speak against the Christ whom once they professed to love. They also have pierced Him whose inconsistent lives have brought dishonor upon the sacred name of Jesus. They also have pierced Him, who refused His love, stifled their consciences, and refused His rebukes. Alas, that so many of you should be piercing Him now by your base neglect of His salvation! They that went every Sunday to hear of Him, and that remained hearers only, destroying their own souls rather than yield to His infinite love; these pierced His tender heart. Dear hearers, I wish I could plead effectually with you tonight, so that you would not continue any longer among the number of those that pierced Him. If you will look at Jesus now, and mourn for your sin, He will put your sin away, and then you will not be ashamed to see Him in that day. Even though you did pierce Him, you will be able to sing, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood." But, remember, if you persevere in piercing Him, and fighting against Him, you will still have to see Him in that day, to your terror and despair. He will be seen by you and by me, however evil we may behave. And what horror will that sight cost us!

I felt unfit to preach to you tonight, but last Lord's Day I said that I would preach tonight if I could possibly manage it. It seemed barely possible, but I could not do less than keep my word, and I also longed to be with you, for your sakes, for perhaps there may not remain many more occasions on which I shall be permitted to preach the gospel among you. I am often ill; who knows how soon I shall come to my end? I would use all that remains to me of physical strength and providential opportunity. We never know how soon we may be cut off, and then we are gone forever from the opportunity of benefiting our fellow men. It would be a pity to be taken away with one opportunity of doing good unused. So would I earnestly plead with you under the shadow of this great truth; I would urge you to make ready, since we shall both behold the Lord in the day of His appearing. Yes, I shall stand in that great throng. You also will be there. How will you feel? You are not accustomed, perhaps, to attend a place of worship, but you will be there, and the spot will be very solemn to you. You may absent yourself from the assemblies of the saints, but you will not be able to absent yourself from the gathering of that day. You will be there, one in that great multitude, and you will see Jesus the Lord as truly as if you were the only person before Him, and He will look upon you as certainly as if you were the only one that was summoned to His bar.

Will you kindly think of all this as I close this second head? Silently repeat to yourself the words, "Every eye shall see Him, and they also that pierced Him."

III. And now I must close with the third head, which is a painful one, but needs to be enlarged upon; HIS COMING WILL CAUSE GREAT SORROW. What does the text say about His coming? "All kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him."

"All kindreds of the earth." Then *this sorrow will be very general*. You thought, perhaps, that when Christ came, He would come to a glad world, welcoming Him with song and music. You thought that there might be a few ungodly persons who would be destroyed with the breath of His mouth, but that the bulk of mankind would receive Him with delight. See how different—"All kindreds of the earth," that is, all sorts of men that belong to the earth, all earth-born men, men out of all nations and kindreds and tongues shall weep and wail, and gnash their teeth at His coming. O sirs, this is a sad outlook! We have no smooth things to prophesy. What do you think of this?

And next, *this sorrow will be very great*. They shall *"wail."* I cannot put into English the full meaning of that most expressive word. Sound it at length, and it conveys its own meaning. It is as when men wring their hands and burst out into a loud cry, or as when eastern women, in their anguish, tear their garments, and lift up their voices with the most mournful notes. All the kindreds of the earth shall wail; wail as a mother laments over her dead child; wail as a man might wail who found himself hopelessly imprisoned and doomed to die. Such will be the hopeless grief of all the kindreds of the earth at the sight of Christ in the clouds; if they remain impenitent, they shall not be able to be silent, they shall not be

able to repress or conceal their anguish, but they shall wail, or openly give vent to their horror. What a sound that will be which will go up before high heaven when Jesus sits upon the cloud, and in the fullness of His power summons them to judgment! Then "they shall wail because of Him."

Will your voice be heard in that wailing? Will your heart be breaking in that general dismay? How will you escape? If you are one of the kindreds of the earth, and remain impenitent, you will wail with the rest of them. Unless you now fly to Christ, and hide yourself in Him, and so become one of the kindred of heaven—one of His chosen and blood-washed ones—who shall praise His name for washing them from their sins—unless you do this, there will be wailing at the judgment seat of Christ, and you will be in it.

Then it is quite clear that men will not be universally converted when Christ comes; because, if they were so, they would not wail. Then they would lift up the cry, "Welcome, welcome, Son of God!" The coming of Christ would be as the hymn puts it—

"Hark, those bursts of acclamation!
Hark, those loud triumphant chords!
Jesus takes the highest station.
Oh, what joy the sight affords!"

These acclamations come from His people. But according to the text the multitude of mankind will weep and wail, and therefore they will not be among His people. Do not, therefore, look for salvation to some coming day, but believe in Jesus now, and find in Him your Savior at once. If you joy in Him now, you shall much more rejoice in Him in that day, but if you will have cause to wail at His coming, it will be well to wail at once.

Note one more truth. It is quite certain that when Jesus comes in those latter days *men will not be expecting great things of Him.* You know the talk they have nowadays about "a larger hope." Today they deceive the people with the idle dream of repentance and restoration after death, a fiction unsupported by the least tittle of Scripture. If these kindreds of the earth, expected that when Christ would come they would all die out and cease to be, they would rejoice that thereby they escaped the wrath of God. Would not each unbeliever say, "It was a consummation devoutly to be wished"? If they thought that at His coming there would be a universal restoration and a general jail delivery of souls long shut up in prison, would they wail? If Jesus could be supposed to come to proclaim a general restoration they would not wail, but shout for joy. Ah, no! It is because His coming to the impenitent is black with blank despair that they will wail because of Him. If His first coming does not give you eternal life, His second coming will not. If you do not hide in His wounds when He comes as your Savior, there will be no hiding place for you when He comes as your Judge. They will weep and wail because, having rejected the Lord Jesus, they have turned their backs on the last possibility of hope.

Why do they wail *because of Him?* Will it not be because they will see Him in His glory, and they will recollect that they slighted and despised Him? They will see Him come to judge them, and they will remember that

once He stood at their door with mercy in His hands and said, "Open to Me," but they would not admit Him. They refused His blood; they refused His righteousness; they trifled with His sacred name, and now they must give an account for this wickedness. They put Him away in scorn, and now, when He comes, they find that they can trifle with Him no longer. The days of child's play and of foolish delays are over, and now they have solemnly to give in their life's account. See, the books are opened! They are covered with dismay as they remember their sins, and know that they are written down by a faithful pen. They must give an account, and unwashed and unforgiven they cannot render that account without knowing that the sentence will be, "Depart, you cursed." This is why they weep and wail because of Him.

O souls, my natural love of ease makes me wish that I could preach pleasant things to you, but they are not in my commission. I need scarcely wish, however, to preach a soft gospel, for so many are already doing it to your cost. As I love your immortal souls, I dare not flatter you. As I shall have to answer for it in the last great day, I must tell you the truth—

"You sinners seek His face
Whose wrath you cannot bear."

Seek the mercy of God tonight. I have come here in pain to implore you to be reconciled to God. "Kiss the Son lest He be angry, and you perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him."

But if you will not have my Lord Jesus, He comes all the same for that. He is on the road now, and when He comes you will wail because of Him. Oh that you would make Him your friend, and then meet Him with joy! Why will you die? He gives life to all those who trust Him. Believe and live.

God save your souls tonight, and He shall have the glory. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—REVELATION 1.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—360, 346, 364.

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

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A SERMON FOR THE TIME PRESENT
NO. 1990

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 30, 1887,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear you not: and to Zion, Let not your hands be slack. The Lord your God in the midst of you is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over you with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over you with singing. I will gather them that are sorrowful over the solemn assembly, who are of you, to whom the reproach of it was a burden." Zephaniah 3:16-18.

HOLY Scripture is wonderfully full and abiding in its inner sense. It is a springing well, where you may draw and draw again, for as you draw, it springs up forever new and fresh. It is a well of water springing up everlastingly. The fulfillment of a divine promise is not the exhaustion of it. When a man gives you a promise, and he keeps it, there is an end of the promise, but it is not so with God. When He keeps His word to the full, He has but begun; He is prepared to keep it, and keep it, and keep it forever and ever. What would you say of a man who had wheat upon his barn floor, and threshed it until he had beaten out the last golden grain, but the next day he went and threshed again, and brought back as much as the day before, and on the day after, again taking his flail, he went to the same threshing, and again brought back his measure as full as at the first, and so on for all the days of the year? Would it not seem to you as a fairy tale? It would certainly be a surprising miracle. But what should we say if, throughout a long life, this miracle could be prolonged? Yet we have continued to thresh the promises ever since faith was given us, and we have carried away our full portion every day. What shall we say of the glorious fact that the saints in all generations, from the first day until now, have done the same, and of that equal truth, that as long as there is a needy soul upon earth, there will be upon the threshing floor of the promises the same abundance of the finest of the wheat as when the first man filled his measure and returned rejoicing? I will not dwell upon the specific application of the text before us; I do not doubt that it was specially fulfilled as it was intended, and if there still remains some special piece of history to which this passage alludes, it will again be fulfilled in due time, but this I know, that those who have lived between whiles have found this promise true to them. Children of God have used these promises under all sorts of circumstances, and have derived the utmost comfort from them, and this morning I feel as if the text had been newly written for the present occasion, for it is in every syllable most suitable to the immediate crisis. If the Lord had fixed His eyes upon

the condition of His church just now, and had written this passage only for this year of grace 1887, it could scarcely have been more adapted to the occasion. Our business shall be to show this, but I would aim at much more. Let our prayer be that we may enjoy this marvelous portion of the sacred word, and take intense delight in it. As God rests in His love, so may we rest in it this morning, and as He joys over us with singing, so may we break forth into joyous psalms to the God of our salvation.

I am going to begin with the last verse of the text, and work my way upwards. The first head is, *a trying day for God's people*. They are sorrowful because a cloud is upon their solemn assembly, and the reproach thereof is a burden. Secondly, we will note *a glorious ground of consolation*. We read in the seventeenth verse, "The Lord your God in the midst of you is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over you with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over you with singing." And thirdly, here is *a brave conduct suggested thereby,* "In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear you not: and to Zion, Let not your hands be slack."

I. Beginning at the eighteenth verse, we notice A TRYING DAY FOR GOD'S PEOPLE. *The solemn assembly had fallen under reproach*. The solemn assemblies of Israel were her glory; her great days of festival and sacrifice were the gladness of the land. To the faithful their holy days were their holidays. But a reproach had fallen upon the solemn assembly, and I believe it is so now at this present moment. It is a sad affliction when in our solemn assemblies *the brilliance of the gospel light is dimmed by error*. The clearness of the testimony is spoiled when doubtful voices are scattered among the people, and those who ought to preach the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, are telling out for doctrines the imaginations of men, and the inventions of the age. Instead of revelation, we have philosophy, falsely so-called; instead of divine infallibility, we have surmises and larger hopes. The gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the same yesterday, today, and forever, is taught as the production of progress, a growth, a thing to be amended and corrected year by year. It is an ill day, both for the church and the world, when the trumpet does not give a certain sound, for who shall prepare himself for the battle?

If added to this we should see *creeping over the solemn assembly of the church a lifelessness, an indifference, and a lack of spiritual power,* it is painful to a high degree. When the vitality of religion is despised, and gatherings for prayer are neglected, what are we coming to? The present period of church history is well portrayed by the church of Laodicea, which was neither cold nor hot, and therefore to be spewed out of Christ's mouth. That church gloried that she was rich and increased in goods, and had need of nothing; while all the while her Lord was outside, knocking at the door, a door closed against Him. That passage is constantly applied to the unconverted, with whom it has nothing to do; it has to do with a lukewarm church, with a church that thought itself to be in an eminently prosperous condition, while her living Lord, in the doctrine of His atoning sacrifice, was denied an entrance. Oh, if He had

found admission—and He was eager to find it—she would soon have flung away her imaginary wealth, and He would have given her gold tried in the furnace, and white raiment with which she might be clothed. Alas! She is content without her Lord, for she has education, oratory, science, and a thousand other baubles. Zion's solemn assembly is under a cloud indeed, when the teaching of Jesus and His apostles is of small account with her.

If in addition to this, *worldly conformity spreads in the church,* so that the vain amusements of the world are shared in by the saints; then is there reason enough for lamentation, even as Jeremiah cried, "How is the gold become dim!" Her Nazarites, who were purer than snow and whiter than milk, have become blacker than a coal. "All our enemies have opened their mouths against us." If there is no longer a clear distinction between the church and the world, but professed followers of Jesus have joined hands with unbelievers, then may we mourn indeed! Woe worth the day! An ill time has happened to the church and to the world also. We may expect great judgments, for the Lord will surely be avenged on such a people as this. Know you not of old that when the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and they were joined unto them, then the flood came and swept them all away? I need not pursue this subject further, lest our burdens take from us the time which is demanded for consolation.

It appears from the text that *there were some to whom the reproach was a burden*. They could not make sport of sin. True, there were many who said that the evil did not exist at all, and others who declared that it was not present in any great degree. Yes, and more hardened spirits declared that what was considered to be a reproach was really a thing to be boasted of, the very glory of the century. Thus they huffed the matter, and made the mourning of the conscientious to be a theme for jest. But there was a remnant to whom the reproach of it was a burden; these could not bear to see such a calamity. To these the Lord God will have respect, as He said by the prophet—"Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that are done in the midst thereof." The many drank wine in bowls and anointed themselves with their chief ointments, but they were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph (Amos 6:6), but some were pressed in spirit and bore the cross, counting the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. God's people cannot bear that Christ's atoning sacrifice should be dishonored; they cannot endure that His truth should be trodden as mire in the streets. To true believers prosperity means the Holy Spirit blessing the word to the conversion of sinners and the building up of saints, and if they do not see this, they hang their harps upon the willows. True lovers of Jesus fast when the Bridegroom is not with His church; their glory is in His glory, and in nothing else. The wife of Phinehas, the son of Eli, cried out in her dying agony, "The glory has departed," and the reason that she gave was once because of the death of her husband and his father, but twice because "the ark of God is taken."

For this she named her new-born child Ichabod—"The glory is departed from Israel, for the ark of God is taken." The bitterest pain of this godly woman was for the church, and for the honor of our God. So it is with God's true people; they lay it much to heart that the truth is rejected.

This burdened spirit is a token of true love to God; those who love the Lord Jesus are wounded in His woundings, and vexed with the vexings of His Spirit. When Christ is dishonored His disciples are dishonored. Those who have a tender heart towards the church can say with Paul, "Who is offended, and I burn not?" The sins of the church of God are the sorrows of all living members of it. This also marks a healthy sensibility, a vital spirituality. Those who are unspiritual care nothing for truth or grace; they look to finances, and numbers, and respectability. Utterly carnal men care for none of these things, and so long as the political aims of Dissenters are progressing, and there is an advance in social position, it is enough for them. But men whose spirits are of God would sooner see the faithful persecuted than see them desert the truth, sooner see churches in the depths of poverty full of holy zeal than rich churches dead in worldliness. Spiritual men care for the church even when she is in an evil case, and cast down by her adversaries, "Your servants take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof." The house of the Lord is to many of us our own house, His family is our family. Unless the Lord Jesus is extolled, and His gospel conquers, we feel that our own personal interests are blighted, and we ourselves are in disgrace. It is no small thing to us; it is our life.

Thus have I dwelt upon the fact that it is an ill day for God's people when the solemn assembly is defiled; the reproach thereof is a burden to those who are truly citizens of the New Jerusalem, and because of this *they are seen to be sorrowful*. The Lord here says, "I will gather them that are sorrowful over the solemn assembly." They may well be sorrowful when such a burden is laid on their hearts. Moreover, they see in a hundred ways the ill effect of the evil which they deplore. Many are lame and halting, this is hinted at in the promise of the nineteenth verse, "I will save her that halts." Pilgrims on the road to Zion were made to limp on the road because the prophets were "light and treacherous persons." When the pure gospel is not preached, God's people are robbed of the strength which they need in their life journey. If you take away the bread, the children hunger. If you give the flock poisonous pastures, or fields which are barren as the desert, they pine and they become lame in their daily following of the shepherd. The doctrinal soon affects the practical. I know many of the people of God living in different parts of this country to whom the Sabbath is very little of a day of rest, for they hear no truth in which rest is to be found, but they are worried and wearied with novelties which neither glorify God nor benefit the souls of men. In many a place the sheep look up and are not fed. This causes much disquietude and breeds doubts and questions, and thus strength is turned to weakness, and the work of faith, the labor of love, and the patience of hope are all kept in a lame state. This is a grievous evil, and it is all around us. Then, alas! Many are "driven out," of whom the nineteenth verse says, "I will

gather her that was driven out." By false doctrine many are made to wander from the fold. Hopeful ones are made to stray from the path of life, and sinners are left in their natural distance from God. The truth which would convince men of sin is not preached, while other truths which would lead seekers into peace are beclouded, and souls are left in needless sorrow. When the doctrines of grace, and the glorious atoning sacrifice are not set clearly before men's minds, so that they may feel their power, all sorts of evils follow. It is terrible to me that this dreadful blight should come upon our churches, for the hesitating are driven to destruction, the weak are staggered, and even the strong are perplexed. The false teachers of these days would, if it were possible, deceive the very elect. This makes our hearts very sorrowful. How can we help it?

Yet, beloved, all the time that the people of God are in this evil case, *they are not without hope,* for close upon all this comes the promise of the Lord to restore His wandering ones. We have the sense twice over, "I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame." "I will make you a name and praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, says the Lord." The adversaries cannot silence the eternal testimony. They hung our Lord Himself on a tree, they took down His body and buried it in a tomb in the rock, and they set their seal upon the stone which they rolled at the mouth of the sepulcher. Surely now, there was an end of the Christ and His cause. Boast not, you priests and Pharisees! Vain the watch, the stone, the seal! When the appointed time had come, the living Christ came forth. He could not be held by the cords of death. How idle their dreams! "He that sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord does have them in derision." Beloved, the reproach will yet be rolled away from the solemn assembly; the truth of God will yet again be proclaimed as with trumpet tongue, the Spirit of God will revive His church, and converts as many as the sheaves of the harvest shall yet be gathered in. How will the faithful rejoice! Those who were burdened and sorrowful shall then put on their garments of joy and beauty; then shall the ransomed of the Lord return with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. The conflict is not doubtful. The end of the battle is sure and certain. I think I even now hear the shout, "The Lord God omnipotent reigns."

II. Secondly, let as think of something which shines like a star amid the darkness. The second verse of the text presents A GLORIOUS GROUND OF CONSOLATION. Here is a rich text indeed. This passage is like a great sea, while I am as a little child making pools in the sand which skirts its boundless flood. A series of discourses might well be founded on this one verse; I mean the seventeenth.

Our great consolation in the worst times lies in our God. The very name of our covenant God—"The Lord Your God"—is full of good cheer. That word, "The Lord," is really JEHOVAH, the self-existent One, the un-changeable One, and the ever-living God, who cannot change or be moved from His everlasting purpose. Children of God, whatever you have not got, you have a God in whom you may greatly glory. Having God you have more than all things, for all things come of Him, and if all things

were blotted out, He could restore all things simply by His will. He speaks, and it is done; He commands, and it stands fast. Blessed is the man that has the God of Jacob for his trust, and whose hope is Jehovah. In the Lord Jehovah we have righteousness and strength; let us trust in Him forever. Let the times roll on, they cannot affect our God. Let troubles rush upon us like a tempest, but they shall not come near unto us now that He is our defense. Jehovah, the God of His church, is also the God of each individual member of it, and each one may therefore rejoice in Him. Jehovah is as much your God, my brother, as if no other person in the universe could use that covenant expression. O believer, the Lord God is altogether and wholly your God! All His wisdom, all His foresight, all His power, all His immutability—all Himself is yours. As for the church of God, when she is in her lowest estate she is still established and endowed in the best possible sense—established by the divine decree, and endowed by the possession of God all-sufficient. The gates of hell shall not prevail against her. Let us exult in our possession. Poor as we are, we are infinitely rich in having God; weak as we are, there is no limit to our strength, since the Almighty Jehovah is ours. "If God is for us, who can be against us?" If God is ours, what more can we need? Lift up your heart, you sorrowful one, and be of good cheer. If God is your God, you have all you can desire; wrapped up within His glorious name we find all things for time and eternity, for earth and heaven. Therefore in the name of Jehovah we will set up our banners, and march onward to the battle. He is our God by His own purpose, covenant, and oath, and this day He is our God by our own choice of Him, by our union with Christ Jesus, by our experience of His goodness, and by that spirit of adoption whereby we cry, "Abba, Father."

To strengthen this consolation, we notice next, that *this God is in the midst of us*. He is not a long way off, to be sought with difficulty, if haply we may find Him. The Lord is a God near at hand, and ready to deliver His people. Is it not delightful to think that we cry not to God across the ocean, for He is here? We look not up to Him from afar, as though He dwelt beyond the stars, neither do we think of Him as hidden in the fathomless abyss, but the Lord is very near. Our God is "Jehovah in the midst of you." Since that bright night in which a babe was born at Bethlehem, and unto us a Son was given, we know God as "Emmanuel, God with us." God is in our nature, and therefore very near to us. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." Though His bodily presence is gone, yet we have His spiritual presence with us evermore, for He says, "Lo, I am with you always." He walks among the golden candlesticks. We have also the immediate presence of God the Holy Spirit. He is in the midst of the church to enlighten, convince, quicken, endow, comfort, and clothe with spiritual power. The Lord still works in the minds of men for the accomplishment of His purposes of grace. Let us think of this when we are going forth to Christian service, "The Lord of hosts is with us." When you call your class together in the Sunday school, say to your Lord, "If Your presence go not with me, carry me not up from here." Ah, friends! If we have God with us, we can bear to be deserted by men. What

a word that is, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them!" Shall not the army shout when the King Himself is in their ranks! Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered! When He is with us they that hate Him must flee before Him. Be it our concern so to live that we may never grieve away the Spirit of God. Beloved, there is such abundant consolation in the fact of the presence of God with us that if we could only feel the power of it at this moment, we should enter into rest, and our heaven would begin below.

Let us go a step further, and note that our consolation is largely to be found in the fact that *this God in the midst of us is full of power to save*. "The Lord your God in the midst of you is mighty; He will save." That is to say, "Jehovah, your God, is mighty to save." His arm is not shortened, He is still "a just God and a Savior." Nor is He merely able to save, but He will display that ability; "He will save." Come, my brother, we see around us this and that to discourage us; let us, like David, encourage ourselves in the Lord our God. We may very well forget all difficulties, since the God who is in the midst of us is mighty to save. Let us pray, then, that He will save; that He will save His own church from lukewarmness and from deadly error; that He will save her from her worldliness and formalism; save her from unconverted ministers and ungodly members. Let us lift up our eyes and behold the power which is ready to save, and let us go on to pray that the Lord may save the unconverted by thousands and millions. Oh, that we might see a great revival of religion! This is what we want before all things. This would smite the enemy on the cheekbone, and break the teeth of the adversary. If tens of thousands of souls were immediately saved by the sovereign grace of God, what a rebuke it would be to those who deny the faith! Oh, for times such as our fathers saw when first Whitefield and his helpers began to preach the life-giving word! When one sweet voice was heard clear and loud, all the birds of paradise began to sing in concert with him, and the morning of a glorious day was heralded. Oh, if that were to happen again, I should feel like Simeon when he embraced the heavenly babe! Then would the virgin daughter of Zion shake her head at the foe, and laugh him to scorn. It may happen; yes, if we are importunate in prayer it must happen, "God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him." Let us not seek power of rhetoric, much less of wealth, but let us look for the power which saves. This is the one thing I crave. Oh, that God would save souls! I say to myself, after being badgered and worried through the week by the men of modern thought, "I will go my way and preach Christ's gospel, and win souls." One lifting up of Jesus Christ crucified is more to me than all the quibbling of the men who are wise above what is written. Converts are our unanswerable arguments. "Happy is the man," says the Psalm, "that has his quiver full of them: they shall speak with the enemies in the gate." Blessed is the man who has many spiritual children born to God under his ministry, for his converts are his defense. Beholding the man who was healed standing with Peter and John, they could say nothing against them. If souls are saved by the gospel, the gospel is proved in the surest manner. Let us care more about conversions than

about organizations. If souls are brought into union with Christ, we may let other unions go.

We go yet further, and we come to great deeps; behold *God's joy in His people*. "He will rejoice over you with joy." Think of this! Jehovah, the living God, is described as brooding over His church with pleasure. He looks upon souls redeemed by the blood of His dear Son, quickened by His Holy Spirit, and His heart is glad. Even the infinite heart of God is filled with an extraordinary joy at the sight of His chosen. His delight is in His church, His Hephzibah. I can understand a minister rejoicing over a soul that he has brought to Christ; I can also understand believers rejoicing to see others saved from sin and hell, but what shall I say of the infinitely-happy and eternally-blessed God finding, as it were, a new joy in souls redeemed? This is another of those great wonders which cluster around the work of divine grace! "He will rejoice over you with joy." Oh, you are trembling for the ark of the Lord; the Lord is not trembling, but rejoicing. Faulty as the church is, the Lord rejoices in her. While we mourn, as well we may, yet we do not sorrow as those that are without hope, for God does not sorrow, His heart is glad, and He is said to rejoice with joy—a highly emphatic expression. The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him, imperfect though they are. He sees them as they are to be, and so He rejoices over them, even when they cannot rejoice in themselves. When your face is blurred with tears, your eyes red with weeping, and your heart heavy with sorrow for sin, the great Father is rejoicing over you. The prodigal son wept in his father's bosom, but the father rejoiced over his son. We are questioning, doubting, sorrowing, trembling, and all the while He who sees the end from the beginning knows what will come out of the present disquietude, and therefore rejoices. Let us rise in faith to share the joy of God. Let no man's heart fail him because of the taunts of the enemy. Rather let the chosen of God rouse themselves to courage, and participate in that joy of God which never ceases, even though the solemn assembly has become a reproach. Shall we not rejoice in Him when He, in His boundless condescension, deigns to rejoice in us? Whoever despairs for the cause, He does not; therefore let us be of good courage.

It is added, *"He will rest in His love."* I do not know any Scripture which is fuller of wonderful meaning than this. "He shall rest in His love," as if our God had in His people found satisfaction. He comes to an anchorage; He has reached His desire. As when a Jacob, full of love to Rachel, has at last ended the years of his service, and is married to his well-beloved, and his heart is at rest; so is it spoken in parable of the Lord, our God. Jesus sees of the travail of His soul when His people are won to Him; He has been baptized with His baptism for His church, and He is no longer straitened, for His desire is fulfilled. The Lord is content with His eternal choice, content with His loving purposes, satisfied with the love which went forth from everlasting. He is well pleased in Jesus—well pleased with all the glorious purposes which are connected with His dear Son, and with those who are in Him. He has a calm content in the people of His choice, as He sees them in Christ. This is a good ground for

our having a deep satisfaction of heart also. We are not what we would be, but then we are not what we shall be. We advance slowly, but then we advance surely. The end is secured by omnipotent grace. It is right that we should be discontented with ourselves, yet this holy restlessness should not rob us of our perfect peace in Christ Jesus. If the Lord has rest in us, shall we not have rest in Him? If He rests in His love, cannot we rest in it?

My heart is comforted as I plainly see in these words love unchanging, love abiding, love eternal, "He will rest in His love." Jehovah changes not. Being married to His people, "He hates putting away." Immutability is written on His heart. The turtledove, when he has once chosen his mate, remains faithful throughout life, and if the beloved dies, he will, in many cases, pine away with grief for her, for his life is wrapped up in hers. Even so our Lord has made His choice of His beloved, and He will never change it; He died for His church, and so long as He lives He will remember His own love, and what it cost Him, "Who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" "He will rest in His love."

The love of God to us is undisturbed, "The peace of God, which passes all understanding," dwells with His love; He is not disquieted about it, but peacefully loves, and is never moved. The calm of God is wonderful to contemplate; His infallible knowledge and infinite power put Him beyond fear or question. He sees no cause of alarm as to His redeemed, or as to the cause of truth and the reign of righteousness. As to His true church, He knows that she is right, or that He will make her right. She is being transformed into the image of Jesus, and He rests in the full assurance that the image will before long be complete. He can carry out His own purposes in His own way and time. He can see the harvest as well as the sowing; therefore He does "rest in His love." You have seen a mother wash her child, and as she washes its face the child perhaps is crying, for it does not for the present enjoy the cleansing operation. Does the mother share the child's grief? Does she also cry? Oh, no! She rejoices over her baby, and rests in her love, knowing that the light affliction of the little one will work its real good. Often our griefs are no deeper than the cry of a child because of the soap in its eyes. While the church is being washed with tribulations and persecutions, God is resting in His love. You and I are wearying, but God is resting.

"He shall rest in His love." The Hebrew of this line is, "He shall be silent in His love." His happiness in His love is so great, that He does not express it, but keeps a happy silence. His is a joy too deep for words. No language can express the joy of God in His love, and therefore He uses no words. Silence in this case is infinitely expressive. One of the old commentators says, "He is deaf and dumb in His love," as if He heard no voice of accusation against His chosen, and would not speak a word of upbraiding to her. Remember the silence of Jesus, and expound this text thereby.

Sometimes also the Lord does not speak to His people; we cannot get a cheering word from Him, and then we sigh for a promise, and long for a visit of His love, but if He is thus silent, let us know that He is only silent

in His love. It is not the silence of wrath, but of love. His love is not changed, even though He does not comfort us—

"***His thoughts are high, His love is wise,***
His wounds a cure intend;
And though He does not always smile,
He loves unto the end."

When He does not answer our prayers with His hand, He yet hears them with His heart. Denials are only another form of the same love which grants our petitions. He loves us, and sometimes shows that love better by not giving us what we ask than He could do if He spoke the sweetest promise which the ears have ever heard. I prize this sentence, "He shall rest in His love." My God, You are perfectly content with Your church after all, because You know what she is to be. You see how fair she will be when she comes forth from the washing, having put on her beautiful garments. Lo, the sun goes down, and we mortals dread the endless darkness, but You, great God, see the morning, and You know that in the hours of darkness dew will fall which shall refresh Your garden. Ours is the measure of an hour, and yours the judgment of eternity, therefore we will correct our short-sighted judgment by Your infallible knowledge, and rest with You.

The last word is, however, the most wonderful of all, *"He will joy over you with singing."* Think of the great Jehovah singing! Can you imagine it? Is it possible to conceive of the Deity breaking into a song; Father, Son and Holy Spirit together singing over the redeemed? God is so happy in the love which He bears to His people that He breaks the eternal silence, and sun and moon and stars with astonishment hear God chanting a hymn of joy. Among Orientals a certain song is sung by the bridegroom when he receives his bride; it is intended to declare his joy in her, and in the fact that his marriage has come. Here, by the pen of inspiration, the God of love is pictured as married to His church, and so rejoicing in her that He rejoices over her with singing. If God sings, shall we not sing? He did not sing when He made the world. No, He looked upon it, and simply said that it was good. The angels sang, the sons of God shouted for joy; creation was very wonderful to them, but it was not much to God, who could have made thousands of worlds by His mere will. Creation could not make Him sing, and I do not even know that Providence ever brought a note of joy from Him, for He could arrange a thousand kingdoms of providence with ease; but when it came to redemption, that cost Him dear. Here He spent eternal thought, and drew up a covenant with infinite wisdom. Here He gave His Only-begotten Son, and put Him to grief to ransom His beloved ones. When all was done, and the Lord saw what became of it in the salvation of His redeemed, then He rejoiced after a divine manner. What must the joy be which recompenses Gethsemane and Calvary! Here we are among the Atlantic waves. The Lord God receives an accession to the infinity of His joy in the thought of His redeemed people. "He shall rejoice over you with singing." I tremble while I speak of such themes, lest I should say a word that should dishonor the matchless mystery, but still we are glad to note

what is written, and we are bound to take comfort from it. Let us have sympathy with the joy of the Lord, for this will be our strength.

III. I close with a brief word upon THE BRAVE CONDUCT SUGGESTED THEREBY. Let us not sorrow under the burdens which we bear, but rejoice in God, the great Burden-bearer, upon whom this day we roll our load. Here it is—"In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear you not; and to Zion, Let not your hands be slack."

There are three things for God's people to do. The first is, to *be happy*. Read verse fourteen—"Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem." Any man can sing when his cup is full of delights; the believer alone has songs when waters of a bitter cup are wrung out to him. Any sparrow can chirp in the daylight; it is only the nightingale that can sing in the dark. Children of God, whenever the enemies seem to prevail over you, whenever the serried ranks of the foe appear sure of victory, then begin to sing. Your victory will come with your song. It is a very puzzling thing to the devil to hear saints sing when he sets his foot on them. He cannot make it out; the more he oppresses them, the more they rejoice. Let us resolve to be all the merrier when the enemy dreams that we are utterly routed. The more opposition, the more we will rejoice in the Lord; the more discouragement, the more confidence. Splendid was the courage of Alexander when they told him that there were hundreds of thousands of Persians. "Yet," he said, "one butcher fears not myriads of sheep." "Ah!" said another, "when the Persians draw their bows, their arrows are so numerous that they darken the sun." "It will be fine to fight in the shade," cried the hero. O friends, we know whom we have believed, and we are sure of triumph! Let us not think for a single second, if the odds against us are ten thousand to one, that this is a hardship; rather let us wish that they were a million to one, that the glory of the Lord might be all the greater in the conquest which is sure. When Athanasius was told that everybody was denying the Deity of Christ, then, he said, "I Athanasius, against the world," *Athanasius contra mundum* became a proverbial expression. Brethren, it is a splendid thing to be quite alone in the warfare of the Lord. Suppose we had half-a-dozen with us. Six men are not much increase to strength, and possibly they may be a cause of weakness, by needing to be looked after. If you are quite alone, so much the better: there is the more room for God. When desertions have cleaned the place out, and left you no friends, now every corner can be filled with Deity. As long as there is so much that is visible to rely upon, and so much to hope in, there is so much the less room for simple trust in God, but now our song is of the Lord alone, "For great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of you."

The next duty is *fearlessness,* "Fear you not." What! Not a little? No, "Fear you not." But surely I may show some measure of trembling? No, "Fear you not." Tie that knot tight about the throat of unbelief! "Fear you not," neither this day, nor any day of your life. When fear comes in, drive it away; give it no space. If God rests in His love, and if God sings, what can you have to do with fear? Have you never known passengers on

board ship, when the weather was rough, comforted by the calm behavior of the captain? One simple-minded soul said to his friend, "I am sure there is no cause for fear, for I heard the captain whistling." Surely, if the captain is at ease, and with him is all the responsibility, the passenger may be still more at peace. If the Lord Jesus at the helm is singing, let us not be fearing. Let us have done with every timorous accent. O rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him. "Your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; He will come and save you."

Lastly, let us *be zealous*, "Let not your hands be slack." Now is the time when every Christian should do more for God than ever. Let us plan great things for God, and let us expect great things from God. "Let not your hands be slack." Now is the hour for redoubled prayers and labors. Since the adversaries are busy, let us be busy also. If they think they shall make a full end of us, let us resolve to make a full end of their falsehoods and delusions. I think every Christian should answer the challenge of the adversaries of Christ by working double tides, by giving more of his substance to the cause of God, by living more for the glory of God, by being more exact in his obedience, more earnest in his efforts, and more importunate in his prayers. "Let not your hands be slack" in any one part of holy service. Fear is a dreadful breeder of idleness, but courage teaches us indomitable perseverance. Let us go on in God's name. I would stir up the members of this church, and all my brethren, to intense zeal for God and the souls of men. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, 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."

Would God that all were on Christ's side out of this great assembly! Oh, that you would come to Jesus, and trust Him, and then live for Him in the midst of this crooked and perverse generation! The Lord be with us. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ZEPHANIAH 3.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—46, 731, 18.

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"SITTING BY"
NO. 1991

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 13, 1887,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 29, 1887,

"And it came to pass on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by." Luke 5:17.

A CONGREGATION is a strange aggregate; it is like the gatherings of a net, or the collections of a dredge. If it is a very large one, it is especially remarkable. What strange varieties of creatures meet in the Noah's ark of a crowded house of prayer! If anybody could write the histories of all gathered here, the result would be a library of singular stories.

You, my dear friends, who usually worship here, have probably no idea of the strange medley of nations, ranks, professions, conditions, and religions which are represented in one of the great congregations of this Tabernacle. I am often myself greatly startled when I come across the tracks of people quite unknown to me, except by the newspapers, which have mingled in these vast assemblies. I could not have imagined that they would ever have entered a place where the gospel is preached. It is noteworthy that God always selects our congregations for us, and His arrangements are always wise. I have frequently said to myself, "I shall have a picked congregation tonight," and in some instances this has been very singularly the case. Persons have come here who had themselves no thought of coming, till some special matter drew them, and then the word spoken has been so manifestly suited to their case, that it made them marvel. If they had sent notice of their coming, and the preacher had known all about them, he might not have ventured to be quite so personal, for he has unwittingly entered into minute details and secret items, which knowingly he would never have revealed. The Lord, who knows what is done in the closet, knows how to direct His ministering servant so that he shall speak to the point, and speak to the heart.

In the present congregation we have a large company of people who have long known the Lord, and have for years rejoiced in His name. We have another company of persons who do not know the Lord savingly, but yet are well acquainted with the gospel, and are not far from the kingdom of God. They are almost persuaded; they tarry in the border land. Oh, that they would cross the frontier, and become dwellers in Immanuel's land! We have also among us some who are far removed from divine life, a people about whom we have little or no hope. Yet it is from among these that we reap the richest spoils for Christ, for He has compassion on the ignorant, and on those that are out-of-the-way. I am fond

of that word "out-of-the-way." The Lord save all of you who are out-of-the-way ones!

In every congregation we have a fourth class, who would decline to be classed at all; they may be said to be here and not here. They are spectators rather than hearers. Like the gentlemen mentioned in our text, they are *"sitting by."* They are too respectable to be numbered with the vulgar crowd. No, no; they are only callers, sitting by. They would not like to have it supposed that they are regular hearers, much less converts, they are "sitting by." They are not repenting, they are not believing, and they are not entering into the truth at all, but they are "sitting by." They have come to look on, take notes, and make remarks. They are on the outskirts of the battle, but they are not combatants at all, they are "sitting by," where they hope they are out of gunshot.

It is about these who are "sitting by "that I shall now speak, for I am afraid they are becoming by far too easy in the seats which they have chosen. They are sitting as God's people sit, and yet they are not truly among them, but only "sitting by." They are a very irritating and disappointing part of our assemblies, but, at the same time, there they are, and we would not turn them out if we could. We are glad to have these persons to quarry from, for who knows but that out of them God, in infinite mercy, may select individuals who will never again "sit by," but who will be heart and soul with Christ and His people, and even become leaders of the host of God?

Let me freely speak to you concerning certain of those who sat by. They were by no means to be despised, for some of them were eminent persons. They were Pharisees, members of the separate sect, who kept themselves to themselves, and were punctilious about the externals of religion. Very superior indeed were these Pharisees, and you could see by their faces that they felt themselves to be persons of importance. With these were doctors of the law, the learned men who had studied the Scriptures very carefully, counted the words of each holy book, and found out the middle letter of it. These doctors of the law had come to hear the unlettered peasant from Nazareth, concerning whom they had a very strong, but by no means favorable opinion. They had heard about Him, and they condescended to give Him a hearing, half blushing at their own modesty in doing so. Not, of course, that He could teach *them* anything; they were merely, "sitting by," and nothing more. We do not see many of these great folk among our crowds, and perhaps there are none such here on this occasion, but we cannot be sure. I do not much care to know whether the learned and profound are here, but they do come among us at times, though it is only to sit by. I will say no more about these remarkable people just now, for many others come into congregations merely to sit by. They have not come with any wish to learn, or understand, or feel, or be saved; they are only "sitting by."

I. Let our first head answer the inquiry—WHAT WERE THESE PEOPLE DOING? They were "sitting by." There is a good deal in this. First, *they were indulging their curiosity*. They had come out of every town of Galilee, and Judea, and Jerusalem to know what this stir was all about. They had heard the great fame of Christ for working miracles, and this

drew them into the throng which continually surrounded Him. Besides, the crowd itself drew them. Why was there such a large company? What could it be all about? They would like to know for the sake of curiosity. They would for once hear the man that they might be able to say that they had heard Him, but they were not going to be influenced by what they heard; they would hear Him as outsiders, "sitting by." They were curious, but not anxious. As a rule, very little comes of this kind of attendance at places of worship, and yet I had sooner people come from this motive than not at all. Curiosity may be the stepping-stone to something better, yet, in itself, what good is there in it? Persons on the Sunday go to St. Paul's, to Westminster Abbey, to the Tabernacle, to this place and to that, and they suppose that they are worshipping God, whereas they might just as well have gone to see a show; in fact, it is going to a show and nothing more as far as their motive is concerned. Do not flatter yourselves; if you go to places of worship merely to look about you or to hear music, you are not worshipping God. If you come to this great house to gratify your own fancy, you are no more worshipping God than you would be if you walked in the fields. You are only, in a very poor and groveling sense, "sitting by."

Many come into our assemblies and sit by in this respect—that *they are altogether indifferent*. I do not suppose that these scribes and Pharisees were quite good enough to be altogether indifferent; they leaned the wrong way, and were bitterly opposed. Too many act as if they said, "I come to hear a noted preacher, but what his doctrine may be I neither know nor care." They do not inquire, "What is this doctrine of the Fall? What is this depravity of heart? What is this work of the Spirit? What is this vicarious sacrifice?" They do not care to know whether they are concerned in anything that is spoken of, nor do they ask, "What is this new birth, this translation from darkness to light, this sanctification of nature?" They hear a theological term and dismiss it as no concern of theirs. They do not want to know too much. This atoning sacrifice—they hear so much about it; this shedding of the precious blood of Jesus, this putting away of sin by the sacrifice of Jesus—they will not lend an ear to this saving mystery, but treat it as a matter of little or no consequence. It is nothing to them that Jesus should die. O dear sirs, it ought to be something to you! If there is anything worth inquiring into, it is your own state before God, your position as to eternal things, your condition at this moment in reference to sin—whether it stains you scarlet, or whether you have been washed from it in the fountain which Christ has opened. If there is anything worthy of a man's inquiry, it is the matter which concerns his own soul for eternity. Would God you would no longer be found "sitting by," but would in earnest feel, "There is something here for me. Perhaps for me there is a peace which I have never known, a joy which I have never imagined. I will see for myself. Perhaps for me there is a heaven of which I have up to now despised; I will make a searching inquiry, and see whether it is so or not." May that be your resolve, and may you no longer be among those who sit by in stolid indifference!

The scribes and Pharisees were sitting by in another, and a worse, sense, for *they were there to criticize in an unfriendly spirit,* and either find faults, or invent them. I see them take out their notebooks to jot down a word the Savior said which they thought could be twisted. How they nudged one another, as He said something which sounded unusual and bold! Oh, could they but catch Him! When, at last, He said to the sick man, "Your sins are forgiven you," I think I see their eyes flash with malignant fire. "Now we have got Him! Now we have got Him! This Man blasphemes." They hoped He had now said more than He could stand to, and they asked in triumph, "Who can forgive sins but God only?" They were "sitting by," watching the Savior as a cat watches a mouse. How eagerly they spring upon Him!

My hearers, this was a wretched business, was it not? It is a very poor business to go to the house of God to criticize a fellow mortal who is sincerely trying to do us good. It will not, in the present case, affect the preacher much, for his skin is hardened, and he feels not the tiny strokes of ordinary censure. In no case can ungenerous criticisms do any good, but the pity of it is, that when we earnestly desire to show you the way of salvation, some of you should hinder us by petty observations upon a faulty mannerism, a slight blunder, a mispronunciation of a word, or an inaccurate accent. Alas, what small things put the eternal truth on one side! I do not know, and I would not like to say if I did know, what petty trifles people will carry away, and talk of, after we have been solemnly pleading with them about heaven, and hell, and the judgement day, and the wrath to come, and the way to escape from it. Was it Carlyle who spoke of the cricket as chirping amid the crack of doom? I am apt to think that many people are like that cricket; they go on with their idle chitchat when Christ Himself is set before them on the cross. Assuredly this is poor work. I am hungry, I come to a banquet, but instead of feasting upon the food, I begin to criticize the dress of the waiters, abuse the arrangements of the banqueting hall, and vilify the provisions. I shall go home as hungry as I came, and who will be blamed for it? The best criticism that you can possibly give of your friend's entertainment is to be hearty in partaking of it. The greatest honor that we can do to Christ Jesus is to feed upon Him, to receive Him, to trust Him, to live upon Him. Merely to complain and to question will bring no good to the cleverest of you. How can it? It is a pitiful waste of time for yourself, and a trial of temper to others. Yet there are many who, like the scribes and Pharisees, are in this manner "sitting by."

Now, I do not care to go farther into these different forms of "sitting by," but no doubt *some kindly admire, but do not profit.* Hundreds of people are "sitting by" who are attentive hearers and warm friends, and yet have no part or lot in the matter. They have been more or less regular attendants at this house of prayer for, say twelve, fourteen, fifteen, twenty years, and yet they are not one whit the better. Some go from public worship to the public house, and yet they would not neglect church or chapel on any account. Many are no better at home for all they have heard; their wives are sorrowful witnesses to that fact. Why, some of you have been prayed for time out of mind, and you have been preached at as well,

and still you are "sitting by." I cannot make out why you come so constantly, and yet profit so little. It would seem to all who knew you a very odd thing if you were seen loafing about a certain shop for an hour and a half one day in the week for twenty years, and yet you never bought a pennyworth of goods. Why do you hang about the gospel shop and yet purchase nothing? On your own showing you are a fool. I do not like using a hard word; still it is used in Scripture for such as you are. He who believes a thing to be so important that he spends one day in the week in hearing about it, and yet does not think it important enough to accept it as a gift, stultifies himself by his own actions. How will you answer for it at the last great day when the Judge shall say, "You believed enough to go and hear about salvation; why did you not believe enough to accept it? You believed enough to quarrel for it; you would stand up for the doctrine of the gospel, and yet you yourself perished in your sin." What answer will you give, you that are "sitting by"? You will have to give some answer, what will it be? Oh, that you would use a little commonsense about your souls, and would quit the seat of the foolish for the stool of the penitent, and no more be of those who are "sitting by."

II. Secondly, let us inquire WHAT WAS HAPPENING WHILE THESE PERSONS WERE "SITTING BY"? They had entered the room where Jesus was preaching, where crowds were listening, where miracles of mercy were being worked. They were criticizing, carping and quibbling, but what was happening to them all the while?

Well, first, *they were incurring responsibility*. Sirs, you cannot hear the gospel and refuse it, and yet remain as you were. You are either better or worse after hearing the gospel. It is made to you either a savor of life unto life, or else of death unto death. Remember, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgement than for Bethsaida and Chorazin, who had heard the gospel. The refusal of the gospel is a crowning crime; there is no sin like it. Does not the Word of God say so? This is no gloomy talk of mine. The Lord Jesus taught that the men of Nineveh would condemn the men of Jerusalem because they took warning, and Jerusalem did not. Oh, you that have heard the gospel so long, and have been "sitting by" all the while, what a mountain of guilt rests upon you! How shall you escape? What must become of you after such base ingratitude?

Besides that, *they were gathering hardness of heart*. Every hour that you listen to the gospel, and bar your heart against it, you are less and less likely to admit it. The bolt that is rusted is hard to move back from its place. The path that has long been trodden by daily traffic has become hard, as though it were paved with stone; hearts that have often been traversed by the gospel become like iron beneath its tread. I fear your consciences have grown hardened by the traffic of the gospel. I know that it is so with many. The Lord forgive them. If I could have a congregation that never heard the gospel before, I should feel more hopeful than I do when I speak to you who have heard it for years. What is now likely to affect you? What fresh arguments can I bring? I can tell you some new story, perhaps, but what of that? You have had too many stories already. It is not so easy a matter to retain your attention now as it once was; the

voice has grown familiar, and the manner is stale to you. Can I hope that I shall now reach the hearts at which I have shot so many arrows which have all missed the mark? O God, have mercy upon those who have been "sitting by" so long!

Once again, let me remind you that those who were "sitting by" *were obstructing Christ all that they could*. There is a something—every preacher has felt it—there is a something in a congregation itself which affects the preacher, even as he affects the congregation. I soon feel when godly men are praying for me, and crying, "O Lord, help him to preach!" I cannot tell you how it is, but so it is that some congregations freeze me, and others set me on fire. When the doctors of the law and the Pharisees are "sitting by," they drag us down, and we cannot do many mighty works. If my eye catches the glance of one of these ice men, if I perceive his wretched indifference, and detect his half-concealed sneer, I am weakened by it. I fancy I hear such folks saying, "We care nothing for what you say. We do not belong to those whom you can influence. We are clad in mail against your weapons." This chills one to the marrow. Now, this is the tendency of your conduct if you are "sitting by"—you chill the preacher, and in chilling the preacher you do boundless mischief to the congregation. Don't you know that it was said even of Jesus, "He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief"? Even He, as man, was in a measure, dependent upon those who surrounded Him; when He saw their faith He healed the sick of the palsy, and at another time, when He saw their unbelief, He looked round with indignation. It is a terrible fact that certain of you may be so acting as to hinder the salvation of others by your indifference to the sacred message. I believe that this is eminently the case with you that are very good people in all but the one thing needful. You do not fear God, and your very goodness works for evil. The example of a rank and rotten profligate will not influence certain minds, for they are disgusted by its grossness, and driven to seek something better. But when young men see an excellent person like you, so moral and amiable, without religion, they gather from your example that godliness is not absolutely needful, and take license to do without it. Thus, you who are "sitting by" may be a curse when you little suspect it; you may be encouraging others in the attempt to live without the Savior.

Yet let me not finish this head without repeating the remark that we are glad to have these people "sitting by" rather than not coming at all. Being in the way, the Lord may meet with them. If you go where shots are flying you may be wounded one of these days. Better to come and hear the gospel from a low motive than not to come at all. Remember Hugh Latimer's quaint story when he urged all his hearers to go and hear the gospel. He even praised that sleepless woman who had been taking sleeping medicine, but found that there was no drug strong enough to make her sleep, till at last she said, "If you would take me to the parish church I know that I could go to sleep, for I have slept there every Sunday for many years." She was taken to that place of rest, and was soon at peace. "Well, well," said Latimer, "she had better come for sleep than not come at all." And so I say; even if you come here to sleep, the Lord may

awake you to seek and find the Savior. Still it is a wretched business—this "sitting by."

III. Next, let us inquire WHAT WAS THE CAUSE WHY THESE PEOPLE WERE "SITTING BY"? Why did they come to hear Jesus, and yet did not become a part of the really attentive congregation, but were hovering round the skirts of it, and "sitting by"? I would not needlessly offend any of those who have come here at this time, but let me quietly say a few things which may be applicable to them.

In the first place, in the case of the scribes it was *self-conceit* which made them sit by. They were divided from the common throng by a sense of superiority. They said, "What have we to do with hearing Jesus of Nazareth, and His message concerning the pardon of sin?" "Why," they said, "we are highly educated people, and do not need to listen to so plain a preacher. His salvation we do not want, for we are not lost." Jesus Himself said, "They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick," thus indicating that it was their good idea of themselves which kept them back from Him. That is the reason why so many sit by; in their own opinion, they are quite as good as the best, and are not in need of any great change. They are most respectable people, and they believe that they are also upright and generous. There went a man out of this place one evening that was spoken to by one of our friends, who happened to know him in trade, and had him in good repute. "What! Have you been to hear our minister tonight?" The good man answered, "Yes, I am sorry to say I have." "But," said our friend, "why are you sorry?" "Why," he said, "he has turned me inside out, and spoiled my idea of myself. When I went into the Tabernacle I thought I was the best man in Newington, but now I feel that my righteousness is worthless." "Oh," said the friend, "that is all right, you will come again, I am sure. The word has come home to you, and shown you the truth; you will get comfort soon." That friend did come again, and he is here tonight; he takes pleasure in that very truth which turned him inside out, and he comes on purpose that the word of the Lord may search him, and try him, and be to him as a refiner's fire. He that is most afraid to be turned inside out is the man who most needs to undergo that process. Alas! Many will not let the word search them. They say within themselves, "That is good, very good, but it is not for me." Such are those that sit by, they sit in a corner, out of the wind of the winnowing fan. Do you not see them draw themselves up, and look very solemnly at other people, as if they would say to their neighbor, "There, you take that home! That doctrine is good for you sinners, but the preacher has no reference to me."

These people were "sitting by" because there was in them *no sense of personal need,* no perception of their own nakedness which only Christ can cover, no sense of inward hunger which only Jesus can remove. They did not want a Savior for themselves, though quite willing to hear Him preached to others, they did not require mercy for themselves, though pleased that sinners should hear of it. They could see, and therefore needed not that their eyes should be opened. They had all things, and had no poverty to plead. So it always will be in the preaching of the word; those will hear it with gladness who perceive that they need what it pre-

sents to them, but others will take no interest in it. Conscious need inclines the ear to hear, and until the Spirit of God works this in us, we shall be deaf as posts to the voice of love, and continue "sitting by."

There was also about these people *a mass of prejudice*. Their conservative tendency kept them aloof. Carried a certain distance, this tendency is good, but it may turn a man into a pillar of salt, and prevent his fleeing for his life. Having drunk the old wine, these immovable people do not desire new, because they feel sure that the old is better. Yet if the old wine is sour or musty, and the new wine is sweet and good, it is a pity to prefer the bad to the good. The old intoxicating wine of salvation by human merit, or by ceremonies, is by many preferred to our Lord's own new wine of the kingdom, namely, justification by His righteousness through faith. "Believe and live" is set aside for "the man that does these things shall live by them." They prefer Sinai to Calvary, their own filthy rags to the Lord's perfect robe of righteousness. They stick to the old covenant, which is taken away, and cannot endure the everlasting covenant of grace. The prejudice of proud human nature is hard to overcome; men are not willing to search the Scriptures, and see whether they are right or not; they stick to their inherited falsehoods.

Many are "sitting by" because of *resolute unbelief and determined self-confidence*. O friends, it is born in us by nature to believe in ourselves. What is that but clear idolatry? It is not till we are born again that we come to believe in Jesus Christ, and so to trust in the living God, and receive a living hope. May the Lord deliver us from that old, good-for-nothing confidence in self, confidence in works, confidence in outward ceremonies, confidence in the flesh! Oh, that we might pour the old and musty wine on the ground, and taste of the new wine, crushed from the cluster by the dying Son of God; the new wine of salvation by grace, through faith, unto the glory of God! Would God that those who are "sitting by" on account of their vainglorious prejudices, may be brought into the marriage feast of grace, and made willing to wear the wedding garment, and honor Him who has prepared it! Prejudice is the ruin of thousands. They might be made to see, if they did not think that they already saw; they might be happy in the Lord, if their groundless conceit did not make them to be "sitting by."

IV. WHAT SHALL WE SAY OF THESE SITTERS-BY? Just a word by way of forming an estimate of them, and then I will have done with them. Oh, that the Lord Himself might deal with them by His Holy Spirit! These sitters-by, these people who do not go in for the truth and faith of the gospel, but hear it, play with it, and talk about it, and then have done with it, what shall I say of them?

Why, first they seem to me to be *wonderfully out of place when you think of the Lord who was preaching*. How could they be indifferent in His presence? He was at a white heat, and they were blocks of ice. He was all energy, and they were "sitting by." He spending and being spent, and they "sitting by." He engaged all night in prayer with His divine Father, and now coming forth clothed with divine power to heal, and they "sitting by." Pretending to be doctors and teachers of the people, and therefore under great responsibility, they were yet content to be "sitting by" when

Jesus was pouring out His soul. O sirs, none of us ought to be indifferent in the presence of the Christ of God. He is clad with zeal as with a cloak; how can we be lukewarm? He laid down His life for the sheep; how can we live for self! He still lives for His people, and holds not His peace, but by His incessant pleading He proves His everlasting interest in our cause and for us to be "sitting by" is horrible ingratitude! Men who have received great salvation "sitting by" while the Savior dies, or even men who are in danger of sinking at once to hell carelessly "sitting by" when the gate of mercy is set open before them by the pierced hand of Jesus! Oh, it is sadly strange! Lord, teach this foolish generation wisdom! Let them not still be "sitting by"!

It was equally incongruous also with the condition of the rest of the congregation. See, there is such a crowd around the Lord Jesus that they are trying to bring in a man who is sick of the palsy, and they cannot get him near. Nobody will make way, they are all so eager to hear and to get a blessing. At last they take the palsied man to the roof; they actually break up the tiling; they let the man down with ropes over the heads of the people; yes, right in among the learned lawyers and the proud Pharisees. The pieces of the tiles are falling everywhere; the dust is on the doctors and divines. See how eager, how earnest, how impetuous the people are! And yet these gentlemen are "sitting by" with cold indifference! See them taking out their pocket books to jot down an expression with which they may find fault! See how they coolly observe little points in what is done! They are not moved, not they! A man is about to be healed who has long been paralyzed, and they treat it as if it were an interesting case in the hospital, around which a company of medical students gather, as to a show. How can they act in this way? Are they made of stone or iron? Common humanity might affect them, one would think, but no, they will not enter into anything that Jesus says or does; they are merely "sitting by."

It will be an awful thing for some of you to be cast away forever, and then to remember that you sat next to people that were saved; sat next them at the very time when they heard unto eternal life. How will you bear to know that these people were saved by that powerful sermon which drove even you to your knees, but you shook off the impression, grew careless, and again continued in your sin? This reflection will sting you as does a serpent when you are past hope, and are driven forever from the presence of God. This will be as the worm that never dies, when you say to yourself, "I was present when Jesus by His grace renewed men's hearts. I was present when my companion heard, believed, and was saved, but I willfully refused to hear, and turned away from the only Savior." What shall I say to yonder husband, who will have to remember that she who in this world lay in his bosom, wept for him, told him that she had found a Savior, and begged him to think of his immortal soul, and turn unto the Lord? You will remember how you steeled your heart against the blessed influence and refused the holy tears of one you loved so well. Or is it so, that your darling child came home from the Sunday school weeping on account of sin, and you, the mother who ought to have thanked God for blessing your offspring, ridiculed your child's re-

pentance? This is "sitting by" in a most horrible way—"sitting by" to scoff and oppose. While others are saved, you are "sitting by." Why, if I were sick of the palsy tonight, if I were lying here, and I saw the Master healing you who were sick, I think I should at least cry out as best I could, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on me." I exhort any of you who are unconverted to take these words out of my mouth, and with your whole heart use them in prayer. Cry, "Lord have mercy upon me. Christ have mercy upon me!"

V. I had much more to add upon this point, but time admonishes me. Let me in a few sentences speak to some WHO SHOULD NOT BE AMONG THOSE WHO ARE "SITTING BY." You that feel your *soul-sickness* will not be of that number. You feel your guilt; you feel your need of Christ; you are broken down tonight; then do not for a moment sit by. Rise, He calls you! Press through the crowd to Jesus. Believe in Him and live. May His Spirit lead you to do so at once! Before I found the Savior, I visited nearly every place of worship in the town where I lived, but I did not find full salvation at any one of them. I believe that it was through my own ignorance. In the little Primitive Methodist chapel, when I heard Christ preached, and was bidden to look alone to Him, I found rest unto my soul, but the reason why I found Him was because His grace had made me know that I wanted Him. I do not suppose that the sermon which was made useful to me had anything in it more remarkable than other gospel sermons. The special point was that the Lord had prepared me to receive the gospel message. They say that the water of the Nile is very sweet. We have heard some of our countrymen assert that a very little of it was too much for them, and that they never wished to drink of it again. There is no use in disputing about tastes, but surely people might agree upon the quality of water. Yet some praise this Nile water to the skies, and others call it muddy stuff. The reason why the water of the Nile is so sweet to Egyptians is that their climate is dry, and the people are thirsty, and other water is scarce. Under a burning sun a drink of water is very refreshing. To the soul that is thirsty after mercy, and reconciliation and eternal life, every promise of the Lord is delightful. Nothing puts such a savor and flavor into the gospel as that work of the Holy Spirit, by which we are made to feel our great need of it.

Oh, if you have not found Christ—you that are seeking Him—go to every place where Christ is preached till you find Him. If you do not get the heavenly blessing in one place, go to another; do not stop where there is no blessing merely because it is your regular place of assembly. You want bread, and if one baker has not got it, go to another. Seek after the Savior as men dig for gold or search for diamonds. I have heard of a man who had long attended one of the churches in Scotland, and as he did not get any good, he went off to listen to certain irregular preaching, and there he found peace with God. The old minister warned him of his wickedness in being away from the church, and said, in Scotch, what I must put into English, "Donald, you should not have gone to hear that man; he is not of the old church." "Well," said Donald, "but I wanted a blessing, and I felt I must go anywhere to get it." "Well," said the minister, "Donald, you should have waited at the pool, like the man in the

gospels, till the water was stirred." "Well, sir," said the man, "but you see that man saw that the water was sometimes stirred, and though he did not get in himself, yet he knew that others stepped in and were healed, and that encouraged him to wait a little longer, in the hope that his turn might yet come. But I have lain at your pool these forty years, and I never saw the water stirred, neither did anybody get healed in it, and so I thought it was time for me to look somewhere else." Indeed it was. We cannot afford to be lost for the sake of churches or chapels. O my hearer, seek the Lord with all your heart, and seek Him on and on, till you find Him. Do not be a mere sitter-by any longer, but obey the call which bids you draw near. Be not content to sit in any pretended house of prayer where prayer is not heard and souls are never saved. Do not let down your bucket into any more dry wells. Go where Jesus is. Traverse all the denominations, and stay not till you can say, "I have found Jesus." If He is not preached in one place, hasten to another. Keep your ears and your hearts open. "Seek you the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near." Do not fall into the habit of going to a place because you always did go there, and always mean to go there. Why, some of you have almost grown to your seats, and are as wooden as that which bears you up. O mere sitter-by, I implore you do not remain in this wretched case. May your cry to the Lord be at this moment—

"Give me Christ, or else I die!"

May God help you to make your hearing a reality, your sitting under the gospel a true reception of it!

You that are in *great sorrow* I do not think it possible that you can be altogether sitters-by! You have been disappointed in love, you have met with a world of trouble, or else you have been the round of amusements, and have seen no end of gaiety, but you are sick of it, and weary of the world and of yourself. You feel that you might as well try to fill your belly with wind as fill your soul with the world's amusements, and you have come here jaded and nauseated. Your heart is laboring and heavy laden and you pine for rest. Come and try my Master. He invites you, He entreats you to come. He cries to you "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He means what He says. You have labored enough for the world, and its wages are not worth having. Come now to Him whose gift is eternal life. May His Holy Spirit lead you to come at once and delay no longer! You are one of those that cannot afford to be "sitting by," for sin curses you, death threatens you, and eternal wrath pursues you. I know how it will be with you unless grace prevents; you will go home, and the sermon will be over, and the many of you will still be sitters-by, for you will shake off conviction and be careless still. Remember, I have warned you. Will you despise the warning?

A poor fallen woman is here at this time, worn out with her crimes. Does she desire to know the Savior? Let her confess her sin and forsake it; then she will not be "sitting by." There is a broken-hearted youth here who begins to reap the wild oats he has sown. Will he sit by? Does he wish to know how his heart can be changed, his sin forgiven, his soul comforted? Let him arise and go to his father, and no longer be "sitting by."

And so I close with a full and free gospel call. Come and welcome, you that gladly would come to Jesus. Come just now, with all your sins about you, and behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world. If you want to know what it is to come to Him, know that it is to *trust Him*. Go to your chamber, and look up and say, "Jesus, I cannot see You; but You are wherever there is a broken heart. Behold, I seek You; reveal Yourself to me. I trust You to forgive me, and to renew me." Jesus will not refuse you, for He casts out none that come to Him. I said "Go home," but I will alter that word. Keep your seats, and seek Him where you are, and as you are. Before you leave this place, commit yourselves into that dear hand which was pierced for the guilty, and is always ready to grasp a sinner. As the pearl fisher is happy when he finds a handful of pearls, so is Jesus happy when He lays hold on poor sinners, and takes them to be His own. Commit your souls to His keeping. Trust Him wholly! Trust him only! Trust him now. Tonight escape for your lives, and find refuge in the Rock of Ages. Jesus cries, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." O Lord, lead all these sinners to look to Jesus by Your Holy Spirit for Your mercy's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—LUKE 5:12-26.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—430, 606, 992.

DEAR FRIENDS—Though for a while I shall be absent in body, yet shall I be present with you in spirit. Week by week I shall prepare the sermon with care, and I trust it will be as profitable, and as life-like as if I had just preached it. I beseech you to be more than ever importunate in prayer. A fierce battle is raging concerning the gospel; "The God that answers by fire, let Him be God." Let us plead for the fire of the Holy Spirit. If we have a special visitation from above, we shall see the defeat of this worst form of infidelity—the infidelity which wears the Christian name. My parting watchword is *"Let us pray."*
Yours, for Christ's sake,
C. H. SPURGEON.

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SONG FOR THE FREE, AND HOPE FOR THE BOUND
NO. 1992

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 20, 1887,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.
ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 6, 1877,

"He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and broke their bands in sunder. Oh that men 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." Psalm 107:14-16.

MY anxious, prayerful desire this morning is that some who have been in the condition described in the text may come out of it into full redemption. They have been too long in prison, and now the silver trumpet sounds—liberty to the captives. Jesus has come into the world to break the gate of brass, and to cut the bars of iron in sunder. Oh, that my prayer might be heard for those who are in bondage! I trust that some of those who are now immured in the dungeon of despondency will say, "Amen," to my prayer, and if they are praying inside, and we are praying outside and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself comes to open the prison doors, then, there will be a Jubilee before long.

This passage, of course, literally alludes to prisoners held in durance by their fellow men. What a sad world man has made of this earth! With superfluity of naughtiness man has multiplied his Bastilles! As if there were not misery enough to the free, he invents cells and chains! One's blood boils when standing in those living graves in which tyrants have buried their victims out of sight and hearing! Could the fiercest of wild beasts display such cruelty to their kind as men have shown to men? By the horrors of such imprisonments, one must estimate the joy of being set free. To God it is a glory that, in the order of His providence, He often provides a way of escape for the oppressed. Cruel dynasties have been overthrown, tyrants have been hurled from their thrones, and then enlargement has come to those who were straightly shut up. Liberated ones should indeed "praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men."

But the various scenes in this Psalm were intended to describe spiritual conditions. The second verse is a key to the whole song, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so." The deliverance here intended is one which is brought to us by redemption, and comes by the way of the great sacrifice on Calvary. We are redeemed with the precious blood of Him who surrendered His own liberty for our sakes, and consented to be bound and crucified that He might set us free. My grateful heart seems to hear

Him saying again, as He did in the Garden of Gethsemane, "If you seek Me, let these go their way." His consenting to be bound, brought freedom to all those who put their trust in Him.

I shall endeavor, as God shall help me, to speak of the text spiritually, and we will consider it under the heading of three questions. First, *Who are the favored men of whom the text speaks?* Secondly, *How has this remarkable deliverance been worked.* Thirdly, *What shall be done about it?* The text tells us how to act. "Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness!"

I. First, let us ask, WHO ARE THESE FAVORED MEN?

These favored persons were guilty men, as you will see by the context—"Because they rebelled against the words of God, and despised the counsel of the Most High." Hear this, you sinful ones, and take heart! God has worked great wonders for a people whom it seemed impossible for Him to notice. If they came into prison through rebellion, you would expect Him to leave them there. Yet rebels are set free by an act of immeasurable grace. The Redeemer has received gifts for men, "yes, for the rebellious also." These men were despisers of God's word; was there a gospel of freedom for them? Yes. It is for them that Jehovah, in abounding grace, has worked miracles of mercy.

The persons described by the Psalmist were guilty of overt acts; they were in actual rebellion against the commands of the Most High. Their rebellion was not a single hasty act; their entire lives were a continuance of their wicked revolt. From their childhood they went astray, in their youth they provoked the Lord, and in their manhood they disobeyed Him more and more. They were in open opposition to their Creator, Benefactor, and Lord. I have no doubt that I am speaking to many who must own that they have been actual and willful transgressors against the Lord of love. They have turned unto Him their back, and not the face, they have not been servants, but rebels.

The persons here spoken of were as evil in their hearts as in their lives, for they "despised the counsel of the Most High." Perhaps they intellectually rejected the teaching of Holy Scripture, and scorned to receive what the Lord revealed. They refused to yield their understandings to infallible teaching, but judged their own thoughts to be better than the thoughts of God. The counsel of the Most High, though marked by the sublimity of Him from whom it came, appeared to them to be less high than their own soaring theories, and therefore they despised it. To some men any doctrine is more acceptable than that of Scripture. They gladly hear what doubters say, but they will not hear what God the Lord shall speak. His counsel of instruction, His counsel of command, His counsel of promise—His whole counsel they cast away from them, and they take counsel of their own conceit.

Now this actual and mental sin, when it is brought home to a man's awakened conscience, fills him with dismay. Because he has transgressed with hand and heart, the convinced sinner is in sore dismay. O my hearer, are you in distress this day through your own fault? Do you wonder that you are in trouble? Did you expect to go in the way of evil, and yet to be happy? Did you never hear those words, "There is no peace, says my God, unto the wicked"? Know you not that they are "like the

troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt"? Now that you find yourself taken in the thorns of your own folly, are you at all surprised? The Scripture says, "Have you not procured this unto yourself?" Are not these the wages of sin? Thank God you have not yet received more than the earnest money of that terrible wage, but, depend upon it, sin is a hard paymaster. Sin and sorrow are wedded in the very nature of things, and there is no dividing them. They that sow iniquity shall reap the same. Turn as it may, the river of wickedness at last falls into the sea of wrath. He that sins must smart unless a Savior can be found to be his Surety, and to smart for him.

So, then, these people who were set free were by nature guilty men, who could not have deserved the divine interposition. Hear this, you consciously guilty, you that are condemning yourselves, and confessing your faults! This is good news for you, even for you. The Lord sets free the men whose own hands have forged their manacles. This is free grace indeed! These marvels of delivering love were performed, not for the innocent in their misfortune, but for the guilty in their rebellion. "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners."

Go a little further, and you will notice that *these persons were doomed men,* for they "sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death." It means that they were in the condemned cell, waiting for execution. No light could come to them, for their condemnation was clear; no escape could be hoped for, not a ray of hope came from any direction. In a short time they must be taken out to execution, so that the shadow of their death fell with its damp, dread, deadening influence upon their spirits. Do I address any such this morning? Ah, my friend, I can sympathize with you as you sit here, and feel that you are doomed! I, too, have felt that sentence of death within me. I knew myself to be "condemned already," because I had not believed on the Son of God. I recollect how those words "condemned already" rang in my ears, as I should think the bell of St. Sepulcher's used to sound in the ears of the condemned in Newgate, warning them that the time was come to go out upon the scaffold. When the shadow of eternal wrath falls upon the heart, nothing worse can be imagined, for the conscience bears sure witness that God is just when He judges, condemns, and punishes. When a man feels the shadow of death upon him, infidel arguments are silenced, self-conceited defenses are banished, and the heart consents to the justice of the law which declares, "The soul that sins, it shall die." My brethren, who remember being in this state of conscious condemnation, will join me in praying for those who are now in that condition, for they need our pity and love. O my hearers, condemned in your own consciences, take heart and hope, for you are the sort of people whom Jehovah in His grace delights to set free! Those doomed ones were the men of whom our text sings, "He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death." It is your condemned condition which needs free mercy, and, behold, the Lord meets your need in His boundless grace! To the doomed the Lord God in Christ Jesus will give free pardon this morning. I speak with great confidence, for my trust is in the God of love. The Lord is going to hear prayer for you, sinners. You shall be brought from under the black cloud which now threatens you with overwhelming tempest; you shall come forth from

the condemned cell, not to execution, but to absolution. Blessed be the name of the Lord, He passes by transgression, and does it justly through the atonement of His Son!

But next, *these persons were bound men,* for they "sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron." Their afflictions were like iron, hard and cold, and such they could not break from. The iron entered into their souls, the rust eroded the flesh, and poisoned the blood. They were bound in a double sense, affliction within, and iron without. It is a terrible thing when a man feels that he is lost, and that he cannot get away from destruction. An evil habit has got him within its iron grasp, and will not relax its hold. Even though he would, he cannot loosen himself from the thralldom of his sin. He has become a slave, and there is no escape for him. "O my God!" he cries, "what can I do?" The more he strains, the more the iron seems to hold him. His attempts to be free from evil only prove to him how much enslaved he is. What an awful compound is described in the text—"affliction and iron"! The bondage is mental and physical too. The enslaved spirit and the depraved flesh act and react upon each other, and hold the poor struggling creature as in an iron net. He cannot break off his sins; he cannot rise to a better life. I know that some of you who are here at this time are in this case. You long to be delivered, but you are unable to cut the cords which hold you. You are greatly troubled day after day, and cannot rest, and yet you get no further. You are striving to find peace, but peace does not come; you are laboring after emancipation from evil habits, but the habits hold you still! Friend thus bound, to you I have to tell the glad news that Jesus Christ has come on purpose that He might proclaim the opening of the prisons to them that are bound. "He has broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder." God is able to liberate men from every bond of sin over which they mourn. Would you be free? He will open the door. There is no habit so inveterate, there is no passion so ferocious, but God can deliver you from it. If you will but trust in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, His grace is a hammer that can break your chains. Let Jesus say, "Loose him, and let him go," and not even devils can detain you. Christ's warrant runs over the whole universe, and, if He makes you free, you will be free indeed.

To advance another step, *these persons were weary men,* for we read of them, "He brought down their heart with labor." This does not happen to all in the same degree, but to some of us this labor was exceedingly grinding and exhausting. Our hearts were lofty, and needed bringing down, and the Lord used means to do it. With some, temporal circumstances go wrong; where everything used to prosper, everything appears to be under a blight. From abundance they descend to want. Perhaps the health also begins to give way, and from being strong and hearty men they become sickly and feeble. How often this tames proud spirits! If it is not outward sorrow, it is within that they labor till their heart is brought low. They cannot rest, and yet they try all earthly remedies for ease, they go to the theater, they sport with frivolous companions, they laugh, they dance, they plunge into vice, but they cannot shake off the burden of their sin, it will not be removed. As the giraffe, when the lion has leaped upon him, bears his enemy upon his shoulders, and cannot dislodge him

even though he rushes across the wilderness like the wind, so the sinner is being devoured by his sin while he madly labors to shake it off. While the unconverted seek to rest themselves, they do but increase their weariness. They labor, yes, labor as in the very fire, but it is labor in vain. In vain do they hasten to every religions service, and attend to every sacred ceremony. In vain do they try to mourn, how can they put feeling into a heart of stone? If they could, they would make their tears forever flow, and their prayers forever rise, but, to their horror, they accomplish nothing. The whip of the law sounds, and they must get to their tasks again, but the more they do, the more they are undone. Like one that, having fallen into a slough, sinks all the deeper into the mire through every struggle that he makes, so do they fall lower and lower by their efforts to rise. I understand those awful struggles of yours, so desperate and yet so unavailing. God is bringing down your heart with labor, but have you not had enough of this? Do you not remember that love word, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest"? Sweet promise, will you not believe it, and avail yourselves of it? Will you not come to Jesus, and take the rest which He gives? How I wish you would come this very day! I beseech the Holy Spirit to turn you to Jesus. The Lord has come forth with power to draw you, and to bring you away from your weariness unto the sweet rest which remains for the people of God. Poor doves, fly no further; return to your Noah! These of whom we speak at this time were as weary men as ever *you* can be, but Jesus gave them rest, why should He not give rest to *you?* Though bad, and banned, and bound, and burdened, there is yet hope, for the Lord can set you free.

Again, *these persons were downcast men*—"they fell down, and there was none to help." "We cannot go on any longer," they said, "it is useless to exert ourselves. We cannot escape God's wrath, and yet we cannot bear it. We are at our wits' end. There is no use in our trying to be better. We must give it up in despair." "They fell down," this shows that they were quite spent. The captive has been grinding at the mill till he cannot go another round, even the lash cannot make him take another step—he falls in faintness, as though life had gone. So have we known men forced to acknowledge that they are "without strength." This was always true, but they did not always feel it. Now they have come to this, that if heaven could be had for one more effort, and hell escaped for one more good work, yet they could not do it. They fall down, and there they lay, a heap of helplessness, dead in trespasses and sins. Where is now the boasted power of their free will? Now it is to you who have fallen down, even to you, that the word of this salvation is sent. The Lord Jesus delights to lift up those that lie at His feet. He is a great over-turner, "He has put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree." He that flies aloft on the eagle's wings of pride shall be brought low by the shafts of vengeance, but he that humbles himself to the dust shall be lifted up. He that has fallen down, and lies in the dust at the feet of Jesus, lies on the doorstep of eternal life. The Lord will give power to the weak, and increase strength to those who have no might. I rejoice when I hear any one of you own to his weakness, since the Lord Jesus will now show forth His power in you.

In fact, *these persons were helpless men,* "They fell down and there was none to help." What a word that is—"None to help"! The proverb says, "God helps those who help themselves." There is a sort of truth in it, but I venture to cover it with a far greater truth, "God helps those that cannot help themselves." When there is none to help you, then God will help you. "There was none to help"—no priest, no minister, not even a praying wife, or a praying mother, could now do anything; the man felt that human helpers were of no avail. His bed was shorter than that he should stretch himself upon it, and his covering was narrower than that he should wrap himself up in it. Now he saw that there was no balm in Gilead, there was no physician there, and he looked to a higher place than Gilead for balm and medicine. The balm for such a wound as his must come from heaven, for on earth there was "none to help." This is a fitting epitaph to be placed over the grave of self-righteousness. This also is the death-knell of priest craft, birthright membership, and sacramentarianism. The conscience sees that there is "none to help." Is this your case? Then you are the men in whom God will work the marvels of His grace, and bring you out where you shall walk in light and peace.

There was only one good point about these people—*they did at last take to praying,* "Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble." It was not much of a prayer to hear, it was too shrill to be musical; it was too painful to be pleasant. "They cried," like one in sore anguish; they cried, like a child that has lost its mother; "they cried," like some poor wounded animal in great pain. Do you tell me that you cry, but that your cry is a very poor one? I know it, and I am glad to hear you say so, for the less you think of your cry the more God will think of it. Do you value yourself according to your prayers? Then your prayers have no value in them. When you think that your prayers are only broken words, and hideous moans, and wretched desires, then you begin to form a right estimate of them, and thus you are on true ground, where the Lord of truth can meet you. "They cried." Was it any credit to them to cry? Why, no, it was what they were forced to do! They would not have cried to the Lord even then if they could have done anything else. They cried when their hearts had been brought so low that they fell down. It is a good fall when a man falls on his knees. O my dear hearer, whatever else you do, or do not do, are you crying to God in secret for His grace? Then, as surely as the Lord lives, you shall come out into liberty. A praying man shall never be sent to perdition. There is that about prayer which makes it a token for good, a pledge of blessings on the road, a door of hope in dark hours. Where is the man that cries? Where is the man that prays? That is the man of whom it shall be said, and of others like him, "The Lord brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and broke their bands in sunder."

May the Lord bless the description which I have given, so that some of you may see yourselves as in a mirror, and be encouraged to hope that the Lord will save you as He has saved others like you! If you do see yourself in the text, take home the comfort of it, and make use of it. Do not look at it, and say, "This belongs to somebody else." You bondaged brother, you self-despairing sinner, you are the man for whom Christ went up to the cross! If you saw a letter directed to yourself, would you

not open it? I should think so. The other day a poor woman had a little help sent to her, by a friend, in a letter. She was in great distress, and she went to that very friend begging for a few shillings. "Why," said the other, "I sent you money yesterday, by an order in a letter!" "Dear, dear!" said the poor woman, "that must be the letter which I put behind the mirror!" Just so, and there are lots of people who put God's letters behind the mirror, and fail to make use of the promise which is meant for them. Come, all you that labor and are heavy-laden, come and taste my Master's love, yes, take of it freely, and be filled with heavenly rest!

II. Secondly, may God's Spirit go with us while we answer the question; HOW HAS THIS DELIVERANCE BEEN WORKED? You that have been set free should tell how you were emancipated. Let me tell my story first. It was the best news I ever heard when it was told me that Jesus died in my stead. I sat down in my misery, hopeless of salvation, ready to perish, till they told me that there was One who loved me, and for love of me was content to yield His life for my deliverance. Wonder of wonders, He had actually borne the death penalty for me! They said that the Lord of glory had become man to save men, and that if I trusted Him I might know assuredly that He had suffered in my stead, and so had blotted out my sins. I marveled much as I heard this, but I felt that no one could have invented news so strange. It surpassed all fiction that the offended God should Himself take my nature, and in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ should pay my debts, and suffer for my sins, and put those sins away. I heard the blessed tidings—there was some comfort even in hearing it—but I believed it, and clutched at it as for life. Then did I begin to live. I believe that truth today; all my hope lies there. If any of you wonder that I show fight for the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ, you may cease to wonder. Would not any one of you stand up for his wife and children? This truth is more to me than wife and children, it is everything to me. I am a damned man to all eternity if Christ did not die for me. I will put it no more softly than that. If my Redeemer had not borne my sins in His own body on the tree, then I shall have to bear them in my own body in the place of endless misery. I have no shade of a hope anywhere but in the sacrifice of Jesus; I cannot, therefore, give up this truth; I had sooner give up my life. I heard that the Son of God had suffered in my stead that I might go free; I believed it, and I said to myself, "Then I have no business to be sitting here in darkness and in the shadow of death." I shook myself from my lethargy, I arose, and went out of my prison, and as I moved to go out, a light shone round about me, and my fetters fell clanking to the ground. What glorious musical instruments they were! The very things that had galled me so long now brought me joy. I found that the iron gate, which I thought could never be unlocked, opened to me of its own accord. I could not believe that it was true; it seemed too wonderful; I thought I must be dreaming. I very soon knew of a surety that it was I myself. The cold night air blew down the street of my daily care, and I said, "Oh, yes, I am still on earth, and it is true, and I am free from despair, and delivered from the curse!" This is how I came out to liberty; I believed in Jesus my Redeemer. Today, my dear brothers and sisters here, hundreds of them, would each one tell the story in a different way, but it would come to the same thing.

Follow me while we go a little into Scriptural detail, and learn from David how the Lord sets free the captives.

First, our deliverance was worked *by the Lord Himself*. Listen, "HE brought them out of darkness." Write that "HE" in capital letters, Mr. Printer. Have you in the house any especially large letters? If so, set up that word in the most prominent type you have—"HE brought them out of darkness." Read also the sixteenth verse—"HE has broken the gates of brass." Did the Lord send an angel to liberate us? No, HE came Himself in the person of His dear Son. When the Lord Jesus Christ had paid our enormous debt, did He leave us to accept our quittance entirely of our own free will, apart from His grace? Ah, no! The Holy Spirit came, and made us willing in the day of His power! "HE," "HE," "HE" worked all the work *for* us, and all our works *in* us. "HE brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death." "Oh that men would praise the Lord, for HE has broken the gates of brass." It is the Lord's doing, it is marvelous in our eyes. There is no salvation worth the having which has not the hand of the Godhead in it. It needs Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to save a soul. None but the Trinity can deliver a captive soul from the chains of sin and death and hell. Jehovah Himself saves us.

Next, *the Lord did it alone*—"He has broken the gates of brass." Nobody else was there to aid in liberating the prisoner. When our Lord Jesus trod the winepress, He was alone. When the Spirit of God came to work in us eternal life, He worked alone. Instruments are condescendingly used to convey the word of life, but the life of the word is wholly of God. As to the divine Father, is it not true of "His own will begat He us by the word of truth"? He is the Author of our spiritual life, and He alone. None can share the work of our salvation with Him, and none can divide the glory. Ho, you that are captives, are you looking for some man to help you? Remember, I pray you, that there is "none to help." "Salvation is of the Lord." Remember that verse, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else," that is to say, there is no one else in the work of salvation except God. O soul, if you have to do with Christ Jesus, you must have Him at the beginning, you must have Him in the middle, you must have Him in the end, and you must have Him to fill up every nook and corner from the first to the last. He *alone* has done it.

Note, too, that what He did was done *by the Lord's own goodness,* for the Psalmist says, "Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness!" His goodness took the form of mercy, as it is said in the first verse of this psalm, "O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good: for His mercy endures forever!" It must have been mercy, because those whom it blessed were as undeserving as they were miserable. They were guilty, guilty in action, and guilty in thought; they had rebelled against the words of God, and despised the counsel of the Most High, yet He came, and set them free. You and I are always wanting to know before we give alms to beggars, "Are they deserving people?" God gives the alms of His grace only to the undeserving. We respond to those who have a claim upon us; God remembers those who have no claim whatever upon Him. "Ah," says one, "but the people cried!" I know they did, but they did not even do that till He first of all brought down their heart with labor. Prayer is a gift from

God as well as an appeal to God. Even prayer for mercy is not a cause, but a result. Grace is at the back of prayer, and at the base of prayer. These prisoners would not have prayed if God had not worked upon them, and driven and drawn them to pray.—

"No sinner can be
Beforehand with Thee;
Your grace is most sovereign,
Most rich, and most free."

So it has been with others, and therefore have I hope that it will be so with you, my beloved hearers. In the greatness of His goodness I trust my Lord will come and save you. It is not *your* goodness, but *His* goodness, which is the cause of hope, not your merit, but His mercy is His motive for blessing you. How greatly do I rejoice to remember that the Lord delights in mercy! It is His joy to pardon sin, and pass by the transgressions of the remnant of His people.

Note, once again, that while we are describing this great deliverance, we cannot help seeing that *the Lord effected it most completely*. What did He do? Did He bring them out of darkness? That was to give them *light*. Yes, but a man that is chained is only a little better off for getting light, for then he can see his chains all the more. Notice what follows—"and out of the shadow of death," so the Lord gave them *life* as well as light. That "shadow of death" is gone, it can no longer brood over their darkened spirits. Yes, but when a man has light and life, if he is still in bondage, his life may make him feel his bondage the more vividly, and his light may make him long the more for liberty. But it is added, "and he broke their bands in sunder," which means *liberty*. The Lord gave light, life, and liberty—these three things. God does nothing by halves. He does not begin to save, and then say, "I have done enough for you. I must stop midway." Dear heart, if the Lord comes to your prison, He will not merely light a lamp in your dungeon, though that were something; He will not merely revive your spirit, and give you more life, though that were something, but He will break your chains, and bring you out into the liberty with which Christ makes men free. He will finish His emancipating work. Do it, Lord; do it now! Help men to believe in Jesus at this moment!

There is one more point which I want you to notice very carefully. When the Lord does this, *he does this everlastingly*. He "broke their bands in sunder." When a man was set free from prison in the old times when they used iron chains, the blacksmith came, and took the chains off, and then they were hung up on the walls. Have you never been in ancient prisons, and seen the fetters and manacles hanging up ready for use; yes, for use upon those who have already worn such jewelry before, if they should come that way again? This is not the case here, for He "broke their bands in sunder." Note this right well, O child of God, you were once shut up as with gates of brass, and bars of iron, and the devil thinks that one of these days he will get you behind those gates again! But he never will, for the Lord "has broken the gates of brass." All the powers of darkness cannot shut us up with broken gates! Satan thinks he will imprison us again, but the bars of iron are cut in sunder. The means of our captivity are no longer available. My mind carries me to a certain scene, and my eyes almost behold it. Behold Samson, the hero of

Israel, shut in within the walls of Gaza. The Philistines boast, "Now will he be our captive." He slept till midnight, and then he arose. He found that he was shut up within the city, and so he went to the gate. That gate was barred and locked, but what difference does it make? Israel's champion bowed his great shoulders down to the gate, he took hold of both the posts, gave a tremendous heave, and in an instant tore up the whole construction from the earth in which it had been firmly placed. "He lifted the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts, and went away with them, and put them upon his shoulders, and carried them up to the top of a hill that is before Hebron." See in this thing a symbol of what our Lord Jesus Christ did when He arose from the dead. He carried away all that which held us captive—posts, and bar, and all. "He led captivity captive."

When our Lord had led us forth from our prison, He said to Himself, "They shall never be shut up again, for now I will make sure work of it," and therefore He broke the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder. How then can any child of God be shut up within the Gaza of sin again? How shall we be condemned when the Lord has put away our sin forever? No, the liberty received is everlasting liberty; we shall not see bondage any more. Oh, dear souls, I do want you to lay hold on this! You doomed and guilty men, you downcast and wearied men, there is everlasting salvation for you; not that which will save you today, and will let you go back to your bondage tomorrow, but that which will make you the Lord's free men forever! If you believe that Jesus is the Christ, if you believe in Him to save you, you shall be saved. It is not said half-saved, but *saved*. "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." That cannot admit that we should go to hell. Jesus says, "I give unto My sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." "He has broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder." Lord, help some poor souls to sing this song today, and receive at this moment everlasting salvation!

III. I close with a practical question; WHAT IS TO BE DONE ABOUT THIS? If such people as we have described have been brought into liberty, what is to be done about it? I do not want to tell you what to do; I would have you do it by instinct. Gladly would I, like Miriam, take a timbrel, and go first, and bid all the sons and daughters of Israel follow me in this song, "Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously. He has brought out His captives, and set His people free." It naturally suggests itself to the liberated spirit to magnify the Lord. So the Psalmist put it, "Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness!"

First, then, if the Lord has set any of you free—*record it*. See how David wrote it down. Write it in your diary; write it so that friends may read it. Say, "The Lord has done great things for us."

When you have recorded it, then *praise God*. Praise God with all your heart. Praise God, every one of you. Praise God every day. When you have praised God yourselves, then, entreat others to join with you. The oratorio of God's praise needs a full choir. I remember, years ago, a bill connected with a religious service of a very pretentious character, and on this bill it promised that the Hallelujah Chorus should be sung before the sermon. The friend who led the singing for me at that time came in to

me, and asked if I could spare him. "See here," he said, "a person has come from the service which has been advertised to say that they have nobody to sing the Hallelujah Chorus. The minister wants me to go down and do it." I answered, "Yes, by all means go. If you can sing the Hallelujah Chorus alone, don't throw yourself away on me." Then we smiled, and at last broke out into a laugh; it was too much for our gravity. Surely for a man to think that he can sufficiently praise God alone is much like attempting to sing the Hallelujah Chorus as a solo. The Psalmist therefore utters that great "Oh!" "Oh that men would praise the Lord!" I do not think he said "men," for the word "men" is in italics; the translators are accountable for it. He means, "Oh that angels, oh that cherubim and seraphim would praise the Lord! Oh, that all creatures that have breath would praise the Lord for His goodness!" Even that would not be enough, but let the mountains and the hills break forth before Him into singing, and let all the trees of the forest clap their hands. Let the sea roar and the fullness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein. With a great "Oh!" with a mighty sigh over the holy business, which was far too great for himself, David felt moved to call upon all others to praise the Lord.

I close with that, my brothers, my sisters, you that have been saved, praise God! Praise Him with the blessings He has lavished on you. I described them in three ways. With your *light* praise Him; the more you know, the more you see, the more you understand, turn it all into praise. Next, with your *life* praise Him—with your physical life, with your mental life, with your spiritual life; with life of every sort even unto eternal life praise the Lord. *Liberty* has been given us; let our freedom praise Him. Be like that man who was made straight, who went out of the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. God has made you free, feel free to praise Him, and if men will not give you leave to praise, take French leave; yes, take heavenly leave, and praise God anywhere and everywhere. Listen! How they sing the songs of Bacchus and of Venus in the streets, and even wake us up in the night; why may not we sing God's praises in the same public fashion? We must praise Him! We will praise Him! We do praise Him! We shall praise Him forever and ever!

Praise Him with the heart He has changed, with the lips He has loosed, with the lives He has spared. A little while ago you could not speak a cheerful word, but now you can rejoice in God. Let those lips, from which He has taken the muzzle of mute despair, be opened in His praise. Praise Him with all the talents He has lent you. If you have any power of thought, if you have any fluency of speech, praise Him. If you have any voice of song, praise Him. If you have health and strength, praise Him. Let every limb of your body praise Him; those members which were servants of sin, let them be instruments of righteousness unto God. Praise Him with your substance. Let your gold and silver, yes, and your bronze, praise Him. Praise Him with all that you have, and with all that you are, and with all that you hope to be. Lay your all upon the altar. Make a whole burnt-offering of it. Praise Him with all the influence you have. If He has delivered you from the shadow of death, let your shadow, like that of Peter, become the instrument of God's healing power to others. Teach others to praise God. Influence them by your example. Fill your house with music from top to bottom; perfume every room with

the fragrance of living devotion. Make your houses belfries, and be yourselves the bells forever ringing out the loud praises of the Lamb of God. He bore your sins, you bear His praises. He died for you, therefore live for Him. He has heard your prayers; let Him hear your praises. Let us together sing "Hallelujah to God and the Lamb." Let us stand upon our feet, and with one voice and heart let us sing—

"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—
PSALM 107:1-32.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—906, 126, 136 (SONG 2).

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:

DEAR FRIENDS—A brief interval of relief from the incessant strain of my position has revived my spirit, and the prospect of some weeks of further rest has brought me rest by anticipation. No one can ever know till the great day shall reveal it the great burden of responsibility which ordinarily presses upon me from day to day. If I am not borne up by the prayers of the Lord's people, I cannot stand. Even now I do not forget the beloved flock at home: how can I? They and the whole work of the Lord are ever on my heart. I beg to be in like manner daily remembered in supplication by those who have fellowship with me. This is at this moment my one urgent word—"BRETHREN, PRAY FOR US."

Yours heartily,
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.

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DRIVING THE VULTURES AWAY FROM THE SACRIFICE
NO. 1993

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 27, 1887,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.
ON THURSDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 3, 1887,

"And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away."
Genesis 15:11.

ABRAHAM, when he was childless, received the amazing promise that his seed should be as the stars of heaven for number. This he believed, and his faith in Jehovah "was counted unto him for righteousness." Surely there is more righteousness in trusting the Lord than in all the works of the flesh! Those who speak lightly of faith are of a different mind from the Lord, whose judgment is according to truth.

For the confirmation of the patriarch's faith the Lord resolved to give to His servant a gracious visitation which should be regarded as the solemn making of a covenant, and also as a prophecy of the future history of the promised seed. Abram was bidden to bring victims; a heifer, a she-goat, a ram, a turtledove, and a pigeon. The language is peculiar, "The Lord said unto him, Take *Me* an heifer of three years old," and then in the next verse we read, "And he took unto *Him* all these." Thus God and His servant each took part in the sacrifice, and so they set forth in symbol the communion which the Lord God has with His people in the covenant of grace, as they meet together in that one great Sacrifice of our Lord Jesus, which is the soul and essence of all the outward offerings. It was an offering taken for God which the Lord accepted, but it was, also, an offering taken unto Himself by Abraham, who saw Christ's day—saw it, and was glad.

The man of God obeyed the command of God with great exactness and deliberation, laying the pieces of the sacrifice in due order, and then waiting upon God until He should be pleased to further reveal Himself. But what is this? The solemn service is disturbed by foul birds. The most intense devotion is liable to interruptions of the worst sort. In the East, if a camel falls dead in the desert, the air is almost immediately full of winged things. Vultures that had not been visible before, not so much as one of them, will suddenly appear, as if by magic, coming from every quarter and circling over the carcass. "Wheresoever the body is, there will the eagles be gathered together."

These and smaller carnivorous birds are the scavengers of warm countries, and do not long allow any flesh to remain uneaten. So, doubtless,

when the victims presented by the patriarch Abram were laid upon the altar, they spied the bodies from afar, and hastened to the prey. It was nothing to the vultures whether they were victims slaughtered for God, or creatures that had fallen dead on the plain, for true to their instinct they discovered the carcasses and flew to them, even as Job said of the eagle, "Where the slain are, there is she." Flights of buzzards, and kites, and carrion crows, began to make their appearance in the sky, and they would have swooped down upon the sacrifices and defiled them, or borne them away piece-meal, if the patriarch, who had presented the sacrifices, had not kept watch at the altar. This he did right earnestly and vigorously, so that we read in the text, "When the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away." When we meet with God, we must be serious and resolute in His worship, and if difficulties arise, we must encounter them with all our might, resolving that we will offer to God a sacrifice which shall not be torn in pieces by distracting influences.

Observe that Abram, when he had done as God had told him, and had brought the victims, and laid them in their places, did not go home in a hurry, and say, "It is near sundown, Sarah will expect me in the tent." No, he remained by the sacrifice. He did not grudge the time, nor feel a sense of weariness, but he loved the worship of God, and therefore lingered at the altar till the sun was going down. Nothing is to be hurried in devotion; never is haste more out of place than in divine worship. The habit of quiet waiting upon God, of never being in a hurry to be gone, the willingness to give time and thought to the service of God, is not as common as one could wish. But when a man is thoroughly devout, and God's Spirit has spoken with him, he is not satisfied to merely give the allotted time to divine service or to private devotion, he loathes to be gone. He would be the first in at the house of the Lord, and last out of it. He can wait the Lord's leisure and not grow impatient, even if, hour after hour, the converse is not closed. The longer the better when God is near us. And if the blessing seems far away, and it does not come all of a sudden, the gracious worshipper waits until it does come, for he would not go away without the benediction of the Lord.

When we are serving the Lord, our holy anxiety must not abate till we are fairly through with the service. Abram had laid the victims on the altar, but as yet no fire from heaven had consumed them, and so he remained on the spot to see that all was well to the end. The servant of the Lord does not quit his place till he has seen the matter through. For fear that all should yet be spoiled he sets himself to watch. When, therefore, the kites and carrion crows come down, the waiting patriarch is there to meet them. Had he gone away in haste to attend to his ordinary duties, the sacrifice had been stolen, or polluted. But he waits, and does well in waiting. My soul, wait only upon God, even as a maid waits on her mistress! Watch and pray, and watch still. "Blessed are all they that wait for Him." They that can be at leisure with God, who do not hurry over what they have to do, and who feel that their time is God's time, these are the true sons of Abraham. If any worldly business would hurry them away, they will not permit it; they give men the cold shoulder rather than rob their Lord, and rob themselves, by hasty worship. Till their appointment

with God is over, they are at no man's call. They cannot break up their interview with God, but must tarry and wait His utmost time. Lest anything unforeseen should happen and spoil their service, they will wait till the sun goes down, and even when sleep overtakes them, they will be where the Lord will meet with them in the night-watches if He so shall favor them. It is wise to never leave our devotions till God Himself has pronounced the dismissal by a benediction, has given the blessing to the full, and so has bidden His servants go in peace.

I think that this staying of Abram to defend the sacrifice when the ravenous birds came down upon it may be used as a lesson to us in three respects. First, *let us zealously guard the great Sacrifice of Christ*. When the foul birds, which are so numerous, especially just now, come down upon the sacrifice, let us drive them away. Secondly, let us guard that minor sacrifice, *the grateful sacrifice of ourselves*. When the birds of temptation come down upon it, let us drive them away. Thirdly, let us anxiously guard *those separate sacrifices of devotion* which come out of our dedicated lives. When anything comes down to disturb us in prayer or praise, let us resolve that we will drive it away. Oh that the Spirit of all grace may bless this discourse to us that we may thereby be excited to holy watchfulness!

I. First, with regard to THE GREAT SACRIFICE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. This has been, and always will be, the great object of attack by the enemies of God. One would have said, if one had not known human nature, that the doctrine of the substitutionary Sacrifice, Christ dying in our stead, would, of all events, have commanded the loving confidence of every human heart. It is so wonderful a system, this plan by which justice is vindicated and mercy is magnified, that one instinctively expects all men to reverently accept it. It would seem too grave a charge to bring against our apostate race that they would set to work to quibble at the divine expedient, and so pick holes in their own salvation, and try to contradict the kindest hope that God Himself could set before them. But so it has been. The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness. It is still to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness, though it is indeed the power of God, and the wisdom of God. It has happened according to the Word of the Lord, "Behold I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense." Therefore, dear friends, all of you who by faith approach the Sacrifice of our Lord Jesus, and who base your hopes of heaven thereon, watch lest the vultures come down upon the Sacrifice, and be ready to drive them away.

Note well, that *the sacrifice which Abraham guarded was of divine ordination*. Jehovah Himself had told him what creatures to kill, how to divide them, and how to arrange the pieces upon the altar. He did nothing according to his own invention; he offered no will-worship; but he did everything as it was prescribed to him. Because this sacrifice was divinely appointed, he could not bear that kites and crows should peck at it, and tear it at their pleasure. It is even so with the Sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ; my blood boils that so many men should dare to assail that which the Lord Jehovah has appointed. It was God who devised the plan, it was God who gave His Son out of His own bosom to die, it is God Him-

self who has commended that plan to our hearts, and made us put our trust in His great Sacrifice. Oh, it brings the tears into our eyes, and the blood into our cheeks, that any should trample on the precious blood, and speak ill of the vicarious sufferings of Christ! Whoever the men may be, yes, though they were angels from heaven, we could not have patience with them. We cannot help regarding those as worse than carrion crows who would desire to touch this most sublime though simplest of all doctrines, that Jesus Christ bore our sins in His own body on the tree. They dare to say that it is immoral to suppose that our sin could be transferred to Christ, or His righteousness to us. Thus, to charge the essential act of grace with immorality is to profane the sacrifice of God, and count the blood of Jesus an unholy thing. It is not for us to speak sweetly of those who deal scurvily with Christ. If they are enemies of Christ, our Sacrifice, they cannot be friends of ours. We shake the dust from our feet against those who reject the doctrine of a crucified Savior, slain in the sinner's stead. They are no brethren of ours who reject the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. We are anxious to drive off those who peck at our Lord's substitutionary Sacrifice, because that Sacrifice is of divine appointment.

Next, we see a further reason for guarding the Sacrifice in the fact that *it is of most solemn import*. That sacrifice was so to Abram. It meant, you know, a covenant. The sacrifice, as Abram had presented it at God's appointing, was the token of his being brought into covenant relationship with God. Now, to my mind, it is one of the most delightful truths of Scripture, though so much neglected, that God's people are in covenant with God, by a covenant of grace. An old Scotch theologian was known to say that he who understood the two covenants, understood the whole science of theology, and I believe it is so. The very pith of the whole business lies in that broken covenant of works by which we are ruined, and in that everlasting covenant of grace, ordered in all things and sure, by which we are saved. The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ is the "blood of the everlasting covenant," even as He says to us at the communion table, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood." If you take His Sacrifice away, of course you take the covenant away. Those who deny the vicarious Sacrifice have no faith in the covenant; in fact, they never speak of such a thing, but place it among the obsolete terms which their forefathers used, but which they themselves have altogether renounced. From their teaching the covenant is gone, and when that is gone, my brethren, what is left? If the covenant is forgotten, what remains to be our support when, like David, we come to our dying beds? Alas for us if we cannot then exclaim, "Although my house is not so with God; yet He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure"! We cannot let the vultures tear this Sacrifice, for it is to us the token of the covenant, and if there is no covenant of grace, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain, and we are still under the curse of the broken law. If you are still out of covenant with God, what hope, what safety, what peace, what joy is there for you? Away, you kites, who are hovering over the Sacrifice with ill intent! You may pretend to be harm-

less as doves, but we cannot allow you to profane the covenant, and peck at the Sacrifice.

And next, we must guard this Sacrifice, because *there God most fully displays His grace*. It was at the place of the sacrifice which Abram had offered that God was pleased to come and reveal Himself to the patriarch as He had not done before. "And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp passed between those pieces. In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram." The place of sacrifice is the place of revelation. Where the blood is shed there grace is manifested. If you would see God in the wilderness, you must go to the place where the sacrifices were offered, for the place of sacrifice was the place where God met His people. The mercy seat where God displayed His grace to men was sprinkled with blood. It must always be so. God cannot meet with sinful men except in Him who is the one Mediator between God and man, whose Sacrifice has reconciled us unto Himself. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission," and without remission there is no fellowship. Therefore, as we love the mercy of God, we must contend for the Sacrifice of Christ, and we must not bear that it should be ignored, much less that it should be decried. True religion is gone when the vicarious work of Jesus is questioned. In the forefront of all preaching must be the cross. "In this sign we conquer," as Constantine saw in his dream. There is no conquest over human hearts except by the story of the death of Jesus for the sins of men. Deprive us of the Sacrifice, and behold an army which has lost both its banners and its weapons of war. The gates of hope are closed against the guilty when the atonement is denied. The windows through which light should come to the penitent are sealed against a single beam of hope when once you take away the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ our Lord. Therefore will we drive away the ravenous birds as long as we have a hand to move. As we love the souls of men, we will spend our last breath in the defense of our Lord's substitution. Can we bear to see man's last refuge taken away? God forbid! Away, you evil birds! The heroes of old chased the harpies from their feasts, much more would we drive you from the altar of our God.

We will do this all the more because, as I have said to you before, *this is the chief point of attack*. Every doctrine of revelation has been assailed, but the order of battle passed by the black prince at this hour runs as follows—"Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the crucified King of Israel." If they can carry the bastion of substitution, if they can throw down the great truth of atonement, then all the rest will go, as a matter of course. The cross taken away, indeed, there is nothing left worth defending. If the ark of the Lord is taken, what remains to Israel? Write *Ichabod,* for the glory has departed. Therefore let us gather up our strength, that we may vigorously chase the vultures from the altar of the living God.

"How are we to do it?" one asks. Well, we can all of us help in this struggle. First, *by a constant, immovable faith in Jesus Christ our crucified Savior for ourselves*. Oh, rest in Him, my beloved! Rest more in His great Sacrifice every day, rest more intelligently, more happily, more implicitly

in that finished work of His which He has worked out for all His people. Looking unto Jesus; coming unto Jesus; resting in Jesus; following Jesus; let that be a complete description of your lives. Every day let your own heart be more united to the Well-beloved Bridegroom, love Him best of all as you see Him arrayed in wounds and bloody sweat. Are not these His choicest ornaments? I am sure your hearts are never so stirred with holy feeling as when you dwell at Calvary, and behold the Surety of the covenant dying for you. Think more and more of Him who loved you to the death, and thereby redeemed you from the death which your own sins deserved. Sing to a grave, sweet melody—

"The ever-blessed Son of God
Went up to Calvary for me;
There paid my debt, there bore my load
In His own body on the tree."

Let your own confidence be strong, and then *very frequently make an open declaration of your faith in the atoning Sacrifice*. I say "very frequently," for I think the oblation of our confession of Christ should be presented continually in these days. The more frequently we bring forward the truth of the atonement the better, when so many are covering it, quibbling at it, or contradicting it. Many of our Non-Conformist churches are accustomed to have communion once a month, and think that quite often enough; it may be so, but we delight to bring before the eyes of men on every first day of the week the tokens of the Redeemer's Sacrifice. The tokens are not objects of superstitious reverence to us, but yet they are very dear, as sweetly reminding us of His body broken for our sake, and His blood poured forth for our redemption. As long as that ordinance is observed, there will be a memorial of Christ's death of the most instructive and impressive kind. But whether you can use the emblems or not, declare the truth itself. Let your conversation be full of Christ crucified, and if there is any question anywhere about this matter, take your stand, and let all know that you have seen that Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world. On this point there can be no difference among really regenerate men. This is one of the dividers of the chaff from the wheat. This great magnet will not draw to itself any but the metal which is akin to itself. Take care that there is no hesitancy about this truth. When the birds come down upon the Sacrifice, let your childlike faith in Christ, and your clear statement of the truth about Him, help to drive them away. Those who are not in love with the doctrine will not long court your company. To some of us it is felt to be a duty to make as bold a defense as we can of this imperishable truth, and we would, if we knew of still plainer words, use them constantly.

"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." Stand fast, each man in his place, in the defense of this central truth of our most blessed faith, and be prepared, for the sake of this, to endure all things from the adversary. Abram was an old man, and a vulture and especially a dozen vultures, eager for their prey, are not easy to deal with; they are very ugly customers, they show no respect for the sacrifice, and certainly not for those who would prevent them from dishonoring the sacrifice. Angry, and resolute, and free from every principle of reverence,

nothing is finer play to them than to tear the great sacrifice of God. If we come in their way, they will aim at our eyes, and tear our faces, and our hands. Let them come on; we are prepared for their worst onslaughts. Be ready to endure anything for the sake of the doctrine of a crucified Savior, made sin for us though He knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him; made a curse for us, as it is written, "Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree." The day shall come when he shall count himself most blessed who died for Christ, and earned the ruby crown of those who spilt their blood for His dear sake. Let us emulate them by being willing to sacrifice character, and friendship, and position, and all else, so that we may stand forth unquestionably clear upon this glorious truth, this article by which a church stands or falls. As churches receive it, they stand; as they reject it, they are outside the pale of the true household of faith. "When the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram drove them away." To this work let us give ourselves till the sun goes down, and we fall asleep to behold the vision of God.

II. But now, coming, perhaps, closer home to some of you dear friends, let us apply this example of Abram to ourselves in the matter of THE GRATEFUL SACRIFICE OF OUR LIVES. It is our reasonable service, that we present ourselves a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God by our Lord Jesus Christ, and we must guard our consecration against the temptations which will assail it.

I am addressing tonight many of you who feel that you have *entered into covenant with God by Jesus Christ*. You are henceforth and forever Jehovah's covenanted ones, and in consequence of that covenant, through the Sacrifice of Christ, *you have become the Lord's*. Remember last Sunday night the text which finished, "And you became Mine." There was a sweet ring about those words to my ears, "You became *Mine."* "You are not your own, you are bought with a price." You know the sneer about the "mercantile atonement," but oh, I love the word "bought," and, as if to make it more mercantile still, the Holy Spirit has worded it even more plainly, "bought with a price." We take all those reproaches about the mercantile theory into our bosom, and hide them there, as greater riches than the treasures of philosophy. We are not ashamed of the Words of God Himself. And now, henceforth beloved, we do confess that we belong wholly to Christ, from the crown of our head to the sole of our feet; body, soul, and spirit; time, talent, thought, substance, all that we are, and all that we have. We have been "bought with a price," and henceforth we put in no claim to ourselves, for we belong absolutely to the Lord that bought us. Now, now the vultures will come! The carrion crows and kites will from afar behold this sacrifice, and they will hasten to the prey. You do not see them tonight, perhaps. No, but the traveler does not see these evil fowls, till all of a sudden the sky seems dark with them. The horrid, hideous creatures come like lightning for rapidity, and they are hungry as death when they arrive on the scene. You that are consecrated to God may expect that, though you do not see them, there are vultures looking down upon the sacrifice, and you must be prepared to drive them away.

"What sort of vultures will there be?" asks one. Well, there will come *doubts as to eternal things*. There will be questions about your own wisdom in giving yourself up to God. I hope you have been strangers to such birds of prey, but some of us have not been; doubts as to whether there is a God to serve; doubts as to whether there is a heaven, an eternal future, a blessed reward; doubts as to whether it is well to give up this world for the next, or not. Drive them away, brethren! Drive them away! When the birds come down upon the sacrifice, drive them away, as he did, who had all the riches of Egypt offered to him, yet "endured, as seeing Him who is invisible." This is what you and I must do; feel that it is but commonsense, sanctified commonsense, to be looking out for that which will endure forever, and to let these temporary things go, if it is needful that they go, that we may win the crown that fades not away.

Possibly there will come to some of you younger folks fond *dreams of ambition*. Now you are content to be a Christian, satisfied to mix with poor people in holy service, quite pleased at an opportunity of teaching in a ragged school. Ah! But there may come a moment when Satan will show you the kingdoms of this world, and he will say, "All these will I give you, if you will fall down and worship me," and you may feel as if the service of Christ was not, after all, very respectable, that you could do better in the world, find choicer company, enter more select society. But drive, drive these carrion crows away, my brothers and sisters, there cannot be anything comparable in the world to the service of God, there cannot be anything so worthy of your noblest manhood as to be truly the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. When these fowls come down upon the sacrifice, drive them away.

Another wretched sort of black crows, however, assails men more frequently; they come in the form of *the cares of life*—the care of getting bread, the hardness of labor. Many a man has said, "Well now, I have many children, and I work hard, and I am poor; surely I must not seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness," and straightway he begins to neglect the assembling of himself together with God's people, and then he thinks that he must spend a part of the Sabbath in labor, and times that he used to spend in prayer are given up to meaner employment. But oh! If ever a man ought to cling to Christ more than at any other time, it is when he is poor. You that are burdened with cares, you are the people who need Christ most of all. If a man lived in a palace, and had no Christ to go to, I would call him a miserable being, but if you have to toil without the comforts of this life, so much the more reason that you should enjoy those eternal compensations which can help you to bear up in your struggle. Oh, let not, I pray you, the cares of this life take you from Christ! Live for Him; you cannot live without Him; do not try it. The heavier your difficulties, the more grace you need. Cling all the more closely, to your Lord when troubles come. When the birds come down upon the sacrifice—those carking cares, and wearinesses, and troubles of life—drive them away.

Perhaps I may be speaking to certain consecrated men and women, who have met with other horridly filthy fowls. Of course, you never saw vultures in their native state; if you did see them once, you would never

want to see them again; they are such loathsome creatures. But there will come to godly men, sometimes, *temptations to sin*. The purest have been tempted to impurity; the most devout have been tempted to blaspheme; men full of integrity have been tempted to dishonesty, and the most truthful to falsehood. We cannot tell what we may be tempted to do. But here is our one business with these vultures; let as drive them away. You cannot help birds flying over your heads in the air, but do not let them alight, and build their nests in your hair. Temptations will come, but do not entertain them. Drive them away. Give the vultures the quarter-staff; make these horrible creatures feel that you cannot and will not permit them to take up a lodging anywhere near you. Abram drove them away; he would have no parley with them. He threw his staff at them, shouted at them, struck at them, and drove them away. God help us to do so with every foul temptation!

But there is a nasty, sleepy kind of vulture, called *idleness;* one of the vultures that sit and sleep by the hour together—and I think I have seen them around here sometimes. This vulture comes to some good men, who say they belong to Christ, but that question we must leave to their own consciences. It is a sleepy vulture, and they say that "they think they have labored long enough." They used to be in the Sunday school when they were younger, but they are now weary of such constant toil. They used to be very earnest in the front rank, but now their position seems to be to sit in an arm-chair, and watch the battle, and see how other people fight. I have been slenderly cheered lately by a large number of brethren who have greatly sympathized with me, and helped me to fight the Lord's battles by bravely looking on. They remind me of Mr. Gough's story of Betty and the bear. She beat the bear with her broom with all her might, and her brave husband, who had climbed a ladder into the loft, helped her grandly by bidding her hit the bear harder and harder, while he looked on. I hope I may yet receive worthier help than this. Let us all be up and doing, and take our full share of the warfare. I exhort you, if the vulture of indolence comes your way, to drive it away. A nasty, dirty creature it is, after all, if it makes a man of God who is capable of Christian service, to a high degree, sit still, fold his arms, and say, "There is nothing more for me to do."

One vulture, too, that wants to be driven away, is that of *measuring yourselves with other people*. Some, judge that, they do all that is expected of them if they copy other people. Their guinea is always put underneath somebody else's guinea. If they gave ten, it would not be too much for them, but still they are satisfied as long as they do as well as other people. Let us get out of this. If we are only going to be what other people are, we shall run great risks of being unprofitable servants. "Comparing themselves among themselves," says the apostle, "they are not wise." I will neither stand in another man's shoes at the day of judgment, nor today, for, though I very frequently feel as though I were surer of any other man's salvation than my own, yet at no time would I dare to run the risk of changing with anyone, for I do know something about myself, but I know nothing of any other man's heart. Let no one make another man his measure and standard. I pray you not to do so, for if

you do, it will be a vulture that will defile your sacrifice. The man who can live most completely to God shall be the happiest man even in this life. He, whose heart's desire is, only to spend and be spent for Christ, shall find that he will win a peaceful state of heart, and this is a foreshadowing of heaven. I mean not that we should seek to win this poor and paltry world, which God has purposely put under our feet, but I mean that the meek "inherit the earth" in the highest and truest sense. He shall have the most of real happiness that is willing to lose happiness and lose everything so that he may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having his own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of God by faith. Therefore, when any of the ravenous fowls of evil come down upon your life's sacrifice, drive them away.

III. And so I must close with only a few sentences upon this last point; GUARD ALL THE SACRIFICES OF YOUR DEVOTION. When, the fowls come down upon your sacrifices of prayer, and praise, and meditation, drive them away. Have you noticed that if all day long there is not a knock at the door, there will be one if you retire to pray? It is wise to do as the Savior says, "Enter into your closet, and *when you have shut the door,* pray to your Father that sees in secret." That shutting of the door means that we are to seek secrecy, and to prevent interruption. A little boy, who was accustomed to spend time every day in prayer, went up into a hayloft, and when he climbed into the hayloft, he always pulled the ladder up after him. Someone asked him why he did so. He answered, "As there is no door, I pull up the ladder." Oh, that we could always in some way cut the connection between our soul and the intruding things which lurk below! There is a story told of me and of some person, I never knew who it was, who desired to see me on a Saturday night, when I had shut myself up to make ready for the Sabbath. He was very great and important, and so the maid came to say that someone desired to see me. I bade her say that it was my rule to see no one at that time. Then he was more important and impressive still, and said, "Tell Mr. Spurgeon that a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ desires to see him immediately." The frightened servant brought the message, but the sender gained little by it, for my answer was, "Tell him I am busy with his Master, and cannot see servants now." Sometimes you must use strong measures. Did not our Lord tell His messengers, on one occasion, to salute no man on the way? Courtesy must give place to devotion. It is incumbent on you that you should be alone with your Lord, and if intruders force an entrance, they must be sent about their business.

Alas! If you send men and women away, evil birds will still not be so dismissed. Wandering thoughts and inward troubles—how shall these be chased away? That door must be well shut which keeps the devil out. He comes in at the smallest opening, for he is a serpent, and serpents get in where other creatures cannot; they have a wriggling way with them. Satan will twist himself in to us when we hope we are beyond his reach. Drive him away, brother! He will go if you resist him. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." He will not stand fire if you are determined to have a shot at him. As to vain thoughts which harass and distract you, seriously determine that you will drive them away. All your thoughts of

sorrow, dismiss them at the mercy seat. As for all business thoughts, do not entertain them. Say what Abraham said to the servants, "Abide here while I go and worship God yonder." Tell the world, "So far may you come, but no farther—I must, I will keep my sacrifice of praise and prayer before the Lord." Sir Thomas Abney had been accustomed to have family prayer at a certain time. He was made Lord Mayor of London. His hour of family prayer being sometime about the time of the banquet, he begged to be excused for a little, for he had an urgent engagement with a special friend. He then went and called his family together, to meet with God in prayer. Do the same, if even a banquet should come down upon you; quit the table for the altar, and your guests for your God. When our time for prayer draws near, if all the twelve apostles were to preach in our street, we ought not to give up our private prayer for the sake of hearing them all. When the birds come down upon the sacrifice, drive them away, however fine they may look; drive off the golden eagles as well as the crows. This will require great watchfulness. Cast yourselves upon the power of the Holy Spirit. He alone can help us, even with our infirmities, much more with our distractions. Let us cry to Him, that His divine overshadowing may be both shield and great reward to us while we attempt to draw near to God in private worship.

Now, my dear hearers, I will keep you no longer, except to say this; those of you who came here tonight to hear the Word, I pray you do not go away without a blessing. Something or other has happened, perhaps, to distract you; drive it away. The Sacrifice of Christ is the thing you have to look to. Look unto the Lord Jesus, and be saved, and if anything comes between you and His atoning death, drive it away. Come tonight to Jesus. Why should it not be? It is the last time the preacher will be here on Thursday nights for a little while. Did he not ask for a closing and crowning blessing? It will be realized to the full if you are saved tonight. You can be saved; you shall be saved if you look to Jesus, the great Sin offering. Give yourselves up to the Savior *now,* upon the spot.

You that have believed in Jesus unto eternal life, and have just begun the divine life, it will not be long before you are beset with various temptations. Be prepared for those fowls, whose chief is the prince of the power of the air, and labor to drive them away. You think that, since you are converted, it will be all plain sailing now. You make a mistake; it is now that the battle begins. Be prepared for conflict. I have no doubt Abram, being a sheik, carried a good staff with him. Be ready with a staff, borrowed from the good Shepherd, to drive away the temptations that are sure to assail young believers.

As for you dear old saints, you have offered your sacrifice, and it is towards evening, and the sun is going down, do not be surprised if you should feel a horror of great darkness, even at the last, but rest assured that the Lord will come, and cheer your darkness with the vision of His covenant love. Drive those doubts away, and those fears of death. You are going home; do not be afraid. Jesus is coming to meet you, therefore dismiss every fear. Stand by the sacrifice all day; stand by the sacrifice when night comes on, birds or no birds. Stand by the sacrifice whether you see a vision of glory or not. Stand by the sacrifice till you behold the

Lamb on His throne. One thing I have made up my mind to, whether I find present joy or present sorrow, present commendation or present censure, I will be faithful to my Lord, and stand by the sacrifice until I die with one hand upon this Book, and another upon the horns of the altar. I would cry this night in the courts of the Lord's house, in the presence of all His people, "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even with cords, to the altar." I will be a sacrifice for Jesus because He is a Sacrifice for me. I count it all joy to preach Him and His cross if I may but win souls and be found in Him at the last. The Lord bless you, and be with you, my brethren, for Christ's sake!

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—GENESIS 15.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—377, 670, 379.

TO THE CHURCH AT THE TABERNACLE:

BELOVED FRIENDS—I write you because my heart prompts me to do so, and because many of you desire it. We have not been in hearty union for so many years without feeling a living interest in each other. This should be more largely the fruit of church membership than it usually is. The idea of real brotherhood should be more tenderly and more practically realized. Let us each one labor after it, and take a deep personal interest in our fellow members, especially in those who are poor, or ill, or young, or despondent, or under peculiar temptations and afflictions.

Thus should we make up among ourselves a sort of mutual pastorate, and should each gain as well as bestow a blessing. Because there is so much of this brotherly concern among you, I feel peace of heart while absent; but because there is not more of it, I would stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance.

We are all the children of one Father, and redeemed with the precious blood of the same Savior. Let us, therefore, feel a natural instinct of unity, and from the force of the inner life cleave to each other in love. We are likely to need more and more that strength which comes from perfect unity of heart. Attacks will be made upon us by the forces of error, and we must stand shoulder to shoulder, or rather heart to heart, in the hour of conflict. May the Lord Himself, by His Holy Spirit, enable us so to do!

My release from public service was greatly needed, for I have felt great prostration since last I wrote you. By your loving prayers I shall be strengthened, and enabled to use my rest for laying in new stores for future use. How much I desire that when I am again among you it may be in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of peace!

I desire to be remembered to each one as truly as if I could grasp every hand, and say, "God bless you," to each individual.

Yours in Christ Jesus,
November 17, 1887.
C. H. SPURGEON.

P.S.—So far as this letter applies to all my readers, it is for them; assuredly I include them all in every word of Christian affection, for it is to this larger church that I owe so much of substantial help in the various Christian enterprises committed to my charge.

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

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

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SWEET PEACE FOR TRIED BELIEVERS
NO. 1994

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 4, 1887,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 31, 1887,

"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you might have peace. In the world you will have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."
John 16:33.

THIS most delightful passage occurs at the close of the last of our Savior's sermons before He went to the Father. Let us treasure it as we lay up a man's last words. Wonderfully full is that sermon; it is of a piece with His last prayer, and that rises above all other pleadings of men. This farewell discourse may occupy but a short space in Scripture, but the thoughts suggested by it are so many that I suppose that the world itself might hardly contain the books that might fairly be written upon it. It took our Lord but a moment to speak some of its sentences; it will take us a lifetime to fully understand them. Perhaps we never shall understand some of these gracious sayings till we have put away all childish things, and shall have come to the fullness of the stature of men in Christ Jesus. We shall never see all the richness of the grace of this sermon till we have risen beyond these mists and clouds into the clearer atmosphere of the unclouded skies. In that happy country, being ourselves raised to a nobler condition, we shall be better able to comprehend the deep things of God, concerning which our Savior spoke in His supreme discourse. Meanwhile, let us apply our heart and mind to the consideration of these last words of the greatest of all preachers, the dearest of all teachers, and may the Spirit of our God open them up to us!

Observe concerning the preaching of our Lord Jesus how eminently practical it is. You never find in the Master's speaking a single sentence spoken for what orators use to call "effect." He never introduces a pretty bit here and there to let men see how poetical His mind could be. He never goes a little aside to introduce a something which was quite unnecessary to the display of the subject, but very necessary to the display of the orator. Nothing so little, and so self-seeking, ever governs the mind of Jesus. Far from it. His soul goes with His subject, and He has no second objective; He would convey His meaning to His hearers, and His mind is concentrated on that aim. He keeps hard at it, steadily driving at His point, and He speaks ever with the one desire that the truth should go home to the heart, and should be blessed to the hearer. Hence He adopted the method in this instance of summing up, and doing what the

old divines used to call "making the improvement" at the end, when the truth which they had spoken was turned to practical account, and the uses of the topic were enlarged upon. We might have found out, perhaps, by diligent study, what the practical drift of the Savior's discourse was, for it is never difficult for a spiritual mind to perceive His drift, but He meant not only that we might possibly see what He was aiming at, but that we should be sure of seeing it, and so He puts it into the plainest language, and He says, "These things have I spoken unto you, that in Me you might have peace."

If this was our Lord's objective, I do not doubt that He had fully accomplished it. All that He had said tended to produce peace in His disciples' hearts, but He knew that their minds were dark—that they had but slight capacity as yet, and so in His infinite tenderness He told them, as one might tell a child, what He intended His address to produce. We thank Him for this, and herein would we endeavor to copy Him. We hope that our friends will always bear with us when we try to be very plain and simple, and spend much of our strength in pointing out what is the practical bearing of the truth which we are teaching. It will be better to be considered needlessly explicit than to miss the end we have in view.

Let us greatly prize this conclusion of the Savior's ministry. It is all the more endeared to some of us by the fact that *our Lord finished as He began*. He is our peace; He came to bring it, and He left it behind Him as He went away. Even before He had commenced His life-work it was announced of Him that He came to bring "peace on earth, good will toward men," and before He is taken up, His last words must necessarily be, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you." It was fit that He should close the service of His life wherein He had preached peace, by pronouncing this as His benediction. "These things have I spoken to you, that in Me you might have peace."

In trying to handle this text tonight, aiming at the same practical end as my divine Lord and Master, I shall notice, first of all, *the believer in Christ,* and in Christ he is at peace. Secondly, *the believer in the world,* and in the world he has tribulation. And thirdly, *the believer in the world and in Christ,* and in that condition he has victory. "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." May the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of peace, bless the word which I may now speak unto you!

I. First, you have THE BELIEVER IN CHRIST spoken of in reference to his peace. Jesus says—"That in Me you might have peace." It is worthy of careful consideration that in Jesus Himself there was ever present an abiding peace. *He had peace*. If He had not Himself possessed peace, we could not have had peace in Him. But what a holy calm there was upon the spirit of our divine Master! Read His life through, and dwell upon any one delightful characteristic, and you will find Him perfect, but if you study it carefully in order to remark upon His manliness, His self-possession, His calm and peaceful bearing in the midst of turmoil and provocation, you will find Him to be a master of the art of peace. Truly in patience He possessed His soul. Never man had more to disturb Him, but never man was less disturbed. He could not be turned aside from any-

thing which He had resolved to do, for He set His face like a flint, and in the doing of it He could not be excited or discouraged, for His spirit was not of this changing world. Men might oppose Him, but He endured great contradiction of sinners against Himself with marvelous long-suffering. When His eager and foolish disciples would push Him forward, or would hold Him back, He was moved neither in the one direction nor in the other by any of them, but He steadfastly held to the even tenor of His way, His soul abiding in God, giving glory to God, and resting in the eternal Power and Godhead which He knew to be always at His side. The background of the life of Christ is the omnipresence of the Father. Wherever you see Him—if you see Him quite alone when every disciple has forsaken Him—you see this text expounded, "You will leave Me alone, and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me."

Now this fact that He felt the presence of the Father, and did not occasionally speak to God, but *dwelt* with Him—that He did not resort to God as a make-shift in time of trouble, but abode with God at all times, and so kept His spirit above everything that would draw it down, this it was that filled Him with an unbroken peace. Even Gethsemane did not break that peace. Covered with the bloody sweat He still cries, "Not as I will, but as You will." When His soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death, yet He knows where His Father is, and He keeps His hold upon Him, and maintains His intimacy with Him. He feels that one word from Him would presently bring more than twelve legions of angels to His rescue. Such is the position of favor which He still occupies with God, even when the sin of man is laid upon Him. O friends, Christ has peace enough and to spare. He is Himself, personally, the deep well-spring of an endless peace, and therefore we can understand why we always find peace in Him. One calm and quiet man has sometimes spread peace through what otherwise would have been terrified company. One Paul standing in the sinking ship saves all from ruin by the majesty of His immovable courage, and one Christ—such a Christ as ours—in the midst of a church turns a horde of cowards into an army of heroes. His infinite peace breathes peace into our vacillating spirits. We rest because we see how He rests.

Now, as the Master had peace in Himself, *He had a strong desire that all His disciples should have peace*. I was about to say that it was with our Lord "the ruling passion strong in death." It was strong within Him when He was coming very near His passion, and was about to go into Gethsemane, and then to Golgotha. Quietly He said, "These things have I spoken to you, that in Me you might have peace." Our Lord Jesus Christ delights to see His people firm, calm, happy. I do not think that He is so pleased to see them excited, although we have those around us who seem to think that great grace can only display itself by raving and raging. The religion of the quiet Jesus was never intended to drive us to the verge of insanity. "He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear His voice in the streets." His Holy Spirit is no raven or eagle, but a dove; His holy influences are powerful, and therefore calm. Weakness hurries, rages, shouts, for it has need to do so. Strength moves with its own de-

liberate serenity, and effects its purpose. To those who think that saints should be maniacs, Jesus says, "Peace! Peace!"

On the other hand we are quite certain that our Lord Jesus does not desire His disciples to be depressed. To some the fit color for piety seems to be gray, drab, or full mourning. But it is not so, the saints are arrayed in white linen, which is the emblem of gladness as well as of purity. The Savior does not wish His disciples to go through the world as through twilight of sadness, whispering in fear, because of judgments to come, and suppressing all joy because of the evils with which they are surrounded. No, brethren, Jesus wishes us all to be happy in Himself, with a quiet peacefulness like His own. He was no laughing maker of merriment, but still He was serenely confident, and He would have us keep to His pitch, and be at peace. "These things have I spoken to you, that in Me you might have peace."

We have a great end to serve; we have a grand life to live; we have a grand Helper ready to help us if we will but believe in Him, therefore, we need not blow a trumpet before we begin, and we need not make a fuss when we are in the midst of our service, nor need we lie down on the ground as if we were the most wretched of men because of our heavenly calling. No, but we may just feel, "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge," and walk with God through life in that holy quiet which springs of conscious strength. Let us enjoy the calm of heart which comes of knowing that the reserves of God are infinite and that at any moment they can come to the front and deliver us should an emergency occur. Oh, that we could learn from Christ the art of peace! He desires that we should have it. Then we should not be so often up and so speedily down, today so brimming over and tomorrow so empty, one moment so fast and another so slow, unduly exhilarated at one moment and at the next so needlessly depressed. We ought not to be movable as waves, but fixed as stars. We ought not to be as thistledown, the sport of every wind, but as yonder granite peak, which defies the storms of the ages. "These things have I spoken to you, that in Me you might have peace"—"peace." Oh, to get it, and to keep it, through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Thus I have noticed that He had peace, and He wished us to have it.

But now notice again that *in order to their having peace He spoke to them certain words*—"These things have I spoken to you, that in Me you might have peace." It will do you good, when you are at home, to read over the preceding chapter, and note with diligence what the Lord Jesus said in order to give His disciples peace, for that same thing will give *us* peace. If you please you may go back to the fifteenth chapter, and even to the fourteenth, where you read—"Let not your heart be troubled." When you are at it, you may, if you like, go all through the Book, backward or forward, searching for peace as for a pearl and you will not err even then, for the great objective of all these Scriptures which in the deepest sense were all spoken by Jesus Christ is that you may have peace. But especially let us dwell upon these particular words in this sixteenth chapter of John, for to these He chiefly alludes.

Now, what did He say to them that they might have peace? One thing was that *He foretold their trials.* He said to them, "They shall put you out of the synagogues: yes, the time comes, that whosoever kills you will think that he does God service." Learn then that one way for you to gain peace is to reflect upon it, that trial is promised you, that trial is in the covenant, that persecution and the ill-will of an ungodly world are evils which you are bound to endure. They are guaranteed to you by the very fact of your being of the seed of the woman whose heel must be bruised, and they will come to you in your measure. Expect trials as you look for clouds and rain in the English climate. If this island is your dwelling place, you cannot look for the climate of India, neither ought you to complain of winter and frost, for these are a part of a Briton's inheritance. You must take the rough with the smooth. When exceedingly severe persecutions and afflictions happen to you, they will seem to the adversary to be evident tokens of perdition, but to you they will be evident tokens of the truth of God's word, and of your being yourself a true lineal descendant of that persecuted Savior who told you, "If they persecute Me, they will also persecute you. The disciple is not above His Master, nor the servant above His Lord." Do, then, make yourself familiar with trial. Wonder when it does *not* come, and when it does come, say, "Ah! You are an old acquaintance of mine." There is such a thing as carrying your cross till you are so accustomed to it that you would be almost uneasy without it. You may bear a burden on your back so long that, if that burden were taken away, you would miss it. The Lord has made some of His children fond of their cross. It was so with Rutherford. He said at last that he was half afraid lest his cross, which had become so sweet to him, might rival Christ Himself. I never feel any fear of *that* myself, for pain is very much dreaded by my coward flesh, but I suppose that there are saints who have come to feel that the bitter is so beneficial, that they would prefer its tonic to the sweetest cup that was ever mingled. It is an acquired taste, no doubt, but he that has it will be at peace about trouble. It shall help you greatly to attain peace if you expect rough treatment while you are a sojourner in this present evil world.

The next thing He did to comfort them was, that *He told them why He was going away*. It is often a choice blessing, when you have a great trial, to know what it is sent for. That is a wise petition if not pressed too far—"Show me why You contend with me." The Savior was going, because it was expedient for them that He should go. Does it not take away the sting of a trial when you know by faith that it is expedient that such and such a grief should happen to you? If it is expedient that the dear child should be taken from your arms—expedient that the business should not prosper—expedient that you yourself should be struck with a sickness which no faith will remove, so that you bow to the divine wisdom. The God who is better to you than all your fears, yes, better than your hopes, perhaps intends the affliction to remain with you until it lifts the latch of heaven for you, and lets you into your eternal rest. Now, when the Savior told them why He was going, the condescending information was meant to produce peace in their hearts. He has also told you

why your trials are sent to you; they work your lasting good; therefore rest concerning them.

Further, to give them peace, the Savior went on *to speak to them of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, and what the Comforter would do*. He enlarged upon that theme, since it was so cheering. Beloved, if you want peace, think much of the divine Comforter. You are not left alone. You are not left without the tenderest sympathy of One who knows how to cheer the heaviest heart. You are not left without a friend more able than all other friends to enter into your secret griefs, and administer to you the most potent consolations. Think much of the Holy Spirit in His office as Comforter, and the meditation will foster peace within your spirit. How ill we treat the Holy Spirit by our few and superficial thoughts of Him! Let us henceforth adore Him with deeper love and reverence.

Then He told them about *the power of prayer*. He said, "Whatsoever you shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it to you," and again "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you." What a breath of peace cools the forehead of the man who remembers that he may pray, and that prayer is heard in heaven! There is a noise in the streets, there is a disturbance within doors, even your own heart is perturbed; what then? Let us pray. The known remedy for unknown evils is prayer. Oh, the peace that comes from the mercy seat! You that are familiar with it will bear me witness that it is wonderful what storms it will quell, what cyclones it will quiet. Only pray, and you are master of the situation. Like your Master, you may walk the waves of the sea, when you have but the power in His name to speak to those waves, and bid them be still, and He gives you that power when you draw near to Him in believing prayer.

All this must have greatly tended to produce peace, but as if this might not be enough, our tender Lord let slip a precious word that ought to give peace to all our minds, *"The Father Himself loves you."* The love of God the Father is a treasure-house of peace. The *Father Himself*—not moved by the importunities of His pleading Son, but Himself, of His own accord, loves you. O Father God, how have You sometimes been slandered, as though You were backward to love us, and Your Son must necessarily persuade You! No, it is not so. God loved His people, and, therefore He sent His Son to redeem them. "He so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." Christ is not the cause of divine love, but the sweetest and best fruit of it. "The Father Himself loves you." Therefore, be of good cheer, and let your peace be like a river.

And then, dear friends, *He confirmed their faith in Himself*. He so spoke to them that at last they said, "Now are we sure. By this we believe," and so on. This is the way to get peace. Peace comes by the way of faith. Those of you who are very fond of doubts, can, perhaps, tell me whether you ever derived any peace from them. Time is but ill-used when we pore over books which are calculated to shake our faith; as well eat food which is sure to make us ill. There are certain men who are always busy with the Scriptures to try and find difficulties in them, and if they cannot find them in the English version, then straightway they will sooner have

a new translation than miss their precious difficulty. This is as foolish as if we should refuse to eat our Christmas pudding because we could not find any stones in the plums, or any hard lumps in the sugar upon which to break our teeth upon. The great objective of some men seems to be to find in the Bible something which they cannot believe, for my part I am delighted with what I do believe. They cultivate doubts, while a wise man regards them as weeds, and burns them in a heap. The Lord knows there is sorrow enough in this world without laboring to make more, and I should like to ask all such critics and great discoverers whether they believe that their discoveries tend at all to the creation of peace in their own minds, or in the minds of others? I believe, and then I get peace. I believe and am sure; then is my peace like a river, and my righteousness like the waves of the sea. Luther tells us how he found peace when one said to him, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins." Oh, if one did but believe what he professes to believe! I mean believed it fully! That way lies peace—in believing up to the hilt. The child-like way, of sitting at Jesus' feet, and receiving His words—this is the path of peace. All the outgrowth of quibbling and caviling may be summed up as thorns and briers, tearing the flesh and rending the spirit. These things had Christ spoken, that they might believe in Him, for well He knew that the victory which overcomes trial is faith, and not doubt. Believing, and not questioning, is the King's highway.

I must notice that *our Master's wish that we might have peace was qualified by those two words, "in Me"*—"That *in Me* you might have peace." Remember, then, you may not expect to derive peace from yourselves. You will turn that dunghill over a long while before you find the jewel of peace in it. Our Lord did not even intend that we should find peace in outward ordinances, or religious exercises. No doubt it is very quieting to read a chapter, or to attend a service, or to come to communion, but it is not the Lord's intent that these should of themselves yield us peace. These are to be means to peace, but the peace must always be *in Himself,* in His own blessed Person. We must get to Him, for this is His wish, "that *in Me* you might have peace"—peace only in Him, but peace always in Him. Peace of the deepest, truest, most constant, most emphatic kind is only found in Jesus. Peace in all seasons, and in all difficulties, peace forever, all this is in Him, and in Him only. Outside of Him it is all tossing to and fro, and question, and fog, and haze, and fear, but in Him we dwell as in a sheepfold, where the sheep lie down and rest. In Him we are in a home where all is love and comfort. Brothers, sisters, let us not wander from this sacred center of serene repose, lest we wander from peace. It is this man who shall be the peace, this Son of God who shall give us rest; let us then come to Him at once in every case; yes, let us always abide in Him. His wish is that His joy may be in us, and therefore He says, "These things have I spoken to you, that in Me you might have peace."

Thus have I said well-near enough to you upon this first point of the believer in Christ, and His peace.

II. I have been a long while on that head, and I want to be all the shorter on the second—THE BELIEVER IN THE WORLD finds himself like wheat under the flail, for so the text puts it, "In the world you will have tribulation."

That is, first, *you are not screened from any kind of trouble*. You are in Christ, and the Savior saves you from your sins, but He has not promised that you will have no sorrow. He has not promised to screen you from either poverty, or toil, or sickness, or slander, or any of the common ills of mankind. Some of the very best of His beloved have been enriched and indulged by being permitted to undergo much secret discipline of pain, and sorrow, and want. Your Lord, among the treasures that He gives you, grants a cross. You start back, and say, "Not *that,* Lord," but He answers, "Yes, *this,* My child. This and no other." The cross is the best piece of furniture in your house, though you have sometimes wished it was not there. It shall always work your good; it does work it now. Some of the comforts allotted to you in providence will be questionable in their effect upon you, by reason of your sinfulness and weakness, but the cross which the Lord appoints you has no result but your good. It is a bitter tree, apparently, but it is a healthful medicine. Take it, child of God; plant it, and let it grow, and its fruit shall be sweet. We are not guarded from tribulation, but we are promised it, and we are benefited by it.

We are not favored by being promised the admiration of the ungodly. "In the world"—not merely in this present state, but in this ungodly world—we shall have tribulation. Worldlings will not gather round you to admire your excellence and assist your piety. If they did I should think that either the world had changed, or else it had made a mistake about you. Which of the two it is, I do not say. I do not think that it can be that the world has changed. Worldlings may like a Christian for certain externals, they may admire him for certain advantages they get from him, but as a Christian they cannot love him. That is impossible. There is an enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman, and you had better understand that it is so, because the serpent has not changed his nature, but is a vile deceiver and destroyer still. He still exhibits his glittering scales, and speaks as craftily and flatteringly to us as he did to mother Eve, and, perhaps, to you he says that he loves you more than he can tell, only you are so unfriendly and suspicious that he has never been able to show his affection. Yes, he sees in you so much to admire that he wishes you were not quite so strait-laced, for then he could introduce you to his dear friends and children, for you would do them no end of good. Hit him across the head if you get an opportunity, for he means no good to you. Of all the devils in the world I hate a roaring devil least, but a fawning devil is the worst devil that ever a man meets. When the world pretends to love, understand that it now hates you more cordially than ever, and is carefully baiting its trap to catch you and ruin you. Beware of the Judas kiss with which the Christ was betrayed, and with which you will be betrayed unless you are well upon your guard. In the world and from the world you shall have tribulation.

The text puts this in such a broad way that it gives a hint that in the world you will have tribulation *often*. Affliction is not with us always, but it is well to be always prepared for it. There are times in which we enjoy prosperity; some Christians enjoy much of it, and do not let them be much alarmed because they do so, for what the Lord's providence sends us is not harmful in itself, and is to be accepted without suspicion. I remember that a person came to me once and told me that she had prayed for affliction. I replied, "Dear soul, dear soul, do not be so foolish. You will have quite enough trouble without asking for it." If a child were to ask his father to let him be whipped, he would be a strange sort of child, and I should think he would not be likely to repeat the experiment if he had a practical man for a father. No, no, no! That is not our path of duty. If God spares us tribulation let us be thankful to Him, but if He does not spare us let us be equally thankful. This last is a hard lesson to learn, but we ought to learn it. We shall frequently endure tribulation, for we are born to it at our first birth, as the sparks fly upward. It is also certain that our second birth introduces us to a second set of tribulations. He sang a true song who gave us this verse—

"'Poor and afflicted,' 'tis their lot,
They know it, and they murmur not;
It would ill become them to refuse
The state their Master deigned to choose."

Again, in the world you will *emphatically* have tribulation. If anybody else has it you shall, and if nobody else has it, yet you will have it. You shall have it, perhaps, where you least wish it or reckon on it. "A man's foes shall be they of his own household." "Any cross but the one I have," cried one. Surely it would not be a cross if you had the choosing of it, for it is of the essence of a cross that it should run counter to our liking. It must be something from which the flesh shrinks, which is not for the present joyous but grievous. So our Lord puts it, "In the world you will have tribulation." I wonder how many Christians here could say that they have *not* found it so. I think that the most of us—at least, all I know of—would say that the prophecy of our Lord has been abundantly verified. And must it not be so in the nature of things? Has not this world been a place of sorrow ever since Adam broke his Maker's command? Did not the mandate then go forth, "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to you. Dust you are, and unto dust shall you return"? To a Christian man must not the world bring tribulation and anguish because it is a world which lies in the wicked one. The Christian is not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world. He is out of his element. He is an alien. He is a pilgrim. Can he expect the comforts of home while he tarries here? It is a world uncongenial to his spiritual nature. There is nothing in it to help him. This world is a foe to grace, and not a friend to it, and hence the gracious man must have tribulation. If he is to be like his Lord he certainly will have it, and if he is to be like the Lord's people, he will have it, for they are a line of cross-bearers. There is no exception to this rule if you take the whole of any believer's life, though for a while certain favored men may seem to be the darlings of providence. Job multiplied his riches, and dwelt at ease with a hedge about him. He thought, per-

haps, that he would have no tribulation to bear, but the flail seemed made of iron when at last it fell. So may the most prosperous have all the greater trial when the day of adversity arrives.

Brethren, I was thinking, as I turned over this subject, that though there is tribulation in the world, we still get far too fond of the world. We are always trying to pluck handfuls of its flowers, and if its roses had no thorns we would bury ourselves in heaps of them! We would never quit the nest and learn to fly if the Lord did not stir up our nest even as does the eagle. We should want to tarry here forever, and say, "Lo, this is my home," if it were not that an unkind world gives us aliens' treatment, and forces us to feel that here we are in exile. One said to a great man, as he looked over his gardens, "These are the things that make it hard to die." As we are not to live here, but must soon be up and away to the better land where our life can far better develop, it is fit that in the world we should have tribulation, that we may turn our thoughts and our desires towards that dear city of our God where alone is our dwelling place. Thanks be unto God for the tribulation which weans our thoughts from earth, and wins them for heaven, and let all the people say, "Amen."

III. But now, lastly, let us view THE BELIEVER IN THE WORLD AND IN CHRIST, and this means victory. I will occupy but a moment or two to say, that if we dwell in Christ, though we have also to dwell in the world, yet we shall overcome the world.

I call your special attention to the words of our Lord Jesus in the text— "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." *Our Lord was at that time still in the world.* Do you know where Christ was when He said *that?* Why, He was on the edge of Gethsemane. He was at the foot, so to speak, of Golgotha, where He was to die. He had not then borne the scourge and the cross. But I dare not lay my hand upon my Master, and say, "Good Lord, You have made a mistake. You have not yet overcome, for the worst part of the battle has not come to You." He knew what He said, and made no error in saying it. Oh, but it was bravely spoken! The faith which abode in Him made Him say, "I have overcome." On the verge of the fight He said, "I have overcome." John caught up this word when he afterwards said, "This is the victory which overcomes the world, even our faith," because it was by faith that our blessed Lord said at this moment, "I have overcome the world." He spoke in the prescience of faith. He took for granted that He would overcome the world, for the Father was with Him.

But up to that point it was assuredly true, as it was even to the end, that *He had really overcome the world.* Its blandishments He had overcome. Its temptations He had overcome. Its terrors He had overcome. Its errors He had overcome. Everything in the world that had assailed Him He had put to the rout. He was tempted in all points like as we are, but He remained without sin. He had overcome everything that had come to attack His holiness, His patience, His self-sacrifice; He had been victor at every point.

Now, here is a matter of joyful consideration; our Lord says, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." But what cheer is there in that?

Well, the cheer lies in the fact which He does not here state, but which He had stated before, namely, that *He is one with us, and we are one with Him*. He does as good as say, "I have overcome the world, and you are in Me, your Head. My overcoming of the world belongs to you. I, your Leader, have overcome the world for you. I have led the way in this dread fight, and conquered the adversaries which you have now to fight with, and thus I have virtually won the battle before you begin it."—

"Hell and your sins obstruct your course,
But hell and sins are vanquished foes:
Your Jesus nailed them to His cross,
And sang the triumph when He rose."

"I have Myself," says Jesus, "overcome for you that you may overcome in Me. Now, go to the fight, to rout the already worsted enemy, and triumph over a serpent whose head I have already broken."

We derive, then, from the fact that Christ has overcome, the assurance that we shall overcome, since we are one with Him, members of His body, and parts of Himself. O brothers, sisters, you must fight your way through. You cannot quit this conflict. You have to cut your way through a solid wall of difficulties; there is no other course! But you are going to do it. You shall do it. A great commander commences a campaign. Does he desire that there shall be no battle? If so, how is it a war? How is he a soldier? He certainly can send home no reports of victory if there is no fighting. He can never come to be a great commander if he never distinguishes himself in the field. So let us consider that every battle-field to which God calls us is only another opportunity of victory, and, Christ being with us, another certainty of victory. Onward, then, you Christian soldiers!—

"Let your drooping hearts be glad;
March in heavenly armor clad."

Let not the brightness of your armor be stained by the rust of fear. You shall overcome as surely as your Lord has overcome. If you commit yourself to His keeping, and abide in Him who is all in all to you, no defeat can possibly befall you.

I have this last word to add. There may be some here who will say, "Look, look; these Christian people have plenty of trouble." That is quite true, but they are not the only ones to be pitied, "Many sorrows shall be to the wicked." Those who are not in Christ Jesus shall also find tribulation in this world, for thorns and thistles spring up more numerously in the field of the sluggard than anywhere else. The wicked shall find that there are special sorrows for them—whips of scorpions for them, especially when they get farther on in life, and their youthful fires burn down to a black ash. Woe unto sinners when they have to reap the fruits of their evil deeds! O sirs, I would not go through life without a Savior, as you do, no, not if I might be made an emperor. To have to fight this life-battle without Christ is sure defeat. What a discovery it will be when, having struggled through one life of sorrow, you shall find yourself beginning another life of greater sorrow, which will never come to an end!

It is an awful thing for a man to go from hell to hell; to make this world a hell, and then find another hell in the next world! But it were a

blessed thing to go through fifty hells to heaven, if such a thing could be. It is glorious to struggle on through poverty, and sickness, and persecution, and to hear at last the word, "Well done!" That will be glorious! Who aspires to it? God help each one of us to labor after it, and give us strength to carry on the holy war, and fight it through even to the end!

But if you are wrapping yourselves up in these poor joys, these wretched rags of earth, and are living to make money, or to get drink, or to enjoy yourselves in the hurtful luxuries of lust, God have mercy upon you, and save you! Hear the gospel, each one of you! "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." The Lord lead you to do so, for His name's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 16.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—734, 744, 779.

A POSTSCRIPT TO THE SERMON FROM MR. SPURGEON:

At this time I am compelled by fervent gratitude to acknowledge, in the mass, a vast amount of loving encouragement for which it is impossible for me to tender individual thanks. The "Down Grade" controversy has cost me dear in several ways, and the pain of heart I have endured I would not wish any other man to bear. But the floods of enthusiastic sympathy have washed out the footprints of sorrow, and left many precious things upon the shores of my memory. I had cast myself upon the Lord alone, willing to be forsaken of all for the truth's sake; and hence it is an extra joy to find so many unlooked-for-friends and helpers in every part of the Christian church. Human sympathy is in this case the basket of silver to bear to me the golden apples of divine consolation. I now know of a surety that there are tens of thousands that have not bowed the knee to "modern thought."

I have felt some little fear lest my orphans should be made to suffer through my actions. They, at least, are innocent of any controversy; yet it is within the possibilities of unhallowed anger that subscriptions to their support should be withheld because of my protest and secession. Those who maintain error are not always very choice in their arguments. I can bear anything myself, God helping me; but I hope I shall not see the Orphanage, or any other of the Institutions under my care, suffering through this solemn debate. Will not my faithful friends see that it is not so? I have no great alarm about it, but it is sometimes well to stir up pure minds by way of remembrance.

During my absence letters containing aid for the Orphanage had better be directed to Mr. F. G. Ladds, Stockwell Orphanage, Clapham Road, London; and he will report them to me.

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

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

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THE HEART: A GIFT FOR GOD
NO. 1995

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 11, 1887,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"My son, give Me your heart."
Proverbs 23:26.

THESE are the words of Solomon speaking in the name of wisdom, which wisdom is but another name for the Lord Jesus Christ, who is made of God unto us wisdom. If you ask, "What is the highest wisdom upon the earth?" it is to believe in Jesus Christ whom God has sent—to become His follower and disciple, to trust Him and imitate Him. It is God, in the person of His dear Son, who says to each one of us, "My son, give Me your heart." Can we answer, "Lord, I have given You my heart"? Then we are His sons. Let us cry, "Abba, Father," and bless the Lord for the high privilege of being His children. "Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God."

I. Let us look at this precept, "My son, give Me your heart," and notice, first, that LOVE PROMPTS THIS REQUEST OF WISDOM.

Only love seeks after love. If I desire the love of another, it can surely only be because I myself have love toward him. We care not to be loved by those whom we do not love. It is an embarrassment rather than an advantage to receive love from those to whom we would not return it. When God asks human love, it is because God is love. As the sparks mount toward the sun, the central fire, so ought our love rise toward God, the central source of all pure and holy love. It is an instance of infinite condescension that God should say, "My son, give Me your heart." Notice the strange position in which it puts God and man. The usual position is for the creature to say to God, "Give me," but here the Creator cries to feeble man, "Give Me." The Great Benefactor Himself becomes the Petitioner—stands at the door of His own creatures, and asks, not for offerings, nor for words of praise, but for their hearts. Oh, it must be because of the great love of God that He condescends to put Himself into such a position, and if we were right-minded, our immediate response would be, "Do *You* seek my heart? Here it is, my Lord." But, alas! Few

thus respond, and none do so except those who are, like David, men after God's own heart. When God says to such, "Seek you My face," they answer at once, "Your face, Lord, will we seek," but this answer is prompted by divine grace. It can only be love that seeks love.

Again, *it can only be supreme love which leads wisdom to seek after the heart of such poor things as we are*. The best saints are poor things, and as for some of us who are not the best, what poor, poor things we are! How foolish! How slow to learn! Does wisdom seek us for scholars? Then wisdom must be of a most condescending kind. We are so guilty, too. We shall rather disgrace than honor the courts of wisdom if she admits us to her school. Yet she says to each of us, "Give Me your heart. Come and learn of Me." Only love can invite such scholars as we are. I am afraid we shall never do much to glorify God; we have but small parts to begin with, and our position is obscure. Yet, common-place people though we are, God says to each one of us, "My son, give Me your heart." Only infinite love would come a-wooing to such wretched hearts as ours.

For what has God to gain? Brothers and sisters, if we did all give our hearts to Him, in what respect would He be the greater? If we gave Him all we have, would He be the richer? "The silver and the gold are Mine," He says, "and the cattle on a thousand hills. If I were hungry, I would not tell you." He is too great for us to make Him greater, too good for us to make Him better, too glorious for us to make Him more illustrious. When He comes a-wooing, and cries, "Give Me your heart," it must be for our benefit, and not for His own. Surely it is more blessed for us to give than for Him to receive. He can gain nothing; we gain everything by the gift. Yet He does gain a son, and that is a sweet thought. Everyone that gives God His heart becomes God's son, and a father esteems his children to be treasures, and I reckon that God sets a higher value upon His children than upon all the works of His hand besides. We see the Great Father's likeness in the story of the returning prodigal. The father thought more of his returning son than of all that he possessed besides. "It was meet," said he "that we should make merry, and be glad: for this your brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found." Oh, I tell you, you that do not know the Lord, that if you give your hearts to Him you will make Him glad! The Eternal Father will be glad to get back His lost son, to press to His bosom a heart warm with affection for Him, which heart before had been cold and stony towards Him. "My son, give Me your heart," He says, as if He longed for our love, and could not bear to have children that had forgotten Him. Do you not hear Him speak? Speak, Spirit of God, and make each one hear You say, "My son, give Me your heart"!

You who are sons of God already may take my text as a call to give God your heart anew, for—I do not know how it is—men are wonderfully scarce now, and men with hearts are rare. If preachers had larger hearts, they would move more people to hear them. A sermon preached without love falls flat and dead. We have heard sermons, admirable in composition, and excellent in doctrine, but like that palace which the Empress of Russia built upon the Neva of blocks of ice. Nothing more lustrous, nothing more sharply cut, nothing more charming, but oh, so cold, so very cold! Its very beauty a frost to the soul! "My son," says God to every preacher, "give Me your heart." O minister, if you cannot speak with eloquent tongue, at least let your heart run over like burning lava from your lips! Let your heart be like a geyser, scalding all that come near you, permitting none to remain indifferent. You that teach in the school, you that work for God in anyhow, do it thoroughly well. "Give Me your heart, My son," says God. It is one of the first and last qualifications of a good workman for God that he should put his heart into his work. I have heard mistresses tell servants when polishing tables that elbow grease was a fine thing for such work, and so it is. Hard work is a splendid thing. It will make a way under a river, or through an Alp. Hard work will do almost everything, but in God's service it must not only be hard work, but hot work. The heart must be on fire. The heart must be set upon its design. See how a child cries! Though I am not fond of hearing it, yet I note that some children cry all over; when they want a thing, they cry from the tips of their toes to the last hair of their heads. That is the way to preach, and that is the way to pray, and that is the way to live; the whole man must be heartily engaged in holy work. Love prompts the request of wisdom. *God knows that in His service we shall be miserable unless our hearts are fully engaged*. Whenever we feel that preaching is heavy work, or Sunday school teaching after six days' labor is tiresome, and going round a district with tracts is a terrible task—then we shall do nothing well. Put your heart into your service, and all will be joyful, but no way else.

II. Now, I turn my text another way. WISDOM PERSUADES US TO OBEY THIS LOVING REQUEST. To take our hearts and give them up to God is the wisest thing that we can do. If we have done it before, we had better do it over again, and hand over once more the sacred deposit into those dear hands which will surely keep that which we commit to their guardian care. "My son, give Me your heart."

Wisdom prompts us to do it, for, first, *many others crave our hearts,* and our hearts will surely go one way or the other. Let us see to it that they do not go where they will be ruined. I will not read you the next

verse, but many a man has lost his heart and soul eternally by the lusts of the flesh. He has perished through "her that lies in wait as for a prey, and increases the transgressors among men." Happy is that young man whose heart is never defiled with vice! There is no way of being kept from impurity except by giving up the heart to the holy Lord. In a city like this, the most pure-minded are surrounded with innumerable temptations, and many there are that slip with their feet before they are aware of it, being carried away because they have not time to think before the temptation has cast them to the ground. "Therefore, My son," says wisdom, "give Me your heart. Everybody will try to steal your heart, therefore leave it in My charge. Then you need not fear the fascinations of the strange woman, for I have your heart, and I will keep it safe unto the day of My appearing." It is most wise to give Jesus our heart, for seducers will seek after it.

There is another destroyer of souls. I will not say much about it, but I will just read you what the context says of it—"Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has babbling? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine. They that go to seek mixed wine. Look not you upon the wine when it is red, when it gives his color in the cup, when it moves itself aright. At the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like an adder. Your eyes shall behold strange women, and your heart shall utter perverse things." Read carefully the rest of the chapter, and then hear the voice of wisdom say, "My son, if you would be kept from drunkenness and gluttony, from wantonness and chambering, and everything that the heart inclines to, give Me your heart."

It is well to guard your heart with all the apparatus that wisdom can provide. It is totally well to abstain from that which becomes a snare to you, but, I charge you, do not rely upon abstinence, but give your heart to Jesus, for nothing short of true godliness will preserve you from sin so that you shall be presented faultless before His presence with exceedingly great joy. As you would wish to preserve an unblemished character, and be found honorable to the end, my son, I charge you give to Christ your heart.

Wisdom urges to immediate decision because *it is well to have a heart at once occupied and taken up by Christ*. It is an empty heart that the devil enters. You know how the boys always break the windows of empty houses, and the devil throws stones wherever the heart is empty. If you can say to the devil when you are tempted, "You are too late; I have given my heart to Christ, I cannot listen to your overtures, I am affianced to the Savior by bonds of love that never can be broken," what a blessed

safeguard you have! I know of nothing that can so protect the young man in these perilous days as to be able to sing, "O God, my heart is fixed; my heart is fixed! Others may flit to and fro, and seek something to light upon, but my heart is fixed upon You forever. I am unable to turn aside through Your sweet grace." "My son," says the text, "give Me your heart," that Christ may dwell there, that when Satan comes, the One who is stronger than the strong man armed may keep His house, and drive the enemy back.

Give Jesus your hearts, beloved friends, for wisdom bids you do it at once, because *it will please God*. Have you a friend to whom you wish to make a present? I know what you do; you try to find out what that friend would value, for you say, "I should like to give him what would please him." Do you want to give God something that is sure to please Him? You need not build a church of matchless architecture—I do not know that God cares much about stones and wood. You need not wait till you will have amassed money to endow a row of almshouses. It is well to bless the poor, but Jesus said that one who gave two mites, which made a farthing, gave more than all the rich men who cast in of their wealth into the treasury. What would God my Father like me to give? He answers, "My son, give Me your heart." He will be pleased with that, for He Himself seeks the gift.

If there are any here to whom this day is an anniversary of birth, or of marriage, or of some other joyful occasion, let them make a present to God, and give Him their hearts. It is wonderful that He should word it so. "My son, give Me your heart." I should not have dared to say such a thing if He had not said it, but He does put it so. This will please Him better than a bull that has horns and hoofs, better than smoking incense in the silver censer, better than all you can contrive of art, or purchase by wealth, or design for beauty. "My son, give Me your heart."

For notice, again, that *if you do not give Him your heart, you cannot please Him at all*. You may give God what you please, but without your heart it is all an abomination to Him. To pray without your heart is solemn mockery; to sing without your heart is an empty sound; to give, to teach, to work without your heart is all an insult to the Most High. You cannot do God any service till you give Him your heart. You must begin with this. Then shall your hand and purse give what they will, and your tongue and brain shall give what they can, but first your heart—first your heart—your inmost self—your love—your affection. You must give Him your heart, or you give Him nothing.

And does He not deserve it? I am not going to use that argument, because, somehow, if you press a man to give a thing, at last it comes not

to be a gift, but a tax. Our consecration to God must be unquestionable in its freeness. Religion is voluntary or else false. If I shall prove that your heart is God's due, why, then, you will not give, but rather pay as though it were a debt, so I will touch that string very gently, lest, in seeking to bring forth music, I snap the chord. I will put it thus; surely it were well to give a heart for a heart. There was One who came and took human nature on Him, and wore a human heart within His bosom, and that human heart was pressed full sore with sorrow till, it is written, that He wept. It was pressed still more with anguish till, it is written, "He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood, falling to the ground." He was still further overwhelmed with grief, till at last He said, "Reproach has broken My heart, and I am full of heaviness," and then it is written, "One of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith came there out blood and water." A heart was given for you, will you not give your heart? I say no more.

I was about to say that I wished I could bring my Master here to stand on this platform, that you might see Him, but I know that faith comes by hearing, not by seeing. Yet would I set Him forth evidently crucified among you and for you. Oh, give Him, then, a heart for a heart, and yield yourself up to Him! Is there not a sweet whisper in your spirit that now says, "Yield your heart"? Listen to that still small voice, and there shall be no need that I speak farther.

Believe me, beloved friends, *there is no getting wisdom except you give your heart to it*. There is no understanding the science of Christ crucified, which is the most excellent of all the sciences, without giving your heart to it. Some of you have been trying to be religious. You have been trying to be saved, but you have done it in an off-handed sort of style. "My son, give Me your *heart*." Wisdom suggests to you that you should do it, for unless your whole heart is thrown into it you will never prosper in it. Certain men never get on in business; they do not like their trade, and so they never prosper. And, certainly, in the matter of religion, no man can ever prosper if he does not love it, if his whole heart is not in it. Some people have just enough religion to make them miserable. If they had none, they would be able to enjoy the world, but they have too much religion to be able to enjoy the world, and yet not enough to enjoy the world to come. Oh, you poor betweenites—you that hang like Mohammed's coffin, between earth and heaven—you that are like bats, neither birds nor beasts—you that are like a flying fish, that tries to live in the air and water too, and finds enemies in both elements—you that are neither this, nor that, nor the other, strangers in God's country, and yet not able to make yourselves at home with the devil—I pity you. Oh, that I could give

you a tug to get you to this side of the border land! My Master bids me compel you to come in, but what can I do except repeat the message of the text? "My son, give Me your heart." Do not be shilly-shallying any longer. Let your heart go one way or the other. If the devil is worth loving, give him your heart, and serve him, but if Christ is worth loving, give Him your heart, and have done with hesitation. Turn to Jesus once for all. Oh, may His Spirit turn you, and you shall be turned, and His name shall have the praise!

III. And now I close with the third observation. LET US BE WISE ENOUGH AT ONCE TO ATTEND TO THIS ADMONITION OF WISDOM. Let us now give God our heart. "My son, give Me your heart."

When? At once. There is no intimation that God would have us wait a little. I wish that those persons who only mean to wait a little would fix a time when they will leave off waiting. They are always going to be right tomorrow. Which day of the month is that? I have searched the calendar, and cannot find it. I have heard that there is such a thing as the fool's calendar, and that tomorrow is there, but then, you are not fools, and do not keep such a calendar. Tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow; it is a raven's croak of evil omen. Today, today, today, today, today; that is the silver trumpet of salvation, and he that hears it shall live. God grant that we may not forever be crying out, "tomorrow," but at once give our hearts to Him!

How? If we attend to this precept, we shall notice that it calls upon us to act *freely*. "My son, *give* Me your heart." You do not need to have it led in fetters. It might, as I have already said, prevent a thing from being a gift if you too pressingly proved that it was due. It is due, but God puts it, as it were, upon free will for once, and leaves it to free agency. He says, "My son, *give* Me your heart. All that you have from Me comes as a gift of free grace; now give Me back your heart freely." Remember, wherever we speak about the power of grace, we do not mean a physical force, but only such force as may be applied to free agents, and to responsible beings. The Lord begs you not to want to be crushed and pounded into repentance, nor whipped and spurred to holy living. But, "My son, give Me your heart." I have heard that the richest juice of the grape is that which comes with the slightest pressure at the first touch. Oh, to give God our freest love! You know the old proverb that one volunteer is worth two pressed men? We shall all be pressed men in a certain sense, but yet it is written, "Your people shall be willing in the day of Your power." May you be willing at once!

"My son, give Me your heart." It seems a pity that a man should have to live a long life of sin to learn that sin does not pay. It is a sad case

when he comes to God with all his bones broken, and enlists in the divine army after he has spent all his youth in the service of the devil, and has worn himself out. Christ will have him whenever he comes, but how much better it is, while yet you are in the days of your youth, to say, "Here, Lord, I give You my heart. Constrained by Your sweet love, I yield to You in the dawn of my being!"

Now, that is what the text means; give God your heart at once, and do it freely.

Do it thoroughly. "My son, give Me your heart." You cannot give Christ a piece of a heart, for a heart that is halved is killed. A heart that has even a little bit taken off is a dead heart. The devil does not mind having half your heart. He is quite satisfied with that, because he is like the woman to whom the child did not belong; he does not mind if it is cut in halves. The true mother of the child said, "Oh, spare the child! Do not divide it," and so Christ, who is the true Lover of hearts, will not have the heart divided. If it must go one way, and the wrong way, let it go that way, but if it will go the right way, He is ready to accept it, cleanse it, and perfect it, only it must go all together, and not be divided. "Give Me your heart."

Did I hear somebody say, "I am willing to give God my heart"? Very well, then, let us look at it practically. *Where is it now?* You cannot give your heart up till you find out where it is. I knew a man who lost his heart. His wife had not got it, and his children had not got it, and he did not seem as if he had got it himself. "That is odd," you say. Well, he used to starve himself. He scarcely had enough to eat. His clothes were threadbare. He starved all who were round him. He did not seem to have a heart. A poor woman owed him a little rent. Out she went into the street. He had no heart. A person had fallen back a little in the payment of money that he had lent him. The debtor's little children were crying for bread. The man did not care who cried from hunger, or what became of the children. He would have his money. He had lost his heart. I never could make out where it was till I went to his house one day, and I saw a huge chest. I think they called it an iron safe; it stood behind the door of an inner room, and when he unlocked it with a heavy key, and the bolts were shot, and the inside was opened, there was a musty, fusty thing within it, as dry and dead as the kernel of a walnut seven years old. It was his heart. If you have locked up your heart in an iron safe, get it out. Get it out as quickly as you can. It is a horrible thing to pack up a heart in five-pound notes, or bury it under heaps of silver and gold. Hearts are never healthy when covered up with hard metal. Your gold and silver are cankered if your heart is bound up with them.

I knew a young lady—I think I know several of that sort now—whose heart I could never see. I could not make out why she was so flighty, giddy, frothy, till I discovered that she had kept her heart in a wardrobe. A poor prison for an immortal soul, is it not? You had better fetch it out, before the moth eats it as wool. When our garments become the idols of our hearts, we are such foolish things that we can hardly be said to have hearts at all. Even such foolish hearts as these, it were well to get out of the wardrobe and give to Christ.

Where is your heart? I have known some leave it at the public house, and some in places that I shall not mention, lest the cheek of modesty should crimson. But wherever your heart is, it is in the wrong place if it is not with Christ. Go, fetch it, sir. Bring it here, and give it into the hand of Him that bought it.

But in what state is it? "Yes, there's the rub." For, as I told you, that the miser's heart was musty and fusty, so men's hearts begin to smell of the places wherein they keep them. Some women's hearts are moldy and ragged through their keeping them in the wardrobe. Some men's hearts are cankered through keeping them among their gold, and some are rotten, through and through, through keeping them steeped in vice. Where is the drunk's heart? In what state must it be? Foul and filthy. Still God says, "Give Me your heart." What! Such a thing as that? Yes, did I not tell you that when He asked for your heart it was all for love of you, and not for what He should get out of you, for what is such a heart as yours, my friend, that has been in such a place, and fallen into such a state? Yet, still give it to Him, for I will tell you what He will do; He will work wonders for your heart. You have heard of alchemists who took base metal, so they say, and transmuted it into gold; the Lord will do more than this. "Give Me your heart." Poor, filthy, defiled, polluted, depraved heart!—give it to Him. It is stony now, corrupted now. He will take it, and in those sacred hands of Christ, that heart shall lie, till, in its place you shall see a heart of flesh, pure, clean, heavenly. "Oh," you say, "I never could make out what to do with my hard heart." Give it now to Christ, and He will change it. Yield it up to the sweet power of His infinite grace, and He will renew a right spirit within you. God help you to give Jesus your heart, and to do it now!

There is going to be a collection for the hospitals. Stop, you collectors, till I have said my last word. What are you going to give? I do not mind what you are going to put into the boxes, but I want to pass round an invisible plate, for my Lord. I desire to pass it round to all of you, and please will you say to yourself when you drop your money into the box, "I am going to drop my heart into the invisible collection, and give it up to

Jesus. It is all that I can do." Collectors; pass round the boxes, and you, O Spirit of God, go from man to man, and take possession of all hearts for Jesus our Lord! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PROVERBS 8.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—428, 522, 797.

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

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PUBLIC TESTIMONY: A DEBT TO GOD AND MAN
NO. 1996

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

"Then they said to one another, We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: If we tarry till the morning light, some punishment will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household."
2 Kings 7:9.

YOU are not surprised to find that, when those four lepers, outside the gate of Samaria, had made the great discovery that the Syrian camp was deserted, they first satisfied their own hunger and thirst. And quite right too. Who would do otherwise? It is true that they were bound to go and tell other hungry ones, but they could do that with all the louder voice, and they were the surer of the truth they had to tell, when they had first refreshed themselves. It might have been a delusion; they were prudent to test their discovery before they told it. Having refreshed and enriched themselves, they thought of going to tell the besieged and starving citizens. I would advise every soul that has found Christ to imitate the lepers in this matter. Make sure that you have found the Savior. Eat and drink of Him; enrich yourself with Him, and then go and publish the glad tidings. I shall not object to your going as early as possible, but still, I would prefer that you should not go to assure others until you are quite certain yourself. I would have you go with a personal witness, for this will be your chief power with others. If you run too soon, and do not first taste and see that the Lord is good, you may say to others, "There is abundance in the camp," and they may reply, "Why have you not eaten of it yourself?" Thus your testimony will be weakened, if not destroyed, and you will wish you had held your peace. It is better that you first of all delight yourself in fatness before you proclaim the fact of a festival. It is good that your faith should grasp the exceedingly great and precious promises, and then, when you run as a tidings-bearer, you will testify what you have seen. If any say to you, "Are you sure that it is true?" you will answer, "Yes, that I am, for I have tasted and handled of the good word of life." Personal enjoyments of true godliness assist us in our testimony for truth and grace.

But the point I desire to bring out is this; if those lepers had stayed in the camp all night, if they had remained lying on the Syrian couches, singing, "Our willing souls would stay in such a place as this," and if they had never gone at all to their compatriots, shut up and starving within the city walls, their conduct would have been brutal and inhuman. I am going to talk to some at this time (I do not know how many of the sort may be here), who think that they have found the Savior, who believe that they are saved, who write themselves down as having truly enjoyed religion, and who imagine that now their sole business is to enjoy themselves. They delight to feed on the word, and to this I do not object at all, but then, if it is all feeding and nothing comes of it, I ask to what end are they fed? If the only result of our religion is the comfort of our poor little souls, if the beginning and the end of piety is contained within one's self, why, it is a strange thing to be in connection with the unselfish Jesus, and to be the fruit of His gracious Spirit. Surely, Jesus did not come to save us that we might live unto ourselves. He came to save us from selfishness.

I am afraid that some of my hearers have never yet confessed the work of God in their souls. They feel that, whereas they were once blind, now they see, but they have never declared what the Lord has done for their souls. Has all this work been done in a corner for their personal pleasure? I want to have a drive at them, and at all others who have not yet considered that the objective of their receiving grace from the Lord is that God may, through them, communicate grace to others. No man lives unto himself. No man should attempt so to live.

My subject will be this; first, *to hide the great discovery of grace is altogether wrong*. In the second place, *if we have made that discovery we ought to declare it*. And, thirdly, *this declaration should be continually made*. It should not be a matter of one solemn occasion, but our whole life should be a witness to the power and grace which we have found in Christ

I. First, then, dear friends, TO HIDE THE DISCOVERY OF DIVINE GRACE WOULD BE WRONG.

Let me ask you to remember the connection of my text. God had come to the Syrian camp, and had by Himself alone routed the whole Syrian host; they had every man of them fled. Though the starving citizens of Samaria did not know it, the Lord had made provision in abundance for all their hunger, and there it was, within a stone's throw of the city gates. The Lord had done it; His own right hand and His holy arm had gotten Him the victory, and had provided for Israel's needs, though they did not know it. These lepers found out the joyful facts, and had utilized their discovery by entering into possession of the treasure; they were appointed to make known the joyful facts, and if they had concealed them they would have been guilty men.

For, first, *their silence would have been contrary to the divine purpose in leading them to make the discovery*. Why were these four lepers led into the camp that they might learn that the Lord of hosts had put the enemy to the rout? Why, mainly that they might go back, and tell the rest of their countrymen. I fear that the doctrine of election has too often been preached in such a way that thoughtful minds have objected to it upon the ground of its tendency to selfishness. Men do not like the doctrine anyhow, but there is no use in putting it in a needlessly ugly shape. Election is a fact, but a fact which relates to other facts. The Lord calls out of the world a people, a peculiar people, whom He makes to be His own; but the ultimate end of the election of these men, is that they may gather in others. As Israel was chosen to preserve the light for the nations, so has the Lord chosen His believing people that they may bring in the other sheep which are not yet of the fold. We are not to get within four narrow walls, and sit and sing—

"We are a garden walled around,
Chosen and made peculiar ground:
A little spot enclosed by grace
Out of the world's wide wilderness."

Or if we do so sing, we are not to bless ourselves over and over again as being the end and climax of the Lord's work and wisdom. No, but since we are a garden walled around, we are to bring forth fruit to Him who owns us. We are to be a nursery ground. I know a piece of ground upon which some millions of young fir trees were grown, which were afterwards planted out upon a range of Scotch hills. Such should our churches be. Though comparable in our feebleness to a handful of corn upon the top of the mountains, we expect that the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon, and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth. We are chosen unto salvation that afterwards we may go and be lights to those who sit in darkness, and spiritual helps to those that are ready to perish. These four men were allowed to see what God had done, on purpose that they might run home with the cheering news. If they had not gone to Samaria with the tidings they would have been false to the divine purpose, and so will you be, my brother, if you continue to hold your tongue; so will you be, my sister, if you never say, "The Lord has done great things for me, of which I am glad." Let the purpose of God, for which you ought to adore Him every day, be plenteously fulfilled in you, and let it be seen that He has chosen you to know Christ that you may make Him known to others.

These people would not only have been false to the divine purpose, but *they would have failed to do well*. They said, one to another, "We do not well." Did it ever strike some of you, dear friends, that it is a very serious charge to bring against yourselves, "We do not well"? I am afraid that many are content because they can say, "We do not drink. We do not swear. We do not gamble. We do not lie." Who said you did? You ought to

be ashamed of yourselves if you did any of those things. But is this enough? What are you actually doing? "To him that knows to do good, and does it not, to him it is sin." I have heard of perfect people, but I have not seen any such. If it came to acts of positive commission of sin, I could possibly compare notes with such brethren, for I endeavor to be blameless, and I trust I am, but when I remember that sins of *omission* are really and truly sins, I bid "good-bye" to all notions of perfection, for my many shortcomings overwhelm me. No man has done all the good he could have done, and ought to have done. If any man assures me that he has done all the good that might have been possible to him, I do not believe him. I will say no more, but let us labor to avoid sins of omission. Dear friend, if you know the Lord, and you have never confessed His name, then you have not done well. If you have been in company and you have not spoken up for Christ, you have not done well. If you have had opportunities of telling out the gospel even to children, and you have not done so, you have not done well. It is a heavy charge, after all, for a man's conscience to bring against him when it forces him to join with others in saying, "We do not well." That is the reason why the barren fig tree was cut down. He that kept the vineyard did not say, "Cut it down, it bears such sour fruit." It bore no fruit at all. There was the point; it cumbered the ground. Take heed, oh, take heed, of a religion which does not make you positively do well! If all that your religion does is to keep you from doing mischief, it has too small an effect to be the religion of Jesus Christ. He asks, "What do you more than others? Do not even publicans do so?" God help us then to make an open declaration of what His Spirit has secretly taught to us!

Besides this, had those lepers held their tongues, *they would actually have been doing evil*. Suppose that they had kept their secret for twenty-four hours, many hundreds might have died of starvation within the walls of Samaria, had they so perished, would not the lepers have been guilty of their blood? Do you not agree with that? May not neglect be as truly murder as a stab or a shot? If, in your street, a man shall perish through not knowing the Savior, and you never made an effort to instruct him, how will you be guiltless at the last great day? If there are any within your reach who sink down to perdition for lack of the knowledge of Christ, and you could have given them that knowledge, will your skirts be free from blood in the day when the great inquest shall be held, and God shall make inquisition for the blood of men? I put it to the consciences of many silent Christians, who have never yet made known to others what God has made known to them—how can you be clear from guilt in this matter? Do not say, "Am I my brother's keeper?" for I shall have to give you a horrible answer if you do. I shall have to say, "No, Cain, you are not your brother's keeper, but you are your brother's killer." If, by your effort you have not sought his good, by your neglect you

have destroyed him. If I were able to swim, and I saw any of you in a stream, and I merely looked at you, and greatly regretted that you should be so foolish as to tumble in, but never stretched out a hand to rescue you, your death would lie at my door, and I am sure it is so with those who talk about enjoying religion, and yet keep it all to themselves, and never rescue the perishing. These are stern truths. Let them go home where they ought to go home, and may God the Holy Spirit bless them!

Again, these lepers, if they had held their tongues, *would have acted most unseasonably*. Note how they put it themselves; they say, "We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace." O brother, has Jesus washed your sins away, and are you silent about it? I remember the day when I first found peace with God through the precious blood, and I declare that I was forced to tell somebody about it; I could not have stifled the voice within me. What, my dear brother! Are you saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation, and can you keep the blessing to yourself? Do you not wonder that all the timbers in your house do not groan at you, and that the earth itself does not open her mouth to rebuke you? Can you be such an ungrateful wretch as to have tasted of amazing mercy, and yet to have no word to say by way of confessing it? Come, brother, come, sister, overcome that retiring spirit of yours, and cry—"I cannot help it; I am driven to it; I must and will bear witness that there is a Savior, and a great one." Personally, *I* cannot hold my tongue, and never will while I can speak—

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

Oh, that God would stir up every silent Christian to speak out for his Lord! We have had enough of the mute spirit. Oh, for the Spirit in the form of tongues of fire!

One thing more; *silence may be dangerous*. What did these men say? "If we tarry till morning light, some mischief will come upon us." That morning light is very close to some of you. If you tarry till tomorrow morning before you have spoken about Christ, some mischief may come upon you. I might put it farther off on a grander scale. There is a morning light which will soon be seen over yon gloomy hills of darkness; how soon we cannot tell, but our Master has bidden us to be always on the watch for it. In such an hour as we think not, He will come, and when He comes, it will be to reward His faithful servants. There is a text which speaks of our not being ashamed at His coming. What a wonderful text that is! What if He were to come tonight; should we not be ashamed? He may come before the unformed word has quit my lips or reached your ears; the shrill clarion of the archangel may startle the dead from their graves, and the Christ may be among us on His great white throne! Suppose He should come tonight, and you, who have thought that you knew

Him and loved Him, should never have sought to win a soul for Him—how will you face Him? How will you answer your Lord, whom you have never owned? You knew the way of salvation, and you concealed it. You knew the balm for the wounds of sinners, and you let them bleed to death. They were thirsty, and you gave them no draught of living water; they were hungry, and you gave them no bread of life. Sirs, I cannot venture to His judgment seat with such a blot upon my soul! Can you? Brother, can you? Sister, can you? What! Your own dear children—your own flesh and blood—have you never prayed with them, nor sought to bring them to Jesus? What! The servants of your house—have you never spoken of the Savior to them? Your wife, your husband, your old father, your brother—and you have never yet opened your lips to say, "Jesus has saved me; I wish you were saved too"! You might have done as much as that. You have said bolder things than that to them about worldly matters. Oh, by the love of God, or even by a lower motive, by the love of your fellow men, burst your bands asunder, and speak out for Christ, or else, if your profession is true, you do not well; indeed, there is reason to question your religion.

Thus much upon the first point—to hide the blessed discovery would have been wrong for the lepers, and it would be wrong for us.

II. Secondly, if we have made the blessed discovery of Christ's gracious work in routing our enemies, and providing for our needs, and if we have tasted of the fruit of that glorious victory ourselves, WE OUGHT TO MAKE A VERY EXPLICIT AVOWAL OF THAT DISCOVERY. It ought to be confessed very solemnly, and in the way which the Lord Himself has appointed. How can we better show forth all righteousness than by being buried with Christ in baptism according to His command? We ought, also, to unite with the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to co-operate therewith in holy service. This ought to be done very decidedly, because *our lord requires it*. Our blessed Lord Jesus Christ couples always with faith the confession of it. He that with his heart believes, and with his mouth makes confession of Him, shall be saved. "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." We constantly find the two together. The faith that saves is not a sneaking faith, which tries to get to heaven by keeping off the road, and creeping along behind the hedge. The true faith comes into the middle of the road, feeling, "this is the King's highway, and I am not ashamed to be found in it." This is the faith which Jesus expects of you, the faith which cries, "I have lifted my hands unto the Lord, and I will not go back."

Next, if you have found Christ, *the man who was the means of leading you to Christ has a claim upon you that he should know of it*. Oh, the joy of my heart, the other day, when I saw some twenty-four who were my spiritual children! I felt then that I was receiving large wages at the Master's hands. Many get good from the minister, and yet they never let him

know of it. This is not doing as they would be done by. It is rather like cheating us of the reward of our ministry. To know that God is blessing us is a great comfort and stimulus. Do not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treads out the corn.

Next, I think *the church of God has a claim upon all of you* who have discovered the great love of Jesus. Come and tell your fellow Christians. Tell the good news to the King's household. The church of God is often greatly refreshed by the stories of new converts. I am afraid that we who get over fifty come by degrees to be rather old-fogeyfied, and it is a great blessing to us to hear the cries of the babes in grace, and to listen to the fresh and vivid testimony of new converts. It stirs our blood, and quickens our souls, and thus the church of God is benefited. If some of you old folks had been at the church meeting the other Monday evening, and heard some five little children, one after the other, telling what the Lord had done for their souls, you would have agreed with me that you could not have done it so well yourselves. You may know more, but you could not have stated what you know so simply, so sweetly, so charmingly, as those dear children did. One of them was but nine years old, or younger, and yet she told of free grace and dying love as clearly as if she had been eighty or ninety. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings the Lord ordains strength. Some of you have known the Lord for many years, and yet you have never confessed Him. How wrong it is of you! How much you injure the church!

Besides that, a decided testimony for Christ *is due to the world*. If a man is a soldier of the cross, and does not show his colors, all his comrades are losers by his lack of decision. There is nothing better for a man when he is brought to Christ than for him to decidedly express his faith, and let those about him know that he is a new man. Unfurl your standard. Decision for Christ and holiness will save you from many dangers, and ward off many temptations. Compromise creates a life of misery. I would sooner be a toad under a plow than be a Christian man who tries to conceal his Christianity. It is sometimes difficult, in this age, for a man to follow his conscience, for you are expected to run with a party, but I am of this mind—that I would sooner die than not live a free man. It is not life to have to ask another man's permission to think. If there is any misrepresentation, if there is any scorn, if there is any contempt for being a Christian, let me have my share of it, for a Christian I am, and I wish to be treated like the rest.

If all Christians came out, and declared what the Lord has done for their souls, the world would feel the power of Christianity, and would not think of it as men now do, as though it were some petty superstition, of which its own votaries were ashamed. If indeed you are soldiers of the cross, bear your shields into the light of day, and be not ashamed of your

Captain! What can there be to make us blush in the service of such a Lord? Be ashamed of shame, and quit yourselves like men!

Your open confession is due all around, and it is especially *due to yourself*. It is due to your spiritual manhood that, if the Lord has done anything for you, you should gratefully acknowledge it. It is also due to your love of others—and love of others is of the very essence of Christianity—that you should explicitly declare that you are on the Lord's side. What more shall I say? What more need I say? I would sound the trumpet, and summon to our Lord's banner all that are good men and true.

III. THIS DECLARATION SHOULD BE CONTINUALLY MADE. Here I speak of many who have confessed Christ publicly, and are not ashamed of His name. Beloved, we ought always to make Christ known, not only by our once-made profession, but by frequently bearing witness in support of that profession. I wish that we did this more among God's own people. Miss Havergal very admirably says, "The King's household were the most unlikely people to need to be instructed in this good news—so it seems at first sight. But, secondly, the lepers were the most unlikely persons to instruct the King's household, and yet they did so." You and I might say—Christian people do not require to be spoken to about our Lord and His work; they know more than we do. If they do require it, who are we, who are less than the least of all our Master's household, that we should presume to instruct them? Thus even humility might check our bearing testimony in certain companies. If you were in the midst of uninstructed people, to whom you could do good, you might feel bound to speak, but among Christians you are apt to be mute. Have you not said to yourself, "I could not speak to that good old man? He is much better instructed in the faith than I am"? Meanwhile, what do you think the aforesaid good old man is saying? He says to himself, "He is a fine young man, but I could not speak to him, for he has so much more ability than I have." Thus you are both as mute as mice when you might be mutually edified. Worse still, perhaps you begin talking upon worthless themes, you speak of the weather, or of the last wretched scandal, or of politics. Suppose we were to change all this, and each one say, "I am a Christian man, and next time I meet a brother Christian, whether he is my superior or not, I shall speak to him of our common Master." If two children meet, they will do well to speak of father and mother. If one is a very little child, he may know but little about his father compared with the knowledge possessed by his big sister, but then he has kissed his father last, and has of late enjoyed more caresses from his father than his grown-up sister has. The elder can tell more of Father's wisdom and providence, but the younger has a more vivid sense of his tenderness and love, and so they can unite in fervent admiration.

Why should Christian people so often meet and part without exchanging five words about the Lord Jesus? I am not condemning any of you; I

am censuring myself more than anyone else. We do not bear enough testimony for our Lord. I am sure I felt quite taken aback the other day when a coachman said to me, "You believe that the Lord directs the way of His people, don't you, sir?" I said, "That I do. Do you know anything about it?" "Why," he said, "yes. This morning I was praying the Lord to direct my way, and you engaged me, and I felt that it was a good beginning for the day." We began talking about the things of God directly. That coachman ought not to have been the first to speak; as a minister of the gospel, I ought to have had the first word. We have much to blame ourselves for in this respect. We hold our tongues because we do not know how a word might be received, but we might as well make the experiment. No harm could come of trying. Suppose you were to go into a place where persons were sick and dying, and you had medicine about you which would heal them; would you not be anxious to give them some of it? Would you say nothing about it because you could not tell how it might be received? How could you know how it would be received except by making the offer? Tell poor souls about Jesus. Tell them how His grace healed *you,* and perhaps they will answer, "You are the very person I need, you have brought me the news I have longed to hear."

There are districts in London, to my knowledge, in the suburbs especially, where, if a man knocks at the door, and begins to say a word about Christ, the poor people answer "No one ever calls upon us to do us any good. We are left to perish." It is shameful that it should be so, but so it is. Men live and men die in this Christian country as much lost to the knowledge of the gospel as if they had lived in the Congo. If they lived in the Congo, we should all subscribe to send a missionary up the river to tell them of Jesus and His love, even at the risk of his dying of fever, we should send a missionary to them, and yet those who live next door to our homes, or are even in our employ, are left in ignorance of salvation. The woman that comes in to clean; the man who sweeps up the mud from the street—these may know no more of Christ than Khoikhois of South Africa, and yet we do not speak about Christ to them. Is not this shocking? We have satisfied our own hunger, and now we allow others to starve! If I should persuade any brother here, or any sister here, who has tasted that the Lord is gracious, to shake off sinful lethargy, I would have done good service. Dear friends, do let us quit indifference, and get to work for Jesus. It is not enough to me that I should myself preach the gospel; I would gladly turn you all out to proclaim it. Oh, that the thousands here assembled would go through London proclaiming Christ! The result of such a crusade eternity alone could reveal. I spoke from this pulpit once about Christian young men who were great hands at cricket, but could not bowl straight at a sinner's heart. A gentleman who was present that day, and heard me, said, "That is true about me, I am a Christian man, but yet I am better known as a cricketer than as a work-

er." He began to serve his Lord with his whole heart, and he is at this day in the front rank of usefulness. Oh, that I could win another such! The multitudes of London are dying in the dark. I beseech you bring them all the light you have! Myriads are perishing all over this United Kingdom. Hasten to their rescue! The world also remains under the power of evil. I beseech you to reclaim it!

"I do not know anything," says one. Then do not say what you don't know. "Oh!" cries another, "I hope I am a Christian." Tell others how you became a believer and that will be the gospel. You need not study a book, and try to make a sermon with three heads and a tail, but go home, and say to your biggest boy, "John, I want to tell you how your father found a Savior." Go home to that sweet little daughter of yours, and say, "Dear Sarah, I want to tell you how Jesus loves me." Before the morning light you may have had the joy of seeing your dear children brought to the Savior if this very evening, you talk to them out of the fullness of your heart.

Only this I say to you; if you do not love my Master, then turn from your evil ways. If you have not trusted Jesus, trust Him at once, and find salvation full and free. When you have found that salvation, then publish the tidings of it. By the love of Him that bled upon the cross—by every drop of blood from His pierced heart, awaken yourselves to serve Him with all your might. Either with tongue or with pen, tell of the love of Jesus—

"Tell it out among the heathen,
That He reigns from the tree."

Sound it forth everywhere beneath yon arch of heaven that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and add, "He has saved me." God bless you!

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
2 KINGS 7:3-16; PSALM 34.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—228, 246, 632.

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

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GOD'S LONG-SUFFERING: AN APPEAL TO THE CONSCIENCE

NO. 1997

A SERMON
DELIVERED IN THE AUTUMN OF 1886,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation."
2 Peter 3:15.

JESUS is well called "our Lord," let us at the commencement adore Him. Let us each one cry to Him, "My Lord, and my God." It is a long, long time since our Lord went up to heaven, and He said that He would come again. Evidently, some of those who best understood Him *mi*sunderstood Him, and thought that He would surely come again even in their lifetime. He said that He would come, and faithful ones in all ages have looked for Him, it is not possible that our Lord can have deceived us. Because He is so sweetly our Lord, our brethren have made sure that He will keep His word, and He will. But certain of them have gone beyond our Lord's promise, and have felt sure that they knew *when* He would come, and they have been bitterly disappointed because the hour which they fixed passed over, and He did not appear. This does not prove that He will not come. The day is certainly nearer, and every hour is hastening His coming. "Behold, He comes with clouds, and every eye shall see Him."

But why are His chariots so long in coming? Why does He delay? The world grows grey, not alone with age, but with iniquity, and yet the Deliverer comes not. We have waited for His footfall at the dead of night, and looked out for Him through the gates of the morning, and expected Him in the heat of the day, and reckoned that He might come before yet another sun went down; but He is not here! He waits. He waits very, very long. Will He not come?

Long-suffering is that which keeps Him from coming. He is bearing with men. Not yet the thunderbolt! Not yet the riven heavens and the reeling earth! Not yet the great white throne, and the day of judgement, for He is full of pity, and bears long with men! Even to the cries of His own elect, who cry day and night to Him—He is not in haste to answer, for He is very patient, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.

But His patience sometimes greatly puzzles us. We cannot make it out. Eighteen, nineteen centuries, and the world not converted! Nineteen centuries, and Satan still to the front, and all manner of iniquity still

wounding this poor, bleeding world! What does it mean? O Son of God, what does it mean? Seed of the woman, when will You appear with Your foot upon the serpent's head? We are puzzled at the long-suffering which causes so weary a delay.

One of the reasons is that we have not much long-suffering ourselves. We think that we do well to be angry with the rebellious, and so we prove ourselves to be more like Jonah than Jesus. A few have learned to be patient and show pity to the ungodly, but many more are of the mind of James and John, who would have called fire from heaven upon those who rejected the Savior. We are in such a hurry. We have not the eternal leisure of God. We have but to live, like mayflies, our little day, and therefore we are in hot haste to see all things accomplished before the sun goes down. We are but leaves in the forest of existence, and if something is not done soon, and done quickly, we shall fade, and pass away amid unaccomplished hope, and so we are not patient. We are staggered when the Master tells us to forgive unto seventy times seven. When He forgives unto seventy times seven, and still waits, and still holds back His thunders, we are amazed, because our mind is not in harmony with the mind of the Infinitely patient God.

We are all the more puzzled, again, because the ungodly so sadly misuse this long-suffering of God as a reason for greater sin, and as a motive for denying that there is a God at all. Because He gives them space for repentance, they make it into space for iniquity, and because He will not deal out His judgments immediately, they say, "Where is the promise of His coming?"

We have impatiently wished that He would break the silence. Have I not in my heart of hearts cried out, "O Lord, how long? Can this go on much longer? Can You bear it? Will You not come with the iron rod, breaking Your foes before Your face, most mighty Son of God?" It is hard to have the days of blasphemy and rebuke multiplied upon us, and to hear the adversary say in every corner, "Where is their God now?" Yet, dear friends, we ought not to be affected by the hissing of these serpents. Surely we would not have our God change His purposes because of the foolish taunts of men. One said, "If there is a God, let Him strike me dead," but God did not smite him, and from this he argued that there was no God; from the same fact I argue that there is a God, and that this God is truly God, for, if He had been less than divine, He might have struck him dead, but being infinitely patient, He bore with him still. Who was that speck that he should cause God to move hand or foot even to crush him? God is not easily moved, even by the blasphemies of the ungodly. He may be provoked one of these days, for long-suffering has its end, but for a while the Lord pauses in pity, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Beloved brethren, Gods long-suffering with a guilty world He may never explain to us. There are many things which we must not ask to have explained. We get into deep waters, and into terrible troubles, when we

must have everything explained. For my part, I like to believe great truths which are beyond my reason. A religion without mysteries seems to me to be false on the face of it. If there is an Infinite God, it is not possible that poor I, with my finite mind, shall ever be able to understand everything about Him. If the Lord chooses to tarry till thousands of years have passed away, yes, till millions of years have elapsed, yet let Him do as He wills. Is He not infinitely wise and good, and who are we that we should put Him to the question? Let Him tarry His own time, only let us watch, and wait, for He will come, and they that wait for Him shall have their reward.

At this time I am going to speak a little upon this point. First, *let us admire the long-suffering of God*. And, secondly, *let us make a right account of it* by accounting it to be salvation.

I. First, I would conduct your minds hurriedly over a few points that may help you to ADMIRE THE LONG-SUFFERING OF GOD.

Admire the long-suffering of God as to *peculiar sins*. Look, brethren, they make images of wood or stone, and they say, "These are God," and they set up these things in the place of Him that made the heavens and the earth. How does He endure to see reasonable beings bowing down before idols, before fetishes, before the basest objects? How does He bear that men should even worship emblems of impurity, and say that these are God? How does He bear it—He that sits in the heavens, in whose hand our breath is, and whose are all our ways?

Others, even in this country, blaspheme God. What an amount of profanity is poured out before God in this city! One can scarcely walk the streets today without hearing horrible language. An oath has often chilled me to the marrow—an oath which was not excused by any special circumstance, but rolled out of the man's mouth as a customary thing. We have today some among us that might match the devil in blasphemy, so foully do they talk. And oh, how is it that God bears it when they dare imprecate His curse upon their bodies and their souls? O Father, how do You bear it? How do You endure these profane persons who insult You to Your face?

Besides, there are those who use fair speech, and yet blaspheme most intolerably. Men of education and of science are often worse than the common folk because they blaspheme with fearful deliberation, and solemnly speak against God, and against His Son, and against the precious blood, and against the Holy Spirit. How is it that the Thrice-holy One bears with them? Oh, wondrous long-suffering of a Gracious God!

And then there are others who wallow in unmentionable impurity and uncleanness. No, I will not attempt any description, nor would I wish to take your thoughts to those things whereof men may blush to think, though they blush not to do them. The moon sees a world of foulness, fornication and adultery, and yet, O God, You bear it! This great blot upon the face of the world, this huge city of London reeks in its filthiness, and yet You hold Your peace!

And then, when I turn my thoughts another way, to the oppression of the poor, to the grinding down of those who, with the hardest labor, can scarcely earn enough bread to keep body and soul together, how does the Just God permit it? When I mark the oppression of man by man—for among wild beasts there is none that equals the cruelty of man to man—how does the All-merciful bear it? I think the sword of the Lord must often rattle in its scabbard, and He must force it down, and say, "Sword of the Lord, rest and be quiet!"

I will not go further, because the list is endless. The wonder is that a Gracious God should continue to bear all this! Think of the sin involved in false teaching. I stood one day at the foot of Pilate's staircase, in Rome, and saw the poor creatures go up and down, on their knees, on what they are taught was the very staircase on which the Lord Jesus Christ stood before Pilate. I noticed sundry priests looking on, and I felt morally certain that they knew it to be an imposture. I thought that if the Lord would lend me His thunderbolts about five minutes, I would make a wonderful clearance thereabouts, but He did nothing of the kind. God is not in haste as we are. Sometimes it does suggest itself to a hot spirit to wish for speedy dealing with iniquity, but the Lord is patient and full of pity.

Especially notice, next, that this long-suffering of God is seen in *peculiar persons*. In certain persons sins are greater than the same sins would be in other people. They have been favored with a tender conscience, and with good instruction, so that when they sin they sin with a vengeance. I have known some who have stood at God's altar, and have gone forth from His temple to transgress; they have been Levites of His sanctuary, and yet first in villainies. Yet the Lord spares the traitors and lets them live.

It is wonderful that God should have such long-suffering when we look at the *peculiar circumstances* under which some men sin. Some men sin against God willfully, when they have no temptation to it, and can plead no necessity. If the poor man steals, we half forgive him, but some do so who have all that heart could wish. When the man driven to extremity has said the thing that was not true, we have half excused him, but some are willful liars, with no gain or profit therein. Some sin for the sheer love of sin, not for the pleasure they gain by it, nor for the profit they hope from it, but for mere wantonness. Born of godly parents, trained as you were in the very school of godliness, made to know, as you know in your own conscience, the Lord Jesus to be the Son of God, when *you* sin against Him, there is a painful emphasis in your transgressions. I speak to some who may well wonder that they are still alive after having sinned with such gross aggravations.

Some manifest the long-suffering of God very wonderfully in the length of time in which they have been spared to sin. Many men are provoked by one offense, and think themselves miracles of patience if they forget it. But many have provoked God fifty, sixty, seventy, perhaps eighty years.

You could not stand eighty minutes of provocation, and yet the Lord has put up with you throughout a lifetime. You tottered into this house tonight. You might have tottered more if you had remembered the weight of sin that clings to you. Yet the mercy of God spares you. Still, with outstretched arms, infinite mercy bids you come and receive at the hand of God your pardon bought with the blood of Jesus Christ. This long-suffering of God is marvelous.

Remember that it would be easy on God's part to be rid of you. There is a text where He says, "Ah! I will ease Me of My adversaries." Some men bear because they cannot help it. They are obliged to submit, but God is not in that condition. One wish and the sinner will never provoke Him anymore, nor refuse His mercy again. He will be gone out of the land of hope. Therefore, I say the long-suffering of God is enhanced in its wonderfulness by the fact that He is under no necessity to exercise it except that which springs out of His own love.

I beg all of you who are unconverted to think earnestly upon God's long-suffering to you in permitting you to be here, still to hear from the cross of Christ the invitation, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth."

II. Secondly, let us take THE RIGHT ACCOUNT OF THE LONG-SUFFERING OF GOD. "Account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation." What does this mean?

Does it not mean, first, as *to the saving of the many?* The Lord Jesus Christ is, as I believe, to have the pre-eminence. I think that He will have the pre-eminence in the number of souls that will be saved as compared with those that will be lost, and that can scarcely be effected except by a lapse of time in which many will be brought to Christ. I am not, however, going into any speculations. I look at it this way. As long as this old hulk keeps beating up against the rocks, as long as she does not quite go down into the sea of fire, it means man's salvation. It means, "Out with the lifeboat! Man the lifeboat, and let us take off from her all that we can, and bring them to shore." God calls upon us, until the world is utterly destroyed with fire, to go on saving men with all our might and main. Every year that passes is meant to be a year of salvation. We rightly call each year "the year of our Lord." Let us make it so by more and more earnest efforts for the bringing of sinners to the cross of Christ. I cannot think that the world is spared to increase its damnation. Christ came not to destroy the world, but that the world through Him might be saved, and so, as every year rolls by, let us account it salvation, and spend and be spent in the hope that by any means we may save some.

And if we can indulge a still brighter hope that the kingdom of Christ shall come, and that multitudes shall be converted, and that the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea, so let it be. But always let this be to the front—that this long-suffering of God means salvation, and at that we are to aim.

So, dear friends, in the second place, the next meaning of this is *to any of you who are unconverted*. I want you to account that the long-suffering of God in sparing you means to you salvation. Why are you here tonight? Surely it is salvation. I met years ago a soldier who had ridden in the charge of Balaclava. He was one of the few that came back when the saddles were emptied right and left of him. I could not help getting into a corner, and saying to him, "Dear sir, do you not think that God has some design of love to you in sparing you when so many fell? Have you given your heart to Him?" I felt that I had a right to say *that*. Perhaps I speak to some of you who were picked off a wreck years ago. Why was that? I hope it was that you might be saved. You have had a fever lately, and have hardly been out before. You have come here tonight, still weak, scarcely recovered. Why were you saved from that fever when others were cut down? Surely it must mean salvation. At any rate, the God who was so full of pity as to spare you, now says to you, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me." When Master Bunyan was a lad, he was so foolhardy that, when an adder rose against him, he took it in his hand, and plucked the sting out of its mouth, but he was not harmed. It was his turn to stand sentinel at the siege of Nottingham, and as he was going forth, another man offered to take his place. That man was shot, and Master Bunyan thus escaped. We would have had no "Pilgrim's Progress" if it had not been for that. Did not God preserve him on purpose that he might be saved? There are special interpositions of divine providence, by which God spares ungodly men, whom He might have cut down long ago as cumberers of the ground; should we not look upon these as having the intention that the barren tree may be cared for yet another year, if haply it may bring forth fruit? Some of you who are here tonight are wonders to yourselves that you are still in the land of the living—I pray you account the long-suffering of God to be salvation. See salvation in it. Be encouraged to look to Christ, and, looking to Him, you shall find salvation, for "there is life in a look at the Crucified One." Account God's long-suffering to be salvation to you if to no one else.

God's long-suffering is one of the great means by which He works for the salvation of His elect. He will not let them die till first they live to God. He will not suffer them to pass into eternity till first His infinite love has justified them through the righteousness of Christ.

Thus I have said what I hope may be embraced by some here present.

But I must finish. This text seems to me to have a bearing upon *the people of God*. Indeed, it is for them that it is written, "Account that the long-suffering of God is salvation."

I must turn the text to give you really what lies in it. God hears the cry going up from His own elect, and it is written, "Shall not God avenge His own elect, though He bears long with them?" That long forbearance of God brings to His own people much of trouble, pain, sorrow, much of amazement and soul distress. Brother, you must learn to look upon that

as salvation. I hear you say, "What do you mean?" I mean this. The very fact that you are made to groan and cry by reason of God's long-suffering to guilty men gives you sympathy with Christ and union with Christ, who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself. Reckon that in being brought into harmony, sympathy, oneness with Christ, through enduring the result of the divine long-suffering, you find salvation. It is salvation to a man to be put side by side with Christ. If you have to bear the jests and gibes of the ungodly—if God spares them, and permits them to persecute you, be glad of it, and reckon it as salvation, for now you are made partaker of Christ's sufferings. What more salvation do you desire?

Remember, too, that when the ungodly persecute the righteous, they give them the mark of salvation, for of old it was so. He that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the spirit. If you were never reviled, if you were never slandered or traduced, who would know that you are a Christian? But when, through the long-suffering of God with the ungodly, you are made to suffer, account it to be a mark of your salvation. "Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

Once more; reckon the long-suffering of God, when it permits the ungodly to slander and injure you, as salvation, because it tends to your salvation by driving you nearer to the Lord. It prevents your making your home in this world. It forces you to be a stranger and a foreigner. It compels you to go outside the gate bearing Christ's reproach, and so, in this way, that which seemed so hard to bear brings salvation to you.

Therefore, comfort one another, dear children of God. Be not overly cast down and troubled because of your Lord's delaying His coming, for He will yet help you, and you shall be delivered.

If the Lord has shown long-suffering to any of you, and yet you have never repented or turned to Him, do so tonight. "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and you are not saved." But, oh, that you might be saved before this service ends! The leaves are falling from the trees thick and fast, and before you fall from the tree of this mortal life, think of your God, and turn to Him, and live. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." May He snatch you from the burning! Amen, and amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—2 PETER 3.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—174, 529, 513.

In THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL I have earnestly asked my dear friends to unite in prayer for the revival of true religion; I wish to press this with all my heart upon my Sermon readers. A visitation from the Holy Spirit would be to our churches what the springtide is to the sleeping bulbs and leafless trees: truth and righteousness would seem to blossom

from the ground. False doctrine and worldliness are wolves which come down upon the sheepfolds in the winter of lifeless Christianity, but are no more seen in the clear, bright days of grace. When the Lord clothes the gospel with the power of His Spirit, error cannot stand in its presence, and sin is afraid to show its face. This, then, is what we need, and prayer is the one great and effectual method of obtaining it.

How can we promote prayerfulness concerning the present crisis? Let us each one be more than ever earnest with the Lord to plead his own cause. Oh, that He would gird His sword upon His thigh, and ride forth to the battle because of truth and righteousness! Let us, when we meet by two and three, make a point of bowing the knee together for this objective. This will suggest larger meetings, and then, best of all, we will hope that the pastors will call the churches together, and say, "There is need of special prayer for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and the overthrow of error." If this could be done by all faithful ministers, the church would not be long without heavenly refreshment.

Personally, I beg my beloved brethren to praise God with me for very remarkable help lately sent me in an hour of severe trial, and also to entreat the Lord on my behalf that I may be kept steadfast, and peaceful, and made wise under the peculiar circumstances of the present severe conflict. What I have done hitherto I have done under pressure of a necessity which no faithful man could have resisted. I have nothing to regret, nothing about which I have a shadow of a question. I could do no other than I have done. Unless I had been willing to have been condemned at the last great day with the enemies of the cross of Christ, I could not have kept silent, nor have continued in an evil confederacy with those who make void the gospel. I can bear anything but an accusing conscience.

C. H. S.

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NOT BOUND YET
NO. 1998

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY DECEMBER 18, 1887,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.
ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 7, 1887

"Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound."
2 Timothy 2:9.

YOU will observe, if you read the verse which precedes, which indeed it would be wrong to sever from the text that the doctrine of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ was the sheet anchor of Paul's comfort, as it was the great substance of his preaching. "Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel: wherein I suffer trouble, as an evildoer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound." Perhaps we do not give sufficient prominence to the doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Possibly, also, for this reason, we do not fully grasp the idea of "the power of His resurrection." Our Lord's death was not the close of His career; He still passed onward. From the cross to the sepulcher was still forward. With weeping and mourning they laid Him in the tomb, surely that was the *finis* of His course. Ah, no! He passed into the grave, it is true, but He also passed through it. The grave had hitherto seemed a *cul-de-sac,* a blind alley, from which there was no exit. All the footsteps pointed to entrance, but none to return. It looked like a dread abyss swallowing all, and offering passageway to none. See what our Lord Jesus has done! He has made a tunnel of it for all His redeemed to pass into the kingdom; we enter at the grave to emerge in the resurrection into eternal life. In this lies part of the power of His resurrection, that He has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. It looked like an iron door or gate of death, but He has unhinged it, yes, He has taken it quite away. The grave was once "a charnel house to fence the relics of lost innocence," but it is so no longer, the imprisoning stone is rolled away. By passing through death our Lord has made a thoroughfare for us. We take death and the grave in transit now; they do not hinder our advance to glory, and immortality, and eternal life. Our course is always onward whatever may lie in the way.

In the strength of that truth, Paul, when he found himself in prison, expected to come out of it, when he saw great difficulties in the way to heaven, he expected to go through those difficulties, and to come out with gain at the further end thereof. This helped to cheer him in his darkest moments. His brave heart thus spoke within him, and said, "What if I should be even dead and buried, I shall rise again, and if the

gospel should seem dead and buried, yet it will rise again, and if the particular cause which I am advocating in Rome should seem dead and buried, yet it must come to life again. I take courage from the great truth that the Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead according to my gospel."

Friends, I think we too may encourage ourselves in our hour of sorrow. From the tomb of our Lord we may gather gems of comfort. Though He died, yet He is dead no longer, and though He was buried, yet the sepulcher could not hold Him, and that same victorious power which brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the sheep, will also bring all His sheep with Him in due time, though they also shall descend into the same darkness of the tomb—

"Vain the stone, the watch, the seal,
Christ has burst the gates of hell;
Death in vain forbids His rise,
Christ has opened paradise.
Lives again our glorious King!
'Where, O death, is now your sting?'
Once He died our souls to save!
'Where's your victory, boasting grave?'
Soar we now where Christ has led,
Following our exalted Head;
Made like Him, like Him we rise;
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies."

I like much this self-forgetting sentence of the apostle, "I suffer trouble, as an evildoer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound." He is shut up in the gloomy dungeon at Rome. No hideous dens could be worse than Roman dungeons usually were. No prison is a desirable place, but a Roman prison was a very vestibule of death. Paul is not only in prison, but in bonds; his right arm is chained to the left hand of a soldier; he cannot do anything except under the inspection of his enforced companion, who, kindly as he may be disposed, cannot be so closely bound to him without causing him much discomfort. One would not like to be chained to the best man that ever lived, and much less to a rough Roman soldier. Paul is in bonds; as he writes, his fetters clank, but he makes light of it, and finds more than sufficient comfort in the reflection, "I suffer as an evildoer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound."

I am going to talk to you upon that point with as much brevity as I can. First, I call your attention to this grand truth, that the word of God is not bound—*in what sense is this true?* And, secondly, *for what reasons is this true?* And, thirdly, *what other facts run parallel to this fact, that though the preacher is bound, yet the word he preaches is not bound?*

I. First, then, IN WHAT SENSE IS IT TRUE, that "the word of God is not bound"? Possibly a meditation upon this text may revive the spirits of some who are cast down. May the Holy Spirit Himself bless the subject to us!

That the word is not bound is, at this time, true in many senses, and, first, *it is not bound so that it cannot be preached*. Paul could preach it even when in bonds, and he did preach it, so that the gospel was made known throughout Caesar's palace, and there were saints in the imperial household. Many came to and fro into the Praetorian guard-room, and

heard the word from the mouth of the apostle. You may be quite sure that he never neglected to make known the message of the gospel to all that visited him in his prison, so that the word of God was not bound even with respect to himself. And, dear friends, whatever saddens us at this hour, we rejoice that the word of God still finds a tongue and a voice with which to speak to the multitudes. That word which, when there was nothing, spoke everything into existence, would still be able to speak for itself, if not a single tongue voluntarily yielded itself to give forth speech for God, but at the same time there are many tongues which gladly proclaim the glorious grace of God. The word of God is not bound by reason of the lack of men to make it known; the true apostolic succession continues among us, and "Christ is preached." That everlasting gospel will never be silenced. It will still be proclaimed to the ends of the earth, and to the end of time. It shall still never cease to bless the world so long as the sea pulses with tides, and time is checkered with night and day—

"Nor shall Your spreading gospel rest,
Till through the world Your truth has run;
Till Christ has all the nations blest
That see the light, or feel the sun."

"The word of God is not bound." Nineteen centuries after Paul we have still an open Bible and a free pulpit. Blessed be God for this!

There have been a great many attempts to bind the word of God, but yet it has not been bound. The preachers of the holy faith of Christ have been hunted to death; they have "wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, afflicted, tormented," but "the word of God has not been bound." When Hamilton was burned in Scotland, there was such an impetus given to the gospel through his burning that the adversaries of the gospel were known to say, "Let us burn no more martyrs in public, for the smoke of Hamilton's burning has made many eyes to smart until they were opened." So, no doubt, it always was. Persecution is a red hand which scatters the white wheat far and wide. I need not remind you how the ashes of God's martyred servant, cast into a brook, were borne onward to a river, and afterwards to the sea, and by the sea they were carried to every shore. The word of God is not bound by the binding of the preachers, but it happens to the persecuted as to Israel in Egypt, "The more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied." Probably the church of God has never had better times; certainly she has never had happier times, than during periods of persecution. These were the days of her purity, and consequently her glory. When she has been in the dark, God has been her light, and when she has been driven to and fro by the cruelties of men, then has she most effectually rested under the shadow of the Almighty.

"The word of God is not bound" so as to be no longer a living, working power among men. Sometimes the enemies of truth have thought that they had silenced the last witness, and then there has been an unexpected outburst, and the old faith has been to the front again. When in Scotland, under the reign of Moderates, the gospel seemed to have died out, one earnest man by accident fell in with a little book, Fisher's *"Marrow of Divinity,"* was enlightened as to the pure truth of God, began at once to preach it, and found thousands to rejoice in it. That marrow has

never been taken away from Scotland's bones ever since, nor can it, nor shall it; let the devil do what he may. A desperate and subtle attempt is now being made, but it will be assuredly foiled through the wisdom of God. Yet, if it should come to this, that they should get rid of all the preachers of the gospel—of the men who would thunder out God's word like Boanerges, or speak it out in tender tones as Barnabas—if the last of the faithful testifiers were consigned to the tomb, God would be sure to raise up another generation to publish His truth, so that the word of God would not lack a spokesman in the midst of the earth. The devil's work is never done; one word from the Lord and it is all undone in an instant.

The enemies of the gospel have attempted also to bind it by the burning of books. I have in my possession an early copy of Luther's sermons, and I was told how very rare it was, because at first the circulation was forbidden, and afterwards they were bought up and burned as soon as they were met with. And what did they do? They only put fire into Luther when they burned his sermons; they drove him to be more outspoken than he otherwise might have been, and so they helped the cause they thought to destroy. It is impossible that truth can die; it has about it the immortality of God. It is utterly impossible that the truth of the gospel shall die, since it is wrapped up in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns forever. He *must see* of the travail of His soul, and must be satisfied for all the scoffs and agonies He has endured, neither will less content Him than a kingdom in which all others shall be merged. "The word of God is not bound," it will still be preached despite the scoffs of philosophers and the roaring of devils. Do not, therefore, at any time sit down in despair because of evil times, for the times are always evil in one respect or another! Do not imagine that truth will become extinct, and that the simple gospel will be forgotten. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but God's word shall never pass away. If the gospel which we hold is of men, it will be overthrown—and let it be; let us see it die without regret, but if it is of God, none can overcome it, and woe unto those who set themselves to do so. If these things are so, why are we so timorous? If our gospel is, as some think, only man's voice, it shall die down into the eternal silences, but if it comes from heaven, it shall increase into the everlasting chorus of heaven. Error shall be blown away like smoke from the chimney, or like March dust in the north wind, but God's own word is as eternal as God Himself. As the sun is not blown out by the tempest, nor the moon quenched by the damp of the night, so is not the gospel destroyed by the sophistries of perverse minds. Therefore let us comfort one another with these words, "The word of God is not bound." It will be preached till doomsday.

Another sense must be remembered; *the word of God is not bound so that it cannot reach the heart*. You may have perhaps, dear friend, some very obdurate relative about whose salvation you have very great concern. You have prayed long, and have used the means within your reach perseveringly; you have also used extraordinary means, and you have looked for an immediate result. But as yet the hard heart does not melt; as yet you see no tear of repentance, and hear no cry of faith, and, moreover, it may be that your friend refuses to go and hear the gospel, and

appears to be more opposed to it than before. I see that you are beginning to be bound in spirit, for the hot tears force up your eyelids, and scald their way down your cheeks while I mention the painful subject. You are hardly able to speak a good word, however much you desire it, for you have so often been repulsed. I think I hear you complaining to the Lord in prayer, and saying—

"But feeble my compassion proves,
And can but weep where most it loves;
Your own all-saving arm employ,
And turn these drops of grief to joy."

But oh! Remember that "the word of God is not bound." God has ways of reaching the hardest hearts and melting them, and He can do it at moments when such a work is least expected. He has ways of making His servants draw the bow at what to them is a venture, but to Him is an absolute certainty, and between the joints of the harness the shaft of conviction finds its way. Do not give anybody up in despair; while God is almighty, have hope for the chief of sinners. Hope on, hope always, even when your last argument seems to have failed, and your last instruction has been refused. It is well that it should be so, that in the work of salvation God may have all the glory, and you may learn to love Him and trust Him all the better in years to come. "The word of God is not bound."

Sometimes it happens to those whom we love that they are removed from the means of grace, but even then the word of God is not bound. We thought full surely, while we could take them to hear the minister whom God blessed to us, that they were within the reach of God's grace, but now they have gone away, and our spirit sinks. At this hour, perhaps, they are on the sea, or you have had a letter telling you that they live in a place remote from gospel preaching. You sigh within your soul, and think, "Oh, now they cannot be saved!" But the word of God is not bound. Had we not, a little while ago, an instance of one whom we were praying for at a prayer meeting, and that night, while we were praying, it was a moonlight night, and as he was walking the deck of the ship, the Lord met with him? When no tongue was able to reach him, the memory of what he had heard at home came over his soul, and he was humbled before God. I was telling, just a little while ago, at our prayer meeting, a very singular instance of how, just lately, three or four sermons on Sunday evenings have been made most useful to a young friend. He was going away to Australia unconverted, and without God. He went on board to depart, and when the vessel steamed out of dock, it ran into another ship, and he was obliged to wait and spend almost a month here while the vessel was being repaired. The Lord met with him on those Sunday nights, and he has gone now, leaving in his mother's heart the sweet persuasion that he has found his mother's God. The God of all grace has ways of getting at human hearts when to our thinking every avenue is fast closed. He can reach the poor in the slums of London, He can reach the harlot in her chambers of iniquity, He can touch the most debauched man in town in his lordly mansion. There is not a soldier who has gone into the ranks for the sake of hiding away from God, and indulging his passions, but what the Lord can conquer him. There is not a runaway thief but what the Lord can find him when the police cannot. He knows

just where His fugitives are, His warrants are out against them, and when the time comes His grace will arrest them—

"Thus the eternal counsel ran,
'Almighty grace, arrest that man'!"

And he was arrested, though he never thought that he should be made to turn to God, and seek eternal life. "The word of God is not bound." It goes forth conquering and to conquer.

But sometimes we are apt to think a case is more hopeless still, when, in addition to natural depravity, and the absence of the means of grace, there springs up a skepticism, perhaps a downright derision of the word of God, and of things sacred. One is apt to think then, "It is all over now; it is of no further use praying for such a one." I am not so sure that the case is any the worse for being openly declared, and honestly described. Nothing is more deadly than absolute indifference, and sometimes, when a man begins to avow himself an infidel, it is only that his conscience is troubling him, and he is obliged to take some drug with which to stifle it; no drug is handier for his use than avowed infidelity. A profession of skepticism is often nothing more than the whistling of the boy as he goes through the churchyard, and is afraid of ghosts, and therefore "whistles hard to keep his courage up." They try to get rid of the thought of God, because of that ghost of conscience which makes cowards of them all. They might have professed to be believers if it had not become too barefaced an inconsistency to live as they do, and yet own a God. I think it would be a good rule for all Christians to immediately pray whenever they hear a man swear. Pray for that particular man, and keep him in your mind's eye as far as you can, hoping that he may be converted to God. "The word of God is not bound." Even blasphemy and infidelity yield to the conquering touch of sovereign grace. I knew a man who had lived a life of carelessness and indifference, with occasional outbursts of drunkenness and other vices. This man happened one day, on Peckham Rye, to hear a preacher say that if any man would ask anything of God, He would give it to him. The assertion was much too broad, and might have done harm, but this man accepted it as a test, and resolved that he would ask, and thus would see if there really was a God. On the Saturday morning of that week, when he was going early to his work, the thought came upon him, "Perhaps there is a God after all." He was ready to swoon as the possibility struck him, and then and there he offered the test petition, concerning a matter which concerned himself and his fellow workmen. His prayer was granted in a remarkable manner, and he came then to be a believer in God. He is more than that now, and has found his way to be a believer in all that God has spoken, and has found peace through believing in Jesus Christ. It struck me as wonderful that this man, who never had any religious care at all before, should, all of a sudden, be turned to serve the living God. The preacher on Peckham Rye never had a more unlikely hearer, and yet he succeeded with him. Oh, pray for them, pray for them till the doors of death enclose them, till the bolts of the gates of eternal destiny are driven home! Pray for them! Pray for them! Never cease to cry to God for those who go to the utmost extremity of sin, for though *you* cannot reach them, "the word of God is not

bound." It is not bound, then, as to the preaching of it, or as to its power to reach the heart.

Still further, *it is not bound as to its power to comfort the soul.* I have—perhaps you have in your measure—to deal with persons under conviction of sin, with others who are suffering through ill health, or mental decline, with some who groan under Satanic temptation, and various forms of mental trial causing awful depression of spirits. We have spoken to certain of them many times without being able to bring them light and comfort. We put the gospel very plainly to them, and try to place it in different lights, hoping that somehow or other they may see hope. Alas! We are often unable to touch the wound of their spirit. But, oh, how they baffle us! How frequently have we had to cry out, "O God, help us!" We cannot comfort these poor people. The man in the iron cage, described by Bunyan, is repeated many times over in our observation. We bring the promises, we bring the doctrines, we bring our own experience to bear upon such persons, but their despair defies our consolation. The darkness is too dense for our poor rushlight to remove it. The captive is too closely shut up in prison for us to set him free. But here is a blessed truth, "The word of God is not bound." By and by that blessed word will break into the midnight darkness. Let us, therefore, continue to ply the afflicted with the word of God, searching out its most cheering assurances, and giving them full and free scope. Perhaps we put too much of our own explanation with the Lord's own word; perhaps we have thought that clever illustrations were needful, and so have overlaid the truth with our poor imagination. When we have come to the end of our explanations and our illustrations, it may be that the word which is not bound will come in, and give liberty to the captives. Wonderful cases have we seen of persons driven to despair, and ready to lay violent hands upon themselves, who have been raised up, and set at joyful liberty by the word of God, of itself alone. Oh, that some may prove its divine power tonight! One Scripture has set many at liberty, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." Hear it, think of it, believe it, and be at peace. A second passage has been fruitful above all other texts I think, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Let a man muse on that verse till he sees his fetters turn to cobwebs, and his prison walls dissolve like dreams. You are bound, poor sinner, but the word of God is not bound! You are bound, poor preacher, but the word of God is not bound! You are bound, dear mother, dear father, bound up in your weakness, and unable to do anything for your wayward child, but the word of God is not bound! It wears no bonds itself, and it is able to take them from all who groan under them.

Thus I have given you several senses of the text. There is another one. *The word of God is not bound in the sense that it cannot be fulfilled.* I now allude principally to the promises and prophecies of God's word. If there is a promise of deliverance to you, and you cannot see the way in which you are to be delivered, you may not, therefore, doubt the promise, for that would dishonor the Lord who spoke it. The word of God is not bound; the word of God will cleave its own way, and reach its own desti-

nation. Who makes a path for the lightning? The lightning burns its own instant way. Who shall make a path for the word of God? It will effect its own design. Jehovah speaks, and it is done. He said to the primeval darkness, "Let there be light!" and there was light. Now, if God has given a promise to you, He will as readily fulfill His word of promise to the least of His people, as He will make His own word effective for His own designs in nature, providence, or judgment. The word of God is not bound. You are come, perhaps, to your last penny, but He has said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." You have come to your last grain of strength, but He faints not, neither is He weary, and He has said, "As your days, so shall your strength be." And so shall it be. Oh, that we could believe the promises of God! We do not half believe them, brethren; we have never yet pressed the best of the wine out of them, because we have let them lie like uncrushed bunches of grapes. Truly they are beautiful to look upon, like the clusters of Eshcol, but that is not the way to know all that is in them. Oh, that we had but faith to tread them in the wine-vat that the ruddy juice might run out, and we might drink and be refreshed! Remember that God has promised nothing beyond His strength, nothing beyond His will. God carries out His promise to the full; He may sometimes exceed it, but He certainly never falls short of it. Therefore, let us be comforted tonight with the recollection that God's word is free to effect its own accomplishment. His decree is omnipotence resolving, and His providence is omnipotence acting. "The word of God is not bound."

There is yet one other sense. "*The word of God is not bound" so that it cannot endure and prevail unto the end*. I know that there are those who think it dead, and therefore they are anxious to attend its funeral, and bury it out of sight, while the new theology shall dance on its grave. They call us poor old fogies for believing in the old gospel, and tell us to go home and order our coffins, and leave the world to these wiser men. They begin to crow as if their work of defeating us had been unquestionably done. We are out of date; we are dead; we are extinct! Perhaps so! Perhaps so! But we think they will be mistaken in their imagination, for the word of God is not defeated after all. And if it were—if it were bound like the Lord Jesus, and were taken before priests and princes to be scourged and spit upon, and if it were crucified among thieves, and taken down from the cross, and laid in the tomb, and the grave were sealed, and watched by mighty men, yet the story would not be ended. Because the Lord lives it would live again, and its resurrection power would be testified in the midst of its adversaries. For this gospel, on which we have rested our souls, and on which our fathers rested throughout their generations, this is not bound. Who is to bind it? With what will they bind it? Green willow branches, and ropes, and bars of brass cannot hold this greater than Samson. It shall snap them in pieces as twine. There is no overcoming the free gospel. They dreamed that they had bound it many times before, and they cried in mockery, "The Philistines are upon you, Samson," but they have had to learn its might when least they expected it, and so they shall yet again. Philosophy and heresy are in league, and they gather their armies in haste. The Lord shall make them as the sheaves of the threshing floor. Therefore, let us be of good comfort,

brothers, and rest quite sure that, though we are beaten, the word of God is not beaten, and that though we are in a minority, and our preaching at a discount, it does not matter—"The word of God is not bound."

II. For a moment or two I have further to inquire, WHAT ARE THE REASONS WHY THE WORD OF GOD IS NOT BOUND?

It is not bound, because *it is the voice of the Almighty*. If the gospel is indeed the gospel of God, and these truths are a revelation of God, omnipotence is in them. It is not possible that the omnipotent word can be bound. Who will attempt the deed? Go bit the tempest, put a chain about the hurricane, control the winds, and bridle the raging sea, and when you have done these, you are but at the beginning of your task; you cannot even then hinder the omnipotence of God, which finds a chariot for itself in the word of God, and rides forth conquering and to conquer.

Moreover, *the Holy Spirit puts forth His power in connection with the word of God,* and as He is divine He is unconquerable. He comes as a rushing, mighty wind, and who can stop Him? He comes as fire, and who can stand before His flaming vehemence? The Holy Spirit's being with the gospel is the reason of its great power. It is not that truth alone is mighty, and will prevail, but that the Spirit of truth works mightily by it, and causes it to subdue the minds of men. If we had no Holy Spirit, what could we do? But as He has promised to take of the things of Christ, and to show them to His people, while He reproves the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, we know that "the word of God is not bound." The Holy Spirit manifests His own sovereign will, doing what He pleases, even as the wind blows where it pleases, and this is the surest proof that His word "is not bound."

If you wanted another reason less strong than these two, I should say, "How can it be bound while *it is so needful to men?"* There are certain things which if men want they will have. I have heard say that in the old Bread Riots, when men were actually starving for bread, no word had such a terribly threatening and alarming power about it as the word, "Bread!" when shouted by a starving crowd. I have read a description by one who once heard this cry; he said he had been startled at night by a cry of "Fire!" but when he heard the cry of "Bread! Bread!" from those that were hungry, it seemed to cut him like a sword. Whatever bread had been in his possession he must at once have handed it out. So it is with the gospel; when men are once aware of their need of it, there is no monopolizing it. None can make "a ring" or "a corner" over the precious commodity of heavenly truth. Neither can anyone put this candle under a bushel so as quite to conceal its light. It cannot be hid, because there are so many that want it. They are pining, these myriads of London, these myriads all over the world, and though they hardly know it, yet there is a cry coming up forever from them for something which they can never find, except in Christ. You may depend upon it you cannot stop the gospel being preached while there is this awful hunger after it in the souls of men. They must have it; you cannot cheat them into enduring a substitute for it. You may set up your altars, and put up your gimcrackeries, but they won't have them instead of the gospel. You may preach your speculations, and tell them "modern thought" has done away with the

old gospel, but as soon as the Holy Spirit shows them their state by nature, and their future danger, they sweep all this rubbish away. As the mower lays the grass in swaths to dry in the sun when he has passed up and down the field, so will the nations of the earth sweep away the green and flowery growths of human philosophy, and either give them to beasts to eat, or cast them into the oven. When men once know what they want, they will have it, despite priests or princes, scientists or skeptics. Oh, it must be so! This dire need of men must be met; the word of the Lord cannot be bound.

I have one thing else to tell you. The word of God is not bound, because, when once it gets into men's hearts, *it works such an enthusiasm in them that you cannot bind it*. You cannot silence lips which have been touched by a live coal from off the altar. When the humblest woman gets to know the gospel, you may say, "There, hold your tongue about it!" But you charge her in vain. She cannot but speak of what the Lord has done for her. The converted man must talk to his work mates about it. You may say, "It would be very irregular for you to hold a meeting; it would be out of all character for a mere working man to stand up on the village green," but he is very likely to do it. You let the man alone; he cannot help it. Look at the many that gathered together in the desert in the South of France in the old persecuting times! Why did they thus risk their lives? Why did they expose themselves to be ridden down by dragoons? They could not help it; they were eager for the gospel. They were in danger of being broken on the wheel if they preached, or listened to preaching, but they could not help it, they must hear the word of the Lord. The preacher said, "Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel." Their adversaries tortured them, and sent them to the galleys; they threatened them with banishment and death, but all in vain. You had better let them go on, for you cannot stop them. In our own land there was no binding the word of God, for those who knew it felt compelled to spread it. There is Master Bunyan; they have put him in prison, and his family is nearly starving, and they bring him up, and they say, "You shall go out of prison, John, if you won't preach. Go home, and tag your laces, that is what you have to do, and leave the gospel alone; what have you got to do with *that?"* But honest John answers, "I cannot help it. If you let me out of prison today, I will preach again tomorrow, by the help of God. I will lie here till the moss grows on my eyelids, but I will never promise to cease preaching the gospel." They could sooner bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion, than govern the movements of the Spirit of God in men. The love of Christ is such that, when it once pours into a man's heart, it must run out at his lips in loving testimony. Has He not put rivers of living water into the midst of those who once drink of the life-giving stream? And they must speak of it, even till they die.

III. Now I come to the close. ONE OR TWO OTHER FACTS RUN PARALLEL TO THE TEXT. Paul is bound, but the word of God is not bound. Read it thus; the preacher has had a bad week, he is full of aches and pains, he feels ill, *but the word of God is not ill*. Oh, what a blessing that is! We preach a healthy gospel if we are unhealthy ourselves. In this let

the invalid rejoice. Dear suffering worker, your work shall not suffer, for it is a sound gospel which you preach, though you yourself are hampered by a poor, weak body!

"What will become of the congregation when a certain minister dies?" Well, he will be dead, *but the word of God is not dead*. God buries His workmen, but His work goes on. One light goes out, but another torch flames forth. Star by star sinks beneath the horizon, but another star appears on the other side to make glad the night. The word of God is not dead when the preacher is dead.

"Oh, but the worker is so feeble!" *The word of God is not feeble*. "But the worker feels so stupid." *But the word of God is not stupid*. "But the worker is so unfit." *But the word of God is not unfit*. You see it all comes to this; the preacher is bound, but the word of God is not bound; the worker is feeble, but the word of God is not feeble. You are nothing and nobody, but the word of God cannot be said to be nothing and nobody; it is everything and everybody; it is girt about with all power.

But you bitterly and truthfully lament that Christian men are nowadays very devoid of zeal. "All hearts are cold in every place," the old fire burns low. *But the word of God is not cold,* nor lukewarm, nor in any way losing its old fire. "Such and such a congregation is as frozen as the North Pole." Yes, but the word of God is not frozen; divine truth is not turned into an iceberg. Do not fret yourself into despair as to the condition of the church, since the Lord lives. Things are bad indeed without His power, but then in the dark hour the glory of the Lord will shine out.

"Yes," says one, "but I am disgusted with the cases I have lately met with of false brethren." Yes, *but the word of God is not false*. "But they walk so inconsistently." I know they do, but *the word of God is not inconsistent*. "But they say they have disproved the faith." Yes, they have disproved their own faith, but they have not disproved the word of God for all that. The Word of God is not affected by the falsehood of men. "If we believe not, He abides faithful; He cannot deny Himself," and till He denies Himself we need not make much account of who else denies Him.

"Oh, but," says one, "it is an awful thing to think of the spiritual ruin of so many that are round about us, who hear the gospel, and yet after all willfully refuse it, and die in their sins." Truly this is a grievous fact; they appear to be bound by their sins like beasts for the slaughter, but the word of God is not bound or injured. It was said of old that it would be a sweet savor unto God in them that are saved, and in them that perish—in the one a savor of life unto life, and in the other a savor of death unto death. Is not the fact as the Lord Himself forewarned us? The ungodly reject the gospel, but the gospel has not, therefore, failed. O sinners, you cannot overcome God's word! You have defeated its influence of love upon yourselves, but it is not defeated after all. If *you* will not come to Christ, others will; the Spirit of the Lord shall bring them. Christ shall see of the travail of His soul. If *you* turn away from His precious blood, and refuse the redemption that He has worked, Christ shall not be disappointed as to the result of His passion; He shall see His seed, and shall prolong His days. You may bite at the gospel, but it shall be as when the viper in the fable gnawed at the file, and destroyed his teeth. You may

seek to put out the gospel light, but you will be thrusting your hand into the fire, and your own flesh shall be consumed. Do not try to war against the gospel! Choose some other adversary than the Lord God Almighty and His invincible gospel. I pray you; cease to fight against the Lord, for the word of God is not bound. However much you may try to bind it, you shall find that it has its liberty, and it will in the next world have liberty to accuse and to condemn if you will not give it liberty now to persuade and to save you. God bless you, dear friends, for Christ's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—2 TIMOTHY 2.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—484, 766, 478.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:

BELOVED FRIENDS—I would not have written this week, only you desire it. I have suffered much from neuralgic pain, for the weather was wet and windy. Today a summer's sun is shining, and we hope for better things.

I rejoice to hear good news of the preachers who have favored me by filling the pulpit in my absence. May the blessing of the Lord rest upon the good seed which they have sown, and on the rest of the services which will take place before my return! I should like to be thoroughly well before I return, and that is not the case just now. Still, I am resting and hoping; and being out of the world's wars and fightings, I have a better opportunity for recovering tone and energy.

Receive my hearty Christian love and my sincere thanks for all you do to support the work, and keep me from any anxiety about it. I am sure that the Lord, who has provided, will provide even to the end, and bring glory to His name by the doing of it.

It is an easy matter to trust when you feel bright and joyous, but we honor the Lord most by believing in Him when we feel depressed, and circumstances are saddening. God is to be trusted whatever the weather may be, inside or out. God's truth will prevail, even if every apostle should turn out to be a Judas, and every prophet a Balaam. In confidence in the unchanging God, let us forever abide.

Yours in the gospel of Jesus Christ,
Mentone, December 9th, 1887.
C. H. SPURGEON.

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SMALL RAIN FOR TENDER HERBS
NO. 1999

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 25, 1887,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"As the small rain upon the tender herb."
Deuteronomy 32:2.

THIS is the language of the great prophet Moses, "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass." We read of Moses that *he was a prophet mighty in word and deed;* he combined with his incomparable teaching an unequalled degree of marvelous miracle-working. He was equally great as a law-giver and as an administrator. This double power was found in no other prophet till our Lord Jesus Christ Himself came. The other prophets were, many of them, mighty in deed, but not in word, and others mighty in word, but not in deed. Samuel spoke mightily in the name of the Lord, but his miracles were few. Elijah was a great doer, but few of his words remain. The combination of the two was peculiar to Moses, and afterwards to Him of whom Moses had said aforetime, "The Lord your God will raise up unto you a prophet from the midst of you, of your brethren, like unto me; unto Him you shall hearken." Moses was mighty in deed, no man could have been more so. He it was that broke the power of Egypt by the ten great plagues, and led forth the once-enslaved people through the Red Sea, and fed them forty years with bread from heaven, and formed them into a nation. Heaven and earth and sea seemed to be obedient to Moses, God had girded him with such extraordinary power, yet I greatly question whether his power of word was not greater than his power of action. Although he was slow of speech, yet with Aaron as his spokesman, he faced the terrible Egyptian king, and so vanquished him that he dreaded the word of Moses more than all the armies of the nations. In the five volumes which he wrote, which are to this day accepted by us as lying at the base of revelation, Moses proved his great capacity in word. He was a master with his pen; he neither failed in prose nor in poetry, in law nor in divinity, in history nor in prophecy. Inspiration from above was his strength; he spoke the very word of God which he had heard when he was with Him on the holy mount.

Yet we perceive that *this might of word,* which dwelt in Moses, displayed itself frequently in a mild and gentle utterance; in the text, he declares that his doctrine should drop as rain, and distil as dew, and that it should be "as the small rain upon the tender herb." The highest power is consistent with the lowliest tenderness. He that is mightiest in word is mighty, not so much in thunder, and earthquake, and fire, as in a silent persuasiveness. God is often most present where there is least of appar-

ent force; the still, small voice had God in it when it was written, "The Lord was not in the wind." It is a wonderful thing, however, this being "mighty in word." It is perfectly marvelous how God does use words to accomplish great things. Remember, it is by the incarnate Word that we are saved at all; it is by the inspired Word that we are made to know the will of God, and it is through the words by which that incarnate Word is preached unto man that God is pleased to communicate the inner life. Faith comes by hearing, and there could be no hearing if there were no words spoken. You may wisely covet the power to speak with the words which God's wisdom teaches, for thus you will be an immeasurable blessing to your fellow men. You may well treasure up those words in your memory, even if you have not the gift to tell them out to others, for they are the wealth of the soul. You may be content to repeat the language of the Book of God, the *ipsissima verba,* the very words of inspiration, if you cannot put together sentences of your own, for the pure Word of God is by itself the best thing a man can say, and to repeat a text is often better than to preach a sermon from it. We cannot too widely scatter the actual language of the Holy Spirit, for we cannot tell what work the divine utterance may perform. Thank God that He does use words, for thus He comes very near to us. Ask Him to open your own lips, that you may show forth His praise; and if that is not granted you, then ask Him to open your ears, that His words may sink into your souls, and prove a savor of life unto life to you.

I intend to make three observations upon my text. Moses says that his doctrine should be as the small rain upon the tender herb.

I. Our first observation is, MOSES MEANT TO BE TENDER. Moses intended, in the sermon he was about to preach, to be exceedingly gentle. He would water minds as tender herbs, and water them in the same fashion as the small rain does. He would not be a beating hail, nor even a down-pouring shower, but he would be "as the small rain upon the tender herb." And this is the more remarkable, because he was about to preach *a doctrinal sermon*. Does he not say, "My *doctrine* shall drop as the rain"? Time was when a doctrinal sermon seemed to be most appropriately preached with clenched fists. The very idea of a doctrinal sermon seemed to mean a fight, a sort of spiritual duel, in which the good man was evidently bent upon demolishing somebody or other who held contrary views. I trust we are learning better, and that we try now to let doctrine distil as rain, and drop as dew, "as the small rain upon the tender herb." It is at certain turning points of the road our duty to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, but we are to recollect that our contentions are the contentions of love, and that it ill becomes the man who holds the truth of a loving Savior to hold it in bitterness, or contend for it with rancor. You will possibly think that I have been guilty in this matter, but I cannot make such a confession to any large extent. I have felt no bitterness, and when I have spoken forcibly, I have yet restrained myself from harder things which I might truthfully have brought forth. Yet, I regret that I have been forced into controversy for which I have no taste, and in which I have no pleasure. I have been driven to it; I have never sought it. To spread the gospel I should choose the gentler method; it is only to defend it that I have to draw the sword. Fight for

truth, yes, be willing to live or die for truth, but if you wish to spread it, you will do it best by letting it drop as rain, and distil as dew, gently and tenderly, "as the small rain upon the tender herb."

It is equally remarkable that this discourse of Moses was *a sermon of rebuke*. He rebuked the people, and rebuked them, too, with no small degree of sternness, when he said, "Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: you grew fat, you are grown thick; then he forsook God which made him." He warned the people of their great sin, and he did not hesitate to say, "They are a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them." Yet he felt that he had rebuked with the utmost meekness, and had still been as the soft dew and gentle rain. Ah, brethren! Upbraiding must be done in tenderness. Rebukes given in an unkind spirit had better not be given at all. I passed by a preacher one evening, who was addressing certain villagers in the most terrific strains. He was telling them, "The Lord is coming! The Lord is coming! You will be all destroyed!" There was plenty of sound, though I fear not an excess of sense, and there was a savor of delirious prophecy, which went beyond the Scriptures into personal visions and figments of the man's own brain. I wondered what he hoped to do. The people were standing at their doors, smoking their pipes, and taking it in as a curious kind of display. Perhaps better that he should rage like a sea in a storm than give the people no warning, and yet I do not suppose any good could come of his shouts. Had he spoken gently to them, one by one, concerning faith in God; had he gone to their doors, and spoken of the great love of Jesus Christ, perhaps there would have been some result, but one would not look for good fruit from the boisterous shouts of nonsense, and yet there are many who feel that if a man shouts and perspires something must be effected. Wisdom does not learn her exercises among the athletes, but among calm scholars. We do not blacken peoples' eyes to make them see, nor bully them into peace, nor kick them into heaven. To strive, and cry, and lift up, and cause clamorous voices to be heard in the streets is not Christ's way. Not a syllable, have we to say against zeal, even when it breaks over all bounds of propriety, but it is the zeal which we value, and not the outbursts by themselves. We question greatly whether too often physical force is not mistaken for spiritual power, and this is an error of a mischievous kind. We want, if we can, to draw our hearers with bands of love, not with cart ropes, and with "cords of a man," not such cords as we put about dogs and bulls. There must be in all rebukes an abounding gentleness, softness, and holy sorrow. When Paul is writing a very strong condemnation, he says, "I now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ." Jesus Christ denounces the doom of Jerusalem, but it is with a flood of tears. He cries, "Woe unto you, Chorazin!" but He feels a woe within His own soul while He is uttering woe to them. Dear brethren, it is well to observe this; that, though it was a doctrinal discourse, it was tender, and though it was a rebuking discourse, with Moses for preacher, yet still it was "as small rain upon the tender herb."

Yet once more, in this discourse, this swan's song, this final deliverance of the great judge in Israel, *he was about to declare the wrath of God,* for here we read words like these, "A fire is kindled in My anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her in-

crease, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains. I will heap mischiefs upon them; I will spend My arrows upon them," and so on. Never stronger, sterner language, but even this was made to drop as the small rain. And if ever there is a time when the sluices should be pulled up, and the floods of sympathy should flow, it is when we preach the wrath of God. I am certain that, to preach the wrath of God with a hard heart, and cold lips, and a tearless eye, and an unfeeling spirit, is to harden men, and not to benefit them. If we preach these terrors of the Lord persuasively we have hit the nail on the head, for what does the apostle say, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." Gently, as a nurse persuades a child, though in the background is the rod, we would woo men to Jesus till we win them. Though we tell them that they must have Christ or perish; they must believe in Him or be forever driven from His presence into outer darkness, we do this because we love them—love them better than those who flatter them. We dare not keep back for a moment the fact that sin is a horrible evil, and brings with it endless misery, nor would we dare to soften a syllable of the heavy tidings which we have to bear from the Lord to the impenitent, yet we have no joy in being the bearers of harsh news, it is the burden of the Lord to us. We wish we had permission to preach always upon cheering themes, as, indeed, we would gladly do, if men would turn to Jesus and live. Yet, even now, when we beat the warning drum, we do not forget to interject frequent pauses between the alarming strokes that pity's gentle voice may take its turn in the winning of souls.

I remember one servant of God who could not help interrupting the great New England minister by crying out, "Mr. Edwards, Mr. Edwards, is He not a God of mercy after all?" I hope I should never, under any circumstances, give occasion for such a question. Though the Lord is a God of vengeance upon such as refuse His Son, and reject His grace, yet is He abundant in mercy, tenderness, and long-suffering, and delights not in the death of any, but that they should turn unto Him and live. Therefore let us give space for mercy to persuade while justice threatens. The right spirit in which to preach the terrors of God is the spirit of the text. We are to make even our solemn warnings drop "as the small rain upon the tender herb." Moses meant to be gentle. Though it was a doctrinal discourse, a searching and rebuking discourse, and a discourse full of the threats of God, yet he displayed in it his customary meekness.

Now, beloved friends, if Moses meant to be tender *how much more truly was Jesus tender!* The representative of the law aimed at tenderness; how much more the incarnation of the gospel! He who came with ten broken commands to threaten men was tender; how much more He who comes with five wounds, fountains of eternal pardon, to persuade men! How winning is the meek and lowly Lamb of God! The moment we look to His life we see that wondrous tenderness displayed in His doctrine, for His teaching was compassionate in manner. Somehow, I cannot imagine our Lord Jesus Christ preaching with tones and manners at all similar to certain of His professed followers, who thunder at men with vehemence devoid of sympathy. He did thunder in indignation, but the lightning of conviction was by far the more noticeable, and with the lightning there always came a shower of pity. The Sermon on the Mount, I have some-

times thought, was such as an inspired woman might fitly have preached; it is so full of heart, and so exceedingly pitiful. For the most part, throughout His ministry, though masculine to the last degree, yet there is a softness, a pathos of love, as if in the person of Christ we had both man and woman, as in the first Adam at the creation. Jesus is the head of the race, completely combining in His own person all the vigor of the man, and all the affection of the woman. He is, as it were, both father and mother to the children of men, blending everything that is sweet in manhood and womanhood in one individuality, and showing it all in His style, which is as forcible as a hero's energy in the day of battle, and yet as gentle as a nurse with her children. All the mannerisms of Christ are wooing, hence we read, "Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him." Hence we have Him saying, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not." To Him the sick came by instinct as to a Physician peculiarly set for the healing of humanity; to Him the bereaved sisters, the widowed mothers, and the outcast lepers ran with eager hope; yes, to Him the wildest of maniacs yielded, feeling the irresistible spell of His love. Oh yes, our Lord's manner was gentleness itself.

Furthermore, *His style of speech was compassionately considerate,* even as the dew seems to consider the withered grass, and the small rain to adapt itself to the tender herb. In His teaching He evidently thought of the feebler sort, and suited Himself to those depressed by grief. You find no hard words thrown in to make the speaker seem wise. There are difficulties about His doctrine inherent to the nature of truth, but they are never aggravated by His style. I suppose nobody ever went to Him, and said, "Rabbi, what did You mean by such and such a word?" They knew the meaning of the words, though not always did they catch the inner sense. Their misapprehension was never the fault of the words which He used. His use of the parabolic style was especially remarkable, He kept on saying the kingdom of heaven is *like;* like this, like that. When He feeds the multitude, He never gives them indigestible food—His *menu* is always bread and fish; so when He preaches, there is no indigestible truth. For the most part, in the early days of His preaching to the outside multitude, He gave them little more than moral truth, for that was all they were able to bear. It sometimes amuses me to see how certain "modern thought" men prove themselves to belong to the outside many, and not to the inner circle of disciples, for they take the Sermon on the Mount, and extol it as the summit of the doctrine of Jesus, whereas it was only His discourse to the multitude, and not such spiritual teaching as He gave to His apostles when alone. There were gleams and glints of the divinely-spiritual truth flashing out of the moral truth like flames from a fire, but for the most part He gave the crowd that which it could receive, and not that which would have been above their heads. He crumbed the bread into the milk, and gave the people a portion fit for their childhood. He fed them with milk, for they were not yet able to bear that strong meat which His servant Paul was permitted afterwards to bring forth in a lordly dish for the feeding and feasting of those who have had their senses exercised in spiritual things. The Lord was very careful as to the manner of His teaching, and as to the matter of His teaching,

too, even to His chosen. "I have yet many things to say unto you," He said, "but you cannot bear them now." There was a gradual development in His teaching as He saw the minds of men were prepared to receive the truth which He should speak, from which method of wisdom and prudence let His disciples learn a lesson.

Furthermore, note well that *the truth which our Lord spoke had always a refreshing effect upon those that were spiritually alive*. Our blessed Master's sermons were "as the small rain upon the tender herb," not merely for the softness of their descent, but for the wondrous efficacy with which they came. His words fell not as fire-flakes to destroy or as the dust from the wilderness to defile, but ever as the warm shower to cherish. What a delight it must have been to have listened to the Lord!

Oh, to hear Him preach once! Ah! Though He should rebuke me, and do nothing else; yes, though He should thunder at me, and do nothing else; how gladly would I listen to His voice, and say, "Speak, Lord; for Your servant hears"! Surely this heart of mine would be too glad to be as a fleece of wool, filled with the dew of His blessed doctrine! There must have been an unutterable sweetness, a delicious persuasiveness, a divine power, about the speaking of Jesus, for, "Never man spoke like this man." His lips were as lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh. Whatsoever He spoke was fragrant with infinite love and gentleness, and therefore it revived the spirit of the contrite ones.

So we learn that Moses meant to be tender, and Jesus was tender. What else do we learn? Why, that *all the servants of Jesus Christ ought to be tender,* for, if Moses was so, much more should we be. I know there are many here tonight who are preachers of the gospel. Dear brethren, let us endeavor, with all our might, to be always considerate towards those whom we address. Let us think of them as tender herbs, for many are so in their weakness, sorrowfulness, instability, and ignorance. I am persuaded that we fix too high a standard when we preach, and assume that our people know a great deal more than they do. I am sure we need frequently need to go over again the elements, the fundamentals, the simplest doctrines of the gospel, to our congregations, for, though there are some that are fathers, for whom we are grateful, yet it is true today, as it was in Paul's day, we have not many fathers, and we ought not to preach with an eye to the few fathers, but with an eye to the many children. We shall do well if the babes in grace are fed by us, and to do this our preaching must be "as the small rain upon the tender herb." We must try to the utmost of our ability to be very plain and simple, for many will not understand us even then. I was greatly pleased with a complaint brought against me the other day, to which I plead guilty, and I expect I shall plead guilty to it for many a day to come. Someone said, "Mr. Spurgeon gives us meat, but there's no gristle; he cuts out all the bone." They wanted a bit or two of hard bone, just to try their teeth on. Alas, many have broken more than a tooth over the novel teaching of "modern thought!" Now, I have never been particularly earnest, when feeding my flock, to seek out the poisonous pastures, just to see how much of injurious fodder they could bear without getting sick. No; I have had regard to those who are not yet able to discern the differences in

spiritual things, and therefore I have led them to those ancient pastures where the saints were content to feed in days gone by.

I think we cannot be too simple, nor too plain, nor set out the precious things of God in too clear a light. The little ones of God have very great needs, and must have our special care. These tender herbs are very apt to be dried up, and yet, being tender, they are not able to drink in a great shower all at once. When I have been traveling, especially in southern France and Italy, I have come upon places where the river has burst its banks, and covered all the land with water; then, instead of blessing the fields, it has swept everything out of them, and buried them in mud, and killed the crops. There is a great difference between irrigation and inundation, and some preachers forget this. A sermon may sometimes act in that fashion to some of God's dear tender ones; it may be a perfect deluge of doctrine, sweeping up by the roots those feeble plants which are not very deeply rooted in the faith. They shall not perish, but we must avoid everything which has a tendency to destroy even the least of them. We do well to give the tender herbs the water of life little by little. It must be "Line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little," for God's children are like our children, and need little and often, rather than much and seldom. There is a loaf of bread, and there is the child; you want to get that loaf of bread into the child. Well, you must do it by degrees, or else you will never do it at all. You will choke the child, if you attempt to insert too much at a time into his limited storeroom. Take the bread, and break it down, and in due time he will appropriate that quarter loaf, and a great many loaves besides, for little children have great appetites. God's children cannot all of them receive a mass of doctrine all at once, but they have a fine appetite, and if you give them time, they will gradually appropriate, masticate, and inwardly digest all the truth of God so that they will be nourished by it and made to grow. Let every minister of Christ remember this, and patiently instruct his hearers as they are able to bear it.

And so, dear friends, I will say one thing more upon this point, which is, *let every Christian remember this,* for every Christian is to try and bring souls to Christ. We are all to be teachers of the gospel, according to our ability, and the way to do it is to be "as the small rain upon the tender herb." Perhaps, dear friend, you say, "Well, I should be small rain, without any great effort, for I have not much in me." Just so, but yet that small rain has a way of its own by which it makes up for being so small. "How is that," you ask? Why, by continuing to fall day after day. Any gardener will tell you that with many hours of small rain there is more done than in a short period with a drenching shower. Constant dropping penetrates, saturates, and abides. Little deeds of kindness win love even more surely than one bounteous act. If you cannot say much of gospel truth at a time, keep on saying a little, and saying it often. If you cannot come out with a wagonload of grain for an army, feed the barn-door fowls with a handful at a time. If you cannot give the people fullness of doctrine like the profound divines of former ages, you can at least tell what the Lord has taught you, and then ask Him to teach you more.

As you learn, teach; as you get, give; as you receive, distribute. Be as the small rain upon the tender herb. Do you not think that in trying to

bring people to Christ, we sometimes try to do too much at once? Rome was not built in a day, nor will a parish be saved in a week. Men do not always receive all the gospel the first time they hear it. To break hearts for Jesus is something like splitting wood; we need to work with wedges that are very small at one end, but increase in size as they are driven in. A few sentences spoken well and fitly may leave an impression where the attempt at once to force religion upon a person may provoke resistance, and do harm. Be content to drop a word or two today, and another word or two tomorrow. Soon you may safely say twice as much, and in a week's time you may hold a long and distinctly religious conversation. It may soon happen that where the door was rudely shut in your face you will become a welcome visitor, whereas had you forced your way in at first you would have effectually destroyed all future opportunity.

There is a great deal in speaking at the right moment. We may show our wisdom in *not* doing, and in *not* saying, as much as in doing and saying. Time is a great ingredient in success. To speak out of season will show our zeal, but not always our sense. We are to be instant out of season as well as in season, but this does not involve incessant talking. I commend to everyone who would be a winner of souls by personal effort the symbol of our text, "as the small rain upon the tender herb." The rain is seasonable, and in accordance with its surroundings. The rain does not fall while a burning sun is scorching the plants, or it might kill them; neither is it always falling, or it might injure them. Do not bring in your exhortations when they would be out of place, and do not be incessantly talking even the best of truth, lest you weary with chatter those whom you desire to convince with argument. If you will wait upon the Lord for guidance, He will send you forth when you will be most useful, even as He does the rain. God will direct you as to time and place, if you put yourself at His disposal.

Thus have I spoken, perhaps, at too great a length, upon the first head—Moses meant to be tender.

II. The second head is MOSES HOPED TO BE PENETRATING, "as the small rain upon the tender herb." Now, small rain is meant to enter the herb, so that it may drink in the nourishment and be truly refreshed. The rain is not to drench the herb, and it is not to flood it; it is to feed it, to revive it, to refresh it. This was what Moses aimed at. Beloved, this is what all true preachers of Christ aim at. We long that the word which we speak may enter into the soul of man, may be taken up into the innermost nature, and may produce its own divine result.

Why is it some people never seem to take in the word, "as the small rain upon the tender herb?" I suppose it is, first, because *some of it may be above their understanding*. If you hear a sermon, and you do not know at all what the good man is talking about, how can it benefit you? If the preacher uses the high-class pulpit-language of the day, which is not English, but a sort of English-Latin—produced rather by reading than by conversation with ordinary mortals, why then the hearer usually loses his time, and the preacher his labor!

One said to me, "If I went to such and such a place I should not want my Bible, but I should need a dictionary, for otherwise I should not know what was meant." May that never be the case with us! When people can-

not understand the meaning of our language, how can we expect that they can drink in the inner sense? I exhort any hearer here to whom it has not occurred that he must understand the sermon to be benefited by it, to seek out always, both in his hearing and in his reading, that kind of teaching which he can grip and grasp. He will rise to higher things by this means, but he cannot rise by that which never touches him. We cannot feed upon that which is high above and out of our sight. Ballooning in theology is all very fine, but it is of no use to poor souls down here below, who cannot hope to be allowed a place in the car. Tender plants are not refreshed by water which is borne aloft into the clouds, they want it to come down to earth and moisten their leaves and roots, and if it does not come near them, how can they be refreshed by it? The fountains of Versailles are very grand, but for the little flowerpot in a London window, a cupful from a child's hand, poured near the root, will suffice.

Many do not drink in the sacred word because *it seems to them too good to be true*. This is limiting the goodness of God; God is so good that nothing can be too good to be looked for from Him. How many fail to grasp a promise because, while they say it may be true in a sense, they do not receive it in *the* sense intended by the Spirit of God! They dwarf and diminish the sense, and in the process they evaporate the real meaning, and the word of God becomes of no effect to them. In many an instance, the gospel does no mighty works because of their unbelief. Depend upon it, God's word is a great word, for He is a great God, and the largest meaning we can find in it is more likely to be true than a smaller one.

Many persons do not receive the gospel promise to the full because *they do not think it is true to them;* anybody else may be blessed in that way, but they cannot think it probable that *they* shall be. Though the gospel is particularly directed to sinners, to such as "labor and are heavy-laden," and to such as need a Savior, yet these good folks think, "Surely grace could never reach to *us*." Oh, how we lose our labor, and fail to comfort men, because of the unbelief which pretends to be the child of humility, but is really the offspring of pride! The small rain does not get at the tender herb because the herb shrinks from the silver drops which would cherish it.

No doubt many miss the charming influences of heavenly truth because *they do not think enough.* How often does the word fail to enrich the heart because it is not thought over! The small rain does not get to the root of the tender herb, for time and opportunity are not allowed to it. O you that would profit by the ministry of the gospel, take this for your golden rule—hear once, meditate twice, and pray three times! I prescribe to you, as a composition and compound of excellent virtue, that there should be at least twice as much meditating as there should be hearing. Is it not strange that people should think sermons worth hearing, but not worth meditating upon? It is as foolish as if a man thought a joint of meat worth buying, but not worth cooking, for meditation is, as it were, a sort of holy cookery by which the truth is prepared to be food for the soul. Solomon says, "The slothful man roasts not that which he took in hunting," and, verily, there are many of that sort, who hunt after a sermon, and when they have found it, they roast it not, they do not prepare

it as truth should be prepared before it can be digested and become spiritual meat. Why get books if you never read, or clothes if you never dress, or carriages if you never ride? Yet any one of these things is more sensible than hearing sermons and never meditating upon them. Do not do so, dear brethren, I pray you!

We are not members of the Society of Friends, although I hope we are friends, and members of a society, but we should try and do after the service what they try to do during the service. Let us keep silence, and let the truth sink into us. We should be all the better if occasionally we were famished of words, for too often we are smothered with them. It would be profitable to have the supply of words stopped, that we might get below the language, and look inward at the hidden sense, that we might reach the heart of truth, and feel its energetic operation upon our heart and soul. We are too often like men who skim over the surface of the soil while there are nuggets of gold just out of sight, which we might readily secure if we would but stop and dig for them. You cannot hope to feel the efficacy of that which is preached, so that it shall be to you as the small rain upon the tender herb, unless you thoughtfully consider it.

And, once more, we ought to *pray that when we hear the word we may be prepared to receive it;* it is of great importance that we should open the doors of our soul to let the gospel enter us. Hospitality to truth is charity to ourselves. Some people sit, while we are preaching, like men in armor, and the gospel bow is drawn with all our force, but the arrow rattles on their mail. It is only now and then that, divinely guided, the arrow finds out a joint in their harness. But the profitable way to hear is to come here without armor of prejudice, or stubbornness, and lay yourself open to receive the arrow; then will it be "the arrow of the Lord's deliverance." Gideon's fleece became wet with the dew, for it was ready to receive it. Every bit of wool has an aptitude, a sponginess, to suck up dew, and the moisture of the atmosphere fell where it was welcome when it fell on that fleece. The fleece was a nest for the dewdrops to rest in. So let it be with our spirits. I pray God to make it so. "The preparation of the heart in man is from the Lord." May He so prepare us that, when the doctrine preached shall come to us as the small rain, it may not fall on stones and dead wood, but on growing herbs, which, though tender, will nonetheless gladly accept the blessed gift of heaven, and return thanks for it.

III. I shall conclude with this third reflection, that MOSES HOPED TO SEE RESULTS. You may, perhaps, say that you do not see this in the text. Will you kindly look again? "As the small rain upon the tender herb." Now, observe, in looking about among mankind, that, whenever wise men expect any results from their labors, they always go to work in a manner suited and adapted to the end they have in view. If Moses means that his speech shall bless those whom he compares to tender herbs, he makes it like small rain. I see clearly that he seeks a result, for he adapts his means. There is a kind of trying to do good which I call the "hit-or-miss" style of doing it. Here you are going to do good; you do not consider what method of doing good you are best fitted for, but you aspire to preach, and preach you do. Of course, you must give a sermon, and a sermon you give. There is no consideration about the congregation, and its special condition, or the peculiar persons composing it, nor what

truth will be most likely to impress and benefit. Hit-or-miss, off you go! When a man means to see results, he begins studying means and their adaptation to ends, and if he sees that his people are strong men, and he wants to feed them, well, he does not bring out the milk jug, but he fetches out a dish of strong meat for them. You can see he means to feed his people, for he has great anxiety when preparing their spiritual meat. When a person wants to water plants, and they are tender herbs, if he looks for results he does not drench them; that would look as if he had no real objective, but simply went through a piece of routine. Moses meant what he was doing. Finding the people to be comparable to tender herbs, he adapted his speech to them, and made it like the small rain.

Now, what will be the result if we do the same? Why, brethren, it will come to pass thus; there will be among us young converts like tender herbs, newly planted, and if we speak in tenderness and gentleness we shall see the result, for they will *take root* in the truth, and grow in it. Paul planted and then Apollos watered. Why did Apollos water? Because you must water plants after you have planted them, that they may the more readily strike into the earth. Happy shall you be, dear friends, if you employ your greater experience in strengthening those whose new life is as yet feeble! You shall have loving honor as nursing fathers, and your wise advice shall be "as the small rain upon the tender herb," for you shall see the result in the young people taking hold of Christ, and sucking out the precious nutriment stored away in the soil of the covenant, that they may grow thereby.

Next, when a man's discourse is like small rain to the tender herb, he sees the weak and perishing one *revive* and lift up his head. The herb was withering at first, it lay down as you see a newly-planted thing do, faint and ready to die, but the small rain came, and it seemed to say, "Thank you," and it looked up, lifted its head, and recovered from its swoon. You will see a reviving effect produced upon faint hearts and desponding minds. You will be a comforter; you will cheer away the fears of many, and make glad the timid and fearful. What a blessing it is when you see that result, for there is so much the more joy in the world, and God is so much the more glorified!

When you water tender herbs, and see them *gro*w, you have a further reward. It is delightful to watch the development and increase of grace in those who are under our care. This has been an exceedingly sweet pleasure to me. I quote my own instance because I have no doubt it is repeated in many of you. It has been a great delight to me to meet men serving God, and preaching the gospel gloriously, who were once young converts, and needed my fostering care. I know men, deacons of churches, fathers in Israel that I recollect talking to twenty or twenty-five years ago, when they could not speak a word for Jesus, for they were not assured of their own salvation. I rejoice to see them leaders of the flock, whereas once they were poor, feeble lambs. I carried them in my bosom, and now they might almost carry me. I am glad enough to learn from them, and sit at their feet. It is a great thing for a father to see his boys grow into strong men, upon whom he may lean in his declining days. "Blessed is the man that has his quiver full of them," they were the children of his youth, and they are the comfort and joy of later days. You, dear friends, in your own

way, you shall comfort the youngsters who are just seeking the Savior, and then, in later years, when you hear them preaching, and see them outstripping you in gifts and in graces, you will thank God that you were like the small rain to them when they were very tender herbs!

Once more, we water plants that we may see them *bring forth fruit,* and become fit for use. So shall we see those whom God blesses by our means become a joy to the Lord Himself, yielding fruits of holiness, patience, and obedience, such as Jesus Christ delights in. His joy is in His people, and when He can rejoice in them, their joy is full. Let us try to be little in our own esteem that we may be as the small rain. Let us try to be a little useful, if we cannot reach to great things; the small rain is a great blessing. Let us try to be useful to little things. Let us look after tender herbs, let us try to bring to Jesus boys and girls. Let us look after the tender plants of the Lord's right hand planting, those who are babes in grace, the timid, trembling, half-hoping, half-fearing ones. Let us come down from the seventh heaven to bless this fallen earth. We have been reading about the trumpets, and the "star called Wormwood," let us come down from those high matters to commonplace affairs. Let us quit clouds and skies, and condescend to men of low estate. Let us come down from communing with the philosophers of culture, and the apostles of a new theology, to the ordinary people who live around us, and cannot comprehend these fine fictions. Let us come down to the streets and lanes, and do what we can for the poor, the fallen, the ignorant. Let us go with Jesus, in the gentleness and sweetness of His divine compassion, to the little children in years, and the babes in grace. So shall we be like Moses; so shall we be, better still, like the Lamb of God, to whose name be glory forever and ever. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON — DEUTERONOMY 32:1-31

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—28 (VERSION 1), 403, 518.

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"With His stripes we are healed."
Isaiah 53:5.

BEING one evening in Exeter Hall, I heard our late beloved brother, Mr. Mackay, of Hull, make a speech, in which he told us of a person who was under very deep concern of soul, and felt that he could never rest till he found salvation. So, taking the Bible into his hand, he said to himself, "Eternal life is to be found somewhere in this Word of God; and if it is here, I will find it, for I will read the Book right through, praying to God over every page of it, if perhaps, it may contain some saving message for me." He told us that the earnest seeker read on through Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, and so on, and though Christ is there very evidently, he could not find Him in the types and symbols. Neither did the holy histories yield him comfort, nor the book of Job. He passed through the Psalms, but did not find His Savior there, and the same was the case with the other books till he reached Isaiah. In this prophet he read on till near the end, and then in the fifty-third chapter, these words caught his delighted attention, *"With His stripes we are healed."* "Now I have found it," he said. "Here is the healing that I need for my sin-sick soul, and I see how it comes to me through the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be His name, I am healed!" It was well that the seeker was wise enough to search the sacred volume; it was better still that in that volume there should be such a life-giving word, and that the Holy Spirit should reveal it to the seeker's heart. I said to myself, "That text will suit me well, and perhaps a voice from God may speak through it yet again to some other awakened sinner." May He, who by these words spoke to the chamberlain of the Ethiopian queen, who also was impressed with them while in the act of searching the Scripture, speak also to many who shall hear or read this sermon! Let us pray that it may be so. God is very gracious, and He will hear our prayers.

The object of my discourse is very simple; I would come *to* the text, and I would come *at* you. May the Holy Spirit give me power to do both to the glory of God!

I. In endeavoring to come to the full meaning of the text, I would remark, first, that GOD, IN INFINITE MERCY, HERE TREATS SIN AS A DISEASE. "With His stripes"—that is, the stripes of the Lord Jesus—"we are healed." Through the sufferings of our Lord, sin is pardoned, and we

are delivered from the power of evil; this is regarded as the healing of a deadly malady. The Lord in this present life treats sin as a disease. If He were to treat it once as sin, and summon us to His bar to answer for it, we should at once sink beyond the reach of hope, for we could not answer His accusations, nor defend ourselves from His justice. In great mercy He looks upon us with pity, and for the while treats our ill manners as if they were diseases to be cured rather than rebellions to be punished. It is most gracious on His part to do so, for while sin is a disease, it is a great deal more. If our iniquities were the result of an unavoidable sickness, we might claim pity rather than censure, but we sin willfully, we choose evil, we transgress in heart, and therefore we bear a moral responsibility which makes sin an infinite evil. Our sin is our crime rather than our calamity, however, God looks at it in another way for a season. That He may be able to deal with us on hopeful grounds, He looks at the sickness of sin, and not as yet at the wickedness of sin. Nor is this without reason, for men who indulge in gross vices are often charitably judged by their fellows to be not only wholly wicked, but partly mad. Propensities to evil are usually associated with a greater or less degree of mental disease, perhaps, also, of physical disease. At any rate, sin is a spiritual malady of the worst kind.

Sin is a disease, for *it is not essential to manhood,* nor an integral part of human nature as God created it. Man was never more fully and truly man than he was before he fell, and He who is especially called "the Son of man "knew no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth, yet He was perfectly man. Sin is abnormal, a sort of cancerous growth, which ought not to be within the soul. Sin is disturbing to manhood; sin unmans a man. Sin is sadly destructive to man; it takes the crown from his head, the light from his mind, and the joy from his heart. We may name many grievous diseases which are the destroyers of our race, but the greatest of these is sin; sin, indeed, is the fatal egg from which all other sicknesses have been hatched. It is the fountain and source of all mortal maladies.

It is a disease, because *it puts the whole system of the man out of order*. It places the lower faculties in the higher place, for it makes the body master over the soul. The man should ride the horse, but in the sinner the horse rides the man. The mind should keep the animal instincts and propensities in check, but in many men the animal crushes the mental and the spiritual. For instance, how many live as if eating and drinking were the chief objects of existence; they live to eat, instead of eating to live! The faculties are thrown out of gear by sin, so that they act fitfully and irregularly, you cannot depend upon any one of them keeping its place. The equilibrium of the life-forces is grievously disturbed. Even as a sickness of body is called a disorder, so is sin the disorder of the soul. Human nature is out of joint, and out of health, and man is no longer man; he is dead through sin, even as he was warned of old, "in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die." Man is marred, bruised, sick, paralyzed, polluted, rotten with disease, just in proportion as sin has shown its true character.

Sin, like disease, operates to weaken man. The moral energy is broken down so as scarcely to exist in some men. The conscience labors under a fatal consumption, and is gradually ruined by a decline; the understanding has been lamed by evil, and the will is rendered feeble for good, though forcible for evil. The principle of integrity, the resolve of virtue, in which a man's true strength really lies, is sapped and undermined by wrong-doing. Sin is like a secret flow of blood, which robs the vital parts of their essential nourishment. How near to death in some men is even the power to discern between good and evil! The apostle tells us that, when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly, and this being without strength is the direct result of the sickness of sin, which has weakened our whole manhood.

Sin is a disease which in some cases causes extreme pain and anguish, but in other instances deadens sensibility. It frequently happens that, the more sinful a man is, the less he is conscious of it. It was remarked of a certain notorious criminal that many thought him innocent because, when he was charged with murder, he did not betray the least emotion. In that wretched self-possession there was to my mind presumptive proof of his great familiarity with crime; if an innocent person is charged with a great offense, the mere charge horrifies him. It is only by weighing all the circumstances, and distinguishing between sin and shame, that he recovers himself. He who can do the deed of shame does not blush when he is charged with it. The deeper a man goes in sin, the less does he admit that it is sin. Like a man who takes opium, he acquires the power to take larger and larger doses, till that which would kill a hundred other men has but slight effect upon him. A man who readily lies is scarcely conscious of the moral degradation involved in being a liar, though he may think it shameful to be called so. It is one of the worst points of this disease of sin that it stupefies the understanding, and causes a paralysis of the conscience.

By and by sin is sure to cause pain, like other diseases which flesh is heir to, and when its awakening comes, what a start it gives! Conscience one day will awake, and fill the guilty soul with alarm and distress, if not in this world, yet certainly in the next. Then will it be seen what an awful thing it is to offend against the law of the Lord.

Sin is a disease which pollutes a man. Certain diseases render a man horribly impure. God is the best judge of purity, for He is thrice-holy, and He cannot endure sin. The Lord puts sin away from Him with abhorrence, and prepares a place where the finally-unclean shall be shut up by themselves. He will not dwell with them here; neither can they dwell with Him in heaven. As men *must* put lepers apart by themselves, so justice must put out of the heavenly world everything which defiles. O my hearer, shall the Lord be compelled to put you out of His presence because you persist in wickedness?

And this disease, which is so polluting, is, at the same time, *most injurious* to us, from the fact that it prevents the higher enjoyment and employment of life. Men exist in sin, but they do not truly live; as the Scripture says, such a one is dead while he lives. While we continue in sin, we cannot serve God on earth, nor hope to enjoy Him forever above. We are

incapable of communion with perfect spirits, and with God Himself, and the loss of this communion is the greatest of all evils. Sin deprives us of spiritual sight, hearing, feeling, and taste, and thus deprives us of those joys which turn existence into life. It brings upon us true death, so that we exist in ruins, deprived of all which can be called life.

This disease is fatal. Is it not written, "The soul that sins, it shall die?" "Sin, when it is finished, brings forth death." There is no hope of eternal life for any man unless sin is put away. This disease never exhausts itself so as to be its own destroyer. Evil men wax worse and worse. In another world, as well as in this present state, character will, no doubt, go on to develop and ripen, and so the sinner will become more and more corrupt as the result of his spiritual death. O my friends, if you refuse Christ, sin will be the death of your peace, your joy, your prospects, your hopes, and thus the death of all that is worth having! In the case of other diseases nature may conquer the malady, and you may be restored, but in this case, apart from divine interposition, nothing lies before you but eternal death.

God, therefore, treats sin as a disease, because it is a disease, and I want you to feel that it is so, for then you will thank the Lord for thus dealing with you. Many of us have felt that sin is a disease, and we have been healed of it. Oh, that others could see what an exceedingly evil thing it is to sin against the Lord! It is a contagious, defiling, incurable, mortal sickness.

Perhaps somebody says, "Why do you raise these points? They fill us with unpleasant thoughts." I do it for the reason given by the engineer who built the great Menai Tubular Bridge. When it was being erected, some brother engineers said to him, "You raise all manner of difficulties." "Yes," he said, "I raise them that I may solve them." So do we at this time, dilate upon the sad state of man by nature, that we may the better set forth the glorious remedy of which our text so sweetly speaks.

II. God treats sin as a disease, and HE HERE DECLARES THE REMEDY WHICH HE HAS PROVIDED, "With His stripes we are healed."

I ask you very solemnly to accompany me in your meditations, for a few minutes, while I bring before you the stripes of the Lord Jesus. The Lord resolved to restore us, and therefore He sent His Only-begotten Son, "Very God of very God," that He might descend into this world to take upon Himself our nature, in order to our redemption. He lived as a man among men, and, in due time, after thirty years or more of service, the time came when He should do us the greatest service of all, namely, stand in our stead, and bear the chastisement of our peace. He went to Gethsemane, and there, at the first taste of our bitter cup, He sweat great drops of blood. He went to Pilate's hall, and Herod's judgment seat, and there drank draughts of pain and scorn in our room and place. Last of all, they took Him to the cross, and nailed Him there to die—to die in our stead, "the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God." The word "stripes" is used to set forth His sufferings, both of body and of soul. The whole of Christ was made a sacrifice for us; His whole manhood suffered. As to His body, it shared with His mind in a grief that never can be described. In the beginning of His passion, when He emphatically suffered

instead of us, He was in agony, and from His bodily frame a bloody sweat distilled so copiously as to fall to the ground. It is very rarely that a man sweats blood. There have been one or two instances of it, and they have been followed by almost immediate death, but our Savior lived—lived after an agony which, to anyone else, would have proved fatal. Before He could cleanse His face from this dreadful crimson, they hurried him to the high priest's hall. In the dead of night they bound Him and led Him away. Soon they took Him to Pilate and to Herod. These scourged Him, and their soldiers spat in His face, and buffeted Him, and put on His head a crown of thorns. Scourging is one of the most awful tortures that can be inflicted by malice. It is to the eternal disgrace of Englishmen that they should have permitted the "cat" to be used upon the soldier, but to the Roman cruelty was so natural that he made his common punishments worse than brutal. The Roman scourge is said to have been made of the sinews of oxen, twisted into knots, and into these knots were inserted slivers of bone, and hucklebones of sheep, so that every time the scourge fell upon the bare back, "the plowers made deep furrows." Our Savior was called upon to endure the fierce pain of the Roman scourge, and this not as the *finis* of His punishment, but as a preliminary to crucifixion. To this they added buffeting, and plucking of the hair; they spared Him no form of pain. In all His faintness, through bleeding and fasting, they made Him carry His cross until another was forced, by the forethought of their cruelty, to bear it, lest their victim should die on the road. They stripped Him, threw Him down, and nailed Him to the wood. They pierced His hands and His feet. They lifted up the tree, with Him upon it, and then dashed it down into its place in the ground, so that all His limbs were dislocated, according to the lament of the twenty-second psalm, "I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint." He hung in the burning sun till the fever dissolved His strength, and He said, "My heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of My bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and My tongue cleaves to My jaws; and You have brought Me into the dust of death." There He hung, a spectacle to God and men. The weight of His body was first sustained by His feet, till the nails tore through the tender nerves, and then the painful load began to drag upon His hands, and tear those sensitive parts of His frame. How small a wound in the hand has brought on lockjaw! How awful must have been the torment caused by that dragging iron tearing through the delicate parts of the hands and feet! Now were all manner of bodily pains, centered in His tortured frame. All the while His enemies stood around, pointing at Him in scorn, thrusting out their tongues in mockery, jesting at His prayers, and gloating over His sufferings. He cried, "I thirst," and then they gave Him vinegar mingled with gall. After a while He said, "It is finished." He had endured the utmost of appointed grief, and had made full vindication to divine justice; then, and not till then, He gave up the ghost. Holy men of old have enlarged most lovingly upon the bodily sufferings of our Lord, and I have no hesitation in doing the same, trusting that trembling sinners may see salvation in these painful "stripes" of the Redeemer.

To describe the outward sufferings of our Lord is not easy; I acknowledge that I have failed. But His soul-sufferings, which were the soul of His sufferings, who can even conceive, much less express what they were? At the very first I told you that He sweat great drops of blood. That was His heart driving out its life-floods to the surface through the terrible depression of spirit which was upon Him. He said, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death." The betrayal by Judas, and the desertion of the twelve, grieved our Lord, but the weight of our sin was the real pressure on His heart. Our guilt was the olive press which forced from Him the moisture of His life. No language can ever tell His agony in prospect of His passion; how little then can we conceive the passion itself? When nailed to the cross He endured what no martyr ever suffered, for martyrs, when they have died, have been so sustained of God that they have rejoiced amid their pain, but our Redeemer was forsaken of His Father, until He cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" That was the bitterest cry of all, the utmost depth of His unfathomable grief. Yet it was needful that He should be deserted, because God must turn His back on sin, and consequently upon Him who was made sin for us. The soul of the great Substitute suffered a horror of misery, instead of that horror of hell into which sinners would have been plunged had He not taken their sin upon Himself, and been made a curse for them. It is written, "Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree," but who knows what that curse means?

The remedy for your sins and mine is found in the substitutionary sufferings of the Lord Jesus and in these only. These "stripes" of the Lord Jesus Christ were on our behalf. Do you inquire, "Is there anything for us to do, to remove the guilt of sin?" I answer: There is nothing whatever for you to do. By the stripes of Jesus we are healed. All those stripes He has endured, and left not one of them for us to bear.

"But must we not believe on Him?" Yes, certainly. If I say of a certain ointment that it heals, I do not deny that you need a bandage with which to apply it to the wound. Faith is the linen which binds the plaster of Christ's reconciliation to the sore of our sin. The linen does not heal, that is the work of the ointment. So faith does not heal; that is the work of the atonement of Christ.

Does an inquirer reply, "But surely I must do something, or suffer something"? I answer: You must put nothing with Jesus Christ, or you greatly dishonor Him. In order to your salvation, you must rely only upon the wounds of Jesus Christ, and nothing else, for the text does not say, "His stripes help to heal us," but, "With His stripes we are healed."

"But we must repent," cries another. Assuredly we must, and shall, for repentance is the first sign of healing, but the stripes of Jesus heal us, and not our repentance. These stripes, when applied to the heart, work repentance in us; we hate sin because it made Jesus suffer.

When you intelligently trust in Jesus as having suffered for you, then you discover the fact that God will never punish you for the same offense for which Jesus died. His justice will not permit Him to see the debt paid, first, by the Surety, and then again by the debtor. Justice cannot twice demand a recompense; if my bleeding Surety has borne my guilt, then I

cannot bear it. Accepting Christ Jesus as suffering for me, I have accepted a complete discharge from judicial liability. I have been condemned in Christ, and there is, therefore, now no condemnation to me anymore. This is the groundwork of the security of the sinner who believes in Jesus; he lives because Jesus died in his room, and place, and stead, and he is acceptable before God because Jesus is accepted. The person for whom Jesus is an accepted Substitute must go free; none can touch him; he is clear. O my hearer, will you have Jesus Christ to be your Substitute? If so, you are free. "He that believes on Him is not condemned." Thus "with His stripes we are healed."

III. I have tried to put before you the disease and the remedy; I now desire to notice the fact that THIS REMEDY IS IMMEDIATELY EFFECTIVE WHEREVER IT IS APPLIED. The stripes of Jesus do heal men; they have healed many of us. It does not look as if it could effect so great a cure, but the fact is undeniable. I often hear people say, "If you preach up this faith in Jesus Christ as saving men, they will be careless about holy living." I am as good a witness on that point as anybody, for I live every day in the midst of men, who are trusting to the stripes of Jesus for their salvation, and I have seen no ill effect following from such a trust, but I have seen the very reverse. I bear testimony that I have seen the very worst of men become the very best of men by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. These stripes heal in a surprising manner the moral diseases of those who seemed past remedy.

The character is healed. I have seen the drunk become sober, the harlot become chaste, the passionate man become gentle, the covetous man become liberal, and the liar become truthful, simply by trusting in the sufferings of Jesus. If it did not make good men of them, it would not really do anything for them, for you must judge men by their fruits after all, and if the fruits are not changed the tree is not changed. Character is everything; if the character is not set right, the man is not saved. But we say it without fear of contradiction that the atoning sacrifice, applied to the heart, heals the disease of sin. If you doubt it, try it. He that believes in Jesus is sanctified as well as justified; by faith he becomes henceforth an altogether changed man.

The conscience is healed of its smart. Sin crushed the man's soul; he was spiritless and joyless, but the moment he believed in Jesus he leaped into light. Often you can see a change in the very look of the man's face, the cloud flies from the countenance when guilt goes from the conscience. Scores of times, when I have been talking with those bowed down with sin's burden, they have looked as though they were qualifying for an asylum through inward grief, but they have caught the thought, "Christ stood for me, and if I trust in Him, I have the sign that He did so, and I am clear," and their faces have been lit up as with a glimpse of heaven.

Gratitude for such great mercy causes a change of thought towards God, and so *it heals the judgment,* and by this means the affections are turned in the right way, and *the heart is healed.* Sin is no longer loved, but God is loved, and holiness is desired. *The whole man is healed,* and the whole life changed. Many of you know how light of heart faith in Je-

sus makes you, how the troubles of life lose their weight, and the fear of death ceases to cause bondage. You rejoice in the Lord, for the blessed remedy of the stripes of Jesus is applied to your soul by faith in Him.

The fact that "with His stripes we are healed" is a matter in evidence. I shall take liberty to bear my own witness. If it were necessary, I could call thousands of persons, my daily acquaintances, who can say that by the stripes of Christ they are healed, but I must not therefore withhold my personal testimony. If I had suffered from a dreadful disease, and a physician had given me a remedy which had healed me, I would not be ashamed to tell you all about it, but I would quote my own case as an argument with you to try my physician. Years ago, when I was a youth, the burden of my sin was exceedingly heavy upon me. I had fallen into no gross vices, and should not have been regarded by anyone as being especially a transgressor, but I regarded myself as such, and I had good reason for doing so. My conscience was sensitive because it was enlightened, and I judged that, having had a godly father, and a praying mother, and having been trained in the ways of piety, I had sinned against much light, and consequently there was a greater degree of guilt in my sin than in that of others who were my youthful associates, but had not enjoyed my advantages. I could not enjoy the sports of youth because I felt that I had done violence to my conscience. I would seek my chamber, and there sit alone, read my Bible, and pray for forgiveness, but peace did not come to me. Books such as Baxter's "Call to the Unconverted," and Doddridge's "Rise and Progress," I read over and over again. Early in the morning I would awake, and read the most earnest religious books I could find, desiring to be eased of my burden of sin. I was not always thus dull, but at times my misery of soul was very great. The words of the weeping prophet and of Job were such as suited my mournful case. I would have chosen death rather than life. I tried to do as well as I could, and to behave myself right, but in my own judgement I grew worse and worse. I felt more and more despondent. I attended every place of worship within my reach, but I heard nothing which gave me lasting comfort till one day I heard a simple preacher of the gospel speak from the text, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." When he told me that all I had to do was to "look" to Jesus—to Jesus the crucified One, I could scarcely believe it. He went on, and said, "Look, look, look!" He added, "There is a young man, under the left-hand gallery there, who is very miserable; he will have no peace until he looks to Jesus," and then he cried, "Look! Look! Young man, look!" I did look, and in that moment relief came to me, and I felt such overflowing joy that I could have stood up, and cried, "Hallelujah! Glory be to God, I am delivered from the burden of my sin!" Many days have passed since then, but my faith has held me up, and compelled me to tell out the story of free grace and dying love. I can truly say—

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

I hope to sit up in my bed in my last hours, and tell of the stripes that healed me. I hope some young men, yes, and old men before me, will at

once try this remedy; it is good for all characters, and all ages. "With His stripes we are healed." Thousands upon thousands of us have tried and proved this remedy. We speak what we know, and testify what we have seen. God grant that men may receive our witness through the power of the Holy Spirit!

I want a few minutes' talk with those who have not tried this marvelous heal-all. Let us come to close quarters. Friend, you are by nature in need of soul-healing as much as any of us and one reason why you do not care about the remedy is, because you do not believe that you are sick. I saw a peddler one day, as I was walking out; he was selling walking-sticks. He followed me, and offered me one of the sticks. I showed him mine—a far better one than any he had to sell—and he withdrew at once. He could see that I was not likely to be a purchaser. I have often thought of that when I have been preaching; I show men the righteousness of the Lord Jesus, but they show me their own, and all hope of dealing with them is gone. Unless I can prove that their righteousness is worthless, they will not seek the righteousness which is of God by faith. Oh, that the Lord would show you your disease, and then you would desire the remedy!

It may be that you do not care to hear of the Lord Jesus Christ. Ah, my dear friends! You will have to hear of him one of these days, either for your salvation or your condemnation. The Lord has the key of your heart, and I trust He will give you a better mind, and whenever this shall happen, your memory will recall my simple discourse, and you will say, "I do remember. Yes, I heard the preacher declare that there is healing in the wounds of Christ."

I pray you do not put off seeking the Lord; that would be great presumption on your part, and a sad provocation to Him. But, should you have put it off, I pray you do not let the devil tell you it is too late. It is never too late while life lasts. I have read in books that very few people are converted after they are forty years of age. My solemn conviction is that there is but little truth in such a statement. I have seen as many people converted at one age as at another in proportion to the number of people who are living at that age. Any first Sunday in the month you may see the right-hand of fellowship given to from thirty to eighty people who have been brought in during the month, and if you take stock of them, there will be found to be a selection representing every age, from childhood up to old age. The precious blood of Jesus has power to heal long-rooted sin. It makes old hearts new. If you were a thousand years old, I would exhort you to believe in Jesus, and I should be sure that His stripes would heal you. Your hair is nearly gone, old friend, and furrows appear on your brow, but come along! You are rotting away with sin, but this medicine meets desperate cases! Poor, old, tottering pensioner put your trust in Jesus, for with His stripes the old and the dying are healed!

Now, my dear hearers, you are at this moment either healed or not. You are either healed by grace, or you are still in your natural sickness. Will you be so kind to yourselves as to inquire which it is? Many say, "We know what we are," but certain more thoughtful ones reply, "We don't quite know." Friend, you ought to know, and you should know. Suppose

I asked a man, "Are you a bankrupt or not?" and he said, "I really have no time to look at my books, and therefore I am not sure." I would suspect that he could not pay twenty shillings in the pound; wouldn't you? Whenever a man is afraid to look at his books, I suspect that he has something to be afraid of. So, whenever a person says, "I don't know my condition, and I don't care to think much about it," you may pretty safely conclude that things are wrong with him. *You ought to know whether you are saved or not.*

"I hope I am saved," says one, "but I do not know the date of my conversion." That does not matter at all. It is a pleasant thing for a person to know his birthday, but when persons are not sure of the exact date of their birth, they do not, therefore, infer that they are not alive. If a person does not know *when* he was converted, that is no proof that he is not converted. The point is do you trust Jesus Christ? Has that trust made a new man of you? Has your confidence in Christ made you feel that you have been forgiven? Has that made you love God for having forgiven you, and has that love become the mainspring of your being, so that out of love to God you delight to obey Him? Then you are a healed man. If you do not believe in Jesus, be sure that you are still unhealed, and I pray you look at my text until you are led by grace to say, "I am healed, for I have trusted in the stripes of Jesus."

Suppose, for a moment, you are not healed, let me ask the question, *"Why are you not?"* You know the gospel; why are you not healed by Christ? "I don't know," says one. But, my dear friend, I beseech you do not to rest until you do know.

"I can't get at it," somebody says. The other day a young girl was putting a button on her father's coat. She was sitting with her back to the window, and she said, "Father, I can't see; I am in my own light." He said, "Ah, my daughter that is where you have been all your life!" This is the position of some of you spiritually. You are in your own light; you think too much of yourselves. There is plenty of light in the Sun of Righteousness, but you get in the dark by putting self in the way of that Sun. Oh, that your self might be put away! I read a touching story the other day as to how one found peace. A young man had been for some time under a sense of sin, longing to find mercy, but he could not reach it. He was a telegraph clerk, and being in the office one morning he had to receive and transmit a telegram. To his great surprise, he spelt out these words—"Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." A gentleman out for a holiday was telegraphing a message in answer to a letter from a friend who was in trouble of soul.

It was meant for another, but he that transmitted it received eternal life, as the words came flashing into his soul.

O dear friends, get out of your own light, and at once, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world"! I cannot telegraph the words to you, but I would put them before you so plainly and distinctly that everyone in trouble of soul may know that they are meant for him. There lies your hope—not in yourself, but in the Lamb of God. Behold him, and as you behold him your sin shall be put away, and by His stripes you shall be healed.

If, dear friend, you are healed, this is my last word to you; then *get out of diseased company*. Come away from the companions that have infected you with sin. Come out from among them, be you separate, and touch not the unclean thing. If you are healed, praise the Healer, and acknowledge what He has done for you. There were ten lepers healed, but only one returned to praise the healing hand. Do not be among the ungrateful nine. If you have found Christ, confess His name. Confess it in His own appointed way. "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." When you have thus confessed Him, speak out for Him. Tell what Jesus has done for your soul, and dedicate yourself to the holy purpose of spreading abroad the message by which you have been healed.

I met this week with something that pleased me—how one man, being healed, may be the means of blessing to another. Many years ago I preached a sermon in Exeter Hall, which was printed, and entitled, "Salvation to the Uttermost." A friend, who lives not very far from this place, was in the city of Para, in Brazil. Here he heard of an Englishman in prison, who had in a state of drunkenness committed a murder, for which he was confined for life. Our friend went to see him, and found him deeply penitent, but quietly restful, and happy in the Lord. He had felt the terrible wound of blood-guiltiness in his soul, but it had been healed, and he felt the bliss of pardon. Here is the story of the poor man's conversion as I have it—"A young man, who had just completed his contract with the gas-works, was returning to England, but before doing so he called to see me, and brought with him a parcel of books. When I opened it, I found that they were novels, but, being able to read, I was thankful for anything. After I had read several of the books, I found a sermon (No. 84), preached by C. H. Spurgeon, in Exeter Hall, on June 8th, 1856, from the words, 'Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost,' etc., (Heb 7:25). In his discourse, Mr. Spurgeon referred to Palmer, who was then lying under sentence of death in Stafford Jail, and in order to bring home this text to his hearers, he said that if Palmer had committed many other murders, if he repents and seeks God's pardoning love in Christ, even he will be forgiven! I then felt that if Palmer could be forgiven, so might I. I sought, and blessed be God, I found. I am pardoned, I am free; I am a sinner saved by grace. Though a murderer, I have not yet sinned 'beyond the uttermost,' blessed be His holy name!" It made me very happy to think that a poor condemned murderer could thus be converted. Surely there is hope for every hearer and reader of this sermon, however guilty he may be!

If you know Christ, tell others about Him. You do not know what good there is in making Jesus known, even though all you can do is to give a tract, or repeat a verse. Dr. Valpy, the author of a great many class books, wrote the following simple lines as his confession of faith—

"In peace let me resign my breath,
And Your salvation see;
My sins deserve eternal death,
But Jesus died for me."

Valpy is dead and gone, but he gave those lines to dear old Dr. Marsh, the Rector of Beckenham, who put them over his study mantel. The Earl of Roden came in, and read them. "Will you give me a copy of those

lines?" said the good earl. "I shall be glad," said Dr. Marsh, and he copied them. Lord Roden took them home, and put them over *his* mantel. General Taylor, a Waterloo hero, came into the room, and noticed them. He read them over and over again, while staying with Earl Roden, till his Lordship remarked, "I say, friend Taylor, I should think you know those lines by heart." He answered, "I do know them by heart; indeed, my very heart has grasped their meaning." He was brought to Christ by that humble rhyme. General Taylor handed those lines to an officer in the army, who was going out to the Crimean War. He came home to die, and when Dr. Marsh went to see him, the poor soul in his weakness said, "Good sir, do you know this verse which General Taylor gave to me? It brought me to my Savior, and I die in peace." To Dr. Marsh's surprise, he repeated the lines—

"In peace let me resign my breath,
And Your salvation see;
My sins deserve eternal death,
But Jesus died for me."

Only think of the good which four simple lines may do. Be encouraged all of you who know the healing power of the wounds of Jesus. Spread this truth by all means. Never mind how simple the language. Tell it out; tell it out everywhere, and in every way, even if you cannot do it in any other way than by copying a verse out of a hymnbook. Tell it out that by the stripes of Jesus we are healed. May God bless you, dear friends! Pray for me that this sermon of mine, which is numbered TWO-THOUSAND, may be a very fruitful one.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ISAIAH 53.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—287, 534, 537.

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

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

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END OF VOLUME 33