JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH—A GLORIOUS NAME FOR THE NEW YEAR
NO. 2182

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

"The name of the city from that day shall be, The Lord Is There [or in the Hebrew, 'Jehovah-Shammah.']"
Ezekiel 48:35

THESE words may be used as a test as well as a text. They may serve for examination as well as consolation and, at the beginning of a year, they may fulfill this useful double purpose. In any case they are full of marrow and fatness to those whose spiritual taste is purified. It is esteemed by the Prophet to be the highest blessing that could come upon a city that its name should be, "JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH, The Lord Is There." Even Jerusalem, in its best estate, would have this for its crowning blessing—nothing could exceed this. Do *we* reckon the Presence of the Lord to be the greatest of blessings? If in any gathering, even of the humblest people, the Lord God is known to be present in a peculiarly gracious manner, should *we* make a point of being there? Very much depends upon our answer to these queries.

Doubtless many would be greatly pleased if there were no God at all, for in their hearts they say, "No God." God is not to them a father, a friend, a trust, a treasure. If they were to speak from their hearts and could hope for a satisfactory answer, they would ask, "Where can I flee from His Presence?" If a spot could be found where there would be no God, what a fine building speculation might be made there! Millions would emigrate to "No God's Land," and would feel at ease as soon as they trod its godless shore! There they could do just as they liked, without fear of future reckoning.

Now, Friend, if you would escape from the Presence of God, your state is clearly revealed by that fact. There can be no Heaven for you, for Heaven is where the Lord's Presence is fullness of joy. If you could be happy to be far off from God, I must tell you what your fate will be. You are now going away from God in your heart and desire and, at last, the great Judge of All will say to you, "Depart, you cursed"—and you will then be driven from the Presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.

I know that there is a company who can truly say that they feel only happy when they are conscious that God is with them. The place where they meet with the Lord is very dear and precious to them because of His unveilings. The memory of holy convocations is sweet because the Lord was among them. They would not care to go where God is not. If there

were a place forsaken of God, however happy and full of merriment men might think it, they would not be found among its guests. Where we cannot enjoy *God's* company, we will not go. Our motto is—"With God, anywhere. Without God, nowhere." In Him we live, and move, and have our being and, therefore, it would be *death* to us to be apart from God! Without God we should be without hope. Ah, my dear Friend, whatever your difficulties, trials and sorrows, all is well with you if God is your delight and His Presence your joy! But, however high your temporal enjoyments may rise, it is all wrong with you if you can rest away from the God of Grace. The child must be in a sad state of heart when he does not care to have his father's approving smile. Things must be terribly wrong with any creature when it can be content to walk contrary to its Creator. Nothing but the corruption of the heart could permit any man to be at ease away from God.

Will you permit these thoughts to saturate you for a little time? I have spoken them with the desire that each one of us may ask himself, "Is the Presence of God my delight?" If so, I am His, and He will be with me. On the contrary, "Is the Presence of God a matter of indifference, or even of dread?" Then my condition is one of guilt, disease and danger. May the Lord, in His infinite mercy, set me right!

This much may stand as a preface, but it must not be treated as most prefaces are, namely, left unread, or glanced over and forgotten. I pray you, carry it with you all along.

I. Now kindly notice that, according to our text, THE PRESENCE OF GOD IS THE GLORY OF THE MOST GLORIOUS PLACE. The Prophet Ezekiel has been telling us many remarkable things which I shall not attempt to explain to you—and my chief reason for not doing so is the fact that I do not understand them, myself. Even if I could open up every dark saying, now is not the time to go into an explanation of all the sublime mysteries which were seen by the eagle eye of Ezekiel, for I seek present, practical edification—and this we can gain in an easier way. It is clear from the text that when God shall bless His ancient people and restore them to their land—and the Temple shall be rebuilt and all the glory of the latter days shall arrive—this will still be the peculiar glory of it all, that, "*the Lord is there*." The Prophet works up a climax and closes his Book of prophecy with these glorious words, *"the Lord is there*."

What a glorious state this world was in at the very first, *in the age of Paradise*, for the Lord was there! Our glorious Creator, having taken the first days of the week to make the world and fit it up for man, did not bring forward His dear child until the house was built and furnished and supplied for his use and happiness! He did not put him in the Garden to dress it till the roses were blooming and the fruits were ripe! When the table was furnished, He introduced the guest by saying, "Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness." The Lord put man, not in an unreclaimed plot of soil where he must hunger till he could produce a harvest—but into an Eden of delights where he was at home with creatures of every sort to attend him! He had not to water dry lands, nor need he thirst, himself, for four rivers flowed through his royal domain, rippling

over sands of gold. I might say much of that fair garden of innocence and bliss, but the best thing I could say would be the Lord was there! "The Lord God walked in the Garden in the cool of the day" and communed with man—and man, being innocent, held high converse with his condescending Maker! The top stone of the bliss of Paradise was this all-comprehending privilege—"the Lord is there."

Alas, that has vanished. Withered are the bowers of Eden—the trail of the serpent is over all landscapes, however fair. Yet days of mercy came and God's saints, in divers places, found choice spots where they could converse with Heaven. *In the first days,* our gracious God spoke with His chosen ones in their daily walk, as Enoch; or under the oak, as Abraham; or by the brook, as Jacob; or before the bush, as Moses; or near the city wall, as Joshua. Wherever it might be, the place became to them the gate of Heaven, for the Lord was there! Amid a torrent of sin and sorrow, you may cross the stream of time upon the steppingstones of the places marked, "JEVOHAH-SHAMMAH." The Lord's delights were with the sons of men and to them, *nothing* brought such bliss as to find that the Lord still would be mindful of man and visit him.

In the days when God had called out unto Himself a chosen nation, *He revealed Himself at Sinai*, when the mountain was altogether on a smoke and even Moses said, "I do exceedingly fear and quake." Well might he feel a holy awe, for the Lord was there! I will not dwell upon the Glory of the tabernacle that was pitched in the wilderness, with its costly furniture and its instructive rites, for, after all, the Glory of the tabernacle was that the Lord was there! A bright light shone between the wings of the cherubim and so the Psalmist, in later days spoke unto the Lord saying, "You that dwells between the cherubim shine forth." Above the sacred tent was the pillar of fire by night and the pillar of cloud by day—an emblem of the constant Presence of God, for all through the wilderness His glorious marching was in the center of the armies of His Israel. The desert sand glowed with the blaze of the present Deity! No spot on earth was so like to Heaven's high courts as that wilderness the Lord, Himself, led His people like a flock. Holy was Horeb, for the Lord was there! Then were the days of Israel's espousals, for the Most High tabernacled among her tribes and made them "a people near unto Him."

In Canaan, itself, the days of sorrow came when the nation went after other gods and the Lord became a stranger in the land. *When He returned, and delivered His people by the Judge*s, then the nations knew that Israel could not be trampled on, for the Lord was there. This was the Glory of David's reign. Then the Lord made bare His arm and the enemies of His chosen were driven like snow from the bleak sides of Salmon when the rough blast carries it away. This was the shout of the joyful people, "The Lord of Hosts is with us: the God of Jacob is our refuge!" Never were the hills of Judah more fruitful, nor the vales of Sharon more peaceful, nor the homes of Israel more restful, nor the sons of Zion more valiant than when to the harp of David the song was raised, "They have seen Your goings, O God; even the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary. This is

the hill which God desires to dwell in; yes, the Lord shall dwell in it forever."

You remember how, in later ages, when Solomon was crowned and his reign of peace had been inaugurated, *he built for God a Temple* adorned with gold and precious stones, and all manner of cunning, work of the artificer? But it was not that glittering roof, it was not those massive pillars of brass in the forefront, it was not the hecatombs of bullocks whose blood was poured forth at the altar which were the glory of the Temple on Mount Zion. Beautiful for situation, it was the joy of the whole earth, but its Glory lay in this—"God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early." The excellence of the Temple was seen when, on the opening day, the Lord revealed Himself and the cloud filled the House of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud—for the "Glory of the Lord had filled the House of the Lord." Little remains for man to do when in, very deed, the Lord dwells in the midst of His saints. Apart from priests and ceremonies, that place is sacred wherein the Lord Most High has His abode. Say of any place, "Jehovah-Shammah, the Lord Is There," and be it tent or temple, you have spoken glorious things of it!

I almost tremble while I remind you of the truest Temple of God—*the body of our Lord*. The nearest approach of Godhead to our manhood was when there was found, wrapped in swaddling bands and lying in a manger, that Child who was born, that Son who was given, whose name was called, "Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." As for you, O Bethlehem, favored above all the towns of earth, out of you He came, who is Immanuel, God With Us! Verily, Your name is Jehovah-Shammah! All along, through 30 years and more of holy labor, ending in a shameful death, God was, in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself. In the gloom of Gethsemane, among those somber olives, when Jesus bowed and in His prayer sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground, He was "seen of angels" as the Son of God bearing human sin! Speak of Gethsemane and we tell you God was there! Before Herod, Pilate, Caiaphas and on the Cross—the Lord was there! Though, in a sense, there was the hiding of God, and Jesus cried, "Why have You forsaken Me?" yet in the deepest sense Jehovah was there, bruising the great Sacrifice. The thick darkness made a veil for the Lord of Glory and behind it, He that made all things bowed His head and said, "It is finished." God was in Christ Jesus on the Cross, and we, beholding Him, feel that we have seen the Father. O Calvary, we say of you, "The Lord is there."

Here I might fitly close, for we can mount no higher, but yet we could not afford to leave out those other dwellings of the Invisible Spirit who still, by His Presence, makes holy places even in this unholy world! We have to remind you that God is the Glory of the most glorious living thing that has been on the face of the earth since our Lord was here. And what is that? I answer, Jesus is gone—the Prophets are gone and we have no Temple, no human priest, no material Holy of Holies—

"Jesus, wherever Your people meet,

There they behold Your Mercy Seat!
Wherever they seek You, You are found,
And every place is hallowed ground."

And yet there is a special place where God dwells among men and that is *in His Church*. He has but one—one Church, chosen by eternal election, redeemed by precious blood, called out by the Holy Spirit and quickened into newness of life—this, as a whole, is the dwelling place of the Covenant God! Because God is in this Church, therefore the gates of Hell shall not prevail against her.

"The Lord is there" might be said of the Church in all ages. I have seen the crypts and underground chapels of the catacombs. And it made me feel that they were glorious places when I remembered that the Lord God was there, by His Spirit, with His suffering people—when holy hymn and Psalm and solemn prayer went up from the very heart of the earth from men who were hunted to the death by their foes—the Lord was there! In those dreary excavations, unvisited by sunlight and wholesome air, God was as He was *not* in the palaces of kings and is not in the cathedrals of priests! In this land of ours, when a few people met together, here and there, to hear the Gospel and to worship, they made cottages, caves and hollows in the woods to be "holiness unto the Lord."

Yes, and when crowds met beneath your Gospel oaks, or gathered together by the hillside to listen to the pure Word of Grace, the Lord was there and souls were saved and sanctified! When the Puritans solemnly conversed together of the things of God and held their little conventicles for fear of their adversaries—God was there! On Scotland's bleak moors and mosses, when the Covenanters gathered in the darkness and the storm for fear of Claverhouse and his dragoons—God was there! Those who wrote in those days tell us that they never knew such seasons in days of peace as they enjoyed among the hills, amid the heather, or by the brook—for Jehovah-Shammah, the Lord was there! And so onward, to this very day, wherever the chosen of God lift up holy hands and worship Him, whether it is in cathedral or in barn, beneath the blue sky or beneath a thatched roof—anywhere and everywhere when the heart is right and the soul adores the living Lord, this is the special Glory of the place—"Jehovah-Shammah, the Lord Is There!"

Flying forward, as with a dove's wing, to the future that is drawing near, we think of the Truth of God that there is to be a *millennial age*—a time of glory, peace, joy, truth and righteousness. But what is to be the Glory of it? Why this, "Jehovah-Shammah, the Lord Is There!" The Lord Jesus Christ will come and begin His personal reign on earth among His ancients. In like manner, as He went up into Heaven, and the disciples saw Him, so will He descend a second time, to be seen here among men. And His glorious Presence shall fashion the golden age, the thousand years of peace! Then shall the nations shout, "The Lord Is Come!" What hallelujahs will then rise to Heaven! Welcome, welcome, Son of God! How will all His faithful ones rejoice with unspeakable joy and sing and sing again, for now the day of their reward has come and they shall shine forth

as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father! In all the Glory of the latter days everything is wrapped up in this one phrase, "the Lord is there."—

"Oh, come, You Day-Spring, come and cheer
Our spirits by Your advent here!
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night
And death's dark shadows put to flight!
Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel
Shall come to you, O Israel!"

Up yonder, where many of our beloved ones have already gone—up yonder, within that gate of pearl where eyes cannot, as yet, see, what is it that makes *Heaven* with all its supreme delights? Not harps of angels, nor blaze of seraphim! Just this one fact, "the Lord is there." What must it be to be with God? O soul that loves Him, what will your fullness of pleasure be when you shall dwell with Him for whom your soul is hungering and thirsting! What joy to be "forever with the Lord!" This perfect bliss may be ours this very day! We little know how near we are to our glorification with our Lord. The veil is very thin that parts the sanctified from the glorified—

"One gentle sigh, the soul awakes—
We scarcely can say, 'he's gone,'
Before the ransomed spirit takes
Its mansion near the Throne."

The joy and glory of those Divine mansions is that "the Lord is there." Heaven's loftiest peak shines forever in this clear light—The Lord God and the Lamb are the Light thereof—"the Lord is there."

Enough of this. I have proved my point, that the Glory of the most glorious place is that "the Lord is there."

II. Suffer me for a few minutes to speak to you upon another point—THE PRESENCE OF GOD IS THE BEST PRIVILEGE OF HIS CHURCH. It is her glory that "the Lord is there." Note this, and mark it well. Brothers and Sisters, we as a Church have grown to great numbers and we are not deficient, either, in gifts or in Graces, or in work for our Lord. But let me solemnly remind you always that our chief, our only strength, must always lie in this—"the Lord is there." If the Lord should depart from us, as He has gone from churches which are now apostate, what an abyss opens before us! If He should take His Holy Spirit from us, even as the Glory departed from the Temple at Jerusalem, then our ruin would become a thing to mention with dread, a case to be quoted for a warning to future generations! O Lord, our God, take not Your flight! Abide with us, we pray You! Our only hope lies in Your making the place of Your feet glorious among us!

If the Lord is among us, the consequences will be, first, *the conservation of true doctrine*. The true God is not with a lie—He will not give His Countenance to falsehood. Those who preach other than according to His Word, abide not under His blessing and are in great danger of His curse. If any man speaks another gospel (which is not another, but there are some that trouble us), God is not with him—and any transient prosperity which he may enjoy will be blown away as the chaff. God is with those who faithfully speak His Truth, hold it devoutly, believe it firmly and live upon it as their daily bread. May it always be said of this Church, "the Lord is there,"

and, therefore, they are sound in the faith, reverent towards Holy Scripture and zealous for the honor of Christ! Trust-deeds and confessions of faith are useful in their way, even as laws are useful to society, but as laws cannot secure obedience to themselves, so articles of belief cannot create faith, or secure honesty. And to men without conscience, they are not worth the paper they are written upon. No subscription to articles can keep out the unscrupulous! Wolves leap into the fold however carefully you watch the door. The fact is, the most of people say, "Yes, that doctrine is in the creed and is not to be denied, but you need not *preach* it. Put it on the shelf as an ornament and let us hear no more about it." Truth must be written on the *heart* as well as in the book! If the Lord is among His people, they will cling to the eternal Truths of God and love the doctrine of the Cross, not by force of law, but because Divine Truth is the life of their souls.

Where God is present, *the preservation of purity* will be found. The Church is nothing if it is not holy. It is worse—it is a den of thieves! Setting the seal of its pestilent example upon evil living, it becomes the servant of Satan and the destroyer of souls. Who is to keep the Church pure? None but God, Himself. If the Lord is there, holiness will abound and fruits of the Spirit will be seen on all sides. But if the Lord is once withdrawn, then flesh and blood will rule and gender towards corruption, after its own manner—and the church will become a synagogue of formalists. Pray, my Brothers and Sisters, continually, that the Lord may dwell in our Zion, to maintain us in all holy obedience and purity of life!

Where God is, *there is the constant renewal of vitality*. A dead church is a reeking Golgotha, a breeding place of evils, a home of devils. The tombs may be newly whitewashed, but they are none the less open sepulchers, haunts of unclean spirits. A Church all alive is a little Heaven, the resort of angels, the Temple of the Holy Spirit. In some of our churches everybody seems to be a little colder than everybody else. The members are holy icicles! A general frost has paralyzed everybody and though some are colder than others, yet all are below zero! There are no flowing rills of refreshment. Everything is bound hard and fast with the frost of indifference. Oh, that the Lord would send forth His wind and melt the glaciers! Oh, that the Spirit of God would chase winter out of every heart and every church! No human power can keep a church from the frostbite which numbs and kills. Unless the Lord is there, growth, life, warmth are all impossible. You that make mention of the Lord, keep not silent and give Him no rest, but cry day and night to Him, "O Lord, abide with us! Go forth with our armies! Make us to be the living children of the living God!"

When the Lord is there, next, *there is continuing power*. With God there is power in the ministry, power in prayer, power in all holy work. We may do a vast deal of work and yet nothing may come of it, but, on the other hand, we may only be able to do comparatively little and yet great results may flow from it, for *results* depend not on the quantity of the machinery, but on the Presence of the Lord!

Do you not all know persons who are not peculiarly gifted and yet are eminently useful? You do not remark anything about them that is spe-

cially noticeable and yet their whole career enlists attention by its power. Their words are effective, for there is character behind them. A consistent life gives force to a plain testimony. It is not so much what is said as who says it! And that is not all—God, Himself, is at the back of the man who is living for Him. He causes him to speak in His name so that none of his words fall to the ground. Is it not said of the godly, "His leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper"? This is so with every Church where the Lord abides. His Presence makes it a power with its children and adherents, a power with the neighborhood and a power with the age. Its example, its testimony, its effort is effective! God uses it and, therefore, it answers its end. The power is with God—but the Church is the instrument by which that power exercises itself. He uses a living people for the display of living power and He gives to them, both life and power, more and more abundantly. As we desire power with which to labor for God, we must pray that the God of Power will remain in our midst.

Furthermore, whenever it can be said of an assembly, "the Lord is there," *unity will be created and fostered*. Show me a church that quarrels, a church that is split up into cliques, a church that is divided with personal ambitions, contrary doctrines and opposing schemes—and I am sure that the Lord is *not* there. Where there are envying, jealousies, suspicions, backbiting and dislikes, I know that the Holy Dove, who hates confusion, has taken His flight. God is Love and He will only dwell where love reigns. He is the God of Peace and will not endure strife. The children of God should be knit together. It would be a shameful sight, indeed, should children of His family fall out and chide and fight. Saints who dwell with God love each other "with a pure heart, fervently." Some professors act as if they hated each other! I may not say, "with a pure heart," but I will say, "fervently." Where God is present, the Church is edified in love and grows up, like a building fitly framed together, to be a holy Temple in the Lord. Oh, for more of this unity!

Where the Lord is, *there is sure to be happiness*. What meetings we have when the Lord is here! It is a Prayer Meeting, but when you have said that, you have not fully described it, for it is far more. It was an unusual meeting for prayer, for, God being there, every prayer was spoken into His ear and all the desires and petitions of the saints were prompted by His Holy Spirit! Why, the very room was lit up with the Glory of the Lord! And whether we were in Heaven or not, we could hardly tell! What happy times we have in preaching the Word of the Lord when God's own Presence is realized! His paths drop fatness. What joyous seasons we have frequently enjoyed at the Communion Table! The provision is but bread and wine, but when, by faith, we perceive the real and spiritual Presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the breaking of the bread we eat His flesh, and in the fruit of the vine we drink His blood! When we have gathered in the Lord's Presence we have sung—

"No beams of cedar or of fir
Can with Your courts on earth compare!
And here we wait, until Your love
Raises us to nobler seats above."

At the Master's Table I have often been so blessed that I would not have exchanged places with Gabriel! The Lord was there—what more could I desire? Joy, delight, rapture, ecstasy—what word shall I use?—all these have waited around the Table of Fellowship, as musicians at a king's banquet. If God is there, our Heaven is there!

III. I shall now close by noticing, in the third place, that since this Presence of God is the Glory of the most glorious place and the choice privilege of the most privileged, it is our exceeding joy. THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD IS OUR DELIGHT IN EVERY PLACE.

We will think of *our own dear homes*. What a delightful family we belong to if it can be said of our house, "Jehovah-Shammah, The Lord Is There"! Has it a thatched roof and a stone floor? What does it matter? The father of the family lives near to God and his wife rejoices to be his fellow-helper in prayer, while the children grow up to honest toil and honorable service. Assuredly that cottage home is dear to God and becomes a place where angels come and go! Because God is there, every window looks towards the Celestial City. It is a comfort that we need not go across the road to morning prayer, or step out every evening to worship, for we are priests, ourselves, and have a family altar at home where the incense burns both morning and night. We talk not of matins and vespers, but we glory that "the Lord is there" when we bow the knee as a household!

What is more delightful than to gather round the family hearth to hear the Scriptures read and listen to the senior, as he talks to the younger ones, of what God has done for him and what the Lord is waiting to give to all who trust Him? Free from all formality, family prayer makes a house a temple, a family a church and every day a holy day! Truly, I may say of families of this kind, wherever they dwell, that it is "none other but the House of God, and it is the very gate of Heaven," for, "the Lord is there." Friend, is God in your house? If it has no family prayer, it has no roof to it. There is no true joy in domestic life unless the Lord is there. All else is fiction! God alone is true delight. I charge you, if your homes are not such that God could come to them, set your houses in order and say, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Will you dare to dwell where God could not lodge with you? May all men say of your home, "The Lord is there!"

Here is *a Christian who lives alone*, altogether apart from family life. All his dear ones are dead, or far away. In his lone chamber, when he bows his knee in secret prayer, or whenever he takes his walk abroad to meditate, if he is, indeed, a true lover of the Lord Jesus, "the Lord is there." Wherever the Believer's lot is cast, if he lives in fellowship with Christ, he may say of his quiet room, or of the garden walk, or even of the stable or the loft, "Jehovah-Shammah, The Lord Is There." Many a humble attic is a right royal residence, for, "the Lord is there." Better Paul's inner dungeon at Philippi, with his feet fast in the stocks—and the Presence of the Lord—than the most grand apartment of Caesar's palace and an unknown god! The Lord is very gracious to His lonely ones. They can say, "And yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me." In a hospital, or in a workhouse—what does it matter if Jehovah is at your side to cheer you?

Some of us can bear witness that we have had the nearest approaches of God to our souls in *times of intolerable pain* and even in seasons of intense depression of spirit as to earthly things. "I was brought low, and the Lord helped me," said David. And we can say the same. The Lord has said, "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you," as much as to say, "If I am not with you anywhere else, I will be with you then." In the furnace, one like unto the Son of God was seen. If Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego never had that glorious fourth Person in their company before, they had Him when they were cast into the midst of the glowing coals! Jehovah-Shammah makes a seven-times-heated furnace a pleasant arbor! We may say of the refining fire, of the threshing floor and of the oil-press, "God has been there!" In the time of trouble He has been a very present help. One might almost say, "Send me back to my prison," as one *did* say who lost God's Presence after he had gained his liberty! One might well cry, "Ah, let me have back my pain if I may again overflow with the joy of the Lord's Presence."

Dear Friends, I thank God that you and I know what it is to enjoy the Presence of God in a great many different ways. *When two or three of the people of God meet together* and talk to one another about the things of God, the Lord is never away. You remember that blessed text, "They that feared the Lord spoke often, one to another." They had holy talks about heavenly things. It was such sweet conversation that the Lord, Himself, turned eaves-dropper and listened and heard. What He heard pleased Him so well that He, then and there, made a note of it. Yes, and wrote it down and ordered that "a book of remembrance" should be preserved "for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name." Was not this sure evidence of His most gracious Presence? John Bunyan knew that God was there when he went about tinkering and came to Bedford—and there were three godly women sitting in the sun, at work—and as they worked they talked so sweetly that the tinker stood and listened and was drawn to better things! By such means he became a Believer and a preacher—and the writer of the "Pilgrim's Progress"—which has so refreshed us all. The Lord was there and, therefore, he dreamed a heavenly dream in Bedford jail. Wherever His people meet, the Lord is graciously near. "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them."

Yes, but when Christian people *go forth to work*—when you come to your Sunday school, or go out with your bundle of tracts, to hand them out in your district, or when you join a little band and stand on the street corner, yonder, and lift up your voice in the name of Jesus—you may expect, if you go with prayer and faith, that it shall be written, "Jehovah-Shammah, The Lord Is There." It is only a young man standing up in a cottage to speak and he has not much to say, yet there are penitential tears and broken hearts—it is so, for God is there! It is only a humble woman speaking to a few persons of her own class and yet angels are rejoicing over a repenting sinner—yes, because God is there! It is only a little room in one of our back streets and the city missionary has come in. There are a dozen or two of the neighbors called together and he is talking of Jesus and His love—oh, but if the Lord is there, do not tell me that the

missionary is not in the Apostolic succession—he need not *claim* it, he is, himself, an Apostle of God to those poor people! He needs no gorgeous vestments, nor the swell of an organ, nor even the thunders of the multitude as they raise the solemn hymn! The few so simple and so poor have *God with them* and it is enough! Wherever you are seeking to do good, in prayerful dependence upon the Holy Spirit, it shall be said "the Lord is there."

And now, from this time forth, Beloved, you that fear God and think upon His name, *wherever you go*, let it be said, "Jehovah-Shammah, The Lord Is There." I often feel sorry when the Sabbath is nearly over and so do many of you. I know you wake on Monday morning and take those shutters down, again, or go off to that workshop where you suffer so much ridicule, or return to the ordinary grind of daily labor and mix up with so many of the ungodly—and you do it mournfully. Now, pray that you may keep up the Sabbath tone all week! Make every place, wherever you go, to be the House of God. A dear Brother of ours went to a shop where he worked with four ungodly men—and his Lord went with him. It was not long before we had the privilege of baptizing that friend's master and all his shop mates, for the Lord was there! The other day there came a fresh man to work who could not bear to hear a word upon religion, but our Brother was the means of his conversion, too, and the new man is coming among us, warm with his first love! Our Brother made up his mind that he was not going to be conquered by any scoffers, but, on the contrary, he was determined to conquer them for Christ! He will not yield to the influences of sin, but he resolves, in the name of the Lord, that evil influences shall yield to the power of the Truth of God and to the attractions of the Cross. Write across your workshop, "The Lord is here." If you cannot do it literally, do it spiritually, "Jehovah-Shammah, The Lord Is There."

Do not be found anywhere where you could not say that the Lord was there! If you are called into the world in the pursuit of your daily vocation, cry unto the Lord, "If Your Spirit goes not with me, carry me not up hence." Determine that you will have the Spirit of God with you and, if it is in busy Cheapside, or in the lonesome country while you are hoeing the turnips or attending to a flock of sheep—in any field, any street, or any room—it shall be said that God is there! Take Jesus with you when you go and, when you come home, may His Spirit still be with you! God grant that it may be so! The Holy Spirit can work you to this!

What shall I say to those who do not know the Lord and do not care for Him? O Friend, the day will come in which Jesus Christ will say to you, "I never knew you: depart from Me, you workers of iniquity." Do not let Him say that, but, tonight, commence an acquaintance with Him. May His Holy Spirit help you to do so! I am sure the Lord Jesus Christ could not say to me, "I never knew you." It is impossible, because I could reply to Him, "Never knew *me*, Lord? Why, I have been to You with so many burdens. I have run to You with so many troubles that I am sure You know me as one knows a beggar whom he has relieved many times a day—

'Do You ask me who I am?

Ah, my Lord! You know my name.'

You remember me, for in my despair I cried to You and You did relieve me of my burden! You know me, for in my sorrow, my broken heart found no comfort but in You! You have known me all these years in which I have had to cry to You for something to preach about, and for help while preaching. You know how I have had to come to You and confess my failures, and mourn my shortcomings, and lament my sins, and trust in Your blood for cleansing."

My Lord cannot say that He does not know *me*, for He has known my soul in adversity. Blessed be His name, I know Him and lean all my weight upon Him! They that know Him shall be with Him and He will receive them unto Himself forever—and this shall be their Glory—"Jehovah-Shammah, The Lord Is There." With Him shall they dwell, world without end! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 45:8-25.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—774, 847, 806.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:

DEAR FRIENDS—In this, the beginning of another year, I find myself in Mentone gradually recovering health after a period of pain and weakness. To begin Volume 37 of weekly sermons has fallen to the lot of no other man. I am grateful for the peculiar privilege and all the more so because all the previous 36 volumes continue to be purchased and read, and preached. I beg each friendly reader to breathe a prayer for the preacher and for these hundreds of sermons, that the Lord may use both the living voice and the printed page to His own Glory and to the salvation of men. Man's thoughts change, but the Word of the Lord endures forever—and this is the Word which in these sermons is preached to men. May the Holy Spirit acknowledge the testimony!

Wishing to all my readers A HAPPY NEW YEAR,
I am their servant for Christ's sake,
C. H. SPURGEON.

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

A GRACIOUS DISMISSAL
NO. 2183

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 11, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And He said to the woman, Your faith has saved you; go in peace."
Luke 7:50.

THE main part of my subject will be—that gracious dismissal, "Go in peace." To her who had been so lately blessed, the word, "*Go,*" sounded mournfully, for she would gladly have remained through life with her pardoning Lord, but the added words, "*in peace*," turned the wormwood into honey—there was now peace for her who had been so long hunted and harried by her sins! Rising from the feet she had washed with tears, she went forth to keep her future footsteps such as those of a believing and, therefore, *saved* woman ought to be.

We like a motto to begin the year with and it has been useful to some spirits to choose a motto with which to enter on a new course of life. We climb the hill of enterprise, or dare the wave of trial with an inspiring word upon our lips. To certain young men, a word has come in life's early morning, wet with the dew of Heaven—and that word of their dawn of day has stayed with them. The echoes of that life-evoking word have followed them long after it was spoken. Amid strange scenes it has come to them like a voice from the unseen. It has whispered to them within the curtains of their dying bed—it has murmured consolation amid Jordan's swelling waves. That first word of joy and peace from Jesus with which they began the new life came to them, again, just as they were melting away into the invisible land. And so they began the service of the Redeemer—and so He declared that their work was finished. Perhaps that love-note will be their welcome at the very gates of Heaven!

Our Lord, in the instance before us, sent a penitent away from the chill atmosphere of self-righteous quibbling and thus relieved her of a controversy for which she was not fitted. But I see more than that in this benediction. It looks to me as if our Divine Master, when He found this poor sinner so full of love to Him that she washed His feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head, having by a parable explained to the Pharisee the reason for the greatness of her love, then said to her, "Go in peace,"—meaning that word not only to be cheering for the necessary purpose of the moment, but to go with her and to attend her all the rest of her life, until, when she came into the dark valley, she should fear no evil, for she would still hear that sweet voice saying, "Go in peace." What music to have heard! What music still to hear!

Now, I would to God that the word which I shall speak at this time might be honored of the Lord to serve that sacred purpose to some here present. May it be a life-word to certain of you! May it be to others of us who have long known the Savior a revival of our rest—and may we get such a draught of peace from Jesus that we may never thirst again! The lips of our Divine Lord are a wellspring of delight! Each word is a chalice brimmed with sweetness. Imbibing this, we shall go our way, even to our journey's end, after the manner of the hymn which we sang just now—

"Calm in the hour of buoyant health,
Calm in my hour of pain;
Calm in my poverty or wealth,
Calm in my loss or gain.
Calm me, my God, and keep me calm,
Softly resting on Your breast,
Soothe me with holy hymn and Psalm,
And bid my spirit rest."

Oh, that our life may be as a sea of glass! May the sacred circle of our fellowship be within the golden line of the peace of God! You who did bid us come to You and rest, now bid us, "go in peace."

I am going to say a little in my opening upon a *delightful assurance* which constituted the reason why the woman went in peace—"Your faith has saved you;" or, as in the 48th verse, "Your sins are forgiven you." Upon the strength of the assurance that she was saved, she might safely go in peace! When we have talked a little upon that subject, we will then come to a *considerate precept*—the Savior directed her, in the moment of trial, to, "go in peace." There was an assurance for her comfort and a precept for her guidance.

I. First, then, consider A DELIGHTFUL ASSURANCE. The ground upon which the penitent woman might go in peace was that she had been saved. The Savior assured her—"Your faith has saved you."

She was not saved by any other way than *we* are saved, but she received the common salvation by like precious *faith*. The way of salvation to her was faith in Christ—that is the same way for us, but she had what some of you, no doubt, would greatly *like* to have—she had *an assurance that she was saved from the Lord's own mouth*! I think I hear some saying, "I should go in peace, I am sure, if the Lord Jesus would but appear to me and speak, and say with His own lips, "Your faith has saved you." It is natural that you should think so. It must have been rapture to receive a benediction from the mouth of our King, our Savior! Yet, dear Friends, we must not hang our confidence upon a mere circumstance. For a mere circumstance it is, whether Christ shall literally stand before you in the flesh and say, "Your faith has saved you," or whether He shall say it to you by the Infallible record of His own Word.

It does not make much difference as to my faith in what my father says to me, whether I meet the venerable man in the morning in my garden and there hear his voice, or whether I get a letter by post in his handwriting, and he says to me upon that paper just what he would have said if I had met him face to face. I do not require him to always come up the hill to my house to tell me everything that he has to say—I should think my-

self an idiot if I did! If I were to say, "My dear Father, you have assured me of your love by letter, but somehow, I cannot credit it unless you come and look me in the face and take my hand and assure me of your good will." Surely, he would say to me, "My dear Son, what ails you? You must be out of your mind. I never knew you to be so childish before! My handwriting has always been enough. I can hardly think you mean it when you say that you cannot credit me unless I stand manifest before your eyes—and with your ears you hear me speak."

Now, what I would not do to my *earthly* father, I certainly would not do to my heavenly Savior! I am perfectly satisfied to believe what He writes to me and if it is so written in His Book, it seems to me to be quite as true and sure as if He had actually come from Heaven and had talked with me, or had appeared to me in the visions of the night. Is not this the reasoning of commonsense? Do you not at once agree with me?

"Well," you say, "we go with you *there*, dear Sir, but, then, He spoke that word to her *personally*. We would never have any more doubts, but would go in peace if He said that word of assurance to us. You see, it is not merely that Jesus, Himself, spoke and said, 'Your faith has made *you* whole,' but He looked that way! He turned towards her and she knew that He referred to her. There was no mistaking to whom the assurance was given! There were other people in the room, but He did not say it to Simon. He did not say it to Peter. He did not say it to James and John. She knew by the look of Him that He meant it for *her* and for her, alone, for she was the only person to go and, consequently, the only one to 'go in peace.' Our Lord put it in the singular number and said, '*Your* faith has saved *you.'* I want it to come home just so to me."

Yes, but I think that this is a little unreasonable, is it not? Because if my father (to carry on my figure) were to speak to me, and to my brothers, and to my sisters, and were to say, "Dear children, I have loving thoughts concerning you, and I have laid up in store for your needs," I do not think that I should say to him, by-and-by, "Now, Father, do you know that I did not believe you, or derive any pleasure from what you said because you spoke to others beside myself? I did not think your statement of love could be true because you included my brothers and my sisters. You did not use the singular, but you put it in the plural—and you spoke to all my brothers and sisters, as well as to myself—and, therefore, I felt that I could not take any comfort out of your tender assurances." I should be a most unreasonable kind of person if I were to talk in that way—and my father would begin to think that his son was qualifying for a lunatic asylum! If he did not attribute it to unkindness of heart, he certainly would ascribe it to stupidity of head! Why, surely, surely, if my father says the same to each one of his children as he says to me, his words are all the more likely to be true, instead of being less worthy of belief and, therefore, I derive comfort from his promises of love being put in the plural rather than in the singular. Surely it should not be less easy to believe that God would deal graciously with me in company with thousands of others than that He should pursue a solitary plan with *me* as the lone object of His love. Is it not so?

"Ah, yes!" says one, "but you have not hit on it yet. I want to know that I am one that is in that plural! And I want to know that I really am one of those to whom Jesus speaks in His Word." My anxious Friend, you may know it—and you may know it most certainly. It is written, "He that believes on Him has everlasting life." It need never be a question whether you believe in Him or not. If you trust Him, that is the gist of the matter. You can readily ascertain whether you do really trust Him, or do not trust Him. If you do trust Him, you are His, and every promise of His Covenant is made to you! You have faith, and when the Lord lays it down as a general statement that faith saves—the statement is applicable to all the world, in every place and in all time—until the present age shall end—and men shall have passed into the fixed state of retribution where no Gospel of faith is preached. "Your faith has saved you." If you have faith at all—if you believe that Jesus is the Christ—you are born of God! If you can say to the Lord Jesus—

"All my trust on You is stayed
All my help from You I bring,"

that is faith and Jesus testifies, "Your faith has saved you."

Now, because the Infallible Witness says this of all who have faith, I do not think you ought to doubt it. It is true you do not hear His voice because He says it rather by the written Word than by word of mouth, but surely this does not affect your faith. We believe a true man whether he writes or speaks—indeed, if there is any choice, we prefer that which he has deliberately put on paper, for this remains when the sound of the voice is clean gone. It is most profitable for us that we should read our Lord's declaration over and over again—and put it in all sorts of shapes—and see how it always remains faithful and true. It is more assuring to you to find it in the volume of the Book than it would be if the Savior met you tonight, and said to you, "Your sins are forgiven you. Your faith has saved you." The record excels the voice.

"No," you say, "I cannot see that." Well now, Peter was with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration and nothing could shake Peter's conviction that he had been there in the midst of that heavenly Glory—and yet, for all that, Peter says, concerning the Inspired Word, "We have a more sure Word of testimony"! He felt that even the memory of that vision, which he had assuredly seen, did not always yield to him so much assurance as did the abidingly Inspired Word of God! You ought to feel the same. If I were conscious tonight that, at some period of my life, I had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken to me, the very spot of ground on which it occurred would be exceedingly dear and sacred to my spirit. But I am certain that when I grew depressed—when darkness rushed over my soul, as it sometimes does, I would be sure to say to myself—"You never saw anything of the kind! It was a delusion, a figment of your imagination, a delirium and nothing more."

But, Beloved, when I get to this Book and see before me the sacred lines, I know that I am not deluded! There it stands, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." I am sure about that and I

am sure that I believe and, therefore, I am *sure* that I am saved! I like to put my finger right down on the passage and then say, "Lord, I know You cannot lie. I have never had a question about this being Your Book. Whatever other doubts have plagued me, this has not. You have so spoken it home to my soul that I am as assured that this is Your Book as I am assured of my own existence. And, therefore, You have done better for the removal of my doubts and for the assurance of my soul's eternal salvation, by putting Your promise in your Book than if You had, Yourself, personally appeared to me and spoken with Your own voice."

O my Hearer, the written Word is most sure! If you believe, you are saved, as surely as you are alive. If you believe, Heaven and earth may pass away, but the Word of the Lord shall stand fast for you. "He that believes in Him has everlasting life." He has eternal life in present possession! Our Lord has put it thus—"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." There are no, "ifs," or, "buts," about these Words of promise. Salvation is put as a present thing and as an abiding thing, but in every case as a *certain* thing! And why should we be worried and worn about the matter? It is so and let us take the comfort of the fact. We must either throw away this Book by beginning to talk about "degrees of inspiration" and all that foul rubbish, or else we are logically bound to be sure of our hope and to rejoice in it!

I guarantee you, O my Hearer, that as long as you stand fast by the belief that this is a sure Word of testimony, you will know that you are saved! If this Book is true, every Believer in Jesus is as safe as Jesus, Himself. To say, "I believe, but I am afraid I am not saved," is to say, but in a roundabout way, that you do not believe at all! For, if you believe, then you believe that God speaks the Truth—and this is the testimony—"God has given us eternal life, and that life is in His Son." This is the testimony of the great Father and the testimony of the eternal Spirit! And we must not dare to doubt it. You may doubt whether you believe or not, but given that you do really and unfeignedly put your trust in the Lord Jesus, then, as effect follows cause, it is certain that the cause of faith will be followed by its sure effect—salvation! "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." Do not worry any longer—go in peace! Have done with questioning! End all debate—go in peace. Go about your business, for the work of salvation is done! You are a saved soul—go and rejoice in finished salvation and ask no more questions. "Why do you cry you unto Me?" said God to Moses, "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward." Why do *you* question and doubt any longer? Go forward to enjoy what God has prepared for you! And as you are saved and justified in Christ, now seek sanctification and all the other blessings of the Covenant of Grace which lie before you in Christ Jesus your Lord! The promise is sure—be sure that it is so—and in perfect rest of soul enjoy the good which God provides you!

I think I have thus brought out as clearly as I can that delightful assurance which is the ground of the command, "Go in peace."

II. We come, secondly, to listen to A CONSIDERATE PRECEPT. Our Lord, with wise tenderness, dismissed the beloved object of His pardoning love and bade her, "Go in peace." May the Holy Spirit bless this to us!

This precept divides itself into two parts. There is, first, "Go." And then there is, "Go in peace."

There is "*go*." Now, in, "*go*," there are two things—to go *from* and to go *to*. *Where was she to go from*? First, she was *to go from these quibblers*. Simon and the Pharisees are as full of objections as a swarm of bees is full of stings. They say in their hearts, one to another, "Who is this that also forgives sins?" They have even dared to question the Character of the Perfect One and have hinted a suspicion of His purity for allowing such a woman to come so near Him and to wash His feet with her tears. Therefore the Savior says to her, "Go." This was not a happy place for a child-like love to linger in. Her soul would have been among lions. Jesus seems to say, "Do not stay to be tormented by these quibblers. Your faith has saved you—go. You have gained a great blessing—go home with it. Let these people argue with each other. You have a rich prize—take it out of the reach of these pirates."

Oftentimes I believe that the child of God would find it to be his greatest wisdom, whenever he is in company that begins to assail his Lord, or to denounce his faith, just to go about his business and let the scoffers have their scoffing to themselves. Some of us have thought it our miserable duty to read certain books that have been brought out against the Truth of God, that we might be able to answer them—but it is a perilous calling. The Lord have mercy upon us when we have to go down into these sewers—for the process is not healthy!

"Oh," says a man, "but you must prove all things!" Yes, so I will. But if one should set a joint of meat on his table and it smelt rather high, I would cut a slice, but if I put one bit of it in my mouth and found it far gone, I would not feel it necessary to eat the whole round of beef to test its sweetness! Some people seem to think that they must read a bad book through—and they must go and hear a bad preacher often before they can be sure of his quality. Why, you can judge many teachings in five minutes! You say to yourself, "No, Sir, no, no, no! This is good meat—for dogs! Let them have it, but it is not good meat for me and I do not intend to poison myself with it." The Savior does not tell the woman, "Stop, now, and hear what Simon has got to say. Dear good woman, you have been washing My feet with tears and here is a highly intelligent gentleman, a Pharisee, who has a very learned speech to deliver—give him a fair hearing. You have to prove all things—therefore stay and hear him. And here are more gentlemen who object to My pardoning your sins. And their objections are fetched from deep veins of thought. Listen to them and then I will answer their questions and quiet your mind."

No, the Savior says, "Go in peace. You have peace—do not stay till you lose it. You have your comfort and joy—refuse to be robbed of them." Why, if you were in a room and you saw a certain number of gentlemen of a suspicious character—and you had your watch with you—you would not feel it necessary to stay and see whether they were able to extract your

watch from you, but you would say to yourself, "No, I am best out of this company." We are safest out of the society of those whose great objective it is to rob us of our faith. "Your faith has saved you. Go home. Leave them. Go in peace."

I think that He meant, besides going away from the men, "*Go away from the publicity into which you have unwillingly stepped*." If our Savior had been like some excellent people of the present day, He would have said, "Stand before all these men and tell your experience. I shall require you to be at half-a-dozen meetings this week and you must speak at every one of them." A splendid woman, was she not, who washed the Savior's feet with tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head? She might have exhibited her eyes and her hair—and told their gracious story. Who can tell but several would have been impressed by the narrative? The Savior said to the woman—so excitable, for she was all that, as well as grateful—"Your faith has saved you; go in peace." As much as to say, "There are certain of your own sex that you can speak to. You will find some poor fallen woman to whom you can quietly tell of My pardoning Grace. But yours is a case in which the very beauty of your character will lie in the quietude of your future life. 'Your faith has saved you.' That is enough for you. You have come upon the stage of action by that splendid act of your love, but do not acquire the habit of winning publicity. Do not aspire to display yourself in a bold and heroic attitude, but go in peace." He almost seems to say, "Subside now into your family. Take your place with the rest of your sisters. Adorn, by your future purity, My doctrine, and let all men see what a change has been worked in you, for, perhaps that very weakness of yours which made you what you were as a sinner, may put you in danger, even as a saint. Therefore I do not ask you to tarry here and join My disciples, or follow Me publicly through the streets. But your faith has saved you; go in peace."

I think that the Master taught a great deal of wisdom here, which some of those who are leaders in the Church of God would do well to copy. Yes, I think that I shall go a little further and say that *I think the Savior, then and there, dismissed her from that high ministry which, for once in her life, she had carried out*. She washed His feet with tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head. It was the action of a love which had risen to a passion. It was an action such as shall be told for a memory of her everywhere—and we may well imitate her penitence and her heroic courage, as well as her love to Christ. But, at the same time, we cannot always be doing heroic actions. Life is mainly made up of common deeds. It would not be possible to be always washing feet with tears, nor to be always unbraiding tresses to use them as a towel.

The difficulty with some people is that they are always wanting to practice the sublime. Alas, they often fail by just one step and become ridiculous! They are always straining after effect and, hearing of what has been done once, by one choice person, they must do it themselves and they must keep on doing it! O my Sister, there may come a time when you will have to speak for Christ and speak openly before many, but tomorrow you had better go home and see to the children and make home happy for

your husband. You will glorify Christ by darning stockings and mending the socks of the little ones, quite as surely as by washing His feet with tears. You make a great mistake if you have not a piety which will take you into domestic life—which will help you to make the common drudgery of life a Divine service. We need men who can serve God with the axe and plane, or behind a counter, or by driving a quill. These are the men we need—but there are many that crave to vault at once into a conspicuous place and perform an astounding deed! Having done it once, they become unsettled all the rest of their lives and do not seem as if they ever could take to plainly keeping the Ten Commandments and walking in the steps of Jesus. I wish that those who must flash and blaze would hear the Lord Jesus say to them, "Go in peace." I mean any of you who really did distinguish yourselves on one occasion and deserved much praise from your Christian friends. I fear lest you should pine for unusual and even undesirable forms of service and become useless in the ordinary course of life. Now, do not be spoiled for life by having been allowed in one unusual deed, but hear the Master say, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace. Serve Me in the daily avocations of life and bring glory to My name at home. Go from the strain of publicity to the gentler pressures of family duty."

Do you not think that He even meant that she was now to cease *from that singular fellowship with Him that she had enjoyed*? She had been very close to Him, but she was, perhaps, never to be quite so near to Him again. In spirit she should be, but certainly not physically. It happens that those who take to the contemplative life—and there is no life higher than that—are apt to think that they must forget the *practical* life. But it must not be so. We must do that which the Master bids us do as well as sit at His feet! I am tempted to tell a story which most of you must know concerning the famous man of God, who, in his cell, thought he saw the Lord Jesus and, under that persuasion, he worshipped with rapt delight. But just then the bell at the convent gate rang and it was his turn to stand at the door and deal out bread to the hungry. There was a little battle in his mind as to which he should do—tarry with his Lord, or go to hand out bread to the poor mendicants. At last, he felt that he must do his duty even at the cost of the highest spiritual bliss. He went and distributed the bread and when he came back, to his great delight, the vision was still there and a voice said to him, "If you had stayed, I would have gone; but as you have gone, I have therefore stayed to commune with you." The path of duty must be followed and no spiritual enjoyment can excuse us from it! Never offer one duty to God stained with the blood of another! Balance your duties and let not one press out another. "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." Do not think that you need to be all day long at your Bible, or all the evening at your prayers. There is a time for everything. Let every holy work have its place, that your life may be a fair mosaic of brilliant colors, all set according to the Divine pattern, to make up a perfect character. "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace and do the next thing, and the next, without weariness."

That leads me to speak of *what she was to go to*. It seems to me that the Savior said, "Now go home. You have been a fallen woman—home is the place for you. Go home to your mother and father, or other relatives. Seek a home. Be domesticated. *Attend to your own work*. Whatever your place is, go to it. Leaving daily duty was the source of your temptation—return to walks of usefulness and habits of order—and this will be your safety. You will be less likely to be led away if you have work to occupy head, heart and hands."

Did He not mean, "*Go now to your ordinary life-trial*"? Do you think yourself a very peculiar person—a sort of saint that has to float in the air, or live upon roses? Do not fancy such a thing! I have heard of the Chinese, that they sell shoes with which you can walk on the clouds. And I believe that some people must have bought a pair of those remarkable articles, for their lives are spent in cloudland, walking as in a dream, upon high stilts of fond imaginations! Do not think great things of yourself. You are but a common man or woman. Do such duty as your fellow Christians do and do not think yourself a superior person. The worst people in the world to work with are superior people. Those are of no importance who think they are of great importance. Poor creature! It is not the Grace of God which turns your brain, but your own silly conceit.

Go forth to your further service— "Go in peace. There are some to whom you can tell of My love. Oh, how you will tell it! You that have washed My feet with your tears, go and shower those tears over fallen ones like yourself. Go, use those eyes, that you may look My love right into their hearts as you are speaking to them. Go all your life in peace and do for Me all that I shall put in your way to do for Me." That is what I think our Lord meant. Brothers and Sisters, do not think of sitting here to enjoy yourselves, but go off and glorify your Redeemer's name. Go!

But then here is the point of it—He said, *"Go in peace*." O my Brothers and Sisters, I desire that all of us who love the Lord may go all the rest of our life journey in peace. May pardoning love put us at peace concerning all our sins! O pardoned one, you love much, for you have had much forgiven—let your thoughts all run to love—and none to fear. Fret not about the past—the dark, dishonorable past. The hand that was pierced has blotted it all out! The great Lord has frankly forgiven you all your debt. Let not that disturb you any longer. Go in peace! What a rest it is to be rid of the burden of sin and to know of a certainty, from the teaching of God's Word, that your sins are forgiven you! This is peace which passes all understanding.

Our Lord meant, next, *"Go in peac*e" *in reference to all the criticisms of all these people who have looked at you*. Do not mind them. Do not trouble about them. What have they to do with you? It is enough for a servant if his master accepts him—he need not mind what others have to say about his service. Your faith has saved you. Forget all the unkind things they have said and do not trouble your heart about the cruel speeches they may yet make. Go in peace and be under no alarm as to upbraiding tongues.

And then I think He meant, "*Go in peace about what you have done*." I know the mood of a word like that. I have preached the Gospel. I have thrown my whole soul into it and after it is all over I have felt bound to chide myself that I did not do much better as to style, or spirit, or length, or some other matter. Oh, but if the Master accepts it, one may go in peace about it! This woman had done a very extraordinary thing in washing Christ's feet with tears, and wiping them with the hairs of her head. And when she got away, she might have said to herself, "I wonder why I was so bold? Was I not immodestly conspicuous? How could I have done it? How must I have looked when I was bathing His feet? For me, too—such a sinner as I am—for me to have done it to the Blessed and Holy One! I fear He must have felt vexed at my rudeness!"

Have you not sometimes done a brave thing for Christ and then, afterwards, felt just like that. "I was a bold minx," you say, "after all, to push myself so forward." The good young man, who has just preached for the first time, says, "Well, I got through it this time, but I will never attempt it again, for I am sure that I am not fit for such holy work." So the Master says to this woman, "Go in peace. I have accepted you and your loving service. Do not be troubled about what you have done. It is all sweet to Me and has a rich perfume of your great love. Never fret about what you have done. You have done the right thing. Your faith has saved you. Go in peace." I want us to have just that kind of peace—peace about what we have done for our Lord, even as we have peace about forgiven sin and peace about human criticisms.

"Go in peace." Oh, to possess, from this time forth, a holy quiet! We are so apt to grow fretful. I know some good Brothers and Sisters who have a swollen vein of suspicion about them that bleeds every now and then, and pains them greatly, and alarms other people. I know some Sisters—they are very good, but unreasonably fearful. They say that they are "nervous." Perhaps that is the fact and so I will say no more. But, oh, that we could get them cured of this disease of the nerves! I would they could be quieted! I admire the members of the Society of Friends for this virtue beyond almost any other which they exhibit—they seem to be so steady, self-contained and equable. They are a little slow, perhaps, but then they are very sure, firm, steadfast and calm. We are, some of us, too much in a hurry to go fast. If we were a little slower, we would be quicker. If we left our affairs more entirely with God, our peace might be like a river.

Yes, I would to God, dear Friends, that we might feel a constant joy. Why not? Nothing ought to trouble us, for we know that all things work together for good. If we live by faith, nothing can trouble us, for between here and Heaven we shall keep company with You, You Blessed One! And if the way You take is rough, the fact of Your being with us shall make it smooth for us. We will travel merrily with this as our march music—"Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Still, to come back to where I began, I dare say that the good woman thought that she would like to speak a word for the Lord. When they said that He could not forgive sin, would not she have liked to say, "But He did forgive my sin and He changed my nature! How dare you speak thus"?

But the Savior said, "Go." She was not called to contend. Thank God every child of God is not called to fight with the adversary—those of us who are men of war from our youth up take no pleasure in strife! We wish that, like this holy woman, we could be exempt from this warfare. She might well rejoice in her escape from the sacred conscription. Many a cuff and blow she thus avoided and, as her Captain sent her off the field, she might go home right happily.

She might have lost the blessed frame of mind in which she then was—and this would have been a real injury to her. She was sweetly wrapped up in love and there her Lord would have her abide. He seems to say, "You are too precious to be battered and bruised in battle. Go—go in peace. Dear Soul, you are so full of love to Me that I do not want you to be worried with fighting, contending and arguing. Go in peace." She would have done no good, I dare say, if she *had* ventured into a fray for which she was so unfitted. If she had spoken, she would have said something which the cruel Pharisees would have turned into a jest. So He said to her, "Go in peace." Why should her feebleness give them an occasion for unholy triumph? All true hearts are not fit for fight. Besides, she had her Lord to be her Advocate, and there was no need for her to speak. Therefore He said, "I can manage them without your presence. Go in peace." When we may believingly leave a difficulty with our Lord, it is faith's duty to go home quietly. No doubt, by going in peace, she would be doing greater service than she would by using her tongue upon these ungodly men. A quiet, happy life is often the noblest witness that we can bear for Christ. Therefore I say to everyone who loves the Lord, there are times when He will say to us, "Do not enter into any of this conflict, turmoil and muddle. Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."

The last word I have to say is this. There are many poor souls who talk about coming to Christ who are not yet saved. They are always hearing about faith and thinking of it—and yet they never do, in very truth, believe. Now, do not hear nor debate any more about faith, but *believe*. Trust Jesus Christ and think no more about your own trusting. Think about it as a *thing done*—not as a thing to be done! God help you now to believe in Jesus—and so pass over the bridge of belief to the golden shore of Jesus, Himself!

Well, but I notice some say that they believe, but it is not believing, because if it were believing, they would "go in peace." A person comes to the bank with a check. He believes it to be honestly his and the signature to be correct. He puts it down on the counter and the clerk puts out the money. But look! The man does not take it. He stands and loafs about. The clerk looks at him, and wonders what he is doing. At last, when the person has been there long enough to wear the good man's patience out, the clerk says, "Did you bring that check to have the money?" "Yes, I handed it in." "Well, then, why do you not take the money and go about your business?" If he is a sensible man, he delays no longer—no, he would not have delayed so long. He takes the money and departs in peace.

Now, dear Soul, if you have a promise from God—"He that believes is not condemned," or, "He that believes has everlasting life"—do you be-

lieve? Then take the blessing and go about your business! Do not keep on saying, "Perhaps it is so," and, "Perhaps it is not so." Do you believe that God speaks the Truth? If so, then take the promised blessing and enjoy it, for you are a saved man! "But I have been going to a place of worship for years and I have been believing in a sort of a way, but I have never dared to say that I was saved." Then you are acting the part of an unbeliever! If you do not know that you are saved, how dare you go to sleep tonight? How can a man dare to eat his meals and go about his business, and yet say, "I do not know whether I am saved or not"? You *may* know it and you *ought* to know it. If you believe, you are saved! If you doubt that fact, you are rather an unbeliever than a Believer. Take up your money and go home. "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" Trust Jesus! Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.

The Lord help you truly to believe, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Romans 8:15-39.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—719, 726, 702.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:

Although far away from my usual congregation, I am not without some little comforting and guiding work to do among those whom my Master leads to this place. This sermon is quite in harmony with what I have had to say to seekers and feeble ones here. "He fashions their hearts alike." There is a family likeness in the Lord's people wherever we meet them! The same Truth of God also suits Believers of every nation—all nations can live upon bread. It is a great delight to minister consolation. Had we nothing else to do, a pastor's life would be spent in green pastures by the still waters. We never carry the lambs in our bosom without feeling our heart grow warmer. All the spiritual help we render comes back to us in the most effectual manner—to water others is to be watered yourself. The river which refreshes the fields is not dry, itself.

Therefore, our word from our retreat to all who are one with us in the Lord's service is on this wise, *Comfort the feeble-minded. Support the weak.*" In doing this, you shall, yourselves, be comforted and supported. Hands that now hang down will, by God's Grace, be lifted up if they are used to raise others from the ground. Try this prescription, you that are yourselves cast down! It is recommended by the preacher.

Mentone, January 3, 1891,

C. H. S.

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A PRIVATE ENQUIRY
NO. 2184

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 18, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.
ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 9, 1890.

"What is the thing that the Lord has said unto you?"
1 Samuel 3:17.

THE Lord would not speak directly to Eli, although he was the High Priest. In ordinary circumstances it would have been so, but Eli had grieved the Lord, and thus had lost his honorable standing. God had not cast him off, but He viewed him with such displeasure that He would only speak to him through another person—even as great kings, if they are offended with their courtiers—send them messages by other hands. The Lord sent, first, a man of God to warn Eli of what would be the sure result of his lack of firmness with his sons. And when He gave him a second warning, it was sent through one who was a little underling in his family.

O you saints who live upon familiar terms with the Lord, take heed of sin, lest you lose your close communion, your favored fellowship and stand in a second place! God will speak to you, but it will be in warning and in a roundabout way—not face to face, with His lips to your ear, as He has been known to do while you have pleased Him. God will not cast you off, but He may set you aside for a time. You may still hear His message through others, but He will be silent to you, personally. You may have to live in the frigid zone of doubt and anxiety, instead of sunning yourselves in the full blaze of Divine Love. It was so with Eli—he had forborne to rebuke sin in his own house—and had brought the anger of God upon himself! And, therefore, he had no comfortable union and no honor with Jehovah, but must be schooled by a child.

Further, when God had sent a man of God to Eli and the message did not awaken him to a sense of his sin in over-indulgence of his sons and toleration of evil in those under him, the Lord sends him a threatening word by a child, for God has many messengers. The sending of the child, Samuel, to bear the terrible tidings to the aged priest was a sweet but stern rebuke of Eli. The child is awake, while the old man is locked in the slumber which comes of a seared conscience. Experience must now be admonished by childhood and wisdom by simplicity! Gray hairs, in this case, yield not a crown of glory to the erring ruler, but he must bow his head in sorrow at a rebuke brought to him by a lowly boy. The child is evidently more trusted by God than the venerable priest! It was the beginning of the Divine chastisement that his honor should pass away and an aged priest should stand reproved by a youthful Prophet. There was much

mercy in it, yet we clearly see the Lord stripping His servant of his decorations and setting him in a lower place—making the Urim and the Thummim which he wore upon his breast to be of secondary power for showing the future, while the Spirit rested more fully on a holy boy.

He, whose talk was still that of childhood, becomes a mouth for God, while the venerable ruler of his people has nothing to say but to submit to his inevitable punishment! Eli was a man of God and, notwithstanding his great chastisement and his mournful death, I doubt not that he died in the Lord. But he brought dishonor on his own name and he was condemned to know that his holy office would not be continued in his line—that none of his descendants should live to old age. He had not duly honored the Lord and, therefore, he heard the sentence pronounced on him and on his race. "They that honor Me, I will honor, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed." He had spared the rod of rebuke and, therefore, the axe of judgment fell on his house, "because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not." O Brothers and Sisters, let us beware of sin—of allowing sin in those under our charge—lest the Lord lay us low and send an affliction upon us, which shall cleave to our race forever!

We will now use Eli's question, by which he extracted from Samuel the message of God, and we will view it in three lights. First, as put *to Samuel*. Secondly, as coming *from Eli*. And, thirdly, as capable of being turned *upon ourselves*. We will ask it of ourselves, as another might ask it. And we will answer it to our own hearts, so that we may, by a rehearsal, become ready to give an answer to him that shall ask us in days to come. Come, my heart, answer to yourself, "What is the thing that the Lord has said to you?" May the Holy Spirit help you by bringing all things to your remembrance, whatever He has said to you!

I. First, let us view this question as addressed TO SAMUEL.

The first remark which we shall make upon it is that God does speak to men. Otherwise this would be a senseless question—"What is the thing that the Lord has said unto you?" God does communicate with mortals. He is not shut up all alone by Himself in sublime solitude. He has not placed His creatures at an immeasurable distance, with an impassable abyss between their littleness and His own grandeur. It is not true that He cannot hear their cries, nor respond to them in tones of love. In ways suitable to their feeble nature, the Lord has spoken to men.

He has done so *in the Inspired volume of His sacred Word*. Every line in this priceless volume was dictated by the Spirit and is a message from God to men. This Book is to be read as the record of Jehovah's voice. It is the phonograph of our Father's speech in days gone by. What He has spoken aforetime by His voice, He continues to speak to us by His written Word. He spoke through Prophets and Seers, Evangelists and Apostles—and here we have it—even all that is of abiding significance to us upon whom the ends of the world are come.

God, in a renewed manner, speaks to us *by His Word when His Spirit applies it to us individually*. We never truly hear the voice of God in Scripture until the Truth of God is spoken home to each heart and conscience

by the *Holy Spirit*. Revelation must be revealed to each one, otherwise it soon comes to be a veiling of the Truth, rather than a discovering of the Lord's mind. The Revelation is clear enough in itself, but we have not the opened eyes till Divine Grace bestows it. If we have not the Spirit of God, the letter may actually become a veil to hide the spirit of Truth. This, indeed, it should not be, neither is it according to its natural intent and tendency—but our depravity makes it so, turning even the Light of God, itself, into a thing which blinds. Do you know what it is to have a text leap out of the Scriptures upon you and carry you away? This special energy and flash of Truth is always memorable. How often have the waves of this sea of Truth been phosphorescent before my eyes—a sea of glass mingled with fire—of which the spray has dashed over me and set my soul on fire! As surely as the Lord spoke these words to Moses, or to David, or to Isaiah, or to John, or to Paul, so surely does He speak them to our souls by His Spirit. Do you understand what I say?

Moreover, our God has ways of communicating His mind to His children *by those of His servants who speak in His name*. He directs the thoughts of His ministers and suggests their words so that they speak to the cases of those who are led to hear the Word of God.

By our own thoughts, also, the Lord communes with us. If we will be still before Him, He will prepare our hearts and in silence we shall hear His voice. It would be a strange thing if God could not and did not communicate with His own children. And it is still more strange and sad that, though He does speak, His people are slow of heart and dull of hearing.

Our God also speaks to us *in Providence*. In choice favors we hear His soft and tender tones. In chastisement and rebukes we hear the sterner notes. But every sound is full of love. The Lord has ways of taking His children apart and speaking to them upon their beds. In the wilderness He speaks to the heart. He can talk with us *in Nature*. Have you not heard Him in the thunder? In the roaring of the sea? Yes, we hear Him, not only in the dash of Niagara, but in the ripple of the brook and the smiling of a primrose on its bank! The Lord is never voiceless except to the earless soul. He speaks—let us hear.

Here we make a further remark—God regards not age in His speaking, but He condescends to speak with young children. Samuel was the Lord's in his long clothes and served the Lord while a boy—and the Lord did not disdain to come to his little cot at night and call him by his name. We often talk as if it could not be possible that the Lord should speak with boys and girls and yet, my Brothers and Sisters, there is not much more of a stoop in God's talking with a child than in His speaking to a man! Indeed, the man has more of sin and thus he is often farther off from God than the child. If the children here present are, by God's Grace, made willing to hear God's voice—if they are obedient to the Lord and have open hearts and attentive minds towards His Word—the great God will not pass them by! The Lord stoops to the lowliness of a child and smiles at its simplicity. If young people are prayerful, thoughtful, reverent, believing and obedient, the fact that, like Samuel, they are small in stature and young in years,

shall be no detriment to them! The Lord will speak and call them by their names.

My observation leads me to believe that many children have heard more of God than persons who are grown up. They may not find willing ears to hear what the Lord has said to them, but if they did, they could tell us marvelous things. Some of us remember how, in our own childhood, the Lord dealt wonderfully with us and there were "prophecies which went before" concerning us, whose meaning we can now read, though at the time we did not understand them. I think that young Samuel was one of the fittest persons in the world for the Lord to choose as His messenger. And so far from its being unusual for young ears to hear the voice from Heaven, I think they are the best prepared to do so. Four times the Lord said, "Samuel, Samuel," and the child responded and said at last, when he knew who it was that called him, "Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears." Anyone here who can say from his heart, "Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears," will not be long without a word from the Invisible! Oh, that our ears may be opened to heavenly tidings—may be wakened, morning by morning, by the voice of the Lord! May we often hear it as the morning song and the evening hymn! May the Lord also hear our voices in prayer and praise and meditation till our lives shall be a holy dialog between our souls and our God, never dying down into silence, but lasting on until we behold Him face to face!

Our next observation is that when we do hear the voice of God we should be deeply impressed by it. Young Samuel gave evidence that he deeply felt the responsibility of having heard the voice of God. We read that, "Samuel lay till morning"—he did not go to sleep, but he did not leave his bed. He laid still and *thought*. After hearing that terrible word which made his heart heavy and caused his ears to tingle, like a wise child, he lay still and pondered it in his soul. He did not rush in upon Eli, for the news was hard to tell. Neither did he seek out another confidant. He had been called to be the Lord's Prophet. He was conscious of his commission and he became sober beyond his years. "He lay till morning." What thoughts passed through his mind on his bed! He had been a child when he went to rest last night and now he had suddenly become a man with a dread secret entrusted to him!

A pressing anxiety was on him as to how he should speak to Eli—and a battle raged within his heart between a fear of grieving the good old man by the message—and the greater fear of grieving God by keeping any of it back. He remained still upon his bed, quietly meditating and turning over what he had heard, and thinking of what he should do. I would to God that, after every sermon, all my hearers, young and old, had a quarter of an hour alone! A night of wakeful thought over it would be still better. I am sure that what is needed with our religious reading is time for private thought. We put into the mill more than it grinds! Some people imagine that if they read so many chapters of the Bible every day, it will be much to their profit—but it is not so if the reading is a mere mechanical exercise. It will be far better to read a tenth as much and weigh it—and let it take possession of brain and heart. A little food cooked is better for dinner

than a great joint raw. A man who wants to see a country must not hurry through it by express train, but he must stop in the towns and villages and see what is to be seen. He will know more about the land and its people if he walks the highways, climbs the mountains, stays in the homes and visits the workshops, than if he does so many miles in the day and hurries through picture galleries as if death were pursuing him. Don't hurry through Scripture, but pause for the Lord to speak to you. Oh, for more meditation! Samuel, "lay till morning." Wise child that! With such work before him for his head and his heart, he did well to lie quiet, take a breath and collect his strength.

Next, the heavenly voice made such an impression on his mind that he feared to tell it to Eli. The message was so dreadful to him that he dreaded to repeat it to him whom it most concerned. When you and I know God's Word and hear God's voice in it, it will often strike us with a solemn awe which will quite overpower us. Jacob, when he saw the ladder and the angels, did not say in the morning, "How delightful was the vision! How happy was my dream!" That would have been like the language of shallow, superficial minds. But he said, "How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the House of God and this is the gate of Heaven." I know that God's Revelation of Himself to us is calculated to fill us with intense joy, but it is even more likely to cast us down upon our faces, prostrate before His Divine Majesty, in solemn awe of the Lord of Hosts. Remember how John put it. "When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead." He was the best beloved of the Lord and yet, at the sight of our glorious Well-Beloved, he had no life left in him, but he swooned at His feet! Marvel not that "the child Samuel feared"—and especially feared to tell Eli the vision. I say that when you and I hear the voice of the Lord our God, it will create in us deep emotions of fear, of joy and of holy reverence—and we shall know of a surety that it is no little thing to hear the Word of the Most High. We shall tremble at His Word, yet we shall rejoice to hear it!

I would say, next, that we should store up in our memories whatever God says to us. These are not things which we can safely allow to slip. What is written in this Book should be transferred to our memories. It is a good thing to learn passages of Scripture by heart, even as classical scholars treasure up the words of their favorite authors. It is a good thing to have texts of Scripture used from day to day to sweeten the breath and then laid by in the heart to perfume the character. A mind well stored with Biblical lore will be a great cheer to us, should we live, like Eli, till our eyes are dim and we cannot see to read. The Bible in the memory is better than the Bible in the bookcase. All that this child heard from the Lord, he kept in his memory, so that, when the time came, he could produce it, "every whit." And in later days could write it down in this, his history. Oh, that you and I were able to produce "every whit" of what God has spoken to us! Alas, too often the Word has come and it has gone—and it has left small trace behind. We have heard and we have forgotten. God grant that, after this, whenever we hear what God, the Lord, shall speak, we may mark, learn and inwardly digest the same! And then it will not depart from us, but will remain for our growth, strength and building up.

One more remark. Looking at the text in its light toward Samuel, we learn that we should be able to tell what we hear from God. We find Eli saying to Samuel, "What is the thing that the Lord has said unto you?" If God has spoken to us, somebody or other will need to know and will have a right to be informed. It may be that many whom we esteem will wish to know what God has spoken to us—so we must be prepared—even though it is with a measure of fear and trembling, to tell them the solemn tidings. What is whispered in our ears in the closet we may have to speak on the housetops.

Samuel did this *very solemnly*, with a deep sense of its weight. Children are generally eager to tell a story, but they do not always consider what effect its repetition may produce. They are not able to keep a secret, but feel a pleasure in communicating what they know. But this child was now raised up by the Spirit of prophecy and became tender and thoughtful. And as it would cause Eli great anguish, he was very slow to speak. He did not open his mouth on the matter till he was commanded by Eli, and then he did it as a sacred duty. Young Christians should speak much of their Lord and His Gospel. God forbid that I should hinder them! But it will be well for them to speak, not because it is pleasant, but because they must. We must tell out the Divine Word because there is a woe upon us if we withhold it. We must not be flippant, but solemnly, under constraint. Much zeal is very natural, but very worthless, because its source is not Divine. That zeal which is kindled and sustained by a heavenly power which makes us feel that we must speak or the very stones would cry out against us—this zeal, I say, is of an effectual kind—and the more of it the better! If I only feel that I may, or may not, tell what I think I have heard from the Lord, the probability is that I had better be silent. The true prophetic Word is as fire in the bones—it *must* come out—and yet when it is spoken it is with lips which a live altar-coal has blistered.

Samuel did his work very *carefully and completely*. We read, "and Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him." He said nothing more and nothing less than God had spoken. You know how difficult it is to repeat a story correctly. You may try it at your own table, with all the good people around it. Whisper a story into the ear of the next person to you and let it be repeated in the same fashion from one to another and, by the time it comes round the small circle, it will be quite a fresh affair! Additions and subtractions are weeds which are hard to keep out of the garden of conversation! Alas, this holds good even of the Word of the Lord—how many add to it or take from it! But the child Samuel repeated his story correctly because the fear of the Lord was upon him. When you do tell the Gospel, tell it correctly, for it is wonderfully easy to make another gospel of it—and the tendency to do so is very powerful in these days. How many are proclaiming a mutilated gospel and are not telling "every whit!" Some part of Revelation they think too high, or too dry or too orthodox, or too something or other—and so their overweening conceit induces them to leave it out. Oh, do not so, I pray you!

Samuel is to be commended that, when he had to tell Eli what God had spoken, he left out nothing. Tell out the Gospel, you ministers of Christ!

Give Christ His due! Give fair proportion to each Truth of God. Do not magnify one doctrine to the exclusion of another, but endeavor to paint the portrait of Revelation with every feature in its place and in due proportion to the rest. It is great wisdom to be able to repeat fully and faithfully what God has spoken to us. May the Holy Spirit aid us herein!

It was *a very painful duty* which the holy child was called upon to perform. Samuel loved his foster father and for him to mention the tremendous doom pronounced upon Eli's house must have caused him great grief of spirit. But he bravely repeated the dread words of the Most High. There are certain Truths in God's Word which we tremble to think upon. Do you dream that we have any pleasure in the doctrine of eternal punishment? We speak of the wrath to come and the everlasting punishment which God apportions to the impenitent with fear and trembling, but we speak of it because we cannot escape from the conviction that it is taught in the Word of God! As Samuel was compelled to tell Eli of the unalterable curse that God had pronounced upon his household, so must God's faithful servants, in the discharge of their duty, speak of the doom of the wicked and never flinch from warning them. O my Hearers, "he that believes not shall be damned," is as true as, "he that believes and is baptized shall be saved." We must speak all the Gospel or else the blood of souls will stain our skirts at the Last Great Day. However painful a duty it may be, it is none the less binding upon us!

But then, in Samuel's case, it was *an obvious duty*. It must have been clear to the young Prophet that he *must* tell Eli what so much concerned him. This conclusion would be reached without much reasoning. If God had spoken to Samuel, it could only be that he might tell Eli. My Hearer, if the Lord has told you anything about eternal things, He has revealed it that you may pass it on. The Truth of God is no man's private property, to be kept under lock and key, as a secret hoard for personal enrichment. Whatever you know about Christ, tell it! Whatever you know about salvation and Sovereign Grace, tell it! It is revealed to you that you may bear it aloft like a flaming torch for the enlightening of others! God will not speak again to the man who does not spread His Truth. Samuel perceived his duty clearly.

And, dear Friends, to communicate the message of God was *a very weighty duty* to the child Samuel. Read what Eli said to him. "I pray you, hide it not from me: God do so to you, and more, also, if you hide anything from me of all the things that He said unto you." My Brother in the Gospel, what if you and I should keep back some painful part of God's message and God should do so to us, and more, also? I cannot bear to be lost and yet I *shall* be lost if I decline to warn others of their danger and of the doom of unbelief! I cannot bear to be cast away forever from the Presence of God, yet this woe will be unto me if I preach not the Gospel and do not declare the whole counsel of God! The result of unbelief and sin in others will fall on us if we do not warn them! O Sirs, if we are unfaithful, God will deal with us at the Day of Judgment as He will deal with the wicked—this is an awful outlook for us! May we never dare to tone down the more severe parts of the Gospel and flatter men in their sins, for if we

do this, God will mete out to us a portion with the condemned! If we have sown pillows for their armholes and rocked their cradles by our smooth speech, their eternal ruin shall lie at our door! How shall we bear it when God shall "do so to us, and more, also," because we kept back His message from the sons of men who so much needed it? Let us resolve that come what will, we will keep back nothing of the Truth of God which the Lord has entrusted to us. A false witness for God, a liar to men's souls—what sentence can be greater than his deserts? Is it possible for us to be too earnest here?

I have said enough upon the text in its first light. I pray for practical result from it. The Lord does speak to men and it behooves them to hear with reverence—and make known His Word with solemn fidelity and earnestness.

II. Let us now view the question as it comes FROM ELI.

I understand from Eli's question, first, that *we should willingly learn, even from a child*. "What? Shall I, a man of 70 or 80, learn from a child?" asks one. Yes, unless you are more foolish than Eli, you may do so. Eli, with all his faults, was willing to hear what God might speak, even if he heard it from the lips of the child, Samuel. How unwise people are when they will not hear a man, but make up their mind that he knows nothing! Some would not hear the most precious Truth of God from the lips of a man whom they despise. Certain of the friars in Luther's day confessed that much of what Luther said was very true and a reformation was certainly very much needed, but then, they would not have it from such a fellow as Luther—a renegade monk who spoke so rudely! Erasmus could be endured, but Luther made such a noise about it!

Teaching is often judged, not by its own value, but by the prejudices which people may happen to have concerning the source from which it comes. "I do not like him," says one. Well, what does it matter whether you like *him* or not? What does he *say*? If a thing is true, never mind who says it. Believe it! If a babe could be put into the pulpit and it lisped out the precious Gospel of Christ, its lisping would be more worth hearing than all the eloquence of men of years and name whose objective might be to overthrow men's faith. Let the Truth of God come from where it may, welcome it! If God has spoken, though it be but to a boy in knickerbockers, be ready to ask him, "What is the thing that the Lord has said to you?"

Next, learn from Eli that *we should be willing to know the very worst of our case*. Let me repeat that word—we should be willing to know the very worst of our case. I have used this expression in my own prayers many a time—"Lord, let me know the worst of my case." I suggest it as a very excellent petition. Surely, we do not wish to be left in a fool's paradise, pleased with the idea that we are rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing—when all the while we are naked, poor and miserable. We desire to be informed as to our condition. We would know even the frightful truth, the humbling truth, what some would even call the *degrading* truth—if, indeed, it is truth. We wish to be degraded, if to know the truth would make us feel degraded. Better in the abyss of a truth than on the

summit of a lie! We wish to be, in our own sight, what we are in the sight of God. We would not be shams, hypocrites, veneered pretenders, but we would be good men and true.

Dear Friend, for this reason do not be angry with the minister if, when you go to hear him on the Lord's Day, his text is not a promise, or a sweet bit of doctrine, but a warning and an exhortation, or even a condemnation. Bare your back to the whip and take your share of the lashes. If the Lord's servant has nothing to give but what comes from the bitter box, do not make faces over it. If he is the Lord's steward and deals out God's Truth, quarrel not with him, lest you be found contending with your Maker! Take the portion, or I might say the *potion*—it may be the very thing you need. If God has sent you a bitter potion, it will be better for you than the sweetest dainties a smooth-tongued flatterer could prepare. Cry to God to search you and to make you to know your true condition as before His face.

Next, *we should desire to hear the whole of God's Word*. We should say to our minister, "I pray you hide it not from me. What is the thing that the Lord has said to you?" Oh, that our Hearers would desire this at our hands! Ask us, yes, plead with us to tell you all that we know of the Truth of God—and when you have heard all that we know of the Truth—search the Scriptures and find out *more*, that you may be well instructed in the things which make for your peace. Be like Eli—afraid to have anything kept from you—and anxious to have full information. Like Eli, we should demand faithfulness. We should say to the teacher, to the friend who is dealing with our soul, "I pray you hide it not from me; but be faithful to me." You do not go to a surgeon that he may falsely assure you that you have no wound. And I hope you do not come here that I may give you unsafe comfort and make you feel content in sin. No, Beloved, if you come aright, you say, "I go to hear the Word of God as I go to a physician, that I may have my case truthfully described and honestly treated by one who takes his Master's medicines out of his Master's treasures." Hear not that which makes you contented with *self*, but that which leads you to seek higher and better things. Let those who are foolish desire to be lulled into the deadly slumber of delusion, but for yourselves, seek after the Truth of God, the whole Truth of God and nothing but the Truth of God—and love that which humbles you and draws you nearer to your Lord!

Dear Hearers, pray for us who are preachers of the Gospel, that we may be made faithful and kept so! You know the prevailing currents of these times are toward flesh-pleasing teaching. Men aspire to be clever and, to that end, they must appear to be bold thinkers, highly cultured and far removed from the old worn-out notions of orthodoxy. Many are the floral displays in sermons! Sheaves of corn are too plain and rustic. This is the age of bouquets and wreaths of rare flowers. Paul must give way to Browning and David to Tennyson. Brothers, there are enough in the novelty business without us—we have something better to do! We have to give an account unto our God of what we do and say. And if we have been murderers of souls, it will be no excuse that we flourished the dagger well, or that, when we gave them poison, we mixed the draught cleverly and

presented it with poetical phrases. Pray for us that we may be clear of the blood of all men. Keep us right by saying to us, "What is the thing the Lord has said to you? I pray you, hide it not from me!"

III. And now, we conclude by considering the question TO AND FROM OURSELVES. I want to put a series of questions very briefly and with great solemnity.

Have we ever asked the Lord to speak to us? Yes, yes, my Sister, I know you have! And you, my Brother, you have done still more, for God has already spoken to you. But here, on Thursday evenings, are many unconverted people and I am much rejoiced that you care to come on a week-night to such a place as this. I do not attribute your presence, in every case, to the highest motive, for you come to hear a preacher of whom you have heard much talk. And at another time you will go to hear some noted orator in another place. Did you ever say to yourself, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak"? This would be a far better objective than listening to human rhetoric. Have you shut yourself up in your room, or have you gone into the woods, or climbed a hilltop, or sat down by the sea and said, "Speak to me, Lord! If there are voices out of the eternal and the unseen, here am I to hear them. In mercy speak to me"? My dear Hearer, are you God's creature and have you never heard the voice of your Creator? Do you think yourself God's child and do you live by the month together and never hear your Father's voice? This is pitiable—alas, it is blameworthy! I press the question home. Have you ever asked the Lord to speak to you?

Next, *have we all regarded what God has spoken*? When we were young, on a Sabbath we heard a word from the pulpit which seemed to go right through us—and then and there we wished that we could go home to our chamber to pray. And when we got home, we shut our door and we cried out in our anxiety because all was not right between God and our souls. But what came of it? The tears we shed—were they the tokens of coming conversion? Is it not sadly true that Monday found us at our old tricks? We had forgotten what manner of men we were! Was it not so? Is it so still with some of you? Has God spoken and spoken, and spoken, and spoken, again, and do you still act like the adder that will not hear, though the charmer charms most wisely? Are you as the ass and as the mule which have no understanding and need bit and bridle before you will obey your Master? The Lord have mercy upon you if it is so! If you have been brutish and obstinate, may Divine Grace subdue you.

A further question is this—*Have we shaped our lives by what God has said*? I know many people who read their Bibles and know what the Scripture means, but they never practice what God says to them. Among the rest, they neglect that great Gospel promise—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." They have neither believed nor been baptized. They are bid to do this and that as Believers—and, avowing themselves to be Believers, they yet refuse to their Lord the obedience which He claims! O my Hearers, to know the Word of God and not to put it into practice is to make rods for your own backs, for he that knew his Master's will and did it not was beaten with many stripes. The more you know, the more stripes will come upon you if you have only *knowledge* and not *obedience*! Does

not this truthful word come home to some who are sitting here at this time? It ought to do so! God grant that it may lead the "hearers only" to become "doers of the word"!

Next, Brothers and Sisters, *have we told what we know*? That is a practical point. I speak to quite a number of Christian men and women who would have to confess, "No. I am like Samuel, so far that I fear to tell Eli the vision." You were going to speak to the person who sat in the pew with you the other Sunday and you almost got a word out, but it died on your lips. For idle words you will have to give an account. You meant to pray with your child, Mother, but you have not done it yet. What if she dies before you have done so? Good Friend, you meant to speak to the man at the next bench in your workshop. Ah, you have meant to do it so many times! I had a friend, a dear friend, who is now, I trust, in Heaven, and there was a man who used to take orders from him for goods and bring them to him when finished. He was a good and punctual workman, but not a Christian. Well, my friend intended—ah, he intended for *years*—to have a quiet conversation with that workman about his soul.

One day the goods came in, but a woman brought them. She said, "I am So-and-So's wife. He finished these goods, but he is dead." My friend said that the words were like a bullet to his heart, for he had so often thought of the man and often said to himself, "I must and will speak to him the next time he calls." But somehow, when he came into the shop, business was brisk and he looked over the goods and paid for them as quickly as he could—and never began a conversation! Now the man was beyond the reach of warning or instruction. Do not let it be so with any person with whom you come in contact! Do as Samuel did—tell the whole of it if they ask you to tell them—or even if they do *not* ask you to tell them! Those who do not ask you are probably those who have the most need of your efforts! I believe there is an art in private conversation. Certain of our dear friends are always telling out the Gospel on all sides and they seem to do it with much ease. I speak of my Lord, also, to individuals, but I must confess that it does not come so easy to me to speak to an individual as to preach to thousands. We must school ourselves to it. That art of buttonholing and coming into close contact with individuals is one that we must cultivate—and we must not be satisfied until we become expert in it—for it is one of the chief ways in which men are saved.

Lastly, there is one question which I would like to ask and I have done. *Do our children ever rebuke us*? Perhaps we have no children—they are all grown up, but possibly we have grandchildren. This Samuel was to Eli like a grandchild. His sons were grown up and had left him. But here was this little one brought into the Temple to minister there and the old man came to be rebuked by this little child! I have known some—perhaps they are even now present—who are godless fathers, drunken fathers, but their grandchildren are members of the Church and good, gracious, amiable, lovely, useful children, too! Grandfathers, are you going down to Hell while your grandchildren are going to Heaven? I charge you by the living God, before whose bar you must surely stand, look at your little ones and hear their prayers and hear their hymns—could you bear to be everlast-

ingly separated from them? And, Fathers, this should come home closely to you. You know that girl of yours—how you love her—and well you may! Your heart is bound up in your little daughter. She is everything a child can be to a father—but she often weeps because she tries to get you to hear the Gospel and you will not come. Sunday to you is not what it is to her and that grieves her.

You were making a rabbit hutch last Sunday, were you not? And your child said, "Father, do come to the House of God," but you would not come, and you pained your child. Will you bear in mind a solemn Truth of God? If your daughter goes to the right and you go to the left, you are probably parting forever. It is not possible that the way of sin should end where the way of righteousness will end! Do not choose eternal separation from your dear ones who love the Lord. Think these things over because, on a Sabbath, when we celebrate the Lord's Supper, some of you have to go away and leave a wife or a dear child behind to commune at the sacred feast. Many thoughts are stirred at that dividing time. I wish that such searching of heart might arise tonight in downright earnest. There will be weeping—there will be *weeping*, at the Judgement Seat of Christ! And if children now rebuke their Christless friends, what will be the thunder of that rebuke when they shall be caught up to the Throne of the highest and their ungodly relatives are cast out forever into the pit prepared for the wicked? God bless you all richly, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
1 Samuel 2:27-36; 3.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—785, 393.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:

DEAR FRIENDS—I hope soon to return to my pulpit in renewed strength. I have great joy in hearing from readers that the sermons which I have issued from my place of rest have been much appreciated by them. It will be a luxury to speak again in the name of the Lord in the great congregation, but prayer is earnestly asked that the Word may be with power. I beg a special petition on my behalf as the reader finishes this sermon.

Mentone, January 9, 1891,
Your needy fellow servant,
C. H. SPURGEON.

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OUR MANIFESTO
NO. 2185

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 25, 1891,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT AN ASSEMBLY OF MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL.

DELIVERED ON FRIDAY MORNING, APRIL 25, 1890.

"But I make known to you, Brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man."
Galatians 1:11.

To me it is a pitiful sight to see Paul defending himself as an Apostle and, doing this, not against the gainsaying world, but against cold-hearted members of the Church! They said that he was not truly an Apostle, for he had not seen the Lord. And they uttered a great many other things derogatory to him. To maintain his claim to the Apostleship, he was driven to commence his Epistles with, "Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ," though his work was a self-evident proof of his call. If, after God has blessed us to the conversion of many, some of these should raise a question as to our call to the ministry, we may count it a fiery trial—but we shall not conclude that a strange thing has happened to us. There is much more room to question *our* call to the ministry than to cast a doubt upon Paul's Apostleship! This indignity, if it is put upon us, we can, by His Grace, cheerfully bear for our Master's sake. We need not wonder, dear Brothers, if our ministry should be the subject of attack, because this has been the lot of those who have gone before us—and we should lack one great seal of our acceptance with God if we did not receive the unconscious homage of enmity which is always paid to the faithful by the ungodly world! When the devil is not troubled *by* us, he does not trouble *us*. If his kingdom is not shaken, he will not care about us or our work, but will let us enjoy inglorious ease. Be comforted by the experience of the Apostle of the Gentiles—he is peculiarly our Apostle—and we may regard his experience as a type of what we may expect while we labor among the Gentiles of our own day.

The treatment which has been given to eminent men while they have lived has been prophetic of the treatment of their reputations after death. This evil world is unchangeable in antagonism to true principles, whether their advocates are dead or living. They said, more than 1,800 years ago—"Paul, what of him?" They still say so. It is not unusual to hear dubious persons profess to differ from the Apostle and they even dare to say, "There, I do not agree with Paul." I remember the first time that I heard

this expression. I looked at the individual with astonishment. I was amazed that such a pigmy as he should say this of the great Apostle! Altogether apart from Paul's Inspiration, it seemed like a cheese-mite differing from a cherub, or a handful of chaff discussing the verdict of the fire! The individual was so utterly beneath observation that I could not but marvel that his conceit should have been so outspokenly shameless. Notwithstanding this objection, even when supported by learned critics, we still agree with the Inspired servant of God. It is our firm conviction that to differ from Paul's Epistles is to differ from the Holy Spirit—and to differ from the Lord Jesus Christ, whose mind Paul has fully expressed! It is remarkable that Paul's writings should be so assailed! But this warns us that when we have gone to our reward, our names will not be free from aspersion, nor our teaching from opposition. The noblest of the departed are still slandered. Be not careful as to human judgment of yourself in death or in life, for what does it matter? Your real character, no man can injure but yourself, and if you are enabled to keep your garments clean, all else is not worth a thought.

To come more closely to our text. We do not claim to be able to use Paul's words exactly in the full sense which he could throw into them, but there is a sense in which, I trust, we can each one say, "I make known to you, Brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man." We may not only say this, but we ought to be able to say it with thorough truthfulness. The form of expression goes as far as Paul was known to go towards an oath when he says, "I make known to you, brethren." He means, I assure you most certainly—I would have you to be certain of it—"that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man." On this point he would have all the brethren know past all doubt.

From the context we are sure that he meant, first of all, that *his Gospel was not received by him from men*. His reception of it, in his own mind, was not after men. And next, he meant, that *the Gospel itself was not invented by men*. If I can hammer out these two statements, we will then *draw practical conclusions from them*.

I. First, TO US THE GOSPEL IS NOT AFTER MEN AS TO THE MODE BY WHICH WE HAVE RECEIVED IT. In a certain sense we received it from men as to the outward part of the reception, for we were called by the Grace of God through parental influence, or through a Sunday school teacher, or by the ministry of the Word, or by the reading of a godly book, or by other agency. But in Paul's case, none of these things were used! He was distinctly called by the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, speaking to him from Heaven and revealing Himself in His own light. It was necessary that Paul should not be indebted to Peter, or James, or John—even in the way in which many of us are indebted to instrumentality—so that he might truly say, "I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the Revelation of Jesus Christ." Yet we also can say this in another sense. We, also, have received the Gospel in a way beyond the power of man to con-

vey it to us—men brought it to our ears, but the Lord, Himself, applied it to our *heart*. The best of the saints could not have brought it home to our hearts, so as to regenerate, convert and sanctify us by it. There was a distinct act of God, the Holy Spirit, by which the instrumentality was made effectual and the truth was rendered operative upon our souls.

So I note that *not one among us has received the Gospel by birthright*. We may be the children of holy parents, but we are not, therefore, the children of God. To us it is clear that, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh," and nothing more. Only, "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Yet we hear of persons whose children do not *need* conversion. They are spoken of as being free from natural corruption and *born* children of God—having a Divine Grace within which only needs to be *developed*. I am sorry to say that my father did not find me such a child. He found out early in my life that I was born in sin, shaped in iniquity and that folly was bound up in my heart! Friends and teachers soon perceived in me a natural depravity and, assuredly, I have found it in myself! The sad discovery needed no minute research, for the effect of the evil stared me in the face in my character.

This tradition as to our being born with a holy nature is gaining foothold in the professing church, though contrary to Scripture—and even to the confessions of faith which are still avowedly maintained! Certain preachers hardly dare formulate it as a doctrine, but it is, with them, a kind of chaotic belief that there may be productions of the flesh which are very superior and will serve well enough *without* the new birth of the Spirit. This tacit belief will lead up to birthright membership and that is fatal to any Christian community, wherever it comes to be the rule! Without conversion, in certain fellowships, young people may drift into the church as a matter of course, but the church becomes only a part of the world—with the Christian name affixed to it!

May we never, in our Churches, sink into that condition! That religion which is a mere family appendage is of little worth! The true seed are "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." We have not received our faith by tradition from our parents—and yet, some of us, if true faith could be so received, would certainly have thus received it, for if we are not Hebrews of the Hebrews, but, according to our family tree, we are Puritans of the Puritans, descended throughout many generations of Believers. Of this we make small account before God, though we are not ashamed of it before men. We have no father in our spiritual life but the Lord, Himself, and we have not received that life, or the Gospel, by any carnal parentage, but of the Lord alone!

Brothers, we have not received the Gospel, nor do we now receive it, *because of the teaching of any man, or set of men*. Do you receive anything because *Calvin* taught it? If so, you had need look to your foundations. Do you believe a doctrine because John Wesley preached it? If so, you have reason to mind what you are doing. God's way, by which we are to receive

the Truth of God, is to receive it by the Holy Spirit! It is helpful to me to know what such-and-such a minister believed. The judgment of a holy, godly, clear-sighted, gifted Divine is not to be despised—it deserves to have due weight with us. He is as likely to be right as we are and we should differ from a Grace-taught man with some hesitancy. But it is a very different thing to say, "I believe it on this good man's authority."

In our raw state as young Christians, it may not be injurious to receive the Truth of God from pastors and parents, and so on, but if we are to become men in Christ Jesus, and teachers of others, we must quit the childish habit of dependence on others and search for ourselves! We may now leave the egg and get rid of the pieces of shell as quickly as may be. It is our duty to search the Scriptures to see whether these things are so—and more—it is our wisdom to cry for Grace to appropriate each Truth and let it dwell in our inmost nature. It is time that we should be able to say, "This Truth of God is now as personally my own as if I had never heard it from lips of man! I receive it because it has been written on my own heart by the Lord, Himself. Its coming to me is not after men."

There is an opinion current in certain circles that you must not receive anything unless it is taught you of men—the word, "men," being swallowed up and hidden away, but being there, after all, under the term—*"the church."* The church is set up as the great authority! If she has sanctioned it, you dare not question it! If she decrees, it is yours to obey! But this is to receive a gospel "after man" with a vengeance. And the process involved is a strange one. You must trace a dogma as coming through a continuous visible church and this will lead you through the *Cloaca Maxima* of old Rome. Though the Truth of God is manifestly clear and pure and proves itself to be the Water of Life to you, yet you must not accept it—you must take yourself to the mudded stream which can be traced through the foul channel of a continuous church, which for ages has apostatized!

My dear Brethren, a doctrine's being believed by what may, in courtesy, be called "the church," is no voucher for it! The most of us would almost regard it as being a question to be raised whether teaching can be true which has been vouched for by those great worldly corporations which have usurped the name of churches of Christ. Several sects claim Apostolic succession and if any possess it, the Baptists are the most likely, since they practice the ordinances as they were delivered. But we do not even care to trace our pedigree through the long line of martyrs and of men abhorred by ecclesiastics. If we could do this without a break, the result would be of no value in our eyes, for the rag of "Apostolic succession" is not worth warehouse-room! Those who contend for the fiction may monopolize it if they will. We do *not* receive the Revelation of God because it has been received by a succession of fathers, monks, abbots and bishops! We are right glad when we perceive that certain of them saw the Truth of God and taught it—but that fact does not make it the Truth of God to us.

We would, each one, say, "I make known to you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man." We never think of quoting the community of men called "the church" as the ultimate authority with conscience. "We have not so learned Christ."

Furthermore, I hope I shall speak for all of you here when I say that *we have received the Truth of God personally by the revelation of it to our own souls by the Spirit of the Lord.* Albeit that in so large a company as this I fear there may be a Judas, and the, "Lord, is it I?" may well be passed round with holy self-suspicion, yet we can all say, unless fearfully deceived, that we have received the Truth of God which we preach by the inward teaching of the Holy Spirit. Let us turn to our diaries, though the dates are now far away in the long-ago. We remember when the Light of God broke in and revealed our lost estate and thus began the groundwork of our teaching. Ah, Friends, the darker doctrines which make up the foil of the priceless jewels of the Gospel—do you not remember when you received them with power? That I was guilty, I believed, for I was so taught—but then and there I *knew* in my soul that it was so! Oh, how I knew it! Guilty before God, "condemned already," and lying under the present curse of a broken Law, I was sorely dismayed. I had heard the Law of God preached and I had trembled as I heard it, but now I felt an inward conviction of personal guilt of the most piercing character. I saw myself a *sinner*—and what a sight is that! Fearfulness took hold upon me and shame and dread. *Then* I saw how true was the doctrine of the sinfulness of sin—and what a punishment it must involve. That doctrine I no longer received of men!

The precious doctrine of peace through the precious blood of Jesus we also know by inward personal teaching. We used to hear and sing of the great Sacrifice and of the love of Him who bore our sins in His own body on the tree. But now we stood at the foot of the Cross—for ourselves we beheld that dear face and gazed into the eyes so full of pity—and saw the hands and feet that were fastened to the wood for our sakes. Oh, when we saw the Lord Jesus, as our Surety, smarting for our offense, *then* we received the Truths of Redemption and Atonement in a way that was "not after man"!

Yes, those gracious men who have gone to Heaven did preach the Gospel to us fully and earnestly—and they labored to make known Christ to us! But to reveal the Son of God in us was beyond their power! They could as easily have created a world as have made these Truths of God vital to us! We say, therefore, each one from his inmost soul, "I make known to you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man," so far as the way by which we have come to know and feel it within our own souls!

Since our first days we have experienced a gradual opening up of the Gospel to our understanding, but in all that process, our real progress has been of *God*—not of men. Brethren, you read commentators—that is

to say, if your own comments are worth hearing you read the books of godly men—that is to say, if you, yourselves, ever say anything worth reading, yet your spiritual learning, if it is true and real, is of the Lord's imparting. Do we learn anything, in the most emphatic sense of learning, unless we are taught of the Lord? Is it not essential that God the Spirit should lay home the Truth of God which has been spoken to you, even by the ablest instructor? You have continued to be students ever since you left College, but your Tutor has been the Holy Spirit. By no other method can our spirits learn the Truth of God but by the teaching of the Spirit of God. We can receive the shell and the outer form of theology, but the real Word of the Lord, itself, comes by the Holy Spirit who leads us into all Truth.

How sweetly the Spirit has taught us *in meditation*! Have you not often been surprised and overcome with delight as Holy Scripture has opened up as if the gates of the Golden City had been set back for you to enter? I am sure that you did not, then, gather your knowledge from men, because it was all fresh to you as you sat alone with no book before you but the Bible and yourself receptive, scarcely thinking out matters, but drinking them in as the Lord brought them to you! A few minutes' silent openness of soul before the Lord has brought us in more treasure of Truth than hours of learned research! The Truth of God is something like those stalactite caverns and grottoes of which we have heard, which you must enter and see for yourself if you would really know their wonders. If you should venture there without light or guide, you would run great risks, but with blazing torch and an instructed leader, your entrance is full of interest. Look! Your guide has taken you through a narrow winding passage where you have to creep, or go on bended knees! At last he has brought you out into a magnificent hall and when the torches are held aloft, the far-off roof sparkles and flashes back the light as from countless jewels of every hue!

You now behold Nature's architecture and cathedrals are, therefore, toys to you. As you stand in that vast pillared and jeweled palace, you feel how much you owe to your guide and to his flaming torch. Thus the Holy Spirit leads us into all Truth and sheds the Light of God on the eternal and the mysterious! This He does in certain cases very personally. Then He fills us with complete forgetfulness of all our immediate surroundings and we commune only with the Truth of God. I can well understand how philosophers, while working out an absorbing problem, have seemed lost and oblivious to all the world besides. Have you never felt a holy absorption in the Truth while the Spirit has filled you with its glorious vision? It has been so with many of the saints while taught of God. They are not likely to give up to popular clamor what they have thus received!

How often has the Lord taught His servants His own Truth *in the school of tribulation*! We speak well of meditation—it is as silver—but tribulation is as much fine gold! Tribulation not only works patience, but patience

brings experience and, in experience, there is a deep and intimate knowledge of the things of God which comes by no other means. Do you know what it is to be in such pain that you could not bear one more turn of the screw? And have you, then, in faintness fallen back upon your pillow and felt that even then you could not be more happy unless you were caught up to the third Heaven? Then has it been verified to some of us that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. While lying in passive peace, it may be you have seen a Scripture come forth like a star between the clouds of a tempest, and it has shone with such luster as only the Lord God could have given to it. Depression of spirit and torture of body have been forgotten while the bright promise has made your soul full of light!

There is a place in the far-back desert which you can never forget. There grows a bush. A very unpromising object is a bush—but it is sacred to you—for there the Lord revealed Himself to you and the bush burned with fire, but was not consumed. You will never unlearn the lesson of the burning bush! Do we know any Truth of God till the Holy Spirit burns it into us—and engraves it on our soul as with an iron pen and with the point of a diamond? There are ways of learning for which we are very grateful, but the surest way of learning Divine Truth is by having the Word of God engrafted so as to take living hold upon the soul! Then we do not only *believe* it—we give our *life* to it—it lives in us and, at the same time, we live upon it! Such Truth throbs in every pulse, for it lives in us and colors our being. The devil insinuates questions, but we are not accountable for what he pleases to do, and we care the less, because he now whispers into a deaf ear. When once the soul, itself, has received the Truth of God, and it has come to permeate the entire being, we are not accessible to those doubts which before pierced us like poisoned arrows!

I may add, concerning many of the Truths of God and the whole Gospel system, that we have learned the Truth, thereof, *in the field of sacrifice and service with our Lord*, so that to us it is not after man. If you do not believe in human depravity, accept a pastorate in this wicked London and if you are true to your commission, you will doubt no more! If you do not believe in the necessity of the Holy Spirit to regenerate, take charge over a cultured and polished congregation that will hear all your rhetoric, and will remain as worldly and as frivolous as it was before! If you do not believe in the power of the atoning blood, never go and see Believers die, for you will find that they trust in nothing else! A dying Christ is the last resort of the Believer—

"***When every earthly prop gives way,***
He, then, is all my strength and stay."

If you do not believe in the election of Grace, live where multitudes of men come under your notice and persons most unlikely are called out from among them in surprising ways—and it will grow upon you! Here comes one who says, "I have neither father, mother, brother, sister, nor

friend who ever enters a place of worship." "How came *you* to believe?" "I heard a word in the street, Sir, quite by accident, that brought me to tremble before God." Here is the election of Grace! Here comes another, dark in mind, troubled in soul and she is a member of a family—all of them members of your Church—all happy and rejoicing in the Lord. And yet this poor creature cannot lay hold upon Christ by faith. To your great joy, you set before her Christ in all His fullness of Grace and she becomes the brightest of the whole circle, for they never knew the darkness as she did, and they can never rejoice in the Light of God as she delights in it! To find a greatly- loving saint you must find one who has had much *forgiven*.

The woman that was a sinner is the only one that will wash Christ's feet. There is raw material in a Publican which you seldom find in a Pharisee. A Pharisee may polish up into an ordinary Christian, but somehow there is a charming touch about the pardoned sinner which is lacking in the other. There is an election of Grace and you cannot help noticing, as you go about, how certain Believers enter into the inner circle, while others linger in the outer courts. The Lord is Sovereign in His gifts and does as He wills—and we are called to bow before His scepter within the Church as well as at its portal. The longer I live, the more sure I am that salvation is all of Grace and that the Lord gives that Grace according to His own will and purpose.

Once more, some of us have received the Gospel because of *the wonderful unction that has gone with it at times to our souls*. I hope that none of us will ever fall into the snare of following the guidance of impressions made upon us by texts which happen to come prominently before our minds. You have judgements and you must not lay them aside to be guided by impressions. But for all that and at the back of all that, there is not a man here that has led an eventful, useful life but must confess that certain of those acts of his life, upon which his whole history has hinged, are connected with influences upon his mind which were produced, as he believes, by supernatural agency! A passage of Holy Writ, which we have read a hundred times before, took us captive and became the master of every thought. We steered by it as men trust the polestar and we found that our voyage was made easy thereby. Certain texts are, to our memory, sweet as wafers made with honey, for we know what they once did for us and the recollection is refreshing. We have been revived from a fainting fit, nerved for a desperate effort, or fired for a sacrifice by a Scripture which became no longer a word in a book, but the very voice of God to our soul—even that voice of the Lord which is full of majesty!

Have you not noticed how a turn of a word in a text has made it seem all the more fitted for you? It looked a very small point, but it was essential to its effect, just as a small notch in a key may be the exact form which makes it fit the lock. How much may hang on what seems, to the unspiritual, to be nothing more than a slight verbal distinction, or an unimportant turn of expression! A thought of primary importance may turn

upon the singular of plural of a word. If it is the Greek word, itself, the importance cannot be overestimated, but in an English word, in the translation, there may be well-near equal force according as the Word is true to the original. The many, who can only read our marvelous English Bible, come to prize its words because the Lord has blessed them to their souls. A simple Welsh friend believed that our Lord must have been a Welshman, because, he said, he always speaks *to me* in Welsh.

To me it has often seemed as if the Well-Beloved of my soul had been born in my native village, had gone to my school and had passed through all my personal experiences, for He knows me better than I know myself. Although I know He was of Bethlehem and Judea, yet He seems like one of London, or of Surrey. No, more—I see in Him more than manhood could have made Him—I discern in Him a Nature more than that of man, for He enters the inmost recesses of my soul, He reads me like an open page, He comforts me as one brought up with me, He dives into my deepest griefs and attends me in my highest joys! I have secrets in my heart which only He knows. Would God His secret were with me as mine is with Him up to the measure of my capacity! It is because of that wonderful power which the Lord Jesus has over us through His sacred Word that we receive that Word from Him and receive it as not of man.

What is unction, my Brothers? I fear that no one can help me by a definition. Who can define it? But yet we know where it is and we certainly feel where it is not. When that unction perfumes the Word of God, it is its own interpreter, it is its own apologist, it is it own confirmation and proof to the regenerate mind. Then the Word of God deals with us as no word of man ever did or could! We have not received it, therefore, of men. Constantly receiving the Divine Word as we do, it comes to us with an energy always fresh and forcible. It comes to us, especially, with a sanctifying power which is the very best proof of its coming from the thrice-holy God. Philosophers' words may teach us what holiness is, but God's Word makes us holy! We hear our Brethren exhort us to aspire to high degrees of Grace, but God's Word lifts us up to them! The Word is not merely an instrument of good, but the Holy Spirit makes it an active energy within the soul to purge the heart from sin so that it can be said, "You are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you." When thus cleansed, you know that the Word is true. You are sure of it and you no longer need, even, the most powerful book of evidences. You have the witness in yourself, the evidence of things not seen, the seal of eternal verity.

I have taken all this time upon how we receive the Gospel and, therefore, I must be brief upon a further point.

II. TO US THE TRUTH ITSELF IS NOT AFTER MEN. I desire to assert this plainly. If any man thinks that the Gospel is only one of many religions, let him candidly compare the Scripture of God with other pretended revelations. Have you ever done so? I have made it a College exercise with our Brothers. I have said—We will read a chapter of the Koran. This is the

Muslim's holy book. A man must have a strange mind who should mistake that rubbish for the utterances of Inspiration! If he is at all familiar with the Old and New Testaments, when he hears an extract from the Koran, he feels that he has met with a foreign author—the God who gave us the Pentateuch could have had no hand in many portions of the Koran!

One of the most modern pretenders to inspiration is the Book of Mormon. I could not blame you should you laugh outright while I read aloud a page from that conglomeration. Perhaps you are familiar with the apocryphal New Testament books. It would be an insult to the judgement of the least in the Kingdom of Heaven to suppose that he could mistake the language of these forgeries for the language of the Holy Spirit! I have had several pretended revelations submitted to me by their several authors, for we have more of the prophetic clan about than most people know of, but not one of them has ever left on my mind the slightest suspicion of his sharing the Inspiration of John, or Paul. There is no mistaking the Inspired Books if you have any spiritual discernment! Once let the Divine Light dawn in the soul and you perceive a coloring and a fashion in the product of Inspiration which are not possible to mere men. Would one who doubts this write us a fifth Gospel? Would anyone among our poets attempt to write a new Psalm which could be mistaken for a Psalm of David? I do not see *why* he could not, but I am sure he *cannot*. You can give us new psalmody, for it is an instinct of the Christian life to sing the praises of God, but you cannot match the glory of Divinely-inspired songs. Therefore we receive the Scripture and, consequently, the Gospel as not after man.

You say, perhaps, "You are comparing books and forgetting that your theme is the Gospel." But this is only in appearance. I do not care to waste your time by asking you to compare the gospels of men. There is not another gospel that I know of that is worth the comparison for a single minute. Oh, but, they say, there is a gospel that is much wider than yours. Yes, I know that it is much wider than mine, but to what does it lead? They say that what is nicknamed Calvinism has a very narrow door. There is a word in Scripture about a strait gate and a narrow way and, therefore, I am not alarmed by the accusation. But then there are rich pastures when you enter within and this renders it worth while to enter in by the strait gate! Certain other systems have very wide doors—but they lead you into small privileges—and those of a precarious tenure. I hear certain invitations which might run as follows—"Come you disconsolate! But if you come, you will still be disconsolate, for there will be no *eternal* life made sure to you and you must preserve your own souls, or perish after all." But I shall not enter into any comparisons, for they are odious in this case.

The Gospel, *our Gospel, is beyond the strain and reach of human thought*. When men have exercised themselves to the very highest in original conceptions, they have never yet thought out the true Gospel. If it is

such a commonplace thing as the critics would have us believe, why did it not arise in the minds of the Egyptians or Chinese? Great minds often run in the same grooves—why did not other great minds run in the same grooves as those of Moses, or Isaiah, or Paul? I think it is a fair thing to say that if it is such a commonplace form of teaching, it might have arisen among the Persians or Hindus, or, surely, we might have found something like it among the great teachers of Greece! Did any of these think out the doctrine of free and Sovereign Grace? Did they guess at the Incarnation and Sacrifice of the Son of God? No, even with the aid of our Inspired Book, no Muslim, to my knowledge, has taught a system of Grace in which God is glorified as to His justice, His love and His sovereignty. That sect has grasped a certain sort of predestination which it has defaced into blind faith, but even with that to help them, and the unity of the Godhead as a powerful light to aid them, they have never thought out a plan of salvation so just to God and so pacifying to the troubled conscience as the method of redemption by the substitution of our Lord Jesus!

I will give you another proof, which, to my mind, is conclusive that our Gospel is not after men, and it is this—that *it is immutable and nothing that man produces can be so called.* If man makes a gospel—and he is very fond of doing it, like children making toys—what does he do? He is very pleased with it for a few moments and then he pulls it to pieces and makes it up in another way—and this continually! The religions of modern thought are as changeable as the mists on the mountains! Look how often science has altered its very basis! Science is notorious for being most scientific in destruction of all the science that has gone before it! I have sometimes indulged myself, in leisure moments, in reading ancient natural history—and nothing can be more comic. Yet this is by no means an abstruse science. In 20 years' time, some of us may probably find great amusement in the serious scientific teaching of the present hour, even as we do now in the systems of the last century. It may happen that in a little time the doctrine of evolution will be the standing jest of schoolboys. The same is true of the modern divinity which bows its knee in blind idolatry of so-called science.

Now, we say, and do so with all our heart, that the Gospel which we preached 40 years ago, we will still preach in 40 years' time if we are alive. [Less than two years later, Brother Spurgeon began eternity in the Presence of his Master—EO.] And, what is more, that the Gospel which was taught of our Lord and His Apostles is the only Gospel now on the face of the earth! Ecclesiastics have altered the Gospel and if it had not been of God, it would have been stifled by falsehood long ago. But because the Lord has made it, it abides forever! Everything human is, before long, moon-struck, so that it shifts with every phase of the lunar orb. But the Word of the Lord is not after men, for it is the same yesterday, today and forever.

It cannot be after men, again, because *it is so opposed to human pride*. Other systems flatter men, but this speaks the Truth of God. Hear the dreamers of today cry up the dignity of human nature! How sublime is man! But point me to a single syllable in which the Word of God sets itself to the extolling of man. On the contrary, it lays him in the very dust and reveals his condemnation! Where is boasting, then? It is excluded—the door is shut in its face. The self-glorification of human nature is foreign to Scripture which has for its grand object the Glory of God! God is *everything* in the Gospel which I preach and I believe that He is All in All in your ministry, also. There *is* a gospel in which the work and the glory are divided between God and man—and salvation is not altogether of Grace—but in our Gospel, salvation is of the Lord! Man never could nor would have invented and devised a Gospel which would lay him low and secure to the Lord God all the honor and praise. This seems to me to be clear beyond all question and, therefore, our Gospel is not after men.

Again, it is not after men, because *it does not give sin any quarter*. I have heard that an Englishman has professed himself a Muslim because he is charmed by the polygamy which the Arabian Prophet allows his followers. No doubt the prospect of four wives would win converts who would not be attracted by spiritual considerations. If you preach a gospel which makes allowances for human nature and treats sin as if it were a mistake rather than a crime, you will find willing hearers. If you can provide absolution at small cost and can ease conscience by a little self-denial, it will not be amazing if your religion becomes fashionable. But our Gospel declares that the wages of sin is death and that we can only have eternal life as the *gift* of God—and that this gift always brings with it sorrow for sin, a hatred towards it and an avoidance of it!

Our Gospel tells a man that he must be born again and that without the new birth he will be eternally lost, while with it he will obtain everlasting salvation! Our Gospel offers no excuse or cloak for sin, but utterly condemns it. It presents no pardon except through the great Atonement and it will give that man no security who tries to harbor any sin in his bosom. Christ died for sin—and we must die *to* sin, or die eternally. If we preach the Gospel faithfully, we must preach the Law of God. You cannot fully preach salvation by Christ without setting Sinai at the back of the picture and Calvary in the front! Men must be made to feel the evil of sin before they will prize the great Sacrifice which is the head and front of our Gospel. This is not to the taste of this or any other age and, therefore, I am sure man did not invent it.

We know that the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is not of men because *our Gospel is so suitable for the poor and illiterate*. The poor, according to the usual fashion of men, are overlooked. Parliament has enclosed all the commons so that a poor man cannot keep a goose! I doubt not that, if it were likely to be effectual, we should soon hear of a bill for distributing freeholds of the stars among certain sky-lords! It is evident that

a fine property in the celestial regions is, at the present time, unregistered in any of our courts. Well, they may sooner enclose and assign the sun, moon and stars than the Gospel of our Lord Jesus! This is the poor man's common. "The poor have the Gospel preached to them." Yet there are not a few, nowadays, who despise a Gospel which the common people can hear and understand! And we may be sure that a plain Gospel never came from *them*, for their taste does not lie in that direction. They want something abstruse, or, as they say, thoughtful. Do we not hear this sort of remark, "We are an intellectual people and need a cultured ministry. Those evangelistic preachers are all very well for popular assemblies, but we have always been select and require that preaching which is abreast of the times"?

Yes, yes, and their man will be one who will not preach the Gospel unless it is in a clouded manner, for if he does declare the Gospel of Jesus, the poor will be sure to intrude themselves and shock my lords and ladies! Brothers, our Gospel does not know anything about high and low, rich and poor, black and white, cultured and uncultured! If it makes any difference, it prefers the poor and down-trodden. The great Founder of it says, "I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because You have hid these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them unto babes." We praise God that He has chosen the base things and things that are despised! I hear it boasted of a man's ministry, although it gradually diminishes the congregation, that it is doing a great work among thoughtful young men. I confess that I am not a believer in the existence of these thoughtful young men—those who mistake themselves for such I have generally found to be more conceited than thoughtful. Young men are all very well and so are young women, and old women, also, but I am sent to preach the Gospel to *every creature* and I cannot limit myself to thoughtful young men! I make known to you that the Gospel which I have preached is not after men, for it knows nothing of selection and exclusiveness, but it values the soul of a sweep or a dustman at the same price as that of the Lord Mayor, or her Majesty!

Lastly, we are sure that the Gospel we have preached is not after men, because *men do not take to it*. It is opposed, even to this day. If anything is hated bitterly, it is the out-and-out Gospel of the Grace of God, especially if that hateful word, *Sovereignty* is mentioned with it! Dare to say, "He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion," and furious critics will revile you without stint! The modern religionist not only hates the doctrine of Sovereign Grace, but he raves and rages at the mention of it! He would sooner hear you blaspheme than preach Election by the Father, Atonement by the Son, or Regeneration by the Spirit. If you want to see a man worked up till the Satanic is clearly uppermost, let some of the new divines hear you preach a Free-Grace sermon! A gospel which is after men will be welcomed by men—but it needs a Divine operation upon the heart and mind to

make a man willing to receive into his utmost soul this distasteful Gospel of the Grace of God!

My dear Brothers, do not try to make it tasteful to carnal minds! Hide not the offense of the Cross lest you make it of no effect. The angles and corners of the Gospel are its *strength*—to pare them off is to deprive it of power! Toning down is not the increase of strength, but the death of it. Why, even among the sects, you must have noticed that their distinguishing points are the horns of their power—and when these are practically omitted, the sect is effete. Learn, then, that if you take Christ out of Christianity, Christianity is dead! If you remove Grace out of the Gospel, the Gospel is gone! If the people do not like the Doctrines of Grace, give them all the more of them! Whenever its enemies rail at a certain kind of gun, a wise military power will provide more of such artillery. A great general, going in before his king, stumbled over his own sword. "I see, said the king, your sword in is the way." The warrior answered, "Your Majesty's enemies have often felt the same." That our Gospel offends the King's enemies is no regret to us!

Dear Friends, if it is so that we have not received the Gospel from man, but from God, *let us continue to receive the Truth of God by the Divinely-appointed channel of faith.* Are you sure that you always will, to the fullest, *understand* the Truth of God? With most of us, the understanding is like a narrow rear gate to the city of Mansoul, and the great things of God cannot be so cut down as to be brought in by that entrance. The door is not wide enough! But our city has a great gate called *faith*, through which even the infinite and eternal may be admitted. Give over the hopeless effort of dragging into the mind by efforts of reason, that which can so readily dwell in you by the Holy Spirit through faith! We that speak against rationalism are, ourselves, apt to reason too much—and there is nothing so unreasonable as to hope to receive the things of God by reasoning them out! Let us believe them upon the Divine testimony—and when they try us and even when they seem to grate upon the sensibilities of humanity—let us receive them, none the less, for all that. We are not to be judges of what God's Truth *ought* to be—we are to accept it as the Lord reveals it.

Next, let us, each one, expect opposition if he receives the Truth from the Lord, and especially opposition from one person who is both near and dear to him—namely, *himself*. There is a certain old man who is yet alive and he is no lover of the Truth of God, but, on the contrary, he is a partisan of falsehood. I heard a gracious policeman say that when he stood in Trafalgar Square and fellows of the baser sort kicked him and the other police, he felt a bone of the old man stirring within him. Ah, we have felt that bone, too often! The carnal nature opposes the Truth of God, for it is not reconciled to God, neither, indeed, can be! Let us pray the Lord to conquer our pride, that His Truth may dominate us, despite our evil hearts! As to the outside world opposing, we are not at all alarmed by *that* fact, for it is exactly what we were taught to expect. We are now unmoved

by opposition. The captain of a ship minds not if a little spray breaks over him.

Remember that if you did not receive the Truth except through the power of the Spirit of God, you cannot expect others to do so. They will not believe your report unless the arm of the Lord is revealed to them. But then, if faith is the Holy Spirit's work, we need not fear that men can destroy it. Those who attempt to change our belief may well be a little dubious as to their success in the task they have undertaken. If faith is a Divine work within our souls, we may defy all sophistries, flatteries, temptations and threats. We shall be divinely obstinate—those who would pervert us will have to give us up! Possibly they will call us bigots, or hard-shells, or even idiots—but this, too, also signifies little if our names are written in Heaven!

Let us also conclude from our subject that *if these things come to us from God, we can safely rest our all upon them.* If they came to us of men, they would probably fail us in a crisis. Did you ever trust men and not rue the day before the sun was down? Did you ever rely on an arm of flesh without discovering that the best of men are men at the best? But if these things come of God, they are eternal and all sufficient! We can both live and die upon the everlasting Gospel! Let us deal more and more with God and with Him, only. If we have obtained Light from Him, there is more of blessing to be had. Let us go to that same Teacher, that we may learn more of the deep things of God. Let us bravely believe in the success of the Gospel which we have received. We believe *in* it—let us believe *for* it. We will not despair though the whole visible Church should apostatize!

When invaders had surrounded Rome and all the country lay at their mercy, a piece of land was to be sold and a Roman bought it at a fair value. The enemy was there, but he would not be dislodged. The enemy might destroy the Roman State. Let him try it! Be you of the same mind! The God of Jacob is our Refuge and none can stand against His eternal power and Godhead. The everlasting Gospel is our banner and, with Jehovah to maintain it, our standard never shall be lowered! In the power of the Holy Spirit, the Truth of God is invincible! Come on, you hosts of Hell and armies of the aliens! Let craft and criticism, rationalism and priest-craft do their best! The Word of the Lord endures forever—even that Word which, by the Gospel, is preached unto men!

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—2 Corinthians 4.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:

[Please note this letter is inserted in Volume 37, 1891. The sermon was preached in 1890.—EOD]

TO MY READERS AND FRIENDS—If you accept the great Truths set forth in this "Manifesto," please circulate it widely. I could not make the sermon shorter, so as to bring it into a single number, or I should have had to leave out some important point. It is a common saying with the opponents of the old faith, that Mr. Spurgeon is a "pessimist," and takes gloomy views of things. Nothing can be more untrue—and this sermon may help to show that I am full of hope and confidence. The days are evil, but the Lord is good. Men forsake the faith, but God is still faithful!

I hope soon to be lifting up my voice again. Refreshed and rested, I look up to the Lord, who can nerve my arm for the conflict, which every day demands more faith and decision. "The Church of the Future," vainly so called, threatens to overthrow the Church of the living God! It is to run a theater and a public-house and include atheists in its membership. It is well to know where the age is driving. With its theater and public-house, it carries on its back two of the greatest instruments of evil yet known.

We have no weapon against this monster, with the double tower on its back, but the Gospel of the Grace of God! It is a sharp sword with two edges, if it is preached as it was delivered at the first. Advices to adapt it to the age are temptations to destroy its forge—and to these we can have no respect. Should I conceal those parts of Divine Truth which are obnoxious to the carnal mind, I should be unfaithful to God, untrue to my calling and guilty of the blood of souls!

Brethren, pray for me and all who are faithful to the Truth of God, that we may be upheld in our steadfastness! The Truth will conquer, for God makes it His banner—and His holy arm upholds it! And the end is not yet, unless, indeed, our Lord should suddenly appear!

Yours in waiting hope,

C. H. Spurgeon.

Mentone, Jan. 15, 1891.

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

OUR EXPECTATION
NO. 2186

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

"He shall see His seed."
Isaiah 53:10.

THE first thought suggested by this text is that Jesus is still alive, for to see anything is the act of a living person. *Our Lord Jesus died.* We know that He died. We are glad that there is overwhelming evidence that, not in appearance, but in fact, He died. His side was pierced. He was given up by the Roman authorities for burial—the imperial authorities were sure of His death. The soldier had made assurance doubly sure by piercing His side. His disciples buried Him. They would not have left Him in the cave if they had felt any doubt about His death. They went in the morning after the Sabbath to embalm Him. They were all persuaded that He had really died. Blessed be the dying Christ! Here our living hopes take their foundation. If He had not died, we must have died forever. The more assured we are of His death, the more assured we feel of the life of all who are in Him!

But, my Brothers and Sisters, He is not dead. Some years ago, someone, wishing to mock our holy faith, brought out a handbill which was plastered everywhere—"Can you trust in a dead man?" Our answer would have been, "No. Nobody can trust in a man who is dead." But it was known by those who printed the bill that they were misrepresenting our faith. Jesus is no longer dead! He rose again the third day. We have sure and Infallible proofs of it. It is an historical fact, better proved than almost any other which is commonly received as historical, that He did really rise again from the grave. He arose no more to die. He has gone out of the land of tears and death. He has gone into the region of immortality. He sits at the right hand of God, even the Father, and He reigns there forever. We love Him that died, but we rejoice that He who died is not dead, but always lives to make intercession for us!

Dear children of God, do not be afraid that Christ's work will break down because He is dead. *He lives to carry it on.* That which He purchased for us by His death, He lives to secure for us by His life. Do not let your faith be a sort of dead faith dealing with a dead man—let it be instinct with life, with warm blood in its veins. Go to your own Christ, your living

Christ—make Him your familiar Friend, the Acquaintance of your solitude, the Companion of your pilgrimage. Do not think that there is a great gulf between you, a living man, and Him. The shades of death do not divide you from Him. He lives, He feels, He sympathizes, He looks on, He is ready to help, He will help you even now. You have come in to the place where prayer is known to be made, burdened and troubled and you seek relief. Let the thought that your Lord is a living Friend ease you of your burden. He is still ready to be your strong Helper and to do for you what He did for needy ones in the days of His sojourn here below. I want even you, who do not know Him, to remember that He lives, that you may seek Him tonight—that before another sun shall rise you may find Him and, finding Him, may, yourselves, be found and saved. Do not try to live without the living, loving Friend of sinners! Seek His healing hand, then beg for His company. Get it. Keep it and you shall find that it makes life below like Heaven above! When you live with the living Christ, you will live, indeed! In Him is the Light of God and the Light of God is the life of men!

And now to the text itself, with brevity. I have to observe upon it, first, that *Christ's death produced a posterity*. "When you shall make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed." Evidently the death of Christ was fruitful of a seed for Him. Secondly, *that posterity remains*. Our Lord Jesus Christ does not look, today, on emptiness—He is not bereaved of His household, but He still sees His seed. And, thirdly and lastly, *that posterity is under His immediate eyes at all times*, for, "*He shall see His seed*."

I. Well, first of all, THE DEATH OF CHRIST HAS PRODUCED A POSTERITY. We do not read, here, that the Lord Christ has followers. That would be true, but the text prefers to say He has a *seed*. We read, just now, that the Lord Jesus has disciples. That would be distinctly true, but the text does not so read. It says, "He shall see His seed." Why His seed? Why, because everyone who is a true follower or disciple of Christ has been born by a new birth from Him into the position of disciple. There is no knowing Christ except through the new birth. We are naturally sold under sin and we cannot discern the spiritual and real Christ until we have a spirit created within us by the new birth, of which He said, "You must be born again." This is the gate of entrance into discipleship! None can be written in the roll of followers of Christ unless they are also written in the register of the family of God—"this and that man was born there." Other men can get disciples for themselves by the means that are usual for such ends, but all the disciples of Christ are produced by miracle. They are all discipled by being newly-created! Jesus, as He looks upon them all, can say, "Behold, I make all things new." They all come into the world, of which He is King, by being born into it. There is no other way into the first world but by birth—and there is no other way into the sec-

ond world, wherein dwells righteousness, but by birth—and that birth is strictly connected with the pangs of the Savior's passion, "when you shall make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed." See, then, the reason why we have here the remarkable expression—"His seed."

Learn from this that all who truly follow Christ and are saved by Him, *have His life in them*. The parent's life is in the child. From the parent that life has been received. It is Christ's life that is in every true Believer—"For you are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God; when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you, also, appear with Him in glory." We have our natural life and this makes us men—we have our spiritual life and this makes us Christians. We take life from our parents—this links us with the first Adam. We have taken life from Christ—this joins us to the second Adam. Do not mistake me, that same life which abides in Christ, at the right hand of God, is that everlasting life which He has bestowed upon all those who put their trust in Him. That water springing up into everlasting life He gave us. He made it to be *in* us a well of water springing up. The first drops of that living spring, the whole outcome of the spring, and the spring itself, came from Him!

Let me put it to you, Beloved Hearers. Do you know anything about this new birth? Do you know anything about this Divine Life? There are multitudes of religious people, very religious people—but they are as dead as doornails! Multitudes of religious persons are like waxworks, well-proportioned and you might mistake them, by candlelight, for life. But in the Light of God you would soon discover that there is a mighty difference, for the best that human skill can do is a poor imitation of real life. You, dear Hearer, dressed in the garments of family religion and adorned with the jewels of moral virtue, may be nothing beyond "a child of nature finely dressed, but not the living child." God's living children may not seem to be quite so handsome, nor so charmingly arrayed as you are and, in their own esteem, they may not be worthy to consort with you, but there is a solemn difference between the living child and the dead child, however you may try to conceal it! Righteous men know themselves to be sinners—sinners believe themselves to be righteous men. There is more Truth of God in the fear of the first than there can be in the faith of the second, for the faith of the second is founded on lies. Beloved, we become, I say again, the followers of Christ by being made partakers of His life—and unless His life is in us, we may say what we will about Christ and profess what we like about following Him—but we are not in the secret! We are out of the spiritual world altogether—that world of which He is the Head, the Creator, the Lord. You see why the word, "seed," is used? We come to Him by birth—we are partakers of His life.

Furthermore, Believers in our Lord are said to be His seed because *they are like He*. I wish that I could say this with less need to qualify it, but the man who really believes in Jesus and in whom the diving life is strong and powerful, is like Jesus and especially like Jesus in this—that, as the Christ consecrated Himself wholly to God's service and Glory, so has the Believer done. And as the Christ founded His successes on being dead and buried, surrendering honor, comfort and life, itself, for His work, so should the true Believer be willing to give up anything and everything, that He may achieve His life-purpose and bring glory to God.

"As He is, so are we in this world"—that is, we are bent upon the glory of God, filled with love to men and anxious for their salvation—that God may be glorified thereby. You know best, Brothers and Sisters, whether this is true of you. But if we have not the Spirit of Christ, we are none of His. If we are not like Christ, it is not possible that we are His seed, for the seed is like the parent. Surely, children are like their father—not all to the same degree—but still, there is the evidence of their sonship in their likeness to him from whom they came. Our Lord's true people are like He, or they could not be styled, "His seed." Alas, the old nature blots and blurs the resemblance! The stamp of the first Adam is not altogether removed, but it ought to grow fainter and fainter while the lines of the Divine portrait should grow stronger and clearer. Is this the experience of our life in Christ? I pray that it may be so. It should cause us great searching of heart if there is not in us an increasing likeness to our Lord.

There is also this to be said for those who are called His seed—that *they seek the same ends and expect to receive the same reward*. We are towards Christ, His seed, and thus we are heirs to all that He has—heirs to His business on earth, heirs to His estate in Heaven. We are to be witnesses to the Truth as Jesus was—and to go about doing good as He did—and to seek and save the lost after His example. This we must inherit, as a son follows his father's business. All that Christ has, belongs to His seed. As a man hands down to his posterity, his possessions, Christ Jesus has made over to His people all that He is and all that He has—and all that He ever will be, that they may be with Him, behold His Glory—and shine with Him as the stars forever and ever! We are His seed in this respect—that He has taken us into His family and given us the family patrimony—and made us partakers of all things in Himself.

Now, Beloved, this is all through His *death*. We are made His seed through His *death*. Why principally through His death? Why, because it was by reason of His death for us that the Father could come and deal with us, and the Spirit could breathe upon us and new-create us! There was no dealing with us by a just God until the atoning Sacrifice had rolled away the stone that blocked the way, namely, the necessity that sin

should be punished. Christ, having died for us, we came into another relation to justice and it became possible for us to be regenerated and brought into the household of God. Beloved, I think that you know, in your own experience, that it was His death that really operated most upon you in the matter of your conversion. I hear a great talk about the example of Christ having great effect upon ungodly men, but I do not believe it and certainly have never seen it! It has great effect upon men when they are born again and are saved from the wrath to come—and are full of gratitude on this account—but *before* that happens, we have known men admire the conduct of Christ and even write books about the beauty of His Character, while, at the same time, they have denied His Godhead! Thus they have rejected Him in His essential Character and there has been no effect produced upon their conduct by their cold admiration of His life.

But when a man comes to see that He is pardoned and saved through the death of Jesus, He is moved to gratitude and then to love. "We love Him because He first loved us." That love which He displayed in His death has touched the mainspring of our being and moved us with a passion to which we were strangers before. And, because of this, we hate the sins that once were sweet. And we turn with all our hearts to the obedience that once was so unpleasant. There is more effect in *faith* in the blood of Christ to change the human character than in every other consideration. The Cross once seen, sin is crucified! The passion of the Master once apprehended as being endured for us, we then feel that we are not our own, but are bought with a price. This perception of redeeming love, in the death of our Lord Jesus, makes all the difference—this prepares us for a higher and a better life than we have ever known before. It is His death that does it!

And now, Beloved, if by His death we have become His seed, (and I think I speak at this time to many who can truly say they hope that it is so with them), then let us consider the fact for a minute. We are His seed. They speak of the seed royal. What shall I say of the seed of Christ? Believer, you may be a poor person living in an obscure lane, but you are of the imperial house! You are ignorant and unlettered, it may be, and your name will never shine in the roll of science, but He who is the Divine Wisdom acknowledges you as one of His seed! It may be that you are sick—even now your head is aching, your heart is faint—you feel that, by-and-by, you will die. Ah, well, but you are of His seed who died and rose and is gone into Glory! You are of the seed of Him "who only has immortality." You may put away your crowns, you kings and emperors—earth, yellow earth, hammered and decorated with other sparkling bits of soil—you may put them all away, as altogether outdone in value! We have crowns infi-

nitely more precious and we belong to a royal house transcendently more glorious than any of yours!

But then it follows, if we are thus of a seed, that we ought to be united and love each other more and more. Christian people, you ought to have a clannish feeling! "Oh," says one, "you mean that the Baptists ought to get together!" I do not mean anything of the kind! I mean that the seed of Christ should be of one heart and we ought to recognize that wherever the life and love of Jesus are to be found, there our love goes out! It is very delightful, at Christmas time, or perhaps at some other time in the year, for all the family to meet. And though your name may be, "Smith," or, "Brown," yet you feel there is some importance in your name when all your clan have met together. It may be a name that is very common, or very obscure, but, somehow, you feel quite great on that day when all the members of the family have joined to keep united holiday. Your love to one another gathers warmth as the glowing coals are drawn together.

So may it be in your heart towards all those that belong to Christ! You are of the blood royal of Heaven! You are neither a Guelph nor a Hohenzollern, but you are a Christian! And that is a greater name than all! He has a seed—even He whom, unseen, we, this night, adore. My inmost soul glories in the Head of my clan—in Him of the pierced hands and the nailed feet—who wears for His princely star the lance mark in His side! Oh, how blessedly bright is He! How transcendently glorious are the nail prints! We adore Him in the infinite majesty of His unutterable love! We are of His seed and so we are near akin to Him. Do not think that I am too familiar. I go not beyond the limit which this Word of God allows me, no, I have scarcely come up to the edge of it! We are truly of the seed of Jesus, even as the Jews are of the seed of Israel—not born after the flesh, for He had none born to Him in that way—but born after the Spirit, wherein His seed is as the stars of Heaven! We rejoice with exultation as we read the text, "He shall see His seed."

Thus much on our first point.

II. Now, my second point is THAT POSTERITY OF HIS REMAINS. Our Lord always has a seed. That seems to me to be clear from the indefiniteness of the text. It does not say that He shall see His seed for so long and then no longer, but it stands as a prophecy fulfilled, always fulfilling and always to be fulfilled—"He shall see His seed." Christ will always have a seed to see. His Church, then, will never die out while the world stands and, throughout eternity, that seed must still exist in the endless state, for world without end our Lord Jesus shall see His seed!

I notice that the word is in the plural—"He shall see His seeds," as though some were truly His seed and yet, for a time, at least, differed from the rest. Our Lord said of those not yet converted, "Other sheep I have,

which are not of this fold: them also I must bring." And again, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word." Christ will see generation after generation of those redeemed by His blood who shall be born into His family and shall call Him blessed! Instead of the fathers, shall be the children, whom He will make princes in all the earth! The Septuagint reads it, "He shall see a long-lived seed." Though I do not think that the version is correct, still, it shows that it was thought and believed that the Messiah would have a perpetual seed. Certainly it is so. Beloved, if it had been possible to destroy the Church of God on earth, it would have been destroyed long ago! The malice of Hell has done all that it could do to destroy the seed of Christ—the seed that sprang from His death.

Standing in the Coliseum at Rome, I could not, as I looked around on the ruins of that vast house of sin, but praise God that the Church of God existed, though the Coliseum is in ruins! Anyone standing there, when the thousands upon thousands gloated their eyes with the sufferings of Christians, would have said, "Christianity will die out, but the Coliseum, so firmly built will stand to the end of time!" But lo, the Coliseum is a ruin and the Church of God more firm, more strong, more glorious than ever! Only read the story of the persecutions under Nero and under Diocletian, in the olden times, and you will wonder that Christianity survived the cruel blows. Every form of torture which devils could invent was inflicted upon Christian men and women! Not here and there, but *everywhere*, they were hunted down and persecuted. It makes one tremble with horror as he reads of women tossed on the horns of bulls, or set in red-hot iron chairs—and men smeared with honey to be stung to death by wasps, or dragged at the heels of wild horses, or exposed to savage beasts in the amphitheatre.

But I will say no more about it. The gallant vessel of the Church plowed the red waves of a crimson sea, her prow scarlet with gore, but the ship itself was the better for its washing and sailed all the more gallantly because of boisterous winds. As to our own country, read the story of persecutions here. You will have enough if you only read Foxe's "Book of Martyrs." I wish that every house had in it a large-typed copy of the "Book of Martyrs." Well do I recollect, as a child, how many hours, how many days, I spent looking at the pictures in an old-fashioned "Book of Martyrs," and wondering how the men of God suffered, as they did, so bravely. I remember how I used to turn to that boy of Brentford, who was first beaten with rods and afterwards tied to the stake, to cheerfully burn for Christ's sake. I am reminded, by the effect which it had upon my mind, of what was said of a certain ancient Church in this city of London, which was greatly persecuted.

Many, many years ago, a number of persons were noticed to be going towards Smithfield, early one morning, and somebody said, "Where are you going?" "We are going to Smithfield." "What for?" "To see our pastor burnt." "Well, but what, in the name of goodness, do you want to see him burnt for? What can be the good of it?" They answered, "We go to see him burn that we may learn the way." Oh, but that was grand! "To learn the way!" Then the rank and file of the followers of Jesus learned the way to suffer and die as the leaders of the Church set the example! Yet the Church in England was not destroyed by persecution, but it became more mighty than ever because of the opposition of its foes!

Since then there have been laborious attempts to destroy the Church of Christ by error. One hundred years ago or so, throughout the most of our Dissenting Churches, a sort of Unitarianism was triumphant. The essential doctrines of the Gospel were omitted, the pith of it was taken away, the marrow was torn out of its bones. The Church of England was asleep, too, and everywhere it seemed as if there was a kind of orthodox heterodoxy that did not believe anything in particular, and did not hold that there was a doctrine worth anybody's living for or dying for—but that all religious teaching should be like a nose of wax—that you might shape whichever way you liked. It looked as if the living Church of God would be extinguished altogether. But it was not so, for God did but stamp His foot and, from all parts of the country, men like Mr. Wesley and Mr. Whitefield came to the front—and hundreds of others, mighty men of valor—proclaimed the Gospel with unusual power! And away went the bats and the owls back to their proper dwelling place! The same mischievous experiment is being tried now, and there will be the same result, for the living Christ is still to the front. The King is not off the ground, yet! The battle will be won by His armies. Jehovah has declared His decree, "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion." Our Lord shall yet see His seed on the conquering hand.

Worldliness has gone a long way to destroy the Church of God. I judge it to be the worst cankerworm that assails us. Persons come into the Church with a profession which they never carry out. Have we not all around us persons who say that they are Christians and are not, but lie? And many who, we hope, are Christians, are but very poverty-stricken specimens of the race, with little love, little zeal, (indeed, they are afraid to be too zealous), little searching of the Word, little prayer, little consecration, little communion with God. They are enough to kill all hope of better things. The Lord have mercy upon His poor Church when she comes to be neither cold nor hot, so that He is ready to spue her out of His mouth! Yet, the lukewarm can still be heated! The cause is not dead! "He shall see His seed."

Take it as a standing miracle that there are *any* godly people on the face of the earth, for there would not be one were it not for the exertion of miraculous power! Christianity is not a natural growth—it is constantly a Divine creation. Christian life needs to daily have the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The Church must perpetually receive fresh light and life from above, or else it would die—but still stands the promise, "He shall see His seed." While sun and moon endure, there shall be a people who follow the Lamb! And even though they are so few that Elijah might say, "I, only I, am left, and they seek my life to take it away," God will reserve to Himself *thousands* that have not bowed the knee to Baal!

III. And now I am to wind up with this third thought—THIS POSTERITY IS ALWAYS UNDER THE IMMEDIATE EYES OF CHRIST. "He shall see His seed." Oh, I like this, "He shall *see* His seed"! He sees them when they are first born anew. I keep looking out from this pulpit for that small portion of them that may be born in this place—and there are many watchful Brothers and Sisters here who try to speak to all that come into the place in whom there are movings of the Spirit. If there is an anxious soul, they seek to find him out. *We* cannot see them all, but HE shall see His seed! Sometimes it is a question whether they are His seed or not—a very great question with themselves, but none with Him—He sees His seed! Some are seeking—they have hardly found. They are longing—they have scarcely realized the way of faith. Ah, well, He sees your first desires, your humble breathings, your lowly hopes, your trembling approaches. He sees you! There is not a child of His, born in any out-of-the-way place, but what He perceives him at once! He observes The first living cry, the first living tear. "He shall see His seed." What a mercy to have such a Watcher! We poor earthly pastors are of small use, but this great Shepherd and Bishop of souls, with eyes that never miss a single new-born lamb of Grace—what a mercy to have such a Shepherd to look after the whole flock! "He shall see His seed."

Yes, and ever afterward, wherever His seed may wander, He still sees them. Some of you, perhaps, have lived long in England, but you are contemplating going far away—to Australia or America. You wonder whether you will meet with any friend who will help you *spiritually*. Do not fear. "He shall see His seed." "Rivers unknown to song are not unknown to God." And if you should have to dwell quite alone in the bush, and have no Christian acquaintance, still go directly to the Son of God, for, "He shall see His seed." The eyes of Christ are never off from the eye of faith. If you look to Him, you may rest well assured that He looks to you!

The beauty of it is that this look of Christ, whereby He sees His seed, is one of intense delight. I cannot preach upon that most precious topic, but I wish you to think it over—it is a Divine pleasure *to the Lord Jesus to look*

at you—it is promised Him as a *reward* for His death! Mother, you know, yourself, what a pleasure it has been for you to look at your daughter and watch her grow up. You would not like to tell her all you have thought of her—you have looked at her with intense delight. Now, the Lord Jesus Christ looks at *you* in just the same way! Love is blind, they say. Jesus is not blind and He sees in His people much more than they ever will see in themselves! He sees their hopes, their desires, their aspirations. And He often takes the will for the deed and marks that for a beauty which now may be half-developed and, therefore, not all we could wish it to be. It is, at present, the caricature of a virtue—but it is well meant and will come right. And the Lord sees it as it will be—and He rejoices in it! Oh, what blessed eyes those are of His that can spy out beauties which only He can see! Since He has created them and put them there, himself, He sees them! "He shall see His seed." He suffered so much for our redemption that He must love us. We cost Him so much that He must delight in us—

"The Son with joy looks down and sees
The purchase of His agonies."

"He shall see His seed."

Brothers and Sisters, our Savior will always behold His redeemed ones! He will see all His seed to the last. When they come to the river which divides them from the celestial country, "He shall see His seed." It may possibly be gloomy with some of you, but it is not often dark at death-time. Many of the Lord's children have a fine candle to go to bed with. Even if they go to bed in the dark, they fall asleep the sooner. But in either case, their Lord will see *them* if they cannot see *Him*. When *you* can see nothing and the brain begins to reel—and thought and memory flee—He sees His seed!

But what a seed He will have to see in the morning! I am not yet an old man, as some suppose from the many years of my ministry, but I am often looking forward to that blessed morning when *all* the sacred seed shall meet around the Throne of God. I believe the Christ will come in to see all His beloved purchased ones and He will search to see whether we are all there. Then shall the sheep pass again under the hand of Him that counts them—and He will count them, for He knows whom He bought with His blood—and He will see that they are there in full tale. I think that I hear the reading of the register, the muster roll. Will you be there to answer to your name?

Dear Friends, all the Lord's seed will be there—all that were born into His house with a new birth. They shall answer, "Yes, yes, yes, we are here! We are here!" Oh, but the joy we shall have in being there—the delight in beholding His face! Yet, if all our joys are put together, they will not equal the joy that *He* will have when He finds them all there for whom He shed

His blood—all whom the Father gave Him—all who gave themselves to Him—all who were born as His seed—not one lost! "Of all whom You have given Me, I have lost none." Oh, the joy, the delight, of our Well-Beloved in that day! Then shall He see His seed!

And I believe that it will be a part of His Heaven for Him to look upon His redeemed. He is the Bridegroom, they make up the bride—and the bridegroom's joy is not in seeing his bride for once on the wedding day, but he takes delight in her as long as they both live! A true husband and a true spouse are always lovers—they are always linked together by strong ties of affection. And it is so with that model Husband, the Lord Christ and His perfect Church above. He loves His people no less and He could not love them any more than when He died for them, and so, forever, "He shall see His seed."

Thus have I talked with you in a very poor and feeble way, as far as my speech is concerned. But the doctrine is not feeble, the Gospel is not poor! O you that are the seed of Christ, go out and magnify Him by your lives! Be worthy of your high calling. Show the nobility of your pedigree by the magnanimity of your lives!

And you that are not among His seed, look where you are! What can you do? All that you can do will bring you no further—you *must* be born again—and this is the work of the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God works the new birth in His own way, but He works according to the Gospel. What is the Gospel? "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." I give you the Gospel without mutilating it, just as I get it in the Gospel by Mark, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Obey the precept and the promise is yours! God help you to believe in the Lord Jesus and so to have eternal life! The moment you believe in Jesus Christ you are born again. May He, by His Holy Spirit, seal the message with His blessing to everyone in this house, for His own name's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 12:20-45.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—325, 332, 302.

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JESUS—"ALL BLESSING AND ALL BLESSED"
NO. 2187

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 1, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Men shall be blessed in Him: all nations shall call Him blessed."
Psalm 72:17.

THERE are many famous names in human history, but many of them are connected with deeds which have brought no blessing upon mankind. To bless and to *be* blessed is the noblest sort of fame and yet how few have thought it worth the seeking! Full many a name in the roll of fame has been written there with a finger dipped in blood. It would seem as if men loved those most who have *killed* the most of them! They call those greatest who have been the greatest cutthroats! They make their greatest illuminations over massacres of their fellows, calling them victories. To be set aloft upon a column, or represented by a public statue, or to have poets ringing out your name, it seems necessary to grasp the sword and to hack and slay your fellow men! Is it not too sadly true that when men have been cursed by one of their leaders, they, from then on call him great? O misery, that wholesale murder should be the shortest method of becoming illustrious!

There is one name that will last when all others shall have died out—and that name is connected with *blessing*—and *only* with blessing. Jesus Christ came into the world on purpose to bless men. Men, as a race, find in Him a blessing wide as the world. While He was here, He blessed and cursed not. All around Him, both by speech, act, glance and thought, He was an Incarnate blessing. All that came to Him, unless they willfully rejected Him, obtained blessings at His hands. The home of His infancy, the friends of His youth, the comrades of His manhood, He blessed unsparingly! He labored to bless men. To bless men, He parted with everything and became poor. To bless men, at last He *died*. Those outstretched hands upon the Cross are spread wide in benediction—and they are fastened there as if they would remain outstretched till the whole world is blessed!

Our Lord's resurrection from the dead brings blessings to mankind. He has won for us redemption from the grave and eternal life. He waited on earth, a while, until He ascended, blessing men as He went up. His last attitude below the skies was that of pronouncing a blessing upon His disciples. He is gone into Glory, but He has not ceased to bless our race. The Holy Spirit came among us soon after the Ascension, because Jesus had

received gifts for men—yes, also for the rebellious. The wonderful blessings which are comprised in the work, Person and offices of the Holy Spirit—all these come to us through Jesus Christ, the ever-blessed and ever-blessing One! He still loves to bless. Standing at the helm of all affairs, He guides the tiller of Providence with a view to the blessing of His chosen. He still spends His time in making intercession for transgressors, that the blessing of God may rest upon them, while His Spirit, who is His Vicegerent here below, is always occupied with blessing the sons of men.

Our Lord Jesus will soon come a second time and in that glorious hour, though His left hand must deal out justice, His right hand will lavish blessing! His chief end and bent in His coming will be that He may largely bless those loving hearts that watch for His appearing. Christ is all blessing. When you have written down His name, you have pointed to the Fountain from which all blessings flow—you have named that Sun of Righteousness to whose beams we owe every good and perfect gift! From the beginning, throughout all eternity, the Lord Jesus blesses men—

"Over every foe victorious,
He on His Throne shall rest!
From age to age more glorious
All blessing and all blessed.
The tide of time shall never
His covenant remove,
His name shall stand forever,
That name to us is—Love."

I purpose, at this time, if the Lord shall help me, to speak very simply about the fullness of blessing which comes from our Master and Lord. First saying, dear Friends, that *we ourselves are living proofs of the statement that men shall be blessed in Him.* Then, desiring to say, in the second place, that *we have seen it to be true, also, in others.* And, thirdly, expressing our conviction that *it shall be true, on the largest scale, with the nations*—"All nations shall be blessed in Him," and, therefore, they shall call Him blessed.

I. First, then, WE OURSELVES ARE LIVING WITNESSES THAT MEN ARE BLESSED IN CHRIST. You and I do not pretend to be great sages, famous philosophers, or learned divines. We feel when a pin pricks us, or when a dog bites us. We have sense enough to know when a thing tastes well or bad. We know chalk from cheese, as the proverb has it. We know something about our own needs and we also know when we get those needs supplied. We have not mastered the extraordinary, but in the commonplace we feel at home. A man is none the worse witness in court because he does not know all the technical terms used in science. A judge is never better pleased than when he sees, in the witness box, some plain, blunt, honest fellow who will blunder out the truth. We will speak the Truth of God at this time, so far as we know it, whether we offend or please. Every man is to speak as he finds and we will speak concerning Jesus Christ as we have found Him. I will try, if I can, to be spokesman for all present who are believers in Christ. And I ask a patient hearing.

We bear witness that we have been blessed in Him. How much, how deeply, how long and in how many ways we have been blessed in Him, I will not undertake to say, but this I will say most emphatically—for many

of you now present, whose lives and histories I know almost as I know my own, we have in verity, beyond all question, been blessed in Jesus to the highest degree and of this we are sure! We believe and faith grasps the first blessing—that *we have received a great blessing in Christ by the removal of a curse which otherwise must have rested upon us.* That curse did overshadow us, once, for it is written, "Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them." We *could* not keep the Law. We *did* not keep it. We gave up all hope of keeping it. Therefore, the dark thunder-cloud of that tremendous sentence hung over us and we heard the voice of justice speaking out of it, like a volley of the dread artillery of God in the day of tempest! The thunder of the curse rolled heavily over our heads and hearts. How some of us cowered down and trembled!

We can never forget the horror of our soul under the near apprehension of Divine wrath! To be cursed of God meant all woes in one. Some of us were brought very low, indeed, by the frown of a guilty conscience. We gave up, even, the *dream* of hope. We thought ourselves effectually, finally and everlastingly condemned and so, indeed, we should have found it, had there not been a Divine Interposer! But now that curse is taken from us and we do not dread its return, for He was made a curse for us, of whose name we are speaking now—even He "who knew no sin, but was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." No curse now remains—only blessing abides! Hallelujah! If our Lord had done nothing else for us but the rolling away of the curse, He would have blessed us infinitely—and we would have blessed Him forever. If He had accomplished nothing but the bearing away of our sin into the wilderness—as the scapegoat of old bore away the iniquity of Israel—He would have done enough to set our tongues forever praising Him. He has lifted from the world the weight of the eternal curse and, therefore, let all the bells of our cities ring out His honor and all the voices of the villages sing forth His praise! O you stars of light, shine to His Glory, for He is blessed beyond all earthly measure!

The negative being removed, *we have had a positive actual experience of blessing*, for God has blessed us in Christ Jesus and we know that none are more blessed than we are. We are not at all, now, the men that we used to be as to our inward feelings. Some years ago, under the apprehension of Divine wrath, we were so unhappy and troubled that we could find no rest. But now we are blessed in Christ so greatly that we are at perfect peace and our soul has dropped its anchor in the haven of content! Our joy is usually as great as formerly our sorrow used to be. We feared our sorrow would kill us—we sometimes think, now, that our joy is more likely to do so, for it becomes so intense that at times we can scarcely bear it, much less speak of it!

As we could get no rest before, so now, by faith, we feel as if we never lost that rest, for we are so quiet of heart, so calm, so settled, that we sing, "My heart is fixed, O God; my heart is fixed!" Not because temporal circumstances are quite as we would wish them, but because we have learned to leave off wishing, we are now more than satisfied! Getting God's

blessing upon everything, we have learned to be content and something more—we joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. We used to fret, before we knew Him, but His love has ended that. We thought we could do things better than God could and we did not like His way of managing—but He has taught us to be like children, pleased with whatever our Father provides—and, therefore, we joyfully declare, "My soul is even as a weaned child! I have nothing to wish for. I need nothing but what my Father pleases to give me." Having God's sweet love, we would not give a snap of the finger for all that princes call their treasure, or all that great men reckon to be their honor. Unto us who believe, Christ is precious—both treasure and honor in one! In fact, Christ is ALL! It is a delightful calm of mind which the Believer enjoys when He dwells in Christ.

Humble faith puts the soul into the guardian hand of the Redeemer and leaves it there in the restfulness of entire trust. Grace baptizes us into blessedness. It plunges us into that sea of everlasting rest in which we hope, forever, to bathe our weary souls. Yes, blessed be His name, the Lord Jesus has made life worth living! It is no longer, "something better not to be." We *must* speak well of the condition into which He has introduced us since we have known His name. "Well, Jack, old fellow," said one who met a man who had lately joined the Church, "I hear you have given up all your pleasures." "No, no," said Jack, "the fact lies the other way. I have just *found* all my pleasures and I have only given up my follies." Every Christian man and women can confirm that way of putting it! We who have believed in Jesus have lost no real pleasures, but we have gained immensely in that direction. If anything sinful was once a pleasure to us, it is not so now—when we discovered it to be evil, it ceased to be pleasure—and we thrust it away without regret! We have lost nothing by conversion that was worth the keeping, but what we gained by coming to Christ has been an inconceivable recompense to us. Is it not so, Brothers and Sisters? Are we not blessed in Christ?

Now, there are some of us who, if we were asked to tell what blessings we have received from Christ, would scarcely know where to begin—and when we had once begun—we would never leave off unless it were from sheer lack of time or strength. Brethren, *certain of us owe all that we have to the influence of the Lord Jesus*. From our birth and childhood we were indebted to the Lord Jesus Christ. Some of us now present had the great happiness to spring from godly parents—before we knew the meaning of language, that softly sweet name of Jesus Christ was sung in our ears! The kindness that we received in our earliest days was, very much of it, due to, "Gentle Jesus," of whom our mothers taught us to sing! He found for us the first swaddling bands of love and watched over our first sleep. Ah, those poor children of the back streets—children who are trained in infamy and blasphemy—how sad their start in life! But some of us had great advantages which were granted us of Sovereign Grace by His dear pierced hands! We bless the Lord who saved our parents and, through saving them, sent to our trembling infancy a mine and a mint of blessing.

In our opening childhood we began to understand for ourselves the loving influence of an affectionate and anxious mother. And then golden

showers of Divine Grace fell on us from the love of Jesus. We remember, some of us, those hours on the Sabbath, when Mother would talk with us of heavenly things—with tears in her eyes persuading her boy to give his heart to Jesus, early, and not to let his first days be spent in sin. We remember a wise and prudent father, whose example and instruction all went the same way. The comforts of our home—and they were many—we owed them all to Jesus, for His love made our parents what they were and created a holy, happy atmosphere around us! He might have left our father to frequent the drunkard's haunt and might have suffered our mother to be what many mothers are—unworthy of the name—and then our childhood would have been utter wretchedness and our home the nursery of vice. Education in crime might have been ours—we might have been tutored for the gallows.

Since that, we have had to shift for ourselves and have left the parental roof, but I, for one, have been casting my thoughts back, to see if I could remember any good thing that I have which I do *not* owe to the Lord Jesus Christ. I do not know that I have anything that I cannot distinctly trace to Him and His influence! I have many Christian friends—most valuable friends, I find them—but my association with them commenced in the House of God and the friendship between us has been cemented by common service yielded to our blessed Master! Many of you would hardly have had a friend in the world if it had not been that Jesus introduced you to His disciples—and they have been the best friends you have ever had, or ever will have! You used to know certain fine fellows who called themselves your friends and as long as you had a shilling to bless yourself with, they stuck to you to have sixpence of it. You know the style of their friendship and you must now have serious doubts as to its value.

Well, they left you when you became Christians and their departure has been a very gainful loss to you! When they cleared out, altogether, you found that their removal was for your good, if not for their own. But those friends you have made in Christ have been really helpful to you. They have deeply sympathized with you and, as far as they could, they have helped you. Many have been carried through sharp trials by the help of Christian hands. But, whatever you may have to say on the point, I am personally a debtor, over head and ears, to my Savior. What is there—I repeat the question—that I do *not* owe to Jesus? I am again and again thinking, and thinking, and thinking—but if anything which I call my own is worth having, I must trace it to Him. And are you not, dear Friends, many of you, compelled to say the same? Among the best things you have are your Sabbaths—but they are *His* days—His resurrection days. Your Bible, too, is a priceless treasure, but that is *His* Testament—His legacy of love! The Mercy Seat is a storehouse of wealth—but *He* is that Mercy Seat, and His own blood is sprinkled on it! You have *nothing*, dear Friend, that you do not owe to Jesus, the Fountain of salvation. You are blessed in Him!

I might single out another class of persons, who, from quite another point of view, would be compelled to say that they, also, have been blessed in Christ. They started in another way and were upon a road which led to

death, but *they have been rescued*. Some of you started life in the midst of an entirely worldly family. There was kindness—parental kindness, in the home, but it was unwise. Abundance of temporal enjoyment was always supplied, but there was a very scanty recognition of anything like religion and, indeed, no knowledge whatever of personal piety. It is little wonder that young persons who are trained in a godless manner and allowed to do very much as they like, should plunge into this sin, and into that. That some young men are saved is a special miracle, for their circumstances make their ruin almost inevitable. I am addressing some of my Christian Brothers and Sisters who remember what liberty to sin was and how they availed themselves of it. They took large license to destroy themselves under the pretence of seeing the world. They were never content except when they were gratifying their passions and obeying the commands of the devil. In their salvation they have been blessed, indeed!

But you, also, who have gone to no great extent in open sin, you, also, have been signally blessed in Christ *by gracious and unmistakable conversion*. In receiving the Lord Jesus into your soul, what a change has been made! From what a bondage have you been rescued! Into what a new life have you been brought! What new scenes now open up before you! What new hopes, what new joys, what new prospects are all your own! Do I speak to some who plunged into the very grossest sin and yet can say, "But we are washed, but we are sanctified"? Blessed be our dear Master's name for Grace to such individuals! Such, indeed, are blessed in Him. I know that I am addressing those who had, in their earliest days, the very worst example—who have been brought into the House of God from the place where Satan's seat is—who cannot, after years of godliness, get out of their memory the recollection of the bad, depraved old times of their youth. In your salvation Jesus has worked a blessed deed. You could drink as others drank. You could fall into sins of uncleanness as others did.

Let us say very little about these open evils. I do not like to hear men talk about their old sins as if they were adventures—they are a shame and a sorrow to all right-minded persons. We humbly hint at them to the praise of the Glory of His Grace, for great Grace it was in the case of some of us. Oh, but the day in which you first knew that dear name! When you first felt repentance melting your hard heart! When you first felt hope springing up in your formerly insensible spirit—then you began to see that there was something nobler and better to live for than merely to gratify sensual passions. Then you began to see that you were an immortal spirit and not meant to fatten like the swine, but were created to be a brother of the angels and to be akin to God, Himself—that was a happy day—a day written in Heaven and made bright with the light of seven days! When Jesus changed your nature, forgave your sins and made you to be like Himself, you were, indeed, blessed in Him!

I want you now, to look back again. I ought not to tire you, even if my talk should seem dull and commonplace, because to remember what God has given and to be grateful concerning it, ought to be a sweet pastime to each one of us. It is not only a duty, but a recreation to be grateful! I do

not know any emotion which can give greater joy than that of thankfulness to the Most High. Dear Friends, the Lord has greatly blessed us in the name of Jesus *in times of very special trouble*. I may not be able to describe your personal trial, but I will take one as a specimen. Depression of spirits comes upon the man. He scarcely knows how or why, but his soul melts because of heaviness. There is, at the back of his sadness, probably some real trial—this he is very apt to magnify and make more of than needs be—and also to expect a dark and terrible calamity to come which will not come. But yet the foreboding is as real a trial as if the catastrophe had actually occurred. The poor despondent creature cannot endure himself and almost grows weary of life. Like the king of Israel, who had all that heart could wish—gardens, palaces, singing men and women—who had all the appurtenances, both of folly and of wisdom, to make him happy, yet he cries, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity!" Nothing will cheer this child of grief—he is downcast and desolate.

If you have ever gone through that experience, it has been a very great delight to you when you have got alone and thought of your Lord Jesus, whose everlasting love cannot cease towards you, whose fullness of Grace cannot be exhausted, whose power and faithfulness will always stand you in good stead. If, by a sort of desperate resolve, you have cast yourself upon Him, to sink or swim, to find everything in Him, or else to have nothing, you have risen up altogether a new man! You have felt, "I can face the adversary. I can meet the trial, for Jesus is mine!" Despair of spirit has fled when you have leaned hard on the Cross-Bearer. I have been one of the cave dwellers and the dark has shut me in, but Jesus has been my Heaven below. I may have a degree of heaviness about me, but still, I trust in the Lord, and I am not afraid, for the name of Jesus has caused me to be strong! Yes, men shall be "blessed in Him" by the strength which He gives in the hour of need.

You remember the loss of that dear little child. How blessed you were in Jesus when He came and solaced you! You remember your father's death, or the loss of your husband, or the death of the dearest earthly friend. Yes, then in such times you knew how precious Christ could be and how blessed you were in Him! Some of you have passed through the desert of poverty. You have frequently been very hard pressed, but still, though you cannot tell how, you have had just enough. You are yet alive though death seemed certain. You have been "blessed in Him," and so you have survived every storm. Some of you have had little enough of earthly comfort and yet you have not been unhappy. I have sometimes admired a dog for his economical use of comforts. When it has been a long, rainy day and the sun has just peeped out and there has been a gleam of sunlight on the floor—I have seen him get up and wag his tail—and shift his quarters so as to lie down where the bit of sunshine was! It is a fine thing to have just that state of mind—never to go sullenly into the shadow, but always cheerfully to accept the square yard of sunshine and make the most of it! There is something, after all, to be thankful for—something for which to praise the name of God. And if the Lord Jesus Christ had taught us nothing else but that—the practice of lying down wherever there is a trace of

sunshine and, better still, of always finding sunshine in His dear name—I am sure we are bound to say that we have been "blessed in Him."

Well, every year will teach us more and more fully how blessed we are in Jesus, and there will come a day—*the last of our earthly days*—when we shall know on a higher scale how blessed we are in Him! One of the most pleasant scenes that I ever see is the dying bed of a fine old Christian. I saw one but a few days ago, who, since I was at his bedside, has entered into rest. It was very pleasant to talk with him about what the Lord had done. He was ready to speak well of the dear name. There was much self-depreciation, but much more honoring of Christ by testimony concerning support given in the hour of affliction and succor in the time of need. Brothers and Sisters, you think it will be hard to die? You may not find it so. One, when he was dying, said, "Is this dying? Why, it is worthwhile going through all the troubles of life, even for death's own sake, if it is like this, for I have such heavenly enjoyment as I never could have imagined." Some of God's saints are very needlessly anxious about dying. I knew one to whom it was always a burden. He went to bed one night and he never woke up—thus answering his own fears, for he did not even know when he passed away, but died in his sleep! He was gone, gone, gone to Heaven without a pang! When you see how Believers pass away to be with their Lord in Glory, you have a commentary upon the words of my text—"Men shall be blessed in Him."

But do you see them? *Their spirits have ascended unto God, their Father*. How full of bliss they are! Disembodied they are, but they are not destroyed. Their poor earthly frames are still in the grave, yet their liberated spirits are supremely blessed, for they are, "forever with the Lord" and they are blessed in Him. Wait you but a very little while and the trumpet shall ring out from the angel's mouth, "Awake, you dead, and come to judgement!" And then shall men be blessed in Him, if they are, indeed, "in Him." When the righteous, restored to their bodies, shall, in their perfect manhood, behold Him face to face and dwell with Him, world without end, "men shall be blessed in Him."

I do not feel satisfied with the style of my speech at this time, but we who speak the Word are by no means masters of ourselves. I cannot rise to the height of this great argument and I do not think that, if I were to try a hundred times, I could ever satisfy myself when speaking upon this most Divine theme. My Lord is the most blessed Master that ever a servant had and He has blessed me personally so unspeakably that, if I were to bear my witness with the tongues of orators and angels by the space of a century, yet must I cease from the task and humbly confess—"I have not told you the half—nor can I tell you even the tenth of how good my Well-Beloved is to me." I suspect that you are, most of you, of my mind and say, "Neither can we." I sometimes tell you the story of what happened to me when I declared, in a sermon, that in the Heaven of the grateful, I would sing the loudest of them all, because I owed more to the Grace of God than anybody else. I meant it not out of any sense of superiority, but rather of *inferiority*. One good old soul, when I came down the pulpit stairs, remarked to me, "You have made a great mistake in your sermon."

I answered, "No doubt I made a dozen." "No, but," she said, "the great mistake was this—you said that you owed more to God than anybody else, but you do not owe anything like so much as I do. I have had more Grace from Him than you have. I have been a bigger sinner than you ever were. I shall sing the loudest!"

"Well, well," I thought, "I will not quarrel with her; it shall make me the more glad to find myself outdone." I found that all the Christians were much of the same mind. Brothers and Sisters, we will have it out when we get up yonder. But you shall praise God, indeed, if you praise Him more than I will—and you must be double debtors to my Lord if you owe Him more than I do! If you are more unworthy and more undeserving than I am, you must, *indeed,* be unworthy and undeserving! And if His rich, free, Sovereign Grace has exhibited itself more fully in you than it has in unworthy me, it has, indeed, overflowed all its banks! We will leave the loving contest for the present, but when all the birds of Paradise reach their nests above, there shall be a competition of adoring praise—and all of us will do our best to bless the name of the Lord!

II. Our second head was to be a practical one—we can only give a few minutes to it. WE HAVE SEEN OTHER MEN BLESSED IN CHRIST. Our observation confirms our experience. If this were the proper time, I could narrate many instances—which I could also confirm by producing the individuals—in which men have been remarkably blessed in Christ. What *social changes* we have seen in those who have believed in Him! They have not been the same persons—in many respects they are new. I have known persons at whose houses I have visited—well, you could not have believed that the man who lodged in the house, where he was first found, could ever have risen to occupy a room in a house at all like that in which he came to reside! The room in which I conversed with him was a palace, compared to the dog-hole in which he once existed. There was a change in his dwelling. There was a change in his wife. You would hardly know the woman—she is so different from the wretched slut and slave who called him, "husband," with a sigh and a sneer! She is here, now, sitting with him, and they are as happy as angels! I shall not point them out, but they are as good as any of you. We have known the case in which, from rags—absolute rags—the coming of Christ into the soul has lifted a man into competence, respectability and position.

Godliness has a gain about it—an honest, worthy gain for the life which now is. It teaches men habits of thrift, prudence and temperance—and delivers them from the thralldom of drunkenness and other vices—by which the major part of poverty is occasioned. It is worth mentioning even such blessings as these, as the poor little children know. They used to run away when Father came in, for they were afraid of him, but now, instead of that, they are watching for the time when his work is done, to go toddling down the street to meet dear Father, for the luxury of being brought home in his arms! Our Lord Jesus Christ has blessed some men and some women at such a rate that the devil, himself, would not have the impudence to say it was not a blessing! Liar as Satan is, he could not

deny that godliness has brought sunshine where there was none—the blessing has been too distinct and manifest for *any* to deny it!

What a *moral change* have we seen in some! They could not speak without an oath, but the habit of profane swearing ended in a minute and they have never been tempted to it since! Rash, bad-tempered men, who would break up the furniture of the house in their passion, have become as gentle as lambs! Such furies usually become quiet, peaceable and long-suffering—Divine Grace has a marvelous influence upon the temper! Men of hot passions that used to give a word and a blow—but generally the blow, first—now watch themselves and guard against their infirmity! They take a little time to think before they let fly a hard word or give a sharp look. The change that we have seen in some men has been as complete as that which could have been worked by that fabled mill, into which the legend says that they put old men, turned the handle and ground them young again! Truly a far greater renovation is worked in mind and heart where Jesus comes. Men are "blessed in Him"!

Then, as to *mental blessing*. What have we seen? This have I seen—here is one case out of many. A young man who had fallen into sin, came to me in deep despair of mind. He was so desponding that his very face bore witness to his misery. He wore the aspect of one who could not live much longer as he then was. I had tried to set the Gospel clearly before him on the previous Sabbath, but he told me that he could not grasp it, for that by his sin he had reduced his mind to such a state that he felt himself to be little better than an idiot. He was not speaking nonsense, either, for there are vices which destroy the intellect. I told him that Jesus Christ could save idiots—that even if his mind was, in measure, impaired as the result of sin, yet there was quite enough mind left to be made glad with a sense of pardon, seeing there was more than enough to make him heavy with a sense of guilt. I cheered that Brother as best I could, but I could effect nothing by my own efforts. Soon the Lord Jesus Christ came to him—and he is now a happy, earnest, joyful Christian! Not long ago he sent an offering of thanksgiving to God for having lifted him up from the deeps into which he had fallen. I hope there is a long life of real usefulness before him.

We cannot mention one tenth of what we personally know! Eternity will open a great book of record. I call upon the spirits of the just made perfect to witness what the Grace of God did for them! I call upon parents, here, to tell the pleasing story of the conversion of their sons and daughters! And I call upon those who watch for their fellow men to say whether they have not met with many cases in which men have been blessed in Jesus by being snatched from between the jaws of madness, itself, by the sweet, calming influence of the always dear and blessed name of our Redeemer! Yes, indeed, and of a truth, men *are* and *shall be* blessed in Him!

The practical point is, Brothers and Sisters, since we need to do good, let us preach up our Lord Jesus Christ as the Sovereign balm for every sinner's wound! If you want to be philanthropists, be Christians! If you would bless your fellow men with the best of all blessings, convey to them the knowledge of Jesus Christ! Do not believe that there is *anything* you

can do for your children which will be more effectual than teaching them about Jesus! Do not think that anything in the workshop can soften the vulgarities, silence the blasphemies and end the profanities of your fellow workmen, like setting Jesus Christ before them! When the Moravian missionaries first went to Greenland, they tried to tell the Greenlanders about the existence of a God—they spent some months in such preliminary subjects before they came to the Gospel—but they never gained the attention of the people. Discourses upon such necessary subjects as the Godhead, the immortality of the soul and the like, were flavorless to the Greenlanders.

It happened, one day, that one of the missionaries, translating the Gospel according to John, read out these words—"God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "What is that?" said the Greenlanders. "What is that? We never heard the likes of *that*. Why have you not told us that before?" Nothing had been done till the missionaries came to the Gospel, itself! Then they reached the Greenlander's heart—awakened his dormant intellect and led him to Jesus! Oh, let us keep on with the subject of Christ Crucified! Whatever there is not in our shop window, let us always have Christ as the chief article of our heavenly commerce. Whatever there may lack of Grace and beauty in our speech, and our outward appearance, may there be no lack of Jesus Christ set forth among the sons of men, for, "men shall be blessed in Him" and not without Him! Great schemes of socialism have been tried and found lacking—let us look to regeneration by the Son of God—and we shall not look in vain. Nothing has come of newfangled preaching from the first day till now—but *never* has the old faith of Jesus failed! Men have been blessed in Jesus and they shall be blessed in Him as long as the race shall exist.

III. Lastly, this whole matter is to extend till THE ENTIRE WORLD SHALL BE BLESSED IN CHRIST. Even at this moment the whole world is the better for Christ. But where He is best known and loved, there is He the greatest blessing. What snatched many an island of the southern sea from barbarism and cannibalism? What, but Jesus Christ preached among them? Men have been blessed in Him in Europe, America, Asia and everywhere. Africa and other lands, still plunged in barbarism, shall receive light from no other source but that from which our fathers received it centuries ago—from the great Sun of Righteousness.

Men shall be blessed in Christ because where He comes, oppression cannot live. You may tell me that the governor of such an empire is a despot. Oh, yes, but despots cannot long flourish where there is an open Bible! Tyrannies may last a generation or two, but all the world knows that their time is short. They will go down—they must go down where Christ is lifted up! That Inspired Book is a testimony for human liberty, louder than all others. It is a declaration of the rights of men under King Jesus—despotism must fall before it, sooner or later. We, in this country, owe our liberties, beyond everything, to the Christianity which is the outflow of a present Christ among us. Slavery? What a plague it was upon the fair hands of our sister nation across the Atlantic! The spot is washed away

and it was true religion which forced the washing! There would have been no freeing of the slaves from fetters if it had not been for the Christianity which, after long silence, at last spoke out! And when it spoke, it was as when a lion roars.

The Christianity of England is always pleading for the slave, for the aborigine, for the down-trodden. Leave our politicians alone and we shall soon have all the infamies alive again! Slavery would be tolerated, if not encouraged, if there were not Christian souls upon the watch. What saves us from war at this moment? What influence is it that is always contrary to war and always cries for peace? Why, it is the Christian element among us which counts anything better than bloodshed! Let the Christian element spread and it will be a power to bless mankind! It shall, in proportion as it spreads, put down evil and foster good. Already many a monopoly has been ended and many a liberty has been gained. Much religious intolerance has been subdued by the power of Jesus Christ over His people and I do pray, dear Friends, that we may live to see all nations more manifestly affected by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. May every nation be ruled by just and righteous laws! May every nation be willing to submit exterior disputes to the arbitration of justice!

It will be so one day. The nations shall be friends and all men shall feel that they are members of one great family. "Do unto others as you would that they should do to you," is the sum of the moral teaching of our Divine Lord—and if that is followed, it will bring about a halcyon era, the likes of which the world has never seen! If His Spirit will come and renew men's hearts—and teach them to love and to obey the Lord their God—then shall all nations call the Redeemer, blessed and, from every corner of the whole earth, the song shall go up, "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sits upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever!" Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 72.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—72 (SONG I), 343, 386.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:

The Preacher feels himself restored and would thank his friends for their prayers for his recovery. He now entreats their intercession that he may, on his return, be clothed with new power from above. Errors, which are at once ludicrous and horrible, are rising up among those who would be leaders of religious thought—we shall need Divine strength to be faithful to the one and only Gospel of our Lord Jesus. Wisdom and power can only come from the Lord of Hosts, who is wonderful in working, and in answer to prayer He can supply all that is needed. "Brethren, pray for us!"

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

ENTANGLED IN THE LAND
NO. 2188

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 8, 1891
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 21, 1890.

"For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They are entangled in the land, the wilderness has shut them in."
Exodus 14:3.

ISRAEL was clean escaped from Egypt. Not a hoof of their cattle was left behind, nor foot of child or aged man remained in the house of bondage. But though they were gone, they were not forgotten by the tyrant who had enslaved them. They had been a very useful body of workers, for they had built treasure cities and storehouses for Pharaoh. Compelled to work without wages, they cost the tyrant nothing but the expenditure of the lash. His exactions of forced labor had grown intolerable to the people, but the buildings erected had been a joy to the lord of Egypt. When they were quite gone, Pharaoh woke up to a sense of his loss and his attendants felt the same. So they cried, "Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?" Then they resolved to drive them back, again, and they thought it easy to do so, for they said, "They are entangled in the land, the wilderness has shut them in." They knew that the Israelites had no spirit for war and they felt sure that they had only to overtake them and hurry them back like a drove of cattle. They had found them such submissive servants that they expected to fit their fetters on them, again, and rivet them forever. Perhaps their God had shot His last arrow and Egypt might capture His people, again, without fear of plagues. Thus men thought—but the Lord thought otherwise.

Do not I speak to some at this hour who, during the last few months, have, by the power of the Lord's gracious hand, escaped out of the bondage of sin? You have got clean away from your old master. With a high hand and an outstretched arm has God brought you forth into liberty! You remember the sprinkling of the blood and the eating of the Paschal Lamb—and you are now on your way to Canaan. But your former master and his friends have not forgotten you. You were once a valuable servant to Satan and he will not willingly lose you. Some of you whom God has saved by Grace could drink for Satan, lie for him, swear for him, lead others into evil ways and you could do other things, cheerfully, which I need not mention, which he always desires to have done in his kingdom. You were a trained servant and knew your master's way so as to answer his purpose better than most. Servants of Satan usually serve him greedily

and you were very eager. Nothing is too hot or too heavy for men who are thoroughly enthusiastic for evil. Sins that should be thought degrading are followed by men under the notion of pleasure and gaiety. "A short life and a merry one," is too often the cry of persons who are preferring death to life.

The devil has the knack of making his bondsmen boast of their freedom and they follow with eagerness that which is to their own loss and ruin. Poor slaves! Their slavery has blinded their minds. Thanks be unto God, certain of you have lately fled from your former bondage! But the point I am to speak of is this—*the great tyrant has not forgotten you* and he designs in his heart your capture and re-enslavement. He and his are continually looking for opportunities by which they may bring you back into the thralldom of evil, fasten the manacles of habit upon your hands and fit the fetters of despair upon your feet. By the Grace of God I hope that the Prince of Evil and his helpers will be disappointed, but they will leave no stone unturned to effect their purposes. One of their hopes of driving you back is the belief that you are entangled by your circumstances and surroundings. They conceive that you have got into serious difficulty through your conversion and that you cannot find your way out of your perplexity. Now the enemy says, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil." The Pharaoh of the infernal regions thinks to drive the fugitives back, again, like a flock of sheep and, notwithstanding all that God has done for them, he hopes, again, to bring them under his yoke. If Jehovah has brought you out, His work will never be undone, but the enemy's hope lies in his belief that you are hopelessly entangled by your present environment.

I speak, just now, mainly to new converts, and I trust I may encourage them. Satan has less hope of getting back those who have escaped from his tyranny for many years. If he can trip them up or worry them, even now, he will take a delight in doing it, but he begins to see that the older pilgrims are really the Lord's and cannot fall into his hands. Of those who have only lately escaped from his power, he has greater hope, for they have not yet proven, by the test of experience, that the work within them is Divine. He hopes that possibly theirs is only temporary reformation and, if so, he can soon make them slip back into the mire of sin from which he hopes they have only half escaped. I am going to speak to the raw recruits, "from Egypt lately come," hoping that, by the blessing of the Holy Spirit, they may be cheered in pressing forward and may feel that they can never go back to their old sins.

The early period of Christian faith, like the infancy of life, is crowded with dangers. Literally, new-born life is so precarious that it is a wonder that any infant survives! Infant spiritual life is so full of weaknesses and diseases that none would survive were it not for Almighty Grace. Hence the need of the special precept, "Feed my lambs." It is our bounden duty to look well after beginners in the ways of God. The moral mortality in our Churches is mainly among the new converts. If they survive the first years

of temptation, as a rule they continue with us. Our Church Roll shows that the leakage is through the unseasoned timbers—

"When they have conquered early fears,
And vanquished youthful wrong,
Grace will preserve their following years,
And make their virtues strong."

If we leave them without help and comfort in their beginnings, we cannot tell how much they will sin and suffer. With the view of helping them, I shall speak, first, upon *one of our early dangers* and, secondly, upon *our security against that danger*.

I. ONE OF OUR EARLY DANGERS is this—we may become entangled in the land—the wilderness may shut us in. That entanglement takes a great many shapes. I will only hint at a few of them.

Dealing with old friends is a frequent one. The man is a new creature in Christ Jesus and since his friends find that he is so, they trouble him. His foes are they of his own household! How is the youth to make an open confession of Christ before his infidel father? Possibly the convert is a wife. How is she to be a Christian if she is married to an ungodly husband? Our earthly loves have great power over us and it is right that they should—but herein comes a hindrance to spiritual life. Satan says to himself, "Ah, he cannot break away from my kingdom, for his brother, his wife, or his betrothed will keep him in my service!" It may not only be *one* member of the family, but several may combine to draw back the half-escaped one. It may be that parents, brothers, sisters, friends of all sorts will unite in their efforts to jeer the young Christian out of his faith and lead him off from the road of uprightness. We hear much of the Salvation Army, but, alas, there is an Army of Damnation, too! Very zealous and crafty are these followers of the Evil One. Cruel mockings, accusations of hypocrisy, slanders and unkindnesses are not spared, to turn the young Christian from the right way. Because of household opposition, Satan says, "He is entangled in the land." The adversary thinks that you have not the courage to stand up against your relatives and you will not dare to confess your Lord before your wife, or your father. We shall now see whether the Lord has brought you out, or whether you are running off on a mere whim of your own—the devil will not be slow to apply the test!

In some cases the entanglement is not so much that of the family as of society. I have personally known one or two friends moving in high circles who have said to me, "As soon as I am known to be a Christian, my friends will cut my acquaintance. I do not know what I shall do when I have to visit at certain houses. Assuredly I shall have to run the gauntlet." It has been a quiet pleasure to me when I have found that they have been banished from such "society" altogether, for it could never have been of any spiritual advantage to them and it might have proved a snare. Their loss was a real gain. But, oh, how many are afraid of Sir John and of Lady Mary, or of some wealthy neighbor! These fine folks may be nothing very great, after all, but, still, weak hearts are all too apt to dread the loss of

their patronage and are ready enough to make a great cross of being frowned out of their society.

In other circles the same difficulties occur. The workshop has its trials as well as the drawing room. "Ah," says Satan, "the man came out and confessed himself a Christian the other night, but I know where he works and there is not a man in the place who will sympathize with him! He will be entangled in the land." It happens that one begins in the morning with a joke. A second comes on with an oath. A third follows suit with a sharp and bitter observation. All day long they give the new convert such handfuls of mud as they can find—and the hope of the Evil One is that thus he will be forced back into his old ways. The same thing happens on the farm, or on board ship, or in the barracks—old companions want to have our society and are not pleased with the silent rebuke which is implied in our separating from them. You know more about this than I do, but I wonder not at Satan saying, "They are entangled in the land, the wilderness has shut them in." Why, some of you can scarcely descend the steps of this Tabernacle, convinced of sin and awakened to seek eternal salvation, before an old friend meets you and, by his careless salutation, he makes you forget the emotion which just before was so manifest! Or if you get over the first attack, you are so warmly assailed indoors that you are greatly inclined to give in. Alas for the many who are speedily entangled in the nets of human associates and never gain the liberty of Christ! The demands of business, of position, of self-interest, of custom—these all hold men as birds are caught with bird-lime, or as the needle is held by a powerful magnet—and so they are prepared to listen to evil entreaties and return to the country from which they came out.

To some, the entanglements come from *having to deal with new matters*. All things have become new and among the rest, even their ordinary business wears a different aspect. It used to be conducted in such and such a way, but now, on examination, the man says, "I am a Christian. I cannot do as I have done and yet, how can I alter it?" It is a very simple matter to fall into those ways of trade which are questionable—but it is not quite so easy to quit them and to gain a livelihood. When you alter one custom of trade, another matter hangs upon it, and needs a change. And it is not easy to bring partners, clerks and workpeople out of old ways into new. They are very apt to be sticklers for former methods. Moreover, there are people in the trade who think you more nice than wise and will even refuse to do business with you if you are so particular. It is no small thing for the convert to set himself right with the world in his changed mode of dealing, yet this has *got to be done* and done with decision, too, or there is no escaping from evil! At such a time the struggler feels—"I am entangled in the land, the wilderness has shut me in"—and the enemy of souls is of the same opinion. Now is his opportunity, but if you escape him, now, he will never again have such an advantage over you.

At the same time, our young Brother may be alarmed about the other side of his new associations—namely, joining the Church. It seems an ordeal to young beginners to come to see the pastor about uniting with the

Lord's people. I am sure they need not be at all terrified of *me*, for no one will more heartily welcome any sincere seeker after Jesus! All that I shall ask is a simple confession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ—and if that is given, even with fear and trembling—I shall be well content. Yet, to the timid beginner, it seems very solemn to be spoken to by the Elders of the Church. Mr. Bunyan puts lions in front of the Palace Beautiful, by which palace he means the Church. I have been told by a facetious person that Mr. Bunyan meant by these lions the Deacons and Elders! Well, I can only say that I find them brave as lions, but even if they were terrible as those monarchs of the forests, there is no just cause for fearing them, for Mr. Bunyan adds, "The lions are chained." If any of you are afraid of our Deacons and Elders, you are so without reason, for the lions are chained by the intense love they bear both to their Lord and to all pilgrims to Zion.

A guard is set before the door of the Church for a necessary purpose, for we would have none enter who are self-deceived—but none of the Brothers in office among us will harm anyone who desires to serve the Lord and dwell with His people. If you have been troubled about your admission to the Church, I hope that fear will come to an end by your pushing forward and being enrolled in our ranks. Get right in your position, both towards the world and the Church, and let not the Evil One say with regard to either of these matters, "They are entangled in the land, the wilderness has shut them in."

We have known others *bewildered with doctrinal difficulties*. When a man's soul is renewed, he begins to *think*, and he desires to understand many things which, before, were indifferent to him. He meets with that most plain and precious Truth of God that, "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," and he is well satisfied with *that* declaration. Still, as he grows, he seeks more knowledge and longs to understand the deep things of God. Possibly, as a young beginner he goes beyond his depth. He perceives the Doctrine of Election in the Bible and he asks, "What is this?" It may be he is greatly puzzled with this doctrine, for though it is rich with comfort for those who, by reason of years, have had their senses exercised, yet it is a hard nut for babes in Grace. It is simple enough when seen from one side of it, but from another it is a bottomless mystery. We have seen minds quite bewildered where, to us, all things have seemed plain.

I have known people stumble over hard texts. "What does *this* text mean? What does *that* passage mean? What does this other Scripture mean?" You would be astonished if you knew how many people are disturbed in mind, lie awake at nights and are likely to lose their faith in Christ over Scriptures which are as cheering as can be when once they are understood! These people need that some man should guide them, for, like the Ethiopian nobleman, they will not otherwise understand what they read. In former periods, many lost themselves in meditations upon free will, predestination, Irresistible Grace and so forth. It was a pity that they dwelt so much upon the decrees of the Father and so little upon the work of the Lord Jesus! They got their heads muddled by things too high

for them. People are more frivolous now, as a rule, and this evil is rare. Still, there are to be found, here and there, thoughtful persons not yet fully instructed in the faith who are puzzled and confused as the Infinite Glory of revealed Truth opens up before their astonished gaze!

They will know, hereafter, but for the present they are sorely troubled and perplexed—and their cruel enemy rejoices that, "They are entangled in the land." Nothing contributes more to this than the divisions in the Christian Church. One preacher cries up one thing and another quite the contrary, till young converts cry, "Who are we to believe?" And they stand as if they had come to crossroads and do not know which way to take. I am sorry it should be so, but there is a promise to the family of faith, "All your children shall be taught of the Lord." You shall not lose your way if you will accept the Word of God as a little child. Be of good courage, for it is written—"He shall guide you continually."

Far worse is the case of those who are *entangled through strange discoveries*. They came in among professed Believers and they supposed that all Christians were perfect, (which, by the way, is a mere supposition), and now they have met with a certain loud professor who has acted very dishonorably and unkindly towards them! And they cry out with astonishment, "How is this?" We who know by experience and observation that Judas may be looked for among common disciples—since he appeared among the chosen 12—are not so staggered when we see a hypocrite! We expect to see black sheep even in the choicest flock—but the new convert is sorely grieved and stumbled when he finds out the melancholy fact that all men are not what they seem. Great mischief is worked among young Christians by hypocritical or inconsistent professors. God grant that none of us may be of that kind, for the blood of souls will lie at the door of such persons!

It may be that, in his earliest days, the young convert finds out with surprise that his own heart is brimming over with sin. He thought that he was so changed that no sin remained in him and no temptation from without could move him. He hoped that he was so sure of the Truth of God that he would never doubt. But now he has to cry, "Lord, help my unbelief," for he can hardly decide whether he believes or not! He has discovered another law in his members warring against the law of his mind and bringing him into captivity. He finds that when he would do good, evil is present with him—and this inward conflict between the flesh and the spirit comes upon him as a terrible surprise. "Why am I like this?" he cries. "Can I be a child of God and have such dreadful thoughts? Could I feel so wretched if I were, indeed, a possessor of Grace?" When young beginners get into this rough road, they are taken by surprise and know not what to do. Then is it that the adversary of their souls hopes that, "They are entangled in the land, the wilderness has shut them in."

Akin to this are their *amazements at painful experiences*. It may be the Lord withholds the light of His Countenance from them and then they walk in darkness and see no light. If they were always to enjoy calm and comfort, they would, with self-complacency, boast, "My mountain stands

firm! I shall never be moved!" But the Lord hides Himself from them to slay their pride. If they were always at ease, they would fall into living by *feeling*, instead of walking by *faith*. Therefore the Lord tries them, leads them by a desert path, clouds their sky and burdens their backs. Then they enquire, "How is this?" Some of us know that when God shuts us up in the dark, He loves us as dearly as when He pours sunlight upon us, but beginners in the Divine Life do not know this—and they are terribly put to it since they judge God's heart by His hands. "Can I be a child of God, and yet be so afflicted? And why is my light so dim?" These frames and feelings, which come of our being frail, foolish and feeble-minded, are a great perplexity—and when we cannot make them out, the adversary cries, "They are entangled in the land, the wilderness has shut them in."

What if, at the back of all this, we should be *assailed with special trials*? Suppose it should be true that ever since you have been a Christian, you have not prospered in worldly concerns as you did before? It will seem strange. When you were a man of the world and were an *enemy* of God, you had plenty of money and a host of friends—but now that you have become a Christian, your means and your friends are gradually melting away. It may be the case. I have known such an instance. Yet it is not hard to explain this in several ways. The Lord would not have us follow Him for the sake of what we get from Him. He would have us men, against whom even Satan could not say, "Have You not set a hedge about him and all that he has?" Our Lord desires followers who will cling to Him at all risks, for no other reason but their value of Himself and His Truth. He would have servants who, having counted the cost, would lose estate and repute, yes, and *life*, itself, sooner than turn aside from the way of their Lord! Perhaps you are being educated to this point of faithfulness. Do not, therefore, doubt because of your exercises and tribulations. but take these things joyfully! The path to Heaven lies by the dens of the leopards and the haunts of the young lions. Dream not that God has forsaken you! Leave it to the devil to say, "They are entangled in the land, the wilderness has shut them in."

Possibly, once more, some may be much beset on the road to Heaven by *mental difficulties*. I do not often say much about these things because there are plenty of preachers who, by mentioning difficulties, are really spreading them. Certain clever gentlemen of the cloth may think it their duty to sow doubts among their hearers, but I have no such ambition. They may imagine that they are answering the questions which they suggest, but it seems to me that they are merely advertising them to many of those who were previously unaware of them. This is an age when men assail the Inspiration of the Bible, the atoning Sacrifice and the Election of Grace. I need not enlarge. *Everything* is now attacked. There is no part of the Bible which some critic would not take away from us. It may be, young Friend, that you cannot answer all the objections which you hear. Do not wonder if you cannot! You would be wiser than Solomon if you could reply to all objections that quibblers may invent!

A friend came to me with a great difficulty, supposing that I could answer it off-hand; but I replied, "He who fashioned this piece of criticism took time in the making of it and you must allow me the same time to demolish it. I will do my best with it, but remember, if you find a thousand difficulties which I cannot meet, that fact will *not* prove that they cannot be met, for I do not profess to be Omniscient, nor do I assert that faith is a Grace which has no difficulties to surmount." If there were a thousand more objections which could not, at this present time, be answered, they might confuse our feeble minds, but they would not shake the eternal Truth of God, itself! God's Word is sure, be the difficulties what they may! Know what you know and believe what you believe—and get a firm grip of undoubted Truths of God—and though, when you are worried with the doubts and hypotheses of philosophers and the like, Satan will say, "They are entangled in the land," let him see that your worry is soon ended by a childlike faith in the living God! Real faith will find a way out of perplexity, or will make one! True faith will sooner set aside the conclusions of human reason than the declarations of God. In fact, faith teaches reason to be reasonable by setting before it the highest of all reasons, namely, the Testimony of God! God send us such a childlike faith and then we shall not be "entangled in the land"!

II. I have thus shown you what our danger is. Now, secondly, let us think of OUR SECURITY UNDER THIS TRIAL.

My text is, "*Pharaoh will say* of the children of Israel, They are entangled in the land, the wilderness has shut them in." Upon this I make the first observation, *that this is not true*. It is only what Pharaoh said. And so when Satan says, "They are entangled in the land," it is not true! It is only one of the sayings of the Father of Lies. "They say"—says one. Well, what do they say? Let them say it—their saying it will not make it true. A troubled one comes to me and complains of a certain charge which has been made. And he adds, as the sharp edge of it all, "Sir, it is not true." Well, then, do not fret about it! One cries out, "They are taking away my character and I feel it keenly because what they say is cruelly false." Friend, do not feel it at all! You ought to feel it only if what they say is true.

Now, what Pharaoh said was *not* true and his speech did not cause the children of Israel to be really entangled in the land. Pharaoh's tongue speaks his *wish*—but his wish will not be realized. Our adversaries say that our cause is defeated. Is it? "Ah," they say, "we have shut him up. The man cannot answer us! We have crushed his faith and argued his confidence to death." Have you? By the grace of God we stand fast in the once-delivered faith, after all your sophistries and boasts! You say that we are entangled, but we are not. "Show us," they say, "the way in which you will get out of the wilderness." No, that we cannot do, but, if you will wait a while, the *Lord* will show you—by leading us graciously through the divided sea—and, it may be, by also drowning you therein, as He did the Egyptians when the waters overwhelmed them! Israel could not guess her way, but Israel could wait till God revealed it. Newly-emancipated one, you are shut in with doubts and difficulties suggested by carnal reason, but, I

pray you, believe your God! By the blood of the Cross, I entreat you, believe the Lord Jesus! By the eternal judgment and the Great White Throne, believe your God. "Let God be true but every man a liar." Wait till He shall clear your way, through the very heart of the sea if need be—a way which will conduct you in safety to the other shore, where, with timbrel and with song, you shall proclaim His victory!

My next observation is this—though Pharaoh said, "They are entangled in the land, the wilderness has shut them in," *yet they had a Guide*. Look at the surroundings of my text and you will see that they were guided by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, so that they had no need to be in any perplexity as to their road. We, too, have a Guide. In Providence we are not left without a Leader and in spiritual things we are not left without the Spirit of God who shall lead us into all Truth. Young traveler, you are not turned out alone into a wild wilderness to find a path—the Good Shepherd goes before you! Follow Him as the sheep follow their shepherd. He never led His flock in the wrong direction yet! Do what He bids you and you are safe. Do as He did when He was here below—His example is your safe direction. Believe Him and obey Him. Keep to the narrow path. Hold fast your integrity and never let go of your faith. You have a heavenly Guide. You are not left alone and, therefore, you cannot be entangled in the land—the wilderness has *not* shut you in!

Remember, next, that *the Lord had appointed a way for these people*. There was not only a Guide, but a way. But where was that way? Mountains blocked them on either side. They could not turn back, for Pharaoh shut up that route. Where should they go? The reedy Red Sea rolled across their front. Listen! Their way is across the *bottom* of that sea and up from its depths to the other shore! A strange path! "It is no way at all," cries unbelief. Have you never read, concerning God, "Your way is in the sea, and Your path in the great waters, and Your footsteps are not known"? Tried Believer, the Lord will make a way for you where no foot has ever been! That which, like a sea, threatens to drown you, shall be a highway for your escape!

I once had a friend, an upright gracious man, a gentleman whom God had prospered. He had, when engaged in a bank, acted uprightly in a matter in which his superiors judged him to be foolishly scrupulous and, therefore, dismissed him. He could not do wrong and so he was left with a wife and family, without a job and, as everybody told him, irretrievably ruined because of his "foolish conscientiousness." He was for years the head of that very bank. In a singular way, the Lord made his discharge the means of his advancement so that he rose, step by step, to be the master where he had been the rejected servant! And this, humanly speaking, would not have come about had it not been for the incident mentioned. Have faith that God can turn the evil into good and that which threatens to annihilate you will be the means of your enlargement! Look well to your integrity and the Lord will look to your prosperity! The way of faith is not a common turnpike road which every careless traveler may traverse without care or study. It is a mysterious way which no fowl knows and the lion's

whelp has not trodden. Those who inherit the special glories of Heaven must encounter the special perils of the deep and of the desert—and in their amazing journey they shall behold the glorious arm of the Lord working wonders for them!

Note well that the Lord would not only find them a way, *but, at the same time, overthrow their enemies*. You have come up out of Egypt, O young Believer, but the taskmasters are at your heels! There may come a decisive moment, after which they shall never pursue you again. These who seek your soul are to be destroyed, so that there shall not be one of them left. I believe that many a young convert hates sin and hates all evil habits, but these evils keep dogging his footsteps and seem as if they would master him—and then there comes a time of great struggle and tremendous battling without and within—on that one desperate field he fights the matter out. His adversaries are drowned in that Red Sea! His old sins and his old habits lose forever their former power. The Red Sea rolled between Israel and Egypt and whatever else might trouble the pilgrim host, they were never, throughout the whole 40 years, molested by Pharaoh, or any of the Egyptians.

It is a grand thing when a man gets clean away from the world and is reckoned as dead to it. He has burnt his boats and has landed on the shore from which he never can go back, again, but must fight out the battle against sin even to the end. When a man is sworn into the army of Christ for eternity and the world has cast him out, there is nothing for him but to go right ahead. Everything that he has is now staked on the Cross of Christ. Happy man to have come to such a pass—to be once and for all crucified to the world, and the world crucified to him! The Egyptians of sin which had so fiercely pursued him are drowned and the rest of the Egyptians of evil have given him up—and he may go on his way to the promised land in peace so far as his old taskmasters are concerned.

Remember, also, dear Friends, that when these people were thought to be hopelessly entangled, *they were about to see the Lord perform for them a work which would be most helpful to their ultimate conquest of Canaan,* for when Pharaoh and his chariots were drowned in the sea, Palestine heard of it and all the natives there began to tremble. Thus sang Moses in his famous song, "Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of Your arm they shall be as still as a stone. The people shall hear, and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold of the inhabitants of Palestine." That day in which a convert has to fight out the battle, once and for all with himself, shall give him strength for all future conflict and smooth his pathway into the land that flows with milk and honey!

You must not think, young Christian, because you are saved from guilt, that everything is done and the warfare ended! There is a life-long conflict for you before you obtain possession of your inheritance and, it may be that, if now, when you are in special trouble, you are found faithful, all the rest of the road will be cleared from similar troubles. Now shall the Egyptians be drowned in the sea! Some of us can remember the time when we had to stand still and seriously ask, "Can I now be true to the

Lord and His Law? I am advised the other way by a very prudent friend. Can I reject this advice? I can see the worldly advantage that I should gain through acting in a crooked course. Can I forego that advantage? I can see that I shall have to suffer if I am conscientious. Can I take up my cross?" When, after hours of anguish and prayer, you have come out of every entanglement pure and free, from that time forth the Lord may lift up the light of His Countenance upon you, and your victory over all other adversaries will be easy. Will not this comfort some of you who have just come to the Red Sea? The place of test and trial shall be the place of the ending of the foe!

Why had the Lord led the people so far if He would not still help them? Do I hear someone say, "I fear that I shall never get out of my difficulties"? Yet you believe that the Lord has brought you out from the dominion of Satan? Tell me, has God brought you so far to let you perish? He has broken off the yoke of sin. He has given you a hope in Christ and you are a changed man. Do you think that He would do all this for you and then *leave* you? Come, my Brother, has the Lord brought you out of Egypt, by the precious blood of the Lamb, that you should die in the wilderness? Do you believe that Jesus has redeemed you to let you be lost, after all? I would speak personally to any elderly Christians here who begin to think that they shall one day fall by the hand of the enemy. How old are you? "Sixty." Sixty? How long do you expect to live? Answer: ten years. Then if God has taken care of you for 60 years, can you not trust Him for the odd ten? "Well," says one, "I am eighty." Eighty? How long do you reckon to remain on earth Are you going to doubt for the few years that are yet to come? Have you trusted your God for 80 long years? Do not doubt Him now, I pray you! Do not please the devil by distrusting your faithful God! As surely as Jehovah begins, He will finish! It shall never be said of any work of God, "He began to build and was not able to finish." If He has set you on the way to the eternal inheritance, He will surely bring you into it! God is never defeated or turned aside. "He shall not fail nor be discouraged." Comfort one another, therefore, with such words as these.

Lastly, *the Lord must bring Israel out of all entanglement, for how else could He be glorified*? Suppose that the Israelites had been left to perish when Pharaoh said they were shut in? What then? What would the Lord have done for His great name? Would not the Egyptians have exulted over Israel's God? A Scotch minister tells the story of an aged saint who, on her dying bed, said that her Savior would never leave her to perish. "But suppose that He did not keep His promise and you were to be lost?" She answered, "He would be a greater loser than I." When asked what she meant, she answered, "It is true that I would lose my soul, but God would lose His honor and His Glory if He were not true."

Brothers and Sisters, if we have trusted in God, and have come out of the Egypt of the world through His Grace, and have left all its sins behind us—if we were left to die in the wilderness—the Lord Jesus Christ would lose His Glory as a Savior, the Divine Father would lose His name for immutable faithfulness and the Holy Spirit would lose His honor for perse-

verance in completing every work which He undertakes! The Lord God of Israel will never stain His Glory—therefore be confident that He who brought you out of Egypt will bring you into Canaan! How I delight in that verse which we sang just now—

"My name from the palms of His hands eternity will not erase;
Impressed on His heart it remains in marks of indelible Grace.
Yes, I to the end shall endure, as sure as the earnest is given;
More happy, but not more secure, the glorified spirits in Heaven."

"Ah" murmurs one, "I don't believe *that*!" Then I am sorry for you, for, "according to your faith be it unto you." "I believe," says one, "that men may fall away and perish." It will be an evil thing for you if it should be to you according to your faith! If you have Grace enough to grasp the whole range of blessing which the Covenant of God offers you, then the whole shall be yours by a covenant of salt. He that thinks he can be off and on with God—saved today and lost tomorrow, and then saved again—has a comfortless creed to defend and a world of absurdities to meet! You are born again! Suppose that you could lose the new life which comes by the new birth? What then? I have heard of people being born again, but could they be born again, and again, and again? According to the notion of some, certain persons are born again, and again, and again, and again, and again I do not know how many times! There is nothing in Scripture to warrant such a strange idea.

If you, my Friend, will come and cast yourself on Christ and take Him to be your Savior, once and for all, He will save you *right now* with an everlasting salvation! He says, "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Jesus, Himself, has said it, "I give unto My sheep, eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." Believe for this with heroic faith! Believe for eternal salvation in Jesus Christ, who is able to work in you a livelong escape from sin! According to your faith, so shall it be.

Oh, no! The devil may say that we are entangled in the land, the wilderness has shut us in! But we shall get out of the labyrinth right enough. Is it not written, "Sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under the law, but under Grace"? We shall yet sing unto the Lord who has triumphed gloriously. He has thrown our sins and our fears into the sea. So be it! Hallelujah! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Exodus 13:21, 22; 14.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—739, 689, 738.

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A CALL TO PRAYER AND TESTIMONY
NO. 2189

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 8, 1891,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I have set watchmen upon your walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: you that make mention of the Lord, keep not silent, and give Him no rest, till He establishes, and till he makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth."
Isaiah 62:6, 7.

IN the opening verses of this chapter our Lord declares that He will not rest till His purpose of Grace is accomplished. "For Zion's sake will I not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest." His soul is set upon the perfection of His Church. There is never a moment when the heart of Christ ceases to beat high with desire for the salvation of His redeemed. From the dreadful work of making Atonement, He stayed not His hand, but set His face like a flint towards it, till He could say, "It is finished." And now, the work of the gathering of His chosen He carries on with quenchless zeal, never staying His Divine intercession, never withholding His hands from wielding that "All Power" which is given Him in Heaven and in earth.

Mark well, Beloved, how He would have His people to be in tune with Himself! He will have no rest till salvation work is done! And He would not have us rest, but He would have us stirred with passionate desire and fired with holy zeal for the accomplishment of the Divine plan of Grace. Till *He* holds *His* peace, He will not allow us to be silent! You that have the Revised Version will be struck with the more literal and forcible rendering of our text—"You that are the Lord's remembrancers, *take you no rest, and give Him no rest*, till He establishes, and till He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth." A restless Savior calls upon His people to be restless and to make the Lord, Himself, restless—to give Him no rest till His chosen city is in full splendor, His chosen Church complete and glorious. Ah, when the three unite, the Son, the people whom He has redeemed and the Lord who works all things, then shall the golden age have come!

Learn from this fact a valuable lesson, that Christ's determination to perform a work, His decree that it shall be so, is no argument for our idleness, but is the best plea and encouragement for our endeavors. "If it is to be," cries one, "I need not do anything." No, Friend, you argue slothfully! On the contrary, the earnest heart will reason itself into immediate and confident action. If it were *not* to be, to what purpose my zeal? Even if I do not know whether it is to be or not to be, if I think it desirable, I will labor for it with anxiety! But if I am assured that the Lord has appointed it, I la-

bor with might and main, feeling a holy confidence in doing the work of the Lord! Since He wills it, we will it—and so it shall be.

Predestination, when rightly understood, never leads to sloth—it has frequently, in human history, been of tremendous force for the production of the most daring and determined action—and it shall be so again. "*Deus vult*," God wills it, is a grand cry to produce a crusade! God wills it, therefore it shall be. Like thunderbolts flung from an almighty hand, Believers crash through every difficulty under the irrepressible impulse of fulfilling a Divine purpose. Oh, that our meditations at this time may bring us all to this resolve, that we will not rest, and we will give God no rest, till His decree is fulfilled and till He has established and made Jerusalem a praise in the earth!

I. In my text I see three things which I will mention one by one. The first is RESPONSIBLE OFFICE—"I have set watchmen upon your walls." "You that make mention of the Lord, keep not silent," or, as your margin and the Revised Version have it, "You that are the Lord's *remembrancers*." Here are three responsible offices—*watchmen* set upon the walls, *speakers* who never hold their peace and *remembrancers* who cease not to plead with their Lord.

May the Holy Spirit help us while we think of the Lord's people as *watchmen*! In times of war every fortified city had upon its walls certain watchmen, so placed as to see eye to eye—that is to say, the eye of one sentinel reached to the eye of another and so they encompassed the city round about. Whoever passed that way by day or night, they challenged him! And if he turned out to be a foe, they gave an alarm and straightway men-at-arms came forth from the guard rooms and the city was protected against surprise. God's people and especially the stronger, the more instructed and the most experienced of them, should, for Christ's sake, act as watchmen upon the walls.

Observe what manner of watchmen we ought to be. It is written, "I *have set* watchmen." We are under Divine command! In the old Roman days, when a sentry was placed in his position by his centurion, he never thought of quitting his post. Rocks might roam, but not the sentinels of the empire! There was found in Pompeii, among the ashes, a sentry, standing in his place with his javelin in his hand—he had not flinched amid the deadly shower which fell from the volcano and buried the city. His centurion, in the name of the emperor, had set him there, and there he stood! How steadfast and immovable ought these to be, whom the Lord, Himself, has set in their place in connection with His Church! It is *Jehovah* who says, "I have set watchmen upon your walls." By a Divine arrangement and by a sacred command, saints are set in their positions and they must stand fast and, having done all, must still stand, for they have received their charge from the King, Himself.

These watchmen guarded the city of cities, "*your walls, O Jerusale*m." The legionary who guarded old Rome felt that if he did not fight for his native city, he would be base, indeed. If we are set to guard the Church of God, what shall I say to him who sleeps at his post, or proves a traitor? If you do not throw your whole strength into the guarding of such a cause as this, what will awaken you? Know you not that the Church is pur-

chased by the blood of Christ? That it is God's peculiar heritage? "The Lord's portion is His people." O shepherds, watch well the sheep that cost your Lord so dearly! "Feed the flock of God which He has purchased with His own blood." If we do not guard the Truth of God, once and for all delivered to the saints, we are something worse than traitors! No word has yet been invented which can set forth the perfidy of the man who betrays the cause of Christ and of the Gospel! He is the murderer of souls. God has set us to guard His own city, and we must not slumber. Let the other cities go, if go they must, but as for you, Salem, City of Peace and City of God, if I forget you, let my right hand forget her cunning! If I count you not beyond my chief joy, let me be in sorrow forever! See, Brethren, your responsible office—watchmen of God's setting—watchmen on the walls of God's own city!

The service is seen to be responsible to the utmost degree when we see that it demands constant care. The Lord says of these watchmen, "*they shall never hold their peace day nor night.*" We are not set to keep the Church of God by day only, but amid the dews or frosts of the darkest night we are to maintain our watch! Christians are to be sentries who will not retreat into the barracks because of the cold, nor quit the rampart because of the heat. At night, watchmen are most required. We are to be instant in season, giving the password at each particular time when the watch reports itself, and thus never holding our peace day nor night. We are to be instant out of season—for at such times the enemy is most likely to come. God's watchmen are not taken on by the hour, to watch by turns, but they are bound to be, throughout life, watchers for souls! We are never off duty! We take a day and a night shift. Our rest is in the Lord's service. Our recreation is in change of occupation. Ours is a *life* service and a *constant* service.

Believers raise no discussion with their Lord as to how many hours of the day they shall spend for Him. Our hours are these—"They shall never hold their peace day nor night." St. Augustine desired to be always found *aut precantem, aut predicantem*—that is, either praying or preaching—either speaking to God for men in prayer, or speaking for God to men in His ministry. Ministers of Christ, especially, should give themselves, not to the serving of tables, but to the ministry of the Word and to prayer. For us to give ourselves to getting up entertainments, to become competitors with theatres and music halls, is a great degradation of our holy office! If I heard of a minister becoming a chimney-sweep to earn his living, I would honor him in both his callings, but for God's watchmen to become the world's showmen is a miserable business! God keep all of us who are ministers of Christ from entangling ourselves with the things of this life! The proverb says, "Stick to your last, cobbler." And I would say—"Stick to your pulpit, minister! Keep to your one work and you will find quite enough for all the strength you have, and even more." Oh, for preachers who "shall never hold their peace"!

You Christian people, you, also, must fulfill your watch. You, also, are called to *ceaseless* service. A policeman wears an armlet to show that he is on duty—and all Believers should feel that such a badge is worn upon their very heart day and night. "The love of Christ constrains us," not now

and then, but always! Our service of the Lord's cause comes not once a week, on Sundays, but so often as we have opportunity! These must always watch, who would be watchmen for souls, watchmen for God, watchers against error and sin, watchers for the coming of the Lord. "I have set watchmen upon your walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night."

But, in the next place, we are to be *spokesmen,* for we are never to hold our peace, but make mention of the Lord. Believers are to speak for God to the people. If you have the ability and the commission, speak to the great congregation. You have both ability and commission, each one of you, to speak to those round about you. Be always ready to speak a word in season. Keep a shot in the locker—never run short of a good word for those whom God's Providence puts in your way. If there is nobody near to whom you can speak for God, then in your solitude speak to God for your fellow men. What a blessed thing to be so familiar with God that you have His ear for your friends and neighbors! Plead with Him for the erring, the unbelieving, the profane. Never hold your peace towards God, for in this case, speech is more than golden. By prayer you unlock the treasuries of Heaven—keep the golden key in constant motion. Never cease to pray, since intercession is benediction. If the world is asleep, if the Church is asleep, hold not your peace by night and, should the Church become active and the world be a little awakened, redouble your prayer till the world is won! You spokesmen *for* God and spokesmen *to* God, never hold your peace day or night!

Sick saints are especially set to take the night watches. While the most of us are blessed with refreshing slumber, these find that sleep forsakes their eyes. They hear the clock's unwearied tick and listen to the slow striking of the hours. Now let them lift their hearts heavenward on behalf of the Lord's cause and Kingdom. Maybe God arouses them to this end—that they may keep the nights safe by their prayers—chasing away evil spirits and keeping the incense burning upon the altar of acceptable intercession! The Lord girdles the globe with intercessions by his daily and nightly watchers. As our Queen's morning drum beats round the globe, so does ceaseless prayer cast a belt of golden Grace around the earth. O you that are the Lord's remembrancers, never suffer the flame of prayer to die down! Arise, even in this night season of the Church, and trim your lamps! Lift up your voices *for* your God and *with* your God. Let no dumb spirit possess you. As speakers heavenward and earthward, never hold your peace day or night!

A third office is brought before us in the marginal reading and in the new version—"You that are *the Lord's remembrancer*s, take no rest." This is an amazing expression—"The Lord's remembrancers." I find the same word elsewhere translated, "recorder"—and truly we are to be the Lord's recorders and keep in memory His great goodness. A high office is that of Remembrancer to the King of kings! Every Christian holds this eminent position. Oriental kings maintained an officer whose business it was to remind the king of the promises which he had made before. He said this to that courtier, that to the other, but His Majesty had plenty of other things to think of and, therefore, every now and then, his Remembrancer

would say, "Please, Your Majesty, you promised to do this and that. May it please you to perform your word."

Now the Lord has appointed His praying people to be His remembrancers. I should never have dared to use such an expression had I not found it in the Inspired Word, itself. The Lord says, in Isaiah 43:26, "Put Me in remembrance." The Lord cannot forget, but in condescension to our forgetfulness, He bids us act as if He *could* do so, and put Him in remembrance! By calling the promise to the Lord's remembrance, we are, ourselves, made to be the better acquainted with it. I find that a Remembrancer was also appointed in our English courts to remind the officers of their duty to their sovereign—and this is also a part of our work to remind the world that there is a God—and that He claims obedience from His creatures. Brothers and Sisters, fulfill your office!

If you would be good remembrancers towards God, you must know the promises of which you remind Him. You must be acquainted with your Bibles so as to fill your mouths with arguments and order your petitions aright. You must come to the great King and say, "Lord, do as You have said. Fulfill this Word unto Your servant whereon You have caused me to hope." If we pray without a promise, we have no reason to expect an answer. God will do what He has promised to do—he may do somewhat more, but we have no right to expect it. The best praying in the world is pleading the promises! I wish we all practiced this sort of prayer. It is wise to bring before the Lord His own Words and plead His Divine veracity—"You have said it. You are true, therefore fulfill Your Word!" It is your business, as the Lord's remembrancers, to be well acquainted with these sacred Words of Grace which you are to bring to remembrance. If you do not remember them, yourself, how can you bring them to the Lord's memory?

Your office of remembrancer is to be carried on incessantly. "You that are the Lord's remembrancers, take you no rest and give Him no rest." I fear that very many of God's promises are seldom used. They are like the locksmith's bunch of keys. Why are they so rusty? Because they are not in constant use. They have not been turned in the lock day by day, or they would be bright enough. Are there not exceedingly great and precious promises which, to some of you, are a dead letter? Promises lie hidden away in God's most Holy Word which you have never used! Perhaps you do not even know that they are there. One came to me, not long ago, and said, "I was surprised to find these words in the Bible." To him I answered, "Your remark makes me fear that you have not searched your Bible as you should have done." We ought to know the length and breadth of the estate which the Lord has given us. Oh, that we would incessantly use the promises in prayer! One said, with a smile, the other day, "It is a fine thing to have a checkbook, to get what money you please by signing your name!" I did not stop to explain to him the limits of that power, but I noted that he looked like one who, if he had owned such a checkbook as he spoke of, would have written down larger amounts than the most of us could compass!

Still, his folly was not equal on the one side to the stupidity of these who err in the other direction, for they have a checkbook and yet never

use it! The treasury of Heaven lies open to faith and yet we fret and worry about our little daily cares. We have but to plead a promise of God, to put Him in remembrance, and He will supply all our needs! Why, then, do we pine in need? Fools that we are, to be anxious and poverty-stricken with the possibilities of infinite riches close at hand! Who among us is there that comes up to the text, "You that are the Lord's remembrancers, take you no rest and give Him no rest"? Thus much upon the office—may the Holy Spirit lead all Believers to undertake and carry on this sacred work!

Ministers, Deacons and Elders of Churches are specially called to this. You older and more advanced Christians should lead the way in this holy employment and, as I have already shown you, the sick must take their turn. Every Christian should aspire to take his place in the cordon and in some way watch on the behalf of Zion. But especially should we be constant, instant and fervent in pleading the precious promises of our Lord. These were not given to be forgotten, but to be pleaded and then to be fulfilled. It is written, "For this will I be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." It is the rule of God's Kingdom that we must bring to His remembrance the promise which we would have fulfilled in our own experience! Therefore, "You that are the Lord's remembrancers, take you no rest."

II. My second head is a REMARKABLE CAUTION—"You that are the Lord's remembrancers, *take you no rest*." I quote the best translation.

Take no rest from prayer. Be always praying. If not always in the act of prayer, be always in the spirit of prayer. "Pray without ceasing." Not only reason, but wrestle with God in prayer. Sometimes pray without words and, sometimes, with them. Pray alone, but often pray with Brothers and Sisters. There is special prevalence in the prayer of two or three. "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in Heaven." Gather in the greater congregations for prayer. "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is," as, I regret to say, the manner of many Churches has come to be in these days. The moderns despise the meeting for prayer and in this, they condemn themselves, by acknowledging that they attach little value to their own prayers! Possibly their consciousness of having lost all power with God in prayer is thus betraying itself. Where the Prayer Meeting is despised, there may be cleverness in the preacher, but there will be no unction for the hearer. O my Brothers and Sisters, I beseech you, both as individuals and as a Church, do not restrain prayer! "Watch and pray"—that precept is a condensation of our text.

Never rest from prayer because you are weary of it. Whenever prayer becomes distasteful, it should be a loud call to pray all the more. No man has such need to pray as the man who does not care to pray. When you can pray and long to pray—why, then, you *will* pray! But when you cannot pray and do not wish to pray—why, then, you *must* pray, or evil will come of it! He is on the brink of ruin who forgets the Mercy Seat. When the heart is apathetic towards prayer, the whole man is sickening from a grievous disease. How can we be weary of prayer? It is essential to life! When a man grows weary of breathing, surely he is near to dying! When a

man grows weary of praying, surely we ought to pray anxiously for him, for he is in an evil case.

Never rest from prayer because you have prayed enough. When has a man prayed enough? The greatest pleaders with God in prayer are the hungriest after more of it. The more a man gets from God, the more he desires from God. Those who have but little, ask but little—but to him that has shall be given—and he shall have abundance. Does anyone say, "I have long been prayerful and watchful, and I shall now take things more easily"? Yes. I saw a good man taking it easy the other day—he was riding upon a bicycle with both feet off the pedals—and with the brake in full force. I did not blame the cyclist, but one thing was quite clear—*he was going down the hill*. He would not have had his feet on the rests in that fashion if he had been upon the upgrade. Brother, whenever you begin to put your legs up and have no more work to do, you are going down hill and there is no doubt about it! The way to Heaven is up hill, and every inch of the way will need effort—for the Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence. Grace does not exempt us from activity, but works it in us. If you know the power of the weapon called, "all-prayer," never put it into its sheath, but continually call upon the Lord, and in this matter, "take no rest."

Do not fall into the habit of praying as a matter of routine. "You that are the Lord's remembrancers, take you no rest." I have heard of soldiers sleeping while on the march and I have known some good people sleep while praying, till I have thought that their prayers were a kind of pious snore. They go on with the old phrases without considering what they mean by them. They are like crickets, whose notes are forever the same. "I sleep," says the spouse, "but my heart wakes." But these might more truly say, "I do not sleep, and yet my heart is not awake." Many prayers are like a grocer's or a draper's account—"Ditto, ditto, ditto." The petitions are as "per usual." It is dreary work when we have the shell of prayer before us, but have no oyster in it. The Brother's lips are here in prayer, but his soul has gone home to his shop, or to his farm. The sails of his mill go round as the wind blows, but he is not grinding anything—there is no grist in the mill, no intelligent, loving desire. Let us get out of the ruts of phrases and set petitions! Mere routine religion is hateful and yet how easily we all fall into it! Let us not rest on our oars and hope to make progress by the impetus already gained. All progress made heavenward by the natural drift of the current is seeming and not real. All worship which is mechanical is, so far, dead! God is a Spirit and we can only worship Him acceptably in spirit and in truth—if the spirit is gone, the very truth of the worship is gone—and it becomes an offense rather than a sweet-smelling savor.

Brethren, *take no rest, so as to pray by fits and starts*. Look at what has been done in many Churches—they plan to have a grand time—and possibly they succeed. Everybody comes up to the Prayer Meetings and all appear to be in earnest about the conversion of souls. There is great excitement and probably much good is done. But after that there is a reaction, a stupor of indifference. As in nature, after high hills, deep valleys—so is it with some religious communities. We say of a man, in the proverb,

"He is as sound asleep as a church." Yes, very good. Nothing sleeps so soundly as a church and, especially after a time of excitement. Men who are at one time lively beyond measure, are apt at another time to sleep beyond waking! After a high wind there may come a lull, wherein everything drops, and stagnation reigns supreme. The Lord save us from spasmodic religion!

"You that make mention of the Lord, take you no rest." Always keep in a high state of revival, or if that is a state which cannot be maintained, suspect that it is a condition unhealthy and undesirable. If there is a kind of celestial delirium here and there—and I am afraid that such is a correct description of it—avoid it! The wild fury of the flesh, in which everything is done by noise, and men are saved by bluster, is not of God! An excitement which cannot be kept up, since the spirit of man would be exhausted by it, is questionable. An excitement which is lawless and ungovernable, since the Spirit of God is not ruling it, is to be dreaded. Fanaticism is a tornado of the flesh and not the health-giving breath of the Holy Spirit. It is well to be as you would always wish to be. That pace is best which can, by Divine Grace, be maintained from year to year. Enoch walked with God—he could not have run with Him, but he was always enabled to keep in step with God—and God's pace is always the right one. Oh, for a gracious energy which does not flag, but goes from strength to strength! "You that are the Lord's remembrancers, take you no rest."

Above all, *let us never rest out of despair*. The feeling does come over us, sometimes—"What is the use of our labor? So little comes of it. What is the use of protesting for the Truth of God? The Churches will not hear you. You only earn ill-will, and are ridiculed as an old fogy. What is the use of being earnest about winning souls? Men are indifferent. The *present* engrosses thought—social questions are pressing. Everybody pines for sensationalism or amusement. What profit is there in keeping to the old way?" That spirit creeps over the child of God like the cold of the Arctic regions, numbing him and tending to send him into the sleep of despair. The evidence of this evil power is found in the tendency to restrain prayer before God. From this may our God rescue us! Come, my Brothers and Sisters, I do not know who among you is going to sleep, but I would like to shake the man who is so benumbed, and wake him up. And I hope that, in your turn, when you see me benumbed, you will shake me, also, and wake me up to diligence in prayer!

Let us awake this morning and begin again! We must not, will not, yield to slumber! There is small cause for fear and no cause for despair. Our cause defeated? Not a bit of it! All will yet come right. God waits, but He waits that He may be gracious unto us. His time to favor Zion will come and the good old cause will win the victory! "The work of the Lord is in a greater hand than ours. He will not fail nor be discouraged." "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint"—and when they feel that they are fainting—they should resolve to pray with double earnestness—and faintness will yield to joy.

Only one more observation—*avoid setting any time limits to God in your prayers*. He says, "You that are the Lord's remembrancers, take you no rest." A wife said that she would pray for her husband for 10 years and if

he was not converted, then, she would conclude that there would be no use in further pleading. To that good wife I would say, "You are right in praying 10 years, but you must not limit the Holy One of Israel! Who are you to put your finger down on the almanac and say, 'God shall answer me on such a day, or I will pray no more'? Plead for your husband as long as he lives." "Well," says one, "I have been praying a long time for a favor, but I am now inclined to cease pleading for it." If you have a question about the rightness of the prayer, do not persevere in a mistake. Solve as quickly as possible the question as to the correctness of the request, for if you waver on *that* point, your prayer will be of that wavering kind which meets no acceptance with the Lord! If you are asking what you know the Lord has promised and what is certainly for His Glory, you may pray with confidence—and you may even spend the last breath in your body in praying for it! Give the Lord no rest and take no rest, yourself, but incessantly, perpetually, continually plead with God till He answers you out of His holy place.

III. And so I come, in the last place, to dwell upon the third matter, which is very amazing. The charge to take no rest was notable, but here is A STILL MORE REMARKABLE CHARGE—*Give Him no rest*." What a word is this! I speak with solemn awe! When the Lord condescends so greatly, we must be doubly reverent. Give *God* no rest? I am amazed at such a command! Come, gracious Spirit and teach me how to speak!

I see then, first, very clearly, that *importunity is here commanded*. "Give Him no rest" is our Lord's own command to us concerning the great God. I do not suppose any of you ever advised a beggar to be importunate with you. Did you ever say, "Whenever you see me go over this crossing, ask me for a penny. If I do not give you one, run after me, or call after me all the way down the street. If that does not succeed, lay hold upon me and do not let me go until I help you. Beg without ceasing." Did any of you ever invite applicants to call often and make large requests of you? Oh, no! Importunity is a common enough thing when men are seeking *earthly* gifts, but it is so sadly rare in *heavenly* concerns, that the Lord has to exhort us to be importunate with Him! He does, in effect, say, "Press Me! Urge Me! Lay hold on My strength! Wrestle with Me, as when a man seeks to give another a fall that he may prevail with him." All this, and much more, is included in the expression, "Give Him no rest." Importunity is *commanded*!

Importunity is influential with God. How vividly the Savior sets this forth in His parables! The poor widow seeks justice of an unrighteous judge. She had a good case and she appeared in court begging for justice, where she might expect it. She cried, "My Lord, hear my suit!" She meets with no response—the harsh magistrate declares that he cannot attend to her. The court is occupied with other cases. At the first pause the widow is heard crying, "My Lord, there is now an interval! Will you hear me?" She is sternly refused. Another day she appears, and another, and another—her case is urgent, and she is in terrible earnest to be heard. She is put out of the court, over and over. Then the order is given that she shall be *kept* out. But she gets in, somehow, and her voice, so touching and piercing, is heard in season and out of season, seeking to be delivered from her ad-

versary. Just as the court is closing she cries, "My Lord!" and is answered, "Have not I told you many times before that I cannot attend to you?" "But, my Lord!" He turns on his heels and is gone to his home.

The next morning, when he comes forth from his gate, there is the widow. She cries, "My Lord!" With a curse he spurns her. He goes down to the court and he takes his seat. You see "His Excellency" on the bench with his officers around him—a very great personage is he! The first thing he hears is, "My Lord, I pray you, avenge me of my adversary!" "That woman again! Let her be removed. Go on with the next case." All day long, whenever there is a pause, or when His Lordship rises to retire, there is the same bitter wail, "O my Lord, hear me, I pray you!" The widow haunts him! He dreams about the sad-faced woman with the uplifted finger, and the cry, "Hear me, my Lord! Hear me!" The next morning it is no dream. He is at breakfast when the servant says, "A person begs to see you, Sir. She has been at the door very often and she will not go away." "What is she like?" "Well, it is a woman dressed in mourning—no doubt a widow." "Drive her away! She is a common nuisance!"

He goes to the court and there is the woman—and she begins again. Then the judge says to himself, "Though I fear not God, nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me." The Lord puts that woman's importunity before us as a model and as an encouragement! "And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him?" Pray like that widow. Do not take, "No," for an answer!

Study that other picture. A man has a friend who arrives at his door in the dead of night. The friend has been walking a long, long way and is worn out. When he gets to the door, he says, "I am glad I have got here at last. I lost my way in the burning heat of the sun and it has taken me many hours to find the track and reach your door. Give me, I pray you, a morsel of bread, for I am near to die of hunger." "I have not a morsel in the house. I have nothing to set before you. Come in and try to sleep, for food I have none." "Alas, I could not sleep, I am so faint with hunger. I pray you, find me food, or I shall perish." The compassionate householder resolves to go down the street to a friend and beg from *him,* three cakes. He knocks at the door, but he has no answer. He knocks, and knocks, and calls aloud to his neighbor. The answer comes from the top of the roof that the man is in bed and cannot rise at that unearthly hour to search for bread.

The householder is not to be put off, for his friend is dying of hunger. And so he knocks and shouts, and ceases not. The man in bed on the roof tries to sleep, but the noise is too great, and the children are being frightened and asking what is the matter. He hears the pleadings of his friend and again reminds him that the request is unreasonable at such an hour. But this does not end the matter. Knock! Knock! Knock! Call! Call! Call! "I will not go down!" vows the man in bed. "I will not go away!" says the man below! He keeps up an incessant shout and clatter. Again you hear knock! Knock! Knock! The man has turned on the other side and tried to go to sleep, but he cannot manage it—that knocking is too vigorous. Although he will not help him because he is his friend, "yet because of his impor-

tunity he will rise and give him as many as he needs." Pray after this manner and you shall prevail! Oh, for Grace to knock till God's door is opened! You may have what you will if you understand the art of importunity!

"Give Him no rest!" Importunity would not have been commanded had it not been right for us and prevalent with God! How safely may we commend what the Lord commands! God is to be moved by the importunate prayers of His people. He will hear! He *must* hear, if we will pray with persistent faith!

Importunity on our part is the sign of coming action on God's part. Sometimes the Lord seems, according to Old Testament figure, to put His right hand into His bosom. We cry to Him, "O Lord, how long?" But His right hand is still in His bosom. Error prevails, sin triumphs, God's people are despised—but His right hand is still in His bosom. Take no rest from prayer and give Him no rest! Before long He will pluck His right hand out of His bosom and He will roll up His sleeve and you will see what His bare arm can do! He will work as soon as He sees that His time is come and that will be when we are in earnest and give Him no rest!

Sometimes God's work goes on so well that we have much cause for gratitude and yet we feel that the pace might be greatly quickened. A sermon that could save a hundred could as readily save a thousand if God blessed it to that extent. The same Truth of God which sways one mind could sway a million minds if applied by the Great Spirit. There is no reason why the sowing of the Lord's Word should not bring forth a hundredfold instead of twenty-fold. We may not *dream* that the Spirit of the Lord is straitened! When God is with us, all things are possible. When the Lord fires His saints with zeal, His own work never lags behind. God is never behind the desires of His people—in fact, their longings are prophecies of His giving. When we cry day and night, God will work day and night. When saints groan and sigh for revival, it is because the revival is *already come and has begun within their souls*! When the whole company of the faithful shall glow together with passionate desire and importunate prayer, we may know that our redemption draws near!

Importunate prayer is the sign of a growing work. The sighs and cries of the Church are growing pains. Prayer is the thermometer of Divine Grace. The Lord has committed His Divine Force, in a large degree, to the custody of His people. Unbelief shuts up that Force—as it is written, "He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." Faith, on the other hand, sets the sacred Force free, for, "all things are possible to him that believes." When saints are all alive and instant in prayer, it is the index and token that the Lord will open the windows of Heaven and pour them out such a blessing that they shall not have room enough to receive it!

I have done when I have urged you, my well-beloved Friends, to take this text as a lesson to be practiced. This first sermon on my return ought to be the keynote of this year's service of God. Have you a mind for great Grace and grand enterprises? Or do you prefer to slacken? I hope you will not hesitate, or choose the meaner part. Does the Lord put it into the heart of one and another to feel an agony concerning the unconverted? Do

some of you feel a deep concern for the souls of others? Does this happen to you that teach in the Sunday school, or who go out to the lodging houses? Is this state of mind prevailing among the officers of the Church? Is this the condition of a large proportion of private members? Then a grand future lies before us! If God gives all of us to travail for souls, we shall see greater things than these! Brothers and Sisters, we hold the Truth of God! If we had wickedly departed from the way of the Lord, all the praying in the world would have brought us no spiritual progress! But holding fast the everlasting Gospel, what is now needed is the fire from Heaven to fall upon our altar and consume the sacrifice! Oh, for the Holy Spirit! Oh, for the working of God, Himself, in our midst!

I exhort you who fear the Lord and are His appointed remembrancers, to be much in prayer and in testimony. Pray and preach! Keep not silent! Tell out the simple Gospel! The more you tell of pardon bought with blood, the better. I saw my dear Brother, Archibald Brown, this week, and he told me of a poor fellow in East London who had been visited by a soul-winning Brother. He had been a wild and wicked man. He was ill and the visitor talked long with him. It seemed to make no impression, till one day he explained Substitution to him and the man asked pointedly, "If I believe in Jesus, do you tell me that He took all my sins upon Himself?" "Yes, he bore all your sins in His own body on the tree." "Well, well," the man cried, "if *He* took them, I have not got them." "No," said the other, "that is the glorious Truth of God. The Lord suffered for your sins." "Then I shall not have to suffer for them?" "No," said the visitor. "Your sin is put away." "Never heard that before," said the rough man. "That is the most wonderful thing I ever heard. I believe it! Blessed be God, I believe it and I am saved!" Soon after his son came in—another fellow of the Bill Sykes [Fictitious character in Charles Dickens' "Oliver Twist."—EOD] order and the visitor began exhorting him. The older man cried out, "Give him that little bit! That will do it!"

Just so, "that little bit will do it." The visitor told the story of Jesus dying in the sinner's place and the little bit did the work! Our chief business should be to cry, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." We must bid men look to Jesus and live! Keep not silent! Publish this salvation far and wide! Preach the Cross and plead the blood! Preach and pray for Jesus! He is All in All. Keep His Sacrifice to the front and God will bless His own Word! Oh, that He may now grant us a glorious period of genuine Grace-work! Amen.

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BIT AND BRIDLE—HOW TO ESCAPE THEM
NO. 2190

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 15, 1891,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go:
I will guide you with My eyes. Be you not as the horse,
or as the mule, which have no understanding:
whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle,
lest they come near to you."
Psalm 32:8, 9.

THE joy of full forgiveness is described in the first two verses of this Psalm—"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity and in whose spirit there is no guile." Oh, the blessedness of sitting at Jesus' feet, a sinner washed in His blood! Outside of Heaven there is no greater joy—and even there they sing of blood-washed robes!

After a man is pardoned, anxiety is awakened as to how he shall be kept from sin in the future. The burnt child dreads the fire and, although his burns have all been healed, he dreads the fire none the less, but all the more. These who have been scorched by sin tremble at even a distant approach to the flame. You will always know whether you are delivered from the guilt of sin by answering this question—Am I delivered from the *love* of sin? He who lost his way yesterday feels his need of a guide today and tomorrow. How can the pardoned one endure the thought of sinning, again, against the Lord? David's great anxiety on this score is met by the gracious answer of the Lord—"I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go."

Another thing is noteworthy—David was now rid of guile as well as guilt. Orientals pride themselves on their cunning and David, by nature, had a considerable share of craft about him. But he now drives it from his spirit—he will not, from now on, tolerate himself in deceit. When he had thrown away this false wisdom, this carnal prudence, he felt that he must look elsewhere for guidance. If he is no longer to plot and plan with the cunning which he had shown in the matter of Uriah, he will need other direction—and he looks *up* for it. See how our gracious God comes in with the promise of guidance. "The meek will He guide in judgment: and the meek will He teach His way." "The Lord preserves the simple." The upright, who can no longer trust their own deceitful hearts, shall find the Lord an all-sufficient Guide. Happy is it for them that He has spoken such

a word as this—"I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go."

One other observation. We find David, in this Psalm, reaching to a high state of joy on account of his being forgiven. He exclaims, in the seventh verse, "You shall compass me about with songs of deliverance." A very proper state of mind to be in! It is meet that the pardoned sinner should leap for joy. But, at the same time, the wisdom of God comes in, not to check the joy, but to render it more deep, more sure—and to prevent its coming to an untimely end. David is in ecstasies of delight, but he is to be reminded that he is not yet in Heaven, and that he is compassed about with other things besides songs. The voice of God commends his joy, but also reminds him that there lies before him a future full of perils and a life strewn with temptations. He is, from then on, to be a disciple as well as a singer! He needs to be instructed and taught in the way, for he is still a pilgrim and not yet at his journey's end. Sound the timbrel, if you will, and shout for joy and sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously! But remember that on the other side of the Red Sea there is a wilderness and you will require much Divine Grace to traverse it—such Grace as only the Shepherd of Israel can give you. You will be wise to address yourselves to your journey and resolve to follow Him whose eyes discern the way, and whose hands can help you in it. A pilgrim's life is not all feasting. He has something else to do besides praising God upon the high-sounding cymbals. We must sit at Jesus' feet, as well as look to His Cross. We are to bear His yoke and learn of Him, that we may find rest for our souls.

This may stand as an introduction, for now I need to conduct you further into this grave business of the saved man. You are pardoned, my Friend, you know you are, and you feel the joy of that knowledge. God grant that your joy may abound yet more and more! Sitting in your seat this morning, you are saying, "Oh, the heaped-up blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven and whose sin is covered!" Yes, but you are not yet in Heaven! Something more is needed—not to secure the love of God, not to complete the work of Sovereign Grace—but to educate you for the skies, to make you meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light! About that matter we are going to talk as the Holy Spirit shall enable us.

That I may set before you, to the fullest, the teaching of the text, I would have you note, first, *a privilege to be sought*—Divine instruction, practical teaching and tender guidance. Secondly, *a character to be avoided*—"Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding." This will bring us to consider, thirdly, *an infliction to be escaped*—"Whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle." If you do not wish to be bitted and bridled, be readily obedient to the direction of your Lord! We will come to a close by reflecting that there is a freedom to be attained. You may be free from bit and bridle and guided by the eyes of God. You may find your way to Heaven without the need of these rough chastisements which compel obedience. Oh, for the help of the great Teacher in this matter!

I. First, here is A PRIVILEGE TO BE SOUGHT. I will proceed at once to set it forth from the words before us.

This guidance is *very full in its nature*. Three words are used to describe it—"I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go: I will guide you with My eyes."

The first word is, "I will instruct you"—a promise more full of meaning than would appear upon its surface. God is prepared to give you an inward understanding of spiritual things, for His instruction is intensely effectual upon the mind. The Lord is prepared to teach you in His Truths—to make you wise in heavenly matters. Though saved, you are, as yet, a mere child, and unfamiliar with great Truths of God. You know but little of Divine things—you know little of yourself, little of your danger, little of holiness and little of God—but the Lord promises, here, to take you for His pupil and to be, Himself, your Instructor! He instructs so effectually as really to build up the mind and, therefore, the Psalmist says, "Through Your precepts I get understanding." Other instructors can awaken that measure of understanding which is already ours, but *God* gives understanding to the simple. A good understanding is one of the gifts of His Grace and blessed are they who receive it!

The second word is, "I will teach you." And this teaching is most practical, for the promise is—"I will teach you in the way which you shall go." God adds the precept to the doctrine and instructs us in both. Eminently precious is that practical teaching by which you are made to know what to do and how to do it. Theoretical teaching is of small importance compared with this practical learning. The Lord will teach us the art and mystery of holiness. He will apprentice us to the Lord Jesus as the Master of Righteousness—he will make us journeymen, one of these days, and turn us into full-blown "workmen that need not to be ashamed." Our great Teacher sends forth fine workmen, whose good works are seen of men and cause them to glorify the Father in Heaven.

The promise of the Lord, in the third word of the verse, goes even further than doctrinal and practical instruction, for we read, "I will guide you with My eyes." Herein is fellowship as well as instruction, for the guide goes with the traveler, and thus will God, in the process of our instruction, give us fellowship with Himself. Blessed are they who follow the Lamb wherever He goes—they have both the privilege of holy walk and heavenly company. It is our high privilege that, while our Shepherd goes before us, He calls us by name and we follow closely in His footsteps, as His well-beloved sheep. We are not only to be *told* the way and *led* into the way, but to be *accompanied* in it by our Teacher and Friend. The education which the Lord provides is complete in all its branches—mind, life and heart are all under the Divine tuition! This is no pauper school, or merely preparatory seminary—the text describes a high school of holiness, a grammar school of Grace, a University of holiness! In this place of sacred instruction, you may take high degrees, if you will, and also become teachers of others! He who forgave you provides everything for you that you can need to make you a disciple, indeed, a learner who in the ages to

come shall make known to angels and principalities and powers the manifold wisdom of God! Who would not be a scholar in such a University as this?

Note, next, that *this teaching is Divine in its source*. See how it runs—"*I* will instruct you." How delightful! "*I* will instruct you: *I* will guide you with My eyes." The Lord will not put us in a low class, where some half-instructed usher or pupil-teacher shall look after us. No, we shall, all of us, be taught by the Lord Jesus, Himself, and His Holy Spirit! It is written, "*I* will instruct you: *I* will guide you." Our Lord may instruct us by men who are taught of Himself, but, after all, the best of His servants cannot teach us anything profitably except the Lord, Himself, teaches by them and through them! He alone teaches us to profit. What a wonderful condescension it is that the Lord should become a Teacher! Sunday school teachers, adore the Head of your sacred college, even God Himself! "*I* will teach you, I will instruct you." They are well taught that are taught of God and this privilege is common to all the family of love, for the Scripture says, "All your children shall be taught of the Lord." It is not said that a *portion* of them shall be left to be trained by angels or archangels, but they shall all be taught of the Lord! Jehovah, Himself, will be the Instructor of every soul that comes to Him through Jesus Christ!

Observe *how wonderfully personal is this promised guidance*. While the address in the ninth verse is in the plural, "Be *you* not as the horse, or as the mule," the promise is in the singular to each individual—"I will instruct *you* and teach *you* in the way which *you* shall go; I will guide *you* with My eyes." Wonder of wonders, the Infinite focuses Himself upon the insignificant! We who are less than the motes in the sunbeam, are, nevertheless, individually considered by Him who fills all in all, who is greater than all that He fills! "I will instruct *you*." Yes, Jehovah will condescend to instruct that Believer who is feeblest of all the company. Rejoice, my Brothers and Sisters, that though your understanding is a commonplace one, and though your position is very obscure, yet the Lord does not say, "I will send you to a preparatory school kept by some inferior teacher." But He does say, "I will instruct you." God instructs each Believer as truly as if He were His only child. It is delightful to reflect that while Christ's death has a sufficient efficacy in it to save a believing world, yet if His design had been to save only me, He would have to have offered the same Sacrifice as He has done. His death would have been necessary to prove that "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." So, while our Lord's teaching would suffice to instruct myriads of men who are willing to learn, yet does He condescend to bring all His teaching to bear upon each single person—"I will instruct *you* and teach *you* in the way which *you* shall go." I note with comfort, in the text, what the French call *tu-toi-ag*e. Speaking to one another very familiarly, they say, "you" and, "you." How sweetly is this seen in this passage—"I will instruct *you* and teach *you* in the way which you shall go. I will guide *you* with My eyes"! Hear you not the great Father talking to His dear child? Yes, I hear Him speaking to you and to me!

Blessed be His name for such familiar love! Let us profit by its promise even to the fullest.

Furthermore, *this teaching is delightfully tender*—"I will guide you with My eyes." That is to say, if you are willing to be so directed, the Lord will guide you, not by the rough means of bit and bridle, muzzle and cord, but with His eyes—a way which implies understanding on your part and love on His part. It is a recognition of confidence in us when He promises, thus, to guide us. The mistress at the head of the table gives a nod to Sarah. She knows what it means and the will of the lady is done at once. The master has not to enter into details with old John, who has been with him for so many years. John knows his wishes and a wink or a look will speak volumes! Well-trained children of God have their faces toward Him and soon perceive His mind—and this secures their prompt obedience. They see much in little and they make great account of every Word of the Lord. When we are what we ought to be, the guidance of the Lord is not sent us in thunder, but in a still small voice! And His instruction comes, not in tempests and hailstones, but in sunbeams and dewdrops. Some saints can be effectually led with a thread of hair. Cords of love and bands of a man are at once the most tender and the strongest bonds for a sanctified soul. "I will guide you with My eyes" is a charming promise, but it is of no use to the blind, the stubborn, the careless, or the self-willed. What a pity that any should debar themselves from so choice a privilege!

See, dear Friends, you that have been lately pardoned, and you, of older years, who have long been forgiven, see what guidance there is for you all the way from your starting point to the gate of pearl at the end of the road! I say this because I mean to wind up this point with the remark—*This teaching is constant*. "I *will* instruct you and teach you; I *will* guide you." He that has begun to guide will not suddenly desert! He that has commenced to teach you will never dismiss you from His class! He that has, in a measure, instructed you and given you an understanding, will continue to teach you until He has perfected you in the knowledge of Himself and conformed you to the image of His Son! I feel most happy to think that such a privilege is promised and provided. I have heard of some who dream that, once forgiven, they may live as they wish—but to such I would say, "You know nothing about the matter. You are in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity." The man who believes in Jesus for salvation, believes in Him so as to be set free from his sins—and his great anxiety is to be saved from all iniquity and to be led in the ways of righteousness to the glory of God! Here is comfort for you that are really seeking a holy life—God has made provision for your being led in it! He who has made you His child will put you in school and teach you until you shall know the Lord Jesus as the Way, the Truth, and the Life! You shall soon know your Father's name and Character and sing unto His praise among the bright intelligences that surround His Throne!

II. I now ask your attention while I show you A CHARACTER TO BE AVOIDED. We are told that since the Lord is ready to instruct us, we are not to be stubborn and wayward. It is ours to be docile and obedient. "Be

you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near to you."

We are not to imitate *creatures of which we are the superiors*. Man is made to have dominion over the horse, the mule and the whole animal creation—let him not seek his models among his servants. I have sometimes heard speeches which have looked in that unwise direction. One said, in my hearing, as an excuse for a passionate speech, "I could not help it. If you tread on a worm it will turn." Is a worm to be the example for a saint? By a worm in that case, I suppose, is meant a serpent—and are you to follow serpents in their malice and venom? I have heard the same thing turned the other way—and it has been made to appear as if an animal might be all the worse for copying a man. The driver of an omnibus was using his whip pretty freely upon one of his horses, and a gentleman sitting on the box-seat observed, "You never strike the horse on this side." "Bless you!" said the driver, "if I were to touch that mare, when I went near her in the stable at night, she would kick me like a Christian!" What a remarkable simile, was it not? "Like a Christian!" Is that so, that Christians *kick*? That Christians are found taking revenge? Here is a matter about which we would urgently cry, "Be you not as the horse, or as the mule." Never render evil for evil, railing for railing, for that is to copy the beasts of the field! Let us look upward to the highest for our model and never go down to the beasts of the field for models.

We must mind that we do not imitate *creatures to whom we are so near akin*. The mule has a touch of the ass in it and I fear it is not the only creature of which this may be said. Is not man, as unredeemed, likened to the ass in the types of the Mosaic Law? Ah, Brothers and Sisters, we are likened in Scripture to many strange beasts, and not without reason! St. Augustine and other ancient writers discuss, at length, the likeness which exists between men and *mules*. I am not going to follow them in their observations, but would simply say with Dr. Donne, "They have gone far in these illusions and applications. And they might have gone as far further as it had pleased them—they have sea-room enough that will compare a beast and a sinner together—and they shall find many times, in the way, the beast the better man." I am afraid that it is so. David himself says, "So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before You"—and yet he was so good a man that he could add, "Nevertheless I am continually with You." A large part of us is animal and its tendency is to drag down that part which is more than angelic. How abject and yet how august is man! Brother to the worm and yet akin to Deity! Immortal and yet a child of dust! Be not the prey of your lower natures—as children of God, yield not yourselves to that which it is your duty to subdue! Have the horse and mule in subjection—keep under your body—do not bear the burden of the animal but make the animal your burden-bearer. "Be you not as the horse, or as the mule," but rise superior to flesh and blood. May the Spirit of the Lord help your infirmities in this matter!

I believe the Psalmist here alludes to the horse and mule *as creatures naturally wild and needing to be broken and trained*. We are by nature as the wild ass that inhales the wind of the wilderness—"he scorns the multitude of the city, neither regards he the crying of the driver." These wild creatures we can make nothing of till we break them in—be not like they—useless, untrained, unbroken. Yet this is how we begin life naturally and spiritually. It is good to get broken in early in life—"it is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth." It is an ill thing for a man to have no restraint in youth and no trouble in manhood. When men and women follow out their own sweet wills, the end is seven-fold bitterness. A mind uncorrected is a vine unpruned, which yields no fruit, but trails along the ground and rots as it trails. It is a grand thing to learn the meaning of the word, "obey." It is ill with these who remain unsubdued. They are of little worth to themselves or to others. The Holy Spirit would not have any of the Lord's people to be of that wild, untamable character, for which there is neither use nor hope.

Furthermore, we are not to imitate *creatures devoid of reason*. "Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding." He especially lays stress on this—that they are *without understanding*. What does he mean by that? Horses and mules have been so trained that they have needed neither bit nor bridle and have performed marvelous feats at a word. It is possible for these animals to be brought to so high a training that they obey the word of command without the use of force. They come to have an understanding of their owner's intent and act as if they really entered into their master's designs. With the horses and mules of *our* streets—and of David's day—this is not the case. These display little understanding and we are not to be like they. You are a reasoning man—act reasonably! You have understanding—do not act under mere impulse, blind willfulness, or ignorant folly. Here is the point, Brothers and Sisters—what we need is to come to an understanding with God and to stay in that condition. The horse does not understand his driver's wishes, except as he intimates them through the bit and bridle. When he is to turn, when he is to quicken his pace and when he is to stand still, he must be told through the rein, for, apart from the bit in his mouth, he has no understanding of the man's mind.

That thought which works in the mind of his driver is not working in the mule's mind and, therefore, he has to feel a pull at his mouth to make him know his master's desire. We need to come to an understanding with God. "Be you not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." Be sensitive to the Spirit of God! So dwell in God that He shall dwell in you and His indwelling shall cause you to feel at once what it is that He would have you to do. May your will be so in accord with the Lord's will that you will only what He wills! This is the highest form of understanding that I know of—may we never rest till we have it. "Give me understanding and I shall keep Your Law." You know how we say, "I should like to come to some understanding with that man," for you feel that without it your relations are unsatisfactory. When two friends really understand each

other's purpose and enter into each other's design, then they act as if they were one. Be you so near to God in heart that you can be guided with His eyes because you understand the mind of your heavenly Father and are in full sympathy with Him!

But the Psalmist also adds, concerning the horse and the mule, that having no understanding, they are *creatures with much self-will and waywardness*. "Their mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near to you." If you look at the Revised Version, you will find it is, "else they will *not* come near to you." And Calvin has it, "lest they kick at you." This is a very obscure passage as to the words, but it is not at all doubtful as to its sense, for the point is that the animal will not do what it should do, but it will obstinately do what it ought not to do—until it gets the bit in its mouth to compel it to do its master's will. So is it with ourselves, but so it should not be! At one time we find men rashly rushing near to God—they have no reverence, no holy trembling and awe. Some appear to be as familiar with God as if He were one of them. Thus the Lord complains in the Psalm, "You thought that I was altogether such an one as yourself." Such vain people need a bit, lest they come near to God. They need to hear the voice which cries, "Draw not near here: put off your shoes from off your feet." Oh, for more holy reverence!

Others will not come near to God at all and need a bit because they run off from the Lord into infidelity, blasphemy, or open vice. These endeavor to carry out their own wild wills, throwing up their heels as they please, and prancing over hill and plain with a defiant contempt of rule and order. We know that kind of people—let us not in any measure grow like they. There are horses and mules that will kick, bite, and do grievous harm to these round about them unless they are restrained with straps and harness. I am afraid I know some kicking saints as well as kicking sinners and I am more afraid of these kicking professors than of the outwardly wicked. I would sooner be bitten by a wolf than by a sheep, that is to say, I could more readily bear injury from an ungodly man than from a professed Believer. A kick from a Christian causes very serious wounding to a gracious heart. "It was not an enemy: then I could have borne it." Remember the question and answer—"What are these wounds in your hands? Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends." These are wounds, indeed, which our Lord receives from a traitorous disciple. "Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they kick at you." Kick not at the will of your Lord! Kick not at the doctrines of His Word. Kick not at the precepts of His house. Kick not at His servants. Kick not at His Providences. Kick not at His Cross. Surely, I need not further urge you to avoid this unlovely character. None of you would wish to be as the horse, or as the mule.

III. I will now dwell for a few minutes upon AN INFLICTION TO BE ESCAPED. If you mean to be like the horse or the mule, you may readily be so, but you will have to pay the penalty. If the Lord means to save you, He will use a bit and a bridle upon you, if you render them necessary by your

willfulness. If you will be guided by His eyes, there will be no need for such stern work—but if you are stubborn, He will not spare you.

I may say of this bit and bridle, that such trappings are *a curb upon freedom*. A man would not endure to go about wearing a bit and a bridle, yet many a child of God is in that condition *spiritually* because he is not subdued to the will of the Lord. Because he is not tender of conscience, because he is frequently disobedient, because he does not carry out his Lord's will, he has to suffer severe discipline and labor under serious disadvantage. If the man were willingly obedient to the Divine will, things would go more happily with him.

The bit is not applied unless it is found necessary, but *it will be applied if necessary*. My text says, "Whose mouth *must* be held in with bit and bridle. Mark that, "must." That *must* arises out of the nature of the creature dealt with. Some men, if they are to go to Heaven, must be poor on the road, or must be sick, or must be defeated, or must be misunderstood—not because there is any real necessity, apart from their obstinate, cross-grained nature—but because they, themselves, render it necessary. God is resolved to save them and, therefore, he will drive them to salvation with bit and bridle rather than leave them free to rush downward to Hell through the indulgence of their own passions and ambitions!

Dear Friends, *what a wretched descent is this from being guided by God's eyes*! In the first case we have an intelligent servant so in accord with his Lord that a look suffices to set him running in the way of obedience. And in the second case we have an avowedly Christian man so out of accord with God that he has to be treated like a mule which will only yield under compulsion and only obey as it is made to smart! I do not know, dear Brothers and Sisters, if this description applies to any of you, but if it does, kindly take it home—and if I seem to be personal to you—well, I intend to be personal and, therefore, I dare not apologize. I am afraid that many of us ought to make it more personal to ourselves than we are likely to do. There is a hair of the mule's tail in every one of us!

"Be you not as the horse, or as the mule," or you shall have your mouth held in with bit and bridle. *That is always a very unpleasant matter*. It is not comfortable, even to a mule, to wear bit and bridle, and it certainly must be very unpleasant to a man. I have known Brothers and Sisters whom God could not use in the conversion of many souls, for they could not bear prosperity. The Lord did bless the preacher, once, and he grew so great in his own esteem that he was not bearable to these around him. For the man's own sake the good Lord saw that it was not safe to let him be useful. Here is a man who formerly succeeded in business, but he grew so worldly, so purse-proud, so forgetful of God, that it was necessary to take his wealth away from him! And it has been done—and now he is devout and lowly.

Another man, when he is in health and strength, is so full of levity and carelessness that he plays the fool. And, in order to keep him right, it is necessary to let him have a sluggish liver, or an aching head, or a sick home, or something else which may sober him. My Friend, if God means

to get you to Heaven, He will lead you there gently if you will freely go. But if you are obstinate and hard, He will thrust the bit between your jaws and drive you there. The less willfulness the less harness, but if need be, you shall wear all the paraphernalia of an unquiet horse, for the great Trainer will have the upper hand of you and thus He will save you! The Lord would be glad for you to go without these disagreeable things, but if you will have them, you shall have them.

I know a person who is always grumbling and I do not wonder that he always seems to have cause for it. It is like the child that I heard crying and its mother said to it, "Hold your tongue! If you cry for nothing, I will soon give you something to cry for." Many a child of God has found something to cry for as the result of wanton murmuring. Some Hearers even go to the House of God and complain that the preacher says this, and does not say that, and omits the other. Before long the Lord removes the preacher they complained of and they have nobody to feed their souls—and then they begin to wish they had the old preacher back again! Well, well, if you make rods for your backs, God will use them upon you! It is His custom not to let anything lie idle in His House. So, if you are busy making a rod, He will be busy in putting it to its proper use.

But all this is *unnatural to the child of God*. Your children do not go about your house with bits in their mouths and bridles on their heads. God would not have his own regenerated ones going up and down in the world all bitted and bridled—but it shall be so sooner than they shall be lost! Disobedience is ruin—from that He must deliver His people. If we take delight in holiness, we shall not need rough usage. Here is the sweet alternative—"I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go: I will guide you with My eyes." This is God's way! Oh that it may be *our* way! May the good Spirit lead us into it! Do not drive your Savior to be stern with you. Do not choose the way of hardness—the brutish way, the mulish way. "Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding," for then you will become sad, gloomy, dull, stupid and full of disquietude. It is essential that your iniquities should be subdued and they shall be. He will save you—save you from rebellion, save you from self-seeking and self-will. He will bend you to His holy will. And if it cannot come to pass anyway else—then the bit and the bridle shall conquer you! O Souls, submit yourselves to God. Vex not His Holy Spirit by hardness of heart.

IV. Now I close by noticing A FREEDOM TO BE ATTAINED. There are children of God who wear no bit or bridle—the Lord has loosed their bonds. To them, obedience is delight—they keep His commands with their whole heart. The Son has made them free and they are free, indeed!

They are free, first, *because they are in touch with God*. God's will is their will. They answer to the Lord as the echo to the voice. Happy is he who can say, "Whatever You desire, O my Lord, I would desire it because You desire it." Then is it safe for the Lord to leave the man free from compulsion. It is written, "Delight yourself also in the Lord; and He shall give you the desires of your heart." This large liberty can only be promised to

these whose desires are in accordance with their heavenly delight. When the desires run towards God with delight, they shall surely be granted. When you and God have come to a good, clear understanding with each other, so that you yield to Him in all things. Then He will hear your prayers and give you the blessing which makes rich and adds no sorrow. When you rejoice in Christ Jesus, in whom the Father is well pleased, then will the Lord be pleased with you! When you cry to Him in the day of trouble, coming to the Mercy Seat, where He delights to dwell, then He will meet with you and lift up the light of His Countenance upon you.

You shall be free, next, because *you are tutored*. The Lord cannot trust our wild nature—He gives freedom where He gives His Spirit—"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." How does our Lord put it?—"Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls." He gives rest through His *blood*. He makes you find rest through learning of Him and bearing His yoke. It is only a horse that has been long taught and trained by great skill that can be trusted to go through a performance without bit or bridle. I sometimes hope there will come a day when these who drive horses will not need to carry whips, because the noble animals have been so trained by kindness as to answer to a *word*. I fear that time is a long way off but I have greater hope of you, beloved Brothers and Sisters, that you will be so trained that no constraint but that of the love of Christ will be needed to be put upon you. The Law was not made for a righteous man. I hope we shall not need Church discipline, or Providential discipline, because we have been trained to joyful, watchful, exact obedience. Oh, that it were so! Teach me, O Lord! Teach me Your way. Show me what You would have me to do. Make me to know the perfect love which casts out fear. When we are thus instructed, the Lord will leave us by His sweet Grace to be encompassed about by mercy and to be guided by His eyes.

We shall be free, again, because *always trusting*. Look at the 10th verse—"He that trusts in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about." Faith gives life and more faith gives light and liberty. When we completely trust in God, we shall do His will completely. When we raise no questions with God—when our reliance upon Him is without reserve; when we know by faith that His will and way for us are perfect—then we shall run in the way of His Commandments because He has enlarged our steps. When we have received life more abundantly through a growing faith, it will be safe for our Lord to take away all bits and bridles—but not till then. When, through Grace, faith has triumphantly mastered our whole being, we shall be victorious over the law of sin and death which dwells in our members and tends to unrighteousness. And then shall the yoke be taken away and the burden be removed. Blessed freedom this!

Especially *free because tender*. "Be you not as the horse, or as the mule"—these are thick of skin, tough of mouth—and so they are mastered by hard means. If we become as tender as the apple of an eye, God will guide us with His eyes. If we avoid even the *appearance* of evil and shun every false way with delicate sensitiveness of mind, we shall hear little

about bits and bridles and the many other sorrows which shall be to the wicked. Ah, dear Brothers and Sisters, what a difference there is between one man and another even in the same Church, holding the same faith! One Christian man needs repeated and urgent warnings, while another is distressed with half a word of admonition! It is hard to stir one to generosity, or to any exertion in the Lord's cause, while another is earnest at once. Love works more in some than fear can produce in others. We have to use strong arguments and sharp cuts of the whip with certain sluggish minds, while others are all sensitiveness and take to themselves censures which were never meant for them.

Oh for a tender heart! May the heart of stone be taken away and a heart of flesh be granted! May we be to the Lord's will as sensitive as the mercury to air and heat! The wave is flowing and a cork upon the water is carried wherever the current moves. That same wave merely ripples at the side of a man-of-war—it does not stir in the least degree. Saintly souls feel the ripples of the Holy Spirit, while self-sufficient professors know nothing of anything less than a tornado! Crave as a choice gift the renewal of a right spirit within you and that right spirit will be eminently tender and pliant to the will of the Lord. My Brothers and Sisters, my longing is that you and I may stand with our faces towards the Lord, watching for the faintest indications of the Divine will. May we be humble, teachable and mild! May our soul be even as a weaned child!

All this will lead to high joy. See how the Psalm ends, "Shout for joy, all you that are upright in heart"! When the bit is taken from the mouth, the tongue will show forth the praises of the Lord! When the bridle is gone, the mouth is free to sing to the Most High! If the heart is well adjusted, there will be music in the life. When we follow the Lord's guidance with alacrity, peace shall be our companion—and joy shall hover over us like a guardian angel! This world will be the vestibule of Heaven when we begin, even now, to rehearse that perfect obedience which is the essential condition of bliss. Beloved, all this the Holy Spirit must work in our hearts, or it will never be there. Cry to Him for it in the name of Jesus, and the Lord will give you an answer of peace!

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 32.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN-BOOK"—30, 651, 649.

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BELIEVING ON JESUS—AND ITS COUNTERFEITS
NO. 2191

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 22, 1891,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"As He spoke these words, many believed on Him. Then said Jesus to those Jews which had believed Him, If you continue in My Word, then are you My disciples, indeed; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:30-32.

Our Lord, on this occasion, was surrounded by quibblers. We must not be astonished if the like should happen to us when declaring the Gospel. Our Lord went on preaching, all the same, and He did not conceal objectionable Truth because of opposition—say, rather, that He set it forth with greater boldness and decision when surrounded by His enemies! The more they opposed, the more He testified.

The Lord Jesus also told the contradicting sinners that the day would come when quibblers would be convicted. Observe how He put it—"When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall you know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself." Quibblers may have a fine time of it just now, but they will, one day, be convicted either to their conversion or their confusion! Let us hope that many will see the Truth before they die—early enough to seek and find a Savior. But many in our Lord's day who discovered it after His uplifting on the Cross and His uplifting from the grave, came by their knowledge sadly late, for in the meantime they had crucified the Lord of Glory. Ah, how much of sin comes out of delayed faith! A far greater number of these Jews were convicted in their minds altogether too late, for when they were driven to feel, by the attendant circumstances of His Crucifixion and Resurrection, that He really was the Son of God, they still persevered in rebellion and sank into obstinate rejection of His claims. On such His blood rested to their eternal condemnation. Quibblers, you may riot for a little season, but your time is short! The hour will come when you shall behold and wonder—and perish. I pray that there may come an end to your unbelief by your being convicted in this life and led to repentance. But if it is not so, you will certainly be ashamed and confounded in the day when the Lord shall come in His Glory and you shall, in vain, beseech the mountains to fall upon you and hide you from His face!

Quibblers ought to be convinced even now—the Savior implies this when He adds, "He that sent Me is with Me: the Father has not left Me alone; for I always do those things that please Him." The Character of Je-

sus should have convinced the Jews of His mission. His evident obedience to God and the equally evident witness of God to Him, would have led them to see His Messiahship if they had not been blinded by prejudice and pride. Any candid man at the present day, studying the life of Christ and observing His unique Character, should be convinced that He is the Son of God—and should come to believe in Him.

But, Beloved, though the Savior was thus surrounded with objectors and had so much to endure from their ignorance and their malice, yet His controversies with them were not without hopeful effects, for our text informs us, "As He spoke these words, many believed on Him." Albeit we may be surrounded with general and virulent opposition, yet there will be fruit from the preaching of the Truth of God. The Word of the Lord shall not return unto Him void—it shall prosper in the thing whereto God has sent it. We may hope that not only a few, but *many* will accept the sacred testimony, since we see that, even in the midst of an exceedingly hot dispute, it happened that, "As He spoke these words, many believed on Him."

I. These Believers were not all of one kind and upon that fact I shall enlarge in this beginning of my sermon. Let that stand as our first observation upon the text—OUR LORD HAD DIFFERENT KINDS OF BELIEVERS AROUND HIM. There were evidently two sorts of Believers who may be set forth to you by the differing expressions used in the Revised Version. We read in verse thirty, "Many believed on Him." And then in the 31st verse we read of "those Jews which had believed Him." Mark the distinction between, "believed on Him" and, "*had* believed Him." It is a singular expression, also, "Those Jews which had believed Him." They were still Jews as to their traditional belief and connection—Jews first of all—whatever they might be in connection with their Judaism. The omission of the word, "on," or, "in," is a happy one, because it is exactly accurate, and it helps to bring out an important distinction while it also accounts for what seems so strange, that those who had believed Him should, almost immediately after, charge Him with being a Samaritan and having a devil, and should even take up stones to stone Him! There were two sorts of Believers and on these I will speak a while.

The first, "*believed on Him.*" These are the right kind. What is it to believe on Christ? It means not only to accept what He says as true and to believe that He is the Messiah and the Son of God, but trustfully to rest in Him. To believe on Him is to take Him as the ground of our hope, as our Savior, upon whom we depend for salvation. When we believe *in* Him or *on* Him, we accept Him as God sets Him forth—and we make use of Him by trusting on Him to do for us what God has appointed Him to do. This trusting on Jesus is saving faith! "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." To believe Him may be a very different thing from believing *on* Him. Such belief may fall far short of saving faith. To believe on Him means heartily to give yourself up to Him and to follow Him as the Way, the Truth and the Life to you. Rejecting all rival confidences, the heart leans all its weight on Jesus and

leaves all its burdens with Him. Believing in Him, we repose all our concerns, for time and for eternity, in His hands.

To believe on Him is also to believe implicitly. We believe all that He may yet say. We accept not only what He says which we can fully understand, but that which as yet is dark to us. We so believe in Him that we go with Him in all His teachings, be they what they may. We not only go as far as He has revealed Himself to us, but we are prepared to go as much farther as He pleases. What He says is the Truth of God to us, on the sole evidence that He says it! We believe in Jesus, not because we judge that what He says can be endorsed by our understanding (though that is, indeed, the case), but because *He says it*! Our Lord's Word is reason enough for us. The *ipse dixit* of the Son of God suffices us, even if all men deny His assertions. He has said it and He is the Truth of God, itself. We believe on Him—Son of God and Son of Man, living, dying, risen again, ascended into the heavens—we trust Him. He is our Infallible Prophet and our Omniscient Teacher. We rest ourselves wholly on Him! That is saving faith. Oh, that it may be said of this congregation, "Many believed on Him"!

But there is another kind of faith which was produced by the Savior's testimony. It had much of hope in it and yet it never came to anything. There is a *temporary* faith which believes Jesus, in a sense, and after its own way of understanding Him, or rather of *misunderstanding* Him. This faith believes *about* Him; believes that He was undoubtedly sent of God; that He was a great Prophet; that what He says is, to a high degree, reasonable and right and so forth. This faith believes what He has just now said, but it is not prepared to believe on Him so as to accept everything that He may say at another time. This faith believes everything that commands itself to its own judgement—it does not, in fact, believe in Jesus, but believes in *itself*—and in Him only so far as He agrees with its own opinions. This faith is not prepared to obey Christ and accept Him as its Master and Lord. This was the kind of faith these Jews possessed—it was a faith which was so crowded up with a mass of favorite prejudices that before long it was smothered by them! They might accept Jesus as the Messiah, but then He must be the kind of Messiah they had always pictured in their own minds—a leader who would defeat the Romans, who would deliver Palestine from the foreign yoke, rebuild the Temple and glorify the Jewish race. They half hoped that He might turn out to be a great leader for their own purposes, but they did not believe in Him as He revealed Himself as the Light of the world, as the Son of God and as One with the Father.

A great deal of disbelief and misbelief is current at the present day. We are encouraged by certain persons to include in our churches all that have *any* sort of belief and, indeed, the line is to be more inclusive, still, for those who have *no belief* at all are to find an open door! The Church of Christ is to be a menagerie of creatures of every kind. I fear if they come into this Noah's ark, wild beasts, they will also go out wild beasts. Only those who enter by the door of regeneration and spiritual faith will, in very deed, be within the Kingdom of the Lord! If they have received Christ, we may receive them into His Church, but not else. It is true, the people of

temporary faith will creep into the visible Church, but they do so on their own responsibility.

Nor need we think that some strange thing has happened to us as a Church when the baser sort are found among us, for one such entered into that college of Apostles—a man who, doubtless, believed the words of Jesus, and thought Him to be the Messiah. I mean Judas, who, with a traitor's hand, sold his Master. His intellect had been convinced, but his heart had never been renewed. He even dared to use his profession of religion and the position which it brought him, as a means of unhallowed gain. Another notable believer of this sort was Simon Magus, who believed because he saw the signs and wonders worked by the Apostles. But as he, also, sought to make gain of godliness, he remained in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity—and never became "a disciple, indeed." There is a greater one than all these, even the devils. We read that "the devils believe and tremble." They hold the faith and feel something of the power of it, for they tremble which is more than modern critics do! Devils know that Jesus is the Christ of God, for they have, upon occasion, confessed it, and have borne witness to the Gospel in the open streets, crying after the preachers of the Word. And yet, with all their knowledge, and with much of a *sort* of faith, and with an apprehension which leads to trembling, they still remain devils and make no advance towards God.

Ah, my Hearers! Beware of that faith which is a mere intellectual movement, which does not control the heart and the life. To come to faith through a cold argument and to feel no spiritual life is but a poor business. You need a faith that leads you to an entire reliance upon the Person of Jesus, to the giving up of everything to Him, to the reception of Him as your Savior and King, your All in All. You have not believed unto eternal life unless you have so believed on Him that you make Him the foundation and cornerstone of your hope! You must believe in Him as taking away sin! God has set Him forth to be the Propitiation for sin and you *must* believe on Him in that capacity!

This will suffice upon our first head—and this very naturally leads us to the second remark.

II. OUR LORD TAKES NOTICE EVEN OF THE LOWEST SORT OF FAITH. When He saw that these people believed Him in a measure and were willing to accept His testimony so far as they comprehended it, *He looked upon them hopefully* and spoke to them. Out of a weak and imperfect faith, something better may arise. Saving faith, in its secret beginnings, may be contained in this common and doubtful faith. It is written, "When the Son of Man comes, shall He find faith on the earth?" Certainly *He* can find it if anyone can! He has a very quick eye for faith. He deals with little faith as we used to do with a spark in the tinder, in the days of our boyhood. When we had struck a spark and it fell into the tinder—though it was a very tiny one—we watched it eagerly, we blew upon it softly and we were zealous to increase it, so that we might kindle our match thereby. When our Lord Jesus sees a tiny spark of faith in a man's heart, though it is quite insufficient, of itself, for salvation, yet He regards it with hope and watches over it, if, haply, this little faith may grow to

something more. It is the way of our compassionate Lord not to quench the smoking flax, nor break the bruised reed. If any of you have only a little faith, now, and that marred by ignorance and prejudice, it may be like a connecting thread between you and Jesus—and the thread may thicken to a cable. Your partial and feeble faith as yet only takes hold upon a part of the Revelation of God, but I am glad that it takes hold on anything which is from above! I would not roughly break that single holdfast which now links you to the Truth of God—and yet I would not have you *trust to it* as though it would stand the stress of tempest. Oh, that your faith may be increased till you trustfully commit yourself to Jesus and believe in Him unto eternal life!

Our Lord addressed Himself especially to these questionable Believers. He turned from His assured disciples to look after those who were more in danger. Their character was a curious combination—full of peril—"Jews who believed Him." You that are familiar with the New Testament Scriptures will think the phrase more suggestive than it, at first sight, appears. It reminds me of those of you who believe the Gospel and still remain worldly, impenitent, prayerless. You fear the Lord and serve other gods! You are not infidels in name, but you are atheists in life! To you there is urgent need that I speak. The Master turned round and spoke to those who were Believers and yet not Believers—holding with Jesus—and yet really opposed to Him. Oh, you that halt between two opinions, my Lord looks on you with a pitying hopefulness and He speaks especially to you at this time! May you have Divine Grace to hear and obey His Word!

It is clear that *He encourages them, but He does not flatter them*. He says, "if." A great, "if," hovered over them like a threatening cloud. Wisely does our Lord commence His word to them with, "if." "*If* you continue in My Word, then are you My disciples, indeed." Continuance is the sure test of the genuine Believer. Our Lord does not say, "Go your way, you are not My disciples." He, in effect, says, "I stand in doubt of you. The proof of your discipleship will be your persevering in your faith." If we say that we believe in Jesus, we must prove it by abiding in believing and by still further believing! The Word of Jesus must be the object of our faith—into that Word we must enter—and in that Word we must continue. Beginning to believe is *nothing* unless we continue to believe!

Our Lord showed His interest in the weaker sort of Believers by helping them on in the safe way, *urging them to continue in His Word*. "You believe," He seems to say, "continue to believe! Believe more. Believe all that I say. You have entered into My Word—dive deeper into it and abide in it. Let My Word surround you—dwell in it—continue in it." Good advice this! And it is the advice I would give in my Master's name to any here who are feeling after Christ and His Gospel. As far as you have already come in faith, keep fast hold and seek for more! You are on the right track in believing Jesus—a track which will lead to the King's Highway if fairly followed. Any kind of faith is better than that deadly doubt which is cried up so much nowadays! By faith comes salvation, but by doubt comes the opposite! Your feeble and imperfect believing has in it much of hopefulness, but it must be *continued*, or we shall be disappointed. Your home and ref-

uge must be the Word of the Lord Jesus and in that refuge you must abide!

Believe what Jesus says in His New Testament of Love. Whatever you find that He reveals by Himself or by His Apostles, receive it without question! Hold fast His Word and let it hold you fast. First, believe Him, believe Him to be true, believe Him to be sent of God for your salvation—and then put yourself into His hands. When you have committed yourself to Him, continue to do so. Do not run away from your faith because of ridicule. Mind that you so believe in Jesus as to practice what He commands—you cannot continue in His Word unless you learn to obey it. The text of faith is obedience. What He bids you, do it. Let your life be affected by the Truth He teaches. Let your whole mind, thought, desire, speech, bearing and conversation be colored and savored by your full faith in Jesus! Enter into His Word as a man into a stream and live there as a fish in the water!

"Continue in My word." Get into Christ's Word as a sinking sailor would get into a lifeboat and, once there, keep inside the boat—do not throw yourself out into the stormy waves through despair—but continue in the place of hope. This is Christ's gracious counsel to those in whom there seems to be some hopeful sign.

My Hearers, we never preach the saving power of temporary, unpractical, unsanctifying faith! If a man says, "I believe in Christ and, therefore, I shall be saved, his faith will have to be tested by his life. If, sometime after, he has no faith in Christ, that faith which he claimed to have is proven to be good for nothing! The faith of God's elect is an abiding faith! It is precious faith and, like precious metal, it survives the fire! "Now abides faith, hope, charity, these three." Thus true faith is classed among the *abiding* things—it is undying, unquenchable. If you truly believe in Jesus, it is for life! Saving faith is a life-long act. It is the relinquishment of all trust in self, once and for all, and the trusting in Jesus forever. He is and always shall be our only confidence. That is the faith which saves.

But the temporary faith which comes and goes, is worth nothing. The shout of, "I believe it," too often ends when the excitement is over. To sing, "I do believe, I will believe," is well enough—but unless that believing appertains to daily life and changes the inner nature—and abides even till death—it has not saved the man. The measure of faith of which we have been speaking may turn out to be the beginning of saving faith, but it may, on the other hand, turn out to be a mere deception soon to be dispelled—a morning cloud which disappears—an early dew exhaled by the sun.

I think I have said enough upon my second point. Let it encourage you, that our Lord takes notice, even of the lowest kind of faith. But let it also warn you, when you see that He receives it with an, "if," and goes on carefully to exhort and warn, lest the hopeful thing should die and its promise should be unfulfilled.

III. But, next, OUR LORD SETS BEFORE THESE PEOPLE INDUCEMENTS TO CONTINUE IN HIS WORD. "Jesus therefore said to those Jews which had believed Him, If you abide in My Word, then are you truly My disciples, indeed; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make

you free." Observe three inducements, each one of them great—and when placed together exceedingly attractive.

The first was *certified discipleship*—"Then are you My disciples, indeed." That is to say, if they persevered in obeying His Word, they would be disciples, not in name only, but in truth. It is a small thing to be called Christians, but it is a great matter to truly be Christians. Further, they would not be merely superficial learners, but deeply taught and inwardly instructed disciples of Jesus. They would really and truly know what Jesus taught and would receive it into their inmost souls—they would be not untrained beginners in the school of Christ, but pupils of the sixth form, "disciples, indeed."

Dear Friends, it is a great thing to be no longer a probationer, but a disciple, indeed! There is more in the expression than I can readily set forth in words. A certain person says he is a disciple of Christ, but you would never know it if he did not tell you! You might live with him for years without hearing an expression or remarking an action which is distinctly Christian—this is NOT to be a disciple, indeed! Another man loves his Lord and treasures His Words. He puts his discipleship of Christ before everything—and you cannot live with him a single day without perceiving a savor of Christ in his words and action. You say of him, "That man is, indeed, a Christian!" In such a case, religion is not exhibited by way of pride, as with the Pharisees of old, but it is seen because it is there and *must* shine forth. Faith throbs in the man's pulse! It looks out from his eyes. It tunes his voice and lights up his countenance! It rules his house and controls his business. The man *lives* for Jesus and if it were necessary, he would *die* for Him. How we prize a thoroughbred Believer! Your mongrel is a poor animal. Blessed is he who makes his Master's service his pleasure! His Lord's Law is his delight! His Savior's Glory the absorbing occupation of his time. He is a disciple, indeed!

To be a disciple, indeed, creates within the mind a blissful assurance. Some are always asking themselves, "Am I truly a disciple?" It is not amazing that they ask the question, for it is a great question. But he that continues in Christ's Word in loving obedience soon ceases to ask that question—he has the witness in himself, or, better still, as some read it, he has the witness in Christ. He knows that he is Christ's disciple, for he continually follows his Master. He not only believes, but he *knows* that he believes! He has continued in the Word so long that he has no doubt about his being in it. How can he doubt, when he is, from hour to hour, feeding on the Word in which he lives like a mite feasting upon the cheese in which he dwells? He is a disciple, indeed, for his deeds are those of a disciple. Oh, you that believe my Master at times and up to a certain point, you must go on to believe Him more constantly, more thoroughly, more absolutely! May you cheerfully stake your souls upon your Lord's veracity! O my Friend, if you would find Jesus to be your Savior, surrender yourself to His wisdom, yield your whole being to His power! So shall you become a disciple, indeed, and be able to claim all the love, care, comfort and honor which such a Lord puts on His faithful disciples! May you bring forth much fruit—so shall you be His disciples—and to you shall be the

double portion which belongs to those who follow the Lamb wherever He goes.

The next blessing which our Lord set before Believers was that of *sacred knowledge*. Observe, "You shall know the truth"—not *a* truth, but *the* truth—the saving, purifying, glorifying Truth of God! Keep on believing and Jesus will teach you that great Truth which is above all other truth—essential, quickening, cleansing, Divine! You shall *know* the Truth of God! You may be charged with dogmatism, but you will not flinch from the assurance that you *know* the Truth! You no longer guess at Truth, nor hit on a sliding scale of probabilities, but you *know* it assuredly! You will grow familiar with it! The Truth of God will be to you a well-known friend! You will discriminate so as to know the Truth when you see it and detect it, at once, from the deceptive falsehood. You will know the Truth and you will not be led away by the flattering voice of error. You will have the touchstone with you and will not be deceived by base metals. You will so know the Truth of God as to be influenced by it, actuated by it, filled by it, strengthened by it, comforted by it and, by its power, you will, yourself, be made true! Surely this is a good reason for abiding in Christ's Words!

The third benefit was *spiritual liberty*—"The truth shall make you free." Our Savior further on explains that He means free from sin. He that lives in sin is the slave of sin. Sincere belief in the Word of Christ leads to emancipation from the tyrannical power of the evil which dwells in our members and from the dominating power of the sin which rules in the customs of the world. "The truth shall make you free." You shall be free from your own prejudices, prides and lusts. You shall be free from the fear of man. If you have sunk so low as almost to ask of the great ones permission to breathe, you shall break that irksome fetter! The Truth of God known within your spirit shall make a free man of you! Up to now you have been the bondsman of self. You have enquired, "What will this thing profit me?" And thus the desire of self-aggrandizement has ruled everything! But when Jesus is your Lord, you shall be free from this sordid motive! "The truth shall make you free." This is a noble saying! Oh, the liberty that comes into the soul through believing on Jesus, who is the Truth! It makes life to be life, indeed, when this freedom is enjoyed! In laying hold on the Truth of God as it is in Jesus, the soul lays hold on the charter of her liberties and she enters on her citizenship in Heaven!

Dear Brothers and Sisters, I hope many here enjoy these three privileges. Disciples, indeed, you believe anything that is taught to you in God's Word, be it what it may. The Truth of God has so entered into you that you now know it and are sure. And this believed-Truth has made you so free that you defy the fetters which men would cast around you! Your Lord has caused you to believe in Him and you have now found the element wherein your soul may abide in life, light and liberty. Thus our Lord dealt with those in whom He saw some hopeful signs—He set choice blessings before them to induce them to proceed further.

IV. But now, fourthly, OUR LORD THUS TESTED THEM BY THE MOST EFFECTUAL MEANS. The test was very sharp in its action and sudden in its results. He said to them, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall

make you free." And what follows? "They answered Him"—answered Him rather than believed Him! How did they answer? Did they say, "Yes, Lord, we believe. Teach us Your Truth and make us free"? No, no. They cried, "We are Abraham's seed and were never in bondage to any man—why do You say, You shall be made free"? These supposed Believers stumbled at the Lord's Word—*stumbled at a privilege*. Jesus said, "The truth shall make you free," and that offended them! To make *freedom* a stumbling block is folly! On another occasion our Lord spoke to His disciples concerning eating His flesh and drinking His blood. And then we read, "From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him." The privilege of feeding upon His Sacrifice, which binds many of us to Him with bands of love, drove others away from Him with cords of hate! Sad fact this!

But it is so in many ways. I believe that God chose His people from before the foundation of the world, I rejoice in the glorious Doctrine of Election! But a great many refuse to believe because of this heavenly privilege. The privileges of the Gospel are the stumbling blocks of legalists! It is too large a Gospel for narrow souls, for, it is too glorious a Gospel for groveling intellects. Men refuse the gift of God because it is so excellent. If we would cut it down till there was nothing left but a more cheese-paring of Grace, I suppose they would accept it. But the very Glory of the Gospel which should fascinate and attract them, repels and disheartens them!

The reason why these Jews became so angry with our Lord was that *He touched their pride*. "Make us free, indeed!" they cried. "We always were free! We were never slaves. We enjoy the largest rights through our father Abraham. We have never come under the dominion of any false prophet or idol god. Make us free, indeed! How can You say this?" Thus the wild thinker claims that he is free and needs no liberty from Christ. The sinner who is in bondage to his passions says that he leads a free and easy life and scorns the idea of being set at liberty, as if he were a slave! The more a slave a man is to his own conceit or his own lusts, the more he talks about his freedom! We would not know that he was free if he did not call himself so. Unbelief calls itself, "Honest doubt," and not without cause, for we would not have known it to be honest if it had not labeled itself so. When a man puts up in his shop window, "No cheating practiced here," I should trade next door. "He protests too much." Your free love, free thought, free life and so forth, are the empty mockery of freedom! Oh, that men knew their state—and then freedom would be prized! For lack of self-knowledge, the blessings of the Gospel prove an offense when they should have hearty welcome.

The prejudices of the Jews which believed Him were wounded. Oh, how often do we find men who will hear the Gospel just so far, and no farther! They have not believed *on* the Lord Jesus Christ. They have not entered into His Word so as to be prepared to believe all that He teaches and, consequently, when some doctrine is heard which grates upon their feelings, or jars on their judgments, or conflicts with their original conceptions, straightway they grow angry with their Savior! After all, it would seem, from the criticisms which you offer, that you know better than the Son of

God! Your judgment would seem to be clearer than His, for you sit in judgment upon His Word! What is Christ to you? Why, He comes before you like the prisoner who stood before Pilate. You question Him, as the Roman Governor did when he asked, "What is truth?" You believe what you choose to believe and disbelieve what you choose to disbelieve! In such a case, who is the greater, the disciple or his Master? Surely you presume too much when you act as judge of Him who is to be the Judge of all the earth!

You are no disciple of His! You can never know the Truth and the Truth can never make you free, indeed! No blessing can come to you since you put yourself out of its way. You may talk about believing, but you have not believed, and you cannot be saved by Jesus until you yield your judgment to His Infallibility, your heart to His Rule, your every faculty to His Grace. Welcome Him as undisputed Lord of your bosom and crown Him Lord of All within your soul—such loyal faith He claims and this He must have—or you will fall short of His salvation.

These people soon showed their true character, for very soon afterwards they said, "Now we know that you have a devil"—and they took up stones to cast at Him! Oh, that we may be delivered from having a faith which will end in open rejection of the Lord!

V. I close with a fifth point—OUR LORD DESERVES OF US THE HIGHEST FORM OF FAITH—yes, the highest degree of faith which is possible! Would you mind looking in your Bibles into the next chapter, which fitly follows the present one? It contains the story of the man blind from his birth, to whom the Savior gave sight. Let me read a description of the kind of faith which I desire for you all. "Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said to him, Do you believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him? And Jesus said to him, You have both seen Him and it is He that talks with you. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped Him." That is the faith which saves—the faith which learns of Jesus from Jesus—hears and believes, and takes Jesus to be its God! The faith which bows at the feet of Jesus and worships Him as Divine is the faith which saves!

Men will not do this till their eyes have been opened. While they say, "We see," their sin remains and their blindness, too. Only he who can say, "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see," will worship Jesus with all his heart. The gracious Lord has come and touched my sightless eyes and given me heavenly sight and, therefore, I trust Him! I, that could see nothing at all, have seen *Him*! I, that had no idea of what light was, for I was born blind, I have seen the light through Him and I both believe and adore! Oh, for a *worshipping* faith—faith on its knees in the Presence of the Son of God! Faith beholding Jesus with the eyes which He has opened!

"Alas," says one, "I wish I had that faith." Listen, then, that you may find it. Faith comes by *hearing*. When I meet with converted persons, I like them to tell me what text was blessed to them, for then my mind runs on that text. I have sometimes asked a convert, "What part of the sermon was

it that God blessed to you? Because I would like to repeat that passage more than once or twice. I would like to "tell it o'er and o'er again." Perhaps the Lord would bless it to another, and another. Think, then, what part of our Lord's sermon was it that brought faith to those many who believed on Him? I think it was the 28th and 29th verses.

In verse 28 the Lord spoke of His death and all that went with it, and all that came out of it—"When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall you know that I am He." How did they lift Him up? They lifted Him up on the Cross—it alludes to His Crucifixion. But they did not know that in *another sense* they lifted Him up—it was through His death that there was a possibility of His Resurrection! And when He rose again and ascended up on high, the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the Church—and He entered into Heaven to make intercession for us—and all this was emphatically a lifting up!

The Cross and its surroundings remain, to this day, the great arguments for our holy faith. The things that should lead men to believe on Jesus Christ are found at His Cross. He was the Son of God, but He died the death of the Cross for love of men. Being dead and buried, His Father raised Him from the dead and thus gave evidence of His mission and of His acceptance with God. There is no question about His Resurrection—it is proved beyond all doubt that Jesus rose again from the dead on the third day. His disciples saw Him for the space of 40 days and ate and drank with Him—and then they beheld Him go up into Heaven till a cloud received Him out of their sight. They waited at Jerusalem and the Holy Spirit came upon them in cloven tongues, the Divine testimony to His ascended power! By the preaching of His Word in the power of the Holy Spirit, the nations were made to hear concerning Jesus, the Savior, and bowed before His Cross.

Now, the more you think of this unique occurrence—this fact which could not have been a piece of imagination, this fact which was attested by honest men, who bled and died for it—the more you think of this, I say, the more you will feel faith stealing over your spirit! Christ on the Cross is thought to be hard to believe in, but it is not so, for the more you know of a Crucified Christ, the more easy will faith become! Christ raised to the Crown by His Cross is the great breeder of faith! Christ rising from the dead is a marvel, yet it is the keystone of the arch of faith. Believe it! Christ gone into Glory—the Son of God bearing His Manhood into the highest place of supreme sovereignty and pleading there for guilty men—think much of this Truth of God and you will find faith come to you, for "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Especially is faith begotten and nourished by that part of God's Word which treats of the Cross and the Crown—the double lifting up of Jesus!

Also, once more, and I have done—you will find faith much helped by looking to the life of Jesus set forth in the Gospels. Read the verse, "He that sent Me is with Me: the Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him." What a perfect life is that of Jesus! Could it have been invented? He who could have sketched it from his imagination must, himself, have been perfect. But, then, no perfect man could have

been guilty of a forgery. Jesus was obedient to the Father in all things and yet He put no force upon Himself in so doing—it was natural to Him to be holy. It was His meat and His drink to do the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish His work. And the God of Heaven, by His miracles, was with Him and bore witness to Him.

There is no superfluous miracle recorded in the Gospels—they are all necessary evidence, such as was called for in that court wherein the Perfection, the Messiahship, the Deity of our Lord were tried. If you read His whole life through till you come to His death, and even study that death in which the Father hid His face from Him as to the enjoyment of His smile, you can see that God was always with His Son Jesus, working out His Divine purposes by Him and bearing witness to Him. God is in accord with Jesus, that is clear. He is with Him even now! Nobody can doubt that there are such things as conversions, for they are common phenomena in every living Church of God. And conversions are God's testimony to the Word of Jesus and the proofs that the Father and the Holy Spirit are working with the Son.

Think of this, and then yield to the Son of God, since God bears witness of Him to you! Come along with you, you that have had other notions. Come and take Jesus to be your Light and Life! You that have had other confidences, leave them all and believe on Him, for He is worthy of your utmost confidence. You that have been hesitating, believe in Jesus once and for all! You that have been procrastinating, come this very day and listen to that voice which shall at once set you free! Oh, that you would now trust Jesus, my Lord and my God! May the good Spirit help you, now, to believe on the Crucified One and may this be another of those occasions concerning which it shall be written in the Book of Record, "Many believed on Him"! God grant it, for our Lord Jesus' sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 8:12-59.
HYMNS FROM OUR "OWN HYMN-BOOK"—427, 565, 564.

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THE JOYOUS RETURN
NO. 2192

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 1, 1891,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"O Israel, return unto the Lord your God; for you have fallen by your iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips. Ashur shall not save us, we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, You are our gods: for in You the fatherless find mercy."
Hosea 14:1-3.

We are in the last chapter of the book of the Prophet Hosea. Throughout the book there has been thunder—sometimes a low rumbling, as of a distant tempest—sometimes peal on peal, as of a storm immediately overhead. And now the tempest has gathered all its force. Here it culminates. You expect the bolt of Heaven to destroy. Lo, instead thereof, a silver shower of mercy! The gentle drops come down plenteously and you hear them fall upon the tender herb like soft and low music. God does not say, "O Israel, depart accursed!" But instead thereof, in dulcet tones He cries, "O Israel, return unto the Lord your God." In the midst of wrath He remembers mercy—

"When God's right arm is bared for war,
And thunders clothe His cloudy car,"

even then He stays His uplifted hand, reins in the steeds of vengeance, and holds communion with Grace—"for His mercy endures forever," and, "judgment is His strange work."

To use another figure—the whole book of Hosea is like a great trial wherein witnesses have appeared against the accused and the arguments and excuses of the guilty have been answered and baffled. All has been heard *for* them and much, very much, *against* them—and the convicted stand at the bar to hear their sentence. Behold the Judge, instead of putting on the black cap to pronounce doom of death, stretches out His hands to the condemned and, in tones of pity, cries, "O Israel, return"!

This is a wonderful chapter to be at the end of such a book. I had never expected, from such a prickly shrub, to gather so fair a flower, so sweet a fruit! But so it is—where sin abounded, Grace does much more abound! No chapter in the Bible can be more rich in mercy than this last of Hosea and yet no chapter in the Bible might, in the natural order of things, have been more terrible in judgement! Where we looked for the blackness of darkness, behold a noontide of light!

While I am preaching from such a text, I feel the need of special help from the Holy Spirit. I lift up my heart for it. Will you not, my Brothers and Sisters, pray for me, that my Hearers may not only hear *my* voice, but may perceive the inward *voice of God* speaking to their hearts? The Lord Himself is the speaker of the text—it is Jehovah who says, "O Israel, return." May many of you hear the voice of God and in that voice perceive an over-powering Omnipotence which shall turn your thoughts and souls into the right way, making you willing in the day of His power!

I ask you to consider, first, *the call to come to God*—"O Israel, return unto the Lord your God." And, secondly, *the argument for coming*—"For you have fallen by your iniquity." Thirdly, we shall dwell upon *the help in coming* which the Lord gives to those who are willing to obey. He says, "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously." In conclusion, we shall pray to see in many *the coming by this help*. May my unconverted Hearers return unto the Lord, and know the power of His restoring Grace!

I. First, notice THE CALL TO COME—"O Israel, return unto the Lord your God." Oh, that the call may be made effectual this day!

It is a very instructive call, for it tells the sinner exactly what he has to do. Return—that is, reverse your course! The course you have taken is the opposite of that which you ought to have taken. Therefore, come back. You have gone from God—come back to God! You have been prayerless—begin to pray! You have been hardened—yield to the Word. You have been full of quibbling—believe even as a little child! Bring forth fruits meet for repentance and not the fruits of obstinate persistence in evil. To many there could be no better direction in spiritual morals than this word, "Return." Do what you have not done—leave undone what you have been doing! Reverse the original. Take the other track! "Return!" is but a single word, but that word is full of meaning. There is to be a change, a total change, a coming back to God.

The word is also instructive because it says, Return *unto the Lord*." Do not only *look* to God, but *return* to Him. Arise and go to your Father. Do not think about it, but do it! Do not return part of the way to this and to that good custom and salutary habit, but come right back to the Lord and rest not till you feel that you are in His arms. It is of no use for the prodigal to say, "I will arise," unless he adds, "and go to my father." It is of no use his quitting one far-off country for another! But it must be said of him, "And he arose and came to his father." The best direction we can give to many a sinner is—Reverse your course of life and let your reversed course of life lead you to God, Himself. How surely will he need the abounding Grace of God for such a work as this! Virgil's lines are true—

"The gates of Hell are open night and day.
Smooth the descent and easy is the way.
But to return and seek the upper skies,
In this the task and mighty labor lies."

The call is very practical. It does not ask for sentiment, but for *action*—"O Israel, return unto the Lord your God." Do not, as I have said before,

merely *think* of it, but resolutely and thoughtfully return! Do not speculate about *when* you will do it—let it be done now! Procrastinate no longer—quit halting and hesitating, once and for all. Cease to count the loss or the gain of it, but take the decisive step—"O Israel, return."

I cannot help reminding you that this instructive and practical exhortation is also *a very pathetic call*. The "O," with which it commences is not used as an oratorical embellishment. Loving entreaty breathes in it. He who speaks is in earnest and pleads with all His heart. It is God, Himself, who says, "O Israel, return unto the Lord your God." It is not a chill command—cold and sharp, like the sword of the Lord in the day of doom. But, albeit, it has all the force of a command—it is a warm and tender entreaty from the lips of Love—"O Israel, return." In that, "O," I seem to hear at once the *weeping* of the Lord Jesus, the sounding of the heart of the great Father and the grieving of the Holy Spirit, "O Israel, return" is a sorrowful, tender, gentle, wooing voice which I beseech you to regard. Possibly some of you may have had to plead with one of your own children who has been very willful and has threatened to do that which would have been exceedingly injurious to him. You have said, "Oh, do not so, my Son! Oh, do not so, my Daughter!" And you have thrown your soul into your pleading. Even thus does God, with sacred pathos, with love welling up from the depth of His heart, plead with every sinner before me! And He words the pleading thus—"O Israel, return unto the Lord your God."

I would remind you, also, that, pathetic as it is, *it is a Divine call*. "O Israel, return!" Who says it? The Prophet? Yes, but more than the Prophet—He who pleads is the Prophet's *God*. The first motion towards reconciliation is never from the sinner, but always from God. The sinner does not cry, "O Lord, my God, permit me to return"—no, but the Lord, Himself, who watches the wandering one and sees him falling to his ruin, cries out, in the freeness of His Grace, "O Israel, return!" What matters it to the Lord though a man should even plunge down to Hell? The Lord will be glorious, though the rebel perishes! The Lord has no need of men. Yet the Lord thinks much of wandering men and longs for their return. Out of the freeness and riches of His love, He calls them to Himself. He swears by His own life that He wills not the death of the sinner, but that he turn to Him and live. Because of His spontaneous love and pity, He cries, plaintively, "O Israel, return unto the Lord your God." Listen, then, my Hearers! If it were *my* call, you might refuse it with small blame—but it is *God's* call—shall your Maker call in vain? Will you add to all your sin, the turning of your back upon the God of Love? Shall Jehovah cry in pity to your souls and cry in vain? God grant it be not so! Here from this text, which, once written, remains, there sounds out of the eternal deep of boundless mercy this cry of Divine Grace—"O Israel, return unto the Lord your God!"

And so I will say no more about this call except that *it is evidently a very gracious one*. He puts it so, "Return unto the Lord *your God*." If you, O Sinner, will return to the Lord, He will be your God! He will enter into covenant with you. He will give Himself over to you to be yours. Henceforth you shall have a property in Jehovah and all the wealth of His infi-

nite Nature shall be yours. You shall be able to say, "This God is our God forever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death." That man has made a great speech who has truly said, "God is mine." There is more in calling God our God than if we could hold the title-deeds of both the Indies, or claim possession of the stars! God, in the infinity of His Grace, declares, "I will be their God."

I cannot preach as I would. Who can compass such a theme as this? Oh, that you were wise, that you knew what was good for you! Then would you answer to this call. O Sinner, how I wish that you were delivered from your madness! Then you would no longer turn your back upon your own blessedness, nor would you any longer reject the Lord your God to your own confusion. Your present course will lead you down to utter and entire destruction —therefore, pause, I pray you! No, I say more! Do not stay where you are, but return, return at once! See you not what a welcome God will give you? He says not, "Return unto your Judge," but, "Return unto your *God*." It is not written, "Return like an escaped prisoner to your jailer, return to the whip and to the stocks," but, "Return unto the Lord your God." This God shall be your exceeding joy! Albeit I cannot put my soul into such words as I could wish, I am sure that men who are wise and prudent will think upon these things and will be led to seek after the Lord, from whom all blessings flow. I remember how, when I perceived the freeness and preciousness of the Gospel, I ran towards it, being drawn that way by a strong desire for that which promised such great things to me! May many a man and woman out of the present company say, "I will answer to the Divine entreaty. Jehovah bids me return and return I will"!

II. Secondly, I beg you to notice THE ARGUMENT FOR COMING. "Return unto the Lord your God; *for you have fallen by your iniquity*." What a wonderful argument is this! You are in an evil plight through sin, therefore return to the Lord your God. "But," says one, "I was afraid I might not come because I had fallen." See how your fear is anticipated? The case is reversed and your having fallen is made by the Lord into an argument why you should return to Him! "I am broken-down," says one. "I have fallen so badly that I shall never be worth a penny for any good work." Yet the Lord cries, "Return, for you have fallen." I hear one moaning, "I am broken to pieces by sin—I am like an old pot that has fallen on the stones. I am useless." For that very reason the Lord of Mercy bids you return! "Return unto the Lord your God; for you have fallen." What ingenuity of mercy there is in the heart of God! See, He takes away the reason for despair and makes an argument for hope out of it! Because you are thus fallen, you have need to return—and God considers your *need*, not your merit! Because you are fallen, God's pity invites you to return. Use the word, "fallen," literally. If you are a fallen man, return! If you are a fallen woman—return! Why is it that the word, "fallen," has a force in reference to woman which it has not in regard to man? Surely a fallen man is as sad a sight as a fallen woman! But whether male or female, here is the argument for your returning to God—"You have fallen; therefore return." I pray you, yield to so gracious a plea!

Dear Friends, the argument is also this—*the cause of your evil plight is sin*. "You have fallen *by your iniquity*." Sin is the root of the mischief. Do not say, "I was fated to be so." "You have fallen by your *iniquity*." It is true that you have fallen in Adam, but you have also fallen by your *own actual sin*, and you have enough to do to confess your own act and deed. Your own willful omissions and commissions have ruined you! You are wounded, but your own hand has given the injurious stab. "You have fallen by your iniquity"—blame no one or nothing else! That you are an unbeliever is your own fault—you will not come to Christ that you might have life. The way you follow is the way of your own choice—in which you follow the imaginations and devices of your own heart. All the misery of your present estate is due to *yourself.* "O Israel, you have destroyed yourself"! Feel that it is so and confess it before God, taking to yourself shame and confusion of face.

The only remedy for your evil case is to come back to God. If you have fallen by your iniquity, you must be set free from this iniquity—but you cannot free yourself. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" You have lain in the lye of evil till you are dyed ingrain with the scarlet of iniquity—and the color cannot be taken out except by a miracle of Divine Grace! Only God can take away the spots from the leopard, and the blackness from the Ethiopian, and the crimson from the deep-dyed wool! The Lord and only the Lord can work these marvels. Therefore you are called upon to "return unto the Lord your God," for your only hope of restoration lies in God, Himself!

Your guilt should not make you hesitate, for the Lord knows all about it, and His invitation shows that He does so. He says, "Return; for you have fallen." O my Hearer, have you tried to hide that fall? Are you sitting here and trying to forget your ruin? The Lord does not forget it and does not wish you to forget it! He sets it before your mind and bids you come to Him as a fallen person. The Lord Jesus Christ receives sinners as sinners. He does not want them to change their character and *then* come, but they are to come to Him for a change! Come simply as sinners—not as awakened sinners, or sensible sinners, or sinners with some other good qualification. As *sinners* come to Him who has come to save sinners! The Lord Jesus gave Himself for our sins—He never gave Himself for our righteousness and, therefore, He would have us come to Him in all our defilement. Come in your evil habits, your guilt, your condemnation, your spiritual death and your corruption! Come just as you are. He delights in mercy—leave space for mercy to work. "Return," He says, "for you have fallen by your iniquity."

If you are in the worst case that any mortal was in, *you have the best possible Helper* to whom you are to return. If you go to Gilead for balm for your wound, you would turn that way in vain, for to the question, "Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there?" the answer is, of course, there is neither balm nor physician there, or else the hurt of the daughter of My people would long ago have been healed. You have gone enough to Gilead, now go to God! Human sources of help must fail you

and for that very reason we would persuade you to turn to God. There is no physician in Gilead, therefore, come along with you to Him whose touch is better than balm, who is, Himself, the health of souls. The very hem of His garment overflows with power, so that a *touch* will heal you!

Jesus has but to cast an eye on the most guilty and forlorn, and they live. Yes, if they do but cast an eye on Him, they receive eternal life! A legion of devils will flee at His word. Oh, what a blessing it is that there is such a mighty Savior! If anybody here perishes, it is not because the Savior is not able to save him. If any man here shall die in his sin, it can only be accounted for by the Savior's declaration, "If you believe not that I am He, you shall die in your sins." "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him." "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." How intensely do I pray that you may return to God, urged by these reasons, namely, that you are helplessly, hopelessly lost—and Christ is a mighty Savior—on whom your help is laid! I would that for this reason you would come to Him, even this very day! He will receive you even now, for He has said it—"He that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out."

III. Now let us see how our gracious God meets us and provides for us THE HELP IN COMING.

The Lord helps our ignorance and our fear. *He gives us direction as to what to bring*. Read the second verse. "Ah!" says the sinner, "I do not know what to take with me in approaching the Most High. I have no bullocks, no lambs, no incense. In my hand there is no price of money or merit." The answer is, "Take with you *words*." Your heart is right; you are longing for salvation; you need not say, "How shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God?" "Take with you words"—you have plenty of them. The heart must be there, first, and then nothing more is asked than, "words." Cheap enough is this offering! Leaves of the forest are not so easy to come at. This is simple enough—He that has a tongue can bring words!

O man and woman, whatever else you *cannot* bring, you *can* bring words, for, indeed, you have multiplied words to sin! The Lord helping you to return, you need not hesitate for need of an offering, since He says, "Take with you words." This is but another version of our grand hymn—

"Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Your Cross I cling.
Naked, come to You for dress,
Helpless, look to You for Grace.
Foul, I to the Fountain fly—
Wash me, Jesus, or I die!"

And then, the Lord helps the coming sinner by *a direction as to where to turn*. "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord." "I need to see the minister," says one. Turn to the Lord! "I desire to converse with a man of God." Turn to the Lord! We read in the book of Job, "To which of the saints will you turn?" My answer would be—Sinner, turn to the sinner's Friend and leave the saints alone! If you would be saved, turn not to Peter,

nor James, nor John—but turn to Him whom all these call, "Master and Lord!" "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord." Have you been in the habit of turning to a man who is called a *priest*? I pray you, do so no longer, for there is now but one sin-atoning Priest, and He is the Lord Jesus! Have you turned to *ceremonies*? Do you look for rest in *sacraments*? You look that way in vain, for they are not the way of salvation! Turn, rather, to the Lord as He is revealed in the Lord Jesus! Take with you words and turn to the Lord, Himself. Against Him you have sinned—to *Him* make confession. You need that His anger should be turned away. Seek, then, a free forgiveness from Him! It is His love that you need—go to Him for it and He will receive you graciously—and love you freely!

A further help is this. The Lord helps us to return to Him by giving *a direction how to pray*. A minister said to me last Thursday evening what I have often felt to be true—"We had need make coming to Christ very plain, for many people are so ignorant that they almost need to have the words of confession and faith put into their mouths. They need somebody to kneel down, side by side with them, and utter the very words that they should speak unto the Lord." There is much more truth in this statement than inexperienced persons may think. So here the Lord does, as it were, put the words into the sinner's mouth. "Take with you words, and say unto Him." He says the words, that the sinner may make them His own, and say them after Him! In this condescending style He teaches the returning sinner how to pray. What a gracious God He is!

Suppose a case. A great king has been grievously offended by a rebellious subject, but in kindness of heart he wills to be reconciled. He invites the rebel to sue for pardon. He replies, "O King, I would gladly be forgiven, but how can I properly approach your offended majesty? I am anxious to present such a petition as you can accept, but I know not how to draw it up." Suppose this great king were to say, "I will draw up the petition for you"? What confidence the supplicant would feel in presenting the petition! He brings to the king his own words! He prays the prayer he is bid to pray! By the very fact of drawing up the petition, the monarch pledged himself to grant it!

O my Hearer, the Lord puts it into your mouth to say this morning, "Take away all iniquity." May you find it in your heart to pray in that fashion! That prayer is best which is offered in God's own way and is of God's own prompting! May you present such a prayer at once!

Here I find *two sentences of petition*. The first is—"Take away all iniquity." Follow me and try to pray this prayer, "O You that takes away the sin of the world, take away all my iniquity. It is great, but pardon it, I pray You, for You did bear our sins in Your own body on the tree. By Your precious blood, wash away all my iniquity! Let me know that You have carried my transgression away, even as the scapegoat carried the sins of Israel into the wilderness of forgetfulness. Take away all iniquity by an act of pardon, I beseech You. Take it away, also, in another sense—Lord, take it out of my heart; take it out of my life."

Dear Seekers, I pray you, do not look on one sin and say, "Lord, spare it!" Do not wish to have one sin left, but cry, "Take it away! Take it away! Take away *all* iniquity. However sweet, or fascinating, or deeply seated, Lord, take away all iniquity. If I have been given to the intoxicating cup, take it away! If I have been the slave of greed, take it away! If I have been subject to passion, or pride, or lustfulness, take it away! Whatever is my besetting sin, 'take away all iniquity'!" Do you wish to have one fair sin spared? It will be your ruin! Hew in pieces that Agag sin that comes so delicately. Let your cry be, "Take it away!" The taking away of it may cost you a right hand or a right eye, but still, shrink not, but cry, "Take away all iniquity." Have done with it *all*. It will be of no use to give up one poison. If you take another poison, it will kill you. All sin must go, or else all hope is gone! Return to God, but it must be with a prayer which shows that you and your sins have fallen out, never to be reconciled.

The next petition is, "Receive us graciously." Confess that a kind reception of you by God must be of Grace alone. Nothing but Divine Grace can open a door for our returning. Sinners cannot be received of the Lord on any other terms but those of mercy. We would not ask to be dealt with according to our merits, but we thank the Lord that He has not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. As to our sins, we cannot answer Him one of a thousand. The Lord must receive us graciously or reject us righteously. Are we not glad that sinners can be received in the name of Grace and find a welcome in the tender mercy of our God? Offer, then, this petition, "Receive us graciously." I am not merely content to talk to you about these gracious words—I want every soul here to use them in personal prayer. Oh, that the Lord would touch all lips, by His Grace, and lead them to say from the heart—"Lord, receive me. I return to You. Take away all iniquity and take me to Yourself! Receive me as a subject of Your Kingdom. Receive me, by Your Grace, into Your home of love. Receive me into the family of Your redeemed on earth and then receive me into Your mansion in Heaven. 'Receive us graciously.'"

These are two sweet petitions and they are fitly framed together. May the Holy Spirit constrain every heart to present them! May these be the words which every one of you shall take with him in returning to the Lord!

One sentence of promise follows these two of petition—"So will we render the calves of our lips." What are the "calves of our lips"? They are sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving! Yonder are the calves of the stall which men bring in sacrifice—they are struck down and they die at the altar. God does not ask us for bullocks which have horns and hoofs! He takes no pleasure in the blood of calves, or of goats. He desires a broken heart, true faith and humble love—these live at the altar. "Whoso offers praise, glorifies God." Let us bring Him our best thoughts, our best expressions, our best testimonies, our heartiest praises! These are not calves of our stalls, but, "calves of our lips." Let our gratitude be a living sacrifice and our conduct a constant testimony to the goodness of God. I think we can say, this morning—at least, I can—"Lord, if You will spare me, I will speak for You." I must do so during the rest of my life, or else I shall have to

change my ways and habits. I was thinking, as I came along this morning, that it is somewhere about 40 years since I first opened my mouth to preach for Christ and I can still say what I have often said—

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

Is there not some young man here who will begin at once to take up this service for the next 40 years? I wonder what young man it is that I may lay hands upon for Jesus? And some Christian woman—no, she is not a Christian, yet, but I call her such, for she is going to be—I am only anticipating a little—will she not now become a Christian and straightaway render unto the Lord Jesus the calves of her lips, by bearing her testimony to her family and among her acquaintances? Who will consecrate himself, this day, unto the Lord? While you cry to God for mercy as to the past, resolve that if you are saved, you will confess His name and so offer Him the calves of your lips! The Lord claims your hearts, first, and your lips next! You must confess Christ before men! Salvation is promised to a *confessed* faith—always remember that—"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." Faith should be confessed in God's own way, by Baptism, and to that faith the promise is specially given.

Though I doubt not that some may be saved who do not make an open avowal of their faith, yet the promise runs as I have quoted it and I would not have you willfully forget the *command* implied in it. "He that confesses Me before men, him will I confess before My Father who is in Heaven"—so says the Lord Jesus. It is no more than His due, that we should take up our cross and follow Him. It is but a small thing, that if we trust in His name, we should bear His name! So you see, the Lord puts into our mouths, this morning, this resolve, that we will praise Him. "So will we render the calves of our lips."

Now come *three sentences of renunciation*—"Ashur shall not save us. We will not ride upon horses, neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, You are our gods." First, the natural, legal trust, so much esteemed among men, must go. Israel always used to fall back upon Assyria. If Egypt threatened the people, or if any other nation oppressed them, they sent a present to the King of Assyria to come and deliver them. But now they cry, "Ashur shall not save us!" The popular trust of the world is in self-righteousness in its various forms. You were going to be saved by your own repentance, reformation and future well-doing—but of this you must say—"Ashur shall not save us." Are you trusting in sacraments? Give up so vain a confidence! They are not meant to save, but to instruct those who are already saved! Are you trusting in your hereditary godliness, your birthright religion? Away with so poor a foundation! Are you trusting in your prayers, your giving to the poor, your attendance on sermons, your honesty, your good nature? Set these on one side, and cry, "Ashur shall not save us!" All confidences must go except Jesus Christ,

whom God has laid in Zion for a foundation stone. On Him must we build and on no other, for, "Ashur shall not save us."

But, next, they gave up all carnal confidence of their own—"neither will we ride upon horses." The kings of Israel were forbidden to multiply horses because they were not used in commerce, but only for military purposes, and Jehovah would not have His people rely upon these creatures. Egypt might glory in horse and chariot, but Israel must not do so. Hence we find pious Hezekiah keeping this Law so strictly that Rabshakeh reviled him by offering to send 2,000 horses if he could set riders upon them. When we come to God, we must quit all trust in ourselves of every sort—in our tears, our prayers, our moral life, our excellent instincts—or anything else. "Some trust in horses and some in chariots, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God." It may be you have fine horses of morality and religiousness; you have many virtues upon which you think you might fairly depend—give up these trusts! Have you been lately trotting out your horses before your own family and saying to your wife, "I am not like many men. I never drink too much, neither do I treat my household unkindly"? Put away these horses! You cannot come to God riding in pride. Say, "We will not ride upon horses." Put away every confidence in yourself, in whatever fashion it appears.

One more stroke of renunciation remains. Down must go the gods of our former estate. He that would come to the true God must have done with the false gods! If we have been living for any objectives but the Glory of God, we must do away with those objectives. If we have been paying religious reverence to anything but God, Himself, we must do away with it. "Neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, You are our gods." It seems strange that men should ever have said such a thing, but since they have said it, they must say it no more. God help everyone here to now make a complete renunciation of everything which usurps the place of God! Whether it is an object of trust, reverence, desire, fear, or love, we must cast it down and worship only God. He says to us, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." In the work of salvation, the work of our hands is out of court! Only God must be glorified.

The words close with *one sentence of faith*. My time fails me, and I cannot dwell upon it at length. "In You the fatherless find mercy." Dear orphan boys below me, here is a word for you! Remember it and love God because it is true—"In You the fatherless find mercy." God is the Father of the fatherless! Now, if God receives the fatherless, who have none to take care of them, and He becomes their God, we may be encouraged to come to Him, even in the most forlorn condition. Does God keep open house for those who have no home? Then I will go to Him! Does God take up those whom father and mother have forsaken? Then will I put my trust in Him! I saw on a board this morning words announcing that an asylum was to be built on a plot of ground for a class of persons who are described in three terrible words—HELPLESS, HOMELESS, HOPELESS. These are the kind of people that God receives—to them He gives His mercy! Are you help-

less? He will help you! Are you homeless? He will house you! Are you hopeless? He is the Hope of those who have no other confidence. Come, then, to Him at once!

IV. This last word should induce sinners to return to God and then we shall see before our eyes THE COMING BY THIS HELP. You that are great, good, full and inwardly strong, you will not return to God. You that are nothing and less than nothing—you that are fallen in your own sight, you that cannot help yourselves—you are likely to come! I pray that you may come at once. I have set before you an open door that no man can shut—will you not enter? Come to my Lord this day! Come, now, and say, "Take away all iniquity and receive us graciously." May God help us to be *doing* this rather than talking and hearing about it!

Let us come to God, for He will help us to come. You see He helps us by giving us words, but as He never helps men to be hypocrites, He will also help us to *feel* the words! He who gives us words to speak, will give us Divine Grace to speak them sincerely. Are not these words the true desires of your hearts? On your knees, when you get home, pour them out before God. In your pews while you are here, present these petitions in silence. Say, "Take away all iniquity, receive me graciously: so will I render the calves of my lips." The Lord's help will suffice, not only to teach us the manner of praying, but to give us the desire, the faith, the love, the resolve which make up this prayer!

Let your coming to the Lord be decisive and actual. You have meant it for years and yet nothing has been done. Some of you have been hearing me preach, now, for a quarter of a century! Think of that! I met, the other day, with one who heard me at New Park Street—and, at last, by our Master's Grace, he has come out to confess his Lord after more than 30 years! Slow work this! Better late than never! Come, my Friends, are you going to stick in the mud forever? Will you lie outside the wicket-gate throughout another year? God grant you may cry right now, "Take away all iniquity: receive us graciously!"

Oh, that this might be the universal cry of all my audience at this hour! The text is not written as for one, but for many. "Take with you words." The first verse is in the singular and speaks of, "you." But the second is in the plural and speaks of, "us." It is not, "Take away all iniquity; receive *me* graciously"—but—"receive *us* graciously: so will *we* render the calves of *our* lips. Ashur shall not save *us*." Come along with you, then, the whole company of you who desire salvation! I call upon you who are sitting in this first gallery all around me! I call upon the dense mass in the area below! I call upon you who sit in the upper gallery! Oh, that we might all join in one common return unto the Lord! Let us call this day, "*The day of the joyous return*." "Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for He has torn, and He will heal us; He has smitten, and He will bind us up." Who says, "No"? What? Will you choose your own destruction and persevere in the way of sin? I hope you will all say, "Yes," and that the Holy Spirit will lead you to carry out the resolve.

The special call is to the fallen—"Return; for you have fallen." Come, you fallen ones, come and welcome! It is to the wandering, for to such is the command appropriate, which says, "Return."—

"Return, O wanderer, to your home!
Your Father calls for you.
No longer now an exile roam
In guilt and misery—
Return! Return!"

The call is to the forlorn and destitute— "In You the fatherless find mercy." You that are fallen, far off, fatherless and forlorn, come at once to God in Jesus Christ! Come now! Come! Come! Come! See how the Lord meets you! Read the fourth verse—I could almost kiss the lines as I gaze on them—"I will heal their backsliding." Come, sick one, here is healing for you. "I will love them freely." Come, unlovely one, here is love for you! "My anger is turned away from him"—though you have felt His wrath burning in your souls, it is gone forever! "I will be as the dew unto Israel"—before this service is quite over, some drops of dew shall have fallen upon your parched spirits and shall sparkle in your bosoms like diamonds glittering in the sun!

These later verses speak as if the gracious work were done. They describe a scene most bright, full of color and rich with perfume—as an accomplished fact! The chapter begins with an exhortation, but it runs into description, as if the people really had come and God had met them and had blessed them exceedingly! Lord, make it so at this very moment! May it not be merely that I have preached and that these people have listened most encouragingly, but may men be really saved through Your Grace! The Lord's people have been praying all the while, "God bless Your servant"—and now I shall look for fruit from this first of March!

The Lord grant that this March may come in like a lamb to many of you! May the lion go out of you! May a heavenly wind spring up and blow across this city and bring soul-healing with it! In this hope, I bid you again, "Come to Jesus." Jesus says, "If any man thirsts, let him come to Me, and drink." "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is thirsty, come. And whoever will, let him take of the Water of Life freely." The Lord gather you all into the arms of His Grace, for His Son's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Hosea 13 and 14.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—907, 589, 600.

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A POOR MAN'S CRY—AND WHAT CAME OF IT
NO. 2193

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, MARCH 8, 1891,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him,
and saved him out of all his troubles."
Psalm 34:6

ON the morning of last Lord's-Day [Sermon #2192, ***The Joyous Return***] we labored to bring sinners to their God and the Lord graciously made the Word effectual. We gave voice to the invitation to return and we entreated men to take with them words and turn to the Lord. God's people found it a happy time. It is a very amazing fact, but an undoubted one, that the simple Gospel which saves sinners also feeds saints! Saints are never better pleased than when they hear those first Truths of God which instruct sinners in the way to God. The Lord be thanked that it is so!

On this occasion I want to speak of what happens to those who *do* return to God—because many have newly been brought through mighty Grace. Some of them I have seen and I have rejoiced over them with exceedingly great joy. They tell me that they did distinctly lay hold on eternal life last Sunday—and they are clear about what it means. They came out of darkness into His marvelous Light! They knew it and could not resist the impulse to tell at once those with whom they sat in the pews—that God had brought them up out of the horrible pit—and had set their feet upon the Rock of Salvation!

For this joyful reason I think we will go a step further and talk of the happiness of those who have come *back* to their Father, have confessed sin, have accepted the great Sacrifice and have found peace with God. It is my heart's desire that those sheep who have come into the fold may be the means of inducing others to enter. You know how one sheep leads another and, perhaps, when some come to Christ, many others will follow. When one of our professional beggars knocks at a door and gets well received, he is very apt to send another. I have heard that vagrants make certain marks near the door by way of telling others of the confraternity which are good houses to call at. If you want many beggars at your house, feed one and another of them well, and birds of the same feather will flock to you! Perhaps while I am telling how Christ has received poor needy ones, others may pluck up courage and say, "We will go, also." If they try it, they may be sure of receiving the same generous welcome as others have done, for our Lord keeps open house for coming sinners!

He has distinctly said, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." That does not refer merely to those who *have* come, but to those who *are* coming—and to you, dear Hearers, who will come at this hour! Jesus bids every hungry and thirsty soul come to Him at once and be satisfied from His fullness. Our text tells how they have sped who have cried to God. "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles."

I. The first lesson we shall learn, this morning, is upon THE NATURE AND THE EXCELLENCE OF PRAYER—This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him."—

"Prayer is appointed to convey
The blessings God ordains to give."

He gives us prayer as a basket and then He pours the blessings of His Grace into it! We shall learn from the text much about prayer.

Evidently *it is a dealing with the Lord*. "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him." He cried to the Lord that the Lord might hear him. His prayer was not intended for men, nor was it mainly meant to be a relief to his own mind—it was intended for the ear of God and it went where it was intended to go! The arrow of desire was shot towards Heaven. It reached the mark it was designed to reach. This poor man cried to the Lord and the Lord is the right Person to whom to appeal in prayer. I am afraid that many public prayers are a performance to please the congregation. And when they are mixed with music, it is hoped that they will influence men of taste.

Even private prayer is not always directed to God as it should be. I have heard ignorant people, sometimes, use the expression, "The minister came and prayed to me." That is a great mistake! We do not pray *to you*—we pray *to God*. We pray *for* you, but not *to* you. Yet I am afraid that the blunder reveals a mournfully dark state of mind as to what prayer is and does. I fear that many prayers are meant for the ears of men, or have no meaning at all beyond being regarded as a sort of incantation which may mysteriously benefit the utterer of them. Believe me, to repeat good words is a small matter—to go over the best composed forms of devotion will be useless, except the heart rises into real dealings with God! You must speak with God and plead with *Him*. I often question those who come to join the Church in this fashion—"You say there is a great difference in you: is there a difference in your prayers?" I very frequently get such an answer as this, "Yes, Sir, I now pray *to God*. I hope that He hears me. I know that He is near and I speak *to Him,* whereas before I did not seem to care whether God was there or not. I said my prayers by rote and it did not seem like speaking to anybody."

Prayer is dealing with God. The best prayer is that which comes to closest grips with the God of Mercy. Prayer is to ask of God, as a child asks of its father, or as a friend makes request to his friend. O my Hearer, you have forgotten God! You have lived without speaking to Him—this has been the case for years. Is not this a wrong state of things? You are now in need—come and spread your case before your God—ask Him to help you. You need to be saved! Beg Him to save you. Let your prayer reach from

your heart to the Throne of God, otherwise, however long it may be, it will not reach far enough to bless you.

From this Psalm we learn that *prayer takes various shapes*. Notice, in the fourth verse, David writes, "I *sought* the Lord and He heard me." *Seeking* is prayer. When you cannot get to God, when you feel as if you had lost sight of Him and could not find Him, your seeking is prayer. "I sought the Lord and He heard me"—He heard me seeking Him—heard me feeling after Him in the dark. He heard me running up and down if haply I might find Him. To search after the Lord is prayer such as God hears. If your prayer is no better than a seeking after one you cannot as yet find, the Lord will hear it. In the next verse David puts it, "They *looked* unto Him." Then a *looking* unto God is a prayer! Often the very best prayer is a look towards God—a look which says, "Lord, I believe You. I trust You. Be pleased to show Yourself to me." If there is "life in a look," then there is the breath of life in a look and *prayer* is that breath! If you cannot find words, it is often a very blessed thing to sit still and look towards the hills from where our help comes. I sometimes feel that I cannot express my desires and, at other seasons, I do not *know* my desires, except that I long for God—in such a case I sit still and look up. "In the morning will I direct my prayer unto You, and will look up." A look is a choice prayer—if it is the look of tearful eyes towards a bleeding Savior!

We might describe prayer in many other ways, as, for instance, in this one—"O *taste* and see that the Lord is good," which you meet with in verse eight. Tasting is a high kind of prayer, for it ventures to take what it asks for. When we come boldly to the Throne of Grace, we have a taste of Divine Grace in the act of coming! That is a very acceptable prayer which boldly ventures to believe that it has the petition which it has asked of God. Believe that God has heard you and you are heard! Take the good your God provides you—take it to yourself boldly and fear not! Come boldly to the Throne of the heavenly Grace, that you may find and receive. Lay hold upon the blessing which you need so much and it will be neither robbery nor presumption.

But *frequently, according to our text, prayer is best described as a* cry. What does this mean? "This poor man cried." This poor man did not make a grand oration—he took to crying! He was *short*—it was only a cry. In great pain a man will cry out. He cannot help it, even if he could. A cry is short, but it is not sweet. It is intense and painful, and it cannot be silenced. We cry because we *must* cry. This poor man cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner." That is not a long prayer, but it prays a great deal of meaning into a few words. That was a short cry, "Lord, save, or I perish!" And that other, "Lord, help me." "Save, Lord," is a notable cry. And so is, "Lord remember me." Many prevailing prayers are like cries because they are brief, sharp and uncontrollable. A cry is not only brief, but *bitter*. A cry is a sorrowful thing—it is the language of pain. It would be hard for me to stand here and imitate a cry. No, a cry is not artificial, but a natural production—it is not from the lips, but from the soul, that a man cries. A cry, attended with a flood of tears, a bitter wail, a deep-fetched sigh—these are prayers that enter into the ears of the Host High. O Penitent, the more you

sorrow in your prayer, the more wings your prayer has towards God! A cry is a brief thing and a bitter thing. A cry has in it *much meaning and no music*. You cannot set a cry to music. The sound grates on the ears. It rasps the heart. It startles and it grieves the minds of those who hear it. Cries are not for musicians, but for mourners.

Can you expound a child's cry? It is pain felt, a desire for relief naturally expressed, a longing forcing itself into sound! It is a plea, a prayer, a complaint, a demand. It cannot wait, it brooks no delay, it never puts off its request till to-morrow. A cry seems to say, "Help me now! I cannot bear it any longer. Come, O come, to my relief!" When a man cries, he never thinks of the pitch of his voice, but he cries out as he can, out of the depths of his soul. Oh, for more of such praying!

A cry is a *simple* thing. The first thing a new-born child does is cry—and he usually does plenty of it for years after! You do not need to teach children to cry! Theirs is the cry of Nature in distress. I never heard of a class at a Board School to teach babes to cry. All children can cry—even those who are without their reasoning faculties can cry. Yes, even the beast and the bird can cry. If prayer is a cry, it is clear that it is one of the simplest acts of the mind. O my Hearer, whatever you need, pray for it in the way which your awakened heart suggests to you! God loves natural expressions when we come before Him. Not that which is fine, but that which is on fire, he loves. Not that which is dressed up, but that which leaps out of the soul just as it is born in the heart, He delights to receive! This poor man did not do anything grand—but from his soul he cried.

A cry is as *sincere* as it is simple. Prayer is not the mimicry of a cry, but the real thing. You need not ask a man or woman, when crying, "Do you mean it?" Could they cry, otherwise? A true cry is the product of a real pain and the expression of a real need—and, therefore, it is a real thing. Dear Souls, if you do not know how to pray, cry! Cry because you cannot pray! Cry because you are lost by nature and by practice and will soon be lost forever unless Grace prevents. Cry with a strong desire to be saved from sin and to be washed in the precious blood of Jesus! Pour out your hearts like water before the Lord. Just as a man takes a pitcher and turns it upside down, pouring all the water out, so turn your hearts upside down and let them flow out until the last dreg has run away! "You people, pour out your heart before Him." Such an outpouring of heart will be a cry and a prayer.

But now note, further, concerning the nature and excellence of prayer, *that prayer is heard in Heaven*. "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him." He was all alone, so that nobody else heard him—but the *Lord* heard him! Yes, the Lord, even Jehovah of Hosts, the All-Glorious, bowed His ear to him! In God's ears the songs of angels are continually resounding. Yes, He hears all the voices of all the creatures He has made! Yet He stooped from His eternal Glory and gave attention to the poor man's cry! Never imaging that a praying heart ever pleads to a deaf God, or that God is so far removed from men that He takes no note of their desires. God *does* hear prayer—He *does* grant the desires and requests of lowly men! I

do not think that we shall ever pray in downright earnest unless we believe that God hears.

I have been told that prayer is an excellent devotional exercise, highly satisfying and useful, but that there its result ends, for we cannot imagine that the Infinite Mind can be moved by the cries of men. Do not believe so gross a lie, or you will soon cease to pray! No man will pray for the mere love of the act, when he has arrived at the opinion that there is no good in it so far as God is concerned! Brothers and Sisters, amidst all the innumerable goings forth of Divine Power, the Lord never ceases to listen to the cries of those who seek His face! It is always true—"The righteous cry and the Lord hears." Wonderful fact this! Truly marvelous! It might surpass our faith if it were not written in His Word and experienced in our lives.

Many of us know that the Lord has heard us. Doubt about this matter has long been buried under a pyramid of evidence. We have often come from the Throne of Grace as sure that God had heard us as we were sure that we had prayed! In fact, our doubts all lie around our own praying and do not touch our assurance that God hears true prayer. The abounding answers to our supplications have been proofs positive that prayer climbs above the region of earth and time—and touches God and His infinity. Yes, it is still the case that the Lord listens to the voice of a man! It is still Jehovah's special title—the God That Hears Prayer! The Lord will hear your prayer, my Hearer, even if you cannot put it into words—He has an ear for thoughts, sighs and longings! A wordless prayer is not silent to Him. God reads the intents of the *heart* and cares more for these than for the syllables of the lips. This poor man could not speak—his heart was so full that he could only *cry*—but Jehovah heard him!

Once more, prayer has this excellence—that *it wins answers from God*. "The Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." God does put forth power in answer to prayer. I know the difficulties which are started concerning this. There is a fixed purpose, from which God does not depart. But this is by no means inconsistent with the prevalence of prayer, for the God who decrees to *give* us blessings has also decreed that we shall *ask* for them! The prayer and the Providence are, alike, appointed by the predestination of God! Our praying is the shadow of God's *giving*. When He is about to bestow a blessing, He first of all works in us earnest prayer for it. God moves us to pray—we pray. God hears and answers—this is the process of Divine Grace. The Lord does, in very deed, answer prayer!

I read yesterday certain notes taken by an interviewer who called on me some years ago. He reports that he said to me, "Then you have not modified your views in any way as to the efficacy of prayer?" In his description he says—"Mr. Spurgeon laughed and replied, Only in my faith growing far stronger and firmer than ever. It is not a matter of faith with me, but of knowledge and everyday experience. I am constantly witnessing the most unmistakable instances of answers to prayer. My whole life is made up of them. To me they are so familiar as to cease to excite my surprise, but to many they would seem marvelous, no doubt. Why, I could no more doubt

the efficacy of prayer than I could disbelieve in the law of gravitation! The one is as much a fact as the other, constantly verified every day of my life."

The interviewer reported me correctly and I would repeat the testimony! I could speak with even deeper confidence today. More than 40 years I have tried my Master's promises at the Mercy Seat and I have never yet met with a repulse from Him. In the name of Jesus I have asked and received, save only when I have asked amiss. It is true I have had to wait because my time was ill-judged and God's time was far better—but delays are not denials! Never has the Lord said to me, or to any of the seed of Jacob, "Seek you My face" in vain. If I were put into the witness box and knew that I should be cross-examined by the keenest of lawyers, I should not hesitate to bear my testimony, that by many Infallible proofs the Lord has proven to me that He hears prayer!

But, my Hearers, if you need evidence on this point, try it yourselves! Remember, the Lord has said, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me." Here is a fair test. Make an honest experiment concerning it. I have no doubt that at this moment I could call upon hundreds in this congregation who would not refuse to stand up and say that the Lord hears prayer. "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him." I might call on many a man and woman here who could solemnly declare that they cried—and the Lord heard them. Are you at this service, Hannah? You were here the other morning with a sorrowful spirit and now I see by your countenance that the Lord has smiled upon you and your soul is magnifying His name! Prayer has done this for you. Is it not so? God answers the supplications of His believing people and of this we are witnesses!

Thus have I set the matter before you and I would remind you of the words of the Lord Jesus, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for everyone that asks, receives; and he that seeks, finds; and to him that knocks, it shall be opened." Thus have we been instructed by our text as to the nature and excellence of prayer.

II. Let us move on and note, secondly, that our text leads us to think upon THE RICHNESS AND FREENESS OF DIVINE GRACE. Great Grace is revealed in this statement—"This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles."

You will see the richness and the freeness of Grace when you consider *the character of the man who prayed*—"this poor man cried." Who was he? He was *a poor man*. How terribly poor I cannot tell you. There are plenty of poor men about. If you advertised for a poor man in London, you might soon find more than you could count in 12 months—the supply is unlimited, although the distinction is by no means highly coveted. No man chooses to be poor.

David, on the occasion which suggested this Psalm, was so poor that he had to beg bread of the Lord's priests and though he was a soldier, he had to borrow a sword from their treasury. He had no house, no home, no calling, no income, no country, no safety for his life. He was poor, indeed,

who wrote these words—"This poor man cried." Why should men imagine that poverty is an injury to prayer? Will the Lord care about the age of your coat? What is it to Him that you have a shallow pocket and a scanty cupboard? "This poor man cried." Does God hear poor men? Yes, that He does, the poorest of the poor, the *poor in spirit*! He hears those who are so poor that even hope has dropped out of their box—and that is the last thing to go.

This poor man was also *a troubled man*, for the text speaks of "all his troubles"—a great, "all," I guarantee you. He did not know what to do. He could not see his way in his blizzard of trials. He was surrounded with difficulties, as with an iron net, and he could not hope for a deliverer. He was a troubled man and because he was a troubled man, he cried. People wondered what he cried about, but they would not have done so had they known his inward griefs. His old companions thought he had gone out of his mind—they said religion had turned his brain and they stayed out of his way. This poor man cried and no man noticed him because he was so poor and so wretched—but "the Lord heard him." *He* does not turn away from the doleful and the desolate—He takes delight in coming to them and binding up their wounds!

This poor man was *a mournful man*—a man altogether broken down, a man who could not hold his head up—he blushed and was ashamed, both before God and man. All he did, when alone, was to cry. And if one watched him closely in company, the tears might be seen forcing their way from his heart through his eyes and down his cheeks This poor man cried, for he was so feeble, so faint, so forlorn, that he could not do otherwise—but "the Lord heard him." The Lord so heard him as to make that poor man rich in Divine Grace!

I feel sure, also, that "this poor man" was *a strange fellow*. What did he want with crying when others were laughing? It is not a pleasant nor a usual sight to see strong men weep. Some men weep because they are very tender-hearted, but many others do so, I am persuaded, because they have been given to drink. This man was given to inward crying—he cried day and night unto the Lord because of a secret wound which never ceased to bleed. People could not make him out and they came to despise him, or, at least, to be shy of him—but "the Lord heard him."

He was also *a changed man*. Why, he used to come in of an evening and was a thoroughly jolly companion! But now he looks as miserable as an owl and nobody desires his company, he is such a kill-joy. "Poor miserable creature!" people say. Even his wife sighs and says, "What has become of my poor dear husband?" He was a poor man and as sad and singular as he was poor. He sought out secret places and there he sighed and cried before the Lord.

But yet he was *a hopeful man*. There must have been some hope in him, though he could not perceive it, for people do not cry for help unless they have some hope that they will be heard. Despair is dumb—where there is a cry of prayer there is a crumb of hope! A cry is a signal of distress and people will not hoist a rag on a pole unless they have a little hope that a passing vessel may spy it out and come to their rescue. There

is not only hope *for* a man, but hope *in* a man as long as he can pray. Yes, as long as he can cry. If you do but long, look, seek and sigh after God, you are one of those poor men whom I have tried to describe—and good will come to you. I can see that poor man now. I used to know him, for he was born in my native town and he went to the school where I was a scholar. He was hardly a man, but only a youth. And then I used to sleep with him, or rather to lie awake at nights with him and hear him groan.

He prayed in my hearing many a time—and very poor praying it was, but he meant what he said. I have been with him in the fields and he used to tell me that he was such a vile creature that he feared that he must be cast into Hell forever! He was afraid that he was not one of the chosen and redeemed people of God, and that he would never be able to believe in Jesus. I knew him when he gave himself up for lost. I know him now. I see him whenever I look in the mirror and I must say on his behalf this morning—"This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." Oh, the freeness and the richness of Grace, that God should hear nobodies! That God should look upon those who are less than the least of all saints—and the very chief of sinners!

If you desire to further see the richness and freeness of Divine Grace, by the help of the Holy Spirit, I beg you to remember *the Character of the God to whom this poor man cried*. He who prayed was poor and his prayer was poor, but he did not pray to a poor God! This poor man was powerless, but he did not cry to a feeble God. This poor man was empty, but he went to God's fullness. He was unworthy, but he appealed to God's mercy. Our God delights in mercy! He waits to be gracious! He takes pleasure in blessing the weary sons of men! This poor man cried to that Savior who is able to save to the uttermost! O my Friend, never mind how poor you are—you are not crying to your own poor self. Remember, you have not to draw water out of your own emptiness—you may come to God, who is the Fountain of Grace. Your merit is poverty, itself, but the mercies of God are unsearchable riches! The power by which you are to be saved lies not in your own spirit, but in the Holy Spirit! Therefore cry with great hope and believe that God is as great in His Grace as in His power and wisdom!

While we are thinking of the freeness and richness of this Grace in the text, I would have you notice *the character of the blessing*. "The Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." He gave him salvation from the whole of his troubles. His *sins* were his great troubles—the Lord saved him out of them all—through the atoning Sacrifice! The *effects* of sin were another set of grievous troubles to him—the Lord saved him out of them all by the renewal of the Holy Spirit. He had fallen into a perilous position by his own fault—and troubles came upon him thick and heavy—but in answer to prayer, the Lord made a way of escape for him, out of them all, and led him into peace. He had troubles without and within, troubles in the family and in the world, and he felt ready to perish because of them—but the Lord delivered him out of them all.

Note that word, "all"—it is large and comprehensive. If you will kindly look at the Psalm, you will see the range of this delightful deliverance. We read in verse four—"He delivered me from *all my fears*." Sometimes our

fears are more painful than our troubles. We suffer more in *dreading* troubles than in enduring them, but prayer banishes such fears. We see that *all shame* was removed in the same way—"They looked unto Him and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed." Happy men, for the shame of their sin is gone! Their shame and their fears went when their prayers were heard. They were no longer distressed about the past and no longer under apprehension of wrath in the future—"He saved them out of all their fears." If you will look further on you will find that the Lord saved them out of *all their needs* (v 9)—"There is no need to them that fear Him." "They that wait upon the Lord shall not need any good thing." Oh, to be saved from the pinch of dire necessity within the soul—saved from all fear, all shame, all trouble and then from all need! This is a grand salvation! But this is not all, for this poor man was saved from *all dangers* (v 20)—"He keeps all his bones: not one of them is broken." He saved him out of all real peril. And, lastly, He saved him from *all apprehension of desertion*—"None of them that trust in Him shall be desolate." The salvation that God gives in answer to prayer is a perfect one! And He gives it freely, gives it in answer to a poor man's cry, without money or merit. How complete is God's deliverance!

Did you ever notice how perfect was the answer which God gave to the prayer of Moses when he cried to God for Pharaoh in the day of the plagues? When the locusts covered the land, Moses prayed and we read, "There remained not one locust in all the coasts of Egypt" (Exo 10:19). So was it with the frogs and even with the flies—"He removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people; there remained not one." Pharaoh could not have found a specimen of locust, or fly in all Egypt! So you may be devoured with troubles as the land by locusts and they may be croaking in your ears like the frogs in the bedchambers of Egypt—but when the Lord bids them, "Go," they will depart from you and you will be in quiet. He who puts away as a cloud your iniquities and as a thick cloud your sins, will soon drive away your troubles like a swarm of buzzing flies! "The Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." Is not this Free Grace? Is not this rich mercy?

And, once more, think that *this all came through a cry*. A cry is all that the poor man brought. He did not go through a long performance. He did not perform a laborious set of ceremonies—"This poor man *cried*, and the Lord heard him." What can be simpler? Oh, you think you need a *priest*, do you?—a priest on whom a bishop has laid his hands? Or do you dream that you must go to a holy place, a pile of stones put together in architectural form? Possibly you even dream that you must pine all through Lent and not expect joy till you reach Easter! What folly is all this! You have but to cry and the Lord will hear you! There is but one Priest—even the Lord Jesus! There is but one Holy Place—His glorious Person. There is but one holy time and that is today! When the Spirit of God works a cry in the heart of the poor man, that cry climbs up to Heaven by the way of Jacob's ladder—and at the same instant, mercy comes down by the same ladder! Our Lord Jesus Christ is that Ladder which joins earth and Heaven together, so that our prayers go up to Heaven and God's mercy comes down

to us on earth! Oh, that men would be content with the blessedly simple apparatus of Divine Grace—"This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles"!

III. I must be brief on my last head, but it is a very important one. Consider THE NEED AND THE USEFULNESS OF PERSONAL TESTIMONY. It is David who says, "This poor man cried." You see he tells the story—he writes it down in a book for us to read. He weaves it into a Psalm for us to sing.

Testimony is a weighty thing for the persuasion and winning of men, but *it must be of the right kind*. It should be *personal*, concerning things which you yourself know—"This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him." Never mind if you should be charged with being egotistical. That is a blessed egoism which dares to stand out and bear bold witness for God in its own person! "*This* poor man cried." Not somebody over the water—"and the Lord heard *him*"—not a man down the next street. The more *definite and specific* your testimony, the better and the more convincing.

One of our evangelists writes me that when he was praying with an inquirer and trying to lead him to Jesus, he was much helped by a working man coming in and kneeling down by their side and saying, "Lord, save this poor soul, even as you saved me at two o'clock this morning!" Afterwards the evangelist asked him how he came to use such an expression. "Well," said the man, "I *was* saved then. Just as the clock struck two, I found the Savior, and I always like to tell when a thing happens." Somehow or other, that "two o'clock in the morning" helped the inquirer mightily—it put such a reality into the transaction, he thought, "This man knows that he was saved at two o'clock in the morning. Why should I not be saved, now, at eight o'clock in the evening?" I do not say that we can all tell the date of our conversion—many of us cannot. But if we can throw in such details, let us do so, for they help to make our testimony striking.

Our witness should be an *assured* one. We must believe and, therefore, speak. Do not say, "I hope that I prayed. And I—I—trust that the Lord heard me." Say, "I prayed, and the Lord heard me." If you begin to stutter when you are giving your evidence for the Lord Jesus, worldlings will not believe you. Are you sure? If you are not sure yourself, you cannot assure others. The accent of conviction is indispensable if you would convince. Be sure that you have cried and be sure that God has heard you—and *then* bear testimony to what you have tried and proved.

Give your testimony *cheerfully*. "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him." Do not say it as if it were a line from "the agony column," but write it as a verse of a Psalm—of such a Psalm as this, which begins with, "I will bless the Lord at all times: His praise shall continually be in my mouth."

Your testimony must have for its sole aim the glory of God. Do not wish to show yourself off as an interesting person, a man of vast experience. We cannot allow the Grace of God to be buried in ungrateful silence. When He made the world, the angels sang for joy! And when He saves a soul, we will not be indifferent. Let us call together our friends and our neighbors and charge them to rejoice with us, for our Lord has found us,

though we were lost! Remember how the father, when the prodigal came back, said to his household, "Let us eat and be merry." So, dear Friends, be glad at heart that the Lord has saved you—and tell others of what He has done, saying, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him."

Testimonies to facts have weight with men. Those who live to win souls have learned from experience that facts are grand things to use in their holy service. When you are teaching people doctrines, they will often be inattentive and unmoved. But when you come to *facts*, they listen and feel their force. I sat not long ago with one whom I would gladly win for my Lord. I told him certain facts with regard to the Lord's hearing prayer for the College and the Orphanage and other parts of my work for the Lord. I marked the deep interest which these facts produced. He believed me to be a man of integrity and he could not resist the conclusion that the Lord is a prayer-hearing God! To yourself and to others, one fact is better than a dozen inferences! Even the hardest of the Gradgrind can only say, "What I need is facts." Test prayer for yourself and then boldly state the results—and you will have power with men. Personal experience is far more convincing than observation—tell facts which you have, yourself, experienced! "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles."

Such testimony will have most weight with the same sort of men as yourselves. When a poor man tells what the Lord did for him, he wins the attention and gains the belief of other poor men. When any event happens to a person like myself, I become interested in it. The poor man says, "I see he is a poor man like myself and if God hears *him*, why should he not hear *me*?" Does not your brother's salvation cheer you and make you feel that you will cry to the Lord, too? How wonderfully God has heard prayer from men in singular positions! He heard Jacob when his angry brother Esau was close upon him with armed men! At Jabbok the Lord heard him by night and he met his brother the next morning with a smiling face. Israel in Egypt was in sore bondage, but the Lord heard his people's cry and sent Moses—and divided the Red Sea, and brought forth His chosen. The Lord heard Samson when he was ready to die of thirst. He heard the men of Reuben who cried to God in the battle against the Hagarites—"and He was entreated of them, because they put their trust in Him."

He heard Hezekiah and Isaiah when Rabshakeh wrote his blasphemous and slanderous letter. We read that, "for this cause they prayed and cried to Heaven. And the Lord sent an angel, who cut off all the mighty men of Assyria." David prayed in the cave, and Elijah on Carmel, and Jeremiah in prison—and the Lord heard them! There was once a man in the belly of a fish miraculously kept alive. The great fish felt ill with such a thing as a living man within him and, therefore, it dived deep down till the prisoner felt himself to be at the bottom of the mountains! Then, to get vegetable medicine, the fish rushed among the sea meadows and Jonah cried, "The weeds were wrapped about my head!" He was in a strange, dark, horrible place and he says of it, "Out of the belly of Hell cried I." Was his cry of any use? Yes! We read, "Out of the belly of Hell cried I, and You heard my voice. My prayer came in unto You, into Your holy Temple." Wherever you

may be and in whatever trial you may be involved, the Lord will hear your cry and come to your help. If any soul here is, like Jonah, in the very belly of Hell in feeling and apprehension, yet, his cry will prevail with Heaven and he shall know that "salvation is of the Lord." A poor man's cry will sound through the telephone of Christ's mediation, in the ear of God—and He will respond to it.

Now, this witness, dear Friends, while it is very strong to those who are like ourselves, *will be increased in force as one and another shall join us.* One person says, "I cried to the Lord, and he heard *me*." "But," says an objector, "that is a special case." Up rises a second witness and says, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him." "Well, that is only two and two instances may not prove a rule." Then, up rises a third, a fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh—and in each case it is the same story—"This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him." Surely he must be hardened in unbelief who refuses to believe so many witnesses! I remember the story of a lawyer, a skeptic who attended a meeting where the subject was similar to our theme of this morning. He heard about a dozen tell what the Lord had done for them and he said, as he sat there, "If I had a case in court, I would like to have these good people for witnesses. I know them all, they are my neighbors. They are simple-minded people, straightforward and honest, and I know I could carry any case if I had them on my side."

Then he very candidly argued that what they all agreed upon was true. He believed them in other matters and he could not doubt them in this, which was to them the most important of all. He tried religion for himself and the Lord heard him—and very soon he was at the meeting, adding his witness to theirs! If I were to put the question at this moment to my present audience, what would be the result? Our friend, Mr. Stott, said, just now, in prayer, that we were a very promiscuous company this dark morning. I agree with him. Still I will try it. You that have had answers to prayer say, "*Yes.*" (The response came like a thunderclap)! I am sure there are none of us who have ever tried the power of prayer who would have to say, "No." If I were to put the contrary, there would be no answer. All who are accustomed to pray will vote with the ayes. Go home, then, with the words of our text in your hearts and on your tongues—"This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles."

Glory be to God! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 34.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—
67 (SONG II), 116 (SONG I) 34 (VER II).

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BETWEEN THE TWO APPEARINGS
NO. 2194

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 15, 1891,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Now once in the end of the world has He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation."
Hebrews 9:26-28.

The two great links between earth and Heaven are the two advents of our Lord, or, rather, He is the great bond of union, by these two appearings. When the world had revolted and God had been defied by His own creatures, a great gulf was opened between God and man. The First Coming of Christ was like a bridge which crossed the chasm and made a way of access from God to man—and then, from man to God. Our Lord's Second Advent will make that bridge far broader, until Heaven shall come down to earth and, ultimately, earth shall go up to Heaven. At these two points a sinful world is drawn into closest contact with a gracious God. Jesus herein is seen as opening the door which none can shut, by means of which the Lord is beheld as truly Emmanuel, "God with us."

Here, too, is the place for us to build a grand suspension bridge by which, through faith, we, ourselves, may cross from this side to the other of the stormy river of time. The Cross, at whose feet we stand, is the massive column which supports the structure on this side. And, as we look forward to the Glory, the Second Advent of our Lord is the solid support on the other side of the deep gulf of time. By faith we first look *to* Jesus and then *for* Jesus—and herein is the life of our spirits. We dwell between these two boundaries—Christ on the Cross of shame and Christ on the Throne of Glory—these are our Dan and Beersheba and all between is holy ground! As for our Lord's First Coming, there lies our rest—the once-offered Sacrifice has put away our sin and made our peace with God. As for His Second Coming, there lies our hope, our joy, for we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is. The glories of His sacred Royalty shall be repeated in all the saints, for He has made us unto our God kings and priests—and we shall reign with Him forever and ever.

At His First Advent we adore Him with gratitude rejoicing in "God with us," as making Himself to be our near kinsman. We gather with grateful boldness around the Infant in the manger and behold our God! But in the

Second Advent we are struck with a solemn reverence, a trembling awe. We are not less grateful, but we are more prostrate as we bow before the Majesty of the triumphant Christ! Jesus in His Glory is an overpowering vision! John, the Beloved Apostle, writes, "When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead." We could have kissed His feet till He left us on Olivet, but at the sight of the returning Lord, when Heaven and earth shall flee away, we bow in lowliest adoration! His first appearing has given us that life and holy confidence with which we press forward to His glorious appearing, which is the crown of all.

I want, at this time, to bring before you those two appearings of our Lord. The text says, "He has appeared." And again, "He shall appear." The 26th verse speaks of His unique manifestation already accomplished. The 28th verse promises the glorious second outshining, as it promises, "He shall appear." Between these two lights—"He has appeared" and, "He shall appear"—we shall sail safely if the Holy Spirit will direct our way.

My first head is this, *once, and no second*. And my other division of discourse will make a kind of paradox, but not a contradiction—*yet a second*.

I. Our first theme is, ONCE, AND NO SECOND. Now once in the end of the world has He appeared to put away sin by the Sacrifice of Himself." This He has done, once, and He will never repeat it. Let us dwell on the subject in detail.

Our Lord Jesus Christ has once appeared and though He will appear again, it will not be for the same purpose. On His first appearing, fix your thoughts, for the like of it will never be seen again. In the bosom of the Father He lay concealed as God. As the Second Person of the Divine Trinity in Unity He could not be seen, for "no man has seen God at any time." It is true that, "without Him was not anything made that was made," and thus His hand was seen in His works but, as to Himself, He was still hidden—revealed in type and prophecy—but yet, in fact, *concealed*. Jesus was not manifest to the sons of men until one midnight an angel hastened from the skies and bade the shepherds know that unto them was born in Bethlehem a Savior, that is Christ the Lord! Then the rest of the angelic host, discovering that one of their number had gone before them on so wonderful an errand, were swift to overtake him and, in one mass of glittering glory, they filled the midnight skies with heavenly harmony as they sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

Well might they sing, for the Son of God now appeared! In the manger He might be seen with the eyes and looked upon, and handled—for there the Word was made flesh—and God was Incarnate! He whom the ages could not contain, the Glorious One who dwelt with the Father, forever unseen, now *appeared* within the bounds of time and space—and humble shepherds saw Him and adored! By Gentiles He was seen, for wise men from the East beheld and worshipped Him whose star had led them. As He grew up, the children of Nazareth beheld Him as a Child, obedient to His parents and, by-and-by, He was made manifest to men by the witness of John and the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Him at His Baptism. God

bore Him witness as He went up and down the hills of Palestine preaching the Kingdom and proclaiming salvation to the sons of men. Men saw Him, for He spoke among them openly, and walked in their midst. His was not the seclusion of dignity, but the manifestation of sympathy! "He went about doing good."

He was seen of angels, for they came and ministered to Him—and He was seen of devils, for they trembled at His word. He dwelt among us and we beheld His Glory—He was the Revelation of God to men, so that He could say, "He that has seen Me has seen the Father." He was made still more manifest by His death, for in His Crucifixion He was lifted up from the earth that all might behold Him. He was exalted upon the Cross, even as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness on purpose, that whoever looked to it might live. Then and there He opened those four conspicuous founts of cleansing blood which were made to flow by the nails. See how it flows from hands and feet! There, too, He laid bare His side and set His heart open for dying men and forthwith there flowed forth blood and water! Thus we may look into His inmost heart.

High on the Cross the Savior hung, without veil or curtain to conceal Him. "Once in the end of the world has He appeared." I know of no appearance that could have been more complete, more unreserved. He moved in the midst of crowds, He spoke to men and women one by one. He was on the mountain and by the sea. He was in the desert and by the river. He was both in house and in Temple. He was accessible everywhere. In the fullest sense, "once in the end of the world has He appeared." Oh, the glory of this gracious epiphany! This is the greatest event in history—the invisible God has appeared in human form!

The text tells us very precisely that in this First Coming of our Lord *He appeared to put away sin*. Notice that fact. By His coming and Sacrifice, He accomplished many things, but His first end and object was "to put away sin." You know what the modern babblers say—they declare that He appeared to reveal to us the goodness and love of God. This is true, but it is only the fringe of the whole Truth of God. The fact is that He revealed God's love in the provision of a Sacrifice to put away sin. Then, they say that He appeared to exhibit perfect manhood and to let us see what our nature ought to be. This, also, is a truth, but it is only part of the sacred design. He appeared, they say, to manifest self-sacrifice and to set us an example of love to others. By His self-denial He trampled on the selfish passions of man. We deny none of these things and yet we are indignant at the way in which the less is made to hide the greater. To put the secondary ends into the place of the grand objective is to turn the Truth of God into a lie! It is easy to distort truth by exaggerating one portion of it and diminishing another—just as the drawing of the most beautiful face may soon be made a caricature rather than a portrait by neglect of proportion. You must observe proportion if you would take a truthful view of things and, in reference to the appearing of our Lord, His first and chief purpose is, "to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."

The great objective of our Lord's coming here was not to live, but to die! He has appeared, not so much to subdue sin by His teaching, as to *put it away by the Sacrifice of Himself*. The master purpose which dominated all that our Lord did was not to manifest goodness, nor to perfect an example, but to put away sin by Sacrifice! That which the moderns would thrust into the background, our Lord placed in the forefront! He came to take away our sins, even as the scapegoat typically carried away the sin of Israel into the wilderness that the people might be clean before the living God. The Lord Jesus has come here as a Priest to remove sin from His people—"You know that He was manifested to take away our sins." Do not let us think of Jesus without remembering the design of His coming! I pray you, Brothers and Sisters, know not Christ without His Cross as some pretend to know Him. We preach Christ—so do a great many more—but, "we preach Christ *Crucified*." And so do *not* many more. We preach concerning our Lord, His Cross, His blood, His death. And upon the blood of His Cross we lay great stress, extolling much, "the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." We know no past appearing of God in human flesh except that appearing which ended with a Sacrifice to put away sin! For this our Savior came, even to save sinners by putting away their sin. We will not deny, nor conceal, nor depreciate His master purpose, lest we be found guilty of trampling upon His blood and treating it as an unholy thing. The putting away of sin was a God-like purpose and it is a wellspring of hope to us, that for this reason Jesus appeared among men.

Let us go a step further with our text— *only once does the Lord appear for the purpose of putting away sin*. He came once to do it and He has done it so well that there is no need for Him to offer any further sacrifice! "This Man, after that He had offered one Sacrifice for sins forever, sat down." He will never appear a second time for the putting away of sin. It was His purpose, once, but He has so fulfilled it that it will never be His purpose again. The High Priest, as you know, came every year with blood for the putting away of sin. He has slain the victim this year, but next year he must come in the same manner—and the next, and the next, and the next—because the sacrifice had not really removed the guilt. But our Lord has come *once* for this Divine purpose and He has so achieved that purpose that He could truly cry, "It is finished," for the work is done once and for all. He has so perfectly put away sin by the Sacrifice of Himself that He will never need to offer a second sacrifice! That our Lord should ever come a second time as He came the first time is inconceivable by those who love Him! He *will* come a second time, but in a very different style, and for a very different purpose—not as a Sacrifice for sins—but as King and Judge.

And here learn yet further, that *only once is sin put away*. Jesus died to finish transgression and make an end of sin. Our Lord made Atonement for sin when He died, the Just for the unjust—He made peace for us when the chastisement of our peace was upon Him. When the Lord had laid upon Him the iniquity of us all, Divine wrath fell upon Him on account of our sins until He cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

Then sin was put away. And there, but never anywhere else, was full Atonement presented and iniquity was blotted out! There is no other place of expiation for sin but the place of our Lord's Sacrifice of Himself. Believing in Him that died on the Cross, our sins are put away—but without faith in Him there is no remission of sin. Beyond our Lord's, other sacrifice there is none—other sacrifice there will never be.

If any of you, here, are entertaining some "larger hope," I would say to you—hope what you please, but remember, that hope without the Truth of God at the bottom of it is an anchor without a holdfast. A groundless hope is a mere delusion! Wish what you will, but wishes without promises from God to back them are vain imaginings. Why should you imagine or wish for another method of salvation? Rest assured that the Lord God thinks so highly of the one Sacrifice for sin, that for you to desire another is evil in His sight! If you reject the one Sacrifice of the Son of God, there remains no hope for you—nor ought there to be. Our Lord's way of putting away sin is so just to God, so honoring to the Law of God and so safe for you, that if you reject it, your blood must be on your own head. By once offering up Himself to God, our Lord has done what myriads of years of repentance and suffering could never have done. Blessed be the name of the Lord, the sin of the world—which kept God from dealing with men at all—was put away by our Lord's death!

John the Baptist said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." God has been able to deal with the world of sinners in a way of Grace because Jesus died. I thank our Lord even more because the actual sins of His own chosen—even of all those who believe on Him in every age—have been put away. These sins were laid on Him and, in Him, God visited man for them. "He His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree"—and so put them away forever—and they are cast into the depths of the sea. The putting away of my guilt as a Believer was really, effectually, and eternally accomplished by the death of our great Substitute upon the bloody tree! This is the ground of our everlasting consolation and good hope through Divine Grace. Jesus did it alone. He did not only *seem* to do it, but He actually achieved the putting away of sin! He blotted out the handwriting that was against us. He finished transgression and made an end of sin—and brought in everlasting righteousness when, once and for all, He died upon the Cross.

Beloved, there is a further note here—observe that *only once has He made a Sacrifice of Himself*. "Now once in the end of the world has He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." The very best way to describe the death of our Lord is to call it, "the Sacrifice of Himself." It may be well rightly to divide the Sacrifice, as the priest cut up the bullock or the ram. You may speak of our Lord's bodily sufferings, His mental griefs and His spiritual anguish, but, for the most part, we are not able to go far in this detailed appreciation of the wondrous Sacrifice. We are such poor folk in spiritual things, that instead of bringing a bullock which could be anatomized and its vital organs all laid bare, we are content to bring a pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons—and these were not

carefully divided asunder, but burned upon the altar! The most of us have to take our Lord Jesus Christ as a whole, since, from lack of understanding, we cannot go into detail. What did He offer to God? He made a sacrifice of *Himself*. Truly He sacrificed His crown, His rest, His honor, His reputation and His life—but the essence of the Sacrifice was *Himself*—He, Himself, took our iniquity and bore our sorrows. "He His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree."

Your sacrifice, O Christ, is not to be measured unless we could compute the infinity of Your Godhead. It was not only Your labor, Your pain, Your shame, Your death—Your Sacrifice was *Yourself*—what more could even *You* offer? There, on the altar, the Son of God did place Himself, and there He bled and died that He might be the Victim of punitive justice, the Substitute for guilty men! There was He unto God a sweet-smelling savor because He vindicated the Law and made it possible for the Lawgiver to be justly merciful. This, according to our text, was done once, and only once, and it never will be repeated, so that the whole business of our Lord's appearing to put away sin by the Sacrifice of Himself, is confined to one appearing and one offering. I want that word, "ONE," to ring in your ears. "By one offering He has perfected forever them that are sanctified." I would have the adverb, "once," go through every ear, and abide in every heart. "By His own blood He entered in *once* into the Holy Place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." Peter says, "Christ also has *once* suffered for sins."

Once it is, and not more often. To suppose the contrary would be, first, to break away from the analogy of human things. Read the 27th verse—"As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." A man dies once and after that everything is fixed and settled—and He answers for His doings at the judgment. One life, one death—then everything is weighed and the result declared—"after this the judgment." So Christ comes and dies once. And after this, for Him, also, the result of what He has done, namely, the salvation of those who look for Him! He dies once and then reaps the fixed result according to the analogy of the human race, of which He became a member and Representative. Men come not back here to die twice—men die once and then the matter is decided—and there comes the judgment. So Christ dies. He does not come back here to die again, but He receives the result of His death—that is, the salvation of His own people. "He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied." "You were slain and have redeemed us to God by Your blood." The Christ is so completely Man that He follows the analogies of manhood as the Apostle, here, observes, and we must not break away from them.

To suppose a second death for our Lord would be to forget what He came to do. The punishment of sin was, "In the day that you eat, thereof, you shall surely die." One death was the sentence. It is true that we have to speak of that one death as divided into the first and the second death, but it is judicially one sentence of death which is pronounced on man. When Christ comes, therefore, He bears the one sentence of death. He laid down His life for us. The penalty due to sin was death—"In the day that

you eat, thereof, you shall surely die." Christ, therefore, must die, and die He did—"By the Grace of God He tasted death for every man." But it was not said, "You shall die twice." No, and Christ does not die twice. "Christ, being raised from the dead, dies no more—death has no more dominion over Him. For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He lives, He lives unto God." He has borne the full sentence which was pronounced on sin and thus He has put away the sin which involved us under the penalty.

To suppose that our Lord should be made a Sacrifice, again, is a supposition full of horror. When you study deeply the death of your Lord, unless your heart is like an adamant stone, you must be bowed down with grief. The visage of Him who was Heaven's Glory was more marred than that of any man, and His form more than the sons of men. He whose brow was from the beginning surrounded with majesty, had His forehead and temples torn with a coronet of thorns! Those blessed cheeks that are as beds of spices were distained with spit from the lips of menials. His face, which is the joy of Heaven, was buffeted and bruised by mockers. His blessed shoulders, which bear up the world, they scourged with knotted whips until the blood ran down in crimson rivers as the plowers made deep furrows.

How could they treat Him so? Was it possible that my Beloved should be scorned and slandered, spit upon and condemned as a felon? Did they lay the shameful Cross upon His blessed back and lead Him through the streets amid the ribald mob? He who knew no sin was numbered with the transgressors! Found guilty of nothing save excess of love to man, He was led away to be *crucified*. They hurried Him off to die at the common place of the gallows. The rough soldiers nailed Him to the Cross and lifted up the rough tree for all to gaze upon. I wonder the angels stood it! It seems extraordinary that they could look on while men were taking their Lord and Master and driving bolts through His hands and feet and lifting His sacred body upon the cruel tree! But they did stand it and the Christ hung on the tree of doom in a burning heat, through the fierce sun and the inflammation of His wounds and inward fever. He was so parched that His tongue was dried up like a potsherd and was made to cleave to the roof of His mouth.

There He hung amid derision, His bones all dislocated and His very flesh dissolved with faintness as though it were turning back to its native dust. Meanwhile His soul was "exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death," and the Father's face, which has sustained thousands of martyrs, was turned away from Him until He cried, "Lama Sabachthani!" And is there heart so brutal as to suggest a repetition of this Divine agony? Repeat this!? Repeat this? O Sirs, we rise at once, as one man, in mutiny against an idea so revolting! One Calvary is glorious, for it has accomplished the grand deed of our redemption—but *two* Calvarys would mean double shame and no glory! Shall the Son of God, after all that He has done, come down on earth to be, a second time, "despised and rejected of men"? Shall He, a second time, be dragged through mire and blood? It must not,

cannot be! God forbid! He has trod the winepress once and for all. No more shall He stain His garments with His own blood!

To suppose a repetition of the Sacrifice is to cast suspicion upon the work and efficacy of the great offering of Himself. Was not that Sacrifice infinite in value? It must have been, for it was the Sacrifice of God, Himself! Why, then, present it *again*? Unless the first was altogether or measurably a failure, why repeat it? The repetition of the Cross would destroy the Cross! O Man, you have taken away from the death of the Lord all its virtue if you would dream of His dying yet again! As to that invention of the Church of Rome—the continual offering of the unbloody sacrifice of the "Mass"—it is a dead thing, for, the "blood is the life thereof," and it is as gross an insult to the one great Sacrifice as could well have been devised by His worst enemies. He has forever put away the sin of His people by His one offering, and now there remains no more sacrifice for sin!

My Brothers and Sisters, the idea that our Lord Jesus did not effectually perform the work of taking away sin removes the foundation of our faith! If by one offering He did not put away sin, shall it be repeated? Suppose, for a moment, that He died twice—why not *three* times? Why not *four* times? Why not 50 times? Why not *forever* the rehearsal of Calvary, forever the doleful cry, forever the tomb of Joseph and the dead body wrapped in linen? And yet, even after a *thousand* repetitions, how could we know that we were saved? How could we be sure that the Sacrifice sufficed and that sin was really put away? If the one offering of Himself did not satisfy justice, what would or could do it? Then are we without hope and, of all men, most miserable, for a golden dream of the putting away of sin has come to us and, lo, it has melted away. *Once* yonder tree! *Once* yonder tomb! *Once* the broken seal and the frightened watch—on that ONE Sacrifice and Justification we securely rest—and we need no repetition of the work. It was enough, for Jesus said, "It is finished!" It was enough, for God has raised Him from the dead!

I do not need, I hope, to linger here to warn you that it is of no use to expect that God will put away sin in any other way than that which at so great a cost He has provided. If sin could have been removed in any other way than by the death of His dear Son, Jesus would not have died. If there had been within the range of supposition any method of pardon except by the Sacrifice of Himself, depend upon it, Jesus would never have bowed His head to death. The great Father would never have inflicted death upon the Perfect One if it had been possible that the cup should pass from Him. He could never have inflicted upon His Beloved a superfluous pain. His death was necessary, but, blessed be God, having been once endured, it has, once and for all, put away sin and, therefore, it will never be endured again.

II. We come, now, to look at the rest of the text. Once, and no second AND YET A SECOND. "He shall appear a second time." Yes, Christ Jesus shall appear a second time, but not a second time for the same purpose as before.

He will appear. The appearing will be of the most open character. He will not be visible in some quiet place where two or three are met, but He will appear as the lightning is seen in the heavens. At His first appearing He was truly seen—wherever He went, He could be looked at and gazed upon—and touched and handled. He will appear quite as plainly, by-and-by, among the sons of men. The observation of Him will be far more general than at His First Advent, for, "every eye shall see Him." Every eye did not see Him here when He came the first time, for He did not travel out of Palestine, save only when, as an Infant all unknown, He was carried down into Egypt. But when He comes a second time, all the nations of the world shall behold Him! They that are dead shall rise to see Him, both saints and sinners—and they that are alive and remain when He shall come shall be absorbed in this greatest of spectacles. Then Balaam shall find it true, "I shall see Him, but not now: I shall behold Him, but not near." Though they cry, "Hide us from the face of Him that sits on the Throne," they shall cry in vain, for before His Judgement Seat they must all appear!

His second appearing will be without sin. That is to say, He will bring no sin-offering with Him and will not, Himself, be a Sacrifice for sin. What need that it should be so? We have seen that He once offered Himself without spot to God and, therefore, when He comes a second time, His relation to human guilt will finally cease. He will then have nothing further to do with that sin which was laid upon Him. Our sin, which He took to Himself by imputation, He has borne and discharged. Not only is the sinner free, but the sinner's Surety is also free, for He has paid our debt to the utmost farthing. Jesus is no longer under obligation on our account. When He comes a second time, He will have no connection of any sort with the sin which once He bore. He will come, moreover, without those sicknesses and infirmities which arise out of sin. At His First Advent, He came in suffering flesh and He came to hunger and to thirst, to be without a place where to lay His head. He came to have His heart broken with reproach and His soul grieved with the hardness of men's hearts. He was compassed with infirmity. He came unto His God with strong crying and tears. He agonized even unto bloody sweat and so He journeyed on with all the insignia of sin hanging about Him. But when He comes a second time it will be without the weakness, pain, poverty and shame which accompany sin! There will then be no marred visage nor bleeding brow! He will have re-assumed His ancient Glory. It will be His *glorious* appearing!

When our Lord comes to the fullest in His Glory, there will remain no sin upon His people. He will present His bride unto Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing. The day of His appearing will be the manifestation of a perfect body as well as a perfect Head. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun when their Lord's Countenance is as the sun shining in his strength. As He will be "without sin," so will they be "without sin." Oh, what a glorious appearing is this! A true appearing and yet the very opposite of the first! Then the text adds—"He shall appear without sin *unto salvation*." What does that mean? It means that He will then *display* the perfect salvation of all those who put

their trust in Him! He will come to celebrate the great victory of mercy over sin. At His coming He will set His foot upon the dragon's head and bruise Satan under our feet. He will come to have all His enemies put under His feet. Today we fight and He fights in us. We groan and He groans in us, for the dread conflict is raging. When He comes again, the battle will be ended—He shall divide the spoil of vanquished evil and celebrate the victory of righteousness!

But the *Resurrection* is the salvation principally intended here. Alas, what evil sin has done! How many of our best beloved lie rotting beneath the clay! The worms are feeding on those whose voices were the music of our lives! The scythe of death has cut them down like grass—they lie together in rows in yonder cemetery. Who slew all these? The sting of death is sin! But when our Lord comes, who is the Resurrection and the Life—from beds of dust and silent clay our dead men shall rise—they shall leap up into immortality! "Your brother shall rise again." Your children shall come again from the land of their captivity. Not a bone, nor a piece of a bone of a saint shall be left as a trophy in the hand of the enemy! When our Lord brought forth Peter from the prison, He did not let him leave his old shoes behind him, but the angel said, "Gird yourself, and bind on your sandals, and follow me." And when the Lord Jesus shall come and open wide the door of the sepulcher, He will bid us come forth in the entirety of our nature and leave nothing behind. Salvation shall mean to us the perfection of our manhood in the likeness of our Lord! No aching hands and weary brows, then, but we shall be raised in power! Our vile body shall be changed and made like His glorious body! Though sown in corruption, our body shall be raised in incorruption and this mortal shall put on immortality! What a glorious prospect lies before us in connection with the day of His appearing a second time unto salvation!

Now notice that this appearing and this salvation will *chiefly belong to those who look for Him*. Will you bear with me patiently a minute or two here? I wonder how many there are in the Tabernacle who are looking for Him? The text says, "Unto them that look for Him shall He appear a second time without sin unto salvation." Beloved, I will put the question again—How many here are looking for our Lord's Second Coming? I am afraid if conscience has her perfect work, many will have to say, "I am afraid I am not among the number." I will tell you what it is to look for that Second Appearing. It is to love the Lord Jesus, to love Him so that you long for Him as a bride longs for her husband. Why are His chariots so long in coming? Come quickly, Lord Jesus! Strong love hates separation—it pines for union. It cries, "Come, Lord! Come, Lord!" Longing follows on the heels of loving. To look for His coming is to prepare for Him. If I were asked to visit you tomorrow evening, I am sure you would make some preparations for my call—even for one so commonplace as myself. You would prepare because you would welcome me. If you expected the Queen to call, how excited you would be! What preparation good housewives would make for a royal visitor!

When we expect our Lord to come, we shall be concerned to have everything ready for Him. I sometimes see the great gates open in front of the larger houses in the suburbs—and it means that they are expecting company. Keep the great gates of your soul always open, expecting your Lord to come! It is idle to talk about looking for His coming if we never set our house in order and never put ourselves in readiness for His reception. Looking for Him means that you stand in a waiting attitude, as a servant who expects his master to soon be at the door. Do not say, "The Lord will not yet come and, therefore, I shall make my plans irrespective of Him for the next 20 or 30 years." You may not be here in the next 20 or 30 *minutes*, or, if you are, your Lord may be also here!

He comes! He is on the road! He started long ago and He sent on a herald before Him to cry, "Behold, I come quickly." He has been coming quickly over the mountains of division ever since—and He will be here soon. If you look for His appearing, you will be found in an attitude of one who waits and watches, that when his Lord comes he may meet Him with joy. Christ is coming, I must not sin. Christ is coming, I must not be rooted to the world. Are you thus expecting Him? I am afraid I shall only be speaking the truth if I say that very few Christians are, in the highest sense, *waiting* for the appearing of the Lord. My friend, Mr. Govett, in his commentary on my text, reminds us of the story of Moses, when God told him to take 70 men up the hill with him. We read of these honored men, that, "they saw God, and did eat and drink." What a privilege! They were all the Lord's guests! As Moses went up to God into the thick darkness, he said to them, "Tarry you here until we come again unto you."

Moses was gone for 40 days—how many of the 70 waited for him? I do not know when they began to slip down from the hill, or whether they went, one by one, or in groups. but when Moses returned, not a soul of them was left, save Joshua, whom Moses had taken up with him to still higher ground. The 70 had gone down among the people and probably spread that unbelief among them which led to the making of the golden calf. None can do so much mischief as those who have been with God, but cannot wait for the glorious appearing! You tell me Moses was gone a long time—well-near six weeks! Yes, and that is why many cannot wait for the Lord, now, because the delay is so long—it is nearly 1,900 years since He went away. True, *4,000* years rolled away before He came the first time, but 2,000 quite wear out the watchers for His Second Coming. Men cannot wait and, therefore, go down to the world and help to fashion its idols. Only here and there do we see a Joshua who will abide in his place till his leader appears.

As to *watching*, this is rarer than waiting. The fact is, even the better sort of Believers who wait for His coming, as all the 10 virgins did, nevertheless do not *watch*. Even the best sort of the waiters slumbered and slept. You are waiting, but you are sleeping! This is a mournful business. A man who is asleep cannot be said to *look* and yet it is, "unto them that look for Him" that the Lord comes with salvation. We must be wide-awake to look! We ought to go up to the watch-tower every morning and look to-

ward the rising sun to see whether He is coming. Surely our last act at night should be to look out for His star and say, "Is He coming?" It ought to be a daily disappointment when our Lord does not come—instead of being, as I fear it is, a kind of foregone conclusion that He will not come just yet. How pleased we are if some daring fellow will tell us when He will come, for then we can get ready near the time and need not perpetually watch!

We would not go to a gypsy in a red cloak and let her tell our fortune—but we will let a man in a black coat tell us the fortune of our Lord. What folly! Of that day and of that hour knows no man, nor even the angels of God! This time of the Advent is a secret and purposely so, that we may always be on tiptoe of expectation, always looking out—because our Lord is surely coming, but we are not sure when He comes. "And unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Many professing Christians forget Christ's Second Coming altogether. Others drop a smile when we speak about it, as though it belonged only to fanatics and dreamers.

But you, Beloved, I trust are not of that kind! As you really believe in the First Coming and the one great Sacrifice, so really believe in the Second Coming without a sin-offering unto the climax of your salvation! Standing between the Cross and the crown, between the cloud that received Him out of our sight, and the clouds with which He will come with ten thousands of His saints to judge the quick and the dead, let us live as men who are not of this world, strangers in this age which darkly lies between two bright appearings, happy beings saved by an accomplished mystery, and soon to be glorified by another mystery which is hastening on! Let us, like her in the Revelation, have the moon under our feet, keeping all sublunary things in their proper place. May we even now be made to sit together with Christ in the heavenlies!

Now all this must be strange talk to some of you. I wish it would alarm those of you who once made a profession of true religion, but have gone back to the world's lies. How will you face Him, you Backsliders, in that day when He shall appear and all else shall vanish in the blaze of His light, as stars when the sun shines out? What will you do when your treachery shall be made clear to your consciences by His appearing? What will you do, who have sold your Master and given up your Lord, who was and is your only hope for the putting away of your sins? Oh, I pray you, as you love yourselves, go to Him as He appears in His First Coming and then, washed in His blood, go forward to meet Him in His Second Coming for salvation.

God bless you and, by His Son and Spirit, make you ready for that great day which comes on apace!

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Hebrews 9:24-28; 10:1-18; Matthew 25:1-13.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN-BOOK—361, 289, 356.

THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH
NO. 2195

A SERMON DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 21, 1890,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing where he went. Hebrews 11:8.

THE part of the text to which I shall call your attention lies in these words, "*By faith Abraham obeyed.*" Obedience—what a blessing it would be if we were all trained to it by the Holy Spirit! How fully should we be restored if we were perfect in it! If all the world would obey the Lord, what a Heaven on earth there would be! Perfect obedience to God would mean love among men, justice to all classes and peace in every land! Our will brings envy, malice, war—but the Lord's will would bring us love, joy, rest, bliss. Obedience—let us pray for it for ourselves and others!—

"Is there a heart that will not bend
To Your Divine control?
Descend, O Sovereign Love, descend,
And melt that stubborn soul."

Surely, though we have had to mourn our disobedience with many tears and sighs, we now find joy in yielding ourselves as servants of the Lord—our deepest desire is to do the Lord's will in all things. Oh, for obedience! It has been supposed by many ill-instructed people that the Doctrine of Justification by Faith is opposed to the teaching of good works, or obedience. There is no truth in the supposition! We preach the *obedience* of faith. Faith is the fountain, the foundation and the fosterer of *obedience*! Men will not obey God till they believe Him. We preach faith in order that men may be brought to obedience. To disbelieve is to disobey! One of the first signs of practical obedience is found in the obedience of the mind, the understanding and the heart—and this is expressed in *believing* the teaching of Christ, trusting to His work and resting in His salvation.

Faith is the morning star of obedience. If we would work the work of God, we must believe on Jesus Christ whom He has sent. Brothers and Sisters, we do not give a secondary place to obedience, as some suppose. We look upon the obedience of the heart to the will of God as salvation! The attainment of perfect obedience would mean perfect salvation. We regard sanctification, or *obedience*, as the great design for which the Savior died. He shed His blood that He might cleanse us from dead works and purify unto Himself a people zealous for good works. It is for this that we were chosen—we are "elect unto holiness." We know nothing of election to

continue in sin! It is for this that we have been called—we are "called to be saints." Obedience is the grand objective of the work of Divine Grace in the hearts of those who are chosen and called—they are to become obedient children—conformed to the image of the Elder Brother, with whom the Father is well pleased.

The obedience that comes of faith is of a noble sort. The obedience of a slave ranks a little higher than the obedience of a well-trained horse or dog, for it is tuned to the crack of the whip. Obedience which is not cheerfully rendered is not the obedience of the heart and, consequently, is of little worth before God. If the man obeys because he has no opportunity of doing otherwise and if, were he free, he would at once become a rebel—there is nothing in his obedience. The obedience of faith springs from a principle within and not from compulsion without. It is sustained by the mind's soberest reasoning and the heart's warmest passion. The man reasons with himself that he ought to obey his Redeemer, his Father, his God and, at the same time, the love of Christ constrains him to do so, and thus, what argument *suggests* affection, *performs*!

A sense of great obligation, an apprehension of the fitness of obedience and spiritual renewal of heart work an obedience which becomes essential to the sanctified soul. Therefore, it is not relaxed in the time of temptation, nor destroyed in the hour of losses and sufferings. Life has no trial which can turn the gracious soul from its passion for obedience! Death, itself, does but enable it to render an obedience which shall be as blissful as it will be complete. Yes, this is a chief ingredient of Heaven—that we shall see the face of our Lord and serve Him day and night in His Temple. Meanwhile, the more fully we obey at this present, the nearer we shall be to His Temple gate. May the Holy Spirit work in us, so that, by faith—like Abraham—we may obey!

I preach to you, at this time, obedience—absolute obedience to the Lord God! But I preach the obedience of a child, not the obedience of a slave; the obedience of love, not of terror; the obedience of faith, not of dread. I shall urge you, as God shall help me, in order that you may come to this obedience, that you should seek after stronger faith—"For by faith Abraham obeyed." In every case where the father of the faithful obeyed, it was the result of his faith—and in every case in which you and I shall render true obedience—it will be the product of our faith. Obedience, such as God can accept, never comes out of a heart which thinks God a liar, but is worked in us by the Spirit of the Lord, through our believing in the Truth, Love and Grace of our God in Christ Jesus. If any of you are now disobedient, or have been so, the road to a better state of things is trust in God. You cannot hope to render obedience by the mere forging of conduct into a certain groove, or by a personal, unaided effort of the resolution. There is a Free-Grace road to obedience and that is receiving, by faith, the Lord Jesus who is the Gift of God and is made of God unto us, sanctification.

We accept the Lord Jesus by faith and He teaches us obedience and creates it in us. The more of faith in Him you have, the more of obedience to Him will you manifest. I was about to say that that obedience naturally

flows out of faith—and I would not have spoken amiss—for as a man believes so is he—and, in proportion to the strength and purity of his faith in God, as He is revealed in Christ Jesus, will be the holy obedience of his life. That our meditation may be profitable, we will first think a little of *the kind of faith which produces obedience*. And then, secondly, we will treat of *the kind of obedience which faith produces.* And then we will advance another step and consider *the kind of life which comes out of this faith and obedience*.

I will be as brief as I can upon each point. Let us look up to the Holy Spirit for His gracious illumination.

I. First, consider THE KIND OF FAITH WHICH PRODUCES OBEDIENCE.

It is, manifestly, *faith in God as having the right to command our obedience*. Beloved in the Lord, you know that He is Sovereign and that His will is law. You feel that God, your Maker, your Preserver, your Redeemer and your Father should have your unswerving service. We unite, also, in confessing that we are not our own, we are bought with a price. The Lord our God has a right to us which we would not wish to question. He has a greater claim upon our ardent service than He has upon the services of angels, for, while they were created as we have been, yet they have never been *redeemed* by precious blood! Our glorious Incarnate God has an unquestioned right to every breath we breathe, to every thought we think, to every moment of our lives and to every capacity of our being! We believe in Jehovah as rightful Lawgiver and, as most fitly, our Ruler. This loyalty of our mind is based on *faith* and is a chief prompter to *obedience*. Always cultivate this feeling. The Lord is our Father, but He is, "our Father which are in Heaven." He draws near to us in condescension, but it is condescension and we must not presume to think of Him as though He were such a one as ourselves. There is a holy familiarity with God which cannot be too much enjoyed, but there is a flippant familiarity with God which cannot be too much abhorred! The Lord is King. His will is not to be questioned. His every Word is Law. Let us never question His Sovereign right to decree what He pleases and to fulfill the decree—to command what He pleases and to punish every shortcoming. Because we have faith in God as Lord of All, we gladly pay Him our homage and desire in all things to say, "Your will be done in earth, as it is done in Heaven."

Next, we must have *faith in the rightness of all that God says or does*. I hope, Beloved, you do not think of God's Sovereignty as tyranny or imagine that He ever could or would will anything but that which is right. Neither will we admit into our minds a suspicion of the incorrectness of the Word of God in any matter whatever, as though the Lord, Himself, could err. We will not have it that God, in His Holy Book, makes mistakes about matters of history, or of science, any more than He does upon the great Truths of salvation! If the Lord is God, He must be Infallible! And if He can be described as in error in the little respects of human history and science, He cannot be trusted in the greater matters!

My Brothers and Sisters, Jehovah never errs in deed, or in Word—and when you find His Law written either in the Ten Commandments, or anywhere else, you believe that there is not a precept too many, or too few. Whatever may be the precepts of the Law, or of the Gospel, they are, altogether, pure and holy. The Words of the Lord are like fine gold—pure, precious, and weighty—not one of them may be neglected! We hear people talk about, "minor points," and so on, but we must not consider any Word of our God as a minor thing, if by that expression is implied that it is of small importance. We must accept every single Word of precept, or prohibition, or instruction as being what it ought to be—and neither to be diminished nor increased. We should not reason about a command of God as though it might be set aside or amended. He bids—we obey. May we enter into that true spirit of obedience which is the unshaken belief that the Lord is right! Nothing short of this is the obedience of the inner man—the obedience which the Lord desires.

Furthermore, we must have *faith in the Lord's call upon us to obey*. Abraham went out from his father's house because he felt that whatever God said to others, He had spoken to him, and said, "Get you out of your country, and from your kindred, and from your father's house." Whatever the Lord may have said to the Chaldeans, or to other families in Ur, Abraham was not so much concerned with that as with the special word of command which the Lord had sent to his own soul. Oh, that we were, most of all, earnest to render *personal* obedience! It is very easy to offer unto God a sort of "other people's obedience"—to fancy that we are serving God when we are finding fault with our neighbors and lamenting that they are not so godly as they ought to be!

Truly, we cannot help seeing their shortcomings, but we should do well to be less observant of them than we are. Let us turn our magnifying glasses upon *ourselves*. It is not so much our business to be weeding other people's gardens as to keep our own vineyard. To the Lord each one should cry, "Lord, what will You have me to do?" We, who are His chosen, redeemed from among men, called out from the rest of mankind, ought to feel that if no other ears hear the Divine call, our ears must hear it and, if no other heart obeys, our soul rejoices to do so. We are bound with cords to the horns of the Altar! The strongest ties of gratitude hold us to the service of Jesus—we must be obedient in life to Him who, for our sakes, was obedient unto death. Our service to our Lord is freedom—we will to yield to His will! To delight Him is our delight! It is a blessed thing when the inmost nature yearns to obey God; when obedience grows into a habit and becomes the very element in which the spirit breathes. Surely it should be so with every one of the blood-washed children of the Host High—and their lives will prove that it is so. Others are bound to obey, but we should attend most to our own personal obligation and set our own houses in order. Our obedience should begin at home—it will find its hands full enough there.

Obedience arises out of a *faith which is to us the paramount principle of action*. The kind of faith which produces obedience is lord of the under-

standing, a royal faith. The true Believer believes in God beyond all his belief in anything else and everything else. He can say, "Let God be true, but every man a liar." His faith in God has become to him the crown of all his believing, the most assured of all his confidences. As gold is to the inferior metals, such is our trust in God to all our other trusts. To the genuine Believer, the eternal is as much above the temporal as the heavens are above the earth. The Infinite rolls, like Noah's flood, over the tops of the hills of the present and the finite. To the Believer, let a Truth of God be tinctured with the Glory of God and he values it. But if God and eternity are not there, he will leave these trifles to those who choose them. You must have a paramount faith in God, or else the will of God will not be a paramount rule to you.

Only a reigning faith will make us subject to its power, so as to be in all things obedient to the Lord. The chief thought in life with the true Believer is, "How can I obey God?" His great anxiety is to do the will of God, or acceptably to *suffer* that will. And if he can obey, he will make no terms with God and stand upon no reservations. He will pray, "Refine me from the dross of rebellion and let the furnace be as fierce as You will." His choice is neither wealth, nor ease, nor honor, but that he may glorify God in his body and his spirit, which are the Lord's. Obedience has become as much his rule as self-will is the rule of others. His cry unto the Lord is, "By Your command I stay or go. Your will is my will. Your pleasure is my pleasure. Your Law is my love."

God grant us a supreme, over-mastering faith, for this is the kind of faith which we must have if we are to lead obedient lives! We must have faith in God's right to rule, faith in the rightness of His commands, faith in our personal obligation to obey and faith that the command must be the paramount authority of our being. With this faith of God's elect, we shall realize the object of our election—namely, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.

Dear Friend, have you this kind of faith? I will withdraw the question as directed to you—and I will ask it of myself—Have I that faith which leads me to obey my God? Obedience, if it is of the kind we are speaking of, is faith in action—faith walking with God, or, shall I say, walking before the Lord in the land of the living? If we have a faith which is greedy in hearing, severe in judging and rapid in self-congratulation, but not inclined to obedience, we have the faith of hypocrites. If our faith enables us to set ourselves up as patterns of sound doctrine—and qualifies us to crack the heads of all who differ from us—and yet lacks the fruit of obedience, it will leave us among the "dogs" who are "without." The faith that makes us obey is the *only* faith which marks the children of God. It is better to have the faith that obeys than the faith which moves mountains. I would sooner have the faith which obeys than the faith which heaps the altar of God with sacrifices and perfumes His courts with incense. I would rather obey God than rule an empire, for, after all, the loftiest sovereignty a soul can inherit is to have dominion over *self* by rendering believing obedience to the Most High.

Thus much upon faith. "By faith Abraham obeyed." And only by *faith* can you and I obey.

II. Let us consider, secondly, THE KIND OF OBEDIENCE WHICH FAITH PRODUCES. This I shall illustrate from the whole of the verse.

Genuine faith in God creates a prompt obedience. "By faith Abraham, *when he was* called, obeyed." There was an immediate response to the command. Delayed obedience is disobedience! I wish some Christians, who put off duty, would remember this. Continued delay of duty is a continuous sin. If I do not obey the Divine Command, I sin—and every moment that I continue in that condition—I repeat the sin. This is a serious matter. If a certain act is my duty at this hour and I leave it undone, I have sinned. But it will be equally incumbent upon me during the next hour—and if I still refuse, I disobey again—and so on till I *do* obey. Neglect of a standing command must grow very grievous if it is persisted in for years. In proportion as the conscience becomes callous upon the subject, the guilt becomes the more provoking to the Lord! To refuse to do right is a great evil, but to *continue* in that refusal till conscience grows numb upon the matter is far worse.

I remember a person coming to be baptized, who said that he had been a Believer in the Lord Jesus for 40 years and that he had always seen the ordinance to be Scriptural. I felt grieved that he had so long been disobedient to a known duty and I proposed to him that he should be baptized at once. It was in a village and he said that there were no conveniences. I offered to go with him to the brook and baptize him, but he said, "No, he that believes shall not make haste." Here was one who had willfully disobeyed his Lord—for as many years as the Israelites in the wilderness, upon a matter so easy of performance and yet, after confessing his fault, he was not willing to amend it, but perverted a passage of Scripture to excuse him in further delay! David says, "I made haste and delayed not to keep Your Commandments." I give this case as a typical illustration—there are a hundred spiritual, moral, domestic, business and religious duties which men put off in the same manner—as if they thought that any time would do for God and He must take His turn with the rest.

What would you say to your boy if you bade him go upon an errand and he answered you, "I will go tomorrow"? Surely you would "morrow" him in a style which would abide upon his memory! Your tone would be sharp and you would bid him go at once. If he, then, promised to run in an hour's time, would you call that obedience? It would be impudence! Obedience is for the present tense—it must be prompt, or it is nothing. Obedience respects the time of the command as much as any other part of it. To hesitate is to be disloyal. To stop and consider whether you will obey or not is rebellion in the germ! If you believe in the living God unto eternal life, you will be quick to do your Lord's bidding, even as a maid hearkens to her mistress. You will not be as the horse, which needs whip and spur—your love will do more for you than compulsion could do for slaves. You will have wings to your heels to hasten you along the way of obedience. "Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts."

Next, *obedience should be exact*. Even Abraham's obedience failed somewhat in this, at first, for he started at once from Ur of the Chaldees, but he only went as far as Haran, and there he stayed till his father died. And then the precept came to him again and he set off for the land which the Lord had promised to show him. If any of you have only half obeyed, I pray that you may take heed of this—and do all that the Lord commands—carefully endeavoring to keep back no part of the revenue of obedience.

Yet the error of the great Patriarch was soon corrected, for we read that, "Abraham, *when he was called to go out . . . went out*." I have only omitted intermediate words which do not alter the sense—and that is exactly how we should obey. That which the Lord commands we should do—just that, and not another thing of our own devising. How very curiously people try to give God something else instead of what He asks for! The Lord says, "My son, give Me your heart," and they give Him ceremonies! He asks obedience of them and they give Him will-worship. He asks for faith, love and justice—and they offer 10,000 rivers of oil and the fat of fed beasts. They will give all except the one thing which He will be pleased with! "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." If the Lord has given you true faith in Himself, you will be *anxious* not so much to do a notable thing as to do *exactly* what God would have you to do. Mind your jots and tittles with the Lord's precepts. Attention to little things is a fine feature in obedience—it lies much more as to its essence in the little things than in the great ones. Few dare rush into great crimes and yet they will indulge in secret rebellion, for their heart is not right with God. Hence so many mar what they call obedience by forgetting that they serve a heart-searching, rein-trying God who observes thoughts and motives. He would have us obey Him with the heart and that will lead us not merely to regard a few pleasing commands, but to have respect unto all His will. Oh, for a tender conscience which will not willfully neglect, nor presumptuously transgress!

And next, mark well that Abraham rendered *practical obedience*. When the Lord commanded Abraham to quit his father's house, he did not say that he would think it over. He did not discuss it *pro and* con in an essay. He did not ask his father, Terah, and his neighbors to consider it, but, as he was called to go out, he went out. Alas, dear Friends, we have so much talk and so little obedience! The religion of mere brain and jaw does not amount to much. We need the religion of hands and feet! I remember a place in Yorkshire, years ago, where a good man said to me, "We have a real good minister." I said, "I am glad to hear it." "Yes," he said, "he is a fellow that preaches with his feet." Well, now, that is a capital thing if a preacher preaches with his feet, by walking *with* God, and with his hands by working *for* God. He does well who glorifies God by where he goes and by what he does—he will excel 50 others who only preach religion with their tongues. You, dear Hearers, are not good hearers so long as you are only hearers—but when the heart is affected by the ears and the hands

follows the heart, then your faith is proven! That kind of obedience which comes of faith in God is *real* obedience, since it shows itself by its *works*.

Next, *faith produces a far-seeing obedience*. Note this. "Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance." How great a company would obey God if they were paid for it on the spot! They have "respect unto the recompense of the reward," but they must have it in the palm of their hand. With them—"A bird in hand is better far than two which in the bushes are." They are told that there is Heaven to be had and they answer that if Heaven were to be had *here*, as an *immediate* freehold, they might look after it, but they cannot afford to wait. To inherit a country after this life is over is too like a fairy tale for their practical minds! Many there are who enquire, "Will religion pay? Is there anything to be made out of it? Shall I have to shut up my shop on Sundays? Must I alter my mode of dealing, and curtail my profits?" When they have totaled up the cost and have taken all things into consideration, they come to the conclusion that obedience to God is a luxury which they can dispense with—at least until near the end of life! Those who practice the obedience of faith look for the reward *hereafter* and set the greatest store by it. To their faith, alone, the profit is exceedingly great. To take up the cross will be to carry a burden, but it will also be to find rest. They know the words, "No cross, no crown," and they recognize the Truth of God that if there is no obedience here, there will be no reward hereafter! This needs a faith that has eyes which can see afar off—across the black torrent of death—and within the veil which parts us from the unseen. A man will not obey God unless he has learned to endure "as seeing Him who is invisible."

Yet, remember that *the obedience which comes of true faith is often bound to be altogether unreckoning and implicit,* for it is written, "He went out, not knowing where he went." God bade Abraham journey and he moved his camp at once. Into the unknown land he made his way. Through fertile regions, or across a wilderness—among friends, or through the midst of foes, he pursued his journey—he did not know where his way would take him, but he knew that the Lord had bid him go. Even bad men will obey God when they think fit—but good men will obey when they know not what to think of it. It is not ours to judge the Lord's command, but to follow it. I am weary with hearing men say, "Yes, we know that such a course would be right, but then the consequences might be painful—good men would be grieved, the cause would be weakened—and we ourselves should get into a world of trouble and put our hands into a hornet's nest." There is not much need to preach caution nowadays—those who would run any risk for the Truth of God's sake are few enough. Consciences, tender about the Lord's honor, have not been produced for the last few years in any great number. Prudent consideration of consequences is superabundant, but the spirit which obeys—and dares all things for Christ's sake—where is it?

The Abrahams of today will not go out from their kindred! They will put up with anything sooner than risk their livelihoods! If they do go out, they

must know where they are going and how much is to be picked up in the new country. I am not pronouncing any judgment upon their conduct, I am merely pointing out the fact. Our Puritan forefathers thought little of property or liberty when these stood in the way of conscience—they defied exile and danger sooner than give up a grain of the Truth of God! But their descendants prefer peace and worldly amusements—and pride themselves on "culture" rather than on heroic faith. The modern Believer must have no mysteries, but must have everything planed down to a scientific standard. Abraham "went out, not knowing where he went," but the moderns must have every information with regard to the way—and then they will *not* go! If they obey at all, it is because their own superior judgments incline that way, but to go forth, not knowing where they go, and to go at all hazards, is not to their minds at all. They are so highly "cultured" that they prefer to be original and map out their own way.

Brothers and Sisters, having once discerned the voice of God, obey without question! If you have to stand alone and nobody will befriend you, stand alone and God will befriend you! If you should get the evil words of those you value most, bear it. What, after all, are evil words, or good words, as compared with the keeping of a clear conscience by walking in the way of the Lord? The line of the Truth of God is narrow as a razor's edge—and he needs to wear the golden sandals of the peace of God who shall keep to such a line! Through Divine Grace may we, like Abraham, walk with our hand in the hand of the Lord, even where we cannot see our way!

The obedience which faith produces must be continuous. Having commenced the separated life, Abraham continued to dwell in tents and sojourn in the land which was far from the place of his birth. His whole life may be thus summed up—"By faith Abraham obeyed." He believed and, therefore, walked before the Lord in a perfect way. He even offered up his son, Isaac. "Abraham's mistake," was it? Alas for those who dare to talk in that fashion! "By faith he obeyed," and to the end of his life he was never an original speculator, or inventor of ways for self-will, but a submissive servant of that great Lord who deigned to call him, "Friend." May it be said of everyone here that by faith he obeyed! Do not cultivate doubt or you will soon cultivate disobedience. Set this up as your standard and, from now on, be this the epitome of your life—"By faith he obeyed."

III. Just a moment or two upon the third point. Let us consider THE SORT OF LIFE WHICH WILL COME OF THIS FAITH AND OBEDIENCE.

It will be, in the first place, *life without that great risk which otherwise holds us in peril.* A man runs a great risk when he steers himself. Rocks or no rocks, the peril lies in the *helmsman.* The Believer is no longer the helmsman of his own vessel—he has taken a Pilot on board. To believe in God and to do His bidding is a great escape from the hazards of personal weakness and folly. If we do as God commands and do not seem to succeed, it is no fault of ours. Failure, itself, would be success so long as we did not fail to obey! If we passed through life unrecognized, or were only acknowledged by a sneer from the worldly-wise—and if this were regarded

as a failure—it could be borne with joy so long as we knew that we had kept our faith towards God and our obedience to Him! Providence is God's business, obedience is ours. What comes out of our life's course must remain with the Lord—to obey is our sole concern. What harvest will come of our sowing, we must leave with the Lord of the Harvest, but we, ourselves, must look to the basket and the seed—and scatter our handfuls in the furrows without fail. We can win, "Well done, good and *faithful* servant"—to be a successful servant is not in our power, and we shall not be held responsible for it. Our greatest risk is over when we obey. God makes faith and obedience the way of safety.

In the next place, we shall enjoy a *life free from its heaviest cares*. If we were in the midst of the forest with Stanley, in the center of Africa, our pressing care would be to find our way out. But when we have nothing to do but to *obey*, our road is mapped out for us! Jesus says, "Follow Me," and this makes our way plain and lifts from our shoulders a load of cares. To choose our course by policy is a way of thorns—to obey is as the King's Highway. Policy has to tack about, to return upon its own courses and, often, to miss the port after all. But faith, like a steam vessel, steers straight for the harbor's mouth and leaves a bright track of obedience behind her as she forges ahead. When our only care is to obey, a thousand other cares take their flight. If we sin in order to succeed, we have sown the seeds of care and sorrow—and the reaping will be a grievous one. If we will forsake the path and try shortcuts, we shall have to do a deal of wading through mire and slough—we shall bespatter ourselves from head to foot—we shall be wearied to find our way and all because we could not trust God and obey His bidding.

Obedience may appear difficult and it may bring with it sacrifice, but, after all, it is the nearest and the best road. Her ways are, in the long run, ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. He who, through the Holy Spirit, is always believingly obedient, has chosen the good part. He it is who can sing—

"***I have no cares, O blessed Lord,***
For all my cares are Thine.
I live in triumph, too, for You
Have made Your triumphs mine."

Or, to change the verse, he is like Bunyan's shepherd boy in the Valley of Humiliation, for that lowland is part of the great Plain of Obedience! And he can also sing—

"He that is down, need fear no fall,
He that is low, no pride.
He that is humble ever shall
Have God to be his Guide."

Although he may not reach the heights of ambition, nor stand upon the giddy crags of presumption, yet he shall know superior joys. He has hit upon the happiest mode of living under Heaven—a mode of life akin to the perfect life above! He shall dwell in God's house and be still praising Him.

The way of obedience is a *life of the highest honor*. Obedience is the glory of a human life—the glory which our Lord has given to His chosen,

even His own Glory. "He learned obedience." He never struck out an original course, but He always did the things which pleased the Father. Be this our glory! By faith we yield our intelligence to the highest Intelligence—we are led, guided, directed—and we follow where our Lord has gone. To us who believe, He is honor. To a soldier it is the greatest honor to have accomplished his sovereign's command. He does not debase his manhood who subjects it to honorable command. No, he is even exalted by obeying in the day of danger. It is no dishonor to have it said—

"Theirs not to reason why;
Theirs but to dare and die."

The bravest and the most honored of men are those who implicitly obey the command of the King of Kings. Among His children, they are best who best know their Father's mind and yield to it the happiest obedience. Should we have any other ambition, within the walls of our Father's house, than to be perfectly obedient children before Him and implicitly trustful towards Him?

And, Brothers and Sisters, this is a kind of *life which will bring communion with God*. God often hides His face behind the clouds of dust which His children make by their self-will. If we transgress against Him, we shall soon be in trouble. But a holy walk—the walk described by my text as faith working obedience—is Heaven beneath the stars! God comes down to walk with men who obey. If they walk with Him, He walks with them. The Lord can only have fellowship with His servants as they obey. Obedience is Heaven in us and it is the preface of our being in Heaven! Obedient faith is the way to eternal life—no, it is eternal life revealing itself!

The obedience of faith creates a form of *life which may be safely copied*. As parents, we wish so to live that our children may copy us to their lasting profit. Teachers should aspire to be what they would have their classes to be. If you go to school to the obedience of faith, you will be good teachers. Children usually exaggerate their models, but there will be no fear of their going too far in faith, or in obedience to the Lord! I like to hear a man say, when his father has gone, "My dear father was a man that feared God. And I would gladly follow him. When I was a boy, I thought him rather stiff and Puritanical, but now I see he had a good reason for it all. I feel much the same, myself, and, with God's help, would do nothing of which God would not approve."

The bringing up of families is a very great matter. This is too much neglected, nowadays, and yet it is the most profitable of all holy service and the hope of the future. Great men, in the best sense, are bred in holy households. God-fearing example at home is the most fruitful of religious agencies. I knew a little humble Dissenting Chapel of the strictest sect of our religion. There was no culture in the ministry, but the people were strong Believers. Five or six families, attending that despised ministry, learned to believe what they believed and to live upon it. It was by no means a liberal creed which they received, but what they held operated on

their lives. Five or six families came out of that place and became substantial in wealth and generous in liberality.

These all sprang from plain, humble men, who knew their Bibles and believed the Doctrines of Grace. They learned to fear God and to trust in Him—and to rest in the old faith—and even in worldly things they prospered. Their descendants of the third generation are not, all of them, of their way of thinking, but they have risen through God's blessing on their grandfathers. These men were fed on substantial meat and they became sturdy old fellows, able to cope with the world and fight their way. I would to God that we had more men today who would maintain the Truth of God at all hazards. Alas, the rubbery backbone is common among Dissenters—and they take to politics, the new philosophy and, therefore, we are losing the force of our testimony—and are, I fear, decreasing in numbers, too. The Lord give us back those whose examples can be safely copied in all things, even though they are decried as being "rigid" or "too precise!" We serve a jealous God and a holy Savior—therefore let us mind that we do not grieve His Spirit and cause Him to withdraw from us.

Lastly, faith working obedience is a kind of *life which needs great Grace*. Every careless professor will not live in this fashion. It will need watchfulness, prayer and nearness to God to maintain the faith which obeys in everything. Beloved, "He gives more Grace." The Lord will enable us to add to our faith all the virtues. Whenever you fail in any respect in your lives, do not sit down and question the goodness of God and the power of the Holy Spirit—that is *not* the way to increase the stream of obedience, but to diminish the source of it. Believe more, instead of less. Try, by God's Grace, to believe more in the pardon of sin, more in the renovation by the Holy Spirit, more in the Everlasting Covenant, more in the Love that had no beginning and will never, never cease. Your hope does not lie in rushing into the darkness of doubt, but in *repentantly* returning into the still clearer light of a steadier faith. May you be helped to do so and may we, all of us, and the whole multitude of the Lord's redeemed, by faith go on to obey our Lord in all things!

I leave this word with you. Remember, "By faith Abraham obeyed." Have faith in God and then obey, obey, obey, and keep on obeying until the Lord shall call you Home! Obey on earth and then you will have learned to obey in Heaven. Obedience is the rehearsal of eternal bliss! Practice by obedience now the song which you will sing forever in glory. God grant His Grace to us! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 109:33-40.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN-BOOK"—649, 653, 650.

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HOSANNA!
NO. 2196

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 22, 1891,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried saying, Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest"
Matthew 21:9.

AFTER the miracle of the raising of Lazarus, a great fame went abroad concerning our Lord. He still rested at Bethany and the people came up to the feast in great number—an easy walk from Jerusalem to Bethany—to see Jesus and to see Lazarus, who had been raised from the dead. These people, on a certain day, formed a company and marched with Jesus towards Jerusalem. On the way our Lord sent two of His disciples to fetch a donkey and its colt—and upon this last He rode into the city. Another crowd, coming out of Jerusalem, met the company attending upon Jesus and, forming one great procession, the whole multitude marched into the city escorting the Lord Jesus in humble state and paying Him honor as King in Zion. Upon no stately warhorse, but riding upon a colt, the foal of a donkey, the meek and lowly King entered the city of David attended by vast and enthusiastic crowds who strewed the fronds of palms, the branches of trees and their own garments in the way along which He rode. Our Lord thus received a right royal and popular reception to the metropolis of His nation. This was a strange event, so very different from anything else that happened to our Savior, that one wonders at it with great wonderment. That it is to be viewed as an important event is clear, since every one of the four Evangelists takes pains to record it (see Matthew 21, Mark 11, Luke 19 and John 12). Even of certain of the greater events of our Lord's life the Holy Spirit has not preserved us four accounts, but since He has done so in this case, He thereby calls us to give the more earnest heed to it. Herein is a mine of teaching—let us dig into it.

Assuredly, this honor paid to our Lord was passing strange—a gleam of sunlight in a day of clouds, a glimpse of summer in a long and dreary winter! He that was, as a rule, "despised and rejected of men," was, for the moment, surrounded with the acclaim of the crowd. All men saluted Him that day with their Hosannas—and the whole city was moved. It was a gala day for the disciples and a sort of coronation day for their Lord.

Why was the scene permitted? What was its meaning? The marvel is that nothing like it had occurred before, for our Lord had healed many

sick folk and these and their friends must have felt favorably towards Him. He had fed thousands at a time with the bread of this life and hosts had been cheered and comforted by His teaching. The common people heard Him gladly and were ready to gather around Him. Among an excitable people it was a wonder that they had not long ago taken Him by force and made Him king. No one had yet appeared so like the Messiah of their Prophets—no one had so well deserved the people's gratitude. If they had, from the first, accepted Him as their monarch, and if they had watched every opportunity of doing Him homage, nobody would have been surprised. The marvel is that the popular enthusiasm had been repressed so long.

It was the Lord Himself who had suppressed the popular enthusiasm. With great skill He had succeeded in bridling a dangerous fanaticism. He "did not strive nor cry, nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets"—and with such a cry, and such a voice as He had—the marvel was that He preserved quiet and kept the nation from revolt. Had He withdrawn His hand, the people would have been eager to assail their foreign rulers. Had this been the errand on which He came, He might at any moment have been saluted as, "the King of the Jews." He, with a masterly art, repressed everything that would have made Him a popular hero. He uttered unpalatable Truth, or He stole away from the scene of His miracles, or He kept Himself in obscure villages—and thus He eluded their honors.

When He had fed the multitudes, He took ship and went to the other side of the lake that they might not follow Him. Many men live for ambitious ends, but our Lord lived to escape the honors of men. The proud hunt after praise, but our Lord fled from preferment, hid Himself from fame and shunned the throne which by descent belonged to Him. He often bade those whom He healed go home and tell no man what He had done, for the dense throngs that gathered about Him rendered it difficult for Him to move on His mission of mercy. "He went about doing good," and did not wait in any place to reap the laurels which His miracles had earned Him. No wonder that, at last, the people felt forced to surround Him with their praises! The pent-up fires of gratitude at last had vent! The covered flames of admiration leaped up, at last, and cast a brilliant light over the old city! Men's hearts had been somewhat worse than diabolical if they had not felt a grateful enthusiasm for so grand a benefactor. No one before had ever so greatly blessed Judea—thousands of voices felt it joy to cry, "Hosanna," before such a One!

It came at last, you see—I have read you the story in John and in Matthew. They saluted Him with their shouts of loyal welcome. But there was little in the acclamation when it did come. There was great shouting for the while, abundant strewing of branches and lining of the road with garments—but there was little else. Remember what happened less than a week afterwards? If not the same individuals, yet people of the same city cried, "Crucify Him, crucify Him." The Hosannas may be very loud, but they will not be long. "Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord" sounds very sweet, but how much more vehement will be the cry, "Let Him be crucified"? Everything which comes to Jesus and His cause by

popular acclamation requires to be duly weighed—and when weighed it will be found wanting. "*Vox populi, vox Dei,*" they used to say, but the saying is false—the voice of the people may seem to be the voice of God when they shout, "Hosanna in the highest"—but whose voice is it when they yell out, "Crucify Him, crucify Him"?

"Surely men of low degree are vanity and men of high degree are a lie." So little value did our Lord place on popular applause that He repressed it! And when it did burst forth, so little did it elevate His spirit that we find Him in the midst of it, gazing upon the city with tears in His eyes. While others were glad, He was weeping for the woes which His prophetic eye foresaw! The throng was carried away by the present moment and the enthusiasm of the hour, but His heart was anticipating that dreadful day when they would find His blood upon them and upon their children—and the Romans would utterly destroy their city and quench the light of Zion in rivers of blood! It may be well that an enthusiastic admiration of religion should be professed by the multitude, but it is no more stable than smoke! It may seem good that the Christian minister should be popular, but popularity is lighter than vanity! Once the Savior rides in state as a King, but soon He walks down those very streets bearing His Cross like a criminal! How soon is the public voice purchased for evil! What dependence can be placed on the clamor of the streets?

We, however, have the story placed before us four times by the Evangelists and, therefore, let us now give it our attentive consideration. May the good Spirit impart instruction to us by this strange stir and singular scene! May some Divine impulse come to us out of this riding of our lowly King into Jerusalem!

First, I shall ask you to think of *Christ triumphant in Jerusalem*. Secondly, I shall bid you see herein *Christ glorified in His Church.* And then, thirdly, we will think of *Christ entering into the heart*. Under these three divisions we may arrange our thoughts and, God helping us, we may meditate to profit.

I. First, I ask you to view CHRIST TRIUMPHANT IN JERUSALEM. Why this procession? Why these shouts of homage? Our Lord always had a reason, and an excellent one, for all that He arranged or permitted. What die He mean by this? How shall we interpret the scene?

I think it was, first, *that He might most openly declare Himself*. He had frequently avowed His mission in plain speech. He had told them who He was and why He came, but they would not hear, so that they dared to say to Him, "If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." He had plainly told them times without number. Now He will assure them still more positively of His Kingdom by openly riding into the city of Jerusalem in state. Now shall they see that He claims to be the Messiah, sent of God, of whom the Prophet said, "Say you to the daughter of Zion, Behold, your salvation comes." Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings shall His fame be proclaimed—multitudes of people shall acknowledge with loud voices that, "He comes in the name of the Lord"—until the envious Pharisees shall be driven to ask, "Do you hear what these say?"

You will remember that our Lord rode into Jerusalem as a King, but He was also brought there as the Lamb of God's Passover, whose blood must save the people. It was not meet that the Lamb of God should go to the altar without observation. It was not fit that He who takes away the sin of the world should be led to the Temple unobserved. The day was near when He was to be offered up and all eyes were called to look on Him and know who and what He was. Therefore He permitted this great gathering and this honorable attention to Himself that He might say to Israel, by deeds as well as by words, "I am He that should come. I am He who of old had said, Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of Me, I delight to do Your will, O My God." Thus He, beyond all question, manifested Himself to the people. When they crucified Him, the rulers knew what He professed to be. Albeit many of them were in ignorance as to the truthfulness of His claims, yet they knew right well that they were crucifying One who professed to be the Lord of Glory—One who was acknowledged to be the Son of David—One who had publicly avowed Himself to be King in Zion. I think this was one reason for the joyous entry into the city of God.

Next, *it was our Lord's public claiming of authority over Israel*. He was the Son of David and, therefore, He was, by natural right, the King of the Jews. If He had taken possession of His own, He would have been sitting on the throne of the chosen dynasty of David by right of birth. He was, moreover, as the Messiah and Christ, the King of His people, Israel. Concerning Him it had been said by the Prophet, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, your King comes unto you: He is just and having salvation; lowly and riding upon a donkey, and upon a colt the foal of a donkey." Our Lord Jesus literally came to Zion in this manner. As King, He rode to His capital and entered His palace. In His priestly royalty, the Son of God went to His Father's House, to the Temple of sacrifice and sovereignty.

Among the tribes of Israel He is seen to be "One chosen out of the people," whom the Lord had given to be a Leader and Commander for the people. Although they might afterwards choose Barabbas and cry that they had no king but Caesar, yet Jesus was their King, as Pilate reminded them, when he said, "Shall I crucify your king?"—and as His Cross declared, when it bore the legal inscription, "This is Jesus the King of the Jews." Before His trial and His condemnation, He had put in a public claim to the rights and prerogatives of Zion's King, whom God has set upon His holy hill. Would to God all my Hearers fully recognized our Lord's Kingdom and yielded to His sway! Oh, that you would bow before Him and put your trust in Him! Part of His intent in riding through Jerusalem was that we, also, who dwell in the isles of the sea might know Him and reverence Him as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Let each one cry in His inmost soul—

"Great King of Grace, my heart subdue,
I would be led in triumph, too.
A willing captive to my Lord,
To sing the victories of His Word."

Possibly our Savior intended, also, by this singular procession, *to let His enemies know His real strength among the people*. If He could gather

so great a crowd of adherents without any summons or prearrangement, surely the whole population must have been, to a large degree, in His favor. If such an enthusiastic reception was spontaneously given Him, how many would have gathered if a plan had been arranged? Had He agreed to lead them against the Romans, thousands of fanatics would have followed His banner! If He had designed to make Himself a king and had permitted His servants to fight, the old fierce courage of the Jewish race would have burned like a flame of fire and His enemies would have fled before Him. He came not with war in His heart, but He would let the foeman see the hilt of the sword which He *might* have drawn from its sheath—He would let scribe and Pharisee bite their lips while they said, "Perceive you how you prevail nothing? Behold, the world is gone after Him."

If the Savior had willed to use the baser methods that men, nowadays, would freely employ, by asking the world's alliance, He might have made Himself a King at once. Had He blended politics with religion and yielded something to general prejudice, He might at once have set up a worldly kingdom! But no, He knew no selfish ambition—His kingdom was not of this world! He came not that He might be honored, *here*, but that He might be put to shame for our redemption! The diadem to which He aspired was a crown of thorns—yet He lets His adversaries see that He was not lowly because He was weak, nor gentle because He was feeble! They might, if they would, have seen by that day in Jerusalem, the greatness of the self-denial which abstained from earthly honors.

Nor have I exhausted the Savior's reasons. We are told by the Evangelist that He did this *that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Prophet.* I have just now quoted the text from Zechariah 9:9—our Lord was always careful and earnest to fulfill each Prophecy of Holy Scripture. He held the Inspired Word in high esteem and was careful of each letter of it. You never hear a word from Him derogatory of the Inspiration, authority, accuracy, or Infallibility of the Law and the Prophets! He fulfils the Word of the Lord even to its jots and tittles. He directed His life by that old chart in which the way of the Messiah was laid down long before He came to earth! Oh, for the same reverence of Scripture among preachers nowadays! God forbid that we should be lowering men's ideas of Inspiration, as some are fond of doing. May we value every Word which came from the Lord in old time! May we willingly change the course of our thought and teaching rather than neglect a single Word of Inspiration! When we see what the will of the Lord is, let us follow it implicitly. Obedience to the rule of Scripture was the way of the Head—it should also be the way of the members. If the King, Himself, is careful in His walk towards the Word of God, surely *we* ought to be!

I also think that as our Lord thus looked back and fulfilled Scripture, *He was looking forward to give us a prophetic type of the future.* Beloved, our Lord will not always be rejected. There are days of triumph for Him. "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner." This is the age of iron, but there comes a golden age of love and light. We look for His appearing and His reign—His reign of peace and joy! There will come a day when the kingdoms of this world shall become the

kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. He shall sit upon the Throne of His father, David, and of His Kingdom there shall be no end. The Lord shall reign forever and ever. Hallelujah! Has not Jehovah said to Him, "Ask of Me, and I shall give You the heathen for Your inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for Your possession"? Yes, there will come a day when He that was the reproach of men shall be the Glory of His people! Kings shall bow down before Him. All generations shall call Him blessed.

When I see that joyful procession going up the hill to Zion and mark how they that went before, joined with those who followed after, while the King Himself rode in the center, I seem to see a rehearsal of the long succession of the faithful in all ages. The Prophets have gone before Him—listen to their loud Hosannas! We come behind Him, even we upon whom the ends of the earth have come, and we have our glad Hosannas, too! Here Patriarchs join with Apostles, Prophets are one with martyrs, and priests keep rank with pastors and deacons—all with one voice lifting up the same note, "Hosanna! Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord." We see, then, in the simple state of our Lord in the streets of Jerusalem, a vision of the long glories which await Him in the New Jerusalem where He shall sit upon His Throne—and His enemies shall be made His footstool!

One thing more I cannot help mentioning. Surely our Lord allowed the populace a vent for their enthusiasm *with the desire to delight His friends*. Do you not think that the sympathetic Jesus thought it worth while to give His little band of followers what our forefathers would have called, "a gaudy day"—a high day—a holiday? These had been with Him in His humiliation and He would give them a taste of His Glory. They had seen Him despised and rejected of men—and He relieved the monotony of His humiliation with a glimpse of His Glory. For once they should be allowed to cast their garments under His feet and strew fragrant branches on His path. For once their zeal should have license to climb the trees and break down the boughs to strew His pathway. Nothing on that day filled their ears but the praises of their beloved Lord and honored Master! They would soon enough have sorrow when they would see Him seized in the garden and taken away bound to Caiaphas and Pilate to be condemned to die. He would give them a breathing space, an interval of pleasure wherein their spirits should no longer drag on earth, but rise on wings, into a lofty joy!

Our Lord loves His people to be glad. He kept His tears to Himself as He wept over Jerusalem, but the gladness He scattered all around, so that even the boys and girls in the streets of Jerusalem made the Temple courts to ring with their merry feet and gladsome songs. Hear how they clap their hands with delight! "Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna!" You hear it everywhere and the Lord smiles as He sees the joy which pours in floods around Him. The Lord loves to cast into our cup, some drops of Heaven's own honey until the bitterness of grief is sweetened and His followers are made happy by their joy in Himself. "Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King." I wish I could express myself in tones more clear and musical,

but though bodily weakness compels me to be measured in my utterance, my soul does magnify the Lord and my spirit does rejoice in God my Savior. May the Lord Himself cast into your hearts the burning coals of joyful love to Him— and so may your souls take fire and blaze aloft with vehement flames of delight! May this day be to your spirits a day of palms and Psalms, of prayers and praises, of Hallelujahs and Hosannas! Let us sing all day, as we sung in our opening hymn—

"Hosanna to the anointed King,
To David's holy Son!
Help us, O Lord! Descend and bring
Salvation from Your Throne.
Blest be the Lord who comes to men
With messages of Grace!
Who comes in God, His Father's name,
To save our sinful race.
Hosanna in the highest strains
The Church on earth can raise;
The highest heavens, in which He reigns,
Shall give Him nobler praise!"

II. Secondly, my text is, to my mind, a parable of CHRIST GLORIFIED IN HIS CHURCH. There are choice days when the shout of a King is heard in our assemblies. We have not yet fallen to a dull monotony of barrenness—we have hills like those of Carmel. The low water mark of lukewarmness is covered deep beneath flood tides of holy exultation. I am going to speak about these hallowed seasons.

I think that *such days come to the Church of God after special miracles of Grace have been worked.* Lazarus is raised from the dead and when the people see the greatness of the Prophet of Nazareth, they begin to commend and extol Him—and this leads on to holy excitement! If the Lord will be pleased to work remarkable conversions among us, we shall have grand times! If special instances of His gracious power are seen by us, we will bear our palms of victory before Him and many hearts will enquire, "Who is this?" Our hearts shall rejoice as with the joy of harvest when we see the Lord saving great sinners! Yes, we will shout as victors who divide the spoil! Do you not think that when Saul of Tarsus was converted and the Churches had rest, that they also had great exultation in their King? Everywhere it must have been spoken of that fierce Pharisee who had become a bold preacher of the faith which once he sought to destroy! What joy there is in saintly hearts when ringleaders in sin become champions for the Truth of God! Oh that our God would work such transformations in this city! Pray, my Brothers and Sisters, that the Lord would do the same for us—and for all His Churches just now. Oh, for displays of His power to quicken the dead! Oh, for Lazarus to be raised and to live among us as a wonder of Divine Grace whom neighbors would come to see! O Lord, give us this signal of delight! Let us see Your arm made bare in the eyes of all the people!

Next, *it was a time of testimon*y, for those who had been present and had seen Lazarus raised from the dead, bore witness. One stepped forward and said, "With these eyes I saw Lazarus come forth from the tomb of rock." "As for me," said another, "I saw him buried and I helped to carry

him to the grave. But I saw him come back to the house alive." "Yes," said a third, "I rolled away the stone and as I stood watching for the result, I saw the dead man come forth alive—and I helped to loosen his grave clothes." All these bore witness to what they had seen. You cannot tell what a joyful effect it produces and what enthusiasm is stirred when one after another bears personal witness. Lord, open men's mouths! Lord, make the quiet ones to tell forth Your praise! Your silent tongues deprive us of our joy. Your cowardly reticence robs Christ of His Glory and the Church of its increase. If God has done anything for you, or you have seen Him do anything for others, bear testimony to it! It is the Lord's due and your duty, that you should speak to the glory of Christ Jesus. When great wonders have been done and those who saw them are willing to bear their testimony, then we may look for red-letter days wherein gladness and praise shall be in the ascendant.

It was a good sign, too, of joy to come, that *the enemies were now raging worse than ever*. They sought to kill both Jesus and Lazarus. If the devil never roars, the Church will never sing! God is not doing much if the devil is not awake and busy. Depend upon it, that a working Christ makes a raging devil! When you hear ill reports, cruel speeches, threats, taunts and the like, believe that the Lord is among His people and is working gloriously. We look upon the "many adversaries" as one of the tokens that a great door and effectual is set before us. When we hear thunder, we look for rain. Wrath in the lowest Hell is a prognostic of Hosanna in the highest Heaven!

It is also a cheering sign when there is *a general eagerness among the people concerning our Lord*. When the disciples gather around their Master and are prompt to do His bidding, then good times are come. When all agree, it is also well. When they that go before, and they that follow after are all of the same mind, then is it a day of joy. When gray heads grow young and young heads grow wise, it is a token for good. When the aged lift up their eyes to Heaven and say, "God, even our own God, shall bless us," things look well. When our matrons and our sires grow hopefully confident and say, "The Lord has blessed us in days gone by and He is going to bless us yet again," then the weather glass points to "Set fair." When the younger sort, that follow after, who have been converted but lately, burn with a holy zeal and cry, "We will give the Lord no rest until He blesses us," then the sun of the Church is shining high up in the sky. When we are all ready, each man, each woman, ready to take our share in the harvesting, then will the sheaves be garnered! It is cheering when the congregation shares the excitement with the Church and its ministers—and the prospect of a Divine blessing is before the mind of all who seek better things. Surely, the time to favor Zion, yes, the set time has come, when her King is longed for and every heart beats high with love for Him!

The case is clear when all this is attended *with an abounding generosity*. It is well when disciples are not only willing to fetch another man's colt, but are willing to lay their own garments on it—when they will not only gather palm fronds to strew the path, but will take off their own coats to carpet the way of the King! When everybody does something, or gives

something, or, at any rate, joins in the hearty Hosannas, then is the King come into our midst! Our King is not where hearts are miserly and souls are selfish, but one token of His Presence is that His people offer willingly unto the Lord. At such times Believers feel that they are not their own, but are bought with a price—and things which once looked like sacrifices too great to be expected of them are cheerfully presented as sacrifices of joy.

Beloved, we must not forget that it is a token of God's having come to His Church and of His having given her a joyful day when *the children share in it*. Luther was greatly encouraged when he found that the children met together for prayer. He said, "God will hear *them*. The devil himself cannot defeat us now that the children begin to pray." It is very beautiful to read Mr. Whitefield's remarks about his sermons at Moorfields and elsewhere in London, when mud and stones were cast at him and yet a group of children always surrounded his pulpit. And though some of them were hurt, yet he noticed how bravely they stood by him through the service. He thought it a token for good that children drank in his words. When God moves the children to earnestness, He will soon move their fathers and mothers! When boys and girls meet to praise God, do not despise their little meetings, nor say, "It is only a parcel of children." The children are, in God's esteem, the most precious portion of the race! He sets high store by His little ones and He has set a special curse upon those who offend one of the little ones that believe in Him. Jesus, Master, come, we pray You! Come in Your lowly pomp, in all Your gentleness and Grace, and then will the children of these modern days sing loud Hosannas to Your name, like those in Your Temple of old.

I want you to notice in our text that *our Savior was received with the shout of Hosanna*! The best interpretation I can give is—"Save, oh, save! Save, oh, save!" Different nations have different ways of expressing their good will to their monarchs. A Roman would have shouted, "Io triumphe!" We sing, "God save our gracious Queen." The Persians said, "O King, live forever." The Jews cried, "Hosanna!" "Save," or, "God save the King!" The French have their "Vivas," by which they mean, "Long live the man." Hosanna is tantamount to all these. It is a shout of homage, welcome and loyalty. It wishes wealth, health and honor to the king. In the Saxon we say, "Hurrah." In Hebrew, "Hosanna." That mighty shout startled all the streets of the old city—"Hosanna, Hosanna, the King is come! Save Him, O Lord! Save us through Him! Long live the King!" While it was a shout of homage, it was also a prayer *to* the King. "Save, Lord; save us, O King! O King, born to conquer and to save, deliver us!" It was, moreover, a prayer *for* Him—"God save the King, God bless and prosper His Majesty. "Prayer also shall be made for Him continually; and daily shall He be praised." We never cease to pray, "Your Kingdom come; Your will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven." Let us then cry, Hosanna, making it at once a loyal shout! A prayer *to* our King and a prayer *for* Him. All these things appear in the benediction which follows, "Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest."

Would it be amiss if we were to indulge in a hearty shout for our King? May we never grow enthusiastic? May we never overleap the bounds of prim propriety? Shall we never cry Hallelujah! Shall no Hosannas burst from our lips? Surely, if our King will come into the midst of His Church, again, and end these black days of doubt, we must and will shout, or else the very stones will cry out! Yes, O Lord Jesus, You shall have our Vivas: we will shout, "Long live the King!"—

"All hail the power of Jesus' name!
Let angels prostrate fall."

Nor will we cease to pray to You! Some of you that have not yet been saved by Him will, I trust, say, "Save me, Lord! O Jesus, save me!" You will not disturb but delight the present meeting if you will in your hearts cry, "Lord, save me!" Remember the cry of two blind beggars on this very journey of our Lord—and how He opened their eyes when they cried, "Son of David, have mercy on us!"

Will we not also put up prayer for our Lord this morning? Will not each one in his pew now breathe a petition to God, saying, "Father, glorify Your Son"? You have said that the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hands—make it so. O Jehovah, You are well pleased with Jesus; show Your good pleasure towards Him by giving Him to conquer ten thousand times ten thousand hearts! Let a nation be born in a day. May He reign forever and ever! Hosanna! Hosanna!

III. I have only a little time for my third point, and yet it is of great importance—CHRIST RECEIVED IN THE HEART. His triumphant ride into Jerusalem was a type of His entering the renewed heart. I pray that you who have never received Him may listen and may, by the listening, be led to pray for His coming into your heart.

On that day, when Christ came up from Bethany, *the city gates were wide open*. We read nothing about them because they were not in the way—there were no shut gates to Him. He rode into Jerusalem without let or hindrance. Are your gates wide open this morning? If not, I would say, "Lift up your heads, O you gates; and be you lift up, you everlasting doors: and the King of Glory shall come in." He is willing to abide in your hearts and go no more out forever—be sure that your gates are set wide before Him! May the Holy Spirit open your hearts! Do not tolerate the thought of shutting out your Lord. Never! Open wide the portals of your soul. Yes, go forth by willing obedience and say, "Come in, my Lord! Come in!"

He was cheerfully received as King. Our Lord did not come to subdue the citizens at the point of the sword. He did not come with force of arms to coerce the city. You must receive Jesus willingly, or not at all. He comes to reign, but He comes in the gentleness of love. He rides on no high-mettled charger. He lays His hand on no sharp sword which clatters at His side. About Him are no men-at-arms. Behind Him come no heavy guns, dragged along the trembling streets. Jesus was willingly received—everyone exultingly welcomed Him. Will you so receive Jesus? Has He made you willing in the day of His power? You may well salute Him and welcome Him to your heart and your home, for you have never before received so blessed a guest! Open wide the gates and entreat Him to come

in, for He will bring Heaven with Him. He never uses force. He conquers only by love. The Holy Spirit works upon the will of man, but He still leaves it a will, so that we freely choose our Lord and delight in Him as our King!

Remember, Beloved, *the coming of Christ is with gentleness and love*. Riding on a colt, the foal of a donkey, is a very different thing from riding the fiery warhorse. I like not men who seem as if they were converted, to hate everybody else. It is not Christ who has come unto you if you have grown prouder, harder, more passionate than ever. No, the Christ who enters to save is, Himself, so meek and lowly of heart that those who take His yoke upon them learn of Him—and they become meek and lowly, too. Admit the lowly Christ and be of one mind with Him. He will kill your bad temper, conquer your malice and cast out your pride! Come and be the willing subject of a King who rides forth in lowliest guise.

His entrance caused great joy. No man's heart was made heavy that day. The face of the King frowned on none. Other kings have found it necessary to force their way through crowds of rebels to their capital and wade through slaughter to a throne—but none was found to hurt or devour in all the holy mountain when Jesus came to Zion! Women have been ravished, men have been murdered—even babes have been massacred when monarchs have entered cities—but when our King comes, boughs and palm fronds, shouts and songs are the setting of a very different scene! Instead of shrieks and groans, we hear the ringing music of children with their glad Hosannas! Oh, will you not admit the Lord Jesus? Who will refuse an entrance to One who brings with Him joy and peace?—

"He shall come down like showers
Upon the fruitful earth!
Love, joy, and hope, like flowers,
Spring in His path to birth!"

When He comes, men feel a burning enthusiasm for Him. It should not be necessary that I should plead for His admission. Surely you should run down the hill to meet Him and then come back, following after Him with glad Hosannas! Lord Jesus, we cannot be cold in Your Presence! Our souls burn as with coals of juniper when we remember You!

But I must tell you one thing which I am sure will not dampen your ardor if you are in a right state. If Jesus comes into your souls *He will come as a Reformer*. He will make your heart a Temple and out of it He will drive the buyers and the sellers—and all else that would pollute the soul. With His scourge of small cords, He will whip out many a naughty thing from the heart which He makes His Temple. Yes, let the thieves go! If your heart has been made a den of thieves by evil desires, should not these be chased out without mercy? So let it be. Welcome, You great Refiner! Gladly would we lose our dross.

I feel so glad to have to add that when He comes into your heart *He will heal you*. Did I not note it to you when we were reading the 14th verse—"The blind and the lame came to Him in the Temple; and He healed them." Dear Heart, if Jesus comes to you, all that is blind and lame about you shall be healed! That was a singular *healing*, was it not? Many of that select company came on crutches and some with legs doubled up, or mal-

formed. Blind men were there, with useless eyeballs or empty sockets where eyes should have been. Into this limping, groping circle came the King of Glory and He did not repel them, but He healed them! Admit the Lord into your heart and the limping of your unbelief will be exchanged for the leaps of faith! Then shall you see those things to which your heart has long been blind. Let Him in! Let Him in! Believe on Him! Trust Him and let Him into your heart—and you shall find Him the Physician of your soul.

Last of all, you that have not yet received Him, we want you to *join with the rest of us in honoring Him and glorifying Him as He comes into your heart*. "Oh!" says one, "if He will only come into *my* heart, I will, indeed, praise Him." Have your hosannas ready! Receive the Lord Jesus Christ with all honors. Mention His name with rejoicing! Have your hurrah ready to welcome the King, the Conqueror, as He enters your soul. Be jubilant! Be enthusiastic! Rejoice that such a One as He should come to dwell with such a one as you—and bring such blessing with Him. Praise Him! Praise Him! Extol Him in the highest heavens! Then pray to Him. "Save, Lord! Save, oh, save!" Then pray for others to Him in the same words, "Hosanna; save, Lord, save!"

And when you have done with Hosannas and prayers, conclude, as the Psalmist did, in that famous 118th Psalm, when he cried, "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar." Ask God of His love, today, to bind you to Christ, *THE Altar*, with one of those wreaths of love and ribbons of triumphant Grace which you now throw at His feet. Oh, for a twisted garland of mercies, the roses of gladness and the lilies of delight to bind our heart to Christ forever! These cords of love may seem weak, but in very deed they hold us faster than chains of steel. Nothing holds a man like the silken cord of gratitude! When you know how Jesus loves you—when you see how He died for you—then you are drawn to love Him in return and are held to serve Him in life, in death and to eternity!

Thus do we celebrate our Lord's triumphant entrance into the City of Mansoul, and we feel that we could prolong the celebration throughout the whole of our lives—

"Yes, we will praise You, dearest Lord,
Our souls are all on flame,
Hosanna round the spacious earth
To Your adored name."

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CHRIST'S RESURRECTION AND OUR NEWNESS OF LIFE
NO. 2197

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MARCH 29, 1891,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Therefore we are buried with Him through baptism into death: that just as Christ was raised up from the dead by the Glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."
Romans 6:4.

I have preached before upon the whole verse, so that this morning I shall take the liberty to dwell chiefly upon the latter part of it—"Just as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

The idea that the Grace of God should lead us to licentiousness is utterly loathsome to every Christian. We cannot endure it. The notion that the Doctrines of Grace give license to sin comes from the devil—and we deny it with a detestation more deep than words can express! "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"

On our first entrance upon a Christian profession, we are met by the ordinance of Baptism which teaches the necessity of purification. Baptism is, in its very form, a washing, and its teaching requires cleansing of the most thorough kind. It is a burial, in which the man is viewed as dead with Christ to sin, and is regarded as rising again as a new man. Baptism sets forth, as in a picture, the union of the Believer with the Lord Jesus in His baptism of suffering and in His death, burial and Resurrection. By submitting to that sacred ordinance, we declare that we believe ourselves to be dead with Him because of His endurance of the death penalty—and dead to the world and to the dominion of sin by His Spirit. At the same time, we also profess our faith in our Lord's Resurrection and that we, ourselves, are raised up in union with Him and have come forth through faith into newness of life. It is a very impressive and vivid symbol, but it is without meaning unless we rise to purity of life.

The basis of this confession lies in the union of every Believer with Christ Jesus. We are dead with Him because we are one with Him. We are risen with Him because we are one with Him. Every Believer is, in the purpose of Divine Grace, identified with Jesus. He was given to the Lord Jesus from before the foundation of the world and placed under His Covenant Headship. The Lord Jesus suffered for the Believer as his Substitute

and virtually each saved one died in Christ, who represented Him. The Believer rose in Christ by virtue of the eternal union which exists between the saint and his Savior. Therefore the Believer continues to live, for the Lord has said, "Because I live, you shall live also." Our destiny is identified with that of our Covenant Head. His life is the model of our experience—He makes us to be conformed to His image, now, and we shall be like He when we shall see Him as He is. O my Hearer, if you are not in Christ, you have *nothing*! Out of Christ you are in the wilderness—with Him you are in a paradise! In Christ, Believers possess all the treasures of wisdom, knowledge, Grace, power and love. All things are yours, if you are Christ's. From our union to Christ follows our sanctification—we cannot follow after sin, for Christ does not follow after it. He died unto sin, once, and we are henceforth dead to it. He is risen by the Glory of the Father and we are risen with Him into righteousness, acceptance and joy!

I. Follow me in the text, taking as your first thought the fact that THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD WAS ATTENDED WITH GLORY—He was "raised up from the dead by the Glory of the Father." Christ's Resurrection is linked with the fullness of eternal Glory.

In itself it was a great marvel. Our Lord was assuredly dead—the Roman guards at the Cross took care that no condemned person escaped the death penalty. In our Lord's case, His heart was pierced with a spear to make sure that no life remained in Him. Joseph begged for His body and, by the loving hands of those who were sure that He was dead, He was wrapped in spices and fine linen—and laid in the rocky tomb. There lay our Lord, in the grave, with a stone rolled at the cave's mouth and a seal set upon it by those in authority, whose envy made them take double precautions. As when a prince lies slumbering in his pavilion he is watched by a guard, so was our Lord's sepulcher watched by a guard of Roman soldiers, so that no man might steal His body. There He lay in the heart of the earth for a portion of three days and nights. He was really dead and in the grave. He wore all the marks of decease—a napkin was bound about His head, and the linen clothes rapped His limbs. On the morning of the third day it was truly said, "The Lord has risen, indeed," for He actually, literally and in very fact awoke to life, unbound the napkin and laid it by itself, leisurely folded His grave clothes and, when the angel had rolled away the stone from the mouth of the sepulcher, the First-Begotten from the dead came forth in a material body to live among His disciples for forty days!

During the time of His sojourn, His Resurrection was established by many Infallible proofs—He was seen, heard, touched and handled. One of His disciples put his finger into the print of the nails and thrust his hand into His side. He possessed a real body, for He ate a piece of a broiled fish and of a honeycomb before them all. It was Jesus of Nazareth and, none other than He, who met His disciples at Galilee! On this firm basis of fact we build our holy faith, but, certain as it is, it is none the less a marvel.

All Glory be to Him "that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the Everlasting Covenant."

The Resurrection of our Lord is glorious in contrast with His humiliation. It has in it sufficient Glory to redeem His passion from the shame which gathered about it. We read in Matthew 20:18, 19, how He was to be betrayed, condemned to death, delivered to the Gentiles, mocked, scourged and crucified. But we note that all the gloom of that dread tragedy is removed by the few words with which our Lord ended the story—"And the third day He shall rise again." The blaze of Resurrection lights up the whole length of the Valley of the Shadow of Death! His death wears no dishonor on its brow, for His rising again has set a diadem thereon! We celebrate Gethsemane and Calvary—and find no bitterness in all their grief—because death is swallowed up in the victory of Resurrection! The whole earthly life of Jesus, with its poverty, its slander, its sorrow, its scourging, its spitting, its crucifixion, is raised above all trace of dishonor by His glorious Resurrection!

His resurrection is glorious in its effects. He was "delivered for our offenses," but, "He was raised again for our justification." In death He discharged our debt. In Resurrection He exhibited the receipt of all our liabilities! He was Surety for us and, therefore, He smarted and went down to the prison of the grave. But by death He discharged His Suretyship and was set free! Our Lord has risen and, therefore, *we* shall rise in the day of His appearing. The Breaker leads the way and behind the mighty champion the whole company of His redeemed pass through the portals of the tomb in the power of His Resurrection. The stone is rolled away for them as well as for Him. They cannot be held by the bonds of death, for He could not be detained a captive. What a glory there is in our Lord's Resurrection, when we further remember that He always lives to make intercession for us and, therefore, He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him! The fullness of salvation comes to us because He has risen from the dead and is now making intercession for the transgressors! O Brothers and Sisters, the Resurrection of Jesus is bright as the sun with glory! Faith in it thrills our hearts. Well might each line of our hymn end with a Hallelujah! When we say, one to another, "The Lord is risen, indeed," we feel like singing all the time, for now our faith is not vain, we are not in our sins and those who have fallen asleep have not perished!

*Our Lord's Resurrection was glorious as to its caus*e, for it was a display of the Glory of the Father. For "glory" you may read, "power," if you please, for it was a great work of power to raise Jesus from the dead. But it was more than a miracle of power, for all the attributes of God united their Glory in the Resurrection of Christ. God's Love came there and opened those closed eyes. His delight bejeweled those deadly wounds. His Wisdom set in motion that pierced heart. Divine Justice claimed His loosing from

the grave and Mercy smiled as she lit up His face with an immortal smile! Then and there did Jehovah make all His Glory to pass before us and He proclaimed the name of the Lord. If you ask where God's Glory is most seen, I will not point to creation, nor to Providence, but to the raising of Jesus from the dead! It is true that in the silence of the tomb there were no spectators, but God Himself was there. After the deed was done, there were many who beheld His Glory and when at the close of His sojourn, below, He ascended beyond the clouds, all Heaven came forth to meet Him and to behold the conqueror of Death and Hell! In His Resurrection the Glory of God was laid bare. The veil which concealed the sacred Presence was torn from top to bottom and the Glory of the Lord was seen in the Resurrection of Christ from the dead!

That Resurrection is glorious because of its sequel in reference to our Lord. Of this I have already spoken in measure. Only let me remind you that He rose to die no more. Once has He suffered, but it is once and for all! His victory is final. Like Samson, the fierce lion of Death roared upon Him in the vineyard. The monster had, up to then, overcome everyone whom he assailed, but this time he met his match! Our greater Samson rent him as though he were a kid and though our Deliverer fell in the act of victory, He rose from the death struggle with fullness of life! Behold, He comes to us, today, bearing handfuls of honey on which He bids us feed. He has taken it from the carcass of the lion which He slew. Now is death a store of sweets rather than a cup of gall! To the child of God death furnishes a couch of rest and is no longer a dark and noisome prison cell. Death is the refining pot for this poor flesh and blood—the body is sown in corruption, but it is raised in incorruption and immortality!

We shall with these eyes behold our Lord when He shall stand in the latter day upon the earth! O glorious Resurrection, which has turned our poison into medicine! O miracle of Love, which has made death to be the gate of life! When you were singing the Easter hymn just now, it seemed to me as if we filled the whole earth with silver bells. And when you came to the last verse, you were so fully getting into the music of the Truth of God, that I had half a mind to cry, "Let us begin again!" In the rising of Jesus, death itself is shut up in prison, and ten thousand Hallelujahs come flying down from Heaven to teach us how to sing—

"Vain the watch, the stone, the seal!
Christ has burst the gates of Hell.
Death in vain forbids Him rise,
Christ has opened Paradise."

II. Let me introduce you to our second point, which is this—THE PARALLEL IN OUR EXPERIENCE IS ALSO FULL OF GLORY. When the time of love had fully come, we also rose as to our spirits, 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." Partakers of His death, we are also partakers of His Resurrection! This body of ours will have its share in that blessing of adoption in due time. As yet, it remains subject to pain, weakness and

death, for it is as the Apostle puts it, "If Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness." The spirit has its resurrection even now, but we are "waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." At the Second Coming of the Lord, the dead shall be raised incorruptible and the living shall be changed. We have the first-fruits of the Spirit, inasmuch as we are spiritually risen from the dead—and the rest will follow in due course.

It is a blessed thing that we should be made alive in Christ. As many of you as have believed in the Lord Jesus have been raised from among the dead. You were once without faith and without feeling. You had no sense of sin. You had no desire after holiness. You had no confidence in Christ. You had no love for the Father, but, "you has He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." You live now even as Jesus lived when He was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the Resurrection from the dead." Why should the Lord of Life have raised you from your death? Multitudes around you are still dead! You could not have made yourselves alive, for it is clear that the dead cannot rise by their own power. You were like the dry bones of Ezekiel's valley, without even the form or the moisture of life! You were more difficult to quicken than your Savior's body, for, "He saw no corruption," but you were corrupt of heart. Ah, how much you saw of corruption! In you has Jehovah repeated the miracle which He performed on His beloved Son!

Remember that *quickening is a necessary part of the process of sanctification.* Sanctification, in its operation upon our character, consists of three things. First, we die to sin. A wondrous death! By this Jesus strikes at the heart of evil. The death of Christ makes us die to sin. After this comes burial. We are buried with Christ and of this burial, Baptism is the type and token. Covered up to be forgotten, we are to sin as a dead shepherd to his flock. As the sheep pass over the dead shepherd's grave, or even feed thereon, yet he regards them not—so our old sins and habits come about us, but we, as dead men, know them no more. We are buried to them! To complete our actual sanctification we receive heavenly quickening. "If we are dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him." Yes, we do live *in* Him and *by* Him, for, "He that believes in Him has everlasting life." I trust you know what this means. Have you been thus dead, thus buried with Christ? Are you now thus quickened in the likeness of His Resurrection? This is your joyful privilege if you are, indeed, Believers in Christ and joined unto the Lord in one spirit.

Being thus quickened *you are partakers of a new life.* You are not like Lazarus, who, when he was raised from the dead, had the same life restored to him. True, you have that same life about you. Alas, that you should have it! For it will be your burden and plague. But your true life has come to you by your being born again from above. "This is the record, that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that

has the Son has life." The Holy Spirit has worked in us a higher life than Nature possessed. "We know that whoever is born of God sins not, but he that is begotten of God keeps himself, and that Wicked One touches him not." We have received "a living and incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever." In this there is a striking display of the Glory of God. As in the Resurrection of Christ we see all the glorious attributes of God, so is there in every Believer's spiritual quickening a manifestation of the Divine Presence. I know not how much there is of God in the regeneration of each new-born soul, but I do know this, that God likens it to a new creation and to the Resurrection and, therefore, we may be sure that it is one of the highest displays of Divine Power.

We talk of conversion, but how lightly do we estimate the full meaning of it! Know you not that regeneration is one of the greatest miracles that God Himself can perform? To be begotten again unto a lively hope is a mass of wonders! We who before lay under spiritual death, have become possessors of a heavenly life—who can fully comprehend this? This is a miracle, indeed, and we ourselves are the subjects of it! Surely we do not think highly enough of the notable deed which has been worked upon our impotent selves. Lazarus raised from the dead was the object of wonder to everybody. The Jews came to Bethany, not to see only Jesus, but to see *Lazarus*, who was raised from the dead. What must Lazarus have thought of being thus brought back from the land of darkness to visit, again, the haunts of men? Lazarus must have felt himself a strange and singular man—even his sisters, Mary and Martha, could not understand his experience. Christian, you have felt what you can never tell—you have received what you can never explain—you possess a secret something which can never be set forth in words! God help you to show it by your l*i*fe!

In this parallel of our history with the story of Christ, in our being spiritually raised from the dead, *we have a pre-eminent security for future perfection*. "He that has worked us for the same thing is God, who also has given us the earnest of the Spirit." If He raised us up when we were dead in sin, will He not keep us alive, now, that we live unto Him? If He called us out of our graves when we were under the bondage of death, will He not preserve us, now, by the life of Him that dies no more? If the life of God has really been infused into us, who shall destroy it? Has not our Master said, "I give unto My sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand"? He would not have given us this life unless He had intended to bring it to perfection! As surely as you live by the Father, you live as Jesus does, beyond the range of further death! "Sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under the Law, but under Grace."

Do you tremblingly ask me, "May I not go back unto sin?" Listen to this! It is written in the Covenant, "I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me." The life which is in you springs up unto eternal life. You shall surely behold His face whose life is already within

your breast. What a blessed thing is this! I cannot declare to you the measureless Glory of God which I perceive in this quickening of souls unto God and yet, that which I perceive is the bare fringe of the Glory. He might have left us to our corruptions and then, at last, He would have said, "Bury My dead out of My sight. Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." But instead thereof, in His free love, He has come in the Person of His dear Son and died for us that we might die in Him and He has quickened His Son that we should live in Him! Soon He will say, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Wondrous Grace! "He that sits on the Throne says, Behold, I make all things new." And never is He to our hearts more truly on the Throne of God than in this new creation of which we are this day the happy subjects—

"Raised from the dead, we live anew;
And, justified by Grace,
We shall appear in Glory, too,
And see our Father's face.

If I gave you only those two things to dwell upon, you might, by God's blessing, find a good Sabbath's meal in them. God sanctify this teaching to all our hearts!

III. But now I want your special attention while I notice, in the third place, that THE LIFE THEN GIVEN IS EMPHATICALLY NEW. Read our text—"Just as Christ was raised from the dead by the Glory of the Father"—I expected that we should then read, "even so we also should be raised by the Glory of the Father." But it is not so. Paul sometimes takes great leaps of thought. It is in his mind that we are raised together with Christ, but his thought has gone further, even to the activity which comes of life—and we read, "that we also should walk in newness of life." As much as to say, "I need not tell you that you have been quickened as Christ was, but since you have been made alive, you must *show it* by your walk and conduct." But he reminds us that this life has much newness about it.

"Newness of life"—what does it mean? It means this. When we are born again and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ—which things take place at the same time—we receive *a life which we never before possessed*. We begin to feel, to think and to act as we never did before. The new life is something foreign to our fallen nature—an exotic, a plant of another clime. The carnal mind knows nothing of spiritual things! The man who is not born again cannot understand what the new birth means! Spiritual things are spiritually discerned and the carnal man is all confused in reference to them. In your quickening you received a light which had never before shone in your bosom—a life that came not from men, neither by men. It is not a development of something which was hidden in our constitution. It is not the evolution of a principle which really exists, only it is hampered and hindered. No! It is *not* written, "You has He fostered, who had the germs of dormant life," but, "You has He *quickened*, who were *dead* in

trespasses and sins." You had no life, you had nothing out of which life could come! Fostered you might have been, but all the fostering possible would only have developed your corrupt nature and caused the evil within to grow at a greater rate! No seeds of eternal life lie buried in the dunghill of fallen nature! *Eternal life is the gift of God!*

This novel life is *new in its principles*. The old life, at its very best, only said, "I must do right that I may win a reward." Wage-earning is the principle of the old legal life when it tries to be obedient. Now you are moved by gratitude and not by a mercenary motive. I hear you sing—

"***Loved of my God, for Him again***
With love intense I burn:
Chosen of Him ere time began,
I choose Him in return."

You now serve, not as a hired servant, but as a loving child. Grace reigns! The love of Christ constrains you. It is your joy to obey out of love and not from slavish fear.

This life is *swayed by new motives*. You now live to please God—before you lived to please yourself, or to please your neighbors. Once you lived for what you could get for yourself—you lived for the passing pleasures of a fleeting life, but now you have launched upon eternal seas. Eternity holds your treasures! Eternity excites your efforts and elevates your desires. You live as seeing Him who is invisible and your conduct is controlled, not by the judgment of fallible men, but by the rule of the heart-searching God!

Your new life has *new objectives*. You aim higher, yes, you aim at the highest of all, for you live for the Glory of God and seek that your light may so shine "that men may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in Heaven." The will of God has now become your law. You count yourself only happy as you may fulfill His purposes, honor His name and extend His Kingdom.

Your inner life has made you conscious of *new emotions*. You feel now as you were not known to feel. Your fears are new, your hopes are new, your sorrows are new and your joys are new. If you were to meet your old self you would not wish to strike up an acquaintance with him, but would rather walk on the other side of the street! When I meet my former self I always quarrel with him, and he with me. I grieve to confess that I find another law in my members warring against the law of my mind and seeking to bring me back into captivity. Behold, all things are new to us! One said to me, when I asked her what kind of change she had undergone—"Either the world is quite altered, or else I am." Yes, Friends, the light is changed because our eyes are opened to it! We feel the very opposite of what we felt by nature.

Now are we cheered by *new hope*s—we have a hope of *immortality*—a hope so glorious that it causes us to purify ourselves in preparation for its realization! We wait for the glorious appearing of our Lord! We look for new heavens and a new earth. We have a lively hope which defies death.

Now have we *new possessions*. We used to wonder what the Christian meant when he spoke of "possessing all things." We now know! God has made us "rich in faith" and He has given us greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. When the Lord lifts up His Countenance upon us, we no longer cry for corn and wine and oil. Though flocks die, crops fail, our estate is entailed—our bread shall be given us and our waters shall be sure. Instead of groaning that life is not worth having, we bless God for our being, because of our well-being in Christ. Behold the desert now rejoices and blossoms as the rose! Where we heard only the hooting of the owl and the cry of the dragon, we hear music as of a song which has just begun, which is every moment swelling and increasing—and shall soon burst into a thunder of hallelujahs which shall never end! We are now happy creatures. Once we were doleful enough, save when we were in our cups and inflamed with a delirious mirth, but now we have peace like a river and a secret joy which no man takes from us. We drink of a well which none can dry up—we have bread to eat that the world knows not of. Truly our fellowship is with the Father and this, even to ourselves, is so vast a joy that it overwhelms us! When we are nearest to God and are absorbed in Him, we cannot comprehend our own delight.

We have come into a new world altogether—a world far more grand than that which Nature reveals. I often compare myself to a chick which before was imprisoned in the dark, narrow and uncomfortable prison of its natural shell. In that condition I neither knew myself, nor anything that was about me, but was in chaos, as one unborn. Do I not remember when the shell was broken and I came out into the open? Then, like a young bird, I was weak and strange, and full of wonderment at the life into which I had come. How strange was it to my soul to have the Godhead consciously perceived and Christ and His redemption blessedly enjoyed! That young life begins to feel its wings and try them a little. It also moves with trembling footsteps, essaying a new walk. It sees things it never dreamed of when shut up in the darkness. The new-born soul beholds "new heavens and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness." That text has come true to some of us—"You shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands." It is a wonderful thing, this new life! I beg to press home the inquiry, *Do you know it*? Do you enjoy it? Do not boast that you are being educated. Educate the old life as you will, it will remain natural and cannot become *spiritual*. You have been, you say, religious from your childhood. Be it so, but even to you I must say, "You must be born again." There must be a passing from death unto life.

Does all I am talking about seem to be a confused maze? So far it will do you good to know that you do not understand the things of God. To know that you are a stranger to the inward life may be a blessing to you. It may be that a prayer will spring up in your heart, "Lord, implant in me this life." The Lord and Giver of Life is willing to bestow it. It is to be had

through Jesus, for, to "as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." May you be born this very day into this newness of life!

IV. I must close, though the subject is sweetly absorbing, and one would like to go further into it. Our fourth point is this—THE WALK WHICH COMES OUT OF THIS LIFE IS NEW. You were dead, but you have been raised from among the dead and now you walk in "newness of life."

The new life that God gives us is exceedingly active. I have never read that we are to lie down and sleep in the newness of life. It is true I have met with persons who professed to have been saved and, therefore, they took matters easily and made themselves religiously comfortable in idleness. I greatly question whether you have new life if you do not walk! God's children are not of a sluggish race. There is vigor and fervency about them. They cannot sleep, as do others. The new life is akin to the life of angels—and angels do not spend the day in slumber or sloth. I never heard of sluggish angels! They are as flames of fire. The new life in a Christian is quick, energetic, forceful. The new life produces a holy walk as soon as it is created. If you have been born unto God, you have cast off your lethargy and are ready to run the race set before you. You may happen to occasionally be dull and sleepy through disease, but you will not *choose* this. When in spiritual health, you will glow with Divine ardor and burn with holy fervency, delighting yourself in serving the Lord.

This activity of life induces progress. If we are really quickened, we are to *walk* in newness of life—that is to say, we shall move on. We are not to take the goose-step in newness of life, but to march on, going from strength to strength. We are not at the end yet—we must advance. All that we have already attained is to lead on to the beyond. It is true we have the new life in us, but we have not yet obtained everything—we must climb higher and go further. The new life *grows*.

This walk is to be in newness of life. We are not to act or grow in the energy of the old life, but in newness of life. The conduct of a Christian is in newness of life and, therefore, others cannot understand him because he acts so differently from themselves. But, alas, all professors are not of this sort! I see a Christian man coming back one evening from a place of questionable amusement. Did he go there in newness of life? The old man used to go in that direction. When a man is doubtfully honest and has made a bargain which will not bear the light—is that done in newness of life? When an employer grinds down the workman to the last farthing—is that done in the newness of life? Surely, you will see what I am aiming at. Brethren, have done with the things of the flesh! Put off the old man. If Christ has quickened you, walk in newness of life. Say to the old man, "Down with you, Sir! I have done with walking in your way."

Let the new man come to the front and follow his guidance. Say in your soul, "O life of God within me, be supreme. Take the upper hand and let

every thought be captive to your power." Let us not live in oldness of spiritual death, but in newness of spiritual life! What a change is worked by the perception and possession of better things! Dr. Chalmers, in his *Exposition of Romans,* pictures a man engaged with full and earnest ambition on some humble walk of retail merchandise. He cares about petty things and makes great account of his little stock-taking. His hopes and fears range within his circumscribed trading—he aspires to nothing more than to reach a few shillings a week to retire upon. But a splendid property is willed to him, or he is introduced into a sublime walk of high and honorable adventure. From then on, everything is made new! The man's cares, hopes, habits, tastes and desires are all new. His expenditure alters. His valuation of money alters. His fear about the state of the stock disappears! His joy in the prospect of a small competency is no more before his eyes. He has risen to a different level altogether. New conditions have silently changed all things. The whole man is built on a bigger scale—his house, his table, his garments, his company and his speech are all of another sort!

In the same way, the Lord, by all that He has done for us, and in us, has changed everything! No point is unaffected. Newness of life affects our manhood from head to foot. The Lord has made us rich in Himself, by the gift of Jesus, and by the work of His Spirit—and He would not have us grieving and fretting about the little matters which once were so exceedingly great to us. "After all these things do the Gentiles seek." Let us have higher cares and more Divine aspirations! Let us seek to live the life of Heaven on earth! We are called unto righteousness—let us not follow after mammon! We are new creatures—may the Lord renew us day by day! Let us quit the old, for the time we have spent in it may well suffice. Our soul now aspires to a nobler destiny.

The Christian life should be one of *joyful vivacity*. We cannot always be what we would like to be, especially if we have a sluggish liver or an aching head, but I would now speak of our normal condition. The Christian man or woman, living in newness of life, should find life fresh about him. Our inner man is renewed day by day. A healthy Christian is one of the liveliest creatures on earth. When he is at work, you may hear him sing. He cannot help it! Do not blame him for a little noise. Let him sing and laugh till he cries. Sometimes he cannot help it—he will burst if his soul may not have vent. When he begins to talk about his Lord, his eyes flash fire. Some people hint that he is out of his mind—but those who know best assure us that he was never before so sane as now. Of course, the world thinks religion is such poor stuff that nobody could grow excited about it. To my mind, cold religion is the nastiest dish ever brought to the table! True godliness is served up hot. Newness of life means a soul aglow with love to God and, therefore, earnest, zealous, happy. Let the believing man have space for his larger life, space for his grander joy. No, do not gag him—let him sing his new song! If any man out of Heaven has a right

to be happy, it is the man who lives in newness of life! Come, Beloved, I want you to go home today with the resolve that the newness of life shall be more apparent in your walk. Do not live the old life over again. Why should you? What good would come of it?

Come, my Soul, if Christ has raised you from the dead, do not live after the fashion of the dark grave which you have left. I am not so enamored of the sepulcher as to return to it! Walk after the fashion of the new life and it will conduct you to God from where it came. Live a God-like life—let the Divine in you sit on the throne and tread the animal beneath its feet. "It is easier said than done," cries one. That depends upon the life within. Life is full of power. I have seen an iron bar bent by the growth of a tree. Have you never heard of great paving-stones being lifted by fungi which had pushed up beneath them? Life is a mighty thing, especially the Divine Life! If you choose to contract your souls by a sort of spiritual tight-lacing, or if you choose to bend yourselves down in a sorrow which never looks up, you may hinder your life and its walk—but give your life full scope and what a walk you may have! Yield yourselves fully to God and you shall see what you shall see! There is a happiness to be enjoyed by truly whole-hearted Believers which some, even of God's own children, would think to be impossible!

Let me finish with a picture which will show you what I mean by whole-heartedness. I have seen boys bathing in a river in the morning. One of them has just dipped his toes in the water and he cries out, as he shivers, "Oh, it's so cold!" Another has gone in up to his ankles and he also declares that it is fearfully chilly. But look! Another runs to the bank and dives in! He rises all in a glow. All his blood is circulating and he cries, "Delicious! What a beautiful morning! I am all in a glow. The water is splendid!" That is the boy for enjoying a bath! You Christian people who are paddling about in the shallows of religion and just dipping your toes in it—you stand shivering in the cold air of the world which you are afraid to leave! Oh, that you would plunge into the River of Life! How it would brace you! What tone it would give you! Dive in, young man! Dive in! Be a Christian, out and out! Serve the Lord with your whole being! Give yourself wholly to Him who bought you with His blood. Plunge into the sacred Flood, by Grace, and you will exclaim—

"Oh, this is life! Oh, this is joy!
My God, to find You so!
Your face to see, Your voice to hear,
And all Your love to know."

May we thus walk in newness of life! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Matthew 28; Romans 6:1-14.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK—307, 309, 318.

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THE CENSUS OF ISRAEL
NO. 2198

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 5, 1891,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"These are they that were numbered by Moses and Eleazar, the priest, who numbered the children of Israel in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho. But among these there was not a man of them whom Moses and Aaron, the Priest, numbered, when they numbered the children of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai. For the Lord had said of them, They shall surely die in the wilderness. And there was not left a man of them, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun." Numbers 16:66.

WE have come to another census, an important stopping place in the march of a nation's history. This carries our thoughts back to the ancient Bible story connected with the chosen people of God. A census was taken of the tribes of Israel in the wilderness two years after they had left Egypt. It only numbered males who were over twenty—the men capable of active service in war. By thus taking a census of His people, the Lord showed that He valued each one of them. They were registered by their families and by their names, thus were they personally enrolled in the family book of the living God and He thus, in effect, said to each one of them, "I have called you by your name; you are Mine." By the registration of each man by name, he felt that he was not lost in the crowd, but was, by person and pedigree, acknowledged as one of those to whom the Lord had promised the land which flowed with milk and honey. There was good reason for taking the number of the people just as the nation was forming, so that in the wilderness they might be arranged, marshaled and disciplined for the conflict which lay before them. When commanded of God, because He saw that great ends would be served thereby—and when associated with *redemption*—a census was by no means a wrong or a dangerous national arrangement. David ordered the people to be numbered, but because his motive and his method were wrong, it brought a pestilence on the land but, in itself, the taking of a census was a wise and useful thing.

Thirty-eight years had passed away since the first numbering at Sinai and the people had come to the borders of the Promised Land, for they were in the plains of Moab by Jordan near Jericho. The time had come for another census. The wisdom which commanded the counting of Israel at the beginning of the wilderness journey also determined to count them at the end of it. This would show that He did not value them less than in former years. It would afford proof that His word of judgment had been fulfilled to them and, moreover, it would marshal them for the grand enterprise of conquering the land of Canaan! They were to go forth in their

armies to fight giant races and armies versed in war. They were to dislodge nations from their ancient strongholds and, with the sword, destroy guilty aboriginal races which God had condemned to destruction. And for this, their military strength needed numbering and ordering. Here was good reason for the census, which now, for the second or third time, was carefully carried out.

Our text is from the Book of Numbers and the book well answers to its title, for it continually deals with numbers and numberings. The numbering on this occasion was not of the women and children or the infirm, for the order ran thus, "Take you the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel, from twenty years old and upward, throughout their fathers' house, all that are able to go to war in Israel." If the numbers of our Churches were taken in this fashion, would they not sadly shrink? We have many sick among us that need to be carried about, nursed and doctored. Half the strength of the Church goes in ambulance service towards the weak and wounded. Another diminution of power is occasioned by the vast numbers of undeveloped Believers, to whom the Apostle would have said, "When for the time you ought to be teachers, you have need that one teach you again what are the first principles of the oracles of God: and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat." They should have become men, but they remain babes in Grace! They are sadly slow in reaching the fullness of the stature of men in Christ Jesus. How many are quite unable to bear arms against the foe, for they need to be, themselves, guarded from the enemy! To revise the Church rolls so as to leave none but vigorous soldiers on the muster roll would make us break our hearts over our statistics. May the Lord send us, for this evil, health and cure!

When the second census was taken, it was found that the people were nearly of the same number as at the first. Had it not been for the punishment so justly inflicted upon them, they must have largely increased. But now they had somewhat diminished. They were a rapidly increasing people when they were in Egypt—the more they were afflicted, the more they multiplied! The family of Jacob increased at a marvelous rate from the time of the going down into Egypt to the time of leaving that land. This was changed during the 40 years of the wilderness, for the whole of the grown men who came out of bondage were judged unfit to enter into the Promised Land because of unbelief. And these, dying away rapidly, the people scarcely maintained their number. It is of *God* to multiply a nation, or a Church. We may not expect any advance in our numbers if we grieve the Spirit of God and if, by our unbelief, we drive Him to declare that we shall not prosper. Israel's growth ceased for 40 years—may it never be so with us as a Church! We would say with Joab, "Now the Lord your God add unto the people, how many soever they be, an hundredfold." May the righteous seed multiply and replenish the earth, and subdue it, till their number shall be as countless as the sands of the shore, or as the stars of the sky!

Concerning the second census of Israel, I would speak with you, since this is the morning of the day on which our British census is to be taken. May we gather lessons of wisdom from the theme!

I. First, observe with interest and with a design to be profited—THE NOTABLE CHANGE WORKED AMONG THE PEOPLE BY DEATH. "But among these there was not a man of them whom Moses and Aaron, the priest, numbered, when they numbered the children of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai."

They answered to their names, 600,000 and more of them—and there they stood in their ranks, full of vigorous life. About 40 years had passed away and if these same names had been read out, not a man save Caleb and Joshua could have answered to the roll call. The entire mass of the nation had been changed! The old ones were all gone. All that stood in their places by the Jordan were men who were under age at the first census, or who were not even born at that time. "Not a man of them" remained, says the text. And it repeats the statement—"There was not left a man of them."

Such changes strike us as most memorable. They must not be passed over without remark. In the course of 40 years, my Brothers and Sisters, what changes take place in every community, in every Church, in every family! A friend showed me, last Thursday, a photograph of myself in the midst of my first deacons. It was taken scarcely 38 years ago and yet, of the entire group, only I survive! Those associates of the youthful preacher have all gone to their reward. We have likenesses of other groups of Church officers of a later date, in which I am placed in the center, and I am there still, but nearly all of those who once surrounded me have gone Home. Those who were our leaders in our days of struggle—and who saw the hand of God with us in those first years—are growing few in number. We have not yet completed the 40 years, but when we have done so, the words of our text will be almost literally applicable to our case as a Church.

The going and the coming, the adding and the taking away have changed the texture of this fabric and no thread will soon be left. Surely the Lord would have us notice this, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. A costly operation, involving so many sorrows, is not to be passed over without thought. Beloved, we, too, are passing away! The pastor and his present helpers must, themselves, be summoned Home in due course. The march of the generations is not a procession passing before our eyes, while we sit, like spectators, at the window, but we are in the procession ourselves, and we, too, are passing down the streets of time and shall disappear in our turn. We, too, shall sleep with our fathers, unless the Lord shall come speedily. I hear a clarion blast sounding out from the graves which lie behind us—"Be you also ready!" From the last closed sepulcher there comes the prophetic warning, "Set *your* house in order, for *you* shall die, and not live."

This change was universal throughout the whole camp. There was a change even in the enumerators. The Sinai census had been taken by Moses and Aaron and now Moses remains just long enough to take his leading place, but his brother, Aaron, is not there. The High Priest of God has gone up to Mount Hor, has been stripped of his garments, has been buried and mourned by all Israel—and now Eleazar, his son, stands be-

fore the Lord in his father's place. It was so among the other priests and Levites and elders of the people. There was change everywhere—among the poorest dwellers in that canvas city and among the princes who dwelt beneath the standards of the tribes, all had changed. "There was not left a man of them."

Thus is it among ourselves—no offices can be permanently held by the same men—"They are not suffered to continue by reason of death." No position, however lofty or lowly, can retain its old possessor. It is not only the cedars that fall, but the fir trees feel the axe. "There is no discharge in that war." That same scythe which cuts down the towering flower among the grass also sweeps down whole regiments of green blades. See how they lie together in long rows, to wither in a common decay! Throughout the whole body, this change is gradually taking place. No man can climb the rock of immortality and sit there, amid the seething sea, and say to Death, "Your waves cannot reach me here!" Though vigorous in health, though sound in constitution, though guarded by all the armor of the science of health, you, too, must fall by the arrows of the insatiable archer. "It is appointed unto men once to die."

The change is inevitable. Man that is born of woman must be of few days. If it had not been for the great sin of Israel at Kadesh, many of the people might have lived to the second census and beyond it. But even then, if by reason of strength their lives had been lengthened, yet would they soon have died out in the ordinary course of nature. If 40 years had not been appointed as the end of that generation, yet without that appointment they would all have passed away in another 20 or 30 years. As Moses said in his wilderness Psalm, "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away."

We must soon quit our tents for the last battle. When the conscript number shall be drawn, we may escape this year and next, but the lot will fall upon us in due time. There is no leaping from the net of mortality wherein, like a shoal of fish, we are all enclosed. Unless our Lord shall soon appear, we shall each one find a grave, for, as the wise man says, "All are of the dust, and all turn to dust again." "We must necessarily die and are as water spilt on the ground which cannot be gathered up again." Therefore we wisely bow before the stern decree and yield ourselves to death.

But let us not forget that *all this change was still under the Divine control*. Though the people must pass away, yet still, the Lord's hand would be in each death and its surroundings. If not a sparrow falls to the ground without our Father's knowledge, we may rest assured that no man dies without the will of God—no man is carried to his long Home unless the Lord has said, "Return, you children of men."—

"What can preserve my life, or what destroy?
An angel's arm can't snatch me from the grave—
Legions of angels can't confine me there."

To create and to destroy are sole prerogatives of the King of Kings! Till *He* speaks the word, we live not, or, living, we die not. Walking in the midst of 10,000 stricken with the plague, we are safe till God appoints our re-

moval. Concerning those that are asleep, we know that they have not died without the will of our Father. Concerning our time, also, we know that we shall not be the toys of chance, or the victims of fate. A wise and loving God fixes the date and place of our decease, for, "precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." Stern though the work may be, His great and tender heart rules the ravages of death! Let us, therefore, be comforted concerning the great changes which death is working. Here is no cause for tears, as though we were left in a monster's power and bereft of a Father's care. The Lord is still ruling and nothing happens save as He appoints.

Moreover, *the change was beneficial*. It was well that the first generation should die in the wilderness. The people who had been accustomed to servitude in Egypt had acquired the vices of slaves—and when they came out of the house of bondage they were fearful, fickle—the creatures of appetite and the victims of panic, selfishness and discontent. They had all the vices of subject races and were, alike, destitute of manliness and self-control. They were soon cowed by fear and baffled by difficulty. They were easily persuaded and as easily dissuaded. They were a people of whom nothing could be made. Even the Divine tuition in which Moses and Aaron were engaged and in which miracles, and types, and laws were employed, could not teach them anything so that they really knew it. To make a nation which could preserve the worship of the one God in the world, the generation which came out of Egypt must die out. The taint of slavery and idolatry must be lessened if it could not be quite removed.

It was desirable that there should be a people trained in a better school, with a nobler spirit, fit to take possession of the promised land. The change was working rightly—the Divine purpose was being fulfilled. Maybe we do not think thus of the changes which are taking place in the communities to which we belong. We scarcely think that better men are coming on—we even fear that the coming race is weaker than the present, but then, we are not fair judges, for we are prejudiced in favor of our own generation! I do not doubt that God means well to His own Church and that the accomplishment of His eternal purposes requires that men should come and go and thus the face of society should be changed. It is well that the age of man is not so protracted as in the days of Methuselah. A teacher influential for error dies and is forgotten. A sinner pestilential for vice passes away and the air grows pure. Imagine a gambler with 500 years of craft to guide him, or a libertine reeking with 600 years of debauchery! Surely the present narrowed limits of human life are all too wide for the depraved! We need not wish for giants of iniquity such as centuries of life would produce. The incoming of new blood into the social frame is good in a thousand ways—it is well that we should make room for others who may better serve our Master. God grant they may! Our prayer is, "Let Your work appear unto Your servants and Your Glory unto their children." We are content to take the work if our sons may behold the glory! We are glad to move off that they may rise on stepping stones of our ended lives to nobler things!

One other remark I cannot help making and that is that *these changes are most instructive*. If we are now serving God, let us do so with intense earnestness, since only for a little while shall we have the opportunity to do so among men. "Whatever your hands find to do, do it with all your might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave where you go." Live while you live! At the same time, lay plans for influencing the rising generation. Lay yourself out to work while it is called today. If anything should be done, it were well that it were done quickly. If we wish the Truth of God to conquer and the Gospel to prevail, let us fight the Lord's battles *now*! And if we would see Truth prevail after we are gone, let us seek out faithful young men who will teach others that the testimony for the Lord God of Israel dies not out of the land. *We* must soon quit the field. Let each man set his house in order, for he must soon leave it to be gazed upon by strangers' eyes. Let us see that our lifework is rounded off and well-finished, so that in the survey of it by our successors they may say of us, "He being dead yet speaks." As we must soon be gone from among the living, let us bless them while we may. Arise, you saints, and bestir yourselves, for the day is far spent and the shadows of evening are falling! I pray that we may learn well this first lesson of our text. O Spirit of Life, teach us life even by the doings of death!

II. Secondly, we have here before us THE PERPETUITY OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD. There was a change in the constituent elements of the Israelite nation, but the nation was still there. Not one man was there who was counted 38 years before, save Caleb and Joshua, and yet the nation was the same! Do you ask for Israel? There it is. Balaam can see the people from the top of the hill and they are the same people whom Pharaoh pursued to the Red Sea. The nation is living, though a nation has died. It is the same chosen seed of Abraham with whom Jehovah is in covenant. God has a Church in the world and He will have a Church in the world till time shall be no more! The gates of Hell and the jaws of death shall not prevail against the Church, though each one of its members must depart out of this world in his turn.

Mark well that "*the Church in the wilderness*" *lives on*. There are the same 12 tribes, the same standards heading the tribes, the same tabernacle in the midst of the host and the same priesthood celebrating sacred service with solemn pomp. Everything has changed and yet nothing has changed. God has built His holy habitation upon foundations which can never be removed! Although the men who bear the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord wear other names, yet they fulfill the same office. The music of the sanctuary rises and falls, but the strain goes on. The hallelujah never ceases, nor is there a pause in the perpetual chorus, "His mercy endures forever."

The gaps were filled up by appointed successors. As one warrior died, another man stepped into his place, even as one wave dying on the shore is pursued by another. The men were not all swept away at once, but by perceptible degrees. Now and then there came an awful and sudden destruction, as when Korah, Dathan and Abiram went down alive into the pit, but, as a rule, the people dropped off gradually, as ripe fruit falls from

the trees—and they were succeeded by others as the fading leaves of autumn have the buds of spring just beneath them. In the Church of God one dies in the order of Nature, but another is born into the Kingdom by the power of Divine Grace. We miss some useful Christian woman and we lament her, but before many days another Sister is prepared of the Lord to serve in her place. Baptism for the dead never ceases among us. An honored Brother falls asleep and we carry him to the grave and, possibly, we fear no other can do his work and fill the vacancy he leaves. Perhaps no one can do the *same* work, but yet, in some other way or form, the work is done! The vines are trimmed, the sheep are fed and the lambs are cherished. Not one dead man lies in the way to stop the march of the army, as did the corpse of Amasa, which lay dead in the road in David's day. The chosen host still marches on! Even as the stars in their courses, we still move on. God buries His workmen, but His work lives.

In Israel's case *the gap were filled by their own sons*. As these men passed away, their children took their places. I commend to you, my Brothers and Sisters, this fact as your encouragement in prayer for your children. Oh, that the Lord would pour His Spirit upon our seed and His blessing upon our offspring! Oh, that every saint here may be succeeded by his own descendants! This is the Lord's frequent way of keeping alive the gracious succession. Abraham is gone, but Isaac still kindles the altar fire. In a blind old age Isaac is gathered to his fathers, but Jacob worships "the Fear of his father Isaac." Jacob gathers up his feet in bed, but Judah and Joseph, and the rest of them, continue as salt in the earth. Oh, that it may be so in all our families! May we never lack a man to stand before the Lord God of Israel to testify for Him! Among all the honors that God can put upon our households I think this is the greatest, that we should have in our families a succession of saints! It is no small privilege to look back and to remember our ancestors who feared the Lord—may we also look forward with hope that if this dispensation lasts, there may still be some of our name, bearing our blood in their veins, who shall be called by Sovereign Grace into the service we have loved so well! Search beyond the congregation for new converts, but do not forget to look *within your own doors* for the largest accessions to the Church! Hope that your sons and daughters after the flesh may be born into "the one family in Heaven and earth," which bears the name of Jesus! Pray that *your* children may be *God's* children—and may your prayer come up with acceptance into the ears of the Lord our God whose mercy is on children's children of them that fear Him and keep His Covenant!

All the offices of "the Church in the wilderness" were filled with fitting men. Behold Aaron, in his robes of glory and beauty! What a man is he to be the High Priest! With what grace and dignity he presides! He dies—will not the priesthood fail? No, my Brothers and Sisters, yonder is Eleazar, who occupies his father's place most worthily! Moses also passes away. There is none like Moses. He is King in Jeshurun, without peer or rival! The Jews have a tradition that when he was called to go up to the top of Nebo to die, the people followed him up the hill, the women beating on their breasts and bitterly wailing, while the strong men bowed themselves

with grief and cried, "The father of the nation is to be taken away! Alas, what shall we do?" He was bid to leave the people on the mountain side and he went up, alone, to the place where Jehovah kissed away his soul—and so he passed into his rest. Truly it was a great loss, but the Lord found a man to follow Moses. Joshua was not equal to Moses in many things and yet, for the work he had to do, he was a much more fit man than Moses. The times were red with war and Joshua was more able than Moses to fight the Canaanites and conquer the land. Joshua was the man for the sword, as Moses had been the man of the Book. And God will fill every office in His Church, not as you and I might wish, but as His infinite wisdom determines. Therefore let us be of good courage and fear no lack.

At this second numbering, *the people stood ready for greater work than they had ever done before*. The first numbering found them fit for the wilderness—the second numbering found them ready for the capture of the goodly land and Lebanon. God had been preparing them, by 40 years of marching, for their new enterprise and for development into a nation. May it please the Lord to make His Church ready for the coming of her Lord and for the salvation of nations! If brighter days are dawning, the Church will be prepared as a bride for her husband—and if tribulation is to come to try all the earth, she shall be strengthened as a martyr for the burning! The Lord keeps her lest any hurt her—He will keep her night and day.

It was Israel's joy that *God's love was not withdrawn from the nation*. The Lord still acknowledged the tribes as His people. His Glory was still above the Mercy Seat and His fiery, cloudy pillar still guided their marching or fixed their stopping. Still the manna dropped from Heaven and still they drank of the water from the smitten Rock. Thus the Lord still has a Church and it is always the same Church, loved of her lord, indwelt by His Spirit and dedicated to His praise. Let us take courage—the Church is not destroyed! Many changes take place and many sorrows are involved therein, but the Church of God is as always as alive as her Immortal Head, who has declared, "Because I live, you shall live also." Her stars are still the hope of the world's night and her angels are the heralds of the eternal morning! She follows the bleeding Lamb who is the Doctrine of her teaching, the Model of her acting, the Glory of her hope!

III. Thirdly, let me bring before your minds THE UNCHANGEABLENESS OF THE WORD OF GOD. This we perceive in the last verse. "For the Lord had said of them, They shall surely die in the wilderness. And there was not left a man of them, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun."

Note *how unchangeable are the threats of the Lord*. "Among these there was not a man of them whom Moses and Aaron, the Priest, numbered. For the Lord had said of them, They shall surely die in the wilderness." Take note of this, you that think God's Word can fail—you know not what you dream! His Words of righteous wrath are not lost—they kill as with a two-edged sword. The verse says, "There was not left a man of them." Whom the Lord had condemned to die, *nothing* could keep alive. Therefore, do not imagine, O you that obey not the Lord, that you shall go unpunished!

The unbelievers were many, yet not one escaped. “Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished.” The rebels were a terribly large majority, but the crowds in the broad way make it none the safer. God has no respect for multitudes—“The wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the nations that forget God.” Here they outnumbered the faithful more than 10,000 times and yet the justice of God did not spare one of them! “There was not left a man of them.” How can any of you hope to escape? “Your hands shall find out all your enemies.” The proudest sinner shall be laid low—the thunders of Jehovah shall smite down each individual transgressor—and no one shall go away free in the day of God’s wrath!

It was a long time before all the sinners died, but the long-suffering of God had its limit and, in the end, every rebel died in the wilderness. They lived on, some of them, for all the 40 years, but they could not pass the boundary. Perhaps they said, “Ah, this ban from God will never take effect on *us*.” Yet, before the years were up, the survivors of the doomed race had to share the common fate. Not a man of those whom Moses and Aaron numbered at Sinai could pass the line of fire which closed in the 40 years. God waits, waits in infinite mercy, but the punishment of the wicked is none the less sure. “Their foot shall slide in due time.” The Lord has bent His bow and made it ready, and when their hour is come, they shall find that He is not slack concerning His Word. Do not, I pray you, doubt the terrible certainty of Divine threats because they are long in taking effect. Say not, “Where is the promise of His coming?” He will come—and when He comes it shall be “in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Some of the unbelieving generation were, no doubt, full of vigor, and they said, “We are as strong as old Caleb and quite as likely as he to cross the Jordan. Our eyes are as clear as those of Moses and we shall outlive the 40 years appointed us.” But death chilled the coals of juniper and quenched their vehement flame. The stalwart man of war laid down his weapons, vanquished by the unconquerable foe of men. “There was not left a man of them.” How like a knell those words sound in my ears! The mighty in the day of battle were no longer mighty when their hour had come! “They could not enter in because of unbelief.” “Their carcasses fell in the wilderness.” All their days were passed away in the wrath of God. Beware, you that forget God, lest He tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver. It is vain for you to indulge a hope, “larger” or smaller, if you die in your sin! The Justice of the Most High is not to be escaped! In that Last Great Day, when the Throne shall be set, and every man shall give an account for the things done in his body, whether they are good or whether they are evil, the strict Judge will, by no means, clear the guilty, but they shall be driven away in His wrath to the place where their worm dies not and their fire is not quenched!

Oh that you would flee to Christ for refuge! Look to His Cross, I pray you, that you may be saved! As the Lord fulfilled His threats, *so did He cause His promises to come to pass*. Caleb lived on and so did Joshua. They were often in danger. Did not the rebels take up stones to stone

them? They were often near to death—Joshua was commander-in-chief of the army and Caleb was a man of war from his youth up. They endured the common risks of soldiers, but nothing could kill them, for God had promised that they should enter the land! They believed God and honored Him by their conduct and, therefore, He kept them until the hour came to go in unto the land to possess it. There were only two of them, but God did not, therefore, overlook them. He keeps covenant with individuals as well as with nations! They were not men who kept themselves out of harm's way, neither were they timorous and, therefore, afraid to advance their opinions. No doubt they came in for a special share of envy and malice, but their reward with God was sure. If you believe in Jesus, though you should be the only one of your family, yet you shall be saved! Though you know none of your kin fear the Lord, yet the God of Israel will not forget the lone one who is separated from his brethren. Though the faithful should become so few that all the saints together should only make a handful, yet it is written, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom."

God's Word stands! "The grass withers, and the flower thereof falls away: but the Word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the Word by which the Gospel is preached unto you." Jehovah's threats and promises are of equal force. "Has He said, and shall He not do it?" There shall be no change, even, to a jot or tittle in this wondrous Book! God forbid that we should begin to doubt it, for if we once begin, where shall we end? With this striking confirmation before us, we believe that the Word of the Lord must stand. Let us be as the man whom the Lord blesses, because, says He, "he trembles at My Word."

IV. Our last point is this—learn from my text THE ABIDING NECESSITY OF FAITH. Those people came out of Egypt with Moses and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea when they came forth into the wilderness. One would have hoped that they all would march to Canaan, but it was not so. The first census is taken. Their names are on the roll. But, sad to say, at the next numbering all those names have vanished! What a difference between the church roll at Sinai and the Book of Life by Jordan!

If you profess to be the people of God, we count you among His children—you are written among the living in Zion. But what an awful thing it would be if your name should not be written in the Lamb's Book of Life at the last! What if you should lie on the threshing floor in the great heap before the winnowing, but should be gone with the chaff as soon as the Lord has come, "whose fan is in His hand"? Oh, that none of us may provoke the Lord to swear in His wrath that we shall not enter into His rest!

Learn, first, that *no man is, was, or ever shall be saved without faith.* "He that believes not shall be damned" is our Lord's solemn declaration. It is written, "He that believes not is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." This is as true today as when it was first spoken.

Learn, next, that *no privilege can supply the lack of faith.* We read that they heard, as you do. But some, "when they had heard, did provoke."

Their provocation lay mainly in their unbelief. No hearing, no, not hearing the Apostles, themselves, could save you without faith! "The Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." Hearing may minister to condemnation if the Truth of God is not believed!

These people went a certain way with Moses towards the Lord's promised rest. They did come out of Egypt. They were numbered with Jehovah's people in the numbering at Sinai. They were separated from all the world in the quietude of the wilderness. But we read there was in them "an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." In heart they went back to Egypt! It is not enough to *begin* well—"he that endures to the end shall be saved"—and no other! They had ceremonies in abundance, but they were not saved by them. They had the morning and the evening lambs. They were circumcised. They ate the Passover. They kept the Day of Atonement. But all these things together did not save them from dying in the desert, shut out of Canaan by unbelief. "They could not enter in because of unbelief." Nothing can make up for the absence of faith. They had nothing to do all the day long in the wilderness but to learn the lessons of God. They had time for thought and they had the best of teachers to instruct them—and the best of textbooks in the ceremonial Law—and yet their knowledge did not preserve them from leaving their carcasses in the desert! They had plenty of time for meditation and contemplation. They had no care about temporals, for their bread was given them and their waters were sure. And yet, because of absence of *faith*, they did not learn that elementary Truth of God which would have ministered to them an entrance into rest.

But *none perished who had faith*—no, not one! All those who believed God and held fast to Him, were made inheritors of the land. Caleb and Joshua—these two saw the land and took their places in it. If you believe, whatever your name may be, you shall be saved, for, "he that believes and is baptized shall be saved." It is written, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Caleb and Joshua, by faith, entered into the land promised to the fathers and you, my Hearer, can only enter in by faith! Have faith in God and you have all things! But without faith it is impossible to please God.

Mark this—while it was faith alone which saved them, *faith gave these men notable characters*. We read of, "My servant, Caleb." He that believes God becomes a servant of God and counts it all joy to obey his Lord! Faith is the mother of obedience. The Lord said that Caleb "had another spirit with him"—faith puts quite another spirit into a man—it is not a murmuring or a mutinous spirit. It is not an ungrateful or distrustful spirit. Neither is it a haughty, willful, rebellious spirit. But it is a spirit of love, of hope, of confidence in God. The faithful man is of another spirit from that of the world, for the Holy Spirit abides in him! Such a man chooses the way of God, so that the Lord says, "He has followed Me fully." This was well—it is wise not to run *before* God, nor to run *away* from God, but to *follow* Him step by step. It is wise not to follow *man,* but to wholly follow the Lord! It is commendable to follow Him fully with undivided, unwaver-

ing, unquestioning, untiring steps! The Lord will see that His servant, Caleb, enters into His rest—there is rest for good servants. As Caleb followed the Lord fully, it was meet that he should enter in where his Lord abides. Men of faith are not idle men, but servants—they are not wicked men, but they follow the Lord. They are not half-hearted men—they follow Him fully. It is not their holiness that saves them, but their faith—nevertheless, where there is no holiness, there is no fruit of faith and no evidence of salvation.

As for Joshua, he was like Caleb. He was a brave and truthful man, a true servant of God. And though we have his life given somewhat at length, yet we discover no flaw in his character. It is almost a rare thing in the Word of God to find a life written at any length without a record of infirmity and sin, for the biographies of Scripture are truthful and they mention men's faults as well as their virtues. As there is no recorded fault in Joshua's career, we gather that he was of a noble character. "The Lord said unto Moses, Take you Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand upon him." So that the faith which took these two men into Canaan was in them the creator of a noble character.

Now, what do *you* say, Beloved Friends? Do you believe God? Do you believe His Word? Or are you of a captious and dubious spirit? Do you believe like children? Is God your Father and, therefore, is His Word your Father's Word which you cannot think of questioning? Will you follow the Lamb wherever He goes, against giants or Canaanites? Will you believe God, whatever may give Him the lie? If so, you shall dwell in the land that flows with milk and honey—and you shall have your portion when the Lord appears! But if you do not truly believe, whatever profession you may make, your carcasses must fall in the wilderness! Woe is me that I have to deliver such a prophecy! Greater woe to you if it should be fulfilled in you! Believe the Lord and you shall prosper.

This day, as you are preparing for the census of the nation, think of the time when God shall make up His last account of natives in His holy city. Will you be numbered with His people, or will your names be left out at the reading of the muster roll? God give us a place among His redeemed—and to His name shall be Glory forever and ever! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Numbers 1:1-5: 44-46; 14:1-10, 20-35; 26:1-4; 6-65.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—87, 88, 90.

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ISRAEL'S HOPE—OR, THE CENTER OF THE TARGET
NO. 2199

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 19, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption."
Psalm 130:7.

When he penned this Psalm, the writer, David, was in deep distress, if not of circumstances, yet of conscience. He constantly mentions iniquities and begs forgiveness. He felt like a shipwrecked mariner, carried overboard into the raging sea. Thus he reviews the situation—"Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O Lord." Yet he lived to tell the tale of deliverance! His prayer from among the waves was a memory worth preserving and he preserves it. The mercy of God to him he weaves into a song for us—and in this our text is found.

Two things the rescued sufferer tells us. First, that, *as God delivered him from the power of sin, so He will deliver all His praying, wrestling, believing people*. That is the last verse of the Psalm—"He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities." The argument is—He delivered *me*. What am I more than others? The gracious Lord who saved me will save all those who call upon Him in truth. He delivered me, though laden with iniquities, and His pardoning mercy is unfailing and, therefore, He can and will rescue others from their uttermost distresses. This is a good line of reasoning, for the Lord's ways are constant and He will do for all Believers what He has done for one of them.

The other thing which the Psalmist sets before us is this—*we are wise if we apply to God, alone, for* help. He says, "I wait for the Lord, my soul does wait. My soul waits for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning." He incidentally tells us that it is vain to wait upon man and put our trust in any human support, for the way of deliverance only lies in reliance upon God, immediately and alone. We are not to depend upon outward means, but upon the God who lends efficacy to all means. Why is it that we need to be told of this? Why is faith in God so rare? To go first to the Lord is to save time! Straightforward always makes the best runner and to go straight to God is not only our *duty*, but it will be our happiest course. The Psalm encourages us to this by the assurance that the Lord can and will help all that seek Him—and it urges us to let that seeking be distinctly and directly turned to the Most High, to Him alone and to none other. To join

another ground of confidence with the Lord is a sort of practical idolatry which is to the wounding of faith.

May we learn well the lesson of this Psalm! When we meet with a man who has been in special trouble and he has escaped from it, we are anxious to know how it came to pass in order that if we are cast into similar trial, we also may resort to the same door of hope. You meet with a man that has long been sorely afflicted—to find him full of joy at his relief is a pleasure and a personal comfort! You heard him lamenting for years and now you hear him rejoicing—and this excites your wonder and your hope! It is as though a cripple saw another lame man leaping and running. He very naturally enquires, "How is this?" The other day you saw a blind man begging in the street—and now he has eyes bright as that which sparkle on the face of a gazelle—and you cry in astonishment—"Tell me who was the oculist that operated on your eyes, for I may be in the same case and I would be glad to know where to go." Here, then, we have a gate of knowledge opened before us. The Psalmist found salvation and deliverance in going directly to God and trusting in Him! Let us follow his example and in all times of distress, caused by our own iniquity, or by anything else, let us repair to the Throne of Grace, for the Most High will also deal with us even as He dealt with His servant of old, to whose cries, out of the depths, He lent an attentive ear. This Psalm is called "*De Profundis*"— its teaching is not only profound but practical.

Let me freely speak with you as concerning the great salvation which, as fallen creatures, we all need. In that matter our only resort must be to God, alone, for, "salvation is of the Lord." God has been pleased, in these last days, to reveal Himself in a glorious manner, suitable to our salvation. He was always to be seen in creation by those whose sight was not darkened by moral evil and, doubtless, angelic eyes always beheld Jehovah in all the works of His hands. He was to be seen under the old Law in types and shadows and, believing men and women were enabled, by the illumination of the Holy Spirit, to behold the Lord in His Temple. But in these last days, the Lord has spoken to us by His Son, whom He has made heir of all things, and in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. There is the Father most clearly to be seen—and now, if we read that Israel is to hope in the Lord and if we see that the way of salvation lies in relying upon "the Lord"—we must read between the lines and understand that the glorious Lord must *always* be the object of faith according as He, at this time, reveals Himself.

It is written, "They that know Your name will put their trust in You." That is to say, they trust, as they know how He reveals Himself. At this moment the manifestation of God stands thus—His dear Son has descended from the highest heavens and taken upon Himself our human nature, so that He is God and Man in one sacred and mysterious Person! In that complex form, the Word made flesh dwelt among men on earth some 30 years and more. And then He took upon Himself the weight of human sin and bore it upon His shoulders up to the Cross. He was arrested by the hand of Divine Justice and treated by Justice as if He had been a sinner, though sinner He could never be. He was numbered with

the transgressors and given over to wicked men, who, in their willful malice, scourged Him, spit upon Him, crowned Him with thorns and condemned Him to a felon's death. He died, not for any iniquity of His own, but for the transgression of His people was He smitten. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him. Yes, "He was made a curse for us" and even more—"He was made *sin* for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." "He died, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God."

If, then, we would trust God for our personal salvation, we must confide in Him as He manifests Himself for that purpose. And as we perceive that God sets forth Christ to be the Propitiation for our sin, we must accept that ordained way of putting away our sin. This is the way in which, "with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption." And thus it is that, "He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities." We trust in the Lord God as He reveals Himself in the Person of His Son Christ Jesus who has displayed in His own self the Love and the Justice of God—and has shown how these were equally glorified by the way of redemption through the substitution and sacrifice of One who is the Fellow of the Highest, and yet next-of-kin to man! Our Lord has buried our sin in His sepulcher and has gone up into Heaven to plead, there, with God, for transgressors and, at the same time, to prepare a place for as many as believe in Him and so are saved by His plenteous redemption! Understand, then, that if we read in the text, "Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption," we now, today, in the light of the Gospel, read it thus—"Let the seeking sinner, who would be redeemed from all his iniquities, trust in God as He is seen in and through Jesus Christ, for there forgiveness is freely given through plenteous redemption, and sin is no longer marked or imputed to the Believer, because the sacrifice of Jesus has blotted it out and removed it forever."

This is the introduction of our discourse. May the Holy Spirit now grant His anointing both to preacher and hearers!

I. The chief point to which I desire you to give earnest heed is this—in obtaining Gospel blessings, THE FIRST EXERCISES OF FAITH MUST BE TOWARDS GOD IN CHRIST JESUS and not towards the blessings, themselves. "Let Israel hope in the Lord." We do not read, "Let Israel hope for *mercy*." But we read, "Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy." Neither does it say, Let Israel hope for plenteous redemption." But it is worded thus, "Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is plenteous redemption." To me this has the look of a very encouraging Truth of God—the sinner is not to hasten with his first thoughts to the mercy that he needs, nor even to the promise of God to which he may look—but he is to go *to the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself*, as the Lord of Mercy and Fountain of Redemption! The first exercise of our faith is to deal immediately with the Lord God as He meets us in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Here let me say that *this is the most natural order which faith can follow*. Look first to the Giver and *then* to the gift! Look for the Helper and then for the help! Do not be saying, "I long to be forgiven. I labor to believe

that I am forgiven. I desire to be saved. I want to know that I am saved." This is looking for the *fruit*, when you have need, *first*, to find the tree! Your first business, as a seeker of pardon and salvation, is to believe in Jesus Christ, that is, to trust yourself with the Divine Savior. The natural order is believe in the Promiser and then you will believe the promise! You never say to yourself, "I should like to be able to take that man's word. I will sit down and try to make my mind confident of the truth of what he says." This would be a foolish and futile method of procedure. You follow a much more reasonable course—you enquire about the individual's character and standing—you find out who he is, what he is and what he has done. And thus you gather arguments for confidence and faith. You cannot help believing the promise when once you believe in the promiser. If you find a merchant to be an eminently upright and substantial man, you do not hesitate to take his checks. In fact, you would be glad to have your wallet full of them! Faith prizes the promises of her faithful God, and calls them precious.

Apply this rule and deal with heavenly things in due order. You seek pardon. Do not look continually at this priceless mercy at first, but look to the pardoning God! You will soon believe in forgiveness if you cause the first exercise of your faith to refer to the Forgiver, even Christ Jesus, Himself. When you have believed *in Him*, as able to say, "Your sins are forgiven you," then you will believe in sins being forgiven! This is the natural order of things. So, also, if you desire to believe for salvation and to be assured that you have it, or may have it at once, the simple course—the natural course—is to believe in the Savior! To be healed, you believe first in the Healer. When you have believed in the Savior, then you will believe in the salvation. If you know that Jesus can save you; if you desire to be saved, you will trust Him to save you. You will be readily able to believe that you can be saved when you trust in Jesus as able to save to the uttermost.

Poor trembling Heart, do not look at the blessing and say, "Alas, it is too great!" Look at the Savior Himself! Is anything too great for Him to give who gave His heart's blood to redeem? Do not say, "My heart is so hard it cannot be changed." Look at the Savior—is anything impossible to Him to whom the Father has committed all power? Is He not mighty to save? Fix your eyes, first and foremost, upon Him who is both God and Man and has, therefore, power and sympathy, majesty and mercy, Omnipotence and brotherliness. I pray you, do not consider so much the greatness of the *effect* as the unlimited power of the *Cause*. I may doubt my washing, but not when I believe in the cleansing virtue of the precious blood! It may be difficult to believe in my salvation, but not to believe in my Savior! It may be hard to hope for Heaven, but the text sets me an easier task—"*Let Israel hope in the Lord*." When I open my window God-wards and look towards the Lord Jesus, I see glorious things in the light of the rising sun, even things which I could not have seen if I had not first turned towards the light. "In the beginning God"—this, according to the first chapter of Genesis, is the natural order of all Divine work—do not attempt to alter it.

To this I would add, *this is the necessary order*. It must be so—the Savior first and then the salvation. Suppose, for a moment, that it were possible for you to obtain pardon without Christ—what good would it do you? I would remind you that no blessing is a Covenant blessing, or a blessing at all, except as it is connected with Christ Jesus and so with the Lord God. No comfort is worth having if Jesus does not comfort us! No forgiveness is worth the words which utter it if Jesus does not forgive. There is no coming to the Father except by Christ. If, therefore, I imagine that I have come to the Father *without* Christ, it is clear that I have not come! If I fancy that I have saving blessings apart from the appointed Savior, I am a deceived man! Beloved, do not seek after mercy, pardon, holiness, Heaven—except through Christ Jesus our Lord—for you will be seeking counterfeits, shadows, delusions. Begin at the Cross! See how Jesus puts it—"Come *unto Me*, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He does not first say, "Take My yoke upon you," but first, "Come *unto Me*." He first gives us rest and then, afterwards, we find it. But we *begin* with coming to Him.

First Christ and then His yoke. First Christ and then rest. Do not ask for rest, first, and then say, "I will come to Christ afterwards." This is an impossible order! Do not even say, "I must get a broken heart and *then* come to Christ." No, come to Christ FOR a broken heart! I preach a Savior to you, tonight, who wants nothing of you, but who is ready to begin with you at the beginning, just where you are, in all your unworthiness and ill desert—in all your depravity and vileness! He is ready to take you up from the mire of the pit wherein you lie and to look on you with love in all the pollution with which you are disgraced! Come, then, and begin with Jesus! It is the necessary order of your coming—first to Christ and *then* to His yoke and to His peace. Let your faith exercise itself, not so much on *what* you ought to be, or on what you *hope* to be, as on what *Christ is* and on His ability to make you all that your heart pines after. Hear the good word of my text and give good heed to it. Note well the permission of heavenly love—"Let Israel hope *in the Lord*."

Observe, also, that, as it is the natural order and the necessary order, so it is evidently *the easiest order*. Sometimes it seems, to a burdened heart, to be more than difficult to believe in the pardon of innumerable sins—it appears impossible. Guilty One, do not try to believe in pardon in the abstract, but believe in Jesus the Sacrifice and Savior, who has once and for all appeared to put away sin. Believe in the Divine Substitute and then you will believe that the forgiveness of your sins is a thing provided for by Him. Do not even say, "I can never be sanctified. Such a wretched sinner as I am could never be made into a saint." Do not try to believe in sanctification, but rely upon the boundless power of Jesus to "make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight." For all parts of salvation, hope in the Lord and look to His hands for the working thereof. Forget yourself, now, and only think of Him who works all things according to the good pleasure of His will. Cease looking for the water and look for the Well! You will more readily see the Savior than see salvation, for He is lifted up, even He who is God,

and beside Him there is none else. You will more easily fix your eyes on Jesus than upon justification, sanctification, or any other separate blessing. When the work seems hard, look to *His* hands—"Is anything too hard for the Lord?"

You may fix your eyes upon a Covenant promise till it dazzles you, but if you see Jesus, the sight will strengthen your eyes and you will see the promise in Him—and perceive it to be, yes and amen, to the Glory of God. It is easier to believe in a personal Christ than in impersonal promises. That poor woman who was sick, in Jesus Christ's day, might have said to herself, "It is impossible that I should be healed," but then she thought not so much of the healing as of the Healer—and when she saw Jesus walking about among the crowds, healing all manner of diseases—and when she believed that God was in Him, why, then she inferred that He could heal her disease! And so she came up behind Him and touched the hem of His garment. She sought *Him* and so sought healing! Stay in this line—let not the devil take you from it—that the first object of your faith should be the Lord Jesus, for by Him, as the Ladder which God has set up, you can climb to the highest place of privilege and lay hold upon the choicest gift of Divine Grace!

This is the way to God, Himself, and the only way which our human feet can tread. Consider well who Christ was and what He has done—and then you will conclude that He can save even you! By *looking to Him,* you will be saved and what is easier than to look? To hope in God is a far more simple matter than to search for signs and evidences in yourself, or to labor to force yourself up into certain states of mind. Answer the question, "Will He save me?" by looking to see what kind of a Savior Jesus is—and when you perceive the Glory of His Person, the perfection of His obedience and the merit of His blood—you will be convinced that you may safely trust in Him according to His command, for He *commands* you to believe! Jesus declares, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." Let us come at once, for it is the nearest and best road to peace!

To come, first of all, to God in Christ Jesus is *the wisest course*. You are too bewildered to know which blessing to seek, therefore seek Jesus, Himself, and He will be unto you wisdom! It is easier to come to the Cross than to the separate blessings which come of it. Take the straight road which lies plainly before your face.

In faintness and trembling of heart we dare not appropriate a mercy—our palsied hands cannot grasp a favor and, therefore, it is our wisdom to fall at Jesus' feet and let Him give us what seems good to Him. Through our ignorance, we know not what to ask for—and through our doubt we are afraid to ask—therefore, let us leave all with our Lord. We need the wine and oil, but we are sorely wounded and shall do well to lie still and let Him pour them in. When the Good Samaritan is come, all is come. Let us, therefore, neither cry for wine nor oil, but for HIM—we know His name! The wisdom of the prayer is seen in its completeness. At first, sinners, conscious of their ill desert, cry to be saved from Hell and this is the most of their prayer. But suppose the Lord should give them this and not change their natures—would they be one whit the better? If there were no

fires of Tophet, so long as a man has sin within him, he creates his own Hell! In seeking the Lord Jesus, a man finds escape from punishment and much more. No man knows enough to be able to ask for an all-round salvation—he will only seek this or that which seems to him most pressingly necessary. We are too ignorant, too much the creatures of feeling, too partial, too childish to make a catalog of what we need. But we can ask for Jesus, and He is all in one! How excellent is that hymn of ours with the refrain—

"Give me Christ, or else I die!"

We have asked all when we have asked for the Savior anointed of the Lord. When our hope is in God through the Mediator whom He has appointed, we hope in Him in a way which renders our hope sure and steadfast—and this is the highest wisdom. In laying hold upon Jesus you have obtained not only something, but everything. In looking first to Jesus, you have sought for the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and you know the promise that all other things shall be added. If you need strength, comfort, guidance, fruitfulness and anything else that makes up eternal salvation, behold, you have it in your Lord! Nothing that is needed for a soul between this present state of trial and the perfection of Heaven is omitted from Christ—"you are complete in Him." If, therefore, you make Him the first object of your faith, and lay hold upon Him, rather than upon any or all blessings, you are delivered from anxiety as to whether your ignorant prayers have comprehended all you need—and this is be a wise course to follow.

It is, therefore, *the most profitable course* for needy souls like ourselves. By grasping our Lord and hoping in Him, we fill our hands, not with brass or silver, but with gold of Ophir. Let others hope where they may, but let Israel, the Prince, hope in the Lord from whom he has already won such royal favors. I see at times, in the newspaper, "Principals only will be dealt with," and in our heavenly business we had better keep to this rule. Go not to the servants—make all your applications to the Master—and in your dealings with Him seek not so much His gifts as Himself, for the Giver is always greater than what He gives! The bottle of water which Hagar carried for Ishmael is a poor thing compared with that well of God beside which Isaac abode. Fruit from a choice tree is well, but apples of gold in baskets of silver are not to be despised. But, if one can have the tree planted in his own garden, he is far richer. Our Lord is the apple tree among the trees of the forest and, to possess HIM, is to have the best of the best, yes, all things that can be desired! Covenant blessings are streams, but our Lord Jesus is the Wellhead. Believe for the infinite, immutable, inexhaustible "deep which lies under," and you may sink as many wells as you please.

I believe that in every case wherein the soul finds peace, this is *the actual order*. We may go about after pardon, renewal and holiness, but we find no rest unto our souls while hunting for these. As a matter of fact, we look unto HIM and are lightened—and not by any other means. If, by aiming even at *repentance*, we are taken off from the Lord—we are taken off the right road. It is possible even to look to faith in such a manner as to

forget the Object of faith! It is not my *hand*, but what my hand *grasps* that saves me when I lay hold on Christ! It is not my eye, but what my eyes see which saves me when I look to Jesus! In very deed no heart can find salvation in that which comes forth from itself—its hope lies only in the Lord, alone, to whom it must trust for everything. Beware of trusting to an anchor which lies on your own deck, or to a confidence which depends in the least degree on yourself. "Let Israel hope in the Lord." Now the Lord is not *self*, nor will He be joined with self! The Lord is beyond and outside of all that the creation can find within, or hope to produce from itself. Mercy and redemption are with the Lord, not with self. Why, then, should we look where, in the very nature of things, those are not and cannot be? Why not look to the Lord, in whom, alone, all heavenly treasures abide?

This, then, is my message to every man or woman who desires salvation, "Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption." Do not begin by hoping in mercy and redemption, for these are not to be found apart from the Lord—but go at once to that Divine Person with whom there is mercy and plenteous redemption—then both of those will be granted to you. I wish I knew how to put this so plainly that every bewildered and cast-down spirit would catch my meaning and accept its counsel. I would also have preachers learn a lesson from the point I have been driving at. Let them not so much preach sinners to Christ as preach Christ to sinners. I am persuaded that a full and clear declaration of what Jesus is, as to His Person, offices, Character, work and authority would do more to produce faith than all our exhortations. "Whoever believes in Him has everlasting life"—but how shall they believe unless they hear of Him?

The very best topic for the immediate conversion of men is Christ Crucified—the doctrine that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. I know one that came in here full of evil, living an unchaste life—and the text was, "He that believes in Him has everlasting life." There would not seem to be anything about the sermon to convict of sin but the charming mercy of God won that heart, and that heart, being won by love, learned at once to hate evil and to serve the Lord Jesus in all that is pure, lovely and of good report! There sat in this very house, not long ago, side by side with one who is still in the service of Satan, a woman who had not attended the House of God for years. Nothing was heard but the simple proclamation of the Grace of God in Christ Jesus to the guilty—and she was shot down by the side of her companion—the thought of the amazing mercy and infinite love of God, in giving His Son to die, touched her heart and she began to weep. Immediately her companion upbraided her, but she answered, "I have found mercy." That was enough for her—she made no other excuse for her emotion.

I pray that the same effects may follow this sermon. I bid you hope in the Lord! Look not to abstract mercy! Look not to any feelings or resolves in yourselves! Look not, even, to the hearing of the Word of God, or to promises, alone, but look to Jesus, who still lives, and who is in the midst of His people at this time, waiting to receive all who are willing to come to

Him! While I tell you this, I am praying the Holy Spirit to bless the Word to your souls, so that, at once, without delay, you may look only to the Lord and may trust in Him and be saved! You are allowed to do so, for the text says, "Let Israel hope in the Lord." If the Scripture permits, who shall forbid?

II. Another form of the same Truth of God now invites our attention—ALL EXERCISES OF FAITH IN REFERENCE TO OTHER THINGS MUST BE IN CONNECTION WITH THE LORD. I began with our first exercise of faith, but I would not end there. As the stars called, "the Pointers," always point to the polestar, so must our faith always look to God in Christ Jesus. Having begun with Jesus, our faith must not look elsewhere. Let Israel always hope in the Lord, for with Him is what she still requires. What do you need tonight, dear Friend? Ask, and you shall receive—but ask only of the Lord! Knock, but knock at the same door! Plead, but when you are pleading, still plead the name of Jesus! Whenever you are expecting a heavenly favor, expect it from the Father through His dear Son, by the Holy Spirit! Whenever you are longing, long for nothing more than there is in Christ! And whenever you obtain a mercy, remember that you have received it only because you have, by faith, received Jesus, and so have become a child of God. Whenever you rejoice in a mercy, take care that you do not so much glory in *it* as in the *Lord* from whom it came. Hope in the Lord and never have any hope in yourself, for that would be a fruitless, groundless, rootless, sapless hope! You are still to find mercy and plenteous redemption in the Lord alone.

I am afraid that sometimes we seek *mercies* apart from God the Giver, or apart from Christ, the channel of their bestowal—and this is always ill of us. Avoid such dangerous error! I read in the papers, frequently, allusions to "Providence." I know what *I* mean by Providence, but I do not know what the newspapers mean by it. I fear it is only a convenient phrase, a conventional expression which is not to be too carefully examined. They do not mean a living, foreseeing, providing, working Personality—that would be too much like religion! They admit a certain *something*, "a power which makes for righteousness," a nonentity called, "Providence." I have too often heard Christian people talk about thanking Providence. What is that? Do you mean, "thank God"? If so, say it boldly! It is *God* that provides. *God* arranges, *God* overrules, *God* works out His gracious designs! Again, how often do we hear of, "Nature" doing this and, "Nature" being that and, "Nature" producing the other! What do you mean? An infidel, some time ago, was speaking in the open air and he orated very eloquently about the elevating influences of Nature and what a blessing it was to study Nature. A friend in the crowd said to him, "That is very pretty, but would you have the goodness to tell me what Nature is, which does all this?" The orator answered tartly, "Every fool knows what Nature is." "Well," said the questioner, "then it will be easy to tell us." "Nature," said the speaker, "Well, Nature is Nature."

Just so. That is where it ended. And so it is with very many people when they talk about Providence or Nature. Let us not speak without knowing what we mean, or without declaring our meaning. We do not

erect an altar and inscribe it TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. We know the Lord and are known of Him and, therefore, we should speak of Him as our hope, our trust, our joy! We know no Providence apart from Jehovah-Jireh, the God who foresees and provides! To us there is no fickle chance, but the Lord reigns. Equally to us is there no blind, inexorable fate, but the Most High decrees and works out His wise and sovereign will! Therefore do not let God's Israel talk as if they hoped in luck or fate, but let them, "hope in the Lord," and acknowledge their reliance upon a personal God who is always working for them—"for with Him is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption."

Now, dear Brothers and Sisters, do you need *mercy*? In your prayers for pardoning mercy, quote the Savior's Sacrifice. Do you need sparing mercy? Mention Him whom God did not spare in the great atoning day. Do you need restoring mercy? Plead Him whom God brought again from the dead! Do you need to behold the light of Jehovah's Countenance? Plead Him who said, "Why have You forsaken Me?" In hoping for mercy, set the eyes of your hope upon the Lord Jesus and let no mercy be hoped for by you apart from Him! Remember what happened to Uzziah. He was a man of God and a king—but when he had grown very great, he thought that he would act as priest for himself. He went into the sanctuary of the Lord and burned incense on his own account—without the Lord's appointed priest—and he was struck with leprosy! And not only was he thrust out of the Temple, but he, himself, hurried to get out!

I tremble for those in whom I see any sign of going before God in right of their own character. I fear that among God's own professing people there are some who are so conscious of their own knowledge and growth, that they pray without Christ, praise without Christ, and talk of being no longer in need of confessing sin! They dare to act without humbly depending upon the Presence of the great High Priest—and then they fall into sin and thus they are struck with leprosy and, perhaps, to their dying day they can never enter into such fellowship with God as once they knew. I would do nothing without Jesus! I would not even wish to repent except my eyes were upon the Cross. I would not hope to think a holy thought except as my soul still gazed upon Jesus my All. Away, away with every idea of mercy except it is mercy received through Jesus, for He, alone, is full of Grace and of His fullness must we receive! I would bind you, Brothers and Sisters, if I could, to the Cross as your one hope! I pray the Lord bind me forever to the Cross—the wounds my only fountains of hope, the blood and water my only cleansing! Go, you who have a righteousness of your own, and hope elsewhere! The only hope of my soul is the bleeding, dying, buried, risen, coming Savior! "Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy," and with Him, alone! All the exercises of faith about mercy must always be tethered to the Cross. Mercy flows through Christ alone.

So is it with "*plenteous redemption*." What a grand utterance that is—"plenteous redemption!" I would like to dwell upon it. Is there not rare music in the sound? It means plenteous forgiveness for plenteous sin, through a price paid, a ransom given. Only in Christ can you find this!

"*With Him* is plenteous redemption." Do not dream of finding redemption in ordinances, in prayers, in tears, or in anything but the life and death and Person of the Son of God! "With Him is plenteous redemption." He has paid a great price and, therefore, a great debt is blotted out! Great offenses are forgiven, but only through the precious blood of our adorable Redeemer.

"Plenteous redemption." Why, that means deliverance from the bondage of many lusts, freedom from the thralldom of strong passions, a ransom of captives from fierce taskmasters! My God, I long to be so delivered and redeemed! And there is with You all Grace, power and provision for plenteous deliverance by redemption—but this is found in Christ alone. I charge you, my Hearers, do not look for escape from the slavery of sin apart from the redemption of Christ! Do not expect to overcome the smallest sin except by the blood of the Lamb! There is nothing, I believe, more deceiving than the notion of the *unregenerate* heart that it is seeking after holiness—though it is destitute of the power of the Holy Spirit and takes no thought of the merit of Jesus Christ. We need much grace and plenteous redemption in fact—but all of all that we receive must come to us from the Lord, by Jesus Christ the Mediator!

"Plenteous redemption" includes in its range of meaning great growth in Divine Grace, abounding usefulness, high spirituality and perfect preparedness for Heaven. For all these we must hope in the Lord, for they are with Him. Never think to have redemption in the least or in the highest degree apart from your hope in the Lord—your trusting in Christ Jesus.

The pith and marrow of what I have said is this—*hope distinctly in the Lord*. There are many stars, but let one, alone, of all the train be the Object of your believing eye. Lay the foundation of your hope in the Lord! Go on building up your comfort in the Lord Jesus and in Him bring forth the top stone. Begin with Christ and end with Christ! As Christ grows more to you, take care that self grows less and less. If your Christianity puffs you up, it is not Christ's Christianity. I spoke just now of King Uzziah, let me refer to him once more. Read in the Second of Chronicles, chapter 26, at the 15th verse—"He was marvelously helped, till he was strong." When he became strong, he went off the lines and we read, "When he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction." *Mind that*. God will always help us while we are weak. When we are strong—what shall I say? Then are we weak and have need to fear, for we are already being lifted up, or we should not count ourselves strong—poor, puny creatures that we are! God will always bless us as long as we confess our dependence upon His blessing. He will always fill us as long as we are empty! He will always feed us as long as we are hungry. He will be your All in All so long as *you* are *nothing*.

But the moment you boast in yourself, and say, "I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing," you will be left to learn that you are naked, poor and miserable! Woe was the day in which dust and ashes set up somebody! Nebuchadnezzar is proud and soon finds a rapid descent from the throne to eating grass like cattle! Worms, in the Presence of the Lord, do all they may do when they *hope*—they do all they can do

when they hope in Him! They have nothing but sin and He has mercy upon them. They are slaves to evil, but He has plenteous redemption with which to set them free. The poorest, weakest, saddest among us may hope in the Lord, for He can do all things! Therefore, let us end our meeting with each one of us hoping in the Lord—and let us continue in our faith in "the God of hope"—till we receive the Heaven we hope for through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Psalm 130, John 3.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—551, 560, 538.

A LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:
London, April 13, 1891.

DEAR FRIENDS—This sermon is issued this week instead of the discourse of last Lord's-Day morning because I am spending a few days in retirement so as to be rested and ready for the College Conference which commences April 20. This Conference is a great muster of ministers and my very soul is on fire with a desire for a special blessing from the Lord when I am addressing them and, indeed, through all the meetings. I would entreat every reader to pray that this Conference may be greatly influential in establishing the Brothers in the faith and in awakening in them a great passion for souls. By this means their churches and congregations will become partakers of the benefit. We need not merely "a little reviving," but a second Pentecost! What we need we will seek, and what we seek we will expect. God has great things in reserve, which he will give in answer to prayer.

In the midst of the week, which some lovingly call the Feast of Tabernacles, one evening is given up to the College Annual Supper and, on that occasion, gifts are sent in for the support of THE COLLEGE. It would greatly cheer me if many of my readers who cannot be present in person, would, nevertheless, have fellowship in the work by sending in their help by April 22. The funds coming in for different parts of the Lord's work under my care have been rather smaller of late. This causes me no anxiety, for the Lord can soon fill the coffers, but I think His people ought to be informed of it, lest any should suppose that their aid is not needed. I would be glad for help from all the members of my "larger congregation."

Brothers and Sisters, I *suggest*—I do no more. And yet I do beg your prayers for the Lord's work.

Yours heartily, for Jesus' sake,
C. H. SPURGEON.

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THE COVENANT PROMISE OF THE SPIRIT
NO. 2200

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 10, 1891,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And I will put My Spirit within you."
Ezekiel 36:27.

No preface is needed and the largeness of our subject forbids our wasting time in beating about the bush. I shall try to do two things this morning—first, I would *commend the text*. And, secondly, I would, in some measure, *expound the text*.

I. First, as for THE COMMENDATION OF THE TEXT, the tongues of men and of angels might fail. To call it a golden sentence would be much too commonplace—to liken it to a pearl of great price would be too poor a comparison! We cannot feel, much less speak, too much in praise of that great God who has put this clause into the Covenant of His Grace. In that Covenant, every sentence is more precious than Heaven and earth—and this line is not the least among His choice words of promise—"I will put My Spirit within you."

I would begin by saying that *it is a gracious Word*. It was spoken to a graceless people, to a people who had followed "their own way" and refused the way of God—a people who had already provoked something more than ordinary anger in the Judge of all the earth, for He, Himself, said (v 18), "I poured My fury upon them." These people, even under chastisement, caused the holy name of God to be profaned among the heathen wherever they went! They had been highly favored, but they abused their privileges and behaved worse than those who never knew the Lord. They sinned wantonly, willfully, wickedly, proudly and presumptuously and, by this, they greatly provoked the Lord. Yet to them He made such a promise as this—"I will put My Spirit within you." Surely, where sin abounded Divine Grace did much more abound!

Clearly this is a Word of Grace, for the Law says nothing of this kind. Turn to the Law of Moses and see if there is *any* Word of God spoken therein concerning the putting of the Spirit within men to cause them to walk in God's statutes. The Law proclaims the statutes, but only the *Gospel* promises the Spirit by which the statutes will be obeyed. The Law commands and makes us know what God requires of us, but the Gospel goes further and inclines us to *obey* the will of the Lord and enables us, practically, to walk in His ways. Under the dominion of Grace the Lord works in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure!

So great a gift as this could never come to any man by merit. A man might so act as to deserve a reward of a certain kind, in measure suited to his commendable action, but the Holy Spirit can never be the wage of human service—the idea verges upon blasphemy! Can any man *deserve* that Christ should die for him? Who would dream of such a thing? Can any man deserve that the Holy Spirit should dwell in him and work holiness in him? The greatness of the blessing lifts it high above the range of merit and we see that if the Holy Spirit *is* bestowed, it must be by an act of Divine Grace—Grace infinite in bounty, exceeding all that we could have imagined. "Sovereign Grace over sin abounding" is here seen in clearest light. "I will put My Spirit within you" is a promise which drops with Graces as the honeycomb with honey! Listen to the Divine music which pours from this Word of Love. I hear the soft melody of Grace, Grace, Grace and nothing else but Grace. Glory be to God, who gives to sinners the indwelling of His Spirit!

Note, next, that *it is a Divine Word*— "I will put My Spirit within you." Who but the Lord could speak after this fashion? Can one man put the Spirit of God within another? Could all the Church combined breathe the Spirit of God into a single sinner's heart? To put any *good* thing into the deceitful heart of man is a great achievement, but to put the Spirit of God into the heart, truly, this is the finger of God! No, here I may say, the Lord has made bare His arm and displayed the fullness of His mighty power! To put the Spirit of God into our nature is a work peculiar to the Godhead and to do this within the nature of a free agent, such as man, is marvelous! Who but Jehovah, the God of Israel, can speak after this royal style and, beyond all dispute, declare, "I will put My Spirit within you"?

Men must always surround their resolves with conditions and uncertainties, but since Omnipotence is at the back of every promise of God, He speaks like a king, yes, in a style which is only fit for the eternal God! He purposes and promises and He as surely performs. Sure, then, is this sacred saying, "I will put My Spirit within you." Sure, because Divine! O Sinner, if we poor creatures had the saving of you, we should break down in the attempt, but, behold, the Lord, Himself, comes on the scene and the work is done! All difficulties are removed by this one sentence, "I will put My Spirit within you." We have worked with *our* spirit, we have wept over you and we have entreated you—but we have failed. Lo, there comes One into the matter who will not fail, with whom nothing is impossible! And He begins His work by saying, "I will put My Spirit within you." The Word is of Grace and of God—regard it, then, as a pledge from the God of Grace.

To me there is much charm in further thought that *this is an individual and personal Word of God*. The Lord means, "I will put My Spirit within you." That is to say, within you, as individuals. "I will put My Spirit within you" one by one. This must be so, since connection requires it. We read in verse 26, "A new heart also will I give you." Now, a new heart can only be given to one person. Each man needs a heart of his own and each man must have a new heart for himself. "And a new spirit will I put within

you." Within each one this must be done. "And I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh"—these are all *personal*, *individual* operations of Divine Grace! God deals with men one by one in solemn matters of eternity, sin and salvation. We are born one by one and we die one by one—even so we must be born again one by one—and each one, for himself, must receive Spirit of God. Without this, a man has nothing! He cannot be caused to walk in God's statutes except by infusion of Grace into him as an individual.

I think I see among my hearers one man, or woman, who feels himself, or herself, to be all alone in the world and, therefore, hopeless. You can believe that God will do great things for a nation, but how shall solitary be thought of? You are an odd person, one that could not be written down in any list—a peculiar sinner with constitutional tendencies all your own. Thus says God, "I will put My Spirit within *you*"—within *your* heart—even *yours*! My dear Hearers, you who have long been seeking salvation, but have not known the power of the Spirit—this is what you need! You have been striving in energy of flesh, but you have not understood where your true strength lies. God says to you, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord." And again, "I will put My Spirit within you." Oh, that this Word might be spoken of the Lord to that young man who is ready to despair! To that sorrowful woman who has been looking into herself for power to pray and believe! You are without strength or hope in and of yourself, but this meets your case in all points. "I will put My Spirit within you"—within *you* as an individual! Enquire of the Lord for it! Lift up your heart in prayer to God and ask Him to pour upon you the Spirit of Grace and of supplications. Plead with the Lord, saying, "Let Your good Spirit lead me. Even me!" Cry, "Pass me not, my gracious Father; but in me fulfill this wondrous Word of yours, 'I will put My Spirit within you.'"

Note, next, that *this is a separating word*. I do not know whether you will see this readily, but it must be so—this Word of God separates a man from his fellows. Men by nature are of another spirit from that of God and are under subjection to that evil spirit, the Prince of the power of the air. When the Lord comes to gather out His own, fetching out from among the heathen, He effects separation by doing according to this Word, "I will put My Spirit within you." This done, the individual becomes a new man. Those who have the Spirit are not of the world, nor *like* the world—and soon have to come out from among the ungodly and to be separate—for difference of nature creates conflict. God's Spirit will not dwell with the evil spirit—you cannot have fellowship with Christ and with Belial—with the Kingdom of Heaven and with this world.

I wish that the people of God would again wake up to the Truth of God that to gather out a people from among men is the great purpose of the present dispensation. It is still true, as James said at the Jerusalem Council, "Simeon has declared how God at first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name." We are not to remain clinging to the old wreck with expectation that we shall pump water out of her and get her safe into port. No, the cry is very different—"Take to the lifeboat!

Take to the lifeboat!" You are to quit the wreck and then you are to carry away from the sinking mass, that which God will save. You must be separate from the old wreck, lest it suck you down to sure destruction! Your only hope of doing good to the world is by yourselves being, "not of the world," even as Christ was not of the world.

For you to go down to the world's level will neither be good for it nor for you. That which happened in the days of Noah will be repeated, for when the sons of God entered into alliance with the daughters of men—and there was a league between the two races—the Lord could not endure the evil mixture, but drew up the sluices of the lower deep and swept the earth with a destroying flood. Surely, in that last day of destruction, when the world is overwhelmed with fire, it will be because the Church of God shall have degenerated and the distinctions between the righteous and the wicked shall have been broken down. The Spirit of God, wherever He comes, does speedily make and reveal the difference between Israel and Egypt—and in proportion as His active energy is felt, there will be an ever-widening gulf between those who are led of the Spirit and those who are under the dominion of the flesh.

The possession of the Spirit will make you, my Hearer, quite another sort of man from what you are now, and then you will be actuated by motives which the world will not appreciate, for the world knows us not because it knew Him not. Then you will act, speak, think and feel in such a way that this evil world will misunderstand and condemn you. Since the carnal mind knows not the things that are of God—for those things are *spiritually* discerned—it will not approve your objectives and designs. Do not expect it to be your friend. The Spirit which makes you to be of the seed of the woman is not the spirit of the world! The seed of the serpent will hiss at you and bruise your heel. Your Master said, "Because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world; therefore the world hates you." This is a separating Word of God, this. Has it separated you? Has the Holy Spirit called you alone and blessed you? Do you differ from your old companions? Have you a life they do not understand? If not, may God in mercy put into you that most heavenly deposit, of which He speaks in our text—"I will put My Spirit within you"!

But now notice, that *it is a very uniting Word*. It separates from the world, but it joins to God. Note how it runs— "I will put *My* Spirit within you." It is not merely *a* spirit, or *the* spirit, but *My* Spirit. Now when God's own Spirit comes to reside within our mortal bodies, how near akin we are to the Most High! "Know you not that your body is the Temple of the Holy Spirit?" Does not this make a man sublime? Have you never stood in awe of your own selves, O you Believers? Have you regarded enough even this poor body as being sanctified and dedicated, and elevated into a sacred condition, by being set apart to be the Temple of the Holy Spirit? Thus are we brought into the closest union with God that we can well conceive of. Thus is the Lord our Light and our life, while our spirit is subordinated to the Divine Spirit. "I will put My Spirit within you"—then God Himself dwells in you! The Spirit of Him that raised up Christ from the dead is in

you! With Christ in God your life is hid and the Spirit seals you, anoints you and abides in you. By the Spirit we have access to the Father! By the Spirit we perceive our adoption and learn to cry, "Abba, Father." By the Spirit we are made partakers of the Divine Nature and have communion with the thrice holy Lord!

I cannot help adding here that *it is a very condescending Word*—"I will put My Spirit within you." Is it really so, that the Spirit of God who displays the power and energetic force of God, by whom God's Word is carried into effect—that the Spirit who of old moved upon the face of the waters and brought order and life from chaos and death—can it be so that He will deign to sojourn in *men*? God in our nature is a very wonderful conception! God in the Babe at Bethlehem, God in the Carpenter of Nazareth, God in the "Man of Sorrows," God in the Crucified, God in Him who was buried in the tomb—this is all marvelous! The Incarnation is an infinite mystery of love—but we believe it. Yet, if it were possible to compare one illimitable wonder with another, I should say that God's dwelling in His people—and that repeated ten thousand times over—is more marvelous!

That the Holy Spirit should dwell in millions of redeemed men and women is a miracle not surpassed by that of our Lord's espousal of human nature, for our Lord's body was perfectly pure and the Godhead, while it dwells with His holy Manhood, does at least dwell with a perfect and sinless Nature. But the Holy Spirit bows Himself to dwell in *sinful* men! To dwell in men who, after their conversion, still find the flesh warring against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh—men who are not perfect, though they strive to be so—men who have to lament their shortcomings and even to confess with shame a measure of unbelief! "I will put My Spirit within you" means the abiding of the Holy Spirit in our imperfect nature. Wonder of wonders! Yet is it as surely a fact as it is a wonder. Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, you have the Spirit of God, for, "if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, He is none of His."

You could not bear the suspicion that you are not His and, therefore, as surely as you are Christ's, you have His Spirit abiding in you! The Savior has gone away on purpose that the Comforter might be given to dwell in you—and He does dwell in you. Is it not so? If it is so, admire this condescending God, and worship and praise His name! Sweetly submit to His rule in all things. Grieve not the Spirit of God. Watch carefully that nothing comes within you that may defile the Temple of God. Let the faintest monition of the Holy Spirit be law to you. It was a holy mystery that the Presence of the Lord was specially within the veil of the Tabernacle and that the Lord God spoke by Urim and Thummim to His people. It is an equally sacred marvel that now the Holy Spirit dwells in our spirits and abides within our nature and speaks to us whatever He hears of the Father. By Divine impressions which the opened ear can apprehend and the tender heart can receive, He speaks to us. God grant us to know His still small voice so as to listen to it with reverent humility and loving joy—then

shall we know the meaning of these words, "I will put My Spirit within you."

Nor have I yet done with commending my text, for I must not fail to remind you that *it is a very spiritual Word*. "I will put My Spirit within you" has nothing to do with our wearing a peculiar garb—that would be a matter of little worth. It has nothing to do with affectations of speech—those might readily become a deceptive peculiarity. Our text has nothing to do with outward rites and ceremonies, but goes much further and deeper. It is an instructive symbol when the Lord teaches us our death with Christ by burial in Baptism—it is to our great profit that He ordains bread and wine to be tokens of our communion in the body and blood of His dear Son—but these are only outward things and if they are unattended with the Holy Spirit they fail of their design.

There is something infinitely greater in this promise—"I will put My Spirit within you." I cannot give you the whole force of the Hebrew, as to the words, "within you," unless I paraphrase them a little, and read, "I will put My Spirit in the midst of you." The sacred deposit is put deep down in our life's secret place. God puts His Spirit not upon the surface of the man, but into the center of his being. The promise means—"I will put My Spirit in your heart, in the very soul of you." This is an intensely spiritual matter, without admixture of anything material and visible. It is spiritual, you see, because it is the Spirit that is given—and He is given internally within our spirit. It is true the Spirit operates upon the external life, but it is through the secret and internal life, and of that inward operation our text speaks.

This is what we so greatly require. Do you know what it is to attend a service and hear God's Truth faithfully preached and yet you are forced to say, "Somehow or other it did not enter into me; I did not feel the unction and taste the savor of it"? "I will put My Spirit within you," is what you need. Do you not read your Bibles and even pray—and do not both devotional exercises become too much *eternal* acts? "I will put My Spirit *within* you" meets this evil! The good Spirit fires your heart. He penetrates your mind. He saturates your soul. He touches the secret and vital springs of your existence. Blessed Word of God! I love my text. I love it better than I can speak of it!

Observe once more that *this Word is a very effectual one*. "I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments and do them." The Spirit is operative—first upon the inner life in causing you to love the Law of the Lord—and then it moves you openly to keep His statutes concerning Himself and His judgments between you and your fellow men. Obedience, if a man should be flogged to it, would be of little worth. But obedience springing out of a life within—this is a priceless breastplate of jewels. If you have a lantern, you cannot make it shine by polishing the outside glass, you must put a candle in it—and this is what God does—He puts the light of the Spirit within us and then our light shines! He puts His Spirit so deep down into the heart that the whole nature feels it! It works upward, like a spring from

the bottom of a well. It is, moreover, so deeply implanted that there is no removing it. If it were in the memory, you might forget it. If it were in the intellect, you might err in it. But, "within you," it touches the whole man and has dominion over you without fear of failure. When the very kernel of your nature is quickened into holiness, practical godliness is effectually secured. Blessed is He who knows by experience our Lord's Words—"The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

If I should fail in expounding the text, I hope I have so fully commended it to you that you will turn it over and meditate upon it yourselves—and so get a home-born exposition of it! The key of the text is within its own self, for if the Lord gives you the Spirit, you will then understand His Words—"I will put My Spirit within you."

II. But now I must work upon THE EXPOSITION OF THE TEXT. I trust the Holy Spirit will aid me. Let me show you how the good Spirit manifests the fact that He dwells in men. I have to be very brief on a theme that might require a great length of time and can only mention a part of His ways and workings.

One of the first effects of the Spirit of God being put within us is *quickening*. We are dead by nature to all heavenly and spiritual things, but when the Spirit of God comes, then we begin to live. The man visited of the Spirit begins to feel—the terrors of God make him tremble, the love of Christ makes him weep. He begins to fear and he begins to hope—a great deal of the first and a very little of the second, it may be. He learns spiritually to sorrow. He is grieved that he has sinned and that he cannot cease from sinning. He begins to desire that which once he despised—he especially desires to find the way of pardon and reconciliation with God. Ah, dear Hearers! *I* cannot make you feel, *I* cannot make you sorrow for sin, *I* cannot make you desire eternal life—but it is all done as soon as this is fulfilled by the Lord, "I will put My Spirit within you." The quickening Spirit brings life to the dead in trespasses and sins!

This life of the Spirit shows itself by causing the man to pray. The cry is the distinctive mark of the living child. He begins to cry in broken accents, "God be merciful to me." At the same time that he pleads, he feels the soft tug of repentance. He has a new mind towards sin and he grieves that he should have grieved his God. With this comes faith, perhaps feeble and trembling—only a touch of the hem of the Savior's robe—but still Jesus is his only hope and his sole trust. To Him he looks for pardon and salvation. He dares to believe that Christ can save even him. Then has life come into the soul when trust in Jesus springs up in the heart!

Remember, dear Friends, that as the Holy Spirit gives quickening at the first, so He must revive and strengthen it. Whenever you become dull and faint, cry for the Holy Spirit. Whenever you cannot feel in devotion as you wish to feel and are unable to rise to any heights of communion with God, plead my text in faith and beg the Lord to do as He has said, namely, "I will put My Spirit within you." Go to God with this Covenant clause, even if you have to confess, "Lord, I am like a log. I am a helpless lump of

weakness. Unless You come and quicken me I cannot live to You." Plead importunately the promise, "I will put My Spirit within you." All the life of the flesh will gender corruption. All the energy that comes of mere excitement will die down into the black ashes of disappointment. Only the Holy Spirit is the life of the regenerated heart! Have you the Spirit? And if you have Him within you, have you only a small measure of His life, and do you wish for more? Then go where you went at first! There is only one river of the Water of Life—draw from its floods. You will be lively enough, bright enough, strong enough and happy enough when the Holy Spirit is mighty within your soul!

When the Holy Spirit enters, after quickening he gives *enlightening*. *We* cannot make men see the Truth of God—they are blind—but when the Lord puts His Spirit within them, their eyes are opened. At first they may see rather hazily, but still they see. As the light increases and the eye is strengthened, they see more and more clearly. What a mercy it is to see Christ, to look unto Him and so to be lightened! By the Spirit, souls see things in their reality—they see the actual truth of them and perceive that they are facts. The Spirit of God illuminates every Believer so that he sees still more marvelous things out of God's Law—but this never happens unless the Spirit opens his eyes. The Apostle speaks of being brought "out of darkness into His marvelous light" and it is a marvelous light, indeed, to come to the blind and dead! Marvelous because it reveals the Truth of God with clearness. It reveals marvelous things in a marvelous way! If hills and mountains, if rocks and stones were suddenly to be full of eyes, it would be a strange thing in the earth, but not more marvelous than for you and for me by the illumination of the Holy Spirit to see *spiritual* things!

When you cannot make people see the Truth of God, do not grow angry with them, but cry, "Lord, put Your Spirit within *them*!" When you get into a puzzle over the Word of the Lord, do not give up in despair, but believingly cry, "Lord, put Your Spirit within me!" Here lies the only true light of the soul. Depend upon it, all that you see by any light except the Spirit of God, you do not see *spiritually*. If you only see intellectually, or rationally, you do not see to salvation. Unless intellect and reason have received the heavenly Light of God, you may see, and yet not see—even as Israel of old. Indeed, your boasted clear sight may aggravate your ruin, like that of the Pharisees, of whom our Lord said, "But now you say, 'We see,' therefore your sin remains." O Lord, grant us the Spirit within, for our soul's illumination!

The Spirit also works *conviction*. Conviction is more forcible than illumination. It is the setting of a Truth before the eye of the soul, so as to make it powerful upon the conscience. I speak to many here who know what conviction means. Still, I will explain it from my own experience. I knew what sin meant by my reading, but yet I never knew sin in its heinousness and horror till I found myself bitten by it as by a fiery serpent, and felt its poison boiling in my veins! When the Holy Spirit made sin to appear sin, then was I overwhelmed with the sight and I would gladly

have fled from myself to escape the intolerable vision. A naked sin stripped of all excuse and set in the light of the Truth of God is a worse sight than to see the devil himself! When I saw sin as an offense against a just and holy God, committed by such a proud and yet insignificant creature as myself, then was I alarmed.

Sirs, did you ever see and feel yourselves to be sinners? "Oh, yes," you say, "we are sinners." O Sirs, do you mean it? Do you know what it means? Many of you are no more sinners in your own estimation than you are Hottentots. The beggar who exhibits a sham sore knows not disease—if he did, he would have enough of it without pretences. To kneel down and say, "Lord, have mercy upon us miserable sinners," and then to get up and feel yourself a very decent sort of person, worthy of commendation, is to mock Almighty God! It is by no means a common thing to get hold of a real sinner, one who is truly so in his own esteem. But it is as pleasant as it is rare, for you can bring to the real sinner the real Savior, and Jesus will welcome him! I do not wonder that Hart said—

"A sinner is a saved thing,
The Holy Spirit has made him so."

The point of contact between a sinner and Christ is sin. The Lord Jesus gave Himself for our *sins*. He never gave Himself for our righteousnesses. He comes to heal the sick and the point He looks to is our sickness. When a physician is called in, he has no patience with things apart from his calling. "Tut, tut!" he cries, "I do not care about your furniture, nor the number of your cows, nor what income tax you pay, nor what politics you admire! I have come to see a sick man about his disease and if you will not let me deal with it I will be gone."

When a sinner's corruptions are loathsome to himself. When his guilt is foul in his own nostrils. When he fears the death that will come of it, *then* it is that he is really convicted by the Holy Spirit—and no one ever knows sin as his own personal ruin till the Holy Spirit shows it to him! Conviction as to the Lord Jesus comes in the same way. We do not know Christ as our Savior till the Holy Spirit is put within us. Our Lord says—"He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you." And you never see the things of the Lord Jesus till the Holy Spirit shows them to you. To know Jesus Christ as your Savior, as one who died *for you* in particular, is a knowledge which only the Holy Spirit imparts! To apprehend present salvation as your own, personally, comes by your being convinced of it by the Spirit. Oh, to be convinced of righteousness and convinced of acceptance in the Beloved! This conviction comes only of Him that has called you, even of Him of whom the Lord says, "I will put My Spirit within you."

Furthermore, the Holy Spirit comes into us for *purification*. "I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments, and do them." When the Spirit comes, He infuses a new life, and that new life is a fountain of *holiness*! The new nature cannot sin because it is born of God and, "it is a living and incorruptible seed." This life produces good fruit and only good fruit. The Holy Spirit is the life of holiness. At the same time, the coming of the Holy Spirit into

the soul gives a mortal stab to the power of sin. The old man is not absolutely dead, but it is crucified with Christ. It is under sentence and before the eyes of the Law it is dead, but as a man nailed to a cross may linger long, yet he cannot live, so the power of evil dies hard, but die it must! Sin is an executed criminal—those nails which fasten it to the Cross will hold it fast till no breath remains in it. God the Holy Spirit gives the power of sin its death wound.

The old nature struggles in its dying agonies, but it is doomed and die it must. But you will never overcome sin by your own power, nor by any energy short of that of the Holy Spirit. Resolves may bind it, as Samson was bound with cords, but sin will snap the cords asunder. The Holy Spirit lays the axe at the root of sin and fall it must. The Holy Spirit within a man is "the Spirit of Judgment, the Spirit of Burning." Do you know Him in that character? As the Spirit of Judgment, the Holy Spirit pronounces sentence on sin and it goes out with the brand of Cain upon it. He does more—He delivers sin over to burning. He executes the death penalty on that which He has judged. How many of our sins have we had to burn alive! And it has cost us no small pain to do it. Sin must be got out of us by fire, if no gentler means will serve—and the Spirit of God is a consuming fire. Truly, "our God is a consuming fire." They paraphrase it, "God out of Christ is a consuming fire," but that is *not* Scripture—it is, "*our* God," our Covenant God, who is a consuming fire to refine us from sin! Has not the Lord said, "I will purely purge away all your dross, and take away all your tin"? This is what the Spirit does and it is, by no means, easy work for the flesh, which would spare many a flattering sin if it could.

The Holy Spirit bedews the soul with purity till He saturates it. Oh, to have a heart saturated with holy influences till it shall be as Gideon's fleece, which held so much dew that Gideon could wring out a bowl full from it! Oh, that our whole nature were filled with the Spirit of God—that we were sanctified wholly, body, soul, and spirit! Sanctification is the result of the Holy Spirit being put within us.

Next, the Holy Spirit acts in the heart as the Spirit of *preservation*. Where He dwells, men do not go back to perdition. He works in them a watchfulness against temptation day by day. He works in them to wrestle against sin. Rather than sin, a Believer would die 10,000 deaths. He works union to Christ in Believers, which is the source and guarantee of acceptable fruitfulness. He creates in the saints those holy things which glorify God, and bless the sons of men. All true fruit is the fruit of the Spirit. Every true prayer must be "praying in the Holy Spirit." He helps our infirmities in prayer. Even the hearing of the Word of the Lord is of the Spirit, for John says, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and heard behind me a great voice." Everything that comes of the man, or is kept alive in the man, is first infused and then sustained and perfected of the Spirit. "It is the spirit that quickens; the flesh profits nothing." We never go an inch towards Heaven in any other power than that of the Holy Spirit. We

do not even stand fast and remain steadfast except as we are upheld by the Holy Spirit.

The vineyard which the Lord has planted, He also preserves, as it is written, "I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." Did I hear that young man say, "I should like to become a Christian, but I fear I should not hold out"? How am I to be preserved? A very proper inquiry for, "He that endures to the end, the same shall be saved." Temporary Christians are not Christians! Only the Believer who continues to believe will enter Heaven. How, then, can we hold on in such a world as this? Here is the answer. "I will put My Spirit within you." When a city has been captured in war, those who formerly possessed it seek to win it back again, but the king who captured it sends a garrison to live within the walls. And he says to the captain, "Take care of this city that I have conquered and let not the enemy take it again." So the Holy Spirit is the garrison of God within our redeemed humanity and *He* will keep us to the end. "May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." For preservation, then, we look to the Holy Spirit.

Lest I weary you, I will be very brief upon the next point. The Holy Spirit within us is for *guidance*. The Holy Spirit is given to lead us into all the Truth of God. Truth is like a vast grotto and the Holy Spirit brings torches and shows us all the splendor of the ceiling. And since the passages seem intricate, He knows the way, and He leads us into the deep things of God. He opens up to us one Truth after another by His light and by His guidance, and thus we are "taught of the Lord." He is also our practical Guide to Heaven, helping and directing us on the upward journey. I wish Christian people oftener inquired of the Holy Spirit as to guidance in their daily life. Know you not that the Spirit of God dwells in you? You need not always be running to this friend and to that to get direction—wait upon the Lord in silence—sit still in quiet before the oracle of God. Use the judgment God has given you, but when that suffices not, resort to Him whom Mr. Bunyan calls, "the Lord High Secretary," who lives within, who is infinitely wise, and who can guide you by making you to "hear a voice behind you saying, This is the way, walk you in it." The Holy Spirit will guide you in life. He will guide you in death and He will guide you to Glory. He will guard you from modern error and from ancient error, too. He will guide you in a way that you know not—and through the darkness He will lead you in a way you have not seen—these things will He do for you and not forsake you.

Oh, this precious text! I seem to have before me a great cabinet full of rich and rare jewels. May God the Holy Spirit, Himself, come and hand these out to you and may you be adorned with them all the days of your life!

Last of all, "I will put My Spirit within you," that is, by way of *consolation*, for His choice name is, "The Comforter." Our God would not have His children unhappy and, therefore, He Himself, in the third Person of the blessed Trinity, has undertaken the office of Comforter. Why does your

face wear such mournful colors? God can comfort you! You that are under the burden of sin, it is true no man can help you into peace, but the Holy Spirit can! O God, to every seeker here who has failed to find rest, grant Your Holy Spirit! Put Your Spirit within him and he will rest in Jesus! And you dear people of God who are worried, remember that worry and the Holy Spirit are very contradictory one to another! "I will put My Spirit within you" means that you shall become gentle, peaceful, resigned and acquiescent in the Divine will. Then you will have faith in God that all is well!

That text with which I began my prayer this morning was brought home to my heart this week. Our dearly beloved friend, Adolph Saphir, passed away last Saturday and his wife died three or four days before him. When my dear Brother, Dr. Sinclair Patteson, went to see him, the beloved Saphir said to him, "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." Nobody would have quoted that passage but Saphir, the Bible student, the lover of the Word, the lover of the God of Israel. "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." His dear wife is gone and he, himself is ill, but, "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." This is a deep well of overflowing comfort, if you understand it well. God's Providence is light as well as His promise—and the Holy Spirit makes us know this. God's Word and will and way are all light to His people and in Him is no darkness at all for them. God Himself is purely and only light.

What if there is darkness in me? There is no darkness in Him and His Spirit causes me to fly to Him! What if there is darkness in my family? There is no darkness in my Covenant God and His Spirit makes me rest in Him! What if there is darkness in my body by reason of my failing strength? There is no failing in Him and there is no darkness in Him—His Spirit assures me of this! David says—"God my exceeding joy"—and such He is to us. "Yes, my own God is He!" Can you say, "My God, my God"? Do you need anything more? Can you conceive of anything beyond your God? Omnipotent to work all forever! Infinite to give! Faithful to remember! He is all that is good! Light only—"in Him is no darkness at all." I have all light, yes, all things, when I have my God! The Holy Spirit makes us apprehend this when He is put within us. Holy Comforter, abide with us, for then we enjoy the Light of Heaven! Then are we always peaceful and even joyful, for we walk in the unclouded Light of God. In Him our happiness sometimes rises into great waves of delight, as if it leaped up to Glory. The Lord make this text your own—"I will put My Spirit within you." Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Ezekiel 36:16-38.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—916, 489, 468.

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THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT
NO. 2201

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 19, 1891,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."
Ephesians 6:17.

To be a Christian is to be a warrior. The good soldier of Jesus Christ must not expect to find ease in this world—it is a battlefield! Neither must he reckon upon the friendship of the world, for that would be enmity against God. His occupation is war. As he puts on, piece by piece, the panoply provided for him, he may wisely say to himself, "This warns me of danger; this prepares me for warfare; this prophesies opposition."

Difficulties meet us even in standing our ground, for the Apostle, two or three times, bids us—"Stand." In the rush of the fight, men are apt to be carried off their legs. If they can keep their footing, they will be victorious, but if they are borne down by the rush of their adversaries, everything is lost. You are to put on the heavenly armor in order that you may stand. And you will need it to maintain the position in which your Captain has placed you. If even to stand requires all this care, judge you what the warfare must be! The Apostle also speaks of *withstanding* as well as standing. We are not merely to defend, but also to attack. It is not enough that you are not conquered, you have to conquer and, therefore, we find that we are to take, not only a helmet to protect the head, but also a sword with which to annoy the foe. Ours, therefore, is a stern conflict, standing and withstanding—and we shall need all the armor from the Divine magazine, all the strength from the mighty God of Jacob!

It is clear from our text that our defense and our conquest must be obtained by sheer fighting. Many try compromise, but if you are a true Christian, you can never do this business well. The language of deceit fits not a holy tongue. The adversary is the father of lies and those that are with him understand the art of equivocation, but saints abhor it. If we discuss terms of peace and attempt to gain something by policy, we have entered upon a course from which we shall return in disgrace. We have no order from our Captain to patch up a truce and get as good terms as we can. We are not sent out to offer concessions! It is said that if we yield a little, perhaps the world will yield a little, also, and good may come of it. If we are not too strict and narrow, perhaps sin will kindly consent to be more decent. Our association with it will prevent its being so barefaced and atrocious. If we are not narrow-minded, our broad doctrine will go down with the world and those on the other side will not be so greedy of

error as they now are. No such thing! Assuredly this is not the order which our Captain has issued. When peace is to be made, He will make it, Himself, or He will tell us how to behave to that end. But at present our orders are very different.

Neither may we hope to gain by being neutral, or granting an occasional truce. We are not to cease from conflict and try to be as agreeable as we can with our Lord's foes, frequenting their assemblies and tasting their dainties. No such orders are written here. You are to grasp your weapon and go forth to fight.

Neither may you so much as dream of winning the battle by accident. No man was ever holy by a happy chance. Infinite damage may be done by carelessness, but no man ever won life's battle by it. To let things go on as they please is to let them bear us down to Hell. We have no orders to be quiet and take matters easily. No, we are to always pray and constantly watch. The one note that rings out from the text is this—TAKE THE SWORD! TAKE THE SWORD! No longer is it talk and debate! No longer is it parley and compromise! The word of thunder is—*Take the sword*. The Captain's voice is clear as a trumpet—*Take the sword*! No Christian here will have been obedient to our text unless with clear, sharp and decisive firmness, courage and resolve, he takes the sword! We must go to Heaven with sword in hand, all the way. "TAKE THE SWORD." On this command I would enlarge. May the Holy Spirit help me!

It is noteworthy that there is only one weapon of offense provided, although there are several pieces of armor. The Roman soldier usually carried a spear as well as a sword. We have seen frequent representations of the legionary standing guard as sentry and he almost always stands with a spear in his right hand, while his sword hangs at his side. But Paul, for excellent reasons, concentrates our offensive weapon in one, because it answers for all. We are to use *the sword* and that only. Therefore, if you are going to this fight, see well to your only weapon. If you are to have no other, take care that you have this always in your hand. Let the Captain's voice ring in your ear, "*Take the sword*! *Take the sword*!" and so go forth to the field.

Notice, first, *the sword you are to take is the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God*. That is our first head and the second is equally upon the surface of the text—*This sword is to be ours*. We are ordered to take the sword of the Spirit and so make it our own sword.

I. First, the Word of God which is to be our one weapon is of noble origin, for IT IS "THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT." It has the properties of a sword, and those were given it by the Spirit of God.

Here we note that *the Holy Spirit has a sword*. He is quiet as the dew, tender as the anointing oil, soft as the zephyr of eventide and peaceful as a dove. And yet, under another aspect, He wields a deadly weapon. He is the Spirit of judgment and the Spirit of burning and He bears not the sword in vain. Of Him it may be said, "The Lord is a man of war: Jehovah is His name."

The Word of God in the hand of the Spirit wounds very terribly and makes the heart of man to bleed. Do you not remember, some of you, when you used to be gashed with this sword Sunday after Sunday? Were you not cut to the heart by it, so as to be angry with it? You almost made up your mind to turn away from hearing the Gospel again. That sword pursued you and pierced you in the secrets of your soul—and made you bleed in a thousand places. At last you were "pricked in the heart," which is a far better thing than being, "cut to the heart"—and then execution was done, indeed! That wound was deadly and none but He that killed could make you alive! Do you remember how, after this, your sins were slain, one after the other? Their necks were laid on the block and the Spirit acted as an executioner with His sword. After that, blessed be God, your fears, doubts, despair and unbelief were also hacked to pieces by this same sword. The Word gave you life! But it was, at the first, a great killer. Your soul was like a battlefield after a great fight, under the first operations of the Divine Spirit, whose sword returns not empty from the conflict.

Beloved, the Spirit of God has war with the Amalek of evil and error from generation to generation. He will spare none of the evils which now pollute the nations. His sword will never be quiet till all these Canaanites are destroyed. The Holy Spirit glorifies Christ not only by what He reveals, but also by what He overturns. The strife may be weary, but it will be carried on from age to age, till the Lord Jesus shall appear, for the Spirit of God shall always espouse the cause of love against hate, of the Truth of God against error, of holiness against sin, of Christ against Satan! He will win the day and those who are with Him shall, in His might, be more than conquerors. The Holy Spirit has proclaimed war and wields a two-edged sword.

The Holy Spirit wields no sword but the Word of God. This wonderful Book, which contains the utterances of God's mouth, is the one weapon which the Holy Spirit elects to use for His war-like purposes. It is a *spiritual* weapon and so is suitable to the Holy Spirit. The weapons of His warfare are not carnal—He never uses either persecution or patronage, force or bribery, glitter of grandeur, or terror of power. He works upon men by the Word, which is suitable to His own spiritual Nature and to the spiritual work which is to be accomplished. While it is spiritual, this weapon is "mighty through God." A cut from the Word of God will cleave a man's spirit from head to foot, so sharp is this sword! Though by long practice in sin a man may have coated himself as with impenetrable mail, yet the Word of the Lord will divide the northern iron and the steel. The Holy Spirit can make a man feel the Divine power of the sacred Word in the very center of his being!

For battling with the spirits of man, or with spirits of an infernal kind, there is no weapon so keen, so piercing, so able to divide between the joints and marrow, so penetrating as to the thoughts and intents of the heart. The Word, in the Spirit's hand, gives no superficial wound, but cuts into the man's heart, and so wounds him that there is no healing save by

supernatural power! The wounded conscience will bleed; its pains will be upon it day and night; and though it seeks out a thousand medicines, no salve but *one* can cure a gash which this terrible sword has made. This weapon is two-edged—indeed, it is *all* edge—and whichever way it strikes, it wounds and kills. There is no such a thing as the flat of the sword of the Spirit—it has a razor edge every way. Beware how you handle it, you critics! It may wound even you. It will cut you to your destruction, one of these days, unless you are converted. He that uses the Word in the Lord's battles may use it upon carnal hopes and then strike back upon unbelieving fears. He may smite with one edge, the love of sin, and then with the other, the pride of self-righteousness. It is a conquering weapon in all ways, this wondrous sword of the Spirit of God!

The Word, we say, is the only sword which the Spirit uses. I know the Holy Spirit uses gracious sermons, but it is only in proportion as they have the Word of God in them. I know the Holy Spirit uses religious books, but only so far as they are the Word of God told out in other languages. Conviction, conversion and consolation are still worked, but only by the Word of God. Learn, then, the wisdom of using the Word of God for holy purposes. The Spirit has abundant ability to speak of His own self, apart from the written Word. The Holy Spirit is God and, therefore, He is the greatest spirit in the universe. All wisdom dwells in Him. He thought out the laws which govern Nature and direct Providence. The Holy Spirit is the great Teacher of human spirits—He taught Bezaleel and the artificers in the wilderness how to make the fine linen and the gold and carved work for the Tabernacle. All arts and sciences are perfectly known to Him and infinitely more than men can ever discover. Yet He will not use these things in this holy controversy. In the quarrel of His Covenant, He uses neither philosophy, nor science, nor rhetoric. In contending against the powers of darkness, "The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God." "It is written" is His masterstroke! Words which God has spoken by holy men of old and has caused to be recorded on the sacred page—these are the battle-axe and weapons of war of His Spirit! This Book contains the Word of God and *is* the Word of God—and this it is which the Holy Spirit judges to be so effectual a weapon against evil that He uses this, and *only* this, as His sword in the great conflict with the powers of darkness.

The Word is the sword of the Spirit because it is of His own making. He will not use a weapon of human workmanship, lest the sword boast itself against the hand that wields it. The Holy Spirit revealed the mind of God to the minds of holy men. He spoke the Word into their hearts and thus He made them think as He would have them think and to write what He willed them to write—so that what they spoke and wrote was spoken and written as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. Blessed be the Holy Spirit for deigning to use so many writers and yet, Himself, to remain the veritable Author of this collection of holy Books! We are grateful for Moses, for David, for Isaiah, for Paul, for Peter, for John, but most of all for that superintending Editor, that innermost Author of the whole sacred Volume—even the Holy Spirit!

A warrior may well be careful as to the make of His sword. If a man had made his own sword, had tempered the metal, had, himself, passed the blade through many fires, and worked it to perfection—then, if he were a skillful workman, he would feel confidence in his sword. When work is done, nowadays, it is, as a rule, badly done. Work done by contract is usually done poorly in some part or another. But when a man does a work for himself, he is likely to do it thoroughly, and produce an article which he can depend upon. The Holy Spirit has made this Book, Himself—every portion of it bears His initial and impress—and thus He has a sword worthy of His own hands, a true Jerusalem blade of heavenly fabric. He delights to use a weapon so Divinely made and He does use it right gloriously!

The Word of God is also the sword of the Spirit because He puts the edge upon it. It is because He is in it that it is so keen and cutting. I believe in the Inspiration of Holy Scripture, not only in the day when it was written, but onward, and even to this day. It is still Inspired. The Holy Spirit still breathes through the chosen Words. I told you the sword was all edge, but I would add that the Holy Spirit makes it so. It would have no edge at all if it were not for His Presence within it and His perpetual working by it. How many people read their Bibles and yet derive no more benefit from it than if they had read an old almanac! In fact, they would more easily keep awake over an ancient Bradshaw than over a chapter of Scripture. The ministers of the Gospel may preach God's Word in all sincerity and purity and yet, if the Spirit of God is not present, we might as well have preached mere moral essays, for no good can come of our testimony. The Holy Spirit rides in the chariot of Scripture and not in the wagon of modern thought. Scripture is that Ark of the Covenant which contains the golden pot of manna and also bears above it the Divine Light of God's shining. The Spirit of God works in, by, through and with the Word—and if we keep to that Word, we may rest assured that the Holy Spirit will stay with us and make our testimony to be a thing of power. Let us pray the blessed Spirit to put an edge on our preaching, lest we say much and accomplish little! Hear us in this thing, O blessed One!

It is "the sword of the Spirit" because *He alone can instruct us in the use of it.* You think, young man, that you can pick up your Bible and go and preach from it at once, properly and successfully? You have made a presumptuous mistake! A sword is a weapon which may do hurt to the man who flourishes with it in mere wanton pride. No one can handle the sword of the Spirit aright save the chosen man whom God has ordained from before the foundation of the world and trained in feats of arms. By this, the elect of God are known—that they love the Word of God and they have a reverence for it—and discern between it and the words of man. Notice the lambs in the field, just now, and there may be a thousand ewes and lambs, but every lamb can find its own mother. So does a true-born child of God know where to go for the milk which is to nourish his soul. The sheep of Christ know the Shepherd's voice in the Word and they will not follow a stranger, for they know not the voice of strangers. God's own peo-

ple have discernment to discover and relish God's own Word. They will not be misled by the cunning craftiness of human devices! Saints know the Scriptures by inward instinct. The holy life, which God has infused into Believers by His Spirit, loves the Scriptures, and learns how to use them for holy purposes.

Young soldier, you must go to the training ground of the Holy Spirit to be made a proficient swordsman. You will go in vain to the metaphysician or to the logician, for neither of these know how to handle a spiritual weapon. In other arts they may be masters, but in the sacred use of Divine theology, they are mere fools! In the things of the Word we are dunces till we enter the school of the Holy Spirit. He must take of the things of Christ and show them to us. He must teach us how to grip this sword by faith and how to hold it by watchfulness, so as to parry the adversary's thrust and carry the war into the foeman's territory. He is well taught, who can swing this great two-handed sword to and fro and mow a lane through the midst of his opponents, and come out a conqueror at the end. It may take a long time to learn this art, but we have a right skillful Teacher. Those of us who have been in this warfare 30 or 40 years, feel that we have not yet reached the full use of this sword! No, I, for one, know that I need to be taught daily how to use this mysterious weapon which is capable of so much more than I have yet supposed. It is the sword of the Spirit, adapted for the use of an Almighty arm and, therefore, equal to the doing of far more than *we* think. Holy Spirit, teach us now feats of arms by this, Your sword!

But, chiefly, it is the sword of the Spirit, because *He is the great Master in the use of it.* Oh, that He would come and show us, this morning, how He can thrust and cleave with it! In this house of prayer we have often seen Him at His work. Here the slain of the Lord have been many. We have seen this sword take off the head of many a Goliath doubt and slay a horde of cares and unbeliefs! We have seen the Spirit pile up heaps on heaps of the slain when the Word of conviction has gone forth—and men have seen sin to be sin—and fallen down as dead before the Lord and His Law. We also know what the use of the sword by the Spirit of God means, for within our own being He has left marks of His prowess. He has killed our doubts and fears and left no more mistrusts to worry us.

There was a man of God who was frequently subject to doubts, even doubts upon the fundamentals of religion. He hated this state of mind, but still, he could not get rid of the habit of evil questioning. In answer to prayer, the Spirit came and convinced him of the pride of his intellect and of the wickedness of setting up his judgment against the Word of the Lord—and from that day forward he was never the subject of another fit of unbelief! He saw things clearly in the Light of the Holy Spirit and that is to see them, indeed! The great giant of doubt is sorely wounded by the sword of the Spirit—yes, he is slain outright—for the Spirit works in the Believer such a conviction of the Truth of God that assurance banishes suspicion! When the Holy Spirit deals with the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes and the pride of life, these also lie at His feet, trophies to the power of His

mighty weapon, even the Word of God! The Holy Spirit is glorious in the use of this sword. He finds that this weapon suits His hand and He seeks no other! Let us use it, also, and be glad to do so. Though it is the sword of the Spirit, yet our feeble hand may grasp it. Yes, and find in the grasping, that somewhat of the Divine power comes unto our arm!

Dear Brothers and Sisters, is it not a very high honor put upon you, as soldiers of the Cross, that you should be allowed, no, *commanded* to take the sword of the Spirit? The raw recruit is not trusted with the general's sword, but here you are, armed with the weapon of God, the Holy Spirit, and called upon to bear that sacred sword which is so gloriously wielded by the Lord God, Himself! This we are to bear, and no other. Does the timid heart enquire, "How, my Master, shall I meet my adversaries"? "Here," says the Holy Spirit, "take this! This is My own sword. I have done great marvels with it. Take it and nothing shall stand against you." When you remember the potency of this sword. When the Spirit tests it upon yourself, you may take it with confidence, and use it in your holy war with full assurance. That Word of God which could convert *you*, can convert anybody! If it could kill *your* despair, it can remove another man's despondency. If it has conquered your pride and self-will, it can subdue the same in your children and your neighbors. Having done what it has certainly done for *you*, you may have a full persuasion that, before its power, no case is hopeless. Therefore, see to it that you use, from this day forth, no other weapon than the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

II. This fairly lands me in the second portion of my discourse. The Word of God is the sword of the Spirit, but IT IS ALSO TO BE OUR SWORD.

Here I must begin again and go over much of the same ground. *We shall need a sword*. Our warfare is not child's play—we mean business. We have to deal with fierce foes who are only to be met with keen weapons. Buffets will not suffice in this contest—we must come to sword-cuts. You may be of a very quiet spirit, but your adversaries are not! If you attempt to play at Christian warfare, *they* will not. To meet the powers of darkness is no sham battle. They mean mischief. Nothing but your eternal damnation will satisfy the fiendish hearts of Satan and his crew. You must take not so much a flag to unfurl, or a drum to beat, as a sword to use and an especially sharp sword, too. In this combat you will have to use a sword such as even evil spirits can feel, capable of dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow. If you are to live through this fight and come off victorious, no form of conflict will suffice less sharp and cutting than sword-work.

Depend upon it that in this struggle you will be forced to come to close quarters. The foe aims at your heart and pushes home. A spear will not do, nor bow and arrow—the enemy is too near for anything but hand-to-hand fighting. Brothers and Sisters, our foes are not only of our house, but of our heart! I find an enemy within which is always near and I cannot get away from him. I find that my antagonist will get his hand on my throat if he can. If our foes were far away and we could reach them with artillery which would kill at six or seven miles' distance, we might lead a

pretty easy life. But no, they are *here*! At our doors! Yes, *within* us—nearer than hands and feet. Now for the short sword! The claymore of Holy Scripture, to stab and cut, near and now. No sling and stone will avail us here, but we must take the sword. You have to slay your foe, or your foe will slay you! It is with us Christians as it was with the Highlanders in battle, when their leader called out to them, "Lads, there they are! If you dinna kill them they will kill you." There is no room for peace—it is war to the knife, not only now, but to life's end!

The use of the sword is necessary for attack. I have reminded you several times already that it will not suffice for the Christian to guard against sin and ward off temptation from himself—he has to attack the powers of evil. In our case, the best method of defense is an attack. I have heard of one who would bring an action in law to gain his ends, for he thought this better than being the defendant. That may be matter of question, but in war it is often safer to attack than defend. Carry the warfare into the enemy's territory. Be trying to win from the adversary and he will not win so much from you. Do not merely be sober, yourselves, but attack drunkenness. Do not be content with being free from superstition, yourself, but expose it wherever it appears! Do not merely be devout when you feel obliged to be so, but pray for the growth of the kingdom—pray always! Do not merely say, "I will keep Satan out of my family by bringing up my children aright," but go to the Sunday school and teach other children, and so carry the war over the border! God forbid that we should ever go to war as a nation! But if we were at war with some nation on the Continent, I would certainly say, "Let the Continentals have the battles on their own ground—we do not want a campaign over here." It is wise to keep the war in the enemy's own regions. If we had fought the devil more in the world, he might never have been able to invade the Church so terribly as he has done. Attack with the sword, for it is your calling, and thus will you best defend yourself.

We need the sword for real fighting. Do you think that you can dream yourselves into Heaven? Or ride there in the chariot of ease? Or fly on the wings of brass music? You make a great mistake if you so imagine. A real war is raging! Your opponents are in deadly earnest and you must take your sword!

And, further, *we need this sword, this sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God*. We say with David, "There is none like that; give it to me." It has worked such wonders that we prefer it to all others. No other will match the enemy's weapon. If we fight the devil with human reason, the first time our wooden sword comes in contact with a Satanic temptation it will be cut in pieces! If you do not wield a true Jerusalem blade, you are in grave peril—your weapon will break off at the hilt—and where will you be? Standing defenseless, with nothing but the handle of a broken sword in your hand, you will be the object of your adversary's ridicule! You must have this sword, for no other will penetrate the foe, and no other will last out the battle. After 20 years, what has become of the pious resolutions of your youth? What is the staying power of your consecration made in the

hour of enthusiasm? Alas, how little trust can be placed in it! What would become of us after 30 years of fighting if we had not the Word of God to rely upon? The Word of the Lord endures forever, but nothing else does. We may do well in early days, but we shall fail in old age if we have not eternal Truths of God to fall back upon.

I can commend this sword to you all, my Brothers and Sisters, although you are so varied in character. This sword suits every hand. Youth or age may, alike, use this weapon. These dear girls from the Orphanage and yonder lads from the Bible class, may fight the battle of their youth with the Word of God, for Holy Scripture may impress and guide our freshest life. You that have grown gray. You that have passed 70 or 80, you will value the Bible more than ever and you will find that this sword is the best for veteran warriors. Young men and young women, here is a sword suited for all of you, and well does it become the hand of the feeblest and the gentlest! The Holy Spirit has, in the sacred Word, prepared an implement of warfare suited for great minds and small, for the cultured and the uneducated. A wonderful sword this is, which, in the hands of faith, reveals an adaptation marvelous to the last degree!

Whatever others may say, it is sufficient for us that this is the regulation sword. A soldier is not left to choose his own equipment. He must carry such arms as his sovereign appoints. This is the regulation sword in Christ's army. The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, is what you are bid to take and, if you, in willfulness, resolve to exchange it for another, you commit an act of rebellion and you make the change at your own risk and peril! Come, then, let us each take the Word of God and carry it nearer our hearts than ever, for such is the Word of *command*, "Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."

Now, see what we are told to do. We need a sword. We need *this* sword. *We are to take this sword*. Note that we are not told that we may lay it down—the demand to take the sword is continuous and there is no hint of its being suspended. There is a time, of course, when the soldier of Her Majesty may remove his sword from his side and take off his regimentals, but there is never such a time with a Christian! One might have thought, from what we have seen of late, that orders had come from headquarters that the soldiers were to lay down the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, and take to lighter weapons. Entertainments, amusements, farces, and sing-songs are now used to do what the Gospel has failed to achieve! Is it not sadly so? Well, if any will try these silly toys, I can only say that they have no command from their Lord to warrant them in their proceedings. Take all these things and see what they will do, but you make the trial at your own risk, and on your own heads the result of failure will fall.

The standing orders are to take the sword of the Spirit and no new regulation has ever been issued by the great Captain of salvation. From the days of Paul till now, the Word stands, "Take the sword of the Spirit." All other things will surely fail and, therefore, the one sole abiding command is, "Take the sword of the Spirit." We are not told to hang up this sword for exhibition. Certain people have a handsomely-bound Bible to lie

upon the table of the best room—and a fine ornament it is! A Family Bible is a treasure! But I pray you, do not let your love of the Bible end there. With a soldier in war, a sword is not meant to be hung up in the tent, nor even to be flourished in the air, but it is issued to be *used*. Nor are we to push this sword into a sheath, as many do who take the Bible and add so much of criticism, or of their own opinion to it, that its edge is not felt! Many men use their low opinion of Inspiration as a scabbard into which they push the Bible down. Their vast knowledge makes a beautiful scabbard and they push down the sword, saying, "Keep still, there! O sword of the Lord, rest and be quiet!" After we have preached our heart out, and men have felt the power of it, they make a desperate effort to imprison the Word in their unbelieving theory, or in their worldliness. They hold down the Word all the week with a firm hand, for fear its edge or point should wound them. It is the scabbard of culture, or philosophy, or of progress—and in this they shut up the living Word of God as in a coffin!

We are not to bury the Word under other matters, but we are to take it as a sword, which means, as I understand it, first, *believe it*. Believe every portion of it. Believe it with a true and real faith, not with a mere creedal faith which says, "This is the orthodox thing." Believe it as a matter of fact for every day, affecting your life. Believe it! And when you have believed it, then *study it*. Oh, for a closer study of the Word of God! Are there not some of you who have never even heard or read all that the Lord has said? Are there not passages of the Bible which have never been read by you? It is a melancholy fact that there would be even a *line* of the sacred Scriptures which has never once come under your eyes. Read the Bible right through, from beginning to end.

Begin tomorrow—no, begin today—and go steadily through the whole of the sacred Book, with prayer and meditation. Never let it be suspected by you that God has recorded Truths in His Word which you have never even once read. Study the Word and work out its meaning. Go deep into the spirit of Inspiration. He gets most gold who digs the deepest in this mine. They used to say of certain mines in Cornwall that the deeper you went the richer was the ore. Assuredly is it so with the mines of Inspired Scripture. The deeper you go under the Spirit's guidance, the larger is the reward for your toil. Take the sword with the grip of sincere faith. Hold it fast by a fuller knowledge. And then exercise yourself daily in its use. The sword is to be taken for earnest fight. You will not be long before occasion arises in such a world as this. You will have to parry with it, to pierce with it, to cut with it and to kill with it. "Where shall I begin?" says one. Begin at home and, for many a day, you will have your hands full! When you have slain all the rebels at home and long before that, you may take a turn at those around you in the world, and in the *professing church*.

Inside your own heart you will find a band of bandits which should be exterminated. There will always be need to keep the sword going within your own territory. End this civil war before you go into foreign parts. When the war within the city of Mansoul has been victoriously carried through, besiege the heart of your friend, your child, your neighbor. Be-

hold, the world lies in the Wicked One! Errors abound and colossal systems of falsehood still stand aloft. Men are still dragged down by the arch-deceiver. Surely, we feel our swords flying out of their sheaths when we think of the millions who are being ruined by sin and error! Oh, for a mighty onslaught upon the powers of darkness!

Once more, *we are to take this sword with a purpose*. We are to use it that we may be able to stand and to withstand. If you want to stand, draw the sword and smite your doubts. How fiercely unbelief assails! Here comes a doubt as to your election. Pierce it through with the Word. Soon comes a doubt as to the precious blood. Cleave it from head to foot with the assurance of the Word that the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin! Here comes another doubt and yet another. As quick as arm can move, drive texts of Scripture through every new fallacy, every new denial of the Truth of God and spit the whole of them upon the rapier of the Word! It will be for your good to kill these doubts outright. Do not play with them, but fight them in real earnest! You will find, also, that temptations will come in hordes. Meet them with the precepts of sacred Writ and slay even the desire of evil by the Spirit's application of the Holy Word! The washing of water by the Word is a glorious cleanser. Discouragements will arise like mists of the morning. Oh, that God's Word may shine them away with the beams of the promises! Your afflictions multiply and you will never be able to overcome impatience and distrust except by the Infallible Word of God. You can bear trial and bear it patiently, if you use this weapon to kill anxiety. You will "stand fast in the evil day" and, having done all, you will still stand, if this sword is in your hand.

You have not only to stand fast, yourselves, but you have to win souls for Christ! Do not try to conquer sin in others, or capture a heart for Jesus except with the sword of the Spirit. How the devil laughs when we try to make converts apart from Holy Scripture and the Holy Spirit! He laughs, I say, for he derides our folly. What can you do, you children, playing with your little wooden swords—what can you do against men covered from head to foot with the steel mail of the habit of sin? Sunday school teachers, teach your children more and more the pure Word of God! And preachers, do not try to be original, but be content to take of the things of Christ and show them to the people, for that is what the Holy Spirit, Himself does—and you will be wise to use His method and His sword. No sinner around you will be saved except by the knowledge of the great Truths contained in the Word of God. No man will ever be brought to repentance, to faith and to life in Christ, apart from the constant application of the Truth through the Spirit.

I hear great shouting, great noises everywhere, about great things that are going to be done—let us see them! The whole world is going to be embraced within the Church, so they say. I fear the world will not be much the better for inclusion in such a church! Big boasters should heed the word of the wise man, "Let not him that girds on his harness boast himself as he that takes it off." If the champion goes forth with any other sword than the Word of God, he had better not boast at all, for he will

come back with his sword broken, his shield cast away, and himself grimy with dishonor. Defeat awaits that man who forsakes the Word of the Lord!

I have done when I have asked you to remember that the text is in the present tense—*Take unto you the sword of the Spirit even now*. What varieties of people there are here this morning! Believers have come here in all sorts of perils. Let them each one take the sword of the Spirit and they will overcome every foe! Here, too, are seekers who wish to be Christians, but they cannot compass it. What is the matter this morning? "Oh," says one, "I have been in the habit of sinning, and the habit is very strong upon me." Fight with sinful habits with the Word of God, as the sword of the Spirit—so only will you conquer your evil self. Find a text of Scripture that will cleave your sin down to the backbone, or stab it to the heart. "Alas, Satan tempts me horribly," cries one, "I have been lately assailed in many ways." Have you? You are not the first. Our Divine Lord in the wilderness was tempted of the devil. He might have fought Satan with a thousand weapons, but He chose to defeat him with only *one*. He said, "It is written. It is written. It is written." He pricked the foeman so sorely with this sharp point that the arch-adversary thought to try the same sword—and *he* also began to say, "It is written." But he cut himself with this sword, for he did not quote the passages correctly, nor give the whole of them—and the Master soon found the way to knock aside his sword and wound him still more.

Follow your Lord's example. "Oh, but," says one," I am so low in spirits." Very well. Fight lowness of spirits with the Word of God. "The doctor recommended me," says one, "to take a little spirits to raise my spirits." Those doctors are always having this sin laid to their charge. I am not so sure that they are not often maligned. You *like* the dose and *that* is why you take it! Try the Word of God for lowness of spirits and you will have found a sure remedy. I find, if I can lay a promise under my tongue, like a sweet lozenge, and keep it in my mouth or mind all the day long, I am happy enough. If I cannot find a Scripture to comfort me, then my inward troubles are multiplied. Fight despondency and despair with the sword of the Spirit. I cannot tell what your particular difficulty may be at this moment, but I give you this direction for all holy warfare—"Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."

You must overcome every enemy, but this weapon is all you need! If you, my Hearer, would overcome sin and conquer unbelief, take such a word as this, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." And as you look you shall be saved—and doubt shall die—and sin be slain! God grant you His Spirit's aid, for Christ's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Ephesians 6.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—917, 673, 672.

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"LO, I COME"—EXPOSITION
NO. 2202

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING. APRIL 26, 1891,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, My ears have You opened: burnt offering and sin offering have You not required. Then said I, Lo, I have come—in the volume of the Book it is written of Me—I delight to do Your will, O My God: yes, Your Law is within My heart." Psalm 40:6-8.

Explained to us by the Apostle Paul in Hebrews 10:5-7—

"Therefore when He came into the world, He said, Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. Then I said, Lo, I come—in the volume of the Book it is written of Me—To do your will, O God."

WE have, in the use made of the passage by the inspired Apostle, sufficient authority for applying the quotation from the 40th Psalm to our Divine Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. With such a commentary, we are sure of our way and our whereabouts. We might have been perplexed as to its meaning had it not have been for this, although I think, even without the guidance of the New Testament passage, those who are familiar with Holy Writ would have felt that the words could not be fulfilled in David, but must belong to a greater than he, even to the Divine Messiah, who, in the fullness of time, would come into the world. We rejoice that the Lord Jesus, Himself, here speaks of Himself. Who but He can declare His own generation? Here He is both the subject of the Words and the Speaker. The Word is from Himself and of Himself and so we have double reason for devout attention. He tells us what He said long ago. He declares, "Then I said, Lo, I come." Because He has come to us, we gladly come to Him, and now we reverently wait upon Him to hear what our Lord shall speak, for, doubtless, He will speak peace to us, and will cause us to learn, through His Spirit, the meaning of His Words. O Savior, say to each of our hearts, "Lo, I come"!

I. Without further preface, I call upon you to notice, first, THE SWEEPING AWAY OF THE SHADOW. "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire. . .burnt offering and sin offering have You not required."

When the Son of God is born into the world, there is an end of all types by which He was formerly prefigured. The symbols end when the Truth, itself, is made fully manifest. The sacrifices of the Law had their times and place, their teaching and their influence. Blessed were those in Israel

whose spiritual minds saw beneath the outward sign and discerned the inward Truth of God! To them the sacrifices of the holy place were a standing means of fellowship with God. Day after day they saw the Great Propitiation as they beheld the morning and the evening lamb—so often as they looked upon a sacrifice, they beheld the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world! In the Paschal supper they were instructed, by the slaying of the unblemished victim, the roasting with fire, the sprinkling of the blood upon the door outside and the feasting upon the sacrifice within.

Spiritual men could have found in the rites and ceremonies of the old Law a very library of Gospel literature! But, alas, the people were carnal, sensual and unbelieving and, therefore, they often forgot, even, to celebrate the appointed sacrifices. The Passover, itself, ceased for long periods and when the festivals were maintained, there was no life or reality in them. After they had been chastened for their neglect and made to wander in exile because of the wandering of their hearts after their idols, they were restored from captivity and were led to keep the Ceremonial Law, but they did it as a heartless, meaningless formality—and thus missed all *spiritual* benefit—with the unlighted candle in their hand they blindly groped in the dark. They slew the sacrifices and presented their peace offerings, but the soul had gone out of the service and, at last, their God grew weary of their formal worship and said, "Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto Me."

We read, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? says the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When you come to appear before Me, who has required this at your hand, to tread my courts?" When once the life is gone out of the best symbolism, the Lord abhors the carcass and even a Divinely-ordained ritual becomes a species of idolatry! When the heart is gone out of the externals of worship, they are as shells without the kernel. Habitations without living tenants soon become desolations—and so do forms and ceremonies without their spiritual meaning. Toward the time of our Lord's coming, the outward worship of Judaism became more and more dead—it was time that it was buried. It had decayed and waxed old and was ready to vanish away—and vanish away it did—for our Lord set aside the first, or old, that He might establish the second, or new. The stars were no longer seen with their twinkling, for the sun had risen!

The removal of these things was wholesale. We have four sorts of sacrifice mentioned here, but I need not go into details. Sacrifices in which blood was shed were abolished when the Son of God offered Himself without spot unto God. Bloodless offerings, such as fine flour, wine, oil, sweet cane bought with money and precious incense—which were tokens of gratitude and consecration—these, also, were no longer laid upon the altar. Both sacrifice and offering were not desired. And burnt offerings, which signified the delight of God in the great Sacrifice, were ended by the Lord's actual acceptance of that Sacrifice, itself! Even the sin offering, which was burned outside the camp as a thing accursed, ceased altogether. It

represented sin laid upon the victim and the victim's being made a curse on that account. It might have seemed always useful as a reminder, for they were always sinning and always needing a sin offering, but even this was not required.

Nothing of the old Ceremonial Law was spared. Now we have no Ark of the Covenant, with its Shekinah light between the wings of the cherubim. Now we have no bronze laver, no table of showbread, no bronze altar and no sacred veil—the Holy of Holies, itself, is gone! Tabernacle and Temple are both removed. "Neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, shall men worship the Father." But the time is come when "they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." A clean sweep has been made of all the ancient rites, from circumcision up to the garment with its fringe of blue. These were for the childhood of the Church, the pictures of her first schoolbooks! But we are no longer minors and we have Divine Grace given us to read with opened eyes that everlasting classic of "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Now has the brightness of the former dispensation been quite eclipsed by the Glory which excels.

As these outward things vanish, they go away with God's mark of non-esteem upon them—*they are such things as He did not desire*. "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire." The Lord God had no desire for matters so trivial and unsatisfactory. They were good for the people, to instruct them—if they had been willing to learn—but they fulfilled no desire of the heart of God. He says, "Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?" By the Prophet Micah, He asks, "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil." These furnish no delight for the Great Spirit and give no pleasure to the thrice holy Jehovah! The formal worshipper supposed that his offerings were, in and of themselves, pleasing to God and, therefore, brought his "burnt offerings, with calves of a year old." So far as they believingly understood the meaning of a sacrifice and presented it in faith, their offerings were acceptable, but in themselves considered, these were far from being what the Lord desired.

He that fills Heaven and earth says, "I will not reprove you for your sacrifices or your burnt offerings, to have been continually before Me. I will take no bullock out of your house, nor he-goats out of your folds. For every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are Mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you: for the world is Mine, and the fullness thereof." The spiritual, the infinite, the almighty Jehovah could not desire merely outward ritual, however it might appear glorious to men! The sweetest music is not for His ears, nor the most splendid roses of priests for His eyes. He desired something infinitely more precious than these—and He puts them away with this note of dissatisfaction.

And more, these sacrifices passed away with the mark upon them that *they were not what God required*. "Burnt offering and sin offering have You not required." What did God require of man? Obedience. He said by Samuel, "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams." He says in another place, "He has showed you, O man, what is

good; and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?" The requirement of the Law was love to God and love to men. This has always been God's great requirement. He seeks spiritual worship, obedient thought, holy living, grateful praise, devout prayer—these are the requirements of the Creator and Benefactor of men. Ritualistic matters were so far required as they might minister to the good of the people and, while they stood, they could not neglect them without loss. But they were not the grand requirement of a just and holy God and, therefore, men might fulfill these without stint or omission, and yet God would not have of them what He required. "Yes," He asks, "who has required this at your hand, to tread My courts?" To see His Law magnified, His justice vindicated, His sovereignty acknowledged and His holiness imitated, is more to His mind! Absolute conformity to the standard of moral and spiritual rectitude which He has set up is His demand—and He can be content with nothing less. These things are not found in sacrifice and offering, neither do they always go therewith and, therefore, the outward sacrifice was not what God required.

They were so to be put away as never to be followed by the same kind of things. Shadows are not replaced by other shadows! The ceremonials of Aaron are not to be followed by another set of carnal ordinances! There are some who seem to think that they are to be so. Instead of Aaron, whom God ordained, we have a so-called priesthood among us at this day, claiming an Apostolic succession, which is impossible if they are priests, since no Apostle was a priest! Instead of rites which God has ordained, we have rites of man's invention! The blessed ordinances of our Lord Jesus Christ, such as Baptism and the Lord's Supper, have been prostituted from their instructive and memorial intent into a kind of witchcraft, so that by what is called, "baptism," children are said to be born again and made members of Christ and children of God! While in the second, or what they call, "Holy Communion," the sacrifice of Christ is profanely said to be repeated or continued, even in the unbloody sacrifice of the "mass."

Ah, Friends! Our Lord did not put away that grand, magnificent system of Mosaic rites to introduce the masquerade in which Rome delights, which certain Anglicans would set up among us! No, no! We have done with the symbolic system and have now but the two outward ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, which are meant only for Believers who know what it is to be buried with Christ and to feed on Him. You have no right to bring in your own forms and ceremonies and place them in the Church of Christ. Beyond what God has ordained, we may not dare to go—and even in those things we may not rest as though there were anything in them of their own operation apart from their sacred teaching! These are instructive to you if you have a mind to be instructed—and if you know the Truths of God which they set forth. But do not imagine that men have come under another kind of ceremonialism, another system of ritual and rubric, for it is not so. The rites appropriate to priests are abolished with the Aaronic priesthood and can never be restored—"He takes away the first, that He may establish the second." When He comes into the world, these carnal ordinances must go out of the world! Sacrifice and

offering, burnt offering and sin offering and all other patterns of heavenly things are swept away when the heavenly things, themselves, appear!

II. Thus much upon the shadows being swept away. And now, secondly, let us view THE REVELATION OF THE SUBSTANCE. We find the Son of God, Himself, appearing. We read here and we hear Him say—"My ears have you opened." The Lord Himself comes, even He who is all that these things foreshadowed!

When He comes, He has a prepared ear. The margin has it, "My ears have you digged." Our ears often need digging, for they are blocked up by sin. The passage to the heart seems to be sealed in the case of fallen man. But when the Savior came, His ears were not as ours, but were attentive to the Divine voice. He says, "He wakens My ears to hear as they that are taught. The Lord God has opened My ears, and I was not rebellious." Our Lord was quick of understanding in the fear of the Lord. He knew what the will of the Lord was and He could say, "I do always the thing that pleases Him." As Man, He had a Divine instinct of holiness which made Him to know and love the Father's will—and caused Him always to translate that will into His own life.

You see He came with opened ears and some think that we have here an allusion to the boring of the ear in the case of the servant who had a right to liberty, but refused to quit his servitude because he loved his master and wished to remain with him forever. It is not certain that there is any such reference, but it is certain that our Lord was bound forever to the service which He had undertaken for His Father—and that He would not go back from it. He pledged Himself to redeem us and He set His face like a flint to do it. He loved His Father and He loved His chosen so much that He vowed to execute the Father's work, even to what I might call, "the bitter end," if I did not know that it was a sweet and blessed end to Him. His ears were prepared for His service!

But *our Lord came also with a prepared body.* Therefore the Apostle Paul, when He quoted this passage, probably taking the words from the Septuagint translation, writes, "A body have You prepared Me." You will wonder how, in one passage, it should speak of the ears and the next should speak of the body, and yet there is small difference in the sense. We do not think of an ear without a body—that would be a sorry business. The reading in the Hebrews is involved in the text as it stands in the Psalm. If the ear is there, a body is there—you cannot even dream of an ear hearing if separate from the rest of the body! The Apostle gives us the sense of the text rather than the words and, at the same time, dealing as He was with Jews by whom the Septuagint was prized, He quoted from the version which they would be sure to acknowledge—and very properly and wisely so—because that version was perfectly accurate as to the meaning of the Hebrew. Regardless, he was inspired to read it—"A body have You prepared Me." There was fashioned by the Holy Spirit, in the womb of the blessed Virgin, a body fit to embody the Son of God. Worked mysteriously, by means into which we must not inquire—for what God has veiled must remain covered—that body was suited to set forth the great mystery, "God manifest in the flesh."

The whole body of Christ was prepared for Him and for His great work. To begin with, it was a sinless body, without taint of original sin, otherwise God could not have dwelt in it. It was a body made highly vital and sensitive, probably far beyond what ours are, for sin has a blunting and hardening effect even upon flesh, and His flesh, though it was in the "likeness of sinful flesh," was not sinful flesh, but flesh which yielded prompt obedience to His spirit, even as His whole human Nature was obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. His body was capable of great endurance, so as to know the griefs and agonies and unspeakable sorrows of a delicate, holy and tender kind which it was necessary for Him to bear. "A body have You prepared Me." In the fullness of time He came into that body, which was admirably adapted to enshrine the Godhead. Wondrous mystery, that the Infant of Bethlehem should be linked with the Infinite! And that the weary Man by the shores of Galilee should be very God of very God, revealed in a body prepared for Him! "A body have You prepared Me"—He had prepared ears and a prepared body.

He who assumed that body was existent before that body was prepared. He says, "A body have You prepared Me. Lo, I come." He from old eternity dwelt with God—the Word was in the beginning with God—and the Word was God. We could not, any one of us, have said that a body was prepared for us and, therefore, we would come *to* it, for we had had no existence before our bodies were fashioned! From everlasting to everlasting our Lord is God and He comes out of eternity into time—the Father bringing Him into the world. He was before all worlds and was before He came into the world to dwell in His prepared body!

Beloved, *the human Nature of Christ was taken on Him in order that He might be able to do for us that which God desired and required.* God desired to see an obedient man, a man who would keep His Law to the fullest—and He sees Him in Christ. God desired to see One who would vindicate the eternal justice and show that sin is no trifle. And, behold, our Lord, the eternal Son of God, entering into that prepared body, was ready to do all this mighty work by rendering to the Law a full recompense for our dishonor of it! An absolutely perfect righteousness He renders unto God—as the second Adam, He presents it for all whom He represents. He bows His head, a victim beneath Jehovah's sword, that the Truth, justice and honor of God might suffer no detriment. His body was prepared to this end. Incarnation is a means to Atonement. Only a man could vindicate the Law and, therefore, the Son of God became a Man. This is a wonderful Being, this God in our nature. "Emmanuel" is a glorious word! Surely, for the Incarnation and the Atonement, the world was made from the first!

Was this the reason why the morning stars sang together when they saw the cornerstone of the world, because they had an inkling that here, God would be manifest as nowhere else, and the Creator would be wedded to the creature? That God might be manifested in the Christ, it may even be that sin was permitted. Assuredly, there could have been no Sacrifice on Calvary if there had not, first of all, been sin in Eden. The whole scheme—the whole of God's decrees and acts—worked up to an atoning

Savior! Of the pyramid of creation and of Providence, Christ is the apex—He is the flower of all that God has made! His Divine Nature in strange union with humanity constitutes a peerless Person, such as never was before, and can never be again! God in our nature, one Being, and yet wearing two Natures, is altogether unique. He says, "A body have You prepared Me. Lo, I come." Think of this—it is a Truth of God more fit for meditation than for sermonizing. The Lord give us to know it well by faith!

III. But now, thirdly, I call your attention to THE DECLARATION OF THE CHRIST made in the text—"Sacrifice and offering You did not desire. Then said I, Lo, I come." Observe *when* He says this. *It is in the time of failure*. All the sacrifices had failed. The candle flickered and was dying out. And then the great Light of God arose, even the Eternal Light and, like a trumpet, the words rung out, "Lo, I come." All this has been of no avail; now I come. It is in the time of failure that Christ always appears. The last of man is the first of God and when we have come to the end of all our power and hope, then the Eternal Power and Godhead appears with its, "Lo, I come."

When our Lord comes, *it is with the view of filling up the vacuum* which had now been sorrowfully seen. God does not desire these things. God does not require these things, but He does desire and He does require something better, and lo, the Christ has come to bring that something! That awful gap which was seen in human hope when Moses had passed away and the Aaronic priesthood and all the ordinances of it were gone, Christ was born to fill! It looked as if the light of ages had been quenched, and God's glorious revelation had been forever withdrawn. And then, in the dark hour, Jesus cries, "Lo, I come!" He fills the blank abyss! He gives to man in reality what he had lost in the shadow!

When He appears, it is as the personal Lord. Lay the stress upon the pronoun, "Lo, *I* come." The infinite *Ego* appears. "Lo, I come." No mere man could talk thus, and be sane! No servant or Prophet of God would ever say, "Lo, I come." Saintly men talk not so. God's Prophets and Apostles have a modest sense of their true position—they never magnify themselves, though they magnify their office. It is for God to say, "Lo, I come." He who says it takes the body prepared for Him and comes in His own proper personality as the I AM. "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." He comes forth from the ivory palaces to inhabit the tents of manhood! He takes upon Himself the body prepared for Him of the Lord God and He stands forth in His matchless personality ready to do the will of God! "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell." Everything is stored up in His blessed Person and we are complete in Him.

Observe the joyful avowal that He makes—"Lo, I come." This is no dirge—I think I hear a silver trumpet ring out—"Lo, I come." Here is a joyful alacrity and intense eagerness! The coming of the Savior was to Him a thing of exceeding willingness. "For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the Cross, despising the shame."

He comes with a word calling attention to it, for He is not ashamed to be made partaker of our flesh. "Lo," He says, "I come. Behold, behold, I come." This is no clandestine union. He bids Heaven behold Him come in-

to our Nature! Earth is bid to gaze upon it. O you sinners, listen to this inviting, "Lo!" Others have cried to you, "Lo, here!" And, "Lo, there." But Jesus looks on you and cries, "Lo, I come." Look here—turn all your thoughts this way and behold your God in your Nature ready to save you! Verily, the Incarnate God is a subject meet for the loftiest thoughts of sages and for the lowliest thoughts of children. Blessed are the children of Grace who can sit at the feet of the Incarnate God and look up, forgetting all the wisdom of the Greeks and all the sign-seeking of the Jews in the satisfaction which they find in Jesus!

I think, too, *I hear in this declaration of the coming One, a note of finality*. He takes away the sacrifice from Aaron's altar, but He says, "Lo, I come." There is the end of it. "Lo, I come." Is there anything after this? Can anything supersede this—"Lo, I come"? "Lo, I come" has been the perpetual music of the ages! Read it, "Lo, I am come"—for it is in the present tense and how sweet the sound! Christ is come and joy with Him! Read it, as well, in the future, if you will, "Lo, I come," for He comes "the second time without sin unto salvation"—here is our chief hope! "Lo, I come." He, Himself, is the last Word of God. "In the beginning was the Word" and so He was God's first Word. But He is the end as well as the beginning—God's last Word to man—Christ is God's ultimatum! Look for no new Revelation—"Lo, I am come," shines on forever. Do not ask, "Are You He that should come, or do we look for another?" He has come! Look for no other! Behold, He came to give what God desires, what God requires—what more would you have? Let Him be all your salvation and all your desire. Let Him be "the desire of all nations." He is the fulfillment of all the requirements of the human race as well as the full amount of what God requires.

IV. Next, I beg you to note THE REFERENCE TO PRECEDING WRITINGS. He says, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of Me." If I preached from the passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews, I might fairly declare that in *the whole volume of Holy Scripture* much is written of our Lord and prescribed for Him as Messiah. The pages of Inspiration are fragrant with the name of Jesus. He is the top line of the entire volume and in the Greek Word I see a half allusion to this. He is the headline of contents to every chapter of Scripture. He is, of all Scripture, the Sum. "In the beginning was the Word." Everything speaks of Him. The Pentateuch and the books of the Prophets, the Psalms, and the Gospels and the Epistles all speak of Him. "In the volume of the Book it is written of Me."

Preaching as I am from the Psalms, I cannot take so long a range. I must look back and find what was written in David's day and *certainly within the Pentateuch.* And where do I find it written concerning His coming? The Pentateuch drips with prophecies of Christ as a honeycomb overflowing with its honey. Chiefly is He to be found in the head and front of the book—as early as the opening chapters of the Book of Genesis, when Adam and Eve had sinned and we were lost—behold, He is spoken of in the volume of the Book in these terms. "The Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." So, early was it written that the Redeemer would be born in our nature to vanquish our foe.

But I confess I do not feel shut out from another interpretation. I conceive that our Lord, here, refers to another Book, *the Book of the Divine purpose*s, the volume of the Eternal Covenant. There was a time before all time, when there was no day but the Ancient of Days—when all that existed was the Lord, who is All in All—then the sacred Three entered into Covenant, in mutual agreement, for a sublime end. Man sinning, the Son of God shall be the Surety. Christ shall bear the result of man's offense. He shall vindicate the Law of God and make Jehovah's name more glorious than ever it has been! The Second Person of the Divine Unity was pledged to come and take up the nature of men, and so become the First-Born among many Brothers and Sisters to lift up a fallen race, and to save a number that no man can number, elect of God the Father, and given to the Son to be His heritage, His portion, His bride.

Then did the Well-Beloved strike hands with the Eternal God and enter into Covenant engagements on our behalf— "In the volume of the Book it is written." That sealed Book, upon whose secrets no angel's eyes have looked, a Book written by the finger of God long before He wrote the Book of the Law upon tables of stone! That Book of God may be spoken of in the Psalm, "And in Your Book all My members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them." Our Lord came to carry out all His suretyship engagements—His work is the exact fulfillment of His engagements recorded in the Everlasting Covenant, "ordered in all things and sure." He acts out every mysterious line and syllable, even to the fullest. Then He said, "A body have You prepared Me. Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of Me." It is always a pleasing study to see our Lord, both in the written Word, and in the Everlasting Covenant of Grace.

V. I must close with the fifth point, THE DELIGHT OF HIM THAT COMES. He said, "Lo, I come." As I have already told you, there is wonderful delight in that exclamation—"Lo, I come." But lest we should mistake our Lord, He adds, "I delight to do Your will, O My God: yes, Your Law is within My heart." There can be no denial of His joy in His service!

Note well that *He came in compete subservience to His Father, God*. "I delight to do"—what? "Your will." His own will was absorbed in the Divine will! His pleasure it was to say, "Not as I will, but as You will." It was His meat and His drink to do the will of Him that sent Him and to finish His work. Though He was Lord and God, He became a lowly servant for our sakes! Though high as the highest, He stooped low as the lowest! The King of Kings was the Servant of Servants, that He might save His people! He took upon Him the form of a Servant, girded Himself and stood obediently at His Father's call.

He had a prospective delight as to His work. Before He came, He delighted in the thought of His Incarnation. The Supreme Wisdom says, "My delights were with the sons of men." Happy in His Father's courts, He yet looked forward to an access of happiness in becoming Man. "Can that be?" asks one. Could the Son of God be happier than He was? As God, He was infinitely blessed, but He knew nothing by experience of the life of man—and into that sphere He desired to enter. To the Godhead there can

be no enlargement, for it is infinite, but still, there can be an addition—our Lord was to add the nature of man to that of God! He would live as Man, suffer as Man, and triumph as Man—and yet remain God! And to this He looked forward with a strange delight, inexplicable except upon the knowledge of the great love He bore to us. He had given His heart so entirely to His dear bride, whom He saw in the glass of predestination, that for her He would endure all things—

"Yes, says the Lord, for her I'll go
Through all the depths of care and woe,
And on the Cross will even dare
The bitter pangs of death to bear."

It was wondrous love! Our Lord's love surpasses all language and even thought. I am talking prodigies and miracles at every word I utter. It was delightful to our Lord to come here!

"What did He delight in?" asks one. Evidently He delighted in God's *Law*. "Your Law is within My heart." He resolved that the beauties of the Law of the Lord should be displayed by being embodied in His own life and that its claims should be vindicated by His own death. To achieve this, He delighted to come and keep it and honor it by an obedience both active and passive. He also delighted in God's will and that is somewhat more, for law is the expression of will and this may be altered. But the will of the great King never changes. Our Lord delighted to carry out all the purposes and desires of the Most High God. He so delighted in the will of God that He came to do it and to bear it, "by which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

He delighted also in *God*. He took an intense delight in glorifying the Father. He came to reveal the Father and make Him to be beloved of men. He did all things to please God. Moreover, He took a delight in *us* and here, though the object of His love is less, the love, itself, is heightened by the conspicuous condescension. The Lord Jesus took a deep delight in His people, whose names were written on His heart and engraved on the palms of His hands. His heart was fixed on their redemption and, therefore, He would present Himself as a Sacrifice on their behalf. The people whom the Father gave Him from before the foundation of the world lay on His very soul—for them He had a baptism to be baptized with, and He was straitened till it was accomplished. He gave Himself no rest till He had left both joy and rest to ransom His own.

May I go a step further and say that *He had an actual delight in His coming among men*? "I delight to do Your will, O My God"—not merely to *think* of doing it. When our Lord was here, He was the most blessed of men! Are you amazed? Do you remind me that He was "a Man of Sorrows"? I grant you that none was more afflicted, but I still stand to it, that within Him dwelt a joy of the highest order. To Him it was joy to be in sorrow—and honor to be put to shame. Do you think that lightens our estimate of His self-denial and disinterestedness? No, it adds weight to it! Some people fancy that there is no credit in doing a thing unless you are miserable in doing it. No, Brothers and Sisters, that is the very reverse! Obedience which is unwillingly offered and causes no joy in the soul is not acceptable. We must serve God with our *heart*, or we do not serve Him.

Obedience rendered without delight in rendering it is only half obedience! You shall say what you will about the greatness of my Lord's agonies. You shall never go too far in your estimate of His unfathomable grief, but going with you to the fullest in it all, I shall still take liberty to say that He had within Himself a fountain of joy which enabled Him to endure the Cross and even to despise the shame! Blessed among men was He, even when He was made a curse for us! With delight He gave Himself for us and made a cheerful surrender of Himself, that He might be the Ransom for many. The text is express upon that fact.

And all this because *our Lord came with such intense heartiness*. He says, "Yes, Your Law is within My heart." Our Lord is most thorough in all that He does. His work is never slovenly, nor in a half-hearted way. He does not even sit on the well and talk to a poor woman, but what His heart is there. He does not go into a fisherman's hut, but what His heart is there and He heals the sick one. He does not sit down to supper with His followers, but what His heart is there and He reveals His love. I wish we were always at home when the Lord calls for us! Sometimes we are all abroad and our heart is away from the service of our Father—but He loved the Lord with all His heart, mind and strength. For us He gave His whole being, rejoicing to redeem us! He was always intense. Whether He preached or practiced, Jesus was all there and always there. Hence His delight, for what a man does with his heart he delights to do. These two sentences are melodious of joy to my ears! "I delight to do Your will, O My God: yes, Your Law is within My heart."

Hear this one other word. It is all done *now*. Jesus has fulfilled the Father's will in the salvation in the midst of His ransomed ones. And shall I tell you, *need* I tell you, what must be the delight, *the heavenly Joy of our Lord, now that the work is finished*? He is now the focus, the center, the source of bliss! What must be His own delight? We often say of the angels that they rejoice over one sinner that repents. I doubt not that they do, but the Bible does not say so. The Bible says, "There is joy in the *presence* of the angels of God over one sinner that repents." What does it mean, "the presence of the angels"? Why, that the angels *see the joy of Christ* when sinners repent! Hear them say to one another, "Behold the Father's face! How He rejoices! Gaze on the Countenance of the Son! What a Heaven of delight shines in those eyes of His! Jesus wept for these sinners, but now He rejoices over them! How resplendent are the nail-prints today, for the redeemed of the Lord's death are believing and repenting! That blessed Countenance which is always as a sun, shines in the fullness of its strength now that He sees of the travail of His soul." He who suffered feels a joy unsearchable—

"The first-born sons of light
Desire in vain its depths to see:
They cannot read the mystery—
The length, the breadth, the height."

Oh, the joy of triumphant love! The joy of the Crucified, whose prepared body is the body of His Glory as once it was the body of His humiliation! In that Manhood He still rejoices and delights to do the will of the Father.

My time has fled and yet I am expected to say something about missions. What shall I say? My Brothers, Sisters—all of you—do you know anything about the Truths of God I have spoken? Then go and tell the heathen that the Lord is come! Here is a message worth the telling! Mary Magdalene and the other Marys hasten to tell the disciples that the Lord had risen—will you not go and tell them that He has come down to save? "Lo, I come," He says. Will you not take up His Words and go to the people who have never heard of Him and say, "Lo, He has come"? Tell the Ethiopians, the Chinese, the Hindus and all the islands of the sea, that God has come here to save men and has taken a prepared body, that He might give to God all He required and all that He desired, that sinful men might be accepted in the Beloved, with whom God the Father is well pleased!

Go, and take to the heathen this sacred Book. "In the volume of the Book it is written of Him." Do not begin to doubt the Book, yourself. Why should you send missionaries to teach them about a Book in which you do not, yourself, believe? Tell the nations that, "In the volume of the Book it is written of Him." Believe this Book and spread it! Help Bible Societies and all such efforts. And aid Missionary Societies which carry the Book and proclaim the Savior! The men of the Book of God are the men of God such as the world needs. Bid such men go and open the Book of God and teach the nations its blessed news!

Go, dear Friends, and assure the heathen that there is happiness in obedience to God. So the Savior found it. He delighted in God's will, even to the death! And they will also know delight, as in their measures they bow before the authority of the Word and the will of the one living and true God, the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob. Jehovah, the I AM, must be worshipped, for beside Him there is none else. Give glory unto God, whom our Lord Jesus has come to glorify. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 40.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—383, 271, 229.

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

"LO, I COME"—APPLICATION
NO. 2203

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S DAY MORNING, MAY 3, 1891, *BY C. H. SPURGEON,* AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Then said I, Lo, I come."
Psalm 40:7.

To my great sorrow, last Sunday night I was unable to preach. I had prepared a sermon upon this text with much hope of its usefulness, for I intended it to be a supplement to the morning sermon [Sermon #2202, *"Lo, I Come"—Exposition"*] which was a doctrinal exposition. The evening sermon was intended to be practical and to commend the whole subject to the attention of enquiring sinners. I came here feeling quite fit to preach, but an overpowering nervousness oppressed me and I lost all self-control—and left the pulpit in anguish. I come here this morning with the same subject. I have been turning it over and wondering why it was so. Perhaps this sermon was not to be preached on that occasion because God would teach the preacher more of his own feebleness and cast him more fully upon the Divine Strength. That has certainly been the effect upon my own heart.

Perhaps, also, there are some here, this morning, who were not here last Lord's-Day evening, whom God intends to bless by the sermon. The people were not here, perhaps, for whom the eternal decree of God had designed the message and they may be here now. You that are new to this place should consider the strange circumstance—which never happened to me before in the 40 years of my ministry—and you may be led to enquire whether my bow was then unstrung that the arrow might find its ordained target in your heart! The two sermons will now go forth together from the press and, perhaps, going *together*, they may prove to be like two hands of love with which to embrace lost souls and draw them to the Savior, who herein says, "Lo, I come." God grant it may be so!

The times when our Lord says, "Lo, I come," have all a family likeness. There are certain crystals which assume a regular shape and, if you break them, each fragment will show the same conformation. If you were to dash them to shivers, every particle of the crystal would still be of the same form. Now, the goings forth of Christ which were of old, His coming at Calvary and that great Advent when He shall come a second time to judge the earth in righteousness—all these have a likeness, the one to the other. But there is a coming of what I may call a lesser sort, when Jesus cries, "Lo, I come," to each individual sinner and brings a revelation of pardon and salvation—and this has about it much which is similar to the great

ones. My one desire this morning is to set forth the Lord Jesus as saying to you, as once He did to me, "Lo, I come."

He still cries to the weak, destitute, forlorn, hopeless sinner, "Lo, I come." I shall talk about that coming and hope that you will experience it, now, and thus be able to follow me in what I say. I speak mainly to the unconverted, but while I do so, I shall hope to be refreshing the grateful memories of those already saved—but this will all depend upon the working of the Spirit of God. To Him, then, lift up your hearts in prayer.

I. I will commence with this observation—THE LORD CHRIST HAS TIMES OF HIS FIRST COMINGS TO MEN—"*Then* said I, Lo, I come."

What are these times? Maybe some here present have reached this season and this very day is the time of blessing when the text shall be fulfilled—"Then said I, Lo, I come." Go with me to the first record in the volume of the Book, when it was said that He should come. You will find it in the early chapters of Genesis.

Jesus said, "Lo, I come," *when man's probation was a failure*. Man in the Garden of Eden had every advantage for obedience and life. He had a perfect nature, created without bias towards evil and he was surrounded with every inducement to continue loyal to his Maker. He was placed under no burdensome law. The precept was simple and plain—"Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it: for in the day that you eat thereof, you shall surely die." Only one tree was reserved—all the rest were given up to be freely enjoyed. In a very short time—some think it was on the first day, but that we do not know—our mother Eve ate of the fruit and father Adam followed her, and thus human probation ended in total failure. They were weighed in the balances and found wanting—"Adam, being in honor, continued not." At that point we read in the volume of the Book that the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. *Then* our Redeemer said, "Lo, I come."

Listen to me, my Friend—you, also, have had your probation, as you have thought it to be. You left your father's roof with every hope. Your mother judged you to be of a most amiable character and your friends expected to see in you one whose life would honor the family. You thought so yourself. Your probation has reversed that hope—you have turned out far different then you should have and, looking back upon the whole of your life to this moment, you ought to be ashamed! It has been a terrible breaking down for you and for all who know you—and you are sitting in this place feeling, "Yes, it is so. The tests have proven me to be as a broken reed. I am under condemnation by reason of my transgressions against God." How rejoiced I am to tell you that, at such a time when you are conscious that you are a dead failure, Jesus says, "Lo, I come!" If you had *not* been a failure, you would not have needed Him and He never comes as a superfluity. But now, in your complete breakdown, you must have Him or perish—and in infinite pity he cries, "Lo, I come!" Is not this good news for you? Believe it and live!

That also was *a time when man's clever dealings with the devil had turned out a great failure*. The serpent came and said, "God knows that in

the day you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." How craftily he put it! How cunningly he insinuated that God was jealous of what man might become and was keeping him back from a nobler destiny! He even dared to say, "You shall not surely die," thus giving the Lord the lie direct! He seemed to say—"His threat is a mere bugbear, a thing to scare you from a great advance in knowledge and position! You shall not surely die." Eve, in her supposed wisdom, was not able to cope with the serpent's subtlety. "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat." The devil had played his cards so well that man was left bankrupt of virtue, bankrupt of happiness, bankrupt of hope! *Then*, in the volume of the Book, it was written, "I said, Lo, I come." Yes, in the exact hour when hellish falsehood had robbed man of everything!

No man has yet dealt with the devil without being a loser. The arch-deceiver promises very fairly, but he lies from beginning to end. I know he promised you pleasure unbounded and liberty unrestrained. Now the pleasure is burnt out and the ashes of that which once blazed and crackled are terrible to look upon! As for liberty, where is it? You have become the bond-slave of sin. You were to enjoy life and lo, you are plunged in death! It may be there are in this house persons who bear in their bodies the marks, not of the Lord Jesus, but of the devil's temptations. He has made you to sin so that your bones are filled with the sins of your youth—and you know it. He needs a long spoon who eats out of the same dish as the devil and your spoon has not been long enough! Sin has overreached and betrayed you. And you stand trembling before God as the result of having listened to the falsehoods of Hell and having rejected the commands of Heaven

Supposing such a person to be present—and I feel sure he is—I pray that he may hear my text as from the Lord Jesus, Himself. "Then said I, Lo, I come." The devil has trod you down, but Jesus comes to raise you up! Your paradise is lost, but by Him it is to be restored! Jesus has come to give repentance and remission of sins. That crafty head which deceived you—the Lord Jesus has broken—He came for this purpose. If you had not been betrayed, you would not have needed a Deliverer, but your misery has made room for His mercy. Not while Adam is perfect in Paradise is there any news of the Seed of the woman bruising the serpent's head. But after the serpent has done his deceitful work and has ruined the race, then we hear that ancient Gospel of God and see the only hope of fallen man! Here is good cheer for you who look with shame upon your foolish yielding to Satan's deceits! You are caught as silly birds in a snare! You have been as foolish as the fish of the sea which are taken in a net, but when you are captives, Christ comes to be your Liberator and God commends His love towards you in that while you are yet sinners Christ died for the ungodly!

Further than this, when we find the first promise of our Lord's coming, "in the volume of the Book," *we find that man's covering was a failure*. The

guilty pair had gathered the leaves of the fig tree and had made themselves aprons, for they knew that they were naked. This was the first fruit of that boasted Tree of Knowledge and it is the principal one to this day! Their scant coverlet contented them for a little while, but when the voice of the Lord God was heard in the Garden, they confessed that their aprons were good for nothing, for Adam acknowledged that he was afraid because he was naked and, therefore, he had hidden himself in the thick groves of the Garden. It is easy to make a covering which pleases us for a season, but self-righteousness, presumption, pretended fidelity and fancied natural excellence—all those things are like green fig leaves which shrivel up before long, lose their freshness—and are rather an exposure than a covering.

It may be that my hearer has found his imaginary virtues failing him. It was when our first parents knew that they were naked that the Savior said, "Lo, I come." My downcast Hearer, if you are no longer in your own esteem, as good as you used to be. If you can no longer hide the fact that you have broken God's Law and deserve His wrath. If you no longer believe the devil's lie that you shall suffer no penalty, but may even be the better for sin, then our Lord, the Savior, says to you, "Lo, I come." To you, O naked Sinner, shivering in your own shame, blushing scarlet with conviction—to you He comes! When you have nothing left of your own, He comes to be your robe of righteousness wherein you may stand accepted with God!

That first news of the coming Champion came at a time *when all man's pleas were failures*. Adam had thrown the blame on Eve—"The woman whom You gave to be with me, *she* gave me of the tree, and I did eat." Eve had also thrown the blame on the serpent, but the Lord God had silenced all such excuses and driven them from their refuges. He had made them feel their guilt and had pronounced upon them the inevitable sentence—and then it was that He spoke of the "Seed of the woman." Here was man's first and last—and best hope! So too, my Friend, when you dare no longer plead your innocence, nor mention extenuations and excuses, then Jesus comes in! If conscience oppresses you so sorely that you cannot escape from it. If it is so that all you can say is "Guilty! Willfully Guilty," then Jesus comes! If you neither blame your surroundings, nor your companions, nor the Providence of God, nor your physical weakness, nor anything else, but just take all the blame to yourself because you cannot help doing so—then Jesus comes in! Verily you have sinned against God, against your parents, against your fellow men, against the Light of God, against knowledge, against conscience and against the Holy Spirit! No wonder, therefore, that you stand speechless, unable to offer any plea by way of self-justification! It is in that moment of shame and confusion that the Savior says, "Lo, I come," for such as you are He is an Advocate! When a sinner cannot plead for himself, Christ pleads for him! When his excuses have come to an end, then will the Lord put away his sin through His own great Sacrifice. Is not this a precious Gospel Word?

When our Lord did actually arrive, fulfilling the text by being born of a woman, it was *when man's religion had proven a failure*. Sacrifices and of-

ferings had ceased to be of any value—God had put them away as a weariness to Him. The scribes and the Pharisees, with all their phylacteries and wide-bordered garments, were a mere sham. There seemed to be no true religion left upon the earth. Then said Christ, "Lo, I come!" There was never a darker 30 years than when Herod slew the innocents and the chief priests and scribes pursued the Son of God and, at last, nailed Him to the tree. It was *then* that Jesus came to us to redeem us by His death! Do I speak to any man here whose religion has broken down? You have observed a host of rites and ceremonies—you were christened in your infancy, you were duly confirmed, you have taken what you call, "the blessed sacrament." Or it may be you have always sat in the most plain of Meeting Houses and listened to the most orthodox of preachers—and you have been among the most religious of religious people—but now, at last, the Spirit of God has shown you that all these performances and attendances are worthless cobwebs which avail you nothing! You now see that—

"Not all the outward forms on earth,
Nor rites that God has given,
Nor will of man, nor blood, nor birth,
Can raise a soul to Heaven."

You are just now driven to despair because the palace of your imaginary excellence has vanished like the baseless fabric of a vision. If I had told you that your religiousness was of no value, you would have been very angry with me and, perhaps, you would have said, "That is a bigoted remark and you ought to be ashamed of yourself for making it!" But now the Spirit of God has told you the same and you feel its force—He is great at convincing of sin! When the Spirit of Truth comes to deal with the religiousness of the flesh, He withers it in a moment! All religion which is not spiritual is worthless. All religion which is not the supernatural product of the Holy Spirit is a fiction. One breath from the Spirit of God withers all the beauty of our pride and destroys the comeliness of our conceit and *then*, when our own religion is dashed to shivers, the Lord Jesus comes in, saying, "Lo, I come." He delights to come in His glorious Personality when the Pharisee can no longer say, "God, I thank You that I am not as other men" and when the once bold fisherman is crying, "Lord, save, or I perish." If you feel that you need something infinitely better than Churchianity, or Dissenterism, or Methodism—in fact, that you need Christ, Himself, to be formed in you—then to you, even to you, Jesus says, "Lo, I come." When man is at his worst, Christ is seen at His best. The Lord walks to us on the sea in the middle watch of the night. He draws near to those souls which draw near to death. When you part with self, you meet with Christ. When no shred of hope remains, then Jesus says, "Lo, I come."

Once more. The Lord Jesus is to come a second time and when will He come? He will come *when man's hope is a failure*. He will come when iniquity abounds and the love of many has waxed cold. He will come when dreams of a golden age shall be turned into the dread reality of abounding evil. Do not *dream* that the world will go on improving and improving—and that the improvement will naturally culminate in the millennium. No such thing! It may grow better for a while—better under certain aspects—

but, afterwards, the power of the better element will ebb out like the sea, even though each wave should look like an advance. That day shall not come except there is a falling away first. Even the *wise* virgins will sleep and the men of the world will be, as in the days of Noah, eating and drinking, marrying and being given in marriage.

And then, all of a sudden, the Lord will come as a thief in the night! The deluge of fire will find men as unprepared as did the deluge of water! He will come taking vengeance on His adversaries. When things wax worse and worse we see the tokens of His speedy coming. He will shortly appear, for the sky is darkening. When every hope will seem blotted out and nothing but grim ages of anarchy and ungodliness are to be expected, then our Deliverer will come! When the count of bricks was doubled in Egypt, Moses came. And when the world attains to its utmost unbelief and iniquity, Jesus will come. So at this moment my Hearer may be saying, "I cannot be worse than I am; if I am not actually already in Hell, yet I feel a fire within which tortures my soul! The sword of vengeance hangs over my head suspended by a single hair! I tremble to live and I fear to die. Lost! Lost! Lost! I am past hope!" This is the time for my text—"*Then* said I, Lo, I come." He who is able to save to the uttermost appears to the soul when every other hope disappears. In your deep distress, I see a token for good! You are now reduced to spiritual death and now, I trust, the Eternal Life will visit you!

Now all this I put before you in simple language, believing what I say, and trusting that if I describe your case, you will know that I mean it for you. I have heard of a preacher who was so fearful lest he should be thought personal, that he said to his congregation, "Lest any of you should think that what I have said was meant for you, I would observe that the sermon I am preaching was prepared for a congregation in Massachusetts." I can plead nothing of the sort! I refer to you, my Hearer, in the most pointed manner! I will attend to Massachusetts, if ever the Lord sends me there, but just now, *I mean YOU*. Oh, that you may have Grace to take home these thoughts to yourselves, for if you do, they will, by the Spirit's power, bring the light of hope into your souls!

II. Secondly, I would remark that CHRIST COMES TO SINNERS IN THE GLORY OF HIS PERSON—"Then said I, Lo, I come." Note that glorious, I! Have you not seen people engaged in urgent work who did not understand their business? Apprentices and other unskilled people are muddling time away. They are making bad, worse, and running great risk. Perhaps a great calamity will occur if the work is not done well and quickly. A first-rate worker is sent for. See, the man has come who *understands* the business. He cries, "Let me come! Stand out of my way! You are on the wrong tack—let me do it myself!" You have not blamed him for egotism, for the thing needed to be done and he could do it—and the others could not. Everybody recognized the master workman and gave place to him. The announcement of his coming was the end of the muddle and the signal of hope! Even so, Jesus comes to you sinners and His Presence is your salvation! He says, "Lo, I come." What does He mean?

He means, *the setting of all else on one side*. There is the priest—he has not helped you much. He may go, for Jesus says, "Lo, *I* come." There are your own efforts and doings. There are your feelings and thoughts. There are your ceremonies and austerities. There are your prayers and tears. There are your hearings and readings—all these must be laid aside as grounds of confidence—and Jesus, alone, must be your trust. He can do for you what none of these can. You are trying to work yourself up to repentance and faith, but you cannot succeed. Let Him come and He will bring every good thing with Him. It is glorious to see our Lord throwing down all our bowing walls and tottering fences and to hear Him cry, "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation." Everything else vanishes before His perfect salvation!

Before Him there is *a setting aside of self*. You have been your own confidence. What you could feel, or do, or think, or resolve, had become the ground of your confidence, but now Jesus puts self down and He is, Himself, exalted. By working yourself to death, you cannot effect our own salvation. Lo, Jesus comes to save you! You cannot weave yourself a garment. Lo, He comes to clothe you from head to foot with His own seamless robe of righteousness! He annihilates self that He may fill all things.

Here is a glorious *setting of Himself at our side and in our place*. Mr. Moody tells a story which I would gladly hope may be true, for one would like to hear something good about a Czar of Russia, and especially about our once enemy, the Emperor Nicholas. The story concerns a soldier in the barracks who was much distressed by his heavy debts. He was in despair, for he owed a great deal of money and could not tell where to get it. He took a piece of paper and made a list of his debts and underneath the list he wrote, "Who will pay these debts?" He then lay down on his bunk and fell asleep, with the paper before him. The Emperor of Russia passed by and, taking up the paper, read it, and being in a gracious mood, signed at the bottom, "Nicholas." Was not that a splendid answer to the question? When the soldier woke up and read it, he could scarcely believe his own eyes. "Who will pay these debts?" was the despairing question. "Nicholas," was the all-sufficient answer! So are we answered! Who will bear our sins? The grand reply is, "JESUS." He puts His own name to our liabilities and, in effect, that He may meet them, He says, "Lo, I come."

Your debt of sin is discharged when you believe in Christ Jesus. "Without shedding of blood is no remission," but the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanses us from all sin! You are not now to bear your own sins. Behold the Scapegoat, who carries them away into the wilderness! Yes, Jesus says, "Lo, I come!" He takes our sins upon Himself. He bears their penalty and we go free! Blessed words—"Lo, I come"—I come to take your weight of sin, your burden of punishment! I come to be made a curse for you, that you may be made the righteousness of God in Me. Sinner, stand out of the way and let Jesus appear for you and fill your place! He sets you on one side and then He sets Himself where you have been! Jesus is now the one Pillar on which to lean, the one Foundation on which to build, the one and only Rest for our weary souls!

He sets Himself where we can see Him, for He cries, "*Lo*, I come." That is to say, "See Me come." He comes openly, that we may see Him clearly. How I wish the Lord would reveal Himself at this moment to each one of those who are weary of earth, of self, of sin and, possibly, even weary of life, itself! Oh, if you could but see Jesus standing in your place, you would have faith to stand in His place and so become, "accepted in the Beloved"! O Lord, hear my prayer, and cause poor hearts to see You descending from the skies, to uplift sinners from the dark abyss! Holy Spirit, touch that young man's eyes with heavenly salve, that he may see where salvation lies. Deal with that poor woman's dim eyes, also, that she may perceive the Lord Christ and find peace in Him. Jesus cries, "Lo, I come! Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth"—

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One!
There is life at this moment for thee.
Then look, sinner—look unto Him and be saved—
Unto Him who was nailed to the tree."

Should you even lie in all the despair and desolation which I described, I would persuade you to believe in Jesus! Trust Him and you shall find Him all that you need!

Our lord sets Himself to be permanently our All in All. When He came on earth, He did not leave His work till He had finished it. Even when He rose to Glory, He continued His service for His chosen, living to intercede for them. Jesus was a Savior 1,900 years ago and He is still a Savior—and He will be a Savior until all the chosen race shall have been gathered Home. He tells us, "I said, Lo, I come," but He does not say, "I said, I will go away, and quit the work." Our Lord's ear is bored and He goes out no more from the service of salvation. It is not written of any penitent souls, "You shall seek Me, but shall not find Me." But it is written, "If you seek Him, He will be found of you." O my Hearer, you are now in the place where the Gospel is preached to you—yes, to *you*, for we are sent to preach the Gospel to every creature! And though you should be the worst, most benighted and most guilty of all the creatures out of Hell, yet you *are* a creature, and we preach Christ to you!

O poor Heart, may the Lord Jesus say to you "Lo, I come!" for He comes to stay—to stay until He has worked salvation *in* you as He has worked out salvation *for* you. He will not leave a Believer till He has presented him spotless before the Throne of God with exceeding joy. I wish I could make all this most clear and plain. You are altogether ruined by your own fault and you cannot undo the evil. You have done all you can and it has come to nothing. You are steeped in sin up to your throat—yes, the filth has gone over your head—you are as one drowned in black waters. Despairing one, cast not your eyes around to seek for a friend, for you will look in vain to men! No arm can rescue you, save one, and that is the arm of Jesus who now cries, "Lo, I come!" Set everything else on one side and trust yourself with the Savior, Christ the Lord!

III. Oh, that many may be comforted while I dwell on the third head! CHRIST IN HIS COMING IS HIS OWN INTRODUCTION. *Here our Lord is His own herald*, "Lo, I come." He does not wait for an eloquent preacher to act as master of ceremonies for Him—He introduces Himself. Therefore

even I, the simplest talker on earth, may prove quite sufficient for my Lord's purpose if He will graciously condescend to bless these plain words of mine. It is not I that say that Jesus comes, but in the text our Lord, Himself, declares, "Then said I, Lo, I come." You need not do anything to draw Christ's attention to you—it is Christ who draws your attention to Himself! Do you see this? You are the blind bat and He is all eyes towards you and bids you look on Him. I hear you cry, "Lord, remember me," and I hear Him answer, "Soul, remember Me." He bids you look on Him when you beseech Him to look on you!

He comes when quite unsought, or sought for in a wrong way. To many men and women, Christ has come though they had not even desired Him. Yes, He has come even to those who hated Him. Saul of Tarsus was on His way to worry the saints at Damascus, but Jesus said, "Lo, I come"—and when He looked out of Heaven, He turned Saul, the persecutor, into Paul, the Apostle! The promise is fulfilled, "I was found of them that sought Me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after Me." Herein is the glorious sovereignty of His love fully exercised and Grace reigning supreme. "Lo, I come," is the announcement of majestic Grace which waits not for man, neither tarries for the sons of men.

Our Lord Jesus is the way to Himself. Did you ever notice that? He Himself comes to us and so He is the way by which we meet Him. He is our rest and the way to our rest. He says, "I am the way." You want to know how to get to Christ? You have *not* to get to Christ, for He has come to you! It is well for you to come to Christ, but that is only possible because Christ has come to you! Jesus is near you—near you *no*w. Backslider, He comes to you! Wandering Soul, roving to the very brink of perdition, the good Shepherd cries, "Lo, I come." He is the way to Himself!

Remember, also, that *He is the blessing which He brings*. Jesus not only gives life and resurrection, but He says, "I am the Resurrection and the Life." Christ *is* Salvation and everything necessary to salvation is in Him. If He comes, all good comes *with* Him, or rather, *in* Him. An enquirer once said to a minister, "The next step for me is to get a deeper conviction of sin." The minister said, "No such thing, my Friend—the next step is to trust in Jesus, for He says, Come unto Me." To come to Jesus, or rather to receive Jesus who has come to us, is the one essential step into eternal salvation. Though our Lord says, "Come unto Me," He has preceded it with this other word, "Lo, I come." Poor cripple, if you cannot come to Jesus, ask Him to come to you and He will! Here you lie and you have been for years in this case—you have no man to put you into the pool and it would do you no good if he did—but Jesus can make you whole and He is here! You cannot stir hand or foot because of spiritual paralysis, but your case is not hopeless. Listen to my Lord in the text, "Then said I, Lo, I come." *He* has no paralysis! He can come, leaping over the mountains of division! I know my Lord came to me, or I should never have come to Him—why should He not come to you? I came to Him because He came to me—

"He drew me, and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice Divine."

Why should He not draw you, also? Is He not doing so? Yield to the pressure of His love!

"Then said I, Lo, I come." You see *our Lord is His own spokesman*. He says to me, "Go and tell those people about My coming"—and I gladly do so—but you will forget my words and refuse to accept the Coming One. Your consciences will be unawakened, your hearts unmoved—I fear it will be so. But if this text is fulfilled concerning our Lord this day—"Then said I, Lo, I come"—you will hear HIM! If He speaks, He is, Himself, the Almighty Word, and His voice will reach your hearts and accomplish His purpose! Dear Christian people, join with me in this prayer—Lord, speak to Your chosen ones that lie here in their death-like despair, far off from You, and say to each one of them, "Lo, I come." O downcast Soul, this is your morning—this is the set time to favor you—this day is salvation come to your house and to your heart! Make haste and come down from the tree of your frivolity or your self-righteousness! Receive the Lord Jesus, for today He must abide in your house and in your heart—the hour for the imperial "*must*" of the eternal purpose has arrived! God grant it may be so! May this be an hour of which Jesus shall declare—"Then said I, Lo, I come!"

IV. Our next point is this—CHRIST, TO CHEER US, REVEALS HIS REASONS FOR COMING. Only a few words on this. Note the rest of the verse—"Lo, I come: in the volume of the Book it is written of Me." When we were yet without strength, in due time, Christ died for the ungodly because it was the due time *according to Covenant purposes*. Christ comes to a guilty sinner just as He once came to a manger and a stable, because so it was appointed. There is nothing for Him to get, but everything for Him to *give.* He comes because so it is written in the volume of the Divine Decrees—

"Thus the eternal counsel ran—
Almighty Grace, arrest that man!"

Therefore in love the Savior appears to the sinner and, by Divine Grace, arrests him in his mad career.

It is His Father's will. Christ's coming to save a soul is with His Father's full consent and aid. The Father wills that you who believe in Him, lost though you are, should now be saved—and Jesus comes to do the will of the Father.

He comes because His heart is set on you. He loves you and so He hastens to your rescue. Your salvation is His delight. Though your soul is sunk in a sea of need and you are in despair because of that need, Jesus loves you, and comes to meet your case. The best of all is that Jesus loves you. One asked an old man of 90, "Do you love Jesus?" and the old man answered with a smile, "I do, indeed. But I can tell you something better than that." His friend asked, "Something better than loving Jesus! What is that?" The old disciple replied, "*He loves me*." O Soul, I wish you could see this fact which is, indeed, better than your love to Jesus, namely, His love to you! Because He loved His redeemed from before the foundation of the world, therefore, in due time, He says, "Lo, I come."

The fact is, *you have need and He has love—and so He come*s. There is no hope for you unless He comes and that is why He comes! If you had a

penny of *your own*, He would not give you His purse. If you had a rag of *your own*, He would not give you His robe. If you had a breath of *your own*, He would not give you His life! But now that you are naked, poor, miserable, lost and dead, Jesus reveals Himself and you read concerning Him, "Then said I, Lo, I come." He gives you His reasons—reasons not in yourself, but all in *His Grace*. There is no good in you—there is no reason in you why the Lord should save you—but because of His free, spontaneous, rich, sovereign, almighty Grace, He leaps out of Heaven, He descends to earth, He plunges into the grave to pluck His Beloved from destruction!

V. Here is my last word—CHRIST'S COMING IS THE BEST PLEA FOR OUR RECEIVING HIM—and receiving Him now! O Sirs, remember you have not to raise the question whether He will come or not. He is come! You have not to say, How can I come to Him? He comes to you! You need a Mediator between your soul and God, but you do *not* need any mediator between *yourself and Jesus*, for He says, "Lo, I come." To you in all your filthiness, in all your condemnation, in all your hopelessness, He comes! Wait not for anybody to introduce you to Him, or Him to you—He has introduced Himself and here is His card—"Then said I, Lo, I come." No pleas are needed to persuade Him to come to you, for He says, "Lo, I come." Though you cannot think of a single argument why He should appear to you in mercy, He does so! It is written, "I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not My people, You are My people; and they shall say, You are my God." O Words of wondrous Grace! Our gracious Lord does not wait for our entreaties; but of His own accord He says, "Lo, I come." Without asking you and without your asking Him, He puts in an appearance in the sovereignty of His Grace.

No search is needed to find the Lord, for He comes in manifested Grace and calls upon us to see Him. "I have long been searching for Christ" murmurs one. What? Seeking for the sun at noonday? Jesus is not lost! It is *you* that are lost and He is searching for you! He says, "Lo, I come"—it is *you* that will not come. Still one declares that he has been seeking the Lord Jesus for many a day. This is sadly strange, for Jesus is near. "Say not in your heart, Who shall ascend into Heaven? or, Who shall descend into the deep? The Word is near you, even in your mouth, and in your heart, that if you will confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved." If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you shall be saved! Searching after Christ? No, verily He says, "Lo, I come."

Moreover, no waiting is needed and no preparation is to be made by you. Why do you wait? HE does not wait, but cries, "Lo, I come!" "I will get ready for Christ," you say, but it is too late to talk so, when He cries, "Lo, I am come." Receive Him! If you are, in yourself, sadly unready, yet He, Himself, will make everything ready for Himself. Only open wide the door and let Him in. Do you say, "But I am ashamed"? Be ashamed! He bids you be ashamed and be confounded, while He declares, "I do not this for your sakes." Yet be not so ashamed as to commit another shameful deed

by shutting the door in your Redeemer's face! Shut not out your own mercy!

A pastor in Edinburgh, in going round his district, knocked at the door of a poor woman for whom he had brought some needed help, but he received no answer. When next he met her, he said to her, "I called on Tuesday at your house." She asked, "At what time?" "About eleven o'clock. I knocked, and you did not answer. I was disappointed, for I called to give you help." "Ah, Sir!" she said, "I am very sorry. I thought it was the man coming for the rent and I could not pay it and, therefore, I did not dare to go to the door." Many a troubled soul thinks that Jesus is One who comes to ask of us what we cannot give, but, indeed, He comes to *give us all things*. His errand is not to condemn, but to forgive. Miss not the charity of God through unbelief! Run to the door and say to your loving Redeemer, "Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof, but as You have come to me, I welcome You with all my heart."

No assistance is needed by Christ on your part. He does not come with half a salvation and look to you to complete it. He does not come to bring you a robe, half woven, which you are to finish. How could you finish it? Could the best saint in the world add anything to Christ's righteousness? No good man would even *dream* of adding his home-spun to that raiment which is of worked gold! What? Are *you* to make up the deficient ransom price? Is it deficient? Would you bring your clods of mud into the royal treasury and lay them down, side by side with sapphires? Would you help Christ? Go, yoke a mouse with an elephant! Go harness a fly side by side with an archangel! But dream not of yoking yourself with Christ. He says, "Lo, I come," and I trust you will reply, "My Lord, if You are come, all is come, and I am complete in You"—

"You, O Christ are all I need,
More than all in You I find."

Receive Him—receive Him at once! Dear children of God and sinners that have begun to feel after Him, say with one accord, "Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus." If He says, "Lo, I come," and the Spirit and the bride say, Come, and he that hears says, Come, and he that is thirsty comes, and whoever will is bidden to come and take the Water of Life freely—then let us join the chorus of comes, and come to Christ ourselves! "Behold, the Bridegroom comes; go you out to meet Him!" You who most of all need Him, be among the first and most glad, as you hear Him say, "Lo, I come!"

All that I have said will be good for nothing as to saving results unless the Holy Spirit shall apply it with power to your hearts. Join with me in prayer that many may see Jesus, just now, and may at once behold and accept the present salvation which is in Him.

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SIN—ITS SPRINGHEAD, STREAM AND SEA
NO. 2204

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"Our fathers understood not Your wonders in Egypt; they remembered not the multitude of Your mercies; but provoked Him at the sea, even at the Red Sea."
Psalm 106:7.

OUR fathers! From them we derive our nature. We inherit our fathers' propensities, for that which is born of the flesh is flesh. As is the nature, such is the conduct. Hence the Psalmist writes in verse 6, "We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly." If we must mention our fathers' faults, it is not to screen ourselves, for we have to confess that our life's story is no brighter than theirs. It is not because the fathers have eaten sour grapes that the children's teeth are set on edge, for we, ourselves, have greedily devoured those evil clusters—"We have sinned with our fathers." "As in water, face answers to face, so the heart of man to man." When we read of the sins of others, we ought to be humbled and warned, for, "all we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned, everyone, to his own way." We have no space wherein to set up a monument to our own glory. As we cannot boast in our pedigree, for we are the children of sinners, so we cannot exalt ourselves because of our personal excellence, for there is none that does good, no not one. We come before God and confess our iniquities as a race and as individuals. And we cry unto Him, in the words of the 47th verse, "Save us, O Lord our God."

It may help us to escape out of the meshes of our natural depravity if we look back and see the causes of our fathers' sins. To confess our personal sin will tend to keep us humble and, in view of the Lord's mercy, which has spared and pardoned us, a sense of our guilt will make us grateful. The less we think of ourselves, the more we shall think of Him whose "mercy endures forever." And if we see where our fathers' sins began and how they grew, and what they came to, we may hope that the Spirit of God will help us to turn from the beginnings of evil and forsake the fountainheads of our iniquities. This will tend to repentance and holiness. May we be so worked upon by the Spirit of God that we shall not be as our earthly fathers, but become like our heavenly Father, who says to us, "Be you followers of God, as dear children." We are not to take our fathers after the flesh for our example wherein they have gone astray, but our Father who is in Heaven we are to imitate by the power of His Grace.

Great things, whether good or evil, begin with little things. The river that rolls its mighty volume to the sea was once a tiny brook. No, it

started as a springhead, where the child stooped down to drink and, with a single drink, seemed as if he would exhaust the supply! The rivulet ripples itself into a river. Sin is a stream of this sort. It starts with a thought. It increases to a resolve, a word, an act. It gathers force and becomes habit and daring rebellion!

Follow me, therefore, first, when I notice, that *lack of understanding lies at the fountainhead of sin*—"Our fathers understood not Your wonders in Egypt." Out of this lack of understanding comes the greater offense of ungrateful forgetfulness. *Failure of memory follows upon a lack of understanding*—"They remembered not the multitude of Your mercies." This readily leads on to the sad consummation of rebellion. *Provocation follows upon forgetfulness*. Inward faults display themselves in outward offenses—"They provoked Him at the sea, even at the Red Sea."

I. Let us begin at the beginning. LACK OF UNDERSTANDING OF GOD'S WONDERS IS THE SOURCE OF SIN. The wonders that God worked in Egypt were exceedingly great and instructive. The 10 plagues were memorable masterstrokes of God's judgment upon the proud and notable displays of His favor to the oppressed. How Egypt staggered beneath the blows of Jehovah! Those tremendous judgments came one after another with righteous deliberation and yet with terrible rapidity! Pharaoh and his proud nobles were wounded and humbled—the leviathan of Egypt was broken in pieces as one that is slain. Surely they for whom all these plagues were worked ought to have considered them and ought to have spied out the plain lessons which they taught! But they failed to do so, for they were dull of understanding. Albeit, God had come out of His secret places and had made bare His arm for them, yet, "our fathers understood not Your wonders in Egypt."

We see this to be the case when we read the story, for, at first, when God began to work for them, they were *so taken up with the present* that they complained of Moses, for the cruel retort of Pharaoh! He had gone in unto the proud monarch and had urged the demand of Jehovah—and the tyrant had replied, "You hinder the people from their works; get you unto your burdens." He increased their toil by refusing to give the people straw to make bricks—and so their bondage was made bitter to the last degree—and they groaned as they saw "that they were in evil case." They are not blamed for *groaning*, but it was very blameworthy that they should say to Moses and Aaron, "The Lord look upon you and judge; because you have made our savor to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hands to slay us."

It was mean to blame their friends for the cruel fault of their enemy. How wretchedly have we also complained when God, in His gracious dealings with us, has caused us an inward grief! He began to show us our sin—a very necessary thing, but we kicked against it and said, "Is this the Grace of God? Oh, that we were rid of these convictions!" Thus the Lord took away our self-confidence, but we were full of unbelief and we thought some great evil had happened to us, whereas it was the way of God's wisdom and love to make sin as much a bondage to us as Egypt was to Israel! How else would we feel our need of redemption and be willing to

come forth free by the blood of the Lamb? If the Lord does but lay His little finger upon us, we complain! And, instead of seeing love in our affliction, we cry out as if the Lord dealt harshly with us. His mercy designs to teach us some great lesson for our eternal benefit, but we murmur and ask, "Is this the love of God to His chosen?"

Our fathers understood not His wonders in Egypt and, oftentimes, this is our case—we judge by the feelings of the present and forget the eternal future! We cannot understand our burdens and our soul-humbling. We stand bewildered and amazed. Though the point is plain enough to faith, *unbelief* does not hear the rod, nor Him that has appointed it—and we are taken up with our present smart. Our selfish desire for immediate comfort prevents our understanding the great plans of Divine Grace.

Further on we find Israel *broken down by utter hopelessness*. Moses spoke to them again, but we read, "They hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage." They had been so brutally crushed by the Egyptians that they had lost all heart. Slavery had killed all the manhood of their race—they were abject, timorous and crouching bondsmen. The last ounce that breaks the camel's back was laid on them by Pharaoh—and they could no more listen to words of hope. Moses said he had come to *deliver* them. He told them they should be brought out with a high hand and an outstretched arm. But they could not think it possible—they shook their heads and turned a deaf ear to what they regarded as vain words. Hope had fled. They understood not that God could, by any possible means, deliver them from the gigantic power which held them down.

Alas, this also has been the case with us! And perhaps *is* the case with some here at this moment. You are so sad and so depressed that you cannot believe in salvation. Your presumptuous hopes lie dead in heaps round about you and you cannot believe that you will *ever* be saved. "Oh!" you say, "there may be mercy for someone else, but there is no mercy for me! God can forgive the chief of sinners, but He will never forgive *me*." Though we tell you of Free Grace and dying love—and of pardon for sins of deepest dye, a pardon bought with Jesus' *blood*—you turn a deaf ear to us because your spirit is wounded and faint. You understand not God's wonders for and in you. You cannot think that, indeed, and of a truth, the Lord Jesus loved you and gave Himself for you. You dare not hope that He has ordained you unto eternal life, that He will put His Spirit within you! You cannot believe that He will give you power to become children of God and joint-heirs with Christ! Your very sorrow for sin has made you incapable of understanding God's wonders of Divine Grace. This is a painful state of mind.

You see, dear Friends, these people, though they saw God's plagues on the Egyptians, which were mercies to Israel, yet *they did not enter into their teachings*. One would have thought that every Israelite would have said, when the thick darkness was over all the land, even "darkness that might be felt," "surely Jehovah is a great and mighty God!" When there was a storm of thunder and hail over all Egypt, the likes of which had never been known before, would it not have been natural for them to cry,

"Who is like unto You, O Jehovah? We, Your people, bow before Your majesty!" The right-minded Israelite would have prostrated himself before the supreme *power* of God and would have never, henceforth, doubted the Lord's ability to redeem His chosen nation.

Should not Israel have also learned the royal *sovereignty* of the Lord God? What armies obeyed the call of that great King! At His word the river brought forth frogs abundantly. He spoke and there came divers sorts of flies and lice in all their borders. "He spoke, and the locusts came, and caterpillars, and that without number, and did eat up all the herbs in their land, and devoured the fruit of their ground." Jehovah's camp is very great. The waters were turned into blood and the dust into creeping things—the heavens were set on fire—and the habitations of men were darkened.

He who did all these marvelous things is King over all the earth. "He smote all the first-born in Egypt, the chief of their strength." Even the first-born of Pharaoh, that sits on the throne, was made to die. Surely Jehovah is King of Kings! Would you not have thought that His people would have felt the force of His Divine *dominion* and would have bowed before His supreme will throughout the rest of their lives? Awed by His power and Glory, we might have expected to find in Israel a loyal people! But no, they neither seemed to tremble before the power, nor to bow before the sovereignty of Jehovah. They murmured against Him and declared that He could not deliver them—and complained that they had been brought out of Egypt to die by the hand of Pharaoh at the Red Sea!

Beyond all question, they ought to have recognized Jehovah's *love* to them. By so much as the plagues were terrible to Egypt they were gracious to His people! Though the Israelites were a race of down-trodden slaves, the Lord loved them. He moved Heaven and earth to liberate them! He not only made the very dust of Egypt alive for them, but He sent swift angels out of Heaven to avenge the wrongs of His chosen. The orbs of Heaven and the creatures of earth—all were brought to bear upon God's great purpose of Grace towards Israel. Truly said the Lord, "I gave Egypt for Your ransom: Ethiopia and Seba for You." It was love, wondrous love to Israel, which made the Lord to show His signs in Egypt, His wonders in the land of Ham! Why did they not become lovingly obedient in return for such favors? Why were they hard of heart, stiff of neck and unwilling to be led of the Lord their God? Alas, they understood not what the Lord was doing for them!

To you, Beloved, it may be that the same fault can be laid. God has done great wonders for Believers, but, it may be, we have not yet learned His power so as to trust His might nor His sovereignty, so as to submit to His will nor His love, so as to rejoice in His faithfulness. Alas, we have but little understanding! No, worse, we have none at all except as the Lord, the Holy Spirit, teaches us to profit and instructs us, as children are instructed.

The tribes of Israel *did not see in all this, the claim which the Lord had upon them*. As a people, they belonged to Him who had made them a nation. Because of what He had done for them, the Lord took up a peculiar

position to them which He would have them acknowledge. Remember how, in the 20th chapter of Exodus, before the Lord proclaims His Ten Commandments, He says—"I am the Lord your God, which have brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage"? By this, Jehovah separated them to be His people and He declared Himself to be their God. During the plagues, He marked His special love to His own, for when the Lord sent a thick darkness over all the land, we read, "But all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings."

When the cattle of Egypt died, Pharaoh sent and found, upon inquiry, that "there was not one of the cattle of the Israelites dead." When the firstborn of Egypt fell dead beneath the angel's sword, the sprinkled blood of the Passover lamb secured to all Israel protection from the midnight slaughter—and men were made to know that God did put a difference between His chosen and the men of Egypt! Yet, the favored people did not understand it—the Truth of God was conspicuous enough, but they did not perceive it as they ought to have done. Neither did they practically show that they were the Lord's people and that only He was their God. The same slowness to take up our true position, we may see and mourn in ourselves. After all the Lord's wonders of Grace towards us, we do not exalt Him as our God, nor serve Him as His people, as we ought to do. Lord, have mercy upon us!

The people did not see that *their God, by all His wonders, was pledging Himself to them*. After having done so much for them, He would not leave them. Could He have brought them out of Egypt to kill them at the Red Sea? They even dared to say that this was their suspicion! Oh, the slanders of unbelief! But if they had understood His wonders, they would have seen that He who had done such great things for them had bound Himself to perfect His purpose and to bring them into the land which He had promised to their fathers. "Ah," you say, "they were very stupid." I do not defend them—but what about yourselves? Have we not been mistrustful? Have we not said in our hearts, "He will yet fail us, and our faith will be disappointed"? Alas, great God, we blush and are ashamed! But, listen—

"Determined to save, He watched o'er my path
When, Satan's blind slave, I sported with death.
And can He have taught me to trust in His name,
And thus far have brought me to put me to shame?"

Will the Lord lose all that He has worked in us and for us? Is He like the foolish one who began to build and was not able to finish? Does the Eternal revoke His resolves? Does the Almighty turn from His purposes? Is it not said, "The Strength of Israel will not lie; for He is not a man, that He should lie, nor the son of man, that He should repent"? O Believer, learn this lesson well and trust in your unchanging God! And thus shall you understand His wonders in Egypt.

The fact is, dear Friends, *these people had no deeply spiritual work upon their hearts*. "They understood not His wonders in Egypt" because their hearts were hardened by their association with a proud, worldly, idolatrous and yet cultured nation—and they had turned aside from the *spiritual faith* of their fathers. Wonders were worked and they saw them, and were amazed, but they did not see beneath the surface, nor perceive

the Lord's meaning in them. Beloved, I pray to God for you who are newly called out from the world, that the first working of Divine Grace in your souls may be deep, true, clear and lasting. I would have you not only know, but *understand*. Depend upon it, a man's later character is very much shaped by the mode of his conversion.

Why do some turn back altogether? It is because their change of heart was not that thorough radical conversion which involves the creation of a new nature! They felt certain superficial impressions which they mistook for the new birth and they made a hasty profession which they could not, afterwards, maintain. They were not thoroughly saved from the dominion of sin, or they would have held on to the end. Many professing Christians of whom we have a good hope that they will prove to be sincere, never had any deep conviction of sin, nor any overwhelming sense of their need of Jesus. Therefore they have seen little of our Lord in His glorious offices and all-sufficient Sacrifice—and have gained no thorough understanding of His Truth. They are like slovenly farmers who have plowed their fields after a fashion, but they have not gone deep—and the land will never yield more than half a crop!

We have all around us too much surface work. Numbers of conversions are true as far as they go, but they go a very little way. I am afraid for you if you have only a flimsy experience, a skin-deep conviction, a blind man's apprehension of the heavenly Light of God. No wonder if very soon you forgot and afterwards rebel! Let us pray God that both in ourselves and in those whom we bring to Christ, the work of Grace may be deep and thorough—and may our faith in Jesus be sustained by a clear understanding of the Gospel and of our Lord's dealings with us! The Truth of God, itself, and our experience of it, may be likened to food—it is not the food we swallow which benefits us, but that which we digest! If undigested food lies in our inward parts and unassimilated, it will brood disease rather than promote health. So Truth which is not understood and thus taken up into the soul, cannot "feed" us in the true *spiritual* sense of that word.

You see, Brothers and Sisters, there was a flaw in the Israelites at the beginning—"They understood not Your wonders in Egypt." When an iron girder suddenly snaps, they tell us that there was a flaw in the original casting. It was quite imperceptible at the first and, therefore, the girder passed all the tests of the engineer—and it was not until years of wear and tear that it gave way. Here was a manifest flaw in the casting as to the people of Israel—"They understood not Your wonders in Egypt." Had they well understood the Truth at the very first, they *would not* and *could not* have forgotten it—and they would not have been so little influenced by it in their conduct towards God.

So much upon the first point. We have had before us a subject which should produce great thought and devout anxiety.

II. FAILURE OF MEMORY FOLLOWS UPON LACK OF UNDERSTANDING. Children forget what they learn unless they understand it. They may pass the School Board standards and yet, in a few years, they may know very little. The capacity for forgetting in some children is amazing. Many, even among grownups, have splendid memories for forgetting! Alas, it is

the case with certain of the Lord's people. That which we do not understand we readily forget. When a child thoroughly understands his lesson, it will be fixed in his memory, but if he has merely learned the words and has not entered into their *senses*, do you wonder that his lesson slips away? So was it with Israel in Egypt and at the Red Sea. Those sentences follow each other in true logical order—"They understood not Your wonders in Egypt; they remembered not the multitude of Your mercies."

Mercies should be remembered. It is a great wrong to God when we bury His mercies in the grave of unthankfulness. Especially is this the case with distinguishing mercies, wherein the Lord makes us to differ from others. Light, when the rest of the land is in darkness! Life, when others are smitten with the sword of death! Liberty from an iron bondage! O Christians, these are not things to be forgotten! Abundantly utter the memory of distinguishing mercies! Discriminating Grace deserves unceasing memorials of praise!

Mercies multiplied should never be forgotten. If they are new every morning, our memory of them should be always fresh. Read the story of the 10 plagues and see how the Lord heaped up His mercies upon Israel with both His hands. Even if they had forgotten one wonder, they ought to have remembered others! "Forgot not all His benefits." Alas, some men, though their memories are refreshed with renewed loving kindnesses, yet prove by their discontent and mistrust that they do not remember the Lord's goodness. A grievous thing is this, when God sends mercy, and mercy, and mercy, and mercy, and mercy, and mercy—heaps of mercies, loads of mercies, *hills* of mercies, *mountains* of mercies, *worlds* of mercies—and yet men forget! His mercies are more than the stars, more than the drops of dew, more than the sands on the seashore and yet we do not remember! This is a mournful and inexcusable fault!

"They remembered not the multitude of Your mercies." That is to say, *they did not permanently remember these blessings.* They remembered the Lord's wonders a little and then they sang—but when the song was over, their memories failed. They remembered God's mercies while they marched for the first few days as free men who had no daily task of brick-making to fulfill—but when they found that Pharaoh pursued them, they forgot all the Lord's mighty acts! When they tasted the waters of Marah and found them bitter, "they murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?" They forgot God's wonders whenever they were in straits. They limited The Holy One of Israel by their unbelief! "They soon forget His works; they waited not for His counsel; but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness and tempted God in the desert." Our remembrance of the Lord's wonders of love should abide with us all our days. May the Lord give us a permanent recollection of His great goodness, both in Providence and in Grace!

Hutton, Bishop of Durham, was, one day riding over the bleak northern hills. He stopped and, giving his horse to his servant, he went aside from the road to kneel down on a certain spot. He always did so when he reached that place, for in the day of his wealth and honor, he had not forgotten that when he was a poor boy he had crossed those wild hills, with-

out shoes and stockings, and had turned a cow out of her place that he might warm his feet with what little heat remained in the place where the creature had lain. He had become bishop of a rich see and a man of renown, but he never passed that spot without kneeling down and praising God. May we have faithful memories for the goodness of our faithful God! The Israelites had memories out of which the mercies of God soon faded. The Lord save us from being like they and cause us to bless His name for what He did for us 50 years ago! Some of us would not have been among His people, today, if it had not been for the Lord's favors in our early youth—therefore let us praise Him for old mercies as well as for new ones.

But Israel *did not remember God's mercies powerfully*. If they remembered these things, yet the remembrance did not enable them to bear up under present discouragements. The Egyptians pursued them and when they heard the cracking of the whips and the neighing of the horses, they cried out unto the Lord—they *whined* out—"It had been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness!" Had they forgotten Jehovah, who had glorified Himself over Egypt and had crippled all her power? Their memory of Jehovah's wonders had not influence enough over them to keep up their courage! Oh, for such a powerful memory of God's mercies that we may never distrust Him!

They did not remember practically. Their lives were not affected thereby. True gratitude shows itself in acts and deeds. A gentleman had been the means of making a position for a tradesman, but, by a misfortune, he came to be, himself, in need of immediate help to tide over a season of great pressure. He called at the house of the person he had so successfully helped and found the wife at home. He told her the case and she answered at once, "My husband will be ready to lend you his name to the full amount required. He will hasten to you the moment you need him, and be glad to do so." A prudent neighbor, afterwards, said, "But you may have to pay away all you have in the world." "Yes," said the grateful wife, "we do not mind that—he was the making of us and if we have to lose everything for his sake, we shall do it very cheerfully—for we shall only be back to where we were when he first helped us."

That is a form of gratitude which is rare enough in this world, though I have seen it here and there. Beloved, if the Lord were to take away all that we have, we should only be back where we were at the beginning! We have nothing but what we have received from Him! He takes nothing from us but what He first gave us—let us bless a *taking* as well as a *giving* God. Oh, for this practical gratitude towards the Lord, that we may in all things either do His will cheerfully, or suffer it patiently! If we remember the multitude of His mercies practically, we shall be ready to surrender honor, ease, health, estate, yes, life, itself, for Him who gave Himself for us! Oh, to remember God's mercies practically in everyday life, in thought and word and deed!

In fact, *the Lord's mercies ought to be remembered progressively*. We should think more and more of His exceeding kindness. A Christian man's life should be like another Bible, another Book of Chronicles. When we come to read through our personal life story, we should say, "Neither the

9th chapter of Nehemiah, nor the 106th Psalm can exceed my experience. The Lord has dealt well with His servant, according to His Word. If some of us had opportunity to write our lives in full—which we could hardly venture to do because there are private passages between our souls and our God which no human eye may read—how fully could we now testify to the faithful love of our Covenant God! On our parts, sin and weakness and fickleness have been conspicuous in our career. But on the Lord's part, Grace and Truth, and faithfulness and love shine forth as the sun! Beloved, we must not let go of the memory of the Lord's matchless kindness, but we must remember it more and more! The older we are, the more must we trust in Him who has not suffered one of His promises to fail!

III. I need a little time for the third head, which is this—GRIEVOUS PROVOCATION FOLLOWED THEIR FORGETFULNESS OF GOD. Lack of understanding begat forgetfulness and forgetfulness brought forth rebellion. Let me read the last part of the text—"They provoked Him at the sea, even at the Red Sea." Why does the Psalmist dwell upon the place and say, "at the sea, even at the Red Sea"? Why was it worse to provoke the Lord *there* than elsewhere? It evidently was so, for the Inspired Scripture mentions the spot twice to put an emphasis upon it. Why was this?

The offense, itself, was grievous anywhere. They doubted God when they heard that Pharaoh pursued them and they said, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, have You taken us away to die in the wilderness?" This imputation of cruelty to their faithful God provoked His sacred heart. The Lord is full of pity and His name is Love and, therefore, He is not easily provoked. But He declares that He *was* provoked by this display of their mistrust. They provoked Him—they called Him forth, as it were, to battle! They vexed Him and stirred Him up to contend with them. O Brothers and Sisters, after so much love as God has shown us, we must not fall to provoking Him! Let us far rather spend our lives in extolling Him! To provoke Him at any time is a wanton wickedness—unjust, ungenerous, diabolical. It is no common sin which thus provokes the long-suffering Lord. Many a sin God has endured patiently, but in this case He is provoked to anger! This is an offense which touches the apple of His eye and causes His jealousy to burn like coals of fire. O children of God, how can you provoke your Father to wrath? The Lord have mercy upon us! We must bow low at His feet with sorrowful repentance. Let us shun this fault in the future.

But why did their transgression at the sea so greatly anger the Lord? Was it because *it came at the outset of their existence as a nation*? They had not gone many days' journey out of Egypt before they rebelled. They had not yet eaten up the bread they carried in their kneading troughs and they had scarcely met their first difficulty—and yet they hastened to provoke their God! How could they rebel so soon? They had scarcely reached the Red Sea before they began provoking the Lord with their dishonorable suspicions. O young Christian, if you provoke the Lord as soon as you are converted, your conduct will be black, indeed! Only a day or two ago you sang His praises and shouted, "Hallelujah! The blood of the Lamb has

saved me." Will you so speedily distrust the Lord and provoke Him "at the sea, even at the Red Sea"? What? Stumble in the first few steps? God grant it may not be so!

If you feel that you have already thus provoked the Lord, confess the wrong and ask pardon through the precious blood. To begin to doubt almost as soon as you begin to believe is a wretched business. What? Have you come out of Egypt and have you brought its bondage with you? You have been saved by the sprinkled blood and you have fed upon the Paschal lamb—and can you so soon utter words dishonoring to your delivering Lord? To doubt in the presence of a mercy is to doubt, indeed! To doubt the power of the blood of Christ when you have newly been saved, to doubt the power of the Holy Spirit to keep you to the end when you have just been renewed—why, this is aggravated guilt! It is sadly common, but it is none the less grievous to the heart of God. He marks it down and there stands the record—"They provoked Him at the sea, even at the Red Sea." This is a poor beginning of a march to Canaan.

Now *this Red Sea was the place of their consecration*. Here they were "baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." Here it was that they said, "He is my God, and I will prepare Him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt Him." As they stood by that Red Sea which had swallowed up all their enemies, they sang the praises of God and proposed to do great things in His honor! What wonderful obedience they meant to render! And yet they provoked Him then and there! What? Will you come up from the waters of your Baptism and go home and provoke God by unholy conversation and ungovernable temper? Can any of you go from the Communion Table into sin? I heard of one who went from the Table of the Lord across the street into the public-house. This is too gross! Such conduct grieves holy men and much more, the Holy God. To go from prayer to robbery, from reading the Word to fellowship with ungodly men—this must be terribly provoking to the thrice holy Jehovah! It is as though it were written again, "They provoked Him at the sea, even at the Red Sea."

It is a high crime and misdemeanor to sin in the presence of a great mercy. There is the sea. They have just marched through it and they have reached Marah, where the waters are brackish. If they now distrust and complain, close on the heels of their great deliverance, it will be a crime, indeed! O men, what are you doing? There is the Red Sea which God divided and yet you think He cannot give you water to drink! O fools and slow of heart, thus to doubt the Almighty! Doubt in the presence of a mercy! Doubt while so great a favor is before your eyes! This is evil, indeed! I find the Hebrew has been read by some, "They provoked Him *in* the sea, even *in* the Red Sea"—while they were passing through the deep they were rebelling! You will hardly believe it! What? When the waters stood upright as in an heap and were a wall on either side of them—and they walked through the depths of the sea and found good footing where sea monsters once had whelped and stabled—were they *then* provoking Him? Yes, they carried their *sinful hearts* with them even into the heart of the sea!

O Beloved, do not bear hard upon these Israelites, bear hard upon *yourselves* and hate the sin which dares intrude within the sacred enclosures of your joy in the Cross and dares to tempt you even when the five wounds of Jesus are shining on your soul like stars of God! Hate the sins which follow you to the Table of the Lord! Hate the wandering mind which taints the sacred bread and wine and defiles you when the instructive symbols are yet in your mouths! Abhor the sin which dogs your heels and follows you even to your knees—and hinders you in drawing near to God in prayer. Oh, the accursed sin which even on Tabor's top makes us fall asleep or talk foolishly! Lord, have mercy upon us and forgive the sins of our holy places and let it not stand against us in your Book that, "They provoked You at the sea, even at the Red Sea." It was called the Sea of Weeds and truly many were the weeds which grew, not only in the water, but in the hearts of those who stood on its shore!

I must give one or two touches to complete the picture. This provocation of God was all the worse because *they had only just done singing*. What a song it was! Handel, with all the majesty of his half-Inspired music, can hardly set forth that wondrous song of Israel at the sea. "I will sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea." That was a noble anthem, but murmuring was a miserable sequel to it. "The Lord shall reign forever and ever," was a glorious hallelujah, but before its echoes had ceased to stir the heart of the lone hills, the same tongues were heard to complain against the Lord! "The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation," died away into mutterings of unbelief!

Do you wonder that God was provoked? Have you ever acted so? Did you ever rise high in rapture and praise the Lord upon the high-sounding cymbals—and then find yourself groveling on the ground within an hour? Have you felt so jubilant that you could have snatched Gabriel's silver trumpet from his mouth that you might blow it with all your might? And have you before long been looking for a mouse hole in which to hide your miserable head by reason of your unbelief? What fools we are! "Verily every man at his best estate is altogether vanity." When we know most, we are ignorant. When we swell to our greatest, we are big nothings! When God makes much of us, we think least of ourselves. How greatly do we prize and praise the precious blood of Jesus which cleanses us from all sin!

This evil happened near the time of their strong faith. You remember how they sang, "Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling, shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away. Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of Your arm they shall be as still as a stone; till Your people pass over, O Lord, till the people pass over, which You have purchased. You shall bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of Your inheritance, in the place, O lord, which You have made for You to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which Your hands have established." They felt quite sure of conquering the land and chasing out the foe. They were so strong in faith that they thought they should never again mistrust the

Lord, whose right hand was so glorious in power! The exultant women who followed Miriam never suspected that they could doubt the Lord, whose right hand had dashed the enemy in pieces.

One of them would probably have said, "As for our enemies, the depths have covered them, there is not one of them left. I shall never fear again. I have attained full assurance and perfection and I shall never again mistrust the Lord." Yet these were the people who speedily murmured for lack of bread until the Lord heard them and was grieved! I dare say the men of the Red Sea said, each one, "My mountain stands firm, I shall never be moved"—and yet in how brief an hour were they challenging the faithfulness of Jehovah—and questioning His power to give them bread in the wilderness! Lord, what is man? We distrust Providence, we suspect Grace and we question the Lord, Himself—and all this after the Lord had made our assurance doubly sure! We are sad creatures and yet the Lord does not cast us away, for it is written, "Nevertheless He saved them for His name's sake, that He might make His mighty power to be known."

Two things more and I have done. *Admire the patient faithfulness of our God.* Jehovah, though provoked, still loves His people. Admire His love to ourselves and especially that He should entertain such constancy of affection towards such wayward, fickle, unreliable souls as we are!

Next, *believe God so as to cease to grieve Him.* Do not start aside at the next little puddle you see in the road—it is not an ocean. Do not whine that you will be devoured the next time you see a cat in the garden— after all, it is not a lion. Do not groan, "I cannot pass this dread abyss," for it is only a little ditch which you can leap by faith. God helping you, rest not till you become "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." Doubt God when He gives you cause to do so, but not till then! If God had left those Israelites, once, they might have had some excuse for distrusting Him, but He had never done so. If He had ever failed in His judgments, they might have had some excuse for unbelief, but when He threatened their enemies with plagues, those plagues never failed to come! Was there a *single* weak point in what God had done for them? They had no ground, whatever, for their unbelief!

O Brothers and Sisters, let us never distrust our God until He gives us ground for doing so—and that will never be! O Blessed Holy Spirit, strengthen the faith of Your people this day, and may that faith create in us perfect obedience to the will of the Lord, so that henceforth we may magnify His holy name and walk with Him until we see His face unveiled above! The Lord sanctify us unto Himself, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 106.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—914, 688, 106.

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"MY TIMES ARE IN YOUR HAND"
NO. 2205

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 17, 1891,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"My times are in Your hand."
Psalm 31:15.

DAVID was sad—his life was spent with grief and his years with sighing. His sorrow had wasted his strength and even his bones were consumed within him. Cruel enemies pursued him with malicious craft, even seeking his life. At such a time he used the best resource of grief, for he says in verse 14, "But I trusted in You, O Lord." He had no other refuge but that which he found in faith in the Lord, his God. If enemies slandered him, he did not render railing for railing. If they devised to take away his life, he did not meet violence with violence, but he calmly trusted in the Lord. They ran here and there, using all kinds of nets and traps to make the man of God their victim, but he met all their inventions with the one simple defense of trust in God. Many are the fiery darts of the Wicked One, but our shield is one. The shield of faith not only quenches fiery darts, but it breaks arrows of steel. Though the javelins of the foe were dipped in the venom of Hell, yet our one shield of faith would hold us harmless, casting them off from us!

Thus David had the grand resource of faith in the hour of danger. Note well that he uttered a glorious claim, the greatest claim that man has ever made—"I said, You are my God." He that can say, "This kingdom is mine," makes a royal claim! He that can say, "This mountain of silver is mine," makes a wealthy claim. But he that can say to the Lord, "You are my God," has said more than all monarchs and millionaires can reach! If this God is your God by His gift of Himself to you, what more can you have? If Jehovah has been made your own by an act of appropriating faith, what more can be conceived of? You have not the world, but you have the *Maker of the world*—and that is far more! There is no measuring the greatness of his treasure who has God to be his All in All!

Having thus taken to the best resource by trusting in Jehovah and having made the grandest claim possible by saying, "You are my God," the Psalmist now stays himself upon a grand old doctrine, one of the most wonderful that was ever revealed to men. He sings, "My times are in Your hand." This to him was a most cheering fact—he had no fear as to his circumstances, since all things were in the Divine hands. He was not shut up unto the hands of the enemy, but his feet stood in a large room, for he was in a space large enough for the ocean, seeing the Lord had placed him

in the hollow of His hand! To be entirely at the disposal of God is life and liberty for us.

The great Truth of God is this—all that concerns the Believer is in the hands of the Almighty God. "My times"—these change and shift—but they change only in accordance with unchanging love and they shift only according to the purpose of One with whom is no variableness nor shadow of a turning! "My times," that is to say, my ups and my downs, my health and my sickness, my poverty and my wealth—all those are in the hands of the Lord who arranges and appoints according to His holy will, the length of my days and the darkness of my nights! Storms and calms vary the seasons at the Divine appointment. Whether times are reviving or depressing remains with Him who is Lord both of time and of eternity—and we are glad it is so!

We assent to the statement, "My times are in Your hand," as to their result. Whatever is to come out of our life is in our heavenly Father's hands. He guards the vine of life and He also protects the clusters which shall be produced thereby. If life is as a field, the field is under the hand of the great Husbandman and the harvest of that field is also with Him! The ultimate results of His works of Grace upon us and of His education of us in this life are in the highest hands! We are not in our own hands, nor in the hands of earthly teachers, but we are under the skillful operation of hands which make nothing in vain! The close of life is not decided by the sharp knife of the fates, but by the hands of Love. We shall not die before our time, neither shall we be forgotten and left upon the stage too long!

Not only are we, ourselves, in the hand of the Lord, but all that surrounds us. Our times make up a kind of atmosphere of existence—and all this is under Divine arrangement. We dwell within the palm of God's hand. We are absolutely at His disposal and all our circumstances are arranged by Him in all their details. We are comforted to have it so.

How came the Psalmist's times to be thus in God's hands? I should answer, first, that they were there in the order of nature, according to the eternal purpose and decree of God. All things are ordained of God and are settled by Him, according to His wise and holy predestination. Whatever happens here happens not by chance, but according to the counsel of the Most High! The acts and deeds of men below, though left wholly to their own wills, are the counterpart of that which is written in the purpose of Heaven. The open acts of Providence, here below, tally exactly with that which is written in the secret Book which no eye of man or angel as yet has scanned. This eternal purpose superintended our birth. "In your Book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them." In your Book, every footstep of every creature is recorded before the creature is made! God has mapped out the pathway of every man who traverses the plains of life. Some may doubt this, but all agree that God foresees all things—and how can they be certainly foreseen unless they are certain *to be*? It is no mean comfort to a man of God that he feels that, by Divine arrangement and sacred predestination, his times are in the hands of God!

But David's times were in God's hand in another sense, namely, that he had, by faith, committed them all to God. Observe carefully the 5th verse—"Into Your hand I commit my spirit: You have redeemed me, O Lord God of Truth." In life we use the words which our Lord so patiently used in death—we hand over our spirits to the hands of God. If our lives were not appointed of Heaven, we would wish they were. If there were no overruling Providence, we would crave for one. We would merge our own wills in the will of the great God and cry, "Not as we will, but as You will." It would be a hideous thought to us if any one point of our life story were left to chance, or to the frivolities of our own fancy. But with joyful hope we fall back upon the eternal foresight and the Infallible Wisdom of God and cry, "You shall choose our inheritance for us." We would beg Him to take our times into His hands, even if they were not there.

Moreover, Beloved Brothers and Sisters, our times are in the Lord's hands because we are one with Christ Jesus. "We are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones." Everything that concerns Christ touches the great Father's heart. He thinks more of Jesus than of all the world! Therefore it follows that when we become one with Jesus, we become conspicuous objects of the Father's care! He takes us in hand for the sake of His dear Son! He that loves the Head, loves all the members of the mystical body! We cannot conceive of the dear Redeemer as ever being out of the Father's mind—neither can any of us who are in Christ be away from the Father's active, loving care—our times are always in His hands. All His eternal purposes work towards the glorifying of the Son and quite as surely they work together for the good of those who are in His Son. The purposes which concern our Lord and ourselves are so intertwisted as never to be separated!

To have our times in God's hands must mean not only that they are at God's disposal, but that they are arranged by the highest wisdom. God's hand never errs and if our times are in His hand, those times are ordered rightly. We need not puzzle our brains to understand the dispensations of Providence—a much easier and wiser course is open to us, namely—to believe the hands of the Lord work all things for the best. Sit still, O child, at your great Father's feet, and let Him do as seems Him good! When you cannot comprehend Him, know that a babe cannot understand the wisdom of its parent. Your Father comprehends all things, though you do not—let His wisdom be enough for you! Everything in the hand of God is where it may be left without anxiety and it is where it will be carried through to a prosperous issue. Things prosper which are in His hands.

"My times are in Your hand," is an assurance that none can disturb, or pervert, or poison. In that hand we rest as securely as rests a babe upon its mother's breast. Where could our interests be so well secured as in the eternal hands? What a blessing it is to see, by the eye of faith, all things that concern you grasped in the hands of God! What peace as to every matter which could cause anxiety flows into the soul when we see all our hopes built upon so stable a foundation and preserved by such supreme power! "My times are in your hand!"

Before I go into this subject, to show the sweetness of this confidence, I pray every Christian here to read the text and take it in the singular, and not as we sang it just now—

"Our times are in Your hand,
Whatever they may be,
Pleasing or painful, dark or bright,
As best may seem to Thee."

We find it in the Psalm, "*My* times are in Your hand." This does not exclude the whole body of the saints enjoying this safety together, but, after all, the Truth of God is sweetest when each man tastes the flavor of it for himself. Come, let each man take to himself this Doctrine of the Supreme Appointment of God and believe that it stands true as to his own case, "*My* times are in Your hand." The wings of the cherubim cover *me*. The Lord Jesus loved *me* and gave Himself for *me*—and *my* times are in those hands which were nailed to the Cross for *my* redemption! What will be the effect of such a faith, if it is clear, personal and enduring? This shall be our subject at this season. May the Holy Spirit help us!

I. A clear conviction that our times are in the hand of God WILL CREATE WITHIN US A SENSE OF THE NEARNESS OF GOD. If the hand of God is laid upon all our surroundings, God, Himself, is near us. Our Puritan fathers walked with God the more readily because they believed in God as arranging *everything* in their daily business and domestic life. They saw Him in the history of the nation and in all the events which transpired. The tendency of this age is to get further and further from God. Men will scarcely tolerate a Creator, now, but everything must be evolved. To get God one stage further back is the ambition of modern philosophy, whereas, if we were wise—we would labor to clear out all obstacles and leave a clear channel for drawing near to God—and for God to draw near to us. When we see that in His hands are all our ways, we feel that God is real and near.

"My times are in Your hand." Then there is nothing left to chance. Events happen not to man by a fortune which has no order or purpose in it. "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." Chance is a heathenish idea which the teaching of the Word has cast down, even as the Ark threw down Dagon and broke him in pieces. Blessed is that man who has done with chance, who never speaks of luck, but believes that from the least, even to the greatest, all things are ordained of the Lord. We dare not leave out the least event! The creeping of an aphid upon a rosebud is as surely arranged by the decree of Providence as the march of a pestilence through a nation. Believe this, for if the least is omitted from the supreme government, so may the next be, and the next, till nothing is left in the Divine hands. There is no place for chance, since God fills all things.

"My times are in Your hand" is an assurance which also puts an end to the grim idea of an iron fate compelling all things. Have you the notion that fate grinds on like an enormous wheel, ruthlessly crushing everything that lies in its way, not pausing for pity, nor turning aside for mercy? Remember, if you liken Providence to a wheel, it must be a wheel which is full of eyes! Its every revolution is in wisdom and goodness! God's

eyes leave nothing blind in Providence, but fill all things with sight. God works all things according to His purpose, but then *He* Himself works them. There is all the difference between the lone machinery of fixed fate and the Presence of a gracious, loving Spirit ruling all things. Things happen as He plans them, but He Himself is there to *make them happen*, to moderate, guide and secure results! Our great joy is not, "My times are in the wheel of destiny," but, "My times are in Your hand." With a living, loving God to superintend all things, we feel ourselves at home, resting near our Father's heart.

"My times are in Your hand." Does not this reveal the condescension of the Lord? He has all Heaven to worship Him and all worlds to govern, and yet, "my times"—the times of such an inconsiderable and unworthy person as I am—are in His hands! Now, what is man that it should be so? Wonder of wonders, that God should not only think of me, but should make my concerns His concerns and take my matters into His hands! He has the stars in His hands and yet He puts us there. He deigns to take in hand the passing interests of obscure men and lowly women!

Beloved, God is near His people with all His attributes, His wisdom, His power, His faithfulness, His immutability and these are, under oath, to work for the good of those who put their trust in Him. "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." Yes, God considers our times and thinks them over, with His heart and soul planning to do us good. That august mind, out of which all things spring, bows itself to us and those eternal wings, which cover the universe, also brood over us and our household, and our daily needs and woes! Our God sits not still as a listless spectator of our griefs, suffering us to be drifted like waifs upon the waters of circumstance, but is busily occupying Himself at all times for the defense and perfecting of His children. He leads us that He may bring us home to the place where His flock shall rest forever.

What a bliss this is! Our times, in all their needs and aspects, are in God's hands and, therefore, God is always caring for us! How near it brings God to us and us to God! Child of God, go not tomorrow into the field, lamenting that God is not there! He will bless your going out. Come not home to your chamber, crying, "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!" He will bless your coming in! Go not to your bed, dreaming that you are left an orphan—neither wake up in the morning with a sense of loneliness upon you—you are not alone, for the Father is with you!

Will you not feel how good it is that God should come so close to you and handle your bread and your water, and bless your bed and your board? Are you not happy to be allowed to come so close to God, as to say, "My times are in Your hand"? There is a great deal in this first point as to the nearness of the Lord—and if you will turn it over—you will see more and more that a conviction that our times are in God's hand tends to create a happy and holy sense of the nearness of God to us.

II. THIS TRUTH IS A COMPLETE ANSWER TO MANY A TEMPTATION. You know how craftily Satan will urge a temptation. He says, "Now you have a large family and your chief duty is to provide for them. Your posi-

tion brings with it many needs. Here is a plan of making money—others follow it. It may not be quite straight, but you must not be particular in such a world as this, for nobody else is." How will you meet this? Can you say to Satan, "It is not my business to provide for myself or for my family—my times are in God's hand and His name is Jehovah-Jireh—The Lord Will Provide. And I will not do a questionable thing, though it would fill my house with silver and gold from the cellar to the chimney pot. I shall not meddle with my Lord's business. It is His to provide for me—it is mine to walk uprightly and obey His Word"?

This is a noble answer to the arch-enemy! But supposing he says, "Well, but you are already in difficulties and you cannot extricate yourself if you are too precise. A poor man cannot afford to have a conscience—it is an expensive luxury in these days. Give your conscience a holiday and you can soon get out of your trouble." Let your reply be, "O Prince of Darkness, it is no business of mine to extricate myself! My times are in God's hand. I have taken my case to Him and He will work for me in this matter better than I can do for myself! He does not wish me to do a wrong thing, that I may do for myself what He has promised to do for me." We are not called upon to eke out God's wisdom with a bit of our own wickedness. God forbid! Do the right, even if the heavens should fall. The Lord who has taken your business into His hands will bear you through.

"Well," says one, "we may use a little discreet policy in religious matters and keep the peace by wise compromise. We may accomplish our end all the sooner by going a little roundabout. If you can just let the Truth of God wait for a little until the fine weather comes, and the silver slippers are in season, then she will be saved a good deal of annoyance!" Brothers and Sisters, it is not for us to pick and plan times in this fashion. God's cause is in God's hands and God would not have us help His cause by a compromising hand being laid on His Ark. Remember what the hand of Uzzah brought on him, though he meant well. Let us continue steadfast in the integrity of our walk and we shall find our times are in God's hand—and that they are well ordered and need no hasty and unholy interposition on our part.

Brethren, is it not a delightful thing for us to know that though we are on a stormy voyage, the Lord, Himself, is at the helm? The course we do not know, nor even our present latitude and longitude. But the Pilot knows all about us and also about the sea. It will be our wisdom not to interfere with our Captain's orders. They put up a notice on the steamboats, "Do not speak to the man at the wheel." We are very apt, in our unbelief, to dispute with Him to whom the steering of our vessel is entrusted. We shall not confuse Him, thank God, but we often confound and confuse ourselves by our idle complaining against the living Lord! No, when you are tempted to presume, or to act in a despairing haste, or to hide your principles, or to do something which is not defensible in order that you may arrange your times more comfortably, answer with a decided "No," and say, "My times are in God's hand"—and there, by His Grace, I will leave them!"

When the devil comes with His subtle questions and insinuations, refer Him to your Lord, in whose hands your times are placed. When you have a lawsuit, the opposite side will likely come and talk with you, to see if they can get something out of you. It will be your wisdom to reply, "If you have anything to say, say it to my solicitor." If the devil comes to you and you get into an argument with him, he will beat you, for he is a very ancient lawyer and he has been at the business for so many ages that you cannot match him. Send him to your Advocate! Refer him to the Wonderful, the Counselor! Always shelter beneath this fact, "My times are in His hand. I have left the whole business to Another and I cannot dishonor Him by meddling." Satan knows the Christ too well to go to Him—he knows the taste of His broadsword, of, "It is written." He will not contest with Jesus if we leave Him to plead the causes of our soul!

III. In the third place, THIS CONVICTION IS A SUFFICIENT SUPPORT AGAINST THE FEAR OF MEN. We may say to ourselves, when our enemies bear very hard upon us, "I am not in their hands. My times are in Your hand." Here are gentlemen judging and condemning us with great rapidity. They say, "He has made a great mistake. He is an old bigot. He has snuffed himself out." This is easier said than done. The candle still shines. They say of you, "He is foolish and headstrong and, on religious matters, he is as obstinate as a mule! But he will come to grief." You have not come to grief, yet, in the way they predict, and they had better not prophesy till they know! The godly are not in the hands of those who mock them! The wicked may gnash their teeth at Believers, but they cannot destroy them! Here is their comfort—they have committed their spirit to the hands of God—and He will sacredly preserve the precious deposit. Fear not the judgments of men! Appeal to a higher court. Take the case to the King's Bench. Go to God, Himself, with the matter, and He will bring forth your judgment as the light and your righteousness as the noonday.

Do the malicious resolve to crush you? They will use to the utmost their little power, but there is a higher power which will hold them back. Rejoicingly say, "My times are in Your hand." Do they treat you with contempt? Do they sneer at you? What does that matter? Your honor comes not from men! Their contempt is the highest *compliment* the wicked can pay you.

Alas, many professors place their times in the hands of the world! If they prosper and grow rich, they see an opportunity of social advantage and they quit their humbler friends to join a more respectable sect. How many are lost to fidelity because their prosperous times are not in God's hands, but in their own? Some, on the other hand, when they are in adversity, get away from the Lord. The excuse is, "I cannot go to the House of God any more, for my clothes are not so respectable as they used to be." Is your poverty to take you out of your Lord's hands? Never let it be so! But say, "My times are in Your hand." Cleave to the Lord in losses as well as in gains and so let *all* your times be with Him.

How often we meet with people who are staggered by slander! It is impossible to stop malicious tongues. They wound and even slay the characters of the godly. The tried one cries, "I cannot bear it! I shall give all up."

Why? Why yield to mere talk? Even these cruel tongues are in God's hands! Can you not brave their attacks? They cannot utter a single whisper more than God permits! Go on your way, O righteous man, and let false tongues pour forth their poison as they will. "Every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn." If my times are in God's hands, no man can do me harm unless God permits it. Though my soul is among lions, yet no lion can bite me while Jehovah's angel is my guard!

This feeling, that our interests are safe in the highest keeping, breeds an independent spirit. It prevents our cringing before the great and our flattering the strong. At the same time, it removes all tendency to envy, so that you do not wish for the prosperity of the wicked, nor fret yourself because of evildoers. When one knows that his times are in God's hands, he would not change places with a king! No, nor even with an angel!

IV. A full belief in the statement of our text is A CURE FOR PRESENT WORRY. O Lord, if my times are in Your hands, I have cast my care on You, and I trust and am not afraid! Why is it, my Sister—for this habit of worrying abounds among the gracious sisterhood—why do you vex yourself about a matter which is in the hands of God? If He has undertaken for you, what cause have you for anxiety? And you, my Brother—for there are plenty of men who are nervous and fretful—why do you want to interfere with the Lord's business? If the case is in His hands, what need can there be for you to be prying and crying? You were worrying this morning and fretting last night—and you are distressed, now, and will be worse tomorrow morning. May I ask you a question? Did you ever get any good by fretting? When there was not rain enough for your farm, did you ever fret a shower down? When there was too much rain, or you thought so, did you ever worry the clouds away? Tell me, did you ever make a sixpence by worrying? It is a very unprofitable business!

Do you answer, "What, then, are we to do in troublous times?" Why, go to Him into whose hand you have committed yourself and your times! Consult with Infinite Wisdom by *prayer*. Console yourself with Infinite Love by fellowship with God. Tell the Lord what you feel and what you fear. Ten minutes' praying is better than a year's murmuring! He that waits upon God and casts his burden upon Him may lead a royal life—indeed, he will be far happier than a king!

To leave our times with God is to live as free from care as the birds upon the bough. If we fret, we shall not glorify God, and we shall not constrain others to see what true religion can do for us in the hour of tribulation. Fret and worry put it out of our power to act wisely. But if we can leave everything with God because everything *really* is in His hands, we shall be peaceful and our action will be deliberate. And for that very reason it will be more likely to be wise. He that rolls his burden upon the Lord will be strong to do or to suffer—and his days shall be as the days of Heaven upon the earth. I admire the serenity of Abraham. He never seems to be in a fluster, but he moves grandly, like a prince among men. He is much more than the equal of the greatest man he meets—we can hardly see Lot with a microscope when we have once seen Abraham! Why was that? Because he believed in God and staggered not.

Half the joy of life lies in expectation. Our children get greater pleasure out of expecting a holiday than they do out of the day, itself. It is much the same with ourselves. If we believe that all our times are in God's hands, we shall be expecting great things from our heavenly Father. When we get into a difficulty we shall say, "I am now going to see the wonders of God and to learn, again, how surely He delivers them that trust in Him!" I thank God I have learned at times to glory in necessities, as opening a window into Heaven for me, out of which the Lord would abundantly pour forth His supplies. It has been to me so unspeakable a delight to see how the Lord has supplied my needs for the Orphanage, the College and other works, that I have half wished to be in straits, that I might see how the Lord would appear for me!

I remember, some time ago, when, year after year, all the money came in for the various enterprises, I began to look back with regret upon those grand days when the Lord permitted the brook Cherith to dry up and called off the ravens, with their bread and meat, and then found some other way of supplying the orphans' needs! In those days, the Lord used to come to me, as it were, walking on the tops of the mountains, stepping from peak to peak and, by marvelous deeds, supplying all my needs, according to His riches in Glory by Christ Jesus!

Do you know, I almost wished that the Lord would stop the streams and then let me see how He can fetch water out of the Rock! He did so, not very long ago. Funds ran very low and then I cried to Him and He heard me out of His holy hill. How glad was I to hear the footsteps of the ever-present Lord, answering to His child's prayer and letting him know that his times were still in his Father's hands! Surely it is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man! It is a joy worth worlds to be driven where none but the Lord can help you—and then to see His mighty hand pulling you out of the net! The joy lies mainly in the fact that you are sure it is the Lord and sure that He is near you. This blessed realization of the Lord's interposition causes us to glory in tribulation! Is not that a cure for worry, a blessed cure for anxiety?

V. Fifthly, a firm conviction of this truth is A QUIETUS AS TO FUTURE DREAD. "My times are in Your hand." Do you wish to know what is going to happen to you in a short time? Would you look between the folded leaves of the future? You can buy a penny newspaper which will tell you the fate of nations this very year. But you may be well-near sure that *nothing* will happen which is thus predicted—and thus it may be of little use to you! Be content with the prophecies of Scripture, but follow not every interpreter of them. Many people would pay great sums to have the future made known to them. If they were wise, they would rather desire to have it concealed! Do not want to know—such knowledge would answer no useful purpose. The future is intended to be a sealed book. The present is all we need to have before us. Do your day's work in its day and leave tomorrow with your God. If there were ways of reading the future, it would be wise to decline to use them. The knowledge would create responsibility, arouse fear and diminish present enjoyment—why seek after it? Famish idle curiosity and give your strength to believing obedience! Of this you

may be quite sure, that there is nothing in the book of the future which should cause distrust to a Believer! Your times are in God's hands—and this secures them.

The very word, "times," supposes change for you. But as there are no changes with God, all is well. Things will happen which you cannot foresee, but your Lord has foreseen all and provided for all! Nothing can occur without His Divine allowance and He will not permit that which would be for your real or permanent injury. "I should like to know," says one, "whether I shall die soon." Have no desire in that direction—your time will come when it should. The best way to live above all fear of death is to die every morning before you leave your bedroom. The Apostle Paul said, "I die daily." When you have got into the holy habit of *daily dying*, it will come easy to you to die for the last time!

It is greatly wise to be familiar with our last hours. As you take off your garments at night, rehearse the solemn scene when you shall lay aside your robe of flesh. When you put on your garments in the morning, anticipate the being clothed upon with your house which is from Heaven in the day of Resurrection. To be fearful of death is often the height of folly. A great Prophet once ran away many miles to escape from death by an imperious queen. He was one of the bravest of the brave and yet He hurried into solitude to escape a woman's threat! When he had finished his weary walk, he sat down and actually prayed, "Let me die." It was a singular thing to do, to run for his life, and then to cry, "Let me die." That man never did die, for we speak of Elijah who rode to Heaven in a chariot of fire! God does not answer all His people's prayers, for He has better things for them than they ask. Do not tremble about what may never happen. Even we may never die, for it is written, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump." Some of us may be alive and remain at the coming of the Lord. Who knows? Behold, He comes quickly! At any rate, do not let us worry about death, for it is in His hands.

VI. Again, a full conviction that our times are in His hands will be A REASON FOR CONSECRATED SERVICE. If God has undertaken my business for me, then I may most fitly undertake such business for Him as He may appoint. Queen Elizabeth wished one of the leading merchants of London to go to Holland to watch her interests there. The honest man told Her Majesty that he would obey her commands, but he begged her to remember that it would involve the ruin of his own trade, for him to be absent. To this the Queen replied, "If you will see to my business, I will see to your business." With such a royal promise he might willingly let his own business go, for a queen should have it in her power to do more for a subject than he can do for himself.

The Lord, in effect, says to the Believer, "I will take your affairs in hand and see them through for you." Will you not at once feel that now it is your *joy*, your *delight*, to live to glorify your gracious Lord? To be set free to serve the Lord is the highest freedom! How beautiful it is to read in the book of Isaiah, "And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers"! Outsiders

shall do the drudgery for you and set you free for higher service! Read on and see—"But you shall be named the Priests of the Lord: men shall call you the Ministers of our God." Faith sets us free from the wear and tear of carking care that we may give ourselves up wholly to the service of the Lord our God! Faith causes us to live exempt from fret, to serve only the blessed God. Set free from the burden of earthly things by God's kind care of us, we present our bodies as living sacrifices unto the Lord our God. He has not made us slaves and drudges, but priests and kings unto God!

I am sure, dear Friends, if we get this Truth of God fully saturating our souls, that our times are in God's hand, it will make life a grander thing than it has ever seemed to be. Do you believe that God's hand is working with you and for you? Then are you lifted above the dumb-driven cattle that surround you, for the God of Heaven thinks of you and puts His hand to your affairs. This connection with the Divine puts heart into a man and rises him to high endeavor and great belief. We feel we are immortal till our work is done! We feel that God is with us and that we are bound to be victorious through the blood of Jesus! We shall not be defeated in the campaign of life, for the Lord of Hosts is with us and we shall tread down our enemies! God will strengthen us, for our times are in His hands and, therefore, we will serve Him with all our heart and with all our soul, being fully convinced that, "our labor is not in vain in the Lord."

VII. Lastly, if our times are in God's hands, here is A GRAND ARGUMENT FOR FUTURE BLESSEDNESS. He that takes care of our times will take care of our eternity. He that has brought us so far and worked so graciously for us will see us safely over the rest of the road. I marvel at some of you older folks, when you begin to doubt. You will say, "Look at yourself." Well, so I do, and I am heartily ashamed that ever a grain of mistrust should get into the eye of my faith. I would weep it out and keep it out for the future.

Still, some of you are older than I am, for you are 70 or 80 years of age. How much longer do you expect to travel in this wilderness? Do you think you have you another 10 years? God has been gracious to you for 70 years and will you fret about the last 10, which, indeed, may never come? That will never do! God has delivered some of you out of such great trials that your present ones are mere fleabites. Sir Francis Drake, after he had sailed around the world, came up the Thames. And when he had passed Gravesend there came a storm which threatened the ship. The brave commander said, "What? Go around the world safely and then get drowned in a ditch? Never!" So *we* ought to say! God has upheld us in great tribulations and we are not going to be cast down about trials which are common to men!

A man of energy, if he takes a work in hand, will push it through and the Lord our God never undertakes what he will not complete. "My times are in Your hand" and, therefore, the end will be glorious! My Lord, if my times were in my own hands, they would prove a failure, but since they are in Your hands, You will not fail, nor shall I! The hands of God ensures success all along the line. In that day when we shall see the tapestry which records our lives, we shall see all the scenes therein with wondering

eyes. We shall see what wisdom, what love, what tenderness, what care was lavished upon them! When once a matter is in God's hands, it is never neglected or forgotten, but it is carried out to the end. Therefore, comfort one another with these words.

I have not been able to preach on this text as I hoped to do, for I am full of pain and have a heavy headache. But, thank God, I have no heartache with such a glorious Truth of God before me! Sweet to my soul are these words—"My times are in Your hand." Take the golden sentence home with you! Keep this Truth in your mind. Let it lie on your tongue like a wafer made with honey. Let it dissolve until your whole nature is sweetened by it. Yes, dear old lady, you that have come out of the workhouse this morning to hear this sermon, say to yourself, "My times are in Your hand." Yes, you, dear Friend, who cannot find employment and have been walking your shoes off your feet in the vain endeavor to seek one—*you,* also, may say, "My times are in Your hand." Yes, my dear Sister, pining away with consumption, this may be your song—"My times are in Your hand." Yes, young man, you that have just started in business and have met with a crushing loss, it will be for your benefit, after all! Therefore say, "My times are in Your hand." This little sentence, to my mind, swells into a hymn—it buds and blossoms into a Psalm! Few are the words, but mighty is the sense, and full of rest.

Now, remember, it is not everybody that can find honey in this hive. O Sinners, you are in the hands of an angry God and this is terrible! The God against whom you continually sin and whom you provoke by refusing His Grace, has absolute power over you! Beware, you that forget God, lest He tear you in pieces! You have provoked, offended and grieved Him, but there is yet hope, for His mercy endures forever. Though you have vexed His Holy Spirit, yet return unto Him and He will have mercy upon you and abundantly pardon you! It is certain that you are in His hands and that you cannot escape from Him. If you should climb to Heaven, or dive to Hell, you would not be out of His reach! No strength of yours can resist Him, no speed can outrun Him. Yield yourselves to God and then this great power of God, which now surrounds you, shall become your comfort!

At present it ought to be your terror. The eyes of God are fixed upon you. The hands of God are against you and if you are unsaved, one touch of that hand will mean death and everlasting destruction! That hand which the Believer devoutly kisses, is the hand which you may well dread. Oh, that you would flee to Christ Jesus and find shelter from wrath beneath the crimson canopy of His precious blood! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 31.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—910, 701, 703.

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

"AM I A SEA, OR A WHALE?"
NO. 2206

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, MAY 31, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON BEHALF OF THE BRITISH AND FOREIGN SAILORS' SOCIETY,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 7, 1891.

"Am I a sea, or a whale, that You set a watch over me?"
Job 7:12.

JOB was in great pain when he thus bitterly complained. These moans came from him when his skin was broken and had become loathsome and he sat upon a dunghill and scraped himself with a potsherd. We are amazed at his patience, but we are not amazed at his impatience! He had fits of complaining and failed in that very patience for which he was noted. Where God's saints are most glorious, there you will find their spots. The weaknesses of the saints lie near their strength. Elijah is the bravest of the brave and flees from Jezebel. Moses is the meekest of the meek and speaks in passion. Job is the most patient of men and cries, "I will not refrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul." As part of his bitter complaint, he asks, "Am I a sea, or a whale, that You set a watch over me?"

He seemed to be watched and whipped—and then watched again. It seemed to him that God concentrated all His strength upon him in afflicting him. He was beaten black and blue and, whereas, other culprits had 40 stripes save one, he had 50 stripes save none! He was spared no suffering and, he cries at last, "I am watched, and checked, as if I were a great sea needing always to be held in bounds or a terrible sea monster needing always a hook in its jaws. Lord, why do You harass me thus? I am such a poor, insignificant thing, that it seems out of Your usual way to be so rough upon one so feeble. The raging ocean, or the mighty leviathan may need such watching, but why do You spend it on me? Am I a sea, or a whale, that You set a watch over me?"

I shall not moor myself to Job's sense of the words, but I shall spread my sail for a voyage further out to sea. This sort of talk may have been used by many a man who is now within hail of my voice—may have been used by sailors now before me.

Let me point out the channel along which I shall steer in my discourse. We shall begin by saying that *some men seem to be narrowly watched by God*. They think that the Lord's eyes are as much fixed on them as though they were great as a sea, or huge as a whale. My second point will be that *they do not like this watching*. They complain about it and wish they could

get rid of it. Therefore they argue with God against it. Our third head is that *their argument is a bad one*. They think they are very harshly treated, but the fact is that *all they complain of is in love*. See, my messmates, the way I shall try to steer, but if the heavenly wind blows me out of my course, don't be surprised if I tack about and go, nobody knows where!

I. I have, first, to say that SOME MEN SEEM TO BE ESPECIALLY TRACKED AND WATCHED BY GOD. We hear of persons being "shadowed" by the police—and certain people feel as if they were shadowed by God—they are mysteriously tracked by the great Spirit and they know and feel it. Wherever they go, an eye is upon them and they cannot hide from it. They are like prisoners under arrest—they can never go out of reach of the law. They cannot get away from God, do what they may! There are men who have been in this condition for years *and they know what I mea*n.

All men are really surrounded by God. He is not far from everyone of us. "In Him we live, move and have our being." "Where shall we flee from Your Presence?" To the heights above, or to the depths beneath? To oceans frozen into ice, or seas where the sun shines with burning heat? In vain we rise or dive to escape from God. "You, God, see me," is as true in the watches of the night as in the blaze of day. God is with us and we are always beneath His eyes. Yet there are certain people to whom this is more clear than it is to others.

Some are singularly aware of the Presence of God. Certain of us never were without a sense of God. As children, we could not go to sleep till we said, "Our Father which are in Heaven." As youths, we trembled if we heard God's holy name blasphemed. As men, engaged in the cares of life, we have seen the Lord's goodness, all along. We delight to see Him in every flower that blooms and to hear His voice in every wind that blows. It has made us happy to see God in His works. "The fool has said in his heart, No God," but this folly we never cared for. We knew that God was good even when we felt we had offended Him. He has taught us from our youth and manifested Himself to us. Softly has the whisper fallen on our ear, "God is near you. God is with you. God has an ear to hear you. God has a heart to love you. God has a hand to help you." I have known those who, even when they have sinned and gone against their consciences, have never at any time quite lost a sense of the nearness of God even though its only fruit was fear—a fear which has torment!

With others, God's watch is seen in a different way. They feel that they are watched by God because *their conscience never ceases to rebuke them*. The voice of conscience is not pitched to the same key in all men, neither is it equally loud in all people. Conscience can be made like a muzzled dog and then it cannot bite the thief of sin. Conscience can grow like a man with a cold who has lost his voice. But it is not so with all men, even after years of sin. Some have a naturally tender conscience and, while living in sin, they are never easy. They make merry all the day, for, "they count it one of the wisest things to drive dull care away"—but dull care, like the chickens, comes home to roost at night! The sailor in company is jolly, but

if he has to keep a lone watch beneath the silent stars, his heart begins to beat and his conscience begins to call him to account for the follies of the day. He starts in his sleep—he dreams over his past sin and the judgment to come—for conscience will wake even when the rest of the man sleeps. "You were wrong," says conscience, and his voice is very solemn.

Even great sin in certain men has not prevented Conscience speaking out honestly to them. Again and again the inward monitor cries, "You were wrong and you will suffer for it." We read that, "David's heart smote him"—the heart deals us an ugly knock. When the blow is within us, it tells. I am addressing some who, though they do not feel pleased about it, yet must know that there is a something within that will not let them sin cheaply. God has a bit in their mouths and a bridle upon their jaws—and every now and then He gives a tug at it and pulls them right up. They are not at home in sin! They have not yet got their sea legs upon the ocean of vice. They sing the songs of the devil with a quake and a shake which shows that the music does not suit them! Thus God has set a watch upon them—they carry a detective in their bosoms.

In some this watching has gone farther, for *they are under solemn conviction of sin.* They are convinced of sin, of righteousness and of judgment to come. God's custom-house officer has boarded them and their smuggling is found out. I remember when I was in that state, myself—a criminal who dared not deny his guilt, but dreaded punishment. I would not go back to that condition for a hundred worlds! There was no rest for me then. I was only a youth, but boyish sports lost their relish for me because I knew that I was a sinner and that God must punish sin. I awoke in the morning and my first act for many a day was to read a chapter of the Bible, or a page of some awakening book which kept my conscience still awake. The Holy Spirit put me in irons and there I lay both day and night! My bed was, at times, a very weary place for me, because the eyes of God's anger seemed to be always watching me. I knew I had offended God and I had not yet found out the way of reconciliation by the blood of Jesus Christ.

Now, it may be that I speak to some here who have been to the ends of the earth and they have said, "Well, when we get away where the Sabbath bell is never heard, we shall get rid of these fears and take our swing in sin." They sailed off and as soon as they reached port, they hurried to a place of vicious amusement—where no one knew them. But the dog of fear howled at their heels and merriment seemed mockery to them. On the lone ocean the very stars pierced their hearts with their rays. At length their messmates began to notice it and call them Old Sobersides. "Jack, what ails you?" was the frequent question, and well it might be, for Jack was very heavy and it is hard to be merry with a broken heart! In some such fashion as this the man feels that God has set a watch upon him and that he has become like a sea which never rests, or a whale which roams the waste of water and knows no home. God watched him and though he would gladly have run the blockade, he could not find an hour in which his vessel was left alone.

Certain men are not only plagued by conscience and dogged by fear, but *the Providence of God seems to have gone out against them*. Just when the man had resolved to have a bout of drinking, he fell sick of a fever and had to go to the hospital. He was going to a dance, but he became so weak that he had not a leg to stand upon. He was forced to toss to and fro on bed—to quite another tune from that which pleases the ballroom! He had yellow fever and was long in pulling round. God watched him and put the skid on him just as he meant to have a breakneck run downhill! The man gets better and he says to himself, "I will have a good time, now." But then he is out of berth and perhaps he cannot get a ship for months—and he is brought down to poverty. "Dear me!" he says, "everything goes against me. I am a marked man!" And so he is. Just when he thinks that he is going to have a fair wind, a tempest comes on and drives him out of his course, and he sees rocks ahead. After a while he thinks, "Now I am all right. Jack is himself, again, and piping times have come." A storm hurries up; the ship goes down and he loses all but the clothes he has on his back. He is in a wretched plight—a shipwrecked mariner far from home. God seems to pursue him even as He did Jonah!

He carries with him misfortune for others and he might well cry, "Am I a sea, or a whale, that You set a watch over me?" Nothing prospers. His tacklings are loosed. He cannot well strengthen his mast; his ship leaks; his sails are torn; his yards are snapped and he cannot understand it. Other people seem to get on, though they are worse than he is. Time was when he used to be lucky, too—but now he has parted company with success and carries the black flag of distress. He is driven to and fro by contrary winds. He makes no headway. He is a miserable man and would wish that the whole thing would go to the bottom, only he dreads a place which has no bottom, from which there is no escape, if once you sink into it. The Providence of God runs hard against him and thus he sees himself to be a watched man.

Yes, and God also watches over many *in the way of admonition*. Wherever they go, holy warnings follow them. They cannot escape from those who would be friends to their souls. They seem to be surrounded with a ring of prayers and sermons and holy talks. The boy said, "If I could get away from my mother, I should be free! I have been tied long enough to her apron strings. I am old enough to do as I like. If I can get away from my father's chidings and prayers, I shall have a fine time of it." So the boy ran away and went to sea—and when he got on board, a good old sailor tackled him—and talked to him about his soul! And then another pleaded with him. The boy said to himself, "Why, I have got out of the frying pan into the fire! I came here to be out of the way of religion and here it is!"

I have known a sailor to go from port to port, and wherever he has landed there has been some gracious man or woman waiting to lead him to Christ. May it be often so! May the Bethel flag be found flying in all waters, till every runaway says, "Why, I am watched wherever I go!" May it be as it was with our dear friends, Fullerton and Smith, on board the steamboat! Mr. Fullerton spoke to a rough man and asked him if he was saved.

And the man was angry, cross, vexed and went to the other side of the vessel. There he complained to Mr. Smith, "That man over there asked me if I was saved; he is a fool!" "Very likely," said Smith, "but then, you see, he is a fool for Christ. I think it is better to be a fool for Jesus than to be wise for the devil." He began to plead with the sailor, when the man cried out, "There is a regular gang of them! I cannot go anywhere but they are on to me."

It has been made hot for some of you by the British and Foreign Sailors' Society which has placed missionaries in so many ports. "There's a gang of them," and wherever you go, you stumble on an earnest Christian man who will not let you alone. If I could stir up Christian people here, I would make it hard for sinners, so that wherever they went they would find a hand outstretched to stop them from going to destruction! Oh, that each one might be met with tears and entreaties, that thus each one might be snatched from the waves of fire and landed on the rock of salvation! Some here present have had to dodge a great deal to keep out of the way of Gospel shots. Their track has been followed by mercy and they have been pursued by swift cruisers of Grace. They have been like fish taken in a net—surrounded on all sides—and neither able to pass through the meshes, nor to break the net, nor to leap out of it! Oh, that the net of Christ's love may so entangle you all, that you may be His forever!

That is our first point—there are some men who seem especially watched of God.

II. Secondly, we notice that THEY ARE VERY APT TO DISLIKE THIS WATCHING. Job is not pleased with it. He asks, "Am I a sea, or a whale, that You set a watch over me?" These people, to whom God pays such attention, are foolish enough to murmur that they are so hedged in and they are vexed to be made to feel that God has His eyes upon them.

Do you know what they would like? *They want liberty to sin*! They would like to be let loose and to be allowed to do just as their wild wills would suggest to them. They would cast off every restraint and have their fling of what the world calls "pleasure." They would climb from sin to sin, hand over hand. They would like to empty all the cups on the devil's sideboard and be as merry as the worst of men when they are taking it free and easy. That is why they would send their consciences to sleep, drown their fears and escape from chastening Providences and warning admonitions. They would like to live where no Christian would ever worry them again with wearisome exhortation! They demand liberty—liberty to put their hands into the fire! Liberty to ruin themselves! Liberty to leap into Hell before their time! Liberty! What destruction has been worked in your name! Free thinking! Free living! Free loving and all that! What misuse of terms! What a libel upon the name of freedom, to use the word, "free," in connection with the slavery of sin! Yet, I am speaking to some who say, "That is just what I want! I want to cut myself clear of all this hamper which blocks me up from having my own way." Ah me! This is the cry of a man who is bent on soul-suicide!

They also wish that they could be as hard of heart as many others are. Some men can drink any quantity and yet do not seem as if they were greatly affected by it. And many a young sailor has wished that he could pour down his grog without a wink, after the style of the old toper. He meets with a foul-mouthed being who can swear till all is blue, while he himself has only dropped an oath or two, and then felt wretched. The young man begins to wish that he was as tough as old Jack, and as much a daredevil as he. The hardened profligate is foolishly envied and looked upon as a man of "pluck." But is it true bravery to ruin one's soul? Is it manly to be wicked? Is it a great gain to have a seared conscience? We don't envy the blind because they cannot see danger, nor the deaf because they cannot hear an alarm—why envy the hardened old sinner because he has become spiritually blind and deaf?

There are monsters, both on land and on sea, whose very breath is pestilent and whose talk is enough to choke up a town with vice. And yet certain young men, whom God will not allow to descend into such rottenness, are almost angry that they are restrained! A tender conscience is a great possession, but these simple ones know not its value. They wish that they could have a heart as hard as the nether millstone. Ah, poor souls! You know not what you wish, for you have no idea how deep is the curse that lies in a callous conscience! When God gave Pharaoh up to hardness of heart, it was a tremendous punishment for his pride and cruelty and, short of Hell, there is no judgment that God can inflict like letting a man have his own way! "Let him alone," says God, "he is joined to idols." And if the Lord says *that*, there is only one other word more dreadful—and that is the final sentence—"Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." O you beginners in vice who cannot yet stifle the cries of your suffering consciences, I pray that you may see your folly and no longer do violence to your own mercy!

Men do not like this being surrounded by God—this wearing the bit and kicking strap—because *they would drop God from their thoughts.* If tomorrow we could hear, by telegram from Heaven, that God was dead, what crowds would buy the newspaper! It would be the greatest relief in the world to many a godless wretch if he could feel sure that there was no God! To some of us this news would be death—we would have lost our Father, our Comforter, our Savior, our All! Alas, many wish that there were no God, and if they cannot persuade themselves that there is none—and it is very hard for a sailor to do that—yet they try to forget Him. If God is out of mind, He is as good as out of the world to the careless sinner.

When God comes with inward fears and awakens conscience—and sends cross Providences, so that the man feels pulled up and made to pause—then he knows that there *is* a God, for he feels a Power which works against his sin from which he cannot get away. He longs to be clear of this secret force, but it wraps him about on every side. He does not read his Bible and yet Scripture rises in his memory! It is long since he bent his knee in prayer—he has almost forgotten what his mother said to him when she lay dying—but still he feels that there is a God and, somehow,

that belief sounds a trumpet blast through his soul, summoning him to his last account. Come to judgment! Come to judgment! Come to judgment! The call rings in his ears and he cannot get away from the terrible sound! Then it is that he cries "Why am I thus? Am I a sea, or a whale, that You set a watch over me?"

Once more, there are some who do not like to be shadowed in this way because *they want to have their will with others*. Shall I speak a sharp word, like a two-edged sword? There are men—and seamen to be found among them—who are not satisfied with being ruined, themselves, but they thirst to ruin others! They lay traps for precious souls and they are vexed that their victims should escape them. They are angry because certain poor women are not altogether in their power. Woe unto the men who lead women astray! I have heard of sailors who, in every port they enter, try to ruin others. I charge you to remember that you will have to face these ruined ones at the Day of Judgement! You sailed away and they never knew where you went, but the Lord knew. It may be, when you lie in Hell, eyes will find you out and a voice will cry aloud, "Are you here? You are the man that led me to Perdition!"

You will have to keep everlasting company with those whom you dragged down to Hell—and these will, forever, curse you to your face. I say there are men who would like to have full license to commit wantonness and they are grieved that they are hindered in their carnival of sin! May God grant that you may be stopped altogether and, instead of lusting to pollute others, may you have a desire to save them! May God grant that the channel of evil may be blocked for you and may you be piloted into the waters of repentance and faith!

This is why some kick against God. I fear these people will be much vexed with me for speaking so plainly, but you must not think that it will alarm me should you be angry. I am rather glad when fellows get angry with my preaching. "Oh," I say to myself, "those fish feel the hook in their jaws and so they struggle to escape." Of course a fish does not like the hook which lays hold of him! But these angry hearers will come again. You people with whom the sermon goes in at one ear and out at the other, you get no good, whatever—but a man who fires up with wrath and says, "How dare that fellow speak thus to me?" is sure to listen again—and it is very likely that God will bless him. But whether it offends you or pleases you—I repeat my warning—I charge you, do not drag others down to Hell with you! If you must go there yourselves, seek not to destroy those around you! Do not teach boys to drink and to swear. Neither tempt frail women to commit uncleanness with you. God help you to shake off all vice, for I know that vile habits are often the reason why men kick against the restraint of God's loving hand.

III. And now I have got to the very heart of my text. The third part is this—that THIS ARGUMENT AGAINST THE LORD'S DEALINGS IS A VERY BAD ONE. Job says, "Am I a sea, or whale, that You set a watch over me?" Listen! *To argue from our insignificance is poor pleading,* for the little things are just those against which there is most need to watch! If you

were a sea, or a whale, God might leave you alone, but as you are a feeble and sinful creature who can do more hurt than a sea, or a whale, you need constant watching! In life, men fall by very little things. One does not need to watch against his dog one half as much as against a horsefly, or a mosquito, for these will sting you when you least expect it. The *little* things need most watching, therefore it is poor reasoning when we complain that God watches us as if we were a sea, or a whale.

After all, *there is not a man here who is not much like a sea*, or a sea monster in this respect, that he needs a watch to be set over him. A man's heart is as changeable and as deceitful as the sea. Today it is calm as a sea of glass, unruffled by a breath of air. Oh, trust not yourself upon it, for before tomorrow's sun is up, your nature may be rolling in tremendous billows of passion! You cannot trust the sea, but it is more worthy of confidence than your heart! Here you are, tonight, and oh, how good you look as you sit and listen and then stand up and sing! Ah, my men! I should not like to hear you if you take to blaspheming your Maker, as many do! When you are down in the forecastle with a little band of praying men, how very good you feel! Let us see you when you are on shore and there is plenty of grog about. It is easy to have a calm sea when there is no wind, but how different is the ocean when a gale is blowing! We are all very well when far away from temptation, but how are we when the devil's servants are around us? Then, I fear, that too often good resolutions prove to be—

"False as the smooth, deceitful sea,
And empty as the whistling wind."

It may be that I speak to one who has undergone a dreadful change. Once you led others in the way of righteousness, but now you draw them into evil. Once you sailed under the Bethel flag, but now the old Pirate of the infernal lake is your captain. You have gone back to your old ways and have again become the slave of the world, the flesh and the devil. Your religious profession had no foundation. Ah me, you need not say, "Am I a sea, or a whale?" for seas and sea monsters are more to be trusted than you are! The sea is immeasurable and, as for you, your sinfulness is unsearchable. Your capacity is almost without measure—your mind reaches far and touches all things. Man's mind can rise in rebellion against the God of the whole earth, till, like the raging waves of the sea, it threatens to put out the lights of Heaven! When man is in a rebellious state he will rage in his thoughts as though he would wash away the shores of Heaven and beat like the surf upon the iron rocks of Hell. A man is an awful mystery of iniquity when left to himself. You cannot fathom his pride, nor measure his daring. Deep down in his mind there are innumerable creeping things, both small and great beasts—for all manner of evils and sins multiply in the heart like fishes in the sea! Do not ask, "Am I a sea, or a sea-monster, that You set a watch over me?" for the Lord may answer, "You are more capacious for evil than a sea and more wild than a sea monster."

I shall now go further and show that, by reason of our evil nature, *we have become like the sea*. This is true in several ways, for, first, *the sea is*

restless and so is our nature. "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." You need not go far to find hearts always agitated, always seeking rest and finding none. They know not Christ and, until they do know Him, they cannot rest. They are always seeking a something—they know not what. They run first in one direction and then in another, but they never follow the right thing. When they are thoughtful, no good comes of their thoughts. Their waters cast up—what? Pearls and corals? No—"mire and dirt." I do not need to explain those words. If any of you have to keep company with these restless beings, you know how foul-mouthed they can be. They cast up worse things than mire and dirt when they are stirred up. Oh, say not, "Am I a sea, or a whale?" Think of yourself as being as restless as a whale when the harpoon is in him—as restless as the sea when a storm is moving its lowest depths.

Let us say, next, that *the sea can be furious and terrible—and so can ungodly men*. When a man is in a fury, what a wild beast he can be! A landsman looks on the sea when it has put on its best behavior and he says, "I should not mind going on a voyage. It must be splendid to steam over such a sea! I feel I shall make a splendid sailor." Let him look at that same ocean, by-and-by. Where is the sea of glass, now? Where are the gentle waves which seemed afraid to ripple too far upon the sand? The sea roars and rages and raves. The Atlantic in a storm is terrible, but have you ever seen a tempest in a man's nature? It is an awful sight and one which causes gracious eyes to weep! What a miserable object is a man with the drink in him! He was as decent a fellow as one could talk with, but now that the drink has mastered him, the devil has come on board and you will do well to give him a wide berth. The same is true of passion. Concerning angry men our advice would be, "Put not to sea in a storm, neither argue with a man in a passion." You do not know what he will do, and he does not know, himself! Such a man will be grieved enough when he sobers down, but meanwhile, while the storm is on, he cares for nothing. His eyes flash lightning, his face is black as tempest, his mouth foams and his tongue rages. In his case, "The sea roars and the fullness thereof." When you feel the Lord's restraint, you need not ask, "Am I a sea, or a whale?" for your own heart may answer, "You can be more furious than the sea itself."

Think, again, *how unsatisfied is the sea*. It draws down and swallows up stretches of land and thousands of tons of cliff, but it is not filled up. "All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full." Huge Spanish galleons went to the bottom, with thousands of gold and silver pieces on board—but the sea was never the richer. When, on some dreadful night, our coasts are strewn with wrecks and hundreds of lives are lost, the devouring deep is never the more satisfied. The sea is a hungry monster which could swallow a navy and then open its mouth for more! Are not many men made of the same craving sort? If you gave them half a world, they would cry for the other half, and if they had the whole round globe, they would weep for the stars! Man's mind never rests in sweet content till

God, Himself, satisfies it with Himself. O man, without true religion it is your fate to go hungry and thirsty forever, or, like the sea, yeasting and foaming after you know not what!

Human nature is like the sea for mischief. How destructive is the ocean and how unfeeling! It makes widows and orphans by the thousands—and then smiles as if it had done nothing! Terrible havoc it can work when once its power is let loose! Do not talk of the destructiveness of the sea—let the reckless sinner think of the destructiveness of his own life! You that are living in sin and vice, what wrecks you have caused! How many who set out on the voyage of life and bade fair to make a splendid passage, have gone upon the rocks *through you*! A foul word, a loose song, a filthy act and a frivolous craft has become a wreck! Conscience can fill in the details. Ah me, one cannot say to God, "Am I a sea, or a sea monster?" or He might well reply, "No shark has devoured so many as the drunkard in his cups, the swearer in his presumption and the unclean in his lust!" Ah me, I could weep to think how much of mischief any one of you who are unconverted may yet do! The Lord deliver you from being left derelict, to cause wreck to others!

We must not forget that *we are less obedient to God than the sea is*. Nothing keeps back the sea from many a shore but a belt of sand—and though it rages in storm and tempest, the sea goes back in due time and leaves the sand for children to play upon. It knows its bounds and keeps them. When the time comes for the tide to rise, the obedient waters march upon the shore in unbroken ranks and fill up every creek. They do not linger behind their time. When the moment comes to stay where they are, they rest at flood. Then comes the instant to begin the ebb and, no matter how boisterous the waves may be, they fall back at God's bidding. What, after all, is more orderly than the great sea? Would to God we were like it in this! How readily this great creature yields! A little wind springs up and its waves answer at once to the breath of Heaven. When the sun crosses the line, the equinoctial gales know their season, while at all times the great currents cease not the flow which God has appointed them.

The sea is obedient to the Lord and so was that great fish of which we read just now—"The Lord spoke unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land." As for us, we refuse to obey! And when left to ourselves, what law can restrain us? Is there anything in Heaven or earth which a proud sinner will not venture to attempt? God blocks up the road to Hell with hedge, ditch and chain—but we break them all! He digs a trench across our way and we leap over it. He piles a mountain in the road and as if our feet were like hinds' feet, we leap upon the high places of presumption! A man will go against wind and tide in his determination to be lost! O Sea! O Sea! You are but a child with your father compared to the wicked and rebellious heart of man! It is a bad argument, then. We *need* to be looked after. We *need* to be watched. We *need* to be kept in check even *more* than a sea or a whale! We *need* the restraining Providence and constraining Grace of God to keep us from deadly sin.

IV. Last of all, I would remark that ALL THEY COMPLAINED OF WAS SENT IN LOVE. They said, "Am I a sea, or a whale, that You set a watch over me?" but if they had known the truth, they would have blessed God with all their hearts for having watched over them as He has done.

First, God's restraint of some of us *has kept us from self-ruin*. If the Lord had not held us in, we might have been in prison! We might have been in the grave! We might have been in Hell! Who knows what would have become of us? An old Scotchman said to Mr. Rowland Hill what, I am quite sure, would have been as true of me. He looked into Mr. Hill's face so keenly and so often that at last good Rowland asked him, "Why are you looking at my face so much?" "I was thinking," said the Scotchman, "that if you had not been converted by the Grace of God, you would have been a terrible sinner." And, surely, this would have been my case. Nothing half-and-half would have contented me. I would have gone to the end of my tether.

Is not the same true of some of you? How many times has the Lord laid His own hand on us to stay us from a fatal step! If we were checked in our youth and brought, then and there, to Jesus, it was a gracious deed on God's part. If we have been hindered during a sinful manhood and have, at length, been made to bow before the will of the Lord, this, also, is great Grace. Left to ourselves, we would have chosen our own destruction! Do you not think that God's taking you apart and giving you a tender conscience—and admonishing you so often—proves His great love to you! Surely someone has prayed for you! There is a mother here tonight. I hope she will not mind my telling you what she did last Tuesday when I was sitting in my vestry. She brought me a little brown paper parcel with £50 in it and she gave it for the British and Foreign Sailors' Society. She has a son whom she has not heard of for years. He went to sea and she cannot find him, or get any tidings of his whereabouts. But she hopes that a missionary of this Society may meet him in some strange place and bring him to the Savior.

She prays that it may be so and, therefore, she brings her self-sacrificing offering—a great sum, I am sure, for her—that she may help to support the good Society which, she hopes, may be a blessing to her boy. There are other sailors to whom God's love is seen in their being followed up by a mother's pleading. Ah, Friend, the Lord would not have checked you so if He had not intended to bless you! That broken leg of yours is to keep you from running too far into sin. That yellow fever was sent to cool the fever of your sin. Your missing that ship caused you to miss shipwreck and death. These mishaps were all tokens of love to *you*. The Lord would not let you perish! He resolves to save you. You are one of His chosen. Christ bought you with His blood and He means to have you for His own. If you will not come to Him with a gentle breeze, He will fetch you by a storm! Yield to the pressure of His love. If you will be as the horse and the mule which have no understanding, He will break you in and manage you with bit and bridle—but it would be far better if you would be ruled by love.

I think I see tokens of electing love upon you in those very things which you have kicked against. The Lord is working to bring you to Himself, and to Himself you must come. The prodigal son was driven home by stress of weather. If his father had had the doing of it, he could not have worked the matter better! His hungry belly and his pig-feeding fetched him home. The unkindness of the citizens of the far country helped to hurry him back to his father. Hardship, need and pain are meant to bring you back—and God has used them to that end! And the day will come when you will say, "I bless God for the rough wave which washed me on shore. I bless God for the stormy Providence which drowned my comfort, but saved my soul."

Once more and I have done. *God will not always deal roughly with you.* Perhaps tonight He will say His last sharp word. Will you yield to softer means? They say that oil poured on troubled waters will make them smooth—God the Holy Spirit can send to your troubled soul a lifelong calm! The winds and waves on the Galilean sea all went to sleep in an instant. How? Why, when Jesus came walking on the water, He said to the warring elements, "Be still." The waves crouched like whipped dogs at His feet, though they had, just before, roared like lions! He said to the winds, "Hush!" and they breathed as softly as the lips of a babe! Jesus is here at this hour. He that died on Calvary looks down on us—believe on Him! He lifts His pierced hands and cries, "Look unto Me, and be you saved!" Will you not look to Him? Oh, that His Grace may lead you at once to say, "He is All in All to me!"

Here is a soul-saving text for you—"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Accept the Savior and though you are as a sea, or as a whale, you shall no longer complain of the Lord's watching you, but you shall rejoice in perfect liberty! He is free who loves to serve his God! He makes it his delight that he is watched of the Lord. The Lord bless sailors! May we all meet in the Fair Havens! May the flag of your Society bless every sea because God blesses its missionaries! I wish for it the utmost prosperity and I judge it to be worthy of the most generous aid of all Christians. In all respects it is exactly to my mind. The Lord send prosperity to it! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Jonah 2.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—42 (VER I) 590, 551.

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REDEMPTION THROUGH BLOOD— THE GRACIOUS FORGIVENESS OF SINS
NO. 2207

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JUNE 7, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

"In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His Grace."
Ephesians 1:7.

READ the chapter and carefully note how the Apostle goes to the back of everything and commences with those primeval blessings which were ours before time began. He dwells on the Divine love of old and the predestination which came out of it—and all that blessed purpose of making us holy and without blame before Him in love, which was comprehended in the Covenant of Grace. It does us good to get back to these antiquities—to these eternal things. You shake off something of the dust of time, as you no longer walk down its restless ages, but traverse the glorious eternity where centuries seem no more than fallen leaves by the way. Thousands of years are less than a drop of a bucket compared with the lifetime of the Almighty! How sublime a thing to climb, in contemplation, to the everlasting God and the eternal council chamber—and to see the heart of love beating towards the chosen people before all time—and the infinite mind of God devising and purposing their good! This is an exceedingly great refreshment and the wonder is that so few Believers dare to ascend this sublime hill of the Lord, there to commune with Him who Was and Is, and is to come!

After the Apostle had briefly touched upon that subject, he then began to speak of *present blessings*—matters of actual experience—and he commenced by saying, "In whom we have redemption." The Grace of the eternal past is a matter of faith, but here is something which is within our grasp and enjoyment. The other we believe, but this we actually and literally *receive*. "We have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins."

And here let me say what a charming thing it is to deal with experimental divinity—not with theories, but with matters of fact—great facts which are dear to you because they have been worked *in you*, and you have not been merely a delighted spectator of them, but you have been the subject and object of them! "In whom we have redemption." Whether others have it or not, *we* have "redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." We do not *hope* for it, but we *have* it. We do not merely *think* so, but we

know that we have it. We are redeemed! We are free from bondage! We are forgiven and are no longer under condemnation!

At this time, as God shall help me, I shall dwell upon the forgiveness of sins. We have not time to plunge into the deeps of the eternal purpose, nor even to dive into the full Doctrine of Redemption, but, as the swallow with his wing touches the brook and then is up and away, so must it be with my thoughts at this time—a mere touch of the river of the Water of Life will be a blessing to myself and, as I cast a little spray over you, I hope it will refresh you, also. May the Holy Spirit help our meditation!

I. The first observation, taken distinctly from the text, is this—THAT THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS IS A GRAND BLESSING. The Apostle has mentioned it, if you notice, among the great things of God—His electing love, His adoption of us by Jesus Christ, His acceptance of us in the Beloved. Side by side with these colossal mercies, he puts this one, that we have "the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His Grace." This is a blessing of no mean stature, for it marches with the giants of Election and Adoption. Let it stand prominently out before us at this time.

What is this "forgiveness of sins"? Too often, in popular talk, it is supposed that the chief and main thought of the forgiven sinner is that he has escaped from Hell. Salvation means much more than this and what it further means is too much kept in the background, but yet I will begin with rescue from punishment, for if sin is pardoned, *the penalty is extinguished*. It would not be possible for God to forgive and yet to punish. That would be a forgiveness quite unworthy of God. It would, indeed, be no forgiveness at all! We are certain that the everlasting punishment of sin declared in Scripture will never happen to the man who is forgiven. When transgression is removed, the soul stands clear at the bar of God, and there can be no further penalty. "I absolve you," says the great Judge—and that carries with it weight, so that a man that is forgiven is cleared of the punishment which he must otherwise have borne. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."

Yet *Divine favor restored* is a still brighter result of forgiveness to many. Speaking from my own experience, while I was under conviction of sin I had less apprehension of the punishment of sin than I had of sin, itself. I do not know that I very frequently trembled at the thought of Hell—I did so whenever it came before my mind. But when I was in the hands of the Holy Spirit, as a Spirit of bondage convincing me of sin, my great trouble was that God was angry with me—properly and rightly so. I mourned that I had offended my Maker, that I had grieved the living God, that I had sinned against His righteous will and that I could not rejoice in His favor, nor sun myself in His smile. I felt that it was right on the part of the holy God to be displeased with me. I believe that the great joy of forgiveness, to the Believer, is that God has taken away His anger from him. That sweet hymn, which we often sing, is a paraphrase of a passage in Isaiah—

"I will praise You every day,

Now Your anger's turned away;
Comfortable thoughts arise
From the bleeding Sacrifice."

"Though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away and You comforted me."

Forgiveness means this among men. A person has grieved and wronged me. I feel hurt in my mind about it. When I forgive him, I no longer feel grieved or angry with him—I think of him as before—and we are on good terms. If my forgiveness is genuine—and in God's case it is emphatically so—then there is no resentment left. The offense is as though it had never been committed. I say to the person who did me wrong, "I take a sponge and I wipe it all off the slate. Give me your hand, let us stand as we stood before." The pardon of sin by God is after such a fashion. He blots out the sin as the Oriental erases with his pencil the record made upon his waxen tablet so that no trace of it remains. He smiles where otherwise he must have frowned. He gives complacent love where otherwise there must have been indignation and wrath. Do you not think that this is the sweetest way of looking at the forgiveness of sin? If you are, at this time, under legal work, feeling the tortures of a guilty conscience, you will appreciate such a pardon very highly. In the case of the poor penitent prodigal, it was the kiss of his father's lips, it was his restoration to his father's heart, it was the cheering words of his father's love that constituted to him the sweetest fragrance of the rose of forgiveness. Yes, the Lord Jesus Christ has come, that we poor guilty ones may be restored to the favor of God and walk consciously in the light of His Countenance because sin is removed!

This pardon of sin, being of this full and sweet character, involving both the reversal of the penalty of sin and the ending of the distance that intervened between us and God, brings with it *the removal of much distress and sorrow from the heart*! I do not think that there can be any grief outside of Hell that is more terrible to bear than the wounds of conscience. We read that, "David's heart smote him" and, believe me, the heart can smite as with an iron mace and smite where the bruise is intensely felt. Give me into the power of a roaring lion, but never let me come under the power of an awakened, guilty conscience! Yes, shut me up in a dark dungeon, among all manner of loathsome creatures—snakes and reptiles of all kinds—but, oh, give me not over to my own thoughts when I am consciously guilty before God! This, surely, is the worm that dies not and the fire that is not quenched!

I do not speak, now, what I have merely heard of, though, if you will read Mr. Bunyan's, "Grace Abounding," you will find a striking account of it there. I speak of what I have felt in my own soul. No pains of body can rival, for a moment, the agonized feeling of the heart when the hot irons of conviction burn their way through the soul. When God sets up the conscience and makes it a target for His arrows, they drink up the life blood of our spirit till we cry out and wonder how such anguish can come to a creature so insignificant. Our soul seems too small a cup to contain such

an ocean of misery—too narrow a field for so cruel a battle. It is not the Lord that is the author of the misery, but He is giving us up, for a while, that we may be filled with our own ways and learn the bitterness of our own sin. When the Lord comes to us with a forgiving word, these sorrows are gone like the mists of the morning when the sun arises. We still grieve to think that we have sinned, but that gnawing remorse, that vulture eating up the liver, is smitten with death and the man breathes hopefully again. Though the penitence remains, the torment is removed from me, when God has forgiven me.

Let me say, here, that full forgiveness of sin, consciously enjoyed, will not only lift an enormous weight from off the soul, but *it will breathe into the heart a great joy*. When you know that sin is forgiven, you cannot be sad as before. The thought of perfect pardon, if it does but fill the spirit, will thrust out gloom and remove apathy. It will make the lame man leap as a hart—he may still be lame, but he will leap as if he were not! And the tongue of the dumb, even though untrained to speech, shall be made to sing concerning Free Grace and dying love. When the thoughts are concentrated upon the enjoyment of complete forgiveness, full reception into the Divine favor and the blotting out of sin, then is the heart lifted into the suburbs of Heaven! My dear Hearers, do you know what I am talking about? Some of you do, blessed be the name of the Lord, but I am afraid that some of you do not—and you never will know the sweetness of mercy until you have first tasted the bitterness of sin! You will never know how Divine Grace can heal until you have felt how sin can wound. There is no clothing you till you are stripped. There is no making you alive till you are killed. There is no filling you till you are empty.

The Lord fills the hungry with good things, but the rich He sends away empty. God Himself will never comfort you till you are driven to self-despair—and if you have already come to that, it is a great privilege to me to be allowed to tell you that the fact of forgiveness of sin is not only a doctrine of the creed, but it is a promise of God's Word! "I believe in the forgiveness of sins"—this is no mere formula, but a realized fact with me. Removal of the penalty, removal of God's offense against us, the clearing away of all the turbid waters within the heart and the creation of joy and peace through perfect reconciliation to God—this is a summary account of the forgiveness of sin. It is a vast and rich blessing!

II. And now, secondly, THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS IS BOUND UP WITH REDEMPTION BY BLOOD. Take the text, "In whom we have *redemption through His blood*, the forgiveness of sins." Redemption and forgiveness are so put together as to look as if they were the same thing. Assuredly they are so interlaced and intertwisted that there is no having the one without the other.

Do you ask—"How is it that there should always need to be redemption by blood in order to the forgiveness of sin?" I call your attention to the expression, "Redemption through His blood." Observe, it is not redemption through His power, it is *through His blood*. It is not redemption through

His love, it is through His *blood*. This is insisted upon emphatically, since, in order to the forgiveness of sins, it is redemption through His blood, as you have it over and over again in Scripture. "Without shedding of blood is no remission." But they say—*they* say—that Substitution is not just! One said, the other day, that to lay sin upon Christ and to treat Him as guilty—and let Him die for the unjust—was not just! Yet the objector went on to say that God forgave men freely without any atonement at all! Of this wise critic I would ask—Is *that* just? Is it just to pass by breaches of the law without a penalty? Why any law at all? And why should men care whether they keep it or break it? It was stated by this critic that God, out of His boundless love, treated the guilty man as if he were innocent. I would ask—if that is right, where is the wrong of God's treating us as innocent because of the *righteousness of Christ*?

I venture to affirm that pardon is needless, if not impossible, upon the theory that the man, though guilty, is treated as if he were not guilty. If all are treated alike, whether guilty or not guilty, why should anyone desire pardon? It were easy to answer quibblers, but they really are not worth the answering! It is to me always sufficient if I find a Truth of God taught in Scripture—I ask no more. If I do not understand it, I am not particularly anxious to understand it! If it is in the Scriptures, I believe it. I like those grand, rocky Truths of the Bible which I cannot break with the hammer of my understanding, for on these I lay the foundations of my soul's confidence! Redemption by blood is here linked with forgiveness of sins and, in many other Scriptures we find it plainly stated. *It is so*. Let that stand for a sufficient answer to all objectors.

And *it is* so, if we come to think of it, *because this reflects great honor upon God*. They say, "Let God simply forgive the sin and have done with it." But where, then, is His justice? "Shall not the Judge of the earth do right?" He threatened sin with punishment. If He does not execute His threats, what then? Can we be sure that He will fulfill His promises? If He breaks His Word one way, might He not break it another? If the Lord should not execute the penalty which He has threatened for sin, would it not look as if He made a mistake in threatening a penalty at all? Would it not seem as if He had been too severe, at first, and then had to catch Himself up and revise His own judgment afterwards? And shall that be? Might it not be supposed that, after all, God made much ado about nothing and that He was really jesting with men when He threatened them with fearful punishment on account of sin? Shall God say, "Yes," and, "No"? Shall He speak and not speak?

This is according to the folly of man! Sometimes it may even be wisdom in a fallible man to reverse his word and retract his declaration, but with God this cannot be! It is necessary for the vindication of His own justice, His wisdom and His holiness, that He shall not forego one of His threats any more than one of His promises! And, since it is just that sin should be punished and that, though the sinner should, in wondrous mercy be permitted to go free, it is wise and just that Another should step in—God

Himself should step in—and bear for the sinner what is due to the justice of the Most High. The Substitution of our Lord in our place is the central Doctrine of the Gospel and it greatly glorifies the name of God.

Besides that, Beloved, *that sin should not be pardoned without an Atonement is for the welfare of the universe*. This world is but a speck compared with the universe of God. We cannot even imaging the multitudes of beings over which the great Lawgiver has rule. And if it could be whispered anywhere in that universe that, on this planet, God tampered with law, set aside justice, or did anything, in fact, to save His own chosen, so that He threw His own threats behind His back and disregarded His own solemn ordinance—why, this report would strike at the foundations of the Eternal Throne! Is God unjust in *any* case? Then how can He judge the universe? What creatures, then, would fear God, when they knew that He could play fast and loose with justice? It were a calamity even greater than Hell, itself, that sin should go unpunished! The very reins of moral order would be snatched from the hand of the great Charioteer—and I know not what of mischief would happen! Evil would then have mounted to the high Throne of God and would have become supreme throughout His domains. It is for the welfare of the universe, throughout the ages, that in the forgiveness of sins there should be redemption by blood. Let lovers of anarchy cavil at it, but let good men accept the Sacrifice of the Son of God with joy as the great establishment of law and justice.

Moreover, *this also is arranged for our comfort and as assurance of heart*. I declare before you all that if I had been anywhere assured, when I was under conviction of sin, that God could forgive me outright without any atonement, it would have yielded no sort of satisfaction to me, for my conscience was sitting in judgment upon myself and I felt that if I were on the Throne of God, I must condemn myself to Hell. Even if I could have derived a temporary comfort from the notion of forgiveness apart from atonement, the question would afterwards have come up—how is this just? If God does not punish me, He ought to do so—how can He do otherwise? He must be just, or He is not God! It must be that such sin as mine should bring punishment upon itself. Never, until I understood the great Truth of God of the substitutionary death of Christ, could my conscience get a moment's peace! If an atonement was not necessary for God, it certainly was necessary for me—and it seems to me necessary to every conscience that is fairly instructed as to the absolute certainty that sin involves deserved sorrow—and that every transgression and every iniquity must have its just recompense of reward. It was necessary for the perpetual peace of every enlightened conscience that the glorious Atonement should have been provided.

Besides that, the Lord meant to save us in a safe way *for the promotion of our future reverence for the Law*. Now, if sin had been blotted out so readily and nothing more said of it, what effect would that have had on us in the future? I think that everyone who has felt the burden of sin, has

stood at the foot of the Cross, heard the cries of the great Sacrifice and read God's wrath against sin written in crimson lines upon the blessed and perfect Person of the innocent Savior—every such person feels that sin is an awful thing! You cannot trifle with transgression after a vision of Gethsemane. You cannot laugh at it and talk about the littleness of its demerit, if you have once stood on Golgotha and heard the cry, "Eli, Eli, lame Sabachthani?" The death of the Son of God upon the Cross is the grandest of all moral lessons because it is a lesson that affects the very soul of the man and changes his whole idea of sin. The Cross straightens him from the desperate twist which sin gave him at the first. The cure of the first Adam's fall is the second Adam's death—the second Adam's Grace, which comes to us through His great Sacrifice! We love sin till we see that it killed our best Friend—and then we loathe it forevermore.

I say, again, that if the great Father forgave you and said, "There is nothing in it. Go your way, it is all over," you would have lacked that grand source of sanctified life which now you find in the wounds of Him who has made sin detestable to you—and has made perfect obedience, even unto death—the subject of your soul's admiration. Now you long to be unto the great Father, in your measure, what your great Redeemer was to Him when He magnified the Law and made it honorable. This is no mean benefit.

O Beloved Friends, I do bless the Lord, at this time, for the forgiveness of sins through redemption by blood! There is something worth preaching in this Truth of God. You can live on it—you can die on it. I am constantly—almost every week—at the deathbeds of our members here—we are so large a Church that one or two, every week, are going Home. When we begin to talk about the precious blood of Jesus—the blood of the Everlasting Covenant, you should see the brightness of dying eyes! I mark the quiet of the departing spirit and, as my dear Friends grip my hand, their testimony is unvaryingly, "Jesus is the Rock of our confidence and all is well."

O Lord Jesus, hold Your Cross before my closing eyes! O blessed Redeemer, what will a man do in death who has not Your death to be the death of his sin? How can a man live who has never seen You lay down Your life in His place, "the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God"? Whatever others may say, let us repeat our text with solemn assurance, "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins."

III. But now, thirdly—and the text is very clear upon this, as upon the other two points—THE FORGIVENESS OF SIN IS STILL A MATTER OF GRACE—AND OF RICH GRACE. "We have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, *according to the riches of His Grace*."

I admit that the forgiveness of sins, on God's part, is a matter of justice, now that the redemption by blood has been completed. The man believes. The man confesses his sin. And it is written, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." The Sacrifice is so great that it justly puts away the sin and it is righteously forgiven. But observe this—

the act of God in forgiving is not one atom the less gracious, because, in His infinite wisdom, He has so contrived that it is unquestionably just. If any make this assertion, they will be called upon to prove it—and they *can* prove it.

Pardon is the more gracious to us that it does not come to us in an unrighteous way. We see God's great prudence and wisdom in planning the method by which He may "be just, and the Justifier of him that believes." Those thoughts and plans on God's part are all tokens of great love to us. Beloved, it is only by Divine Grace that we are justified, yet that this Grace is exercised in a way of justice causes the Grace to be not less, but even manifestly more gracious!

The death of Christ, the redemption by blood, instead of veiling the Grace of God, only manifests it. Put the thing before your own minds. Suppose that somebody has offended you and you say, "Think no more of it. It is all forgiven"? Very well. That is kind of you and commendable. It shows the graciousness of your character. But suppose, on the other hand, you were in office as a judge and felt compelled to say, "I am willing to forgive you, but your offense has resulted in such great mischiefs and all these things have to be cleared away. I will tell you what I will do. I will clear them away myself. I will bear the result of your sin in order that my pardon may be seen to be most sure and full. I will pay the debt in which you have involved yourself. I will go to the prison to which you ought to go as the consequence of what you have done. I will suffer the effect of your wrongdoing instead of condemning you to suffer it"?

Well, now, the forgiveness that costs you so much would manifest your graciousness much more than that which costs you nothing beyond a kind will and a tender heart! Oh, if it is so, that God, the Divine Ruler, the Judge of all the earth, says to guilty man, "I will pardon you, but it is imperative that My Law be carried out. And this cannot be done except by the death of My dear Son, who is One with Me, who is very God of very God, who Himself wills to stand in your place and vindicate My justice by suffering the penalty due to you"—then I say that the Grace of God is a thousand-fold more clearly shown than by the free forgiveness which "modern thought" pleads for! Pardon which has cost God more than it cost Him to make all worlds—which has cost Him more than to manage all the empires of His Providence—which has cost Him His Only-Begotten Son and has cost that Only-Begotten Son a life of sorrow and a death of unutterable and immeasurable anguish—I say that *this* pardon is preeminently gracious! Love is more displayed in this, infinitely more, than by a mere word and a wave of the hand which would dismiss the sinner without any attempt at an atoning sacrifice.

Besides, Beloved, let this always be remembered, that it is in the application of redemption and the personal pardon of any sinner, through the blood of Jesus, that the Grace of God is best seen by that sinner. To each one, that pardon through the Lord Jesus comes, not only according to Grace, but "according to the riches of His Grace." I can understand that

God should forgive *you*, all of you. I could hear it with full belief and it would not astonish me. But that He should pardon *me*—that I should have the forgiveness of sins and redemption by blood—that truly astonishes me! And I believe that any person, under a sense of sin, sees more of the Grace of God in His own salvation than in the salvation of anybody else. He may be quite conscious that he has never been a thief, or a drunk, or a murderer and yet, when he comes to look at it, he may see reasons why the pardon of sin in his case should be more remarkable than even in the case of a drunk, or a thief, or a murderer! There may be elements in his own case which may make him seem to have sinned even more grievously than open transgressors because he transgressed against greater light, with less temptation and with a direr presumption of rebellion against the Most High. That Jesus died is unutterable Grace—but that He loved me and gave Himself for *me*—this is overwhelming Grace and makes the heir of Heaven say with emphasis, "Blessed be God that, in Jesus, I have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His Grace!"

Do you not feel at this time, you that have been pardoned, that nothing but the riches of God's Grace could ever have pardoned you? No scanty Grace could have provided an atonement equal to your iniquities! Poverty of Grace would have left you ruined by your debt of sin! Riches of Grace were needed and riches of Grace were forthcoming in redemption by blood and in the full, perfect, irreversible forgiveness which God gave you in the day when you believed on Jesus Christ your Savior! Oh, that the Holy Spirit would help you to sing of the Grace of God today and every day!

IV. Thus far have I brought you, then, in three remarks. Kindly follow me in the fourth one, upon which I will not be long.

Fourthly, THIS FORGIVENESS OF SINS IS ENJOYED BY US NOW. "In whom we have"—*we have*—"redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His Grace." I remember the astonishment with which I felt as I sat in a ministers' meeting and heard one who professed to be a preacher of the Gospel, assert that he did not think that any of us could be sure that he was forgiven. I ventured at once to say that I was sure—and I was pleased, but by no means surprised, to find that others dared to say the same. I hope I have hundreds before me who enjoy the same assurance!

Brothers and Sisters, if there is no consciousness of the forgiveness of sins possible, *how can there be any rest for the conscience*? Yet Jesus says, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." What rest is possible to the condemned? Can you go to bed tonight with your sins unforgiven? Some of you may have the foolhardiness to do that, but I would not dare to do it! Look where you are. Within a moment you may be dead. Within that moment you will be in Hell, past all hope. In a single instant you may be eternally lost—can you endure the thought? Our breath has but to stop, or the heart to cease beating and instantly life is over! How can you be at peace while sin is unforgiven?

Unless sin had made men mad, they would never rest till they were cleared from their sins. There cannot be any true rest without a consciousness of forgiveness. Yet that rest is promised—therefore the present enjoyment of an assurance of forgiveness must be possible!

And, next, *where could there ever be that great love in the hearts of men and women which we read of in Scripture*? She that washed the Savior's feet with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head—would she have done so if she had not known that she was forgiven? She loved much because she had had much forgiven her! And the stimulus, the zeal, the fervor that spurs on a man in his service and suffering for the Lord Jesus must arise out of the consciousness that the Lord has done great things for him—and the conclusion that, therefore, he must do great things for his Lord. Surely, you have robbed Christianity of its highest moral force if you have denied the possibility of knowing that you are pardoned!

Moreover, *where is there any testimony of the power of Grace*? We that come and preach to you would be liars if we, ourselves, have never tasted and handled pardoning Grace. We do, at any rate, but preach to you a second-hand Gospel, which we have never tested and proved for ourselves. If I did not know, in my very soul, that the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin, how could I dare to face you with the Gospel message? I have not impudence enough to tell you of what is, or is not the Truth of God, about which I am uncertain myself! God grant me Grace to break stones, or sweep chimneys sooner than come and tell you a cunningly-devised fable, or a tale about which I have no assured certainty, derived from personal knowledge! Could I say to you, "I dare say there is bread, but I myself am hungry and I have never eaten a mouthful of the provision which I offer you"? Think of my saying to one perishing of thirst, "There is Living Water flowing from the Rock, but personally I am thirsty." You might say to me at once, "Then go home to your house and next time you appear, be sure of the truth of what you tell us. If *you* do not believe it, how should we believe it?" Beloved, there are thousands, there are still *tens of thousands* on earth who know that the Son of God has power on earth to forgive sins! And there are myriads in Heaven who passed to their happiness confident that they had been forgiven—and they sang on earth the same song that they sing in Heaven, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb! They know it, they have no doubt about it! Many of us know it here and rejoice therein at this moment.

Dear Friend, what would you give to have this assurance? You may have it—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." "Whoever believes in Him is justified from all sin." "He that believes in Him has everlasting life." Oh, that God's Grace may lead you to cast away all other confidences and to lay your guilty spirit down at Jesus' feet! Then shall you go your way rejoicing that you, also, with us, can say, "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins."

V. Fifthly—and this is only a brief head, but it is a point that must not be left out—THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS BINDS US TO OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. Let us read the text again. "*In whom* we have redemption through *His* blood." We have *nothing* apart from Jesus! Every blessing of the Covenant binds us to Christ. Covenant gifts are so many golden chains to fasten the soul of the Believer to his Lord. Our wealth of mercy is all in Christ. There is nothing good outside of Christ. When are we pardoned, Brothers and Sisters? When have we forgiveness? Why, when we are in Him, *"in whom* we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." O son of Adam, living without Jesus, hear and take warning! So long as you are out of Christ, you must bear your own burden till it crushes you to the dust! But as soon as you have touched the hem of His garment there is a link of connection—and if you can rise from that to holding Him by the feet—the union is closer! And if you can, from that, become like Simeon, who took Him up in his arms, then may you cry, "My eyes have seen Your salvation!" When you have Christ to the fullest, you have Grace to the fullest! It is as you are in Christ—in connection and communion with Christ—that you receive the pardon of sin, for all the pardon is in Him. Do you see that?

"In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." The forgiveness is not so much in His office and in His work, as in *Himself*. When you get Christ, you have redemption, for He *is* Redemption. When you get Christ, you have forgiveness of sins, for He is the Propitiation for our sins. He has put the sin away by the Sacrifice of Himself. Get Christ and you have the proof, the evidence, the sum, the *substance* of perfect pardon. If you accept the Beloved, you are "accepted in the Beloved." When you are in Him, then you are forgiven, but your forgiveness is only in Him. In Him you have redemption—out of Him you are in bondage.

Beloved, every day, as we go afresh to God for a sense of pardon, let us know that we can never get it unless we come viewing Jesus. I notice that some Believers, when they get rather dull and cold, begin the work of self-examination. This may appear very proper, but it is dreary work. I do not believe, dear Friends, if you are very poor, that you will ever get rich by looking through all your empty cupboards. If it is very cold and you have no coals in the cellar, you will not become warm by going into the cellar and seeing that there is nothing below but an empty coal hole. No, no—if our Graces are to be revived we must begin with a renewed consciousness of pardon through the precious blood—and the only way to get that sense of pardon is to go to the Cross, again, even as we went at first! I sometimes wonder that you do not get tired of my preaching because I do nothing but hammer away on this one nail. I have driven it in up to the head and I have gone round to the other side to clinch it—but I still keep at it. With me it is, year after year, "None but Jesus! None but Jesus!" Oh, you great saints, if you have outgrown the need of a sinner's trust in the Lord Jesus, you have outgrown your sins! But you have also outgrown your

Grace and your saintship has ruined you! He that has the mind of Christ within him must still come to his Lord, just as he came at the first.

I frankly confess that still I cry to my Lord Jesus—

"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to Your Cross I cling."

Still, to this day, I have no redemption in myself, but only in Jesus! I am not an inch forwarder as to the ground of my trust. Is it not so with you? Do we not still say of Jesus—"In whom we have redemption through His blood"? To this day we find no reason for forgiveness in ourselves. The precious blood is still our one plea! Lost and condemned are we apart from the one offering of our Great High Priest. But cleansed and justified are we in Him—

"Oh, how sweet to view the flowing
Of His sin-atoning blood!
With Divine assurance knowing,
He has made my peace with God."

You know the story of the poor bricklayer who fell from a scaffold, and when they took him up, he was so much injured that they fetched a minister to him, who, stooping over him, said, "My dear Man, you have a very short time to live. I entreat you to make your peace with God." To the surprise of the minister, the man opened his eyes and said, "Make my peace with God, Sir? It was made for me nearly 1,900 years ago, upon the Cross of Calvary, by Him that loved me and gave Himself for me." Oh, the joy which this creates in the heart! Yes, it is in *Jesus* that the peace is made—effectually made, made for me, made for you, made for all Believers! In Jesus is perfect redemption! In Jesus pardon is provided, proclaimed, presented and sealed upon the conscience! Go and live on Jesus; live with Jesus; live in Jesus; never go away from Jesus and may He be dearer to you every day of your lives! Blessed be His adorable name! Amen, and Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Ephesians 1.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—289, 293, 296.

Mr. Spurgeon is recovering from the great weakness left upon him by an attack of influenza, but he hopes to preach at the Tabernacle next Lord's-Day. May this sickness be sanctified to the Glory of God!

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THE STATUTE OF DAVID FOR THE SHARING OF THE SPOIL
NO. 2208

A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 7, 1891,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And David came to the two hundred men, which were so faint that they could not follow David, whom they had made also to abide at the brook Besor: and they went forth to meet David, and to meet the people that were with him: and when David came near to the people, he saluted them. Then answered all the wicked men and men of Belial, of those that went with David, and said, Because they went not with us, we will not give them any of the spoil that we have recovered, save to every man his wife and his children, that they may lead them away, and depart. Then said David, You shall not do so, my Brethren, with that which the Lord has given us, who has preserved us, and delivered the company that came against us into our hands. For who will hearken unto you in this matter? But as his part is that Goes down to the battle so shall his part be that tarries by the stuff: they shall part alike. And it was so from that day forward, that he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel unto this day."
1 Samuel 30:21-26.

THOSE who associate themselves with a leader must share his fortunes. Six hundred men had left their abodes in Judea. Unable to endure the tyranny of Saul, they had linked themselves with David and made him to be a captain over them. They were, some of them, the best of men, and some of them were the worst—in this, resembling our congregations. Some of them were choice spirits whom David would have sought, but others were undesirable persons from whom he might gladly have been free. However, be they who they may, they must rise or fall with their leader and commander. If he had the city Ziklag given to him, they had a house and a home in it. And if Ziklag was burned with fire, their houses did not escape. When David stood amid the smoking ruins, a penniless and a wifeless man, they stood in the same condition. This rule holds good with all of us who have joined ourselves to Christ and His cause—we must be partakers with Him. I hope we are prepared to stand to this rule today. If there is ridicule and reproach for the Gospel of Christ, let us be willing to be ridiculed and reproached for His sake. Let us gladly share with Him in His humiliation and never dream of shrinking. This involves a great privilege, since they that are with Him in His humiliation shall be with Him in His Glory. If we share His rebuke in the midst of an evil gen-

eration, we shall also sit upon His Throne and share His Glory in the day of His appearing. Brothers and Sisters, I hope the most of us can say we are in for it—to sink or swim with Jesus. In life or death, where He is, there will we, His servants, be. We joyfully accept both the Cross and the Crown which go with our Lord Jesus Christ—we are eager to bear our full share of the blame, that we may partake in His joy.

It frequently happens that when a great disaster occurs to a band of men, a mutiny follows. However little it may be the leader's fault, the defeated cast the blame of the defeat upon him. If the fight is won, "it was a soldiers' battle"—every man at arms claims his share of praise. But if the battle is *lost*, blame the commander! It was entirely his fault—if he had been a better general, he might have won the day. This is how people talk—fairness is out of the question. So in the great disaster at Ziklag, when the town was burned with fire, and wives and children were carried away captive—then we read that they spoke of stoning David. Why David? Why David more than anybody else, it is hard to see, for he was not there, nor any one of them. They felt so vexed, that it would be a relief to stone *somebody*—and why not David? Brethren, it sometimes happens, even to the servants of Christ, that when they fall into persecution and loss for Christ's sake, the tempter whispers to them to throw up their profession. "Since you have been a Christian, you have had nothing but trouble. It seems as if the dogs of Hell were snapping at your heels more than ever since you took upon you the name of Christ. Therefore, throw it up and leave the ways of godliness." Vile suggestion! Mutiny against the Lord Jesus? Dare you do so? Some of us cannot do so, for when He asks us, "Will you, also, go away?" we can only answer, "Lord, to whom should we go? You have the Words of eternal life." No other leader is worth following! We must follow the Son of David. Mutiny against Him is out of the question—

"Through floods or flames, if Jesus leads,
We'll follow where He goes."

When a dog follows a man, we may discover whether the man is his master by seeing what happens when they come to a turn in the road. If the creature keeps close to its master at all turnings, it belongs to him. Every now and then you and I come to turns in the road and many of us are ready, through Divine Grace, to prove our loyalty by following Jesus even when the way is hardest. Though the tears stand in His eyes and in ours. Though we weep together till we have no more power to weep, we will cling to Him, when the many turn aside, and witness that He has the Living Word and none upon earth beside. God grant us Grace to be faithful unto death!

If we thus follow our Leader and bear His reproach, the end and issue will be glorious victory. It was a piteous sight to see David leaving 200 men behind him and marching with his much diminished forces after an enemy who had gone, he scarcely knew where, who might be 10 times stronger than his little band, and might slay those who pursued them. It

was a melancholy spectacle for those left behind to see their leader a broken man, worn and weary like themselves, hastening after the cruel Amalekite. How very different was the scene when he came back to the brook Besor more than a conqueror! Do you not hear the song of them that make merry? A host of men in the front are driving vast herds of cattle and flocks of sheep—and singing as they march, "This is David's spoil!" Then you see armed men with David in the midst of them, all laden with spoil, and you hear them singing yet another song! Those that bring up the rear are shouting exultingly, "David recovered all! David recovered all!" They, the worn-out ones that stayed at the brook Besor, hear the mingled song and join first in the one shout, and then in the other, singing, "This is David's spoil! David recovered all!"

Yes, we have no doubt about the result of our warfare. He that is faithful to Christ shall be glorified with Him. That He will divide the spoil with the strong is never a matter of question. "The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hands." The old Truth of God by which we stand shall never be blotted out—

"Engraved as in eternal brass
The mighty promise shines!
Nor shall the powers of darkness erase
Those everlasting lines."

We are certain as we live that the exiled Truth shall celebrate its joyful return. The faith once for all delivered to the saints may be downtrodden for a season—but rejoice not over us, O our adversaries—though we fall, we shall rise again! Therefore we patiently hope, quietly wait and calmly believe. We drink of the brook Besor by the way and lift up our heads.

This morning I want to utter God-given words of comfort to those who are faint and weary in the Lord's army. May the Divine Comforter make them so!

I. I shall begin by saying, first, that FAINT ONES OCCUR EVEN IN THE ARMY OF OUR KING. Among the very elect of David's army—heroes who were men of war from their youth up—there were hands that hung down and feeble knees that needed to be confirmed. There are such in Christ's army at most seasons. We have among us soldiers whose faith is real and whose love is burning and yet, for all that, just now their strength is weakened in the way and they are so depressed in spirit, that they are obliged to stay behind with the baggage.

Possibly some of these weary ones had grown faint because *they had been a good deal perplexed*. David had so wrongfully entangled himself with the Philistine king, that he felt bound to go with Achish to fight against Israel. I dare say these men said to themselves, "How will this end? Will David really lead us to battle against Saul? When he could have killed him in the cave, he would not, but declared that he would not lift up his hand against the Lord's anointed! Will he now take us to fight against the anointed of God? This David, who was so great an enemy of Philistia and slew their champion, will he war on their behalf?"

They were perplexed with their leader's movements. I do not know whether you agree with me, but I find that half-an-hour's perplexity takes more out of a man than a month's labor. When you cannot see your bearings and know not what to do, it is most trying. When, to be true to God, it seems that you must break faith with man—and when, to fulfill your unhappy covenant with evil would make you false to your Christian profession, things are perplexing! If you do not walk carefully, you can easily get into a snarl. If Christians walk in a straight line, it is comparatively easy going, for it is easy to find your way along a straight road. But when good men take to the new cut, that by-path across the meadow, then they often get into ditches that are not on the map and fall into thickets and sloughs that they never reckoned upon. Then is the time for heart-sickness to come on. These warriors may very well have been perplexed and, perhaps, they feared that God was against them—and that now their cause would be put to shame. And when they came to Ziklag and found it burned with fire, the perplexity of their minds added intense bitterness to their sorrow and they felt bowed into the dust. They did not pretend to be faint, but they were *really* so, for the mind can soon act upon the body and the body fails sadly when the spirits are worried with questions and fears. This is one reason why certain of our Lord's loyal-hearted ones are on the sick list and must stay in the barracks for a while.

Perhaps, also, *the pace was killing to these men*. They made forced marches for three days from the city of Achish to Ziklag. These men could do a good day's march with anybody, but they could not foot it at the double quick march all day long. There are a great many Christians of that sort—good, staying men who can keep on under ordinary pressure, doing daily duty well and resisting ordinary temptations bravely. But at a push they fare badly—who among us does not? To us there may come multiplied labors and we faint because our strength is small.

Worst of all, *their grief came in just then*. Their wives were gone. Although, as it turned out, they were neither killed nor otherwise harmed, yet they could not know this—and they feared the worse. For a man to know that his wife is in the hands of robbers and that he may never see her again is no small trouble. Their sons and daughters were also gone—no prattlers climbed their father's knee, no gentle daughters came forth to bid them, "Welcome home." Their homes were still burning, their goods were consumed and they lifted up their voices and wept—is it at all amazing that some of them were faint after performing that doleful *miserere*? Where would you be if you went home this morning and found your home burned and your family gone, you knew not where?

I know many Christians who get very faint under extraordinary troubles. They should not, but they do. We have reason to thank God that no temptation has happened to us but such as is common to men and yet, it may not seem so. But we may feel as if we were especially tried, like Job. Messenger after messenger has brought us evil tidings and our hearts are

not fixed on the Lord as they ought to be. To those who are faint through grief I speak just now. You may be this and yet you may be a true follower of the Lamb—and as God has promised to bring you out of your troubles, He will surely keep His word. Remember, He has never promised that you shall have *no* sorrows, but that He will deliver you out of them all. Ask yon saints in Heaven! Ask those to step out of the shining ranks who came there without trial. Will one of the leaders of the shining host give the word of command that he shall step forward who has washed his robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, but who never knew what affliction meant while here below? No one stirs in all that white-robed host! Not one comes forward? Must we wait here forever without response? Look! Instead of anyone stirring from their ranks, I hear a voice that says, "These are they which came out of great tribulation." All of them have known not only tribulation, but *great* tribulation! One promise of the New Testament is surely fulfilled before our eyes—"In the world you shall have tribulation." When trouble came so pressingly on David's men, they felt their weakness and needed to stop at the bank of the brook.

Perhaps, also, *the force of the torrent was too much for them.* As I have told you, in all probability the brook Besor was only a hollow place which, in ordinary times, was almost dry. But in a season of great rain it filled suddenly with a rushing muddy stream, against which only strong men could stand. These men might have kept on upon dry land, but the current was too fierce for them and they feared that it would carry them off their feet and drown them. Therefore, David gave them leave to stay there and guard the stuff. Many there are of our Lord's servants who stop short of certain onerous service—they are not called to do what their stronger comrades undertake with joy. They can do *something*, but they fail to do *more*—they can also bear certain trials, but they are unable to bear more—they faint because they have not yet come to fullness of growth in Divine Grace. Their hearts are right in the sight of God, but they are not in condition to surmount some peculiar difficulty.

You must not overdrive them, for *they* are the feeble of the flock. Many are too faint for necessary controversy. I have found a great many of that sort about lately—the Truth of God is very important, but they love peace. It is quite necessary that certain of us should stand up for the faith once delivered to the saints, but they are not up to the mark for it. They cannot bear to differ from their fellows and they hold their tongues rather than contend for the Truth of God. There are true hearts that, nevertheless, cannot defend the Gospel! They wish well to the champions, but they seek the rear rank for themselves. And some cannot advance any further with regard to knowledge—they know the fundamentals and feel as if they could master nothing more. It is a great blessing that they know the Gospel and feel that it will save them, but the glorious mysteries of the Everlasting Covenant, of the Sovereignty of God, of His eternal love and distinguishing Grace, they cannot compass—these are a brook Besor which, as

yet, they cannot swim. It would do them a world of good if they could venture in but, still, they are not to be tempted into these blessed deeps. To hear of these things rather wearies them than instructs them. They have not strength enough of mind for the deep things of God. I would have every Christian wish to know all that he can know of the revealed Truths of God. Somebody whispers that the secret things belong not to us. You may be sure you will never know them if they are secret, but all that is revealed you ought to know, for these things belong to you and to your children! Take care you know what the Holy Spirit teaches. Do not give way to a fainthearted ignorance, lest you be great losers thereby. That which is fit food for babes should not be enough for young men and fathers—we should eat strong meat—and leave milk to the little ones.

Yet these fainting ones were, after all, in David's army. Their names were in their Captain's Register as much as the names of the strong. And they did not desert the colors. They had the same captain as the stoutest-hearted men in the whole regiment. They could call David, "Master," and, "Lord," as truly as the most lion-like man among them! They were in for the same dangers, for if the men in front had been beaten and had retreated, the enemy would have fallen on those who guarded the stuff. If the Amalekites had slain the 400, they would have made short work of the two hundred. They had work to do as necessary as that of the others. Though they had not to fight, they had to take care of the stuff—and this eased the minds of the fighting men. I will be bound to say it was a great trial to them not to be allowed to march into the fight. For a brave man to see the troops go past him and hear the last footfall of his comrades, must have been sickening. Who could pleasantly say, "I am left out of it. There is a glorious day coming and I shall be away. I shall, until I die, think myself accursed I was not there, and hold my manhood cheap that I fought not with them on that glorious day." It is hard for brave men to be confined to a hospital and have no drive at the foe. The weary one wishes he could be in the front where his Captain's eyes would be upon him. He pants to smite down the enemies and win back the spoil for his comrades.

Enough of this. I will only repeat my first point—fainting ones do occur, even in the army of our King.

II. Secondly, THESE FAINTING ONES REJOICE TO SEE THEIR LEADER RETURN. Do you see, that when David came back, they went to meet him and the people who were with him. I feel very much like this myself. That was one reason why I took this text. I felt, after my illness, most happy to come forth and meet my Lord in public. I hoped He would be here and so He is! I am also glad to meet with you, my Friends. We are still spared for the war. Though laid aside a while, we are again among our Brothers and Sisters. Thank God! It is a great joy to meet you. I am sorry to miss so many of our Church members who are laid aside by this sickness, [influenza—see postscript of Sermon #2207] but it is a choice

blessing to meet so many of our kindred in Christ. We are never happier than when we are in fellowship with one another and with our Lord.

David saluted the stay-at-homes. Oh, that He might salute each one of us this morning, especially those who have been laid aside! Our King's salutations are wonderful for their heartiness. He uses no empty compliments nor vain words. Every syllable from His lips is a benediction. Every glance of His eyes is an inspiration. When the King, Himself, comes near, it is always a feast day to us! It is a high day and a holiday, even with the faintest of us, when we hear His voice! So they went to meet David and he came to meet them and there was great joy. Yes, I venture to mend that, and say there is great joy among us now! Glory be to His holy name, the Lord is here! We see Him and rejoice with unspeakable joy!

David's courtesy was as free as it was true. Possibly those who remained behind were half afraid that their leader might say, "See here, you idle fellows, what we have been doing for you!" No. He saluted them, but did not scold them. Perhaps they thought, "He will upbraid us that we did not manage to creep into the fray." But no. "He gives liberally, and upbraids not." He speaks not a word of upbraiding, for his heart pities them and, therefore, he salutes them—"My Brethren, God has been gracious to us. All hail!" David would have them rejoice together and give praise unto the Most High. He will not dash their cup with a drop of bitter.

Oh, for a salutation from our Lord at this good hour! When Christ comes into a company, His Presence makes a heavenly difference. Have you ever seen an assembly listening to an orator, all unmoved and stolid? Suddenly the Holy Spirit has fallen on the speaker and the King, Himself, has been visibly set forth among them in the midst of the assembly! And all have felt as if they could leap to their feet and cry, "Hallelujah, hallelujah!" Then hearts beat fast and souls leap high, for where Jesus is found, His Presence fills the place with delight. Now, then, you weary ones, if you are here, any of you, may you rejoice as you now meet your Leader and your Leader reveals Himself to you! If no one else has a sonnet, I have mine. He must, He shall be praised! "You are the King of Glory, O Christ! All Heaven and earth adore You. You shall reign forever and ever."

III. Thirdly, FAINT ONES HAVE THEIR LEADER FOR THEIR ADVOCATE. Listen to those foul-mouthed men of Belial, these wicked men, how they rail against those whom God has afflicted! They came up to David and began blustering—"These weaklings who were not in the fight, they shall not share the spoil. Let them take their wives and children and be gone." These fellows spoke with loud, harsh voices and greatly grieved the feebler ones. Who was to speak up for them? Their leader became their advocate!

First, do you notice, *He pleads their unity*? The followers of the son of Jesse are one and inseparable. David said, "You shall not do so, my Brethren, with that which the Lord has given us, who has preserved us." "We are all one," says David. "God has given the spoil, not to you, alone,

but to us all. We are all one company of brothers." The unity of saints is the consolation of the feeble. Brothers and Sisters, our Lord Jesus Christ would refresh His wearied ones by the reflection that we are all one in Him. I may be the foot, all dusty and travel-stained, and you may be the hand, holding forth some precious gem, but we are still one body. Yonder friend is the brow of holy thought and another is the lip of persuasion and a third is the eye of watchfulness, but still, we are one body in Christ. We cannot do, any one of us, without his fellow—each one ministers to the benefit of all. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you." We are all one in Christ Jesus. Surely this ought to comfort those of you who, by reason of feebleness, are made to feel as if you were very inferior members of the body—you are still living members of the mystical body of Jesus Christ your Lord—and let this suffice you. One life is ours, one love is ours, one Heaven shall be ours in our one Savior!

David further *pleaded Free Grace*, for he said to them, "You shall not do so, my Brethren, with that which the Lord has given us." He did not say, "With that which you have conquered and fairly earned in battle," but, "that which the *Lord has given us*." Look upon every blessing as a gift and you will not think any shut out from it, not even yourself! The gift of God is eternal life—why should you not have it? Deny not to anyone of your Brothers and Sisters any comfort of the Covenant of Grace. Think not of any man, "He ought not to have so much joy." It is all of Free Grace and if Free Grace rules the hour, the least may have it as well as the greatest! If it is all of Free Grace, then, my poor struggling Brother, who can hardly feel assured that you are saved, yet if you are a Believer, you may claim every blessing of the Lord's gracious Covenant! God freely gives to you as well as to me the provisions of His love—therefore let us be glad and not judge ourselves after the manner of the law of condemnation!

Then he pleaded *their needfulness*. He said, "These men abided by the stuff." No army fights well when its camp is unguarded. It is a great thing for a Church to know that its stores are well guarded by a praying band. While some of us are teaching in the school or preaching in the street, we have great comfort in knowing that a certain number of our friends are praying for us. To me it is a boundless solace that I live in the prayers of thousands! I will not say which does the better service—the man that preaches, or the man that prays—but I know this, that we can do better without the voice that preaches than without the heart that prays. The petitions of our bed-ridden Sisters are the wealth of the Church! The kind of service which seems most commonplace among men is often the most precious unto God. Therefore, as for those who cannot come into the front places of warfare, deny them not seats of honor, since, after all, they may be doing the greater good. Remember the statute, "They shall part alike."

Notice that David *adds to his pleading a statute*. I like to think of our great Commander, the Lord Jesus, making statutes. For whom does He legislate? For the first three? For the captains of thousands? No. He

makes a statute for those who are forced to stay at home because they are faint. Blessed be the name of our Lord Jesus! He is always looking to the interests of those who have nobody else to care for them! If you can look after your own cause, you may do so, but if you are so happy as to be weak in yourself, you shall be strong in Christ. Those who have Christ to care for them are better off than if they took care of themselves. He that can leave his concerns with Christ has left them in good hands. Vain is the help of self, but all-sufficient is the aid of Jesus!

To sum up what I mean—I believe the Lord will give to the sick and the suffering an equal reward with the active and energetic if they are equally concerned for His Glory. The Lord will also make a fair division to the obscure and unknown as well as to the renowned and honored if they are equally earnest. Oh, tell me not that she who rears her boy for Christ shall miss her reward from Him by whom an Apostle is recompensed! Tell me not that the woman who so conducts her household that her servants come to fear God, shall be forgotten in the day when the "Well dones" are distributed to the faithful! Homely and unnoticed service shall have honor as surely as that with which the world is ringing!

Some of God's people are illiterate and they have but little native talent. But if they serve the Lord as best they can, with all their heart, they shall take their part with those that are the most learned and accomplished! He that is faithful over a little shall have his full reward of Divine Grace. It is accepted according to what a man has. We may possess no more than two mites, but if we cast them into the treasury, our Lord will think much of them.

Some dear servants of God seem always to be defeated. They seem sent to a people whose hearts are made gross and their ears dull of hearing. Still, if they have truthfully proclaimed the Word of the Lord, their reward will not be according to their apparent success, but according to their fidelity.

Some saints are constitutionally depressed and sad. They are like certain lovely ferns which grow best under a constant drip. Well, well, the Lord will gather these beautiful ferns of the shade as well as the roses of the sun! They shall share His notice as much as the blazing sunflowers and the saddest shall rejoice with the gladdest. You Little-Faiths, you Despondencies, you Much-Afraids, you Feeble-Minds, you that sigh more than you sing, you that would but cannot, you that have a great heart for holiness but feel beaten back in your struggles, the Lord shall give you His love, His Grace, His favor, as surely as He gives it to those who can do great things in His name! Certain of you have but a scant experience of the higher joys and deeper insights of the Kingdom, and it may be that you are, in part, at fault because you are so backward. And yet, if true to your Lord, your infirmities shall not be reckoned as iniquities! If lawfully detained from the field of active labor, this statute stands fast forever, for

you as well as for others—"As his part is that goes down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarries by the stuff: they shall part alike."

IV. Now, fourthly, FAINT ONES FIND JESUS TO BE THEIR GOOD LORD IN EVERY WAY. Was He not a good Lord when He first took us into His army of salvation? What a curious crew they were that enlisted under David! "Everyone that was in debt, and everyone that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him, and he became a captain over them." He was a captain of ragamuffins! But our Lord had not a better following. I was a poor wretch when I came to Christ. And I should not wonder if that word is near enough to the truth to describe *you*. I was a good-for-nothing, over head and ears in debt and without a penny to pay. I came to Jesus so utterly down at the heel, that no one else would have acknowledged me.

He might well have said—"No, I have not come to this—to march at the head of such vagrant beggars as these!" Yet He received us graciously, according to His promise, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." Since then, how graciously has He borne with us! We are not among those self-praising ones who have worked such wonders of holiness. We mourn our shortcomings and transgressions and yet He has not cast away the people whom He did foreknow. When we look back upon our character as soldiers of Christ, we feel ashamed of ourselves and amazed at His Grace. If anybody had told us that we would have been such poor soldiers as we have been, we would not have believed them. We do not excuse ourselves—we are greatly grieved to have been such failures. Yet our gracious Lord has never turned us out of the ranks. He might have drummed us out of the regiment long ago, but here we are, still enrolled, upheld and smiled upon. What a captain we have! None can compare with Him for gentleness. He still acknowledges us and He declares, "They shall be Mine in that day when I make up My jewels."

Brothers and Sisters, let us exalt the name of our Captain! There is none like He. We have been in distress—and He has been in distress with us. Ziklag smoked for Him as well as for us. In all their affliction, He was afflicted. Have you not found it so? When we have come to a great difficulty like the brook Besor, He has gently eased His commands and has not required of us what we were unable to yield. He has not made some of you pastors and teachers, for you could not have borne the burden. He has abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence. He has suited the march to the foot, or the foot to the march. How sweetly He has smiled on what we have done! Have you not wondered to see how He has accepted your works and your prayers? You have been startled to find that He answered your feeble petitions.

When you have spoken a word for Jesus and God has blessed it, why, you have thought, "Surely there is a mistake about this! How could my feeble words have a blessing on them?" Beloved, we follow a noble Prince. Jesus is the chief among 10,000 for tenderness as well as for everything

else. How tenderly considerate He is! How gentle and generous! He has never said a stinging word to us ever since we knew Him. He is that riches which has no sorrow added to it. He has rebuked us, but His rebukes have been like an excellent oil which has never broken our heads. When we have left Him, He has turned and looked upon us, and so He has cut us to the quick, but He has never wounded us with any sword except that which comes out of His mouth, whose edge is *love*. When He goes away from us, as David did from those 200 who could not keep up with him, yet He always comes back in mercy and salutes us with favor. We wonder to ourselves that we did not hold Him—and vow that we will never let Him go—but we wonder still more that He should come back so speedily, so heartily, leaping over the mountains, hastening like a roe or a young hart over the hills of division! Lo, He has come to us! He has come to us and He makes our hearts glad at His coming. Let us indulge our hearts, this morning, as we take our share in the precious spoil of His immeasurable love! He loves the great and the small with the same love—let us be joyful all round!

There is one choice thing which He will do, that should make us love Him beyond measure. David, after a while, went up to Hebron to be made king over Judah. Shall I read to you in the Second Book of Samuel, the second chapter and the 3rd verse? "And his men that were with him" (and among the rest, these weak ones who could not pass over the brook Besor), "and his men that were with him did David bring up, every man with his household: and they dwelt in the cities of Hebron." Yes, He will bring me up, even *me*! He will bring you up, you faintest and weakest of the band! There is a Hebron wherein Jesus reigns as anointed King and He will not be there and leave one of us behind! There is no Kingdom for Jesus without His brethren, no Heaven for Jesus without His disciples! His poor people who have been with Him in faintness and weariness shall be with Him in Glory, *and their households*. Hold on to that additional blessing! I pray you, hold on to it! Do not let slip those words—"*and their households*." I fear we often lose a blessing on our households through clipping the promise. When the jailer asked what he must do to be saved, what was the answer? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." You have heard that answer hundreds of times, have you not? Did you ever hear the rest of it? Why do preachers and quoters snip off corners from Gospel promises? It runs thus—"You shall be saved, *and your house*."

Lay hold of that blessed enlargement of Grace, "and your house." Why leave out the wives and the children? Will you let the Amalekites have them? Do not be satisfied without household salvation. Let us plead this Word of the Lord this morning—O You blessed David, whom we have desired to follow, who has helped us so graciously even unto this day, when You are in Your Kingdom, graciously remember us, and let it be said of us, "and David went up there, and his men that were with him David

brought up (they did not go up of themselves) every man with his household; and they dwelt in the cities of Hebron;" "*Every man with his household*." I commend those words to your careful notice. Fathers, have you yet seen your children saved? Mothers, are all those daughters brought in yet? Never cease to pray until it is so, for this is the crown of it all, "Every man with his household."

What I have to say lastly is this—how greatly I desire that you who are not yet enlisted in my Lord's band would come to Him because you see what a kind and gracious Lord He is! Young men, if you could see our Captain, you would get down on your knees and beg Him to let you enter the ranks of those who follow Him! It is Heaven to serve Jesus. I am a recruiting sergeant and I would gladly find a few recruits at this moment. Every man must serve somebody—we have no choice as to that fact. Those who have no master are slaves to themselves. Depend upon it, you will either serve Satan or Christ, either self or the Savior! You will find sin, self, Satan and the world to be hard masters—but if you wear the livery of Christ, you will find Him so meek and lowly of heart that you will find rest unto your souls! He is the most magnanimous of captains! There never was His like among the choicest of princes!

He is always to be found in the thickest part of the battle. When the wind blows cold, He always takes the bleak side of the hill. The heaviest end of the Cross always lies on His shoulders. If He bids us carry a burden, He also carries it. If there is anything that is gracious, generous, kind and tender—yes lavish and super abundant in love—you always find it in Him! These 40 years and more have I served Him, blessed be His name! And I have had nothing but love from Him. I would be glad to continue yet another 40 years in the same dear service here below if it so pleased Him. His service is life, peace, joy! Oh, that you would enter in it at once! God help you to enlist under the banner of Jesus even this day! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 Samuel 30.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—917, 731, 733.

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THE BEST STRENGTHENING MEDICINE
NO. 2209

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 21, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Out of weakness were made strong."
Hebrews 11:34.

THOSE who out of weakness were made strong are written among the heroes of faith and are, by no means, the least of them. Believers "quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong." Who shall tell which of the three grand deeds of faith is the greatest? Many of us may never have to brave the fiery stake, nor to bow our necks upon the block, to die as Paul did, but if we have Divine Grace enough to be out of weakness, made strong, we shall not be left out of the roll of the nobles of faith—and God's name shall not fail to be glorified in our persons.

Brothers and Sisters, as Believers in the Lord Jesus, *we are called to two things*, namely, to do and to suffer for His name's sake. Certain saints are summoned to active marching duty and others are ordered to keep watch on the walls. There are warriors on the field of conflict and sentries in the box of patience.

Both in doing and in suffering, if we are earnest and observant, *we soon discover our own weakness*. "Weakness" is all we possess. "Weakness" meets us everywhere. If we have to work for the Lord, we are soon compelled to cry, "Who is sufficient for these things?" And if we are called to suffer for Him, our weakness, in the case of most of us, is even greater—many who can labor without weariness cannot suffer without impatience. Men are seldom equally skilled in the use of the two hands of doing and bearing. Patience is a Grace which is rarer and harder to come at than activity and zeal. It is one of the choicest fruits of the Spirit and is seldom found on newly-planted trees. The fact soon comes home to us that we are weak where we most of all desire to be strong.

Our longing is to be able both to do and to suffer for our Lord—and to do this, *we must have strength from above—and that strength can only come to us through faith*. I have read you this glorious 11th of Hebrews which describes the mighty men of faith, the men of renown. They accomplished all their feats by a power which was not in them by nature. They were not naturally strong either to do or to suffer. If they *had* been, they would not have required faith in God! But being men of like passions with ourselves, they needed to trust in the Lord and they did so. They were quite as weak as the weakest of us, but by their faith they laid hold on

heavenly strength until they could do all things. There was nothing in the range of possibility, or, I might say, nothing within the lines of *impossibility*, which they could not have performed! They achieved everything that was necessary in the form of service and they bore up gloriously under the most fearful pressure of suffering, simply and only by faith in God, who became their Helper.

You and I may be very weak at this time, *but we can be made strong out of just such weakness*. We need not wish to have any strength of our own, for by faith we can reach to any degree of power in the Lord! We can have all imaginable strength for the grandest achievements desirable, if we have faith in God. Upon this simple but most practical matter I am going to speak to you at this time. We all wish to be strong. Medicines, lotions, foods, baths and all sorts of inventions are advertised as means of increasing strength. We are all, in heavenly things, so weak that the idea of being made strong should be very attractive to us.

Let us learn, then, how others "out of weakness were made strong." And let us follow on to enjoy their privilege by copying their conduct. Let me ask you to note, first, *faith makes men strong for holy doing.* And, secondly, *faith makes men strong for patient suffering*. We shall go over the ground which I marked out in my introduction.

I. To begin with—FAITH MAKES MEN STRONG FOR HOLY DOING. Here, indeed, all our strength must come to us by faith in the thrice-holy God.

The first duty of a Christian man is *to obey God*. Obedience is hard work to proud flesh and blood. Indeed, these ingrained rebels will never obey through our own efforts. By nature we love our own will and way and it goes against the grain for us to bring ourselves into such complete subjection as the Law of the Lord requires. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." Who among us has done this? Who among us *can* do this unless a power outside of himself shall come to his aid? Only faith takes hold of the Divine strength and only by that strength can we obey! Hence faith is the essential point of holiness. Ah, my dear Friend, if you start on the voyage of life, by Divine Grace, with the resolve that you will follow the track marked down on the chart by the Lord, your God, you will find that you have chosen a course to which the Lord's hands, alone, can keep you true!

The current does not run that way. Before long you will find that the wind is dead against you and the course to be followed is hard to keep. What will you do, then, if you have not faith? When duty is contrary to your temperament, what will you do without faith? When it involves loss of money, or ease, or honor—what will you do, then, if you have no faith? If you believe that God is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, you will persevere, but no other way. Suppose the right course should expose you to ridicule, cause you to be spoken of as a fanatic, or mocked at as a hypocrite, or despised as a fool—what can you do without faith? If you trust the living God, you will do the right thing and bear the loss or the shame. But if your faith fails you, self-love will create such respect for

your own good name, such fear of ridicule, such unwillingness to be singular, that you will slide from your integrity and choose a smooth and pleasing road.

Though you may think it a very ordinary thing to obey God in all things, you will find that a man had need to set his face like a flint in order to keep the right road—and the only way in which he will be able to hold on his way will be by having faith in God! Let him say, "God commands and, therefore, I must do it," and he will be strong! Let him feel, "God commands and, therefore, He will bear me through," and he will be strong! Let him say, "God commands and He will recompense me," and he will be strong! We are not saved *by* obedience, for obedience is the *result* of salvation! We are saved by faith, because faith leads us to obey! Faith is weakness clinging to strength and becoming strong through so doing. Faith in God made the cripple at the Temple gate stand, walk, leap and praise God—and even so does faith make our sin-crippled manhood obey the will of the Lord with exultation.

Taking another view, we would remark that faith makes us strong *to fulfill the relationships of life*. We are not alone by ourselves and we can neither live nor die apart, for God has linked us with others. We either curse or bless those around us. If we have faith in God, we shall bless our children, as Isaac and Jacob blessed their sons. Faith leaves a legacy of benediction to its heirs. If you have faith in God, you may bless your brothers while you live, as Joseph did—faith has housed many a family which otherwise had starved. If you have faith in God, you can lead others out of the bondage of sin and through the wilderness world, as Moses led the children of Israel, for faith is a great guide. But you can do nothing aright for others without faith in God for yourself and them.

Do I address a wife who has a godless husband? Have faith in God about him! Do not try to deal with your husband otherwise than by faith in God. If you attempt his conversion apart from heavenly power, you might as well try to take leviathan with a hook! Dear Father, have you children who are unruly, irreligious, defiant? Do the young men refuse to be advised? Are your girls light and trifling? Go to God in prayer and faith! He that knows the care of a household knows how easily a parent can do serious mischief with his children by his very efforts to do them good. One parent is too indulgent, another is too severe. Take the children to God, take them to God, I pray you! It is *here* that your strength lies. Strength to do right at the head of a household must come by Divine gift—and that gift will only be placed in the open hands of faith! If we believe for our whole house, the promise will be fulfilled to us and to our house, for it is made to faith. May faith enable us, each one, like David, to bless our household!

Do I speak to a young apprentice here who fears God and who lives in an ungodly family? Do you feel bewildered as to how to behave yourself? Orders are given you which cause you great searching of heart. You have to question in your inmost soul whether you can conscientiously do as your employer requires. I beseech you, have faith in God that He will di-

rect you and also have faith to follow that direction when you receive it! It is a very perilous spot, that beginning of life, when the youth first leaves the home of piety and finds himself where the fear of God is not in the place. If, as a decided Believer, he takes his stand—and if he is firm and steadfast for his God—he will make a man and his later years will be bright and useful. But if he begins to give way a little and if he tries to trim his sail to the wind, he will never attain to a holy character!

We read of the children of Ephraim that, being armed, and carrying bows, they turned back in the day of battle and, therefore, they were never to be relied on in the time of war. He who is not firm at starting is cutting out for himself a poor pattern of life. That which begins with shamefacedness, equivocation, hesitation and compromise will ripen into apostasy. Such a wretched faith has no influence on the man's self and it will have no influence upon others! Father, mother, husband, wife, sister, brother, servant, master—whatever your relation, I beseech you, if you feel weak in the discharge of your duty, exercise faith in God about it—and out of weakness you shall be made strong!

There is a high and blessed duty and privilege—I will call it both—which is to every Christian the necessity of his life, and that is *to pray*. Can you pray, my Brother? If you know how to pray, you can move Heaven and earth! Can you pray, my Brother? Then you can set almighty forces in operation! You can suffer no need, for everlasting supplies await the hands of prayer—"Ask, and it shall be given you." You cannot miss your way, for you shall be guided in answer to prayer. You shall hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk you in it." "O Sir," you say, "I cannot pray prevailingly." Then you are not like Jacob, good at wrestling. You cannot take hold upon the angel and win the victory. Do you feel in prayer as if the sinew of your strength were shrunk and your knee out of joint? Well, then, let me bring the text before you. Out of this weakness in prayer you can only be made strong *by faith*. Believe in God and you will prevail with God. Believe in His promise and plead it. Believe in His Spirit and pray by His help. Believe in Jesus, who makes intercession, for through *Him* you may come boldly to the Throne of Grace!

Faith alone can repair feeble knees. "According to your faith be it unto you." To pray without faith is formality—no, it is vanity! To be weak in prayer is a disease which will bring on many other maladies. Seek faith to become Masters of the Art of Prayer. I would rather be Master of the Art of Prayer than M.A. of both universities! He who knows how to pray has his hands on a leverage which moves the universe. But there is no praying without believing. If you believe not, you may be heard—it is more than I can promise you. But if you believe, *you shall* be heard, for God refuses no believing prayer! To refuse to keep His own promise when it is pleaded would be to falsify His Word and change His Character—and neither of these things can ever be!

Have you strong confidence—"He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not, with Him, also freely give us all things?" Jesus said, "If you, then, being evil, know how to give good

gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give good things to them that ask Him?" Believe in prayer and you will pray believingly! Some do not think that there is much in prayer. Poor souls! May the Lord teach them better! O my Brothers and Sisters, believe up to the hilt in prayer and you will find it to be the most remunerative work on earth! He that trades with God in prayer enters upon a business whereof the merchandise is better than silver or gold! Prayer makes us "rich towards God," and this is the best of riches—but it must be *believing* prayer. "Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering." Have you a poor, faint heart in this sacred exercise? Be assured that only by faith, out of this weakness, can you be made strong.

It may be that certain of my hearers feel that they cannot attain to the matters I have mentioned, for they are as yet battling to reach the position of servants and pleaders. Faith is the great force which is needed by those whose principal work is to *overcome sin*. When God began with many of us, He found us very low down beneath the flood of evil. It may be that an awful temper broke over us in surging waves. We have to rise superior to it. Possibly He found us plunged in the great deeps of an evil habit. Was it drunkenness? Was it gambling? What was it? It had to be left beneath—we were called to rise out of it. Some are permitted to sink a long way down in sin—and when God begins with them, they have a desperate ascent even to reach common morality—what must the conflict be before they attain to spirituality and holiness? It is hard for those to rise to the surface who have been plunged in the deeps. If a man has been sunk down in black waters full of filth, a thousand fathoms deep, and if he has been long imprisoned in dark caves where no light has come, what a wondrous power would that be which should raise him to the sunlight!

The Spirit of God comes to many when they are in much the same condition. And what a work it is to bring them up from the horrible midnight and to give strength to rise out of the inky waters! I have seen many a soul wearying to ascend—receiving a little light and a little more light and a little more light—but yet far from being clear of the dark waters of iniquity! Dear Struggler, you will never overcome sin except by faith in Jesus Christ. Trust Him! Trust in the precious blood—that is the great sin-killer! Trust His pierced hands to pierce the hands of your lusts. Trust His wounded side to cut through the heart of your evil desires. Your hope lies there—where Jesus died, where Jesus rose again, where Jesus has gone into Glory. You may resolve to overcome a sin and, perhaps, any one sin you may conquer for a time. But sin itself, as a force, in all its armies, is never to be overcome, save through the blood of the Lamb! You will never be able to cut down this huge upas tree except with the axe of Christ's atoning Sacrifice. Take that and every blow will tell, but no other instrument will avail! God strengthening you, you shall, out of weakness, be made strong to overcome sin, though it is backed by the world, the flesh and the devil. Entrenched in your nature, though your sins may be, you will drive out these Canaanites and free your heart from their dominion!

I have often met with persons awakened by Divine Grace to see the evil of a certain act and they have said, "I do not know how I shall ever break off the habit." Yet they have very easily escaped from it. I remember one who was very foul-mouthed and habitually used oaths. I hardly think that, for years, he had spoken without ill language and yet, from the moment he turned unto the Lord, he never used an oath—and he also noted that he never had a temptation to do so! I remark that the particular form of sin known as blasphemy is one of the first to die and to be buried out of sight. Other sins die hard, but this is shot through the head by true repentance and faith in Jesus! Some sins cling to a man like the fabled tunic of Hercules which could not be torn away, but burned into his flesh and bones whatever he might do. How long a well-beloved habit lingers at the door after the heart has given it a bill of divorce! As a dog, which is chased away from the house, returns again and again to its former master, so does an evil lust return even to the soul that loathes it. How weak we are in this matter! How slow to cut off right hands and pluck out right eyes! But yet it must be done and only faith can do it—by calling in the aid of the Almighty One. Trust in Christ to overcome, by His Spirit, that which He has put away by His death. In Him we shall find succor—and by faith out of weakness we shall be made strong!

I change the run of my discourse altogether by remarking that there is another thing that falls to the lot of Christian men, a matter of the very first importance, namely, *to spread the Gospel*. "Yes," says one, "I acknowledge that it is an urgent service to make known to others what the Lord has done for me, but, somehow, I cannot discharge my conscience by fully doing as I would. I tried the other day to say a good word and I am afraid that I made a failure of it. I stammered a good deal and I said little that I thought to say—and some things I said seemed to weaken what I did say. I resolved, the other day, that I would see a man whom I had known, and tell him that I was a changed character. But when I reached his house, I drifted into other talk and went the way in which *he led me*. I could not come to the point."

Many would make a similar confession if they made a clean breast of it. Many of the truest children of God are, at first, possessed by a dumb spirit and it needs the Lord Jesus to cast it out. But do you not think that we are too apt to attempt to spread the Gospel in *our own strength*—and need we wonder if we break down? If we were by faith to begin, humbly waiting upon the Lord for words, and taking hold upon Divine strength, might we not accomplish far more than we now do? I have heard of one brought to Christ who was a very great sinner—of so stiff a neck that he never would be approached by anybody who aimed at his conversion. He hated the very mention of religion! He answered all appeals very coarsely. But one of his neighbors felt forced to go to him very early in the morning and to say to him, "I beg your pardon for intruding so early, but I lay awake all last night thinking about you; and I cannot rest till I tell you something."

He answered, "What were you thinking about *me* for? I don't need any of your thoughts." "Oh," said the other, "I felt so sorry to think that, if you were to die, you would die without hope, that I was obliged to come to you." The bearish man grumbled, "Mind your own business." "But," said the other, "it *is* my business. I think my heart will break unless I see you saved." All the answer was, "Go away with you. Don't come here with your cant!" The Brother went home weeping, but he was not the only one who felt his heart breaking. The bearish one went away from his forge and said to his wife, "I can always answer these religious fellows. I do not care for your parsons a bit. but that neighbor of ours has been in here and he says he shall break his heart unless I am converted—*and that beats me*." He was beaten. Out of a sort of kindly pity for his neighbor's weak-mindedness, with a mixture of an unacknowledged feeling on his own account, he went to hear the preaching of the Word of God and was brought to Jesus!

"But," says one, "I know if I were to try to speak to any of *my* neighbors, I should break down." Friend, I am not careful in that matter, nor need you be. If you are in real earnest, you might possibly do more by a breakdown than by anything else. Only break the ice and begin—and you shall find my text to be true in your case, also, and out of weakness you, too, shall be made strong! God does not need *your* strength—He has more than enough power of His own! He asks for your *weakness*—He has none of that, Himself, and He is longing, therefore, to take your weakness and use it as the instrument in His own mighty hands! Will you not yield your weakness to Him and receive His strength?

Permit me to speak to some aspiring spirit here, and say—Dear Friend, would you like to do *something great for God*? Have you heard the motto of our early missionaries—"Attempt great things for God"? Does that thought burn within your heart? Do you long to be of some use? "Oh, yes," says one, "I would attempt great things for God, but I am terribly weak." Make the attempt by faith in God, for it is written, "Out of weakness were made strong." If you feel incapable, throw yourself upon the infinite capacity of God! So long as you are willing to be used. So long as God has given you an anxiety and travail of spirit for the souls of others, you need not fear, but may, with faith, get to work in all your feebleness, for as your day your strength shall be! Has not the Lord said, "My Grace is sufficient for you: for My strength is made perfect in weakness"? And is not that Word of God true?

I would make one more application of my text, which is capable of being used in a thousand directions. "Out of weakness were made strong." This will be experienced *in bearing witness for the Truth of God.* Suppose that you are called to testify for the Truth of God in the midst of those who doubt, disbelieve, or even deride it? You look to those who agree with you and they are lukewarm. You turn to old associates and they do not share your concern. Friends tell you that you are making much ado about nothing, or that you are uncharitable, narrow-minded and bigoted. I need not repeat the accusations—they have been so often hurled at myself that I

know them by heart! They say, "The man was born too late! He is behind the age! He fights for a worn-out creed! He is out of place in a world of progress!" What then? Is there anything galling to you in all this? Indeed there is, unless faith is strong—and then the bullets turn to pellets and the stones are soft as sponges!

When they talk to you like that, do not begin bristling up and declaring that, after all, you are as wise and as strong as your opponents, though that may readily be the case, but accept all their remarks upon your folly and weakness and say to yourself, "Out of weakness were made strong." Hold to God's Word by faith and you will be strong! God will vindicate His own cause, but it may be His way to let error prevail for a while. Bide your time when the cause is an eternal one, for you can afford to do so. If we had been in Egypt at the time when Pharaoh started out to follow the Israelites to the Red Sea. If we had been clothed with all power, we would have stopped Pharaoh's chariots and horses before they left Egypt—and thus we should have nipped his enterprise in the bud. We would have taken off the chariot wheels at once, so that they could not follow after the children of Israel. That is what *we* would have done, but Jehovah did something better! He allowed the Egyptians to pursue, overtake and threaten to divide the spoil—and He allowed them in their pride to go down after Israel into the depths of the sea!

Then, and not before, He overthrew them, so that Israel sang, "The horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea." This was a grand thing for the tribes in their later journeys through the wilderness. The timid Israelites would always have been afraid that Pharaoh would follow them and capture them, but when the forces of Egypt and all her chosen captains were drowned beneath the waves, all fear of them was gone forever! The victory was complete. Meanwhile, the tremendous blow made their future antagonists in Canaan to tremble. In the conflict with evil, *we* would overcome it early and put it to the rout at the first attack. But it may be that God will allow error to proceed further and let it seem to triumph, so that by its own presumption it may place itself where it may be the more effectually crushed, never again to afflict the Church.

It is for us, in our weakness, to go forward as the Lord leads us—and the day of the resounding timbrels and the twinkling feet will come in due time—and Jehovah will be magnified when even humble maidens "sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously." Be steadfast, unmovable! Never mind the craft, policy and number of the foe! God's time is best! He knows better than we do when to strike for victory. Out of weakness we shall be made strong if we fully rely upon the faith "once for all delivered to the saints."

I would entreat you, each one, to make an application of the text to yourself in every work of faith and labor of love in which you may be engaged.

II. Now, Beloved Friends, suffer me a few words upon the other cheering fact, namely, that FAITH MAKES MEN STRONG FOR PATIENT SUF-

FERING. The patience of hope is a very important part of Christian life and faith is the essence of it.

Many are called to suffer much in *daily life*. Ah me, what a world of misery there is in this great city, among even good and gracious people! A man might study London till he turned his brain. The poverty and the suffering of even godly people in London would be a subject too harrowing for those of you who have specially tender hearts. Let us not forget those members of Christ's mystical body that are in the fire—"His feet are like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace." Few, if any, are without sorrow, and many saints have a double portion of grief in their pilgrimage. Sitting here with your Brothers and Sisters in Christ, you look very cheerful, but I may be addressing those whose life is one protracted struggle for existence. Assuredly, you will not hold out without true faith—and much of it! You must endure, "as seeing Him who is invisible." You must joy in God, or you will not joy at all. Earthly comforts are not yours, but if you grasp the spiritual and the eternal, you will not repine.

If in this life you only had hope, you would be, of all men, most miserable. But having that hope, you are among men most happy. The solitary place shall be glad for you and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. Commend me to firm faith for power to bear the daily cross! He that believes has everlasting life and the joys which come of it. Trust in your God, in His love to you, in His care of you and then you shall be as the lilies, which toil not, and spin not, and yet are clothed—or as the ravens which have no store and yet are fed. Behold, by faith, the Heaven prepared for you and know for sure that you will soon be there among the angels! And you will defy cold, hunger, nakedness, shame and everything else. Your faith, out of weakness, shall make you strong.

Certain saintly ones are called to bear *great physical pain* and I commend to them, from practical experience, the power of faith in God under acute agony. This is the sweetest support in the presence of a threatened operation. How grim those surgeon's lancets seem! Ah me, I knew a patient once—I still know her—who, when the lancets had been used upon her, caused the doctor's case of instruments to be filled up with roses! God alone can help you to fill up with roses that grim memory of danger and suffering! Oh, how sweet to feel that if God has sent diseases to your house, He has made them a chariot in which benedictions have been brought to you! Go not to *wine* for comfort in the hour of depression! Above all things, dread the intoxicating cup in all its forms! You need not even appeal to friends for consolation. What do they know about your inward sorrow? There are seas of suffering which the sufferer must navigate alone. No other sail is within sight. Scan the horizon and nothing is to be seen but wave after wave. Now is the hour for faith in the great Lord who holds even lonely seas in the hollow of His hands. He knows your poor body and He permits it to be frail and permits your heart to be trembling because He will glorify Himself in His tenderness to your weakness, wherein He will make you strong! JEHOVAH-ROPHI is His name—"The

Lord That Heals You." Give yourself up to Him and you shall yet sing of His loving kindness and tender mercies!

But there are other forms of suffering than these of daily life and of bodily pain. Possibly I speak to some who are suffering the evils of *persecution.* No cruel tyrant can burn Believers now, nor even cast them into prison, for Christ's sake, but there are enough ways for the seed of the serpent to show its enmity to the seed of the woman. "Trials of cruel mockings" are still common. There are many ways in which the devil's whip can reach the back of the child of God. Persecution is still abundant and many a man's foes are of his own household. I will rehearse no stories of Christian women with jeering husbands, nor of godly youths who endure scoffing and far worse, but many a house is still a place of martyrdom. Gracious Sufferers, may the Lord keep you from anger and unkindness! By faith, alone, can you bear persecution and turn it to account for the good of others.

Do not attempt to escape by yielding what is right and true, but ask the Lord to help you to stand fast for Him. If it is true that the Lord still has His martyrs, let it be seen that they are as brave as ever. Not now do they gather in the great amphitheater, where sits the emperor in state, with all the proud citizens of Rome in the nearer gallery, tier on tier, and the multitude up yonder gazing with their cruel eyes into the vast arena below. Not now do I see them lift up the great iron door and let loose the monsters that come forth roaring, hungry for their prey. Not now do I see, standing in the middle, a man and his wife and children, all unarmed. Not now do I hear the shouts of the mob, as they exult that Christians are given to the lions. This is all over. Christ, in His suffering members, has conquered Caesar and pagan Rome, for out of weakness Believers were made strong.

A softer spirit has come over the human mind, but there is as much enmity against God as ever, and now it finds a less public arena and a meaner mode of torture. Today the tried one suffers alone and misses the encouragement of Christian eyes. At times he has to feel that it were better for him to fight with beasts at Ephesus than to bear the taunts, threats and slanders of ungodly kinsfolk. My Sister, my Brother, have faith in God in your hidden sorrow! Cry to Him in the secret of your soul and you will bear your load, yes, you will bear it calmly, and you will win those who hate you! Of your secret martyrdom, angels will be spectators and Christ will suffer in you—therefore, fear not. Out of weakness you shall be made strong by faith.

We have among us those who are not exposed to persecution, but have to stand against *assaults of unbelief.* That which Believers in past ages have accepted as the Truth of God is not believed in many places, nowadays, and so it comes to pass that one brings to us a bit of skeptical science which he has picked up from Huxley or Tyndall. Another comes with a criticism that he has found in some of the modern divines who are the devil's instruments for spreading infidelity. And a third appears with a vile blasphemy from one of the coarser assailants of religion—and each one

demands an immediate answer to his quibble, or his difficulty. Do they really expect that we are to answer, on the spur of the moment, every objection that they are pleased to raise? I confess that I do not believe that one human brain is capable of answering every objection that another human brain could raise against the most obvious truth in the world. Do not try to answer quibblers, but if you do, mind that *faith* is your weapon! If you take the wooden sword of your own reasoning, you may easily be beaten. Believe for yourself, because God has said it, and speak as the Lord guides you. Fix it in your mind, "This is God's Book. This is His Infallible Revelation and I believe it against every argument that can possibly be urged against it. Let God be true, but every man a liar." This will be sure defensive ground, but if you get off that rock, you will soon find yourself sinking or staggering! For an *offensive* weapon, take "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God"—and if this does not serve your turn, nothing will. Have a thorough, entire and childlike faith in the Revelation of the Most High and you will be made strong in those mental conflicts for which, in yourself, you are so weak.

Again, it may be that I am speaking to sad ones who suffer under *mental depression*. Some of us are, by constitution, inclined to that condition. I have sometimes envied those good people who are never excited with joy and, consequently, seldom or never despond. "Along the cool, sequestered vale of life they hold the even tenor of their way." Happy people! At the same time, when I rise, as upon eagle's wings in joyous rapture, I feel right glad to be capable of the blissful excitement! Yet if you soar to the skies, you are very apt to drop below sea level. He that can fly, can faint. Elijah, after he had slain the prophets of Baal, was found fleeing into the wilderness from the face of Jezebel. If you are so constituted that you rise and fall. If you are a creature that can be excited and that can be depressed and, worse still, if you happen to have been born on a foggy day and to have swallowed so much of that fog that you have found it shading your spirit many a time since, then you can only be strong by *faith*!

If you are one of those plants which seldom bloom with bunches of bright flowers, but have your blossoms hidden and concealed, be not disquieted. If you are never mirthful and seldom able to call yourself joyful—the only cure for depression is faith! Settle this in your heart—"Whether I am up or down, the Lord Jesus Christ is the same. Whether I sing, or whether I sigh, the promise is true and the Promiser is faithful. Whether I stand on Tabor's summit, or am hidden in the vale of Baca, the Covenant stands fast and everlasting love abides." Be assured, beyond all questioning, that he that believes in the Lord Jesus is not condemned! Believe in Him, though you see no flashes of delight nor sparkles of joy. We are safe because we are in the City of Refuge—not because we are, in ourselves, ill or well. If you will stand firm in Christ Jesus, even in your weakness you will be made strong!

It may be that certain of you are called to suffer in your minds, not because of any wrong thing in yourselves, but *for the sake of others*. Some years ago I preached a sermon to you from the text, "My God, My God,

why have You forsaken Me?" and in a mournful degree I felt what I preached, as my own cry. I felt an agony of spirit, for I was under an awful sense of being forsaken of God. And yet I could not understand why I was surrounded by such thick darkness. I wished to clear myself if any sin remained upon me, but I could not discover any evil which I was tolerating. When I went back into the vestry, I learned the secret of my personal distress, for there was an elderly man, in a horror of great darkness, who said to me, "I have never before met with any person who has been where I am. I trust there is hope for me." I bade him sit down and I talked with him. I saw him afterwards and I hope I guided him from the verge of insanity into the open, healthy place of peace through believing in my Master.

I fear I should never have touched his case if I had not been in the miry clay myself. Then I understood why I must feel like one forsaken. The Lord was leading me where I would be taught to know my man and should be made willing to sit side by side with him in the dark prison house and lend him a hand to escape. Since then, in presenting myself to my Lord for service, I have said to Him, "Make me useful to the doubting and the feeble-minded. I do not bargain for comfort, peace and joy, if I can be more helpful to Your poor, weary children without them. Place me where I can best answer Your purpose by being made to sympathize with Your troubled people. I only want to bring them to Heaven, to the praise of the Glory of Your Grace. And as for me, let me rejoice or suffer, as best suits their case." For this a man must have faith in God and he must be sure that his trials, endured through his office, will have great recompense of reward. If you are chosen to be a leader and a helper, or a mother in Israel, be satisfied to endure hardness with the full belief that it is all right and that God will not only bring you through, but will also bless *somebody else* by the means of your tribulations.

My time is ended, although I had much more to say. I can only pray the Lord to give you Divine Grace to believe in Him. If I should never again have the pleasure of speaking for my Lord upon the face of this earth, I should like to deliver, as my last confession of faith, this testimony—that nothing but faith can save this 19th Century—nothing but faith can save old England. Nothing but faith can save the present unbelieving church. Nothing but firm faith in the grand old Doctrines of Grace and in the everliving and unchanging God can bring back to the Church a full tide of prosperity and make her to be the deliverer of the nations for Christ. Nothing but faith in the Lord Jesus can save you or me. The Lord give you, my Brothers and Sisters, to believe to the utmost degree, for His name's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Hebrews 11.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—531, 533, 682.

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THE AGREEMENT OF SALVATION BY GRACE WITH WALKING IN GOOD WORKS
NO. 2210

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 28, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them"
Ephesians 2:9, 10.

I shall call your attention to the near neighborhood of these two phrases, "Not of works" and, "Created in Christ Jesus unto good works." The text reads with a singular sound, for it seems strange to the ear that good works should be given such a negative description as to the cause of salvation and then should be spoken of as the great end of it! You may put it down among what the Puritans called, "Orthodox Paradoxes," if you please, though it is hardly so difficult a matter as to deserve the name.

Not long ago, I tried to handle the point of difference supposed to exist between the doctrine of faith—"Believe, and you shall be saved," and the doctrine of the new birth and its necessity—"You must be born again." My method was on this wise—I did not explain the difficulties which appear to the logician and the doctor of metaphysics, but I tried to show that, practically, there were none. If we deal only with difficulties which block up the way to salvation, there are none. As for those matters which involve no real hindrance, I leave them where they are. A rock which is in nobody's way may stand where it is. He that believes in Jesus *is* born again. These two things are equally true—there must be a work of the Spirit within, yet he that believes in the Lord Jesus *has* everlasting life.

Now, there is a contention always going on about the doctrine of good works, but instead of taking one side or the other, we shall try to see whether there is really anything to quarrel over if we keep to the Scriptures. We insist upon it, with all our might, that salvation is "not of works, lest any man should boast." But, on the other hand, we freely admit and earnestly teach that, "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Where there are no good works, there is no indwelling of the Spirit of God! The faith which does not *produce* good works is *not saving faith*—it is not the faith of God's elect—it is not faith at all in the Scriptural sense. I have just taken these two points to bring them forward for the help and comfort of beginners. I seek not to instruct you who are already well taught, but my

aim at this time is to instruct beginners on this important subject. Salvation is not of works, but, at the same time, we, who are the subjects of Divine Grace, are "created in Christ Jesus unto good works." This is plain to the enlightened Believer, but babes in Grace have weak eyes and cannot at once perceive it.

Before, in the gracious Providence of God, Luther was raised up to preach the doctrine of Justification by Faith, the common notion among religious persons was that men must be saved by works—and the result was that, knowing nothing of the root from which virtue springs, very few persons had any good works at all! Religion so declined that it became a mere matter of empty ceremony, or of useless seclusion and, in addition, superstition overlaid the original Truth of the Gospel, so that one could hardly find it out at all. The reign of self-justification and priestcraft led to no good result upon the masses of religious people. Indulgences and forgiveness of sins were hawked through the streets and publicly sold. So much was charged for the pardon of one sin and so much for another, and the treasury of "his holiness" at Rome—who might better have been called, "his *un*holiness"—was filled by payments for abating penalties in a "purgatory" of Rome's inventing!

Luther learned from the sacred Volume, by the Spirit of the Lord, that we are saved by Grace, alone, through faith—and, having found it out, he was so possessed by that one Truth of God that he preached it with a voice of thunder! His witness on that one point was so concentrated that it would be too much to expect equal clearness upon all other Truths of God. I sometimes compare him to a bull who shuts his eyes and goes straight on at the one objective which he means to overthrow. With a mighty crash, he broke down the gates of Papal superstition! He saw nothing—he did not need to see anything—except this—"By Grace are you saved through faith." He made very clear and good work upon that point, faulty as he was upon certain others. The echoes of his manly voice rang down the centuries. I note that nearly all the sermons of Protestant divines, long after Luther, were upon Justification by Faith and, whatever the text might be, they somehow or other brought in that article of a standing or falling Church. They seldom finished a sermon without declaring that salvation is not by works, but that it is by faith in Jesus Christ.

I do not censure them for a moment! Far rather do I *commend* them—better too much than too little upon the central doctrine of the Gospel. The times needed that point to be made clear to all comers and the Reforming preachers made it clear. Justification by Faith was the nail that had to be driven home and clinched—and all their hammers went at that nail. They were not nearly so clear and specific upon many other doctrines as they were upon this, but then it was a foundation stone and they were occupied in laying it—and they did lay it and laid it thoroughly—and laid it forever. Still, they would have more fully completed the circle of revealed Truth if Sanctification had been as fully apprehended and as clearly explained as Justification. It had been well if the legs of the Gospel of the

Reformation had been equal, for one was a little longer and a little stronger than the other and, therefore, there was a limp—a halting like that of victorious Israel, as he came from Jabbok—but still a limp which it would be well to cure.

We have passed beyond the stage of dwelling too much on that cardinal doctrine and I greatly fear that in these times we do not have enough preaching of Justification by Faith. I could wish the Lutheran times back, again, and that the old thunders of Wittenberg could be heard once more. And yet I shall be glad if everything that is practical in the Gospel shall also have its full sphere allotted to it. The duties—let me rather say, the high and holy *privileges*—which come to us as children and servants of God—these should be maintained and fully preached, side by side with the blessed Truth of God embodied in those lines—

"There is life in a look at the Crucified One!
There is life at this moment for you."

I shall dwell, first of all, upon the first point of the text, which is this, "Not of works," or, *the way of salvation*. "Not of works" is a negative description, but within the negative there lies very clearly the positive. The way of salvation is by something *other* than our own works. Secondly, I shall speak about *the walk of salvation*. We who are saved, walk in holiness, for we are, "created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them." It is a decree of the Sovereign Lord that His chosen should be led to walk in holiness!

I. First, then, THE WAY OF SALVATION is negatively described as, "Not of works." To this many take exception, but that we cannot help—the Scripture is plain enough. We are told that we ought not, on any occasion, allow persons to sing—

"Sinner, nothing do,
Either great or small,
Jesus did it, did it all,
Long, long ago."

Great exception has been taken to that expression, but I believe that if the same Truth of God had been expressed in any other words, the same objection would have been raised, for it is the *Truth* that is objected to, rather than the words in which it is set forth! My text itself would be, to such persons, very objectionable—"Not of works." They are ready to rail at Paul for speaking thus evangelically. They hate the doctrine of salvation all of gift and not in the least of merit—a doctrine which we love! We preach salvation, "not of works." We repeat the teaching again and again, and mean to repeat it continually till we die! Salvation is of the Lord's mercy and *not* by works of the Law.

If we were to preach that salvation is of works, we should please many fine folk; but as we do not know that it would be at all to their benefit that they should be pleased, we shall not brush one hair of our head in a different way from that in which it grows, to please them—much less shall we keep back, or explain away, the fundamental Truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ—and that for several reasons.

If we were to preach to sinners, dead in trespasses and sins, that salvation would be by their own works, *we should be setting aside the way of salvation by Grace*. There cannot be two ways of salvation for the same people! If we take to the one, we practically deny the other. It cannot be questioned that a guilty man, if saved at all, must be saved through the mercy of God. It cannot be denied, also, that our Savior and His Apostles taught that we are saved by faith. A man must shut his eyes if he does not see this to be their teaching. If, then, I teach men that they can be saved by works, I have practically told them that salvation by Grace is a myth, a mistake, a mischievous error! I have set it aside, for, as I have said before, there cannot be two ways to Heaven—there cannot be more than one. If I set up the way of *works*, I shut up the way of *Grace*. If salvation is of merit, it is not of mercy! And if there is no salvation of men by the pure mercy of God, what an unhappy case are we in! To deny Grace is really to deny hope. Where, then, would there be any Gospel, or glad tidings, or good news?

The way of salvation by *works* is not "news." It is the old way of man's devising which is the general and well-known error of all the ages. Moreover, it is not, "good news," or glad news, for there is nothing good or glad in it. That we shall be rewarded for our works is nothing more than the heathens taught! Justification by religious performances and meritorious deeds is nothing better than the old Phariseeism with a Christian name stuck upon it! It is not worth revealing by the Spirit of God, for it is to be seen by the light of man's own candle. That doctrine makes the Lord Jesus Christ to be practically a nobody, for if salvation is of works, then the way of salvation through faith in our Savior is superfluous and even mischievous.

Next, to preach *the way of salvation by works is to propose to men a way in which they have already failed*. If you are to be saved by works, you must begin very early—you must begin *before* you sin—since *one* sin decides the matter. But already you have commenced to break the Law of God. I am not addressing persons who have yet to start upon the way, for they have started already. You are a good way on the road, one way or other, and since you began in the way of works, what a failure you have already made of it! Is there anyone here who can claim that he is already saved by works, as far as he has gone? Has anyone among you been without sin? Look at your lives! Examine your consciences! Observe your words, your thoughts, your imaginations, your motives—for all these come into the account!

Is there a man or woman here that does good and sins not? Scripture declares that "there is none that does good, no, not one." "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, everyone, to his own way." The way of salvation cannot, therefore, be by following a road from which we have already so sinfully and steadily departed. If you were perfect as Adam was before he sinned, you might follow the way of works and be safe—but you are not in that condition. If I could be sent to an Adam and an Eve altogether unfallen, I might propose to them the way of salvation

by obedience to the Law—but *you* have fallen and your nature is inclined to forsake the right way. The very garments that you wear show that you have discovered your shame. The daily labors which weary you prove that you are not in Paradise. The very preaching of the Gospel implies that you are in a sinful world! You are not possessed of an unbiased will, or inclined to that which is good—you have chosen the evil and still continue to choose it—therefore I should only be proposing to you a road in which you have already stumbled. And I should be setting you a task in which you have already broken down.

And, next, I think it will be admitted by all, that *the way of salvation by good works would be self-evidently unsuitable to a considerable number*. I will take a case. I am sent for, in an emergency, and it is the dead of night. A man is dying, smitten suddenly by the death-blast. I go to his bedside, as requested. Consciousness remains, but he is evidently in mortal agony. He has lived an ungodly life—and he is about to die. I am asked by his wife and friends to speak to him a word that may bless him. Shall I tell him that he can only be saved by good works? Where is the time for works? Where is the possibility of them? While I am speaking, his life is struggling to escape! He looks at me in the agony of his soul and he stammers out, "What must I do to be saved?" Shall I read to him the Moral Law? Shall I expound to him the Ten Commandments and tell him that he must keep all these? He would shake his head and say, "I have broken them all; I am condemned by them all!" If salvation is of works, what more have I to say? I am of no use here. What can I say? The man is utterly lost! There is no remedy for him. How can I tell him the cruel dogma of "modern thought" that his own personal character is everything? How can I tell him that there is no value in belief, no help for the soul in looking to Another—even to Jesus, the Substitute? There is no whisper of hope for a dying man in the hard and stony doctrine of salvation by works!

If salvation had been by works, our Lord could not have said to the thief, dying at His side, "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise." That man could do no works! His hands and feet were fastened to the cross and he was in the agonies of death. No, it must be of Grace, all-conquering Grace—and the *modus operandi* must be by faith, or else for dying men the Gospel is a mockery! The man must look and live! The expiring sinner must trust the expiring Savior. As life ebbs out, the penitent must find life in Jesus' death. Is it not clear that the Gospel of works is unsuitable in such a case as this? Now, a Gospel which is unsuitable to *anybody* is not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Yes, I put it plainly. A Gospel that does not suit *everybody* does not suit *anybody*—and if it suits *any* class and condition really and truly, it must suit *all* classes! I think I have told you that, on one occasion, I had a letter which was intended to be very irritating to me, from some rather eminent, aristocratic gentleman who said that he had read some of my sermons when he was out on the coast of Africa and he found that certain black fellows out there—certain,

"niggers"—delighted in them very much. He wrote to inform me that I was a very competent preacher for "niggers."

I accepted the assurance at once as a very high compliment! I felt that, if I could preach to "niggers," I could preach to anybody and that, if the Gospel that I preached was suitable to the natives on the coast of Africa, it would certainly suit the people in London! If those who are afar off could understand it, you, who are near, could also understand it! The Gospel was not sent into the world to be a patent medicine that could only be purchased by the wealthy, or a spell that could only be uttered by Latin scholars. It is a Gospel for all ranks and conditions of men—and if I prove that what you call the Gospel is unsuitable for the dying, or is unsuitable for the ignorant—it is NOT the Gospel of Jesus Christ! The Gospel of salvation by Grace, through *faith*, is suitable for every class of persons that we have to deal with! Sinful habit has bound in iron fetters many of our fellow citizens and the Gospel can free them! Be the habit drunkenness, or profanity, or what it may, the habit holds them fast—and the Prophet says, concerning habit, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may you also do good, that are accustomed to do evil."

To what purpose, then, do I cry to the leopard, "Change your spots," or to the Ethiopian, "Change your skin"? I must bring a *superior force* to bear upon the leopard or the Ethiopian before this can be accomplished! And there is no force in mere exhortation. You may exhort a blind man to see as long as you like, but he will not see. You may exhort a dead man to live as long as you like, but he will not live through your exhortation! Something more is needed! The forces of natural depravity and the acquired habits of sin in many cases—I think you will admit it—put the doctrine of salvation by works out of court! And if out of court as to *one*, it is gone as to *all,* for there can be but one Gospel. Go through your convict settlements. Go through your jails and just see what you can do with a doctrine of salvation by good works! You will come home disappointed, however earnest may be your address. But go there and tell of Free Grace and dying love—and pardon bought with blood—and eyes that stream with tears, confessions of sin and cries for pardon will tell you that you have not spoken in vain!

Further, dear Friends, if we go and preach salvation by works to men, we are preaching to them *a way of salvation impossible to all because of the perfection of the Law*. What are the good works that can merit Heaven? What are the good works that can ensure eternal life? These are not the easy things which some seem to imagine. They must be perfectly pure, continuous and unspotted. "The Law of the Lord is perfect." It condemns a *thought* and even the *glance* of an eye, as an act of criminality. "Whoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart." The Law of God in 10 commands means much more than the bare words would imply—it deals with the whole range of moral condition, motive and thought. Dream not that its sweep includes only *external* acts—indeed, it *does* include externals, but, in very deed, the Ten

Commandments are *spiritual*! They go right through the heart and search the inward parts of the spirit. The more a man understands the Law of God, the more he feels condemned by it—and the less does he indulge the dream that he, as he is, shall ever be able to keep it intact. With such foul hands as ours, how can we do clean work? With hearts so polluted, how can we be "undefiled in the way"? Nature rises no higher than its source and that which comes out of the heart will be no better than the heart—and that is, "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."

The Law of God is one and if you break it in any one point, you break it altogether. If, in a chain of 100 links, 99 should be perfect, yet if a *single* link anywhere in the chain should be too weak for the weight placed upon it, the load will fall to the ground quite as surely as if 20 links were snapped! One breakage of the perfect Law of God involves transgression against the whole of it! In order to be saved by works, there must be absolutely perfect, continuously perfect obedience to it in thought, word and deed. And that obedience must be rendered cheerfully and from the heart—for this is the heart of the first table—"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might." Can you keep that? Vain-glorious man, have you measured your moral strength against requirements so great and yet so just? Have you proved yourself equal to the task?

Here is the heart of the second table—"You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Have you ever tried to do that—to love your neighbor *as yourself*? You have been a little kind and sometimes generous, but the standard of loving your neighbor *as yourself*—have you ever reached to that? Has your charity been equal to your self-love? I do not believe that it has ever gone even *half* the way. Now, "What things soever the Law says, it says to them who are under the Law," and if it says all this to you and you cannot answer to its demands, how can you hope that you shall live by it? When a man fails to keep the Law of God, it condemns him! And its penalty—in other words, its *curse*—falls on him as justly his due. He that is under the Law is under the *curse*. All that the Law has to say to you is—"You have broken me and you must die for it." Read the curses written in the Book of Deuteronomy and remember that all these are pronounced over your head—

"Look to the flames that Moses saw,
And shrink, and tremble, and despair."

And again, dear Friends, *if we preach salvation by works, we shall take the minds of men away from a sense of their great need.* Here is a person who has a terrible disease. He can be cured. The knife must be used, but if, instead thereof, I lay down for him rules of cleanliness and of general hygiene, I may do him some sort of good, but meanwhile he will neglect the chief evil, his disease will spread and will become fatal. What am I to do, if I am a surgeon? Must I not impress him, first, with the conviction that a serious operation is required, and that it must be submitted to? All the rest will be proper enough and even *necessary*, in due time, but I

must do *nothing* to take his mind away from the great master evil that is destroying his life!

The *sinner* must be told that he must be born again, that his nature is corrupt, that this corrupt nature must be destroyed, that a new nature must be created in him—to all this his mind *must* be turned! He must be made "a new creature" in Christ Jesus. And if I stir him up to *eternal action*, with a view to his salvation by it, I shall be taking his thoughts away from the inward evil of sin which is the very essence of the matter! O Sirs, if you had committed an offense against the government of your country and were found guilty and condemned to die, my first business with you would be to entreat you to ask pardon of your queen! I might come into your cell and say that I would have you dressed more respectably; would have you read such a book, or learn such a science—and this might be all very well—but the *first* thing you need is to have the sentence of death repealed! I will exhort you, my dear Hearers, to do everything that is honest, right and good, but there is something needed even more than this! You need to be *cleansed from sin by the precious blood of Christ*. You need to be *renewed in heart by the Holy Spirit* and you must turn your thoughts to these things! You first and most of all need the Lord Jesus! Look to him, I pray you! I dare not exhort you to do this work, or to do that, lest I distract your mind from Christ.

The preaching of legal justification has no power over men. Congregations thus instructed are usually careless, worldly and devoted to carnal amusements. Those who *hear* about works feel as if they had now done enough and do not need to practice them. There is nothing in such doctrine to awaken anxiety, or move desire, or stir the depths of the soul. It has nothing Divine about it, nothing supernatural, nothing which can really raise the fallen, cheer the faint, or inspire the gracious. Without unction, life, or fire, a legal ministry is mere fiddling a tune to lame men, or setting forth a course of living action for a vault full of corpses. This point we know to be fact and, therefore, we shall not repeat the experiment.

I am afraid that *if we began to preach salvation by works, we would encourage pride in some and create despair in others*. Many would think that they had done pretty well, as compared with other people—they would, therefore, right speedily wrap themselves up in a false hope. But others, knowing that they had *not* done well, as compared with other people, would think that there was no hope for them and so would sit down in despair. What practical purpose could this serve—to be making some more proud and others more wicked through the influence of despair upon them?

But the very worst matter is that *it would be taking them away from Jesus*. Our business, my Brethren, is to hold up Jesus Christ! To what end did He die if men could be saved by their own works? It was a superfluity that He should hang upon the Cross if our own merits can open a way of salvation. How could the great God permit and even ordain such a death if we could be saved by our own merits? Why that bloody sweat? Why that

nailing of the hands and feet? Why that, "Eli, Eli, lama Sabachthani?" if, of yourselves, you can be saved? But it is not so! You cannot save yourselves by efforts of your own and, therefore, we have to come to you, shutting you up to only this one thing—that you must be saved by faith in Him whom God has set forth to be a Propitiation for sin! You need the love of God! You need the power of the Holy Spirit! You need to be quickened into newness of life! You need to be helped to run in the ways of righteousness! In a word, you need *everything* until you come to Christ and everything that you need you will find in Him, and in Him, alone.

Within yourselves there is nothing that you need. You may search, look and turn the dunghill of your nature over and over again, but you will never find the jewel of salvation there! That pearl of great price is in the Lord who assumed human nature, lived, loved, died and rose again—that He might redeem men from the Fall and all the sin consequent thereof. Oh, that you would look away from self once and for all! God forbid that the preacher should ever hold up anything else before you except the Crucified Savior, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, bidding men look and live!

To talk to unbelieving men about the possibility of salvation by their own works *would keep them from eternal life*. All that the life of nature can do will never suffice to produce a higher nature. Let the natural exert itself as it may, it will never rise to the spiritual! The best working horse does not, thereby, become a man—the best unregenerate man cannot, thereby become regenerate! There must be a new birth—and that comes by *faith*—not by works. To believe in Jesus is the entrance gate of the new life and there is no other door! If we, in any way, set you hunting about for another way, we shall cause you to miss the only one entrance and that will be to your soul's eternal loss! As we dread this, we more and more resolve to hold up the Cross and the Cross alone, and again and again we cry, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." God forbid that by our essays upon virtue, or, "the enthusiasm of humanity," we should distract you from hastening to the Lord Jesus, that He may give you rest, life and holiness! We want you to let your thoughts run, *all of them*, to Calvary and to that wondrous Person whose wounds upon the tree bleed healing for the wounds of sin—and whose death is, for Believers—the death of the great evil power which once held them in bondage!

Thus much upon a topic which we shall never wear threadbare and which we shall always continue to insist upon while life or breath remains, because it will always be needed while sinners remain on earth needing salvation.

II. But now we come to this second most important part of the subject, namely, THE WALK OF SALVATION. Those who have believed in Christ and have been the subjects of the Spirit's work, are now, "created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained *that they should walk in them*." God desires that His people should abound in good works. It is His great objective to produce a people fit to commune with Himself—a holy people with whom He can have fellowship in time and in

eternity! He wishes us not only to produce good works, but to *abound* in them—and to abound in the highest order of them. He would have us become imitators of Himself as dear children, possessing the same moral attributes as the Father in Heaven possesses! Is it not written, "Be you perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect"? Oh, that we came within measurable distance of this blissful consummation!

Note in the text, first, that *there is a new creation*. One of the poets said of old that, "an honest man is the noblest work of God." That is not true unless we add to the word, "honest," an emphatic *spiritual* sense. A Christian man, however, *is* the noblest work of God. He is the product of the second creation. At first, man fell and marred his Creator's work, but, in the *new* creation, He that makes all things makes us new! Now, the objective of the new creation of our race is holiness unto the glory of God. You are not new-made in the image of the fallen Adam, but in the likeness of the second Adam! You are not new-created to sin—this cannot be imagined! The new creature sins not, for it is born of God. The new life is a living and incorruptible seed which lives and abides forever.

The *old nature* sins and always will sin, but the *new* life is of God and it strives daily against the sin of the old nature and perseveres, and pushes forward towards everything that is holy, upright and perfect. Its instincts all run towards perfect holiness. The old nature does not care to pray, but the new nature prays as readily as we breathe. The old nature murmurs, but the new nature sings and praises God from an impulse within. The old nature goes after the flesh, for it is fleshly, but the new nature seeks the things of the Spirit, for it is spiritual! If you have been born again at all, you have been born unto holiness! If you have been new-created, you have been created unto good works! If this is not so with us, our religion is a mere pretence.

This new creation is in connection with Christ, for we read in the text, "Created *in Christ Jesus*." We are the branches; He is the Vine out of which we grow! Your life and all your fruit-producing power lie in your union to Christ. You are not merely new-created, but you are created in Christ Jesus! It is not merely a change from a lower nature to a higher, but from separation from Christ to union with Him! What a wonderful thing that is—that you and I should not only be creatures in the world, but new creatures in Christ Jesus! Creatures we were in the first Adam, but our new creatureship is in the second Adam. Beloved, if you are what you profess to be, you are one with Jesus by that vital union which cannot be dissolved—and good works follow upon that union! Joined to Jesus by faith in Him, love to Him and imitation of Him, you walk in good works! Your creation to holiness is your creation in Christ Jesus. As you become one with the anointed Savior, His anointing ordains you to service and His salvation leads you into obedience. There cannot but be fruit on that branch which is vitally joined to that fruitful Stem, Christ Jesus, who did always those things which pleased the Father!

Our good works must flow from our union with Christ by virtue of our faith in Him. We depend upon Him to *make* us holy. We depend upon Him

to *keep* us holy. We overcome sin by the blood of the Lamb. We reach after holiness by the constraining love of Jesus. Love to Christ is the impelling cause of putting away first, one evil, and then another—and the energy enabling us to follow after one virtue and then another. Love to Christ burns like a fire in the breast that has conceived it and, as it burns, it makes the heart to glow and to become transformed to its own nature. You have seen a piece of iron put into the fire, all black or rusty, and in the fire it has gradually become red with heat and, as it has reddened, it has thrown off the scales of rust until, at last, it has looked to be, itself, a mass of fire. The effect of the love of God, shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit, is to burn off the rust and scales of sin and depravity—and we become pure love *to* God through the force of the love *of* God which takes possession of our being!

Moreover, that love moves us to patient imitation of Christ. Do you know what that means? "The Imitation of Christ" is a wonderful book upon the subject which every Christian should read. It has its faults, but its excellences are many. May we not only *read* the book, but write it out anew in our own life and character by seeking in everything to be like Jesus! It is a good thing to put up in your house the question, "What would Jesus do?" It answers nine out of 10 of the difficulties of moral casuistry. When you do not know what to do and the Law does not seem very explicit upon it, put it so—"What would Jesus do?" Here, then, stands the case—by your creation in Christ you come to exhibit faith *in* Him, love *to* Him and imitation *of* Him—and all these are the means by which *good works* are produced in you! You are "created in Christ Jesus unto good works."

Notice that *creation unto these good works is the subject of a Divine decree*—"Which God has before ordained that we should walk in them." This is God's decree! Am I ordained to eternal life? Answer the other question—"Am I ordained to walk in good works?" If I am ordained to good works, then I *do* walk in them and the decree of God is manifestly carried out in me! But if I make a profession of being a Christian, attend a place of worship and compliment myself upon my safety—while I am living in sin—then evidently there is no decree that I shall walk in good works, for I am living otherwise than that decree would have caused me to live. O Beloved, it is the eternal purpose of God to make His people holy! Agree with that purpose, with the freedom of your renewed will and with the delight of your regenerated heart! Concur in the will of God. Yes, vehemently desire, heartily pant after perfect holiness in the fear of God! Then may you, in the midst of severe struggles against temptation from outside and from within, fall back upon the decree of Predestination. Since it is God's decree that, as being new-created in Christ, I should be full of good works, I shall be so despite my old nature and despite my spiritual weakness! The decree in the new creature of God will be carried out despite my surroundings, despite the temptations of my circumstances, despite the opposition of the devil. God has before ordained that we should walk in good works—and we *shall* walk in them, sustained by His holy Spirit!

So, then, dear Friends, these good works must be *in the Christian*. They are not the root, but the *fruit* of his salvation. They are not the way of the Believer's salvation—they are his *walk in the way of salvation*. Where there is healthy life in a tree, the tree will bear fruit according to its kind. So, if God has made our nature good, the fruit will be good. But if the fruit is evil, it is because the tree is what it always was—an evil tree. The desire of men created anew in Christ is to be rid of every sin. We do sin, but we do not *love* sin. Sin gets power over us, sometimes, to our sorrow, but it is a kind of death to us to feel that we have gone into sin. Yet it shall not have dominion over us, for we are not under the Law, but under Grace and, therefore, we shall conquer it and get the victory!

The outcome of our union with Christ must be holiness. "What concord has Christ with Belial?" What union can He have with men that love sin? How can they that are of the world, who love the world, be said to be members of the Head who is in Heaven, in the perfection of His Glory? Brothers and Sisters, we must, in the power of the text, and especially in the power of our union to Christ, seek to make daily advances in good works which God has before ordained that we should walk in them, for walking means not only *persevering* but *advancing*. We should go from strength to strength in holiness—we should do more and do better. What are you doing for Jesus? Do twice as much! If you are spreading abroad the knowledge of His name, work with both hands! If you are living uprightly, seek to put away any relics of sin that abide in your character that you may glorify the name of God to the utmost.

And, lastly, *this should be our daily exercise*—"That we should walk in them." Good works are not to be an amusement, but a vocation. We are not to indulge in them occasionally—they are to be the tenor and bent of our lives. "Oh," says one, "that is a hard saying!" Do you think so? Well, then, this displays and sets in clear light the first part of my subject. You see how impossible it is that you should be saved by these good works, do you not? But if you *are* saved—if you have *obtained* a present salvation, if you are *now* a child of God, if you are now assured of your safety, I charge you, by the love you bear to God, by the gratitude you have to His Christ—give yourself wholly to everything that is right, good, pure and just! Help everything that has to do with temperance, righteousness, truth and godliness! And "let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven."

May the Spirit of God seal this sermon upon the hearts of His people, for Christ's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Ephesians 2.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN-BOOK"—238, 554, 537.

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GOD REJOICING IN THE NEW CREATION
NO. 2211

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 5, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be you glad and rejoice forever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in My people."
Isaiah 65:17-19.

THIS passage, like the rest of Isaiah's closing chapters, will have complete fulfillment in the latter days when Christ shall come, when the whole company of His elect ones shall have been gathered out from the world, when the whole creation shall have been renewed, when new heavens and a new earth shall be the product of the Savior's power, when, forever and forever, perfected saints of God shall behold His face and joy and rejoice in Him. I hope and believe that the following verses will actually describe the condition of the redeemed during the reign of Christ upon the earth—"There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that has not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old. They shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of My people, and My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, says the Lord."

But the work which is spoken of in the text is already begun among us. There is to be a literal new creation, but that new creation has already commenced and I think, therefore, that even now we ought to manifest a part of the joy. If we are called upon to be glad and rejoice in the completion of the work, let us rejoice even in the commencement of it! The Lord Himself will joy and rejoice—and we who are in sympathy with Him are exhorted and even *commanded* to be glad—let us not be slack in this heavenly duty.

Do you know what this work of creation is, which is here thrice promised in the words, "I create. . .I create . . .I create"? It is evidently a *second* creation, which is altogether to eclipse the first, and put it out of mind. Shall I tell the story?

The first creation was so fair that when the Lord looked upon it, with man as its climax and crown, He said, "It is very good." But it failed in man, who should have been its glory! Man sinned and in his sin he was so connected with the whole of the earth that he dragged it down with him! The slime of the serpent passed over everything. The taint of sin marred the whole of God's work in this lower world. The creation was made subject to vanity and it groans in pain even now. But the Infinitely Blessed would not be defeated. And in infinite condescension He determined that He would make a new creation which would rise upon the ruins of the first. He resolved that under a second Adam, something more than Paradise should be restored to the universe. He purposed that He would undo, through Jesus Christ, the Seed of the woman, all the mischief that had been worked by the serpent. He has commenced to undo this mischief and to work this new creation—and so commenced that He will never withdraw His hand till the work is done.

He has commenced it thus—by putting new hearts into as many as He has called by His Spirit, regenerating them and making them to become new creatures in Christ Jesus. These, the Apostle tells us, are a kind of first-fruits of this new creation. We are the commencement of the future ingathering. Our new-born spirits are the first ripe ears of corn out of a wonderful harvest that will come, by-and-by. The saints' spirits are, first of all, new-created, but their bodily parts remain in the old creation. Hence we suffer pain, for though the Spirit is life because of righteousness, "the body is dead because of sin." By-and-by our *bodies* shall be new-created, when, from beds of dust and silent clay, we shall leap up into *immortal* beauty! The resurrection will be to the body what regeneration is to the soul. When body and soul are thus created anew, the whole earth around them in which they shall dwell, shall be, at the same time, also renewed. And so God shall make the spirits, the minds, the bodies and the abodes of men all new. These bodies, quickened by His Spirit who dwells in us, and united to souls purified and refined, shall tread upon an earth delivered from the curse and shall be canopied beneath new heavens! Have they not new desires? Should not all above them be new? They shall tread a new earth for they have new ways.

Inasmuch as this ought to be the subject of joy and the text invites us to it, I come to press upon you the sweet duty of present delight! Oh, when happiness is made a precept, when joy is made a command, I cannot but hope that God's people, to whom I am now speaking, will answer the call! Has joy become a duty? Then we will be joyous! Has gladness become a precept? Then we will gladly enough obey and our heart shall dance for joy! I will read the text again and then we will consider what sort of joy it is which is to arise out of the work of Divine Grace in the new creation. "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be you glad and rejoice forever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in My people."

I. First, then, concerning the joy to which we are called, we would say, IT IS A JOY IN CREATION—"Behold, I *create* new heavens and a new earth. I *create* Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy."

I must confess that I think it a most right and excellent thing that you and I should rejoice in the natural creation of God. I do not think that any man is altogether beyond hope who can take delight in the nightly heavens as he watches the stars and feel joy as he treads the meadows all bedecked with kingcups and daisies. He is not lost to better things who, on the waves, rejoices in the creeping things innumerable drawn up from the vast deep, or who, in the woods, is charmed with the sweet carols of the feathered minstrels. The man who is altogether bad seldom delights in Nature, but gets away into the artificial and the sensual. He cares little enough for the fields except he can hunt in them; little enough for lands unless he can raise rent from them; little enough for living things except for slaughter or for sale. He welcomes night only for the indulgence of his sins and the stars are not half as bright to him as the lights that men have kindled—for him, indeed, the constellations shine in vain!

One of the purest and most innocent of joys, apart from spiritual things, in which a man can indulge, is a joy in the works of God. I confess I have no sympathy with the good man, who, when he went down the Rhine, dived into the cabin that he might not see the river and the mountains lest he should be absorbed in them and forget his Savior. I like to see my Savior on the hills and by the shores of the sea! I hear my Father's voice in the thunder and listen to the whispers of His love in the cadence of the sunlit waves. These are my Father's works and, therefore, I admire them and I seem all the nearer to Him when I am among them. If I were a great artist, I would think it a very small compliment if my son came into my house and said he would not notice the pictures I had painted because he only wanted to think of *me*. He therein would *condemn* my paintings, for if they were good for anything, he would be rejoiced to see my hand in them!

Oh, but surely, everything that comes from the hand of such a Master Artist as God has something in it of Himself! The Lord rejoices in His works and shall not His people do so? He said of what He had made, "It is very good." And He cannot be very good, himself, who thinks that which God makes is not very good. In this he contradicts his God! It is a beautiful world we live in—

"Every prospect pleases,
And only man is vile."

There are lovely spots on this fair globe which ought to make even a blasphemer devout. I have said, among the mountains, "He who sees no God here is mad!" There are things that God has made which overwhelm with a sense of His Omnipotence—how can men see them and doubt the existence of the Deity? Whether you consider the anatomy of the body, or the conformation of the mighty heavens, you wonder that the scorner does not bow his head—at least in silence—and acknowledge the infinite supremacy of God!

Well, now, if there is—and I am sure there is—something pure and elevating in joy in God as the Creator of ordinary things—as the Maker of all

this first creation—much more is there something bright, pure and spiritually exhilarating in rejoicing in God's higher works, in God's spiritual works, in God's *new* creation! I think if a man feels within him a new heart and rejoices in his new birth. If he sees in others new and holier lives and rejoices in them. If he listens to the preaching of the Gospel and discovers in it new and better principles such as the old worn-out world could never have discovered—why, that man is a gracious man! The eye that can see the new nature is an eye that Grace has given and newly opened to new light. The heart that can rejoice in the new creation is a heart that is, itself, renewed, or else it would not comprehend spiritual things and could not rejoice in them. I invite you, therefore, dear Friends—you that see, know and somewhat appreciate the new creation in its beginnings—to joy and to rejoice in it tonight!

It is a delightful thing that God should make a tree and bid it come forth in Spring with all its budding verdure. It is a far better thing that God should take a poor thorny heart like yours and mine—and transform it till it becomes like the fir tree or the pine tree to His praise. It is a charming sight when bulbs that have slept under ground through the winter, hold up their golden cups to be filled with the glory of the returning sun. But how much better that hearts that have lain dead in trespasses and sins should be moved by the secret touch of the Spirit of God to welcome the Sun of Righteousness and to rejoice in Him! How glorious to see a slum become a sanctuary, a den of thieves a house of God! This is even more wonderful than for darkness to become light and chaos yield to order. God's new creation, even in its beginnings here and now, is a something to delight one's soul in! I pray you, delight yourselves therein. Behold, in the creation of a new heart, the manifest finger of God! What power to turn the human will—to subdue fierce passions—to change the very core and center of the heart! This is power in the moral and spiritual world as great as anything which can be seen even in the convulsions of earthquakes.

Herein is wisdom, too! We speak of the wisdom of God as seen in anatomy, in botany, or in astronomy. Yet this wisdom is still more to be seen in regeneration—in the making of the sinner who wandered from God to become a saint who follows after holiness—in the bringing of the opposer of Christ to become His friend and advocate. To rule the will and yet leave it free. To guide the heart and yet to let it choose. To reverse the law of being and yet to violate no law of man's nature—herein is the wisdom of the Highest, Himself! The attributes of God are to be seen in the visible creation, but they are to be seen in a brighter and superior light in the *new creation*. There is not one of the attributes of God which has not its illustration under the economy of Grace and, blessed shall your whole being be if you can, to the fullest, rejoice in that which God creates!

There is one reason why you are called upon to rejoice in it, namely, that you are a part of it. When the angels saw God making this world, they sang together and shouted for joy—but they were not a part of this lower world. They had nothing to do with man's estate, but as a matter of sympathy. But as for this new creation of our gracious God, you and I,

Beloved, who have believed in Jesus, are part of it! That same Grace which has quickened others into new life, has quickened us. The same Spirit who has given new principles and new desires to others, has also given them to us. The Father has begotten us, again, by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. We are the central beings of the new creation and so let us joy and rejoice in it with all our soul, mind and strength!

I know, when I lay sorely sick and tormented in body, it seemed always to be such a joy to me that I, myself, my inner self, my spirit, has been new-created and that my nobler part could rise above the suffering and soar into the pure heavens of the spiritual realm! And I have said of this poor body, "You have not yet been new-created. Still does the venom of the old serpent taint you, but you shall yet be delivered. You shall rise again if you die and are buried, or you shall be changed if the Lord should suddenly come. You, poor body, you that drags me down to the dust in pain and sorrow, even *you* shall rise and be made anew in 'the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body'—for the new creation has begun in me, even the earnest of the Spirit." O Beloved, can't you rejoice in this? I would incite you to do so. Rejoice in what God is doing in this new creation! Let your whole spirit be glad! Overflow with gladness! Let loose the torrents of praise! Leap down, you cataracts of joy!

Well, that is our first point. It is a joy in creation.

II. And, secondly, IT IS A JOY WHICH WILL ECLIPSE ALL THAT HAS GONE BEFORE.

Now, my text is, "And the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." God's great new-creating work ought to fill us with such joy as to make us forget the old creation, as though we said to ourselves—"What are the sun and the moon? We shall not have need of these variable lights in the perfection of the new creation, for in Heaven, 'They need no candle, neither light of the sun.'" What is the sea, though it is the very mirror of beauty? In that new creation there will be no more sea—storms and tempests will be all unknown. What are these luxuries of sight and hearing? We shall not need them when our eyes shall behold the King in His beauty in the land that is very far off! The joy of the spiritual is such that, while it admits the joy of the natural, yet, nevertheless, it swallows it up as Aaron's rod swallowed up the rods of the magicians. In those last days we shall be in tune with Dr. Watts when he sang—

"Lo! what a glorious sight appears
To our believing eyes!
The earth and seas are passed away,
And the old rolling skies.
From the third Heaven, where God resides,
That holy, happy place,
The new Jerusalem comes down,
Adorned with shining Grace.
The God of Glory down to men
Removes His blessed abode,
Men the dear objects of His Grace,
And He their loving God.
His own soft hands shall wipe the tears

From every weeping eye,
And pains, and groans, and griefs, and fears,
And death itself shall die."

As an instance of the expulsive power of a new delight, we all know how the memory of the old dispensation is gone from us. Brothers and Sisters, did any of you ever weep because you did not sit at the Passover? Did you ever regret the Paschal lamb? Oh, never, because you have fed on Christ! Was there ever a man that knows his Lord that ever did lament that he had not the sign of the old Abrahamic Covenant in his flesh? No, he gladly dispenses with the rites of the Old Covenant, since he has the fullness of their meaning in his Lord. The Believer is circumcised in Christ, buried in Christ, risen in Christ and in Christ exalted to the heavenly places! Did you ever regret the absence of the burnt offering, or the red heifer, or any of the sacrifices and rites of the Jews? Did you ever pine for the feast of tabernacles, or the dedication? No, because, though those were like the old heavens and earth to the Jewish believers, they have passed away, and we now live under new heavens and a new earth, so far as the dispensation of Divine teaching is concerned. The Substance is come and the shadow has gone—and we do not remember it.

Now, I want you to feel just the same with regard to all your former life as you now feel towards that old dispensation. The world is dead to you and you to the world. Carnal customs and attractions are, for you, abolished, even as the ancient sacrifices are abolished. What were your sins? They are blotted out. The depths have covered them. You shall never see them again. Seek not after them as though you had a lingering esteem for them. Let them not come to mind except to excite you to repentance! What were your pleasures when you lived in sin? Forget them! They were flavorless, deceptive, destructive evils. You now have a higher pleasure which enchants your soul. What have been the sorrows of your past life, especially your sorrows while coming to Christ? You need not remember them, but, like the woman who remembers no more her travail for the joy that a man is born into the world, so your birth into the new creation causes you to forget all the sufferings of your spirit in coming there.

"Old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new!" I would to God that the joy of the new creation would so fill us right up to the brim that we should not imagine any other joy! This puts out all other joy as the sun hides all the stars. Let all go! Let all go! Rolled up as the heavens and the earth are to be, like vestures all worn, let all of my past life be laid aside. Now put I on my new dress of sparkling joy and delight in the new things, for has not Christ made all things new to me? A new song is in my mouth, even praise to Him forevermore! A new Law is in my heart and a new service engages all my powers.

There is great scope for enlargement here, but I will not linger, lest I chase away your joy by speaking about it unto weariness.

III. In the third place, IT IS A PRESENT AND A LASTING JOY. "But be you glad and rejoice FOREVER in that which I create." Be now glad and now rejoice—it is a *present* joy. Take a delightful interest in that which God is now creating in the spiritual realm—though the work is only in the

doing, yet be glad concerning it! Be glad in anything that the Lord has created in you. Has He created in you so much of the new life as to have produced conviction, repentance, faith in Christ, hope in the promise, longing for holiness? Be glad in this even if you have other circumstances pressing upon you and causing you to be heavy of heart. Though you might be mourning because you are so sickly, yet be glad that you are born again! If somewhat distressed because you are so poor, yet be glad that you are a child of God and have a place in the new family of love! Let the old things go and grasp the new, the heavenly. The old creation—bear with it a little longer, for the time of your redemption from its bondage draws near. Find your joy where God would have you find it, namely, in that part of your nature which is *new*, in the *new* principles, the *new* promises, the New Covenant and the blood of the New Covenant which are yours—all of them! Look no longer for the living among the dead, but let your heart dwell in the living world with your living Lord and be glad! The Kingdom of God is within you! Rejoice in it!

And I want you, also, to find your joy in the new creation of God as you see it in others. The angels rejoice over one sinner that repents—surely you and I ought to do so! Try and do good and bring others to Christ—and when a soul shows signs of turning to its God, let that be your joy. "Be glad and rejoice in that which *I create*." I have had many rich draughts from this cup. I do not know anything that has made me so happy, hundreds and thousands of times in my life, as to see God at work in men's hearts and, without exaggeration, to hear of this one and of that one brought to Christ through the hearing or the reading of my sermons! It has been a Heaven to me! Oh, you may drink as much as you like of this cup of sympathy with God in His new creation work! There is no intoxication about it—to find a joy in the work of God in the hearts of others is healthy, unselfish delight!

I know some snarling people who, if they hear of one being converted, say "they hope it is genuine," which, being interpreted, means that they do not believe it is—and they almost hope it is not. "Oh, but," they say, if there is a great work done anywhere, "I never did like excitement! When I hear of many conversions, I expect many backsliding." Cold, dead fish that they are, excitement would not hurt them. A little boiling might do them good, perhaps. Yes, but if they meet with one who is an eminent Christian and whose public character will bear the closest inspection, they say, "Ah, well! We do not know what he is like at *home*." And so they have always some sly word to say against God's work, just like the serpent in Eden coming and hissing, "Yes, has God said?" I would far rather be one of those that can see the beauty of God's handiwork in my fellow Christians, than one who can spy out their defects.

I think it is very beautiful where John Bunyan represents Christiana and Mercy as admiring each other. They had both enjoyed a wash in that wonderful beauty-giving bath and Mercy said to Christiana, "How beautiful you are! I never saw anyone look so lovely as you are." But Christiania said that she was not beautiful at all—she could not see anything about herself to admire, while in Mercy she saw everything to esteem and love.

Oh, to have an eye for the work of God in other people and to rejoice in it! Such an eye sees not itself and yet it is, itself, one of God's loveliest works. "Be you glad and rejoice," says God, "in that which I create."

Can we decline the sacred invitation? No, rather let us thankfully enter into the joy of our Lord! Be thankful for what God has done for yourself. Be thankful for what God is doing in other people. And remember that if you once begin this joy, you need never renounce it, for the text says, "Be you glad and rejoice *forever*." Every day and all day, this light of joy is shining, for the Creator stays not His hand! As long as you live there will be something in the new creation that shall be to you a wellspring of fresh joy and delight. Heaven will only enlarge this joy. Be glad forever because God will always be creating something fresh in which you may be glad!

IV. Again, in the fourth place, it may be said of the joy which we ought to feel, that IT IS A JOY WHICH GOD INTENDED FOR US, "For, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy." He has made the new city, the new people, the new world to be a source of joy!

Take Jerusalem as the emblem of the Church of God. God always intended that His chosen, called and converted people should be a rejoicing. He created you on purpose, that you should, yourselves, be happy and bring happiness to others! Do you not know that His name is the happy God and nothing gives Him greater happiness than to give happiness to His creatures? Do you think you were chosen to be a groaner all your days? Were you called to misery, dear Brother, Sister? Does Jesus Christ say, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will make you *doleful*"? Does He say, "Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, and you shall find *agony* in your hearts"? No! But He talks about rest, peace, joy and blessedness.

One wrote to me, some years ago, and said that he came into this congregation and he felt at once that he must be in the wrong place because he found so large an assembly. God's people, he said, are a small remnant. There are few that shall be saved. He had settled that matter in his own expanded soul. But he was still more sure that he was in the wrong place when he looked at me, for I looked happy! And in his judgment, if I had known anything about the experience of a tried child of God, my face would have been much longer, more wrinkled and more sadly serious. I confess that my face does betray, at times, the fact that I am happy—but I cannot help it! But when this good man looked round on the great congregation—you were not all here then—but when he looked round on the vast congregation and saw them all looking so happy, he felt that he must get out of the building as soon as he could, for such smiling people could not be the afflicted people of God! He walked, he said, some distance along our streets, feeling heavy at heart because of the joy he had witnessed, but at last he reached a Chapel place in a court.

The very aspect of the Chapel gave him hope—it was so small and so hidden away. He entered, and, to his satisfaction, he found in the congregation less than a score—here were the faithful few! At any rate, he could say of this, "Is it not a little one?" The minister was as doleful as could be desired and the subject was full of lamentation. He tells me that he sat

down there in peace, for he found himself at home! I am glad he was suited. Different people have different ways, you know, and some love to be comfortably wretched. But I find myself miserable only when I keep away from my Lord and His work of new-creation. I have always found that when I can get under the shadow of His wings, my soul is at rest and I look upon that restfulness and happiness as the work and fruit of the Spirit—"the fruit of the Spirit is joy and peace."

My impression is that I am not right when I give way to depression and melancholy. I certainly should not go to a place of worship *seeking* for doubt and despondency! Neither should I conclude that I must be on the way to Heaven because I felt in my own heart some of the miseries of Hell. When I am despondent, I say to myself, "Why are you cast down, O my Soul?" I probably know as much about depression of spirit as any man that lives, but I consider myself foolish and blameworthy—a fool for knowing so much darkness—and I do not want to feel any more of it. I would like to drive myself out of it once and for all if I could, for we ought to be glad and rejoice forever in that which God creates! He has created His people as a rejoicing—yes, His people to be a joy! Ours is a heritage of joy and peace! My dear Brothers and Sisters, if anybody in the world ought to be happy, we are the people! How large our obligations! How boundless our privileges! How brilliant our hopes!—

"Bright the prospect soon that greets us
Of that longed-for nuptial day,
When our heavenly Bridegroom meets us
On His kingly, conquering way!
In Glory, bride and Bridegroom reign forever."

What should make us miserable? Shall the children of the bride chamber mourn while the Bridegroom is with them? Sin?—that is forgiven! Affliction?—that is working our good! Inward corruptions?—they are doomed to die! Satanic temptations?—we wear an armor which they cannot penetrate! We have every reason for delight and we have, moreover, this command for it, "Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart." God bring us into that blessed condition and keep us there!

God intended not only that we should have joy, but that we should spread it among others. He intends that wherever we go, we should be light-bearers and set other lamps shining. Why are some so afraid of joy? They seem, wherever they go, to be busy in turning out the lambs. The first thing to be done is, "Take that child out." Dear little child, with its pleasant prattle, so happy at your feet!—why send it away? If there is a very happy hymn in the book, do not sing it—it would be presumptuous! Sing—

"Lord, what a wretched land is this."

Crooked meter, key dismal, dolorous tune! I fear that certain Christians go through this world making it miserable as they march through it. Oh, that they could see that Christ has come to destroy the works of the devil and would have us rejoice in the new creation of our God!

Alas, there are heady, hard-hearted persons abroad who, by their willfulness and pride, would crush every flower in the garden beneath their

wicked hoofs! Wherever they go, everything is despised, ridiculed and kicked by them! This is the spirit of the Evil One! Oh, do not so! Christian people, you dare not be so! You shall not be so—God will not let you be so—you must be gentle, compassionate, generous, kind, gracious! Wherever you go, try to make others happy, for God creates Jerusalem as a rejoicing and His people a joy—a joy to others who have no joy, a source of happiness to the saddest of our race! Help the widow, comfort the fatherless, succor the poor, cheer the desponding, tell the glad news to the weary heart. In the Father's hands, in Christ's hands, in the Spirit's hands, seek to break the prisoner's fetters and to bring him out into the light of liberty! You, too, are anointed to proclaim liberty to the captives. May the God of infinite mercy help you and help me to do so!

Now, dear Friends, just for a minute upon this creation. I want to show how the work of God does create a joy-making people. As soon as ever we are converted, what is one of the first things that comes of it? Why, joy! The morning I found Christ, it snowed very hard. The snowflakes fluttered around me like white doves, as I went home, and I felt just as light as those, for my soul was washed whiter than snow! It was not a gloomy winter's day to me, but all Nature wore her bridal dress in sympathy with my delight! Was it not so with you on the day of your new birth? Were you not as happy as you could be when you first found the Savior? So far, you see, the Lord creates joy—and it is better, still, further on! When the creation of God goes on and a man is helped to conquer sin—when the work of Grace in his soul grows and increases, he cries, "Thanks be to God which gives us the victory"—and he gets increased joy in his soul over every conquered sin.

When you and I see sin subdued, do we not feel happy? Whenever the news comes to me that a man has been reclaimed from drunkenness, or a woman is saved from the streets, or when I hear of a hard-hearted sinner repenting, I rejoice in the Lord! Conversion days are our high holidays! Revivals are our jubilees! Thus the Lord gives us opportunities for joy and rejoicing as His new-creation work proceeds stage by stage. Better days are in store, it may be, and I trust that in years to come we shall more and more behold God working and shall rejoice therein!

But, by-and-by, there will be a still greater joy! We shall enter into Heaven and there will be joy among the angels and joy in our heart over God's new-creation work which will proceed at a glorious rate! Then the nations will be converted to God. I know not when, nor exactly how, but the day shall come when Christ shall reign from pole to pole. And what a joy that will be! We shall, indeed, be glad in that which God creates, as the islands of the sea shall ring out His praise! Then Christ the Lord will come and what joy and rejoicing there will be in that day when He has fully fashioned the new earth and the new heavens! His ancient people, the seed of Abraham, shall be gathered in with exultation. We will clap our hands when the long-wandering nation shall turn unto the true God and acknowledge the rejected Messiah of the house of David!

The Gentiles will not be jealous. They will rejoice as the Jew comes in and then will the Jews rejoice over the Gentiles, as they see them wor-

shipping Abraham's God! Everything that is to come in the eternal future flashes the Light of God into the eyes of Believers and calls upon them to rejoice in anticipation! Nothing prophesied should be dreaded by us. There is nothing foretold by Seer, or beheld in vision, that can alarm the Christian. He can stand serenely on the brink of the great eternity and say, "Come on! Let every event foretold become a fact! Pour out your vials, you angels! Fall, you star called Wormwood! Come, Gog and Magog, to the last great battle of Armageddon!" Nothing is to be dreaded! Nothing is to be feared by those who are one with Jesus! To us remains nothing but joy and rejoicing, for God has made His people a rejoicing—yes, His people a joy!

V. I finish up with the last point, IT IS A JOY IN WHICH WE SHARE WITH GOD. Gently, my tongue! Timidly and cautiously speak here! Here is your warrant for supposing a fellowship with God and man in this joy—"Behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. *And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in My peopl*e." The wonderful comes out here! God, Himself, the Ever-Blessed, finds joy in His new creation! Here is ground for marveling! I have often said to you that when the Lord made the material world, there was not much in it to touch His spiritual Nature and so He simply spoke and said, in plain prose, "It is good." That was all—He said it was good. But when the Lord has made new heavens and earth, when He has finished, when the bride of Christ shall be brought to Him—you know the word, "He will rest in His love, He will joy over her with singing."

Did you ever get into your hearts the idea of the Lord God *singing*? God singing over His Church, over His Jerusalem, over His new creation! God singing! I can understand the angels singing for joy over God's work, but here is *God singing over His own work!* I will tell you something more wonderful than that—it is that you should be a part of that work and that God should sing over *you*! And yet it is not so very wonderful, for is He not the Father, and does not the Father sing over His prodigal son that wandered and is come back? Is He not the Savior, and will not the Savior, who bought us with His blood, sing over us who are the purchase of His agonies? He is the Spirit, and shall not the Spirit, who has strived with us and worked all our works in us, sing when His work is done and we are sanctified?

Father, when Your eternal purposes are all fulfilled, You will joy over Your people! Son of God, Redeemer, when all Your agonies shall have received their recompense in the salvation of Your redeemed, You will rejoice over Your chosen! Holy Spirit, when all Your condescending indwelling within us shall have accomplished its design, You will rejoice in Your people! Come now, Beloved, rejoice in sympathy with the Divine heart! When the father found his son, he made the whole household merry, and shall not we be? When the woman had found her piece of money, she called together her friends and neighbors and she said, "Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost." Shall not we rejoice with the Spirit over the lost silver pieces? When the shepherd brought home his sheep, he said, "Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost." Come,

then, rejoice with the Father, rejoice with the Son, rejoice with the Spirit! And if the Lord God, as the Trinity in Unity, invites us to be glad and rejoice in that which He creates, let us not hold back, but let us sing His matchless love and new-creating power and infinite wisdom! I am sure you will sing! You *must* sing even now, if you know yourselves to be a part of this amazing Grace!

And now I close with this observation. Nobody will ever rejoice in this new-creating work of God while he is rejoicing in his own works and trusting in himself and boasting his own merits. It is a sign of Grace when a man is sick of self and is in harmony with God. When he leaves off rejoicing in what he can do and comes to rejoice in what God has *done* and *is doing*, then a change has been worked in him! Some of you are trying to save yourselves and make yourselves right before God—as well might the dead try to find life for themselves. It cannot be done! You must be made new by a power you have not within yourself—by a Divine Power. You must be born again and this is the work of God—not your work. We shall know when this heavenly work is begun in you when you cease from rejoicing in anything that you are or can be of yourselves, and then shall you, with us, rejoice in that which God creates in you!

Ring the bells of Heaven! Tune your voices, sons of earth! He who makes all things new is on the Throne, working out His holy pleasure. Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Romans 8:19-28; 2 Peter 3:3-13.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—
345, 316, 360; 108 (FLOWERS AND FRUITS).

Mr. SPURGEON has been very seriously ill, but the prayers of the Lord's people at the Tabernacle and elsewhere have been graciously answered on his behalf. Hearty thanksgiving should be rendered to the Lord for his partial recovery, joined with earnest supplication for his complete restoration to health and strength. Both Mr. and Mrs. SPURGEON are deeply grateful for the widespread sympathy that has been manifested during this season of severe trial.

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

THE PRIVATE THOUGHTS AND WORDS OF JESUS
NO. 2212

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JULY 12, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 26, 1891

"And Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify Him: and the third day He shall rise again."
Matthew 20:17-19.

You have this same story in Matthew, Mark and Luke, a little differently told, as would naturally be the case when the information came from three different observers. It will be to our edification to put the three accounts together, so as to get a complete view of the incident, for each Evangelist mentions something omitted by the others.

Our Lord firmly resolved to go to Jerusalem about a fortnight before the Passover, with the view of becoming, Himself, the Lamb of God's Passover. He had frequently left Jerusalem when His life had been in danger because His time was not yet come and He, thus, set us the example of not willfully running into danger, or braving it with foolhardiness. But now that He felt that the hour of His s
Sacrifice was near at hand, He did not hesitate, or seek to avoid it, but He resolutely set out to meet His sufferings and His death. When He was in the highway that led to Jerusalem, He marched in front of the little band of His disciples with so vigorous and bold a step—and with such a calm, determined air of heroism upon Him, that His followers were filled with astonishment (Mark 10:52).

Here are the very words—"And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them; and they were amazed, and as they followed they were afraid." Knowing that, according to His own account, He was going to suffering and death and, being well assured, from their own observation, that He was about to encounter the most furious opposition, they were amazed at His dauntless courage and wondered what made Him so resolved! We also read that "they were afraid," afraid for themselves, in a measure, but most of all afraid for Him. Would not His daring lead to conflict with the powers then in authority and might not terrible things happen both to Him and to them? It was not altogether timidity, but awe which came over them—His manner was so majestic and sublime. That

lowly Man had a something about Him which commanded the trembling reverence of His disciples. After all, meekness is imperial—and commands far more reverence than anger or pride.

His followers felt that great events were about to transpire and they were deeply sobered and filled with awe-struck apprehension. In the Presence of their Lord, who seemed to be leading a forlorn hope to a fierce battle, they were afraid. They were amazed at His courage and afraid for the consequences. They were also amazed at Him and afraid because of their own unfitness to stand in His Presence. Do we not know what this feeling is? Then it was that He took the 12 aside and began to tell them what things should happen to Him. The conversation was private. At this time we will go aside with the chosen Apostles for a little while and hear what their Lord would say to *us*, even as He aforetime said it to them. May the good Spirit bless our meditation!

I shall have three things to speak of and the first will be *our Lord's private communings*. This will give us an insight, secondly, into *our Lord's private thoughts*. And when we have looked into these a little, as far as our dim eyes are able, we will then notice, in the third place, *our Lord's dwelling on the details of His passion*, for into those details He went with singular impressiveness. Let us not forget our need of the Holy Spirit's illumination while we come near to a place so holy as this of "The Revelation of the Passion."

I. First, then, our LORD'S PRIVATE COMMUNINGS. He did not say all things to all men. He spoke certain matters only to His disciples. To the outside world it was given to hear the parable, but to the disciples was it given to know the explanation. Not even to all the disciples did our Lord make known the whole of His teachings. He had an elect out of the elect! First came 12 out of the many and then came three out of the twelve. These three were admitted to special manifestations which the other nine did not share. As if to carry the principle of election to the utmost extent, one was chosen out of the three, who enjoyed a peculiar personal love and leaned his head upon his Lord's bosom, as the other two never did. We are happy to be admitted, by the key of Inspiration, into the inner chamber of our Lord's private conferences.

On this occasion, *our Lord's communings were with the leaders of His band*. Those who have to lead others need more instruction than the rest. It needs more Grace to lead than to follow. No man can give out what he has not received. If you are to be a fountain of living waters to others, you must, yourself, be filled from the fullness of God. Dear Brothers and Sisters, you whom the Lord has chosen to be vessels of mercy to others, take care that you wait much upon Him yourselves, and are much with Him in secret retirement. Live near to God, that you may bring others near. I remember sitting, one rainy day, in an inn, at Cologne, looking out of a window upon a square. There was not much to see, but what was to see I did see, as I occasionally looked up from my writing.

I saw a man coming to a pump that stood in the middle of the square and from that pump he filled a vessel. A little while after, I saw the same man again filling his buckets. All that morning I saw no one else, but only

that one water-loving individual, filling his buckets again and again. I thought to myself, "What can he be? Why is he always drawing water?" Then I perceived that he was a water carrier, a bearer of water to families in the adjoining streets. Well might he often come to the fountain, himself, since he was supplying others. You that are water carriers for thirsty souls must necessarily come often to the Living Water, yourselves, and be thankful that your Master is always willing to meet you and give you rich supplies! He graciously waits to take you apart in the way and speak to you things which you need to hear and tell. Take care that you hear well that which you are commissioned to publish to all the world. Take good note of this, you who instruct others—neglect not the yielding of your ears to your Lord quite as completely as your tongue. Hear Him that you may speak of Him. Be sure that you are alone much with your Lord, that you may have Him much with you in public.

When our Lord, on this occasion, spoke to the 12, the time was significant—*it was on the way to a great trial.* To Him, His coming suffering was the sum of all trial. He was about to be wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities! The chastisement of our peace was about to fall upon Him that with His stripes we might be healed. But it was also to be a time of great trial to the disciples. Inasmuch as they loved their Lord, they would sympathize with His sufferings and death. Inasmuch as they trusted in Him, it would be a sharp trial to their faith to see Him dying on the Cross, vanquished by His remorseless enemies. Inasmuch as they loved His company, they would weep and lament, and feel like orphaned children when He was taken from them. Therefore they must be favored with a special private interview to prepare them for the coming ordeal.

Have you ever noticed how our Lord, before the coming to us of a great tribulation, strengthens our hearts by some heavenly visitation? Either before or after the affliction, it has happened to me to enjoy very special manifestations of the Well-Beloved. At such junctures He brings us into His banqueting house and His banner over us is love, that we may go down to the battle like men refreshed by a feast. He gives us a joyful bracing up, that we may be ready for tomorrow's stern service. I feel that it is so and I pray that each of you may know, by personal experience, how wise is your Redeemer's foresight—and how, by the communion apart, He prepares us for that which we are to meet at the end of the way. A drink from the brook of fellowship by the way will make you ready for the heat of the conflict. A word from His myrrh-dropping lips will perfume the air, even of the valley of death-shade. Speak to us, Lord, and we will not heed the howls of the dog of Hell!

When our Master thus took the 12 apart, we may say of His conversation, that *it was upon choice themes.* Our Lord's conversation is always holy and suitable for the occasion. *He spoke to them of the Scriptures.* Luke says, "He took unto Him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the Prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished." Blessed theme—the Word of the Lord by His Prophets and the fulfillment thereof! Have you ever noticed how our Divine Lord delights to speak upon the Scriptures? How of-

ten does He enforce His teaching by, "as the Scripture has said"! If He has only two of them and they are walking on the road, we read, "Beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." Communion with Christ Jesus must be based on the Word of the Lord!

If you speak half a word derogatory of Holy Scripture, your fellowship will evaporate. Men talk about building upon Christ and not upon the Scriptures, but they know not what they say, for our Lord continually established His own claims by appealing to Moses and the Prophets! They would be Christo-centric, they say—I only wish they would! But if they take Christ for a center, they will inevitably have the Scriptures for a center, too—and these men neither want the one nor the other. They care nothing for the center—they only want to do away with the circumference, that they may roam at their own proud wills! Our Lord made the written Word to be the reason for many of His acts—He did this and He did not do that—because of what the Scriptures had said. He comes not to take away the Law and the Prophets, yes, not a jot or a tittle does He destroy, so careful is He of the Scriptures of truth! We learn from Him to believe not only in Inspired Words, but in Inspired jots and tittles!

They that have been much with Christ always show a profound reverence for the Word of God. I have never yet met with a person worthy to be called a saint who did not love and revere the Inspired Book. I have heard, in the last few days, the newly-coined word, "bibliolatry," which is meant to set forth the imaginary crime of worshipping the Bible. I know not who may be guilty of the offense—I have never met with such idolaters. When I do, I will try to show them their error, but at present I am too much occupied with the enemies of the Bible to think much of its too ardent friends, if there is such an one! While the word may be used in an accusation against us, it most surely is a confession on the part of those who use it that they see nothing special about the Scriptures and are angry with those who do! Let them speak as they will, O Lord, "my heart stands in awe of Your Word." I would be numbered with the men who tremble at Your Word!

The words of the Holy Spirit are more than words to me. I tremble lest I should sin against *Him* by sinning against them! I would not take away a word from the Book of this prophecy, nor add thereunto—let it stand as it is—for here it is that Jesus meets us and communes with us! He opens the Scriptures to our understanding and then He opens our understanding to receive the Scriptures. He makes us hear His voice in these chapters—yes, we see Him in them—

"Here I behold my Savior's face
Almost in every page."

We cannot look up to Heaven and see Jesus amid the celestial splendors, but He lovingly looks down from the Throne of His Glory into the mirror of the Word—and when we look into it we see the sweet reflection of His face. As in a mirror, His countenance is displayed by Scripture. O Believers, love the Word of God! Prize every letter of it and be prepared to answer the cold, carping words of critics who know nothing of the benediction which

comes to us through every line of Inspiration. These are they who would cruelly divide the living child, for it does not belong to them, but we will have no sword come near it, for it is our love—it is life and bliss to us! Our Lord, in His most private conversation with our souls, speaks in, and by, and through the Scriptures in the power of the Holy Spirit!

But the chief theme that our Lord dwelt upon was *His own suffering even unto death*. Beloved, our Lord Jesus has said many delightful things—and let Him say what He will, His voice is as angels' music to our ears! But from the Cross, His voice is richest in consolation. We never come so near to Jesus—at least, such is my experience—as when we gaze upon His bloody sweat, or see Him robed in shame, crowned with thorns and enthroned upon the Cross! Our Lord's incomparable beauties are most visible amid His griefs. When I see Him on the Cross, I feel that I must borrow Pilate's words and cry, "Behold the Man!" Covered with His own blood from the scourging and about to be led away to be crucified between two thieves, you look into His inmost heart and behold what manner of love He bore towards guilty men!

We know not Christ till He puts on His crimson garments. I know not my Beloved when He is only to me as the snow-white lily for purity. But when, in His wounding, He is red as the rose, then I perceive Him! "My Beloved is white and ruddy, the chief among ten thousand." A suffering Savior bears the palm for me—a wounded Savior is my Lord and my God! The lower He went for my redemption, the higher does He rise in my soul's loving esteem. He saw this when He said, "I, if I am lifted up," for, indeed, it was a lifting up of Him to die upon the cruel Cross. To the wondering universe, the Son of God is lifted to a height of wondering admiration by His becoming obedient unto death out of love to His chosen. He is lifted up in every grateful heart and shall be lifted up forever. Our fellowship with Jesus largely flows along the great deep of His suffering and to me, at least, it is then deepest, truest and sweetest.

Our Lord talked to the 12 of His sufferings in great detail, of which we will speak further on, but He did not shrink from dwelling upon His death, nor did He stop there, but *foretold His rising again*. In each of the three accounts He appears to end the story of His passion by saying that on the third day He would rise again from the dead. That was a glorious climax—"The third day He shall rise again." Oh, that blessed doctrine of the Resurrection! If our Lord's record ended at the Cross, it might drive us to despair. But He is declared to be the Son of God with power by His Resurrection from the dead! That He was raised from the dead makes us see the merit, the power, the great reward of His death. He that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the Everlasting Covenant, even He will make us perfect in every good work to do His will. Whenever the Master comes very near to us in His gracious condescension, He shows us not only that He shed His blood for us, but that He rose again and always lives to carry on our cause. When you worship most closely, you will worship Him that lived, died, rose again and now lives forever and ever. This is our Lord Jesus Christ! He is not only a teacher, or merely a bright example, but One

whose death is the source of our salvation and whose Resurrection and eternal Glory are the guarantee and foretaste of our everlasting bliss! A living, dying, risen Christ is One with whom we have joyful fellowship! And if we know Him not in this Character, we do not know Him at all!

Furthermore, He conversed with them upon *their share in all this*. They were one with Him in that which would befall Him. He says, "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem." True, they would have no share in the scourging, the spitting and the Crucifixion. He must tread that winepress alone. But yet they would, with Him, carry the cross in the near future, and with Him deny themselves during the rest of their lives. Henceforward it would not only be Jesus the Lord who would bear witness for God and righteousness, but the followers of the Crucified One would unite in testimony to the same Truth of God, for the same great purpose! It was well for Him to speak to them on such a practical theme—they would be cheered and comforted in later days when they remembered that He had told them of these things. He will draw us into very intimate communion if we are willing to take up His Cross and bear His reproach. We lose much when we quit the separated path because it is rough, for we lose our Lord's sweet company. Oh, for Grace to love the rough paths because we see His footprints on them!

They listened to this private talk, but we are told by Luke that *it was very much lost upon them* because they did not understand Him. "And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken." "But," you say, "it was very simple." Possibly that is why they did not understand it. Numbers of people imagine that they understand mysteries and yet the simplicities of the faith are hid from their eyes because they are gazing after abstruse doctrines. They search after difficult things and miss the plain Truth of God! We groan as we wantonly dive into a profound abyss and yet we stand confounded over a little transparent stream, which, to wade through, would bring us bliss!

When our Lord told the 12 that He would die, they imagined that it was a parable, concealing some deep mystery. They looked at one another and they tried to fathom where there was no depth, but where the Truth lay on the surface. The deep things of God, thousands will pry into, but yet these are not *saving* matters—nor are they of any great practical value. Fixed fate, free will, predestination, prophecy and the like—these have small bearings upon our salvation from sin—but in the death of our Lord lies the kernel of the matter! Beloved, when we try to commune with Jesus, let us wear the garments of simplicity! It is the serpent who trades in subtlety, but I would have you remember "the simplicity which is in Christ Jesus." There is in Him a depth which we cannot fathom, but His every Word is the pure Truth of God and those things which are necessary are made so plain that he who runs may read and he who reads may run!

Believe Him to mean what He says and take His promises as they stand and His precepts in their plain meaning! And, oh, if we do this, we shall be made greatly wise! Do not confuse your minds with doctrinal riddles nor amuse your souls with spiritual mysteries, but believe in Him who is

Jesus, the faithful and true, who makes known to us the heart of the Father! Believe that He died in our place! Believe that He took our sin upon Him and carried it all away! Believe that we are justified through His Resurrection and are made to live because He lives! Hypotheses and critical doubts we may leave to the dogs that first sniffed them out, but as for us, we will be as children who eat the bread their father gives them and ask no questions as to the field in which the wheat was reaped—and raise no debates as to the mill at which the seed was ground!

Thus, you see, the private conversations of our Lord with the 12 dealt with His sufferings and death—and His communications come home to our hearts in proportion as we are prepared to receive them in childlike simplicity.

II. Secondly, we will now turn our minds to THE PRIVATE THOUGHTS OF OUR LORD JESUS. We shall not be presumptuous if we humbly enquire—What were the thoughts of our Lord at the time? When He had called them quite apart and spoken to them, we may be quite sure that what He said to them was the outcome of His innermost meditations.

Our Lord was forecasting His death in all its mournful details. Do you not know that frequently it is more painful to anticipate death than it is actually to die? Yet our Lord dwelt upon His sufferings, even to their minutiae. A person was speaking to me, the other day, of a painful operation which he was bound to undergo. There was no probability that he could get into the hospital for another month or two and he remarked that he greatly wished that the operation could have been performed sooner, "For," he said, "it is so painful to be looking forward to a matter so distressing. Let it be soon," was his cry. Our Lord was like a grain of wheat which is cast into the ground and lies there, for a while, before it dies. He was buried, as it were, in prospective agony—immersed in suffering which He foresaw. In the thought of the Cross, He endured it before He felt the nails! The shadow of His death was upon Him before He reached the tree of doom! Yet He did not put away the thought, but dwelt upon it as one who tastes a cup before he drinks it to the dregs. After so deliberate a testing, is it not all the more marvelous that He did not refuse the draught?

Did He not remember *His engagement to go through with our redemption*? "Lo, I come," He said, "in the volume of the Book it is written of Me." He had pledged Himself by solemn Covenant and in the Book it was written that He would stand in our place and give His life an offering for sin. From this suretyship He never departed. He knew that the Father would bruise Him and put Him to grief in the approaching day of His anger. He knew that the wicked would pierce His hands and His feet. He knew all that would occur and He stayed not back from the pledge which He had given in the council chamber of eternity, that His life should be rendered up as a ransom for many! It were well if *we,* also, remembered our vows to God and the obligations under which we are placed by His great love.

Our Lord's thoughts *took the form of a resolution to do the Father's will to the end.* He set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem. Nothing could make Him look aside. He had undertaken and He would go through with

it. Unless it should prove possible for us to be saved otherwise, He would not set aside that cup which His Father had given Him to drink. The thought of our perishing, He could not bear—that was not to be tolerated. He would suffer all imaginable and unimaginable woe sooner than desert the cause He had espoused. He was straitened—so He described it—straitened till His labor was accomplished! He was like a Man pent up against His will—He longed to be discharging His tremendous task. He had an awful work to do, an agonizing suffering to bear, and He felt fettered until He could be at it—"How am I straitened till it is accomplished!" He was as a hostage bound for others, longing to be set free! He longed to be bearing the penalty to which He had voluntarily subjected Himself by His Covenant Suretyship. He therefore thought upon that "obedience unto death" which He was determined and resolved to render.

He had an eye, all the while, to you and to me. While He was thinking of death, He was chiefly regarding those for whom He would suffer. I doubt not that there flashed before that mighty mind the individuals who make up the vast host of His redeemed—and among them there were insignificant individuals such as we are. Out of His strong love to us, even to *us*, He determined to pay our ransom price in death—it was part of His solace that He would deliver you and me. "He loved me and gave Himself for me." He made a voluntary offering of Himself for me, before He actually died—often and often surrendering Himself in purpose before the Cross was reared for the actual offering up of His body once and for all.

Then there came into His mind, also, the thought of *the grand sequel of it all*. He would rise again! On the third day it would all be over and the recompense would begin. A few hours of bitter grief. A night of bloody sweat. A night and a morning of mockery when He would be flouted by the abjects and made nothing of by the profane. A direful afternoon of deadly anguish on the Cross and of dark desertion by Jehovah! And then the bowing of the head and a little rest in the grave for His body. And on the third day the light would break upon mankind, for the Sun of Righteousness would arise with healing in His wings! The light that would come when He should rise would lighten the Gentiles and be the Glory of His people Israel. He would then have said, "It is finished," and He would shortly afterward ascend to reap His reward in personal glorification and in receiving gifts for men—yes, for the rebellious, also, that the Lord God might dwell among them!

Surely our Lord's thoughts were all the while upon His Father! He always remembered the Beloved Father to whom He was to be "obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross." That 22nd Psalm, which might well be our Lord's on the Cross, is full of God—it is an appeal to God. As our Lord went on His way with the 12, conversing upon the road, they must have seen that He was in close communion with God. There was about Him a deep solemnity of spirit—a rapt communion with the Unseen—a heavenly walking with God even beyond His usual. This, mixed with His deeply-fixed resolve—and that stern joy which only they can feel who are resolved to accomplish a great purpose through bowing to the Divine will, let it cost

what it may. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus was everything to Him! And in all His acts, His heart was set upon Jehovah's Glory.

I wish that I had time for my subject, but it is overwhelming me. I can only open the door and bid you look into the private thoughts of Him whose thoughts are priceless gems, whereas yours and mine are as the pebbles of the brook. What meditations were His! How precious, also, are Your thoughts unto me, O Christ! How great is the sum of them! Wonderful things did You ponder in Your soul on those days of Your nearing passion!

III. Now we will have a few moments as to OUR LORD'S DWELLING ON DETAILS. I do not want to preach. I wish to be a kind of guide for your thoughts, just setting the example by thinking first that you may follow. May the sacred Spirit now lead you quietly into the points upon which our Lord so calmly enlarged!

Note well what our Lord said about His sufferings. "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man shall be betrayed." Stop there! "*Betrayed*"! It is as though I heard the deep boom of a death knell. "Betrayed"! "Betrayed"! To die, yes, that is not a word with a sting in it to Him! But, "Betrayed"!—that means sold by cruel treachery! It means that one who ate bread with Him lifted up his heel against Him! It means that a man who was His familiar acquaintance, with whom He walked to the House of God in company, sold Him for a paltry bribe. "Betrayed for thirty pieces of silver! A goodly price, indeed, for the blood of such a Friend! "Betrayed"! Hear how He cries—"If it were an enemy, then I could have borne it." "Betrayed"! It was no stranger—it was no bloodhound of the Pharisees who scented Him out in the garden—but, "Judas also, which betrayed Him, knew the place." Betrayed with a kiss and with a friendly word! Handed over to them who sought His blood by one who ought to have defended Him to the death! "Betrayed"! It is a dreadful word to be set here before the passion, and it throws a lurid light over it all. We read—"The same night in which He was betrayed He took bread." This was the bitterest drop in His cup—that He was betrayed.

And still is He *betrayed*! If the Gospel dies in England, write on its tomb, "Betrayed." If our churches lose their holy influence among men, write on them, "Betrayed." What care we for infidels? What care we for those who curse and blaspheme? They cannot hurt the Christ! His wounds are those which He receives in the house of His friends. "Betrayed"! O Savior, some of us have been betrayed, but ours was a small sorrow compared with Yours, for You were betrayed into the hands of sinners by one who claimed to be Your friend, by one who was bound by every tie to have been Your faithful follower. "Betrayed"! Beloved, I cannot bear the word! It falls like a flake of fire into my bosom and burns its way into my inmost soul. "*Betrayed*"! And such a faithful Friend as He! So full of love and yet betrayed!

Read on. "The Son of man shall be betrayed *unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes*." The chief priests ought to have always been His best defenders! They were the leaders of the religion of the day—these chief priests were the guides of Israel! When Israel bowed before the Lord, the

chief priests presented the sacrifice. Yet these were our Lord's most bitter enemies—by their malice He was condemned and crucified! It is hard to have the professed servants of God against you. The scribes, too, those Bible writers and Bible interpreters—these, also, were fiercely against Him. From the hands of scribes He would have less mercy than from soldiers. I said, the other Lord's-Day, what I now repeat—I would rather be bitten by wolves than by sheep! It is wretched work to have those against you who are reckoned to be the best men of the time. It was little to Him to have Herod against Him, or Pilate and the Romans as His foes, for they knew no better. But it was heart-rending work to see the men of the Sanhedrim, the men of prayers and phylacteries, the men of the Temple and of the synagogue arrayed against Him! Yet into their hands He falls! Good Master, You are delivered into the hands of men who know no mercy, for they hate You for Your faithful words! They can compromise, but You cannot! They can trifle with language, but You cannot! They can play the hypocrite and that, You cannot do!

Read on—"*And they shall condemn Him to death.*" They did not leave the sentence of condemnation to the Romans, but they, themselves, passed sentence upon their Victim. The priests, whose office made them types of Himself—and the scribes, who were the official interpreters of His Father's Book—these condemned the Holy and Just One! They count Him worthy of death—nothing less will serve their turn. This the Christ could plainly see and it was no small trial to come under the censure of His country's governors. They could not put Him to death, themselves. If they dared, they would have stoned Him and that would have broken the prophecy which declared that in death His enemies must pierce His hands and His feet. They can condemn Him to death, but they cannot execute the sentence! Yet none the less, this iron entered into His soul that those who were professedly the servants of God condemned Him to die! If you have ever tasted of this cup you know that it has wormwood in it.

Notice, further—"*And shall deliver Him to the Gentiles.*" All men conspired in our Master's death—not half the world, but all of it must have a hand in the tragedy of Calvary. The Gentile must come in. He takes his share in this iniquity, for Pilate condemns Him to the Cross. The chief priests hand Him over to Pilate and he commits Him to the Roman soldiers that they may do the cruel deed. They "delivered Him to the Gentiles." The Master dwells on this. It opens another gate through which His sorrows poured. At the hands of the Gentiles He dies—and for Gentiles He suffered. Beloved, I like to see how the Master notes this point. He makes distinctions. He does not say that He should be condemned by Pilate, but He is condemned to die by the chief priests and then He is delivered to the Gentiles. He sees it all and dwells upon the points of special interest. O Believer, behold your Lord bound and taken away to the Hall of Pilate! See Him delivered to the Gentiles, while His fellow countrymen cry, "We have no king but Caesar"! They shout, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" And the Gentiles carry out their cruel demand. Unanimity among our persecutors must add greatly to the sting of their unkindness.

These three words follow—"*To mock, and to scourge, and to crucify Him.*" Mark puts in, "To spit upon Him." That was a sad part of the *mockery*. What dreadful scorning He endured! From the Jews, when they blindfolded Him and buffeted Him—and from the Gentiles when they put on Him a purple robe and thrust a reed into His hand, bowed the knee and cried before Him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" They plucked His hair. They smote His cheeks. They spat in His face. Mockery could go no farther. It was cruel, cutting, cursed scorn! Ridicule sometimes breaks hearts that are hardened against pain—and the Christ had to bear all the ridicule that human minds could invent. They were maliciously witty. They jested at His Person. They jested at His prayers. They mocked Him when He cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Herein is immeasurable grief and the Savior foresaw it and spoke about it.

That was not all—*they scourged Him*. I will not harrow your hearts by trying to describe scourging as it existed among the Romans. The scourge was an infamous instrument of torture. It is said to have been made of the sinews of oxen, intertwisted with the hucklebones of sheep and slivers of bone—so that every time the lashes fell, they plowed the back and laid bare the white bones of the shoulders. It was an anguish more cruel than the grave! But our Lord endured it to the fullest. They mocked Him and they scourged Him—He dwells upon each separate item. Some of our most touching hymns upon our Lord's passion are spoken of by the cold-blooded critics of today as sensuous. "I cannot bear," says one, "to hear so much about the physical agonies of Christ." Beloved, we must preach the physical agonies of Christ more than ever because this is an age of affectation in which His mental and spiritual griefs are no more apprehended than those of His body!

The device is to be rid of His sufferings altogether! This age is as fond of physical pleasure as any that has gone before it and it must be made to know that physical pain was a great ingredient in the cup which our Lord drank for man's redemption! Very many are so unspiritual that they will never be reached by high-soaring language, appealing to a delicacy which they do not possess. We must exhibit the bleeding Savior if we would make men's hearts bleed for sin! The cries of His great grief must ring in their ears or they will remain deaf! Let us not be ashamed to dwell upon points upon which the Lord, Himself, dwelt.

Then He adds, "*to crucify Him.*" Here I will come to a pause. Behold Him! Behold Him! His hands are extended and cruelly nailed to the wood. His feet are fastened to the tree and He is left to bear the weight of His body upon His hands and feet. See how the nails tear through the flesh as the weight drags the body down and enlarges the wounds! Look, He is in a fever! His mouth is dried up and has become like an oven! And His tongue cleaves to the roof thereof! Crucifixion was an inhuman death and the Savior was "obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross." The wonder is that He could foresee this and speak of it so calmly. He meditates upon it and speaks to choice familiar friends about it! Oh, the mastery of love, strong as death! He contemplates the Cross and despises its shame!

Thus He dwells on it all and then closes by saying, "*and the third day He shall rise again.*" We must never forgot *that*, for *He* never forgets it! Ah, you may think as much as you will of Calvary and let your tears flow like rivers. You may sit at Gethsemane and say, "Oh, that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for my Lord!" But, after all, you must wipe those tears away, for He is not in the grave—He rose again on the third day! O blessed morning! Not to be celebrated by an Easter, once in the year, but to be commemorated on every first day of the week, more than 50 times in each year! Every seven days that the sun shines upon us brings us a new record of His Resurrection! We may sing every Lord's-Day morning—

"Today He rose and left the dead,
And Satan's empire fell!
Today the saints His triumph spread,
And all His wonders tell."

The first day of the week stands forever as the remembrance of our risen Lord and on that day He renews His special communings with His people! We believe in Him! We rise in Him! We triumph in Him! And, "He ever lives to make intercession for us." Thus, you see, I have not preached my own thoughts, but I have set you thinking. Treasure these thoughts in your minds! All this week, sweeten your souls with the sacred spices of our Lord's thoughts and Words when near His death. God bless this meditation to you by His Holy Spirit!

If you have never believed in Him, may you believe in Him at once! Why delay? He is able to save unto the uttermost! Believe in Him right now! And if you have believed, keep on believing and let your believing grow more intense. Think more of Jesus, love Him more, serve Him more and grow more like He. Peace be unto you for His dear sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Matthew 16:13-28.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—287, 273, 281.

MR. SPURGEON UPDATE:

During last week Mr. SPURGEON appeared to be making good progress towards recovery, but on Saturday he suffered a serious relapse. His condition causes grave anxiety to the Church at the Tabernacle and all his friends. Their hope is that the Lord will yet raise him up in answer to the prayers of the thousands of Believers who are continually pleading for him.

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

"HONEY IN THE MOUTH!"
NO. 2213

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 19, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
ON FRIDAY MORNING, APRIL 24, 1891,
AT THE CONFERENCE OF THE PASTORS' COLLEGE
EVANGELICAL ASSOCIATION.

"He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father has are Mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine and shall show it unto you." John 16:14, 15.

BELOVED Friends, here you have the Trinity, and there is no salvation apart from the Trinity! It must be the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. "All things that the Father has are Mine," says Christ, and the Father has all things. They were always His; they are still His; they always will be His—and they cannot become ours till they change ownership—till Christ can say, "All things that the Father has are Mine"—for it is by virtue of the representative Character of Christ standing as the Surety of the Covenant, that the "all things" of the Father are passed over to the Son, that they might be passed over to us. "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell; and of His fullness have all we received." But yet we are so dull that though the conduit pipe is laid on to the great fountain, we cannot get at it. We are lame. We cannot reach it, but in comes the third Person of the Divine Unity, even the Holy Spirit, and He receives of the things of Christ and then delivers them over to us! So we actually receive, through Jesus Christ, by the Spirit, what is in the Father!

Ralph Erskine, in his preface to a sermon upon the 15th verse, has a notable piece. He speaks of Grace as *honey*—honey for the cheering of the saints, for the sweetening of their mouths and hearts—but he says that in the Father, "the honey is in the flower, which is at such a distance from us that we could never extract it." In the Son, "the honey is in the comb, prepared for us in our Immanuel, God-Man, Redeemer, the Word that was made flesh, saying, 'All things that the Father has are Mine; and Mine for your use and benefit—it is in the comb. But then, next, we have honey in the mouth—the Spirit taking all things and making application of them, by showing them unto us and making us to eat and drink with Christ, and share of these 'all things'—yes, not only eat the honey, but the honeycomb with the honey—not only His benefits, but Himself."

It is a very beautiful division of the subject. Honey in the flower in God, as in mystery, really there. There never will be any more honey than there is in the flower. There it is. But how shall you and I get it? We have not

wisdom to extract the sweetness. We are not as the bees that are able to find it out. It is bee honey, not man honey. Yet you see in Christ it becomes the honey in the honeycomb and, therefore, He is sweet to our taste as honey dropping from the comb. Sometimes we are so faint that we cannot reach out a hand to grasp that honeycomb and, alas, there was a time when our palates were so depraved that we preferred bitter things and even thought them sweet! But now that the Holy Spirit has come, we have got the honey in the mouth and the taste that enjoys it! Yes, we have now so long enjoyed it that the honey of Grace has entered into our constitution and we have become sweet unto God—His sweetness having been conveyed by this strange method unto us.

Beloved Friends, I scarcely need say to you, keep the existence of the Trinity prominent in your ministry! Remember, you cannot pray without the Trinity. If the full work of salvation requires a Trinity, so does that very breath by which we live. You cannot draw near to the Father except through the Son and by the Holy Spirit. There is undoubtedly a trinity in nature. There certainly constantly turns up the need of a Trinity in the realm of Grace—and when we get to Heaven we shall understand, perhaps, more fully what is meant by the Trinity in Unity. But if that is a thing never to be understood, we shall at least apprehend it more lovingly, and we shall rejoice more completely as the three tones of our music shall rise up in perfect harmony unto Him who is One and indivisible, and yet is Three, forever blessed, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God!

Now for the point which I am to open up to you this morning, though *I* cannot do it, but *He* must do it. We must sit here and have the text acted out upon ourselves. "He shall glorify Me. He shall take of Mine and shall show it unto you." May it be so just now!

First, *what the Holy Spirit does*—"He shall take of Mine and shall show it unto you." Secondly, *what the Holy Spirit aims at and really effects*—"He shall glorify Me." And then, thirdly, *how, in doing both these things, He is the Comforte*r. It is the Comforter that does this and we shall find our richest, surest comfort in this work of the Holy Spirit, who shall take of the things of Christ and show them unto us.

I. First, WHAT THE HOLY SPIRIT DOES. It is clear, Beloved Friends, that the Holy Spirit *deals with the things of Christ*. As our brother, Archibald Brown, said, when expounding the chapter just now, He does not aim at any originality. He deals with the things of Christ. All things that Christ had heard from His Father He made known to us. He kept to them. And now the Spirit takes of the things of Christ and of nothing else. Do not let us strain at anything new. The Holy Spirit could deal with anything in Heaven above, or in the earth beneath—the story of the ages past, the story of the ages to come, the inward secrets of the earth, the evolution of all things, if there is an evolution. He could do it all! Like the Master, He could handle any topic He chose, but He confines Himself to the things of Christ and therein finds unutterable liberty and boundless freedom.

Do you think, dear Friend, that you can be wiser than the Holy Spirit? And if His choice must be a wise one, will yours be a wise one if you begin

to take of the things of something or somebody else? You will have the Holy Spirit near you when you are receiving of the things of Christ, but, as the Holy Spirit is said never to receive anything else, when you are handling other things on the Sabbath, you will be handling them alone—and the pulpit is a dreary solitude, even in the midst of a crowd—if the Holy Spirit is not with you there. You may, if you please, think through a theology out of your own vast brain, but the Holy Spirit is not with you there. And, mark you, there are some of us that are resolved to tarry with the things of Christ and keep on dealing with them as far as He enables us to do so! And we feel that we are in such blessed company with the Divine Spirit that we do not envy you that wider range of thought, if you prefer it.

The Holy Spirit still exists, works and teaches in the Church. And we have a test by which to know whether what people claim to be Revelation is Revelation or not—"He shall receive of Mine." The Holy Spirit will never go farther than the Cross and the coming of the Lord. He will go no farther than that which concerns Christ. "He shall receive of Mine." When, therefore, anybody whispers in my ear that there has been revealed to him this or that, which I do not find in the teaching of Christ and His Apostles, I tell him that we must be taught by the Holy Spirit. His one vocation is to deal with the things of Christ! If we do not remember this, we may be carried away by quirks, as many have been. Those who will have to do with other things, let them—but as for us, we shall be satisfied to confine our thoughts and our teaching within these limitless limits—"He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you."

I like to think of the Holy Spirit handling such things. They seem so worthy of Him. Now has He got among the hills. Now is His mighty mind among the infinities when He has to deal with Christ, for Christ is the Infinite veiled in the finite. Why, He seems something more than Infinite when He gets into the finite, and the Christ of Bethlehem is less to be understood than the Christ of the Father's bosom! He seems, if it were possible, to have out-infinited the infinite, and the Spirit of God has themes here worthy of His vast Nature!

When you have been the whole Sunday morning whittling away a text to the small end of nothing, what have you done? A king spent a day in trying to make a portrait on a cherrystone—a king who was ruling empires! And here is a minister who professes to have been called of the Holy Spirit to the employ of taking of the things of Christ, who spent a whole morning with precious souls who were dying while he spoke to them on a theme concerning which it did not signify the turn of a hair whether it was so or not! Oh, imitate the Holy Spirit! If you profess to have Him dwelling in you, be moved by Him! Let it be said of you, in your measure, as of the Holy Spirit without measure, "He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you."

But, next, what does the Holy Spirit do? Why, *He deals with feeble men.* Yes, He dwells with us poor creatures! I can understand the Holy Spirit taking the things of Christ and rejoicing therein, but the marvel is that He should glorify Christ by coming and showing these things to us! And yet,

Brothers, it is among us that Christ is to get His glory. Our eyes must see Him! An unseen Christ is little glorious. And the things of Christ unknown—the things of Christ untasted and unloved—seem to have lost their brilliance to a high degree. The Holy Spirit, therefore, feeling that to show a sinner the salvation of Christ glorifies Him, spends His time and has been spending these centuries in taking of the things of Christ and showing them to us. Ah, it is a great condescension on His part to show them to us. And it is a miracle, too. If it were reported that suddenly stones had life, hills had eyes and trees had ears, it would be a strange thing. But for us who were dead and blind and deaf in an awful sense—for the spiritual is more emphatic than the natural—for us to be so far gone and for the Holy Spirit to be able to show the things of Christ to us is to His honor! And He does it. He comes from Heaven to dwell with us. Let us honor and bless His name.

I never could make up my mind which to admire most as an act of condescension—the Incarnation of Christ, or the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The Incarnation of Christ is marvelous—that He should dwell in human nature, but, observe, the Holy Spirit dwells in human nature in its *sinfulness*—not in perfect human nature, but in *imperfect* human nature! And He continues to dwell, not in one body, which was fashioned strangely for Himself and was pure and without taint, but He dwells in *our* bodies! Know you not that they are the temples of the Holy Spirit, which were defiled by nature and in which a measure of defilement still remains, despite His indwelling? And this He has done these multitudes of years, not in one instance, nor in thousands of instances, but in a number that no man can number! He continues to come into contact with sinful humanity! Not to the angels, nor to the seraphim, nor to the cherubim, nor to the host who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, does He show the things of Christ—but He shall show them to *us*!

I suppose that it means this, that *He takes of the words of our Lord*—those which He spoke personally and by His Apostles. Let us never allow anybody to divide between the word of the Apostles and the word of Christ! Our Savior has joined them together. "Neither pray I for these, alone, but for them, also, which shall believe on Me through their word." And if any begin rejecting the Apostolic word, they will be outside the number for whom Christ prays—they shut themselves out by that very fact! I wish that they would solemnly remember that the word of the Apostles is the word of Christ. He tarried not long enough, after He had risen from the dead, to give us a further exposition of His mind and will. And He could not have given it before His death, because it would have been unsuitable. "I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now." After the descent of the Holy Spirit, the disciples were prepared to receive that which Christ spoke by His servants, Paul and Peter, and James and John.

Certain doctrines which we are sometimes taunted about as being not revealed by Christ, but by His Apostles, were all revealed by Christ, every one of them! They can all be found in His teaching, but they are very

much in the parabolic form. It is after He has gone up into Glory and has prepared a people, by His Spirit, to understand the Truths of God more fully, that He sends His Apostles and says, "Go forth, and open up to those whom I have chosen out of the world the meaning of all I said." The meaning is all there, just as all the New Testament is in the Old! And sometimes I have thought that, instead of the Old being less inspired than the New, it is more inspired! Things are packed away more tightly in the Old Testament than in the New, if possible. There are worlds of meaning in one pregnant line in the Old Testament—and in Christ's words it is just so. He is the Old Testament to which the Epistles come in as a kind of New Testament, but they are all one and indivisible—they cannot be separated.

Well, now, the words of the Lord Jesus, and the words of His Apostles, are to be *expounded* to us by the Holy Spirit. We shall never get at the center of their meaning apart from His teaching. We shall never get at their meaning at all if we begin disputing about the words, saying, "I cannot accept the words." If you will not have the shell, you will never have the chick! It is impossible. "The words are not Inspired," they say. Here is a man in the witness box and he has sworn to speak the truth and he says that he has. And now he is cross-examined and he says, "Now, I have spoken the truth, but I do not stand by my words." The cross-examining lawyer has got hold of a certain statement of his. The witness says, "Oh, I do not swear to the words, you know." The question is asked, "What, then, do you swear to? There is nothing else. We do not know anything about your meaning. All that you have sworn to must be your words." But what the fellow means is this—he is a liar. He is a perjurer. Well, I say no more than commonsense would suggest to you if you were sitting in a court. Now, if a man says, "I have spoken the truth, but still I do not swear to the words," what is left? If we have no Inspiration in the Words of God, we have got an impalpable Inspiration that oozes away between your fingers and leaves nothing behind!

Well, take the words and never dispute over them! Still, into their soulfullness of meaning you cannot come until the Holy Spirit shall lead you into them. They that wrote them for you did not fully understand what they wrote in many instances. There were some of them who enquired and searched diligently to know what manner of things those were which the Holy Spirit had spoken to them and of which He had made them speak. And you to whom the words come will have to do the same. You must go and say, "Great Master, we thank You for the Book with all our hearts. And we thank You for putting the Book into words. But now, good Master, we will not quibble over the letter, as did the Jews and the rabbis and the scribes of old, and so miss Your meaning. Open wide the door of the words, that we may enter into the secret closet of their meaning. Teach us this, we pray You. You have the key. Lead us in."

Dear Friends, whenever you want to understand a text of Scripture, try to read the original. Consult anybody who has studied what the original means, but remember that the quickest way into a text is praying in the

Holy Spirit. Pray the chapter over! I do not hesitate to say that if a chapter is read upon one's knees, looking up at every word to Him that gave it, the meaning will come to you with infinitely more light than by any other method of studying it. "He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you." He shall re-deliver the Master's message to you in the fullness of its meaning!

But I do not think that is all that the text means. "He shall receive of Mine." In the next verse the Lord goes on to say, "All things that the Father has are Mine." I think that it means, therefore, *that the Holy Spirit will show us the things of Christ*. Here is a text for us—"The things of Christ." Christ speaks as if He had not any things, just then, which were specially His own, for He had not yet died. He had not yet risen. He was not pleading, then, as the great Intercessor in Heaven—all that was to come. But still, He says, "Even now all things that the Father has are Mine"—all His attributes, all His Glory, all His rest, all His happiness, all His blessedness. *All that* is Mine and the Holy Spirit shall show that to you."

But I might almost read my text in another light, for He *has* died, risen and gone on high, and lo, He comes! His chariots are on the way! Now, there are certain things which the Father has and which Jesus Christ has, which are truly the things of Christ, *emphatically* the things of Christ. And my prayer is that you and I, preachers of the Gospel, might have this text fulfilled in us—"He shall take of Mine"—My things—"and shall show them unto you."

Suppose, dear Brothers, that we are going to preach the Word, again, and the Holy Spirit shows to us our Master in His Godhead. Oh, how we will preach Him as Divine—how surely He can bless our congregation! How certainly He must be able to subdue all things unto Himself, seeing that He is very God of very God! It is equally sweet to see Him as Man. Oh, to have the Spirit's view of Christ's Manhood, distinctly to recognize that He is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh—and that in His infinite tenderness He will be compassionate to me and deal with my poor people and with the troubled consciences that are round me! I have still to go to them and tell them of One who is touched with the feeling of their infirmities, having been tempted in all points like as they still are! Oh, my Brothers, if we once, no, if *every time* before we preach, we get a view of Christ in His Divine and Human Natures and come down fresh from that vision to speak about Him, what glorious preaching it would be for our people!

It is a glorious thing to get a view of the offices of Christ by the Holy Spirit, but especially of His office as a Savior! I have often said to Him, "You must save my people. It is no business of mine. I never set up in that line, or put over my door that I was a savior—but *You* have been apprenticed to this trade! You have learned it by experience and You claim it as Your own honor. You are exalted on high to be a Prince and a Savior. Do Your own work, my Lord." I took this text and used it with sinners the other Sunday night, and I know that God blessed it when I said to them, "May the Holy Spirit show you that Christ is a Savior! A physician does

not expect you to make any apologies when you call upon him because you are ill, for he is a physician and he needs you in order that he may prove his skill. So Christ is a Savior and you need not apologize for going to Him! He cannot be a Savior if there is not somebody to be saved!" The fact is, Christ cannot get hold of us anywhere except by our sin. The point of contact between the sick one and the physician is the disease. Our *sin* is the point of contact between us and Christ. Oh, that the Spirit of God would take of Christ's Divine offices, especially that of a Savior, and show them unto us!

Did the Holy Spirit ever show you these thing of Christ, namely, His Covenant engagements? When He struck hands with the Father, it was that He would bring many sons to Glory—that of those whom the Father gave Him, He would lose none, but that they should be saved, for He is under bonds to His Father to bring His elect Home. When the sheep have to pass, again, under the hands of Him that counts them, they will go under the rod, one by one, each one having the blood-mark—and He will never rest till the number in the heavenly fold shall tally with the number in the Book.

So I believe and it has seemed delightful to me to have this shown to me when I have gone to preach. It is a dull, dreary, wet, foggy morning. There are only a few present. Yes, but they are picked people whom God has ordained to be there—and there will be the right number there! I shall preach and there will be some saved. We do not go at a chance, but, guided by the blessed Spirit of God, we go with a living certainty, knowing that God has a people that Christ is bound to bring Home and bring them Home He will! And while He shall see of the travail of His soul, His Father shall delight in every one of them! If you get a clear view of that, it will give you backbone and make you strong. "He shall take of Mine and shall show you my Covenant engagements, and when you see them, you shall be comforted."

But, Beloved, the Holy Spirit favors you by taking what is peculiarly Christ's, namely, His love, and showing that to you. We have seen it, seen it sometimes more vividly than at other times. But if the full blaze of the Holy Spirit were to be concentrated upon the love of Christ—and our eyesight enlarged to its utmost capacity—it would be such a vision that Heaven could not excel it! We should sit with our Bible before us in our study and feel, "Well now, here is a man, whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell. Such a man is caught up into the third Heaven." Oh, to see the love of Christ in the light of the Holy Spirit! When it is so revealed to us, it is not merely the surface which we see, but the love of Christ itself! You know that you never saw anything yet, strictly speaking. You only see the *appearance* of the thing—the light reflected by it—that is all you see. But the Holy Spirit shows us the naked Truth of God, the *essence* of the love of Christ! And what that essence is—that love without beginning, without change, without limit, without end—and that love set upon His people simply from motives within Himself. And from no motive

ab extra—what that must be, what tongue can tell? Oh, it is a ravishing sight!

I think that if there could be one sight more wonderful than the love of Christ, it would be the blood of Christ—

"Much we talk of Jesus' blood,
But how little's understood."

It is the climax of God! I do not know of anything more Divine. It seems to me as if all the eternal purposes worked up to the blood of the Cross and then worked from the blood of the Cross towards the sublime consummation of all things. Oh, to think that He should become Man! God has made spirit, pure spirit, embodied spirit—and then materialism—and somehow, as if He would take all up into one, the Godhead links Himself with the material and He wears dust about Him even as we wear it! And taking it all up, He then goes and, in that fashion, redeems His people from all the evil of their soul, their spirit and their body by the pouring out of a life which, while it was Human, was so in connection with the Divine, that we speak correctly of "the blood of God."

Turn to the 20th chapter of Acts and read how the Apostle Paul puts it—"Feed the Church of God, which He has purchased with His own blood." I believe that Dr. Watts is not wrong when he says—"God that loved and died." It is an incorrect accuracy, a strictly absolute accuracy of incorrectness! So it must be ever when the finite talks of the Infinite. It was a wonderful Sacrifice that could absolutely obliterate, annihilate and extinguish sin and all the traces that could possibly remain of it, for, "He has finished the transgression, made an end of sins, made reconciliation for iniquity and brought in everlasting righteousness." Ah, dear Friends, you have seen this, have you not? But you have yet to see more of it. And when we get to Heaven, we shall then know what that blood means—and with what vigor shall we sing, "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood"! Will anybody be there to say, "Is not that the religion of the shambles?" as they blasphemously call it. Ah, my Friends, they will find themselves where they will wish they had believed "the religion of the shambles"! And I think that it will burn like coals of juniper into the soul of any man that has ever dared to talk like that, that he did despite unto the blood of God and so, by his own willful deeds, will be cast away forever.

May the Holy Spirit show unto you Gethsemane, Gabbatha and Golgotha! And then, may it please Him to give you a sight of what our Lord is now doing! Oh, how it would cheer you up at any time when you were depressed, only to see Him standing and pleading for you! Do you not think that if your wife were ill, your child were sick and there was hardly any food in the cupboard—if you were to go out the back door and you saw Him with the breastplate on, and all the stones glittering—and your name there and Him pleading for you—don't you think you would go in and say, "There, Wife, it is all right, He is praying for us"? Oh, it would be a comfort if the Holy Spirit showed you a pleading Christ! And then, to think that He is *reigning* as well as pleading! He is at the right hand of God, even the Fa-

ther, who has put all things under His feet. And He waits till the last enemy shall lie there. Now, you are not afraid, are you, of those who have been snubbing you and opposing you? Remember, He has said, "All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth. Go you therefore, and teach all nations; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

Next, and best of all, may the Holy Spirit give you a clear view of His coming. This is our most brilliant hope—"Lo, He comes!" The more the adversary waxes bold and the less of faith there is, and when zeal seems almost extinct, these are the tokens of His coming. The Lord always said that He would not come unless there was first a falling away. And so the darker the night grows and the fiercer the storm becomes, the better will we remember that He of the lake of Galilee came to them upon the waves in the night when the storm was wildest. Oh, what will His enemies say when He comes? When they behold the nail-prints of the Glorified and the Man with the Crown of thorns—when they see Him really come, they that have despised His Word and His ever-blessed blood—how will they flee before that face of injured love! And we, on the contrary, through His infinite mercy, will say, "This is what the Holy Spirit showed us and now we behold it literally! We thank Him for the foresights which He gave us of the Beatific Vision."

I am not yet done on the first head, because there is one point which I want you to remember. When the Holy Spirit takes of the things of Christ and shows them to us, He has a purpose in so doing. You will not laugh, I hope, when I remind you of what the little boys sometimes do at school with one another. I have seen a boy take out of his pocket an apple and say to his schoolmate, "Do you see that apple?" "Yes," says the other. "Then, you may see me eat it," he says. But the Holy Spirit is no Tantalus, taking of the things of Christ and holding them up to mock us! No. He says, "Do you see these things? If you can see them, you may *have* them." Did not Christ, Himself, say, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth"? *Looking* gives you a claim and if you can see Him, He is yours! It is with you, with regard to the Spirit showing you things, as it was with Jacob. You know Jacob lay down and went to sleep. And the Lord said to him, "The land whereon you lie, to you will I give it." Now, wherever you go, throughout the whole of Scripture, if you can find a place where you can lie down, that is yours! If you can sleep on a promise, that promise is yours! "Lift up now your eyes," said God to Abraham, "and look from the place where you, are northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which you see, to you will I give it."

May the Lord increase our holy vision of delighted faith, for there is nothing we see but we may also enjoy—all that is in Christ is there for us!

II. Now, secondly, WHAT THE HOLY SPIRIT AIMS AT AND WHAT HE REALLY ACCOMPLISHES. "He shall glorify Me."

Ah, Brothers, the Holy Spirit never comes to glorify *us*, or to glorify a denomination, or, I think, even to glorify a systematic arrangement of doctrines! He comes to glorify CHRIST! If we want to be in accord with Him, we must preach in order to glorify Christ. May we never have this

thought—"I will put that bit in. It will sound well. The friends will feel that oratory is not quite extinct, that Demosthenes lives again in this village." No, no! I would say, "Brother, though it is a very delightful piece, strike that out because if you have had a thought of that kind about it, you had better not put yourself in the way of temptation by using it." "Yes, that is a magnificent sentence! I do not know where I met with it, or whether it is my own. I am afraid that most of our friends will not understand it, but then it will give them an impression that they have a deep thinker in their pulpit." Well then, it may be very admirable and, further, it might be a very right thing to give them that precious piece; but if you have that thought about it, strike it out! Strike it out ruthlessly! Say, "No, no, no! If it is not distinctly my aim to glorify Christ, I am not in accord with the aim of the Holy Spirit and I cannot expect His help! We shall not be pulling the same way and, therefore, I will have nothing of which I cannot say that I am saying it simply, sincerely and only that I may glorify Christ."

How, then, does the Holy Spirit glorify Christ? It is very beautiful to think that He glorifies Christ *by showing Christ's things*. If you wanted to do honor to a man, you would, perhaps, take him a present to decorate his house. But here, if you want to glorify Christ, you must go and take the things *out of Christ's house*—"the things of Christ." Whenever we have to praise God, what do we do? We simply say what He is! "You are this and You are that." There is no other praise. We cannot fetch anything from anywhere else and bring it to God—the praises of God are simply the facts about Himself! If you want to praise the Lord Jesus Christ, tell the people about Him. Take of the things of Christ and show them to the people—and you will glorify Christ.

Alas, I know what you will do. You will weave words together and you will form and fashion them in a marvelous manner till you have produced a charming piece of literature. When you have carefully done that, put it in the fire under the oven—and let it burn! Possibly you may help to bake some bread with it. Brethren, it is better for us to tell what Christ is than to invent 10,000 fine words of praise in reference to Him. "He shall glorify Me, for He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you."

Again, I think that the blessed Spirit glorifies Christ by showing us the things of Christ *as Christ's*. Oh, to be pardoned! Yes, it is a great thing, but to find that pardon in His wounds—that is a greater thing! Oh, to get peace! Yes, but to find that peace in the blood of His Cross! Brothers, have the blood-mark very visibly on all your mercies! They are all marked with the blood of the Cross, but sometimes we think so much of the sweetness of the bread, or of the coolness of the waters, that we forget from *where* these came and *how* they came—and then they lack their choicest flavor. That it came from Christ is the best thing about the best thing that ever came from Christ! That He saves *me* is, somehow, better than my being saved! It is a blessed thing to go to Heaven, but I do not know that it is not a better thing to be in Christ and so, as the result of it, to get into Heaven. It is Himself and that which comes of Himself that becomes best of all because it comes of Himself! So the Holy Spirit shall glorify Christ by

making us see that these things of Christ are, indeed, of Christ, and completely of Christ—and still are in connection with Christ—and we only enjoy them because we are in connection with Christ.

Then it is said in the text, "He shall glorify Me: for He shall take of Mine and shall show it *unto you*." Yes, it does glorify Christ for the Holy Spirit to show Christ to us. How often I have wished that men of great minds might be converted! I have wished that we could have a few Miltons and such men, to sing of the love of Christ. A few mighty men who teach politics and the like, to consecrate their talents to the preaching of the Gospel. Why is it not so? Well, because the Holy Spirit does not seem to think that that would be the way to supremely glorify Christ and He prefers, as a better way, to take us commonplace sort of persons and to take the things of Christ and to show them to *us*. He does glorify Christ and, blessed be His name that ever my bleary eyes should look upon His infinite loveliness! That ever such a wretch as I, who can understand everything but what I ought to understand, should be made to comprehend the heights and depths and to know, with all saints, the love of Christ that passes knowledge!

You see, in a school, that clever boy. Well, it is not much for the master to have made a scholar of *him*. But here is one who shines as a scholar and his mother says that he was the greatest dolt in the family! All his schoolfellows say, "Why, he was the butt of all our jokes! He seemed to have no brains, but our master, somehow, got some brains into him and made him know something which he appeared, at one time, incapable of knowing." Somehow, it does seem to be as if our very folly, impotence and spiritual death—if the Holy Spirit shows to us the things of Christ—will go towards the increase of that great *glorifying of Christ* at which the Holy Spirit aims!

Then, Beloved Brothers, since it is for the honor of Christ for His things to be shown to men, He will show them to us, *that we may go and show them to other people*. This we cannot do, except as He is with us to make the others to see. But He will be with us while we tell forth what He has taught us and so the Holy Spirit will really be showing to others while He is showing to us! A secondary influence will flow from this service, for we shall be helped to *use the right means* to make others see the things of Christ.

III. Our time is almost gone, but in the third place I must just point out to you HOW HE IS, IN BOTH OF THESE THINGS, OUR COMFORTER. He is so, first, for this reason—that *there is no comfort in the world like a sight of Christ*. He shows to us the things of Christ. Oh, Brothers, if you are poor and if the Holy Spirit shows you that Christ had not where to lay His head, what a sight for you! And if you are sick and if the Holy Spirit shows you what sufferings Christ endured, what comfort comes to you! If you are made to see the things of Christ, each thing according to the condition which you are in, how speedily you are delivered out of your sorrow!

And then, if the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ, *that is the cure for every kind of sorrow*. He is the Comforter. I may have told you before, but I can-

not help telling you again, that many years ago, after the terrible tragedy in the Surrey Royal Gardens, [See "Emotional Trial by 'Fire!'"—http://www.pilgrimpublications.com/agonies.htm EOD] I had to go away into the country and keep quite still. The very sight of the Bible made me cry. I could only keep alone in the garden and I was heavy and sad, for people had been killed and there I was, half dead, myself.

And I remember how I got back my comfort and I preached on the Sabbath after I recovered. I had been walking round the garden and I was standing under a tree. If it is there now, I should know it and I remember these words—"Him has God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior." "Oh," I thought to myself, "I am only a common soldier. If I die in a ditch, I do not care. The King is honored. He wins the victory." And I was like those French soldiers in the old times who loved the emperor—and you know how, when they were dying, if he rode by, the wounded man would raise himself up on his elbow and cry once more, *"Vive l' Empereu*r!" for the emperor was engraved on his heart! And so, I am sure, it is with everyone of you, my Brothers, in this holy war! If our Lord and King is exalted, then let other things go which way they like. If He is exalted, never mind what becomes of us. We are a set of pigmies—it is all right if *He* is exalted! God's Truth is safe. We are perfectly willing to be forgotten, derided, slandered, or anything else that men please. The cause is safe and the King is on the Throne. Hallelujah! Blessed be His name! Amen.

MR. SPURGEON UPDATE:

Another anxious week has passed, and by the blessing of the Lord upon the means used, MR. SPURGEON'S life is still spared. United and almost universal prayer for his complete recovery has continued to be offered and, at the time that this sermon is sent to the printers, there appears to be a slight improvement in the dear sufferer's condition which is still very critical. MRS. SPURGEON and the other members of the family, as well as the Church at the Tabernacle, are very grateful for all the sympathy that has found expression in various ways. And they entreat all Believers to continue pleading for MR. SPURGEON'S full restoration, if it is the Lord's will.

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

BARRIERS BROKEN DOWN
NO. 2214

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 26, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."
Romans 10:3.

You that have your Bibles open, kindly follow me from the first verse of the chapter. It begins, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved." If you really desire that men should be saved, pray for them! It is an empty wish, a mere formality, if you do not turn it into prayer. Every loving desire for any man or woman should, by the Believer, be taken before God in prayer. We cannot expect that God will save men unless His people pray for it. There must be travail before the birth and there must be travail in prayer with God before we can expect that many will be born, again, into the Church of God. Oh, for more prayer! Let us cry to God in secret, in the family and in all our assemblies, that God would save the sons of men!

But prayer, if it is sincere, is always attended with effort. Therefore the Apostle begins to teach as well as to pray. He prays that Israel might be saved and then he explains the difficulties in the way and tries to remove them. You pray, dear Friend, do you? But you never speak to the individual for *whom you pray*. Is your prayer sincere? I will not question it. But your prayer has hardly reached that pitch of passionate earnestness which will secure an answer, for if you were in downright earnest, you would go to the person for whom you pray and explain the way of salvation! You want your boy to be a scholar. Then you send him to school. You want your girl to learn a certain trade. You put her apprentice to it, do you not? In the things of common life, that which you desire you use *means* to obtain. Oh, that in all our Churches we might feel that while effort without prayer is presumption and prayer without effort is hypocrisy, the holy blending of prayer and labor will produce, for certain, a grand result!

If we labor for souls, we must not be content unless souls are really saved, for the Apostle says, "For I bear them record that they have a zeal for God." Well, does not that satisfy you, Paul? They are zealous for God! They are red-hot! "No," he says, "not unless it is in the right way. They have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge." We feel very thankful when we see tears stream down the cheeks, but, you know, people cry

at the theater and there is not much in it. Pray God it may not end in a shower of tears, but that the heart may bleed as well as the eyes weep! It may happen that we have induced our Hearers to give up some outward sins. So far, so good. But it is written, "You must be born again." And if this vital change is not experienced, all outward reformation will land them short of Heaven! Beloved, the Apostle's love for souls led him to pray and led him to labor—but it led him to be very concerned that none should stop short of real living faith in Christ—and justification by His blood and righteousness.

When we are in the throes of a revival and we think men are turning to Christ, let us be happy and let us not throw any cold water upon anybody—but let us see that it is really the work of Grace in the hearts of our Hearers. Let us take care that the plowshare goes down deep. Some soil needs even cross-plowing and scarifying. Let us do the work thoroughly, for it is only those that are really converted that will stand. We do not need a lot of people that will run in at one door of the Church and out at the other—we want saving work and our prayer should be—"Lord, quicken the people into Divine Life by Divine Truth, through the Divine Spirit!"

Now observe that the Apostle, being thus earnest about souls, endeavors to be especially clear about the doctrine of Justification by Faith. If we want men to be truly converted, we must set before them the plan of salvation very clearly and distinctly. I meet with hundreds of persons who have had some kind of work upon their hearts, but they tell me that they walk in a mist. They have not quite understood it. They feel that they are on the Rock, but they were not quite sure what the Rock really is. It is a good thing that our zeal for God should be according to *knowledge*, that we know *what* we believe and *why* we believe it. That we *know* that we are saved, *how* we are saved and *why* we are saved, for if there is a mistake here, it may be fatal!

Martin Luther, who, as we all know, continually preached the doctrine of Justification by Faith, said, one day, that he felt half inclined to take the Bible and bang it about the people's heads, for they seemed as if they would not get a hold of the doctrine that we are saved by faith in Jesus Christ and by Him, alone! I suspect that knocking people's heads about with the Bible would not effect any very great result—but that was Martin Luther's way of putting it. Keep hammering away on that nail—"Believe, believe, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Well, now, that was the particular battleground of Luther's day, so that he said, "The doctrine of Justification by Faith is the article of a standing or a falling church." If a Church holds and preaches that, it is a Church of Christ, notwithstanding many blunders. But, whatever it may preach, if it does not preach *that*, it is to be questioned whether it is not a fallen church, a church that has lost its true position.

The fight today is the same as in Luther's day. The words have changed and men make other pretenses, but the fight all along the line is still this—Are we saved by our own merits, or by the merits of another? Are we

righteous through what we *do*, or are we righteous through what Christ has done? Is sin put away by tears and repentances, or is sin washed away by the precious blood of Christ and by that alone? Beloved, I trust that our pulpit will never give an uncertain sound upon this matter!

In our discourse we shall endeavor to show you that while there are two righteousnesses, our own righteousness and the righteousness of God, there will always be, as there has always been, a conflict between the two. Men will choose their own righteousness and they will not submit themselves to the righteousness of God.

You that are fellow workers for Christ will be especially interested in this text, for it sets forth three difficulties in the way of a man's salvation. The first is *ignorance*—"They, being ignorant of God's righteousness." The next is *self-will*—"And going about to establish their own righteousness." And the third is *flat rebellion*—"Have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."

I. Well, now, our first difficulty is with IGNORANCE. "Ignorance is the mother of devotion," according to the Church of Rome. "Ignorance is the mother of error," according to the Word of God. We love the spread of knowledge, although there is a knowledge which it were better not to know, as there is a philosophy that is nothing but vain deceit and not true wisdom. What we want our fellow men to possess is *spiritual* knowledge. Especially do we desire that they may have, first and chiefly, knowledge with regard to God's righteousness, for the difficulty is that *men do not know what that righteousness is which God* requires.

Do you want to be saved by your own righteousness? Do you know what kind of righteousness it must be? To be accepted, it must be *perfect*. That is to say, if you have committed but *one* sin, you have stained your character in the sight of God and your hope of perfect righteousness is gone. God's Law requires obedience from the first moment that the creature understands that Law, as long as that creature lives. Mark what it requires of you—"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind." Have you done that? "And your neighbor as yourself." Have you done *that*? Why, there is not one of us who has done it! If we had kept the Law of God completely, from the first command to the last, from the first day until now—even that would not save us, for, if there were to be one sinful word or deed during the *rest* of life, it would spoil the whole—and God could not accept our righteousness.

When a man commits one sin, he is guilty of disobedience to all the commands of God, for, "he that offends in one point is guilty of all." Here is a chain containing 20 links. If I break one of them, I have broken the chain. True, there are 19 perfect links, but if number 10 is snapped, down goes the cage over the mouth of the mine and the miners are killed! Suppose that I should be required to produce a perfect vase of alabaster, or clear crystal, as a present to the Queen? But my maid has chipped it just a little. What is to be done? I may possibly find somebody to use some patent cement and fasten the little pieces in their places, but when all is

done, it is chipped—it is not perfect—and if it must be perfect before royalty can accept it, I must get another vase, for this one will not do.

Now, dear Friend, while I am talking to you about a chip, here, and a chip, there, in your life, I am sure you must be saying, "Do not talk so, Sir. Why, some of us have not only got chipped, but we are smashed right up! And as to broken links, why, we have fairly melted the chain—there is not a link left. We have nothing, absolutely nothing, that we can bring before God." I am glad to hear it! If you are lost, you are the very ones Christ came to save. And if you have no righteousness of your own, you have got to the halfway house of salvation! When you strip a man, you are partly on the way to clothing him. When a man is changing his old clothes for better, he must first get the old ones off. Oh, how glad I am to meet with a real sinner! There are many sham sinners about. I saw, one day, in Italy, a fellow sticking out his arm with an awful sore and he begged of me. As I suspected that he had manufactured that sore with a little sulfuric acid, or by some such process, I did not feel the least pity for him. We have lots of people who come confessing their sins—"Oh, yes, we are sinners! We are sinners!" They do not mean it—they are only sham sinners. A real sinner, one who feels his guilt, is a "sacred thing," as Hart says, "the Holy Spirit has made him so." He is an empty vessel that God is going to fill! He is a broken heart that God is going to make new! But our trouble is that the mass of people are not aware how perfect and how complete any righteousness must be before God can accept it.

The next difficulty is that *men do not know that God has provided a righteousness* for all Believers. For every soul born of Adam who will believe in Christ, there is a perfect righteousness! Not ours, but God's. God came here in human form not bound to be obedient, but, "being found in fashion as a man, He became obedient"—obedient to His own Law and fulfilled every jot and tittle of it. He was "obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross." And His obedience is *ours* if we believe! God looks at us as if we had done what His Son has done! Christ died and rose again—and God regards *us* as having died in Him and reckons that we are risen with Him and now live in Him! Our righteousness is the righteousness of Another, even of the Son of God—a *perfect* righteousness, a Divine righteousness, an everlasting righteousness! In the Book of Daniel it is written that Messiah, the Prince, should "finish the transgression, make an end of sins, make reconciliation for iniquity and bring in everlasting righteousness." He was "made sin for us, Who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

Alas, how many there are who do not know that God justifies the ungodly—that sinners can be regarded as just through what Christ has done and suffered and, that, believing in the precious Christ whom God has set forth to be a Propitiation, the vilest are fair to look upon in God's esteem and the far-off ones are made near by the blood of Christ! Oh, I wish that men knew it! I have sometimes thought that if they did but know it, if they did but really hear the Gospel, they must believe it. You that preach Christ in the streets, go on preaching Him! I saw a man preaching, the

other day, with no creature but one dog to listen to him and I really thought that he might as well have gone home. But I met with a story yesterday which I know to be true and it showed me that I was making a mistake. There was a woman who, for years, had been in such dreadful despair that she would not even listen to the Gospel.

She came to be very ill and she said to one that called upon her, "You sent a man to preach under my window three months ago and I got a blessing." "No," the friend said, "I never sent anybody to preach under your window." "Oh," she said, "I think you did, for he came and preached and my maid said that there was nobody listening to him. I did not want to hear him, but as he made so much noise, my maid shut the window and I lay down in bed. But the man shouted so, that I was obliged to hear him, and I thank God I did, for I heard the Gospel and I found Christ! Did you not send him?" "No," said the good man, "I did not." "Well," she said, "then God did! There was nobody in the street listening to him, but I heard the Gospel—and I got out of my despair and I found the Savior—and I am prepared to die."

Fire away, Brothers! You do not know where your shot will strike, but, "there's a billet for every bullet." I believe that there is some soul whom God means to bless whenever we preach the Gospel, depending upon His Grace. But the mass of mankind are ignorant of the righteousness which God requires and ignorant of the righteousness which God has provided.

Many *are ignorant as to how they are to receive this righteousness*. If there is such a righteousness, they say, how are we to get it? The current notion is, "I must *pray* so much. I must *weep* so much. I must *feel* so much." Ah, this is the common ignorance, whereas men should know that—

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One."

"Why, *everybody* preaches this," says someone. I know they do, but people do not understand it, although you keep on preaching it, for until God the Holy Spirit makes men to know the meaning of what you say, they will but nod their heads and pass on. Though I heard the Gospel from my childhood and was brought up upon the very knee of piety, I did not understand what I must do to be saved till I heard that text preached from—"Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." I do not believe that my ignorance was the fault of the preacher. It was certainly not the fault of my father, or my mother—and not the fault of the Bible which I had read through, again and again—it was the fault of these dim eyes that I could not see! Go on! Go on, you preachers of the Word! Spread abroad the knowledge of this great fact, that, "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life."

The worst of this terrible ignorance is that the mass of mankind *do not know HIM who is our Righteousness*. Who is the Righteousness of God? Who is the Blessed One? God's only-begotten Son! God, the Word made flesh, born at Bethlehem, nurtured in the carpenter's shop, toiling here below and wearing His life away for the souls of men—extending His arms upon the Cross. Giving His side to be pierced, His soul to be breathed out,

His body to be laid in the tomb that men might be saved! O Jesus, in Your wounds is our salvation, but men do not know it! O Jesus, Your death is the death of sin, Your life is our life unto God—but men do not know it! Alas, alas, men still go on in their blindness and ignorance! Still is the Lord of Life despised and rejected of men and still His servants cry, "Who has believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"

You see our great difficulty is human ignorance—ignorance, dear Friends, even of the *facts* of the Truth of God. You do not know how near to this place, in the very midst and heart of London, there are tens of thousands who do not know the name of Christ! You think it incredible, but I know that it is so. There are multitudes that have never read a chapter in the Word of God since they went to Sunday school as children. And they never darken the threshold of God's House. There are streets, in neighborhoods not far from here, where, if one man goes to a place of worship, he is marked by all his neighbors as a strange character. Let me turn aside for a moment and ask you how, in this city of London, are we to get the Gospel to the working men—to a great number of them? How does it get to some of them?

How? Oh, little Mary sings it on father's knee on Sunday night. He has not been out to a place of worship, but his little girl has been to the Sunday school. Or his son Jack has been to the mission and comes home and tells his father what the preacher said. He will listen to his own children when he will listen to no one else! The way to increase the number of those who are not ignorant is for us so to see the things of Christ that others who have never seen them may have, from us, an intimation of what *we* have seen! Oh, it must be very painful to a blind man for another to say to him, "Now I am looking over a delightful landscape. Over there I can see a beautiful piece of water and beyond the hills I see the sea. There is a ship going along." "Oh," the man says, "I wish I had eyes that I could see, too!" The Holy Spirit makes us see, so that, as we tell the story, we may set others longing to also see.

I think I reminded you once before, that when the prodigal came back, his father said, "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet." But, you will notice, he never fed him. The father does not say anything about that. He says, "Bring here the fatted calf, and kill it; and let *us* eat, and be merry." Well, it is the servants and all the rest of the household that are to eat. There is nothing said about killing the fatted calf for the prodigal. No, no, you see he had lost his appetite, and others must begin to eat, first, and then, when they began to eat, he was sure to join in with them. There is no surer way of begetting an appetite than seeing other people eating. Let us enjoy the things of Christ so much that poor sinners' mouths will water and they will begin to ask, "What is your Beloved more than any other beloved? What is this righteousness of which you speak? What is this wonderful thing?" We have need to tell others what we know, for ignorance, even of the simple facts of the Gospel, is extremely common.

Others are in great ignorance as to the *excellence* of the Gospel. They do not know the peace, the joy, the rest it brings—

"His worth if all the nations knew,
Sure the whole world would love Him too."

But they think that it is all mere talk—a something all very well for parsons and for some few other people to get a hold of—but nothing for the working man, nothing for the man of business, nothing for your noble gentleman who has his heaven at Newmarket and his bliss at Epsom. Ah, dear Friends, I would to God they knew the Pearl of Great Price, the incomparable value of salvation by blood—for then would they reckon the highest glory of this present world as unworthy to be compared with the least delight of the Kingdom of God!

With many, this ignorance is *willful*. Nobody is so blind as the man that does not want to see! Nobody so deaf as the man that does not wish to hear! Many are like the hogs in harvest—very deaf when they are told to get out of the corn-field. And so, when sinners run riot in their sins, they are very deaf, indeed, when they are told to quit them and fly to Christ for refuge! Some of you, perhaps, do not want to know too much. When you come to that part of the Bible that begins to touch your conscience, you say, "Shut that up." You will go on somewhere else. You do not want to know! Willful ignorance will bring terrible damnation. If there is salvation and you do not want to know it, then you deserve to be cast away.

There are some who are ignorant *despairingly* and I pity them, poor souls! They sigh and cry, "Oh, I cannot be saved, I am so guilty. My heart is so hard!" The devil tells men, first, that they can be saved any day they like, so they may put it off. Then, immediately afterwards, he says, "Salvation is not for such as you. You never had enough sense of sin. You never will have enough faith. God will never save *you*." Ah, my dear Friend, I wish I could make you understand that whoever comes to Christ, He will in no wise cast out, for He, Himself, has said, "He that believes on Me has"—has *now*—"everlasting life." He shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck him out of Christ's hands. Some of us will give Christ great glory when we get to Heaven. I think that some people will meet us at the gate and say, "What? And have *you* got here?"

I should not wonder if it was some elder brother. That elder brother was a good fellow. He was a real child and he was always with his father and all his father had was his. Yet he was surprised to see the prodigal come home after wasting his father's living. Ah, but it is those that cost the Lord so much in whom His infinite Grace will be displayed! They will glorify Him most. O you despairing ones, if you must faint, faint away on to the bosom of Christ! Swoon away into the arms of the almighty Savior and then it will be well to have swooned and you will find, in Him, your strength!

II. There is another thing that stands in our way that is worse than ignorance and that is SELF-WILL. Men, ignorant of God's righteousness, are said to be "going about to establish their own righteousness." In other words, to set up the *poor idol* of their own righteousness. Man sees God's

righteousness and, instead of accepting it, he says, "I think I could match that. I will set up my own righteousness!" There is a treasure of gold and the man says, "No, I will not have that. I think that I could make a sovereign at home out of a bit of brass." Fool that he is! How shall he mimic God? If I were at Heaven's wide-open gate and a voice should say, "Enter freely," and I replied, "No, I think I prefer the Surrey Hills, or a place down by the seaside," what a fool I would be! But, even then, not so great a fool as when forsaking the righteousness of God, I want to set up my own! A human thing at best—how shall that match the Divine righteousness? An imperfect thing at best—how shall I compare that with the perfect righteousness of Christ? A fading, floating thing, always apt to be damaged by the next moment's temptation—how can I be so foolish? A ridiculous thing, an ignominious thing, a filthy thing.

Paul said that his righteousness, which was of the Law, was "blameless"—and yet he counted it dung—that he might win Christ! Dung, the most filthy thing! Here, scavenger, take it away! Have any of you any righteousness of your own? I do not believe that even the dustman would take it! He would say, "No, the carts are not for carting away man's righteousness—we have no place bad enough to shoot it into." Shoot it into the bottomless pit! No, even there they have not any righteousness, for they know their true condition. Human righteousness is a great lie—it is filthy rags. Away with it from off the face of the earth!

What do men try to do? In what *vain efforts* are they spending their time and strength? According to the text, they go about "to establish their own righteousness." I think you will better understand it, if I read it, "They go about to *set up* their own righteousness." You see it is a dead thing. "See here," they say, "we will make it stand." If I had a corpse here—I am glad that I have not—well, I set it up and it tumbles down. Nevertheless, I will put its legs out a little wider and see whether it will stand. Down it goes! Now I will prop it up. Surely, I can make this dead thing stand. But, no, it has a tendency to fall—down it goes! Have I not seen a sinner try to set up the corpse of his own righteousness and make it stand? At last he has been obliged to say what the fool said in the old classic, "It needs something inside." And so it does, for until there is life within, it will not stand! Even so, our righteousness has no true vitality, no life within and it will not stand.

Or, to use another illustration, it is like a man trying to patch up an old house. You find such in country villages—a place which nobody has ever repaired for 50 years! I do not know if there is any landlord, but if there is, he would like to forgot that he has such property! The main beam is nearly cracked through. The lath and plaster have gone, long ago, and the birds go in and out the best parlor, whenever they like—the whole thing is tumbling down. A man buys it and he says, "Now, you know, it is a pity to pull this house down. I think I will repair it." So he puts in a beam there, just under the roof, and he puts a strut here and another timber there and, by the time he has spent as much as would have built a new house, he has got a very handsome ruin left, but nothing more.

I think it was Charles the First who used to swear, "God mend me." Somebody said it would be an easier job to make a new one of him and I believe it! When men say, "God mend me," they had better say, "God make me new." So, as to your righteousness, if you have a lot of it and it is very good. If you have been christened, or baptized, if you like, and confirmed and have always gone to your place of worship—and are so good that you wonder you can live in such a wicked world as this—if you have all that righteousness, the best thing to do with it is to get rid of it, for it will ruin your soul! But this is what men do—they try "to set up" their own righteousness.

And then the text says that they "go about" to do this—"Going about to establish their own righteousness." That is to say, they set about it with great zeal. Some of you who know the Lord can remember how you thought you would do it. Why, at first, when you started as a young man, you were never going to do any wrong! You were going to have a perfect righteousness of your own. You had an ugly temper, however, and it broke out, indeed. "Well," you said, "I shall never do it again." You came down to breakfast and you were as bad-tempered as ever, so you said, "Never mind, I will set it up now. I will be a teetotaler. That will be a grand thing." So it was, but, somehow or other, down tumbled your righteousness again!

Then you went to a place of worship. You said, "I will always be here." You began to think that you would grow into a saint, but you did not. Down tumbled your righteousness! Always it went and you, all the while, tried zealously to set it up. "Going about" implies great earnestness. When a man says, "I am going about a thing," he means that he is going to take his coat off—going to work in his shirtsleeves. He is going to toil at it for many hours. I remember how I set to work in my shirtsleeves to make a righteousness of my own! And I did very nicely, indeed, while it was dark. But when a little light from the Cross broke in, I began to see the filthiness of it. And you, my Friend, think yourself very beautiful when you cannot see yourself! But let the mirror be held before you, you would begin to see the spots of filth that defile the very best of your righteousness. Ah me, how foul the righteousness of men is—and yet they go about to set up their own righteousness.

To "go about" to establish a righteousness means, in the next place, that men have varied ways of doing it. Shall I tell you what I frequently meet with? I have talked with a person and said, "Can you trust in your own works?" "Oh, no, Sir, I can never do that." "Well, can you come to Christ and take the righteousness of God?" "Well, Sir, no. I do not feel enough my own emptiness." Look! This man is going to bring his own emptiness to help him! He actually thinks that if he has not any righteousness, his own emptiness is good for something and, if he can get to feel *that*, he will come and bring his feelings of emptiness to commend him to Christ! Did you ever hear of such a thing? You go to him and you say, "My dear Man, salvation is not on account of your *feelings*." Each time

you drive him out of his refuge of lies, he hastens back to the old ground again—something of himself.

Suppose there is a ship out at sea and the people on board feel that they are safe. One of them says, "I know that we shall not drift far out of our course." "Why?" "Because we have such a big anchor on board." You say, "Ah, he is a cockney. He must be a fool who believes in an anchor *on board*." Why, it is no good to anybody! It is when you "let go" the anchor and lose sight of it—and the anchor gets an unseen grip down below, that it is good for something. But while the anchor is on board, it is only so much dead weight for the ship. You want to have your anchor on board, do you? You do not like it to "enter into that which is within the veil"—that is too mysterious. You want to *feel* something, to have something of your own. O pride! O self-will! God will have salvation to be all of Grace and man will have it of debt!

God gives the promise of His Grace and man puts his penny down to *pay* for it! Men's pennies and God's promises do not go together very well to buy Heaven. He says, like a king, "You may have it for nothing," and we say, "Lord, we think we could make up a little something to buy it." Well, then, you will never have it! His terms are free, rich, Sovereign Grace—a sinner with nothing—receiving everything from God! He may have it. He may have it *now*. None can say no to him. But he stands chaffering, trying to pay his penny, as if God kept a shop! Has God come down to stand in your market and cry to you, "Here, bring your gold and your silver to purchase My favor"? You know not who He is, for all things are His! If He were hungry, He would not tell you, for the cattle on a thousand hills belong to Him. Will you have salvation freely? If so, take it freely. But if you will *buy* it, you and God can never agree.

Let me just close this point about human will, by saying that the efforts of men for their own salvation are *deadly efforts*. God will save them one way, but they want to be saved by another! God says, "Here is medicine. Take it; drink it." Man says, "No, I will grow my own drugs in my own garden and I will compound my own medicine." And he goes and takes his own dose. And can he ever get well in such a way as that? God says, "I will forgive." Man says, "I will try and *deserve* to be forgiven," as if that could be possible. I have heard that the Romanists say that venial sins are a kind of sins that *deserve* to be forgiven. What sort of sin must that be? Yet some men seem to think that somehow or other they can deserve to be forgiven! That would not be forgiveness at all! Come, come, you vilest of the vile, you lost and utterly undone! Come, come, you that have no righteousness, or the ghost of a shade of a shadow of a pretense of any! Come as you are! There is everything you need in Christ. Come and have Him and you shall not be refused! But reject His terms and salvation can *never* be yours.

III. Now, very briefly, I want to speak upon the third difficulty, which is a gross evil, namely, FLAT REBELLION.

Observe my text, dear Friend, if you forget everything else. I say, remember what the Lord says—"They have not submitted themselves unto

the righteousness of God." This is a *strange word*. "Have not submitted themselves." Do you not wonder that such a word is used? Here is a criminal who will not submit to be pardoned! Here is a sick man who will not submit to be made well! Here is a man with a broken leg who will not submit to have it healed! Here is a poor beggar in the street who will not submit to be made into a gentleman! Why, the word seems quite out of place, does it not? It shows you the monstrous absurdity of self-righteousness, that men will not submit themselves to that which is the greatest blessing that Heaven, itself, can bestow! It is a matter of *submission*.

While it is a strange word, it is a very *searching word*. Is it so, that, the reason why I am not saved is that I will not submit? Do I stick out? Have I an iron sinew in my neck? Am I such a self-willed fool that I will not submit before my Maker—will not yield, even, to have salvation for *nothing*? Am I so proud that I scorn to be a pauper before God? That is just it. That is the reason why many have not peace. If they were bankrupts, if they were cleaned right out, they would have perfect rest of soul, but still they stand out and, in their self-righteousness, fight against God!

It is a very *true word*. I am sure that there is many a sinner who has not anything to be proud of and yet he is as proud as Lucifer. Why, there are harlots that are proud of their own righteousness! There are drunks proud of their own righteousness! I do not know where they get it, but they are proud of it. I have heard say that a dustman can be as proud as my Lord Mayor. And so the vilest sinner can be proud of his own righteousness. "Why," you say, "he has nothing to be proud of!" No more have you—I mean you good, moral persons—you who never do anything wrong, as you think. You have not any more righteousness than he has, if it comes really to be measured up and tested by the Word of God. Still, it is so—the worse the man, the harder he is to bow before the righteousness of God.

It is a very *suggestive word*. "They have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." They will not acknowledge that God is King. They quarrel with His Sovereignty. How can the rebel be forgiven when he begins to question whether the king is king? When he begins to deny the rights of the magistrate to condemn him, how can he be pardoned? You must yield, my Friend! Submit to the fact that God is God, or else you will not submit to God's righteousness! Man thinks that God is hard, austere, demanding too much—and while God puts before him everything for nothing—yet still he says that the price is too high! It is *his heart* that is too high, his *proud looks* that need bringing down. Oh, that God would bring them down! The man will not submit to the power of God. He will not yield himself up to God to work with him, and in him and for him. He wants to do all himself and then, if he got to Heaven, he would throw his cap up and want to share the glory! But it will not do. It is all of Grace from first to last—and the sinner must consent that it shall be so or else the gate of Heaven will never give him admittance!

Lastly, it is a very *cheering word*. "They have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God." You ask, "And is that all that I have to do—to submit myself? Is that all?" There is a feather in the cap of your pride. Take it out! You have a weapon of rebellion by your side. Throw it down! Just submit yourself, with folded hands, with the rope around your neck. Say, "Lord, if my soul is sent to Hell, I deserve it. I submit and I plead for mercy. I plead the precious blood. I not only submit to take that plea, but I delight to take it. I am happy to believe that—

'You have promised to forgive
All who on Your Son believe.
Lord, I know You cannot lie—
Give me Christ, or else I die.'"

Beloved Friend, may the Holy Spirit lead you to submit! You have been kicking and struggling—now submit. You have been despairing and talking about its being presumptuous to believe. Submit! Give all that up. No more of your talk! Come to faith! When a man submits to God, that man has the victory. When God is King, you are safe. When you take Christ to be everything and you are nothing—then neither death nor Hell shall ever divide you from the heart of God! When you are not your own, you are Christ's, but so long as you are dependent upon self, you do not know the Lord and you *cannot* know Him.

May God bless this simple testimony to each and all, and to His name be praise! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Romans 9.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—554, 556, 538.

MR. SPURGEON UPDATE:

It is very difficult to know what report to give, week by week, concerning MR. SPURGEON'S illness. Before last week's sermon had reached country readers, he had apparently become much worse and the gravest apprehensions were entertained. Then came an improvement which made everyone full of thanksgiving—but this, again, was followed by a return of the terrible delirium which has been such a trying portion of the present illness. One thing we can say, MR. SPURGEON is in the Lord's hands and He will do with him what is right.

When friends read that there is an abatement of the most serious symptoms, let them not slacken their supplications, but, "continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving." On the other hand, if all hope of recovery appears to be gone, let them still plead with the Lord, if it is His gracious will, to raise up His dear servant and strengthen him for future service.

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

YOUNG MAN! A PRAYER FOR YOU
NO. 2215

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 2, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray, open his eyes, that he may see! And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha"
2 Kings 6:17.

THIS young man waited upon a Prophet—he could not have had a more instructive occupation, yet his eyes needed to be opened. He was well disposed towards good things, for the tone of his language to his master shows that he was heartily at one with him—but his eyes were not yet half opened. Being in great alarm for his master's safety, he ran to him to warn him—good servants should be their master's best friends. In return, his believing master prays for him. If we desire the good of our servants, our children and our friends, let us take care that we make supplication for them! All that we can do for them at our best is to give them secondary blessings, but if we pray to God for them, they will receive the best of gifts from Him who sends down in His mercy nothing but good gifts and perfect gifts. When we have come to the end of our teaching, example and persuasion, let us hand our young friends over to the Lord who works effectually unto eternal salvation.

Elisha's petition for this young man was, "O Lord, I pray, open his eyes, that he may see!" The young man was, at that time, in the peculiar condition of seeing and yet not seeing. He saw the enemy surrounding the city, but not the greater host of the Lord's angels who protected the man of God. Looking over the little walls of Dothan, he observed all the country round about to be occupied by the horses and chariots of the king of Syria. And he cried, "Alas, my Master! What shall we do?" He could see the danger, but he could not see the deliverance and, therefore, the Prophet lifted up his heart to Heaven and said, "O Lord, I pray, open his eyes, that he may see!" Elisha reckons his servant's natural sight as not seeing and regards the vision which detects the invisible as the only true sight.

Perhaps I am addressing some, at this time, who are very friendly to the cause of God and are even connected with it by relationship or occupation. They cheerfully lend a hand at any time in holy service so far as they can and they wish prosperity to the cause of true religion. Yet their eyes have not been opened to see *spiritual* things or, at least, not sufficiently opened to see the gracious and Divine side of them. They see enough to perceive that they are in danger from a great enemy. They perceive that it

is no easy thing to fight the battle of life and in the prospect of it they cry, "What shall we do?" They perceive that it is a difficult thing for a man to stand up for holiness, for truth, for integrity, for purity and to maintain a gracious character throughout the whole of life. They seem, to themselves, to be environed with opposing forces in their business, in their temperament, in their companionships and, perhaps, in their families. As for the cause of godliness, it seems hemmed in by adversaries and they ask—"What is to be done? Is not the matter desperate? Might it not be as well to surrender at once?" For any such timid one I would present to God the prayer of Elisha—"O Lord, I pray, open his eyes, that he may see!" Oh, that the prayer might be answered at this hour!

Very briefly, I shall speak, first, upon *our prayer.* Secondly, upon *our reason* for offering such a petition. And thirdly, upon *our hope*, for we trust that if our prayer is answered, the person whose eyes are opened will behold a vision which will bless him beyond anything he has ever dreamed of.

I. First, then, OUR PRAYER—"Lord, I pray, open the eyes of the young man, that he may see!" This petition bears many senses. I will mention only a few.

For certain of our friends we pray that their eyes may be opened *to see the enemy of their souls under the many disguises which he assumes*. We fear that many are ignorant of his devices. Young men, especially, are too apt to mistake the great enemy for a friend. They believe his false and flattering words and are seduced to ruin. He holds forth to them the sparkling cup—but in its beaded bubbles death is lurking! He talks of "pleasure," but in the lusts of the flesh the pleasure is a shadow and misery is the substance! He wears the mask of prudence and admonishes young men to "mind the main chance," and leave religion till they have made their fortunes. But that gain which comes of thrusting God aside will prove to be an everlasting loss! The devil as a serpent does more mischief than as a roaring lion. If we had to meet the devil and knew him to be what he is, we might far more easily conquer him—but we have to deal with him disguised as an angel of light—and here is the need of a hundred eyes, each one of them opened by God, that we may see!

Even worse than this is the fact that, at times, he does not meet us at all, but he undermines our path. He digs pits for our feet, he shoots his arrows from afar, or sends forth a pestilence which walks in darkness. Then have we need of a better sight than Nature gives. I would pray for the young man who is just leaving home to go into the world, "O Lord, open the eyes of the young man, that he may see!" May he be able to detect the falsehood which may hide itself beneath the truth, the meanness which may wrap itself about with pride, the folly which may robe itself in learning, the sin which may dress itself in the raiment of pleasure! I would not have you taken, like birds, in a snare. I would not have the youth led, like a bullock to the shambles, by the hand of temptation. Let us breathe such a prayer as that of Elisha for each person in this place who is beginning life. God grant that his eyes may be opened to see sin as sin and to

see that evil never can be good, a lie never can be true and rebellion against our God can never be the way to happiness!

We want men's eyes to be opened *to see God as everywhere, observing all things*. What an opening of the eyes this would be to many! It is a sad but true saying that God may be seen everywhere, but that the most of men see Him nowhere. He is blind, indeed, who cannot see HIM to whom the sun owes its light. Until our eyes are opened, we rise in the morning, we fall asleep at night and we have not seen God all day, although He has been every moment around us and within us! We live from the first day of January to the last day of December—and while the Lord never ceases to see us, we do not even *begin* to see Him till, by a miracle of Grace—He opens our eyes! We dwell in a wonderful world which the great Creator has made, filled with His own handiwork, cheered with His own Presence—and yet we do not see Him! Indeed, there are some so blind as to assert that there is no Creator and that they cannot perceive any evidence that a supremely wise and mighty Creator exists!

Oh, that the Lord Jesus would open the eyes of the willfully blind! Oh, that you, also, who are blinded by forgetfulness rather than by error, may be made to cry with Hagar, "You, God, see me," and with Job, "Now my eyes see you"! If God will graciously convince men of His own Divine Presence, what a benediction it will be to them, especially to the young in commencing life! A clear perception that the Lord observes all that we do will be a very useful protection in the hour of temptation. When we remember the Divine eyes, we shall cry, like Joseph, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" To see *yourself* is well, but to see *God* is better. Let us pray, "O Lord, open the young man's eyes, that he may see YOU!"

When a man begins to see his great enemy, and his best Friend, we may next pray, Lord, open his eyes *to see the way of salvation through the appointed Savior*. There is no seeing the Lord Jesus but by His own light. We look *to* Him with a look which comes *from* Him. I have tried to explain salvation to people many times in simple words and figures, but there is a great deal more needed than an explanation. It is right to be very plain, but more is needed than a clear statement. No matter how bright the candle, a blind man sees none the better. I continually pray, "Lord, open my mouth," but I perceive that I must also pray, "Lord, open men's eyes!" Until *God* opens a man's eyes, he will not see what faith means, nor what atonement means, nor what regeneration means. That which is plain as a pikestaff to a seeing man is invisible to the blind. "Believe, and live"—what can be plainer? Yet no man understands it till God gives Grace to perceive His meaning.

It is our duty, as preachers, to put the Gospel as plainly as possible, but *we* cannot give a man spiritual understanding. We declare, in baldest and boldest terms, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved," but men ask, like simpletons, "What do you mean?" We cry, "Look unto Jesus and live," but when our explanations are over, we learn that they have mistaken our meaning—and are still looking to *themselves*—and turning their backs on the Lord Jesus. To believe, or trust, is no mys-

tery, but the simplest of all simplicities! And for that very reason men cannot be persuaded to think that we mean what we say, or that God means what He says. We need to pray—"Lord, open their eyes, that they may see, for seeing, they do not see, and hearing, they do not perceive!"

Blessed be the Lord, how sweetly they do see it the moment their eyes are opened by His own Omnipotent touch! Then they are amazed that they did not see it before and call themselves fools for not perceiving what is so plain! Faith in the Lord Jesus is the simplest A B C of Divine Revelation—it belongs to the rudiments and elements of heavenly knowledge and we are dolts, indeed, not to take it as we find it in the Word of God and leave off mystifying ourselves over so plain a matter! Once let the miracle-working power of God open our eyes and we see well enough! But till then, we grope in the noonday for that which is right before us! I hope, beloved fellow-Christians, that you are praying while I am speaking. Praying, I mean, for those around you, and for all the blind souls that wander among the graves of earth—"Lord, open their eyes, that they may see!" He that made the eyes can open them! Sin cannot so darken the mind but that God can pour light into it! If we cannot make men see, we can at least lead them to the Master Optometrist, who can rectify their sight.

We should pray that our friends may have their eyes opened *to see all manner of spiritual Truths of God.* These optics of ours can only see natural objects. That is all they are intended for. We should be very grateful that our eyes can see as much as they see, but spiritual objects are not discernible by the eyes of the body, which are only for material objects. The things which pertain to the *spiritual* Kingdom must be perceived by eyes of a spiritual sort, eyes opened by the Lord! God must give to us spiritual senses before we can discern spiritual things—let this never be forgotten. There are those sitting among us who cannot discern spiritual things, for they have not the needed faculties. Carnal men and carnal women see only carnal things. The flesh cannot grasp, perceive, or discern the things of the Spirit. We must become spiritual and receive spiritual faculties before we can perceive spiritual things—in a word, we must be "born again." "The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Therefore the need of the prayer, "Lord, open the eyes of the young man, that he may see!"

Already the horses and chariots of fire were round about Elisha, but his servant could not see one of them because they were *spiritual* chariots and *spiritual* horses—angelic beings belonging to the purely spiritual domain—and as yet the youth had not entered the spiritual region and had no eyes with which to see into it. When God had given him spiritual eyes, then there began to break upon his vision that strange sight. Ethereal, airy—no, *spiritual*—but yet most real! That sight which revived his soul with the conviction that the Prophet was safe, was the ministers of God, as flames of fire, flashing to and fro and, like an army with horses and chariots, showing themselves strong for the defense of the servant of Jehovah. How surprised he was! How great his amazement! How content his

mind! He and his master were mysteriously defended beyond all fear of danger.

O my Hearers, as yet strangers to the things of God—if the Lord would open your eyes at once, you would be astonished, indeed, for as yet you have no idea, you cannot have any idea, what the spiritual life is, nor what spiritual realities must be—neither can you have any true idea of them till you are quickened of the Lord! You may talk about spiritual subjects and discuss them and think yourselves theologians—but you resemble deaf persons criticizing music—and blind men describing pictures! You are not qualified, even, to express an opinion upon the matter till you are created anew in Christ Jesus and brought within range of the spiritual and the heavenly. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." Let the prayer go up, then, from all enlightened hearts, for those who are not as yet walking in the light—"Lord, open the eyes of the young men, that they may see!"

We may expect a speedy answer! God hears prayer! Who knows but that many sitting in this house may be surprised by the secret touch of the invisible Spirit and all of a sudden may find themselves introduced into a new world? Elisha's prayer for this young man was not—and our prayer for others is not that they may do something which they can already do—that they may use some faculty which they already possess. No, our prayer is that a new sight may be granted to them—and that a new nature may be created within them, by a power altogether above and beyond themselves! We call on the hand of God! We ask the Lord to work a marvel! We would have you, dear Friends, receive what no education can ever get you, what no graduation at any university can ever bestow upon you! We want you to obtain what no years of experience or of study can achieve! We want you to possess what no imitation of other people will gain for you! We want you to experience a change which only the Lord, Himself, can work in you! We would have you pass from Nature's darkness into God's marvelous light—from an awful blindness into a clear vision of things otherwise invisible! Register that prayer before the Lord, you that are familiar with the courts of Heaven! Present the prayer for children, kinsfolk and friends. Cry, "Lord, let them receive sight, through the gracious working of Your Holy Spirit!"

II. Secondly, let us set forth OUR REASON for praying such a prayer for those around us. On this occasion, I can truly say that I am praying much more than I am preaching. While I am standing here before you, I am also bowing low before the Lord, my God, and I am bearing upon my heart certain of you for whom I long in my heart and have great heaviness of spirit. I am praying, in the secret of my soul, "Lord, open his eyes, that he may see!"

The first reason for our prayer is because *we, ourselves, have been made to see*. Had this miracle of Grace not taken place within *us*, we would have had no thought of prayer for you. But now our whole heart goes with the plea. Once we were as you are. Our eyes were blinded so that we saw neither our foes in all their terror, nor the Glory of the Lord round about us. Like blind Samsons, we went through the weary drudgery

of earth surrounded by our foes. At last a glimmering of the Light of God fell upon us like a lightning flash, showing us our sin! And after we were thus illuminated we endured a great fight of afflictions. Without were fights, within were fears. Our enemies were around us and we knew not what to do! But some man of God prayed for us and one day our eyes were turned toward the hills from which comes all aid to terror-stricken men. The Lord was there, though we knew Him not! But, by His Grace, we looked to Him and were enlightened and our faces were not ashamed—for round about Him the mountain was full of chariots and horses of fire! "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the Glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."—

"Lord, I was blind. I could not see
In Your marred visage any Grace!
But now the beauty of Your face
In radiant vision dawns on me!"

What else but such a heavenly vision could have scattered all our guilty fear? What else could have given us peace in the midst of tumult? We did not quite understand how it was done, nor did the change come to all of us in the same way, but we can all say, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see!" And since the prayers of others availed for us, we ought with double earnestness and hope to continue to plead for those who still have missed the glorious Revelation. "Lord, open the eyes of the young man, that he may see!"

We call upon the Lord for this second reason, because *only by His power can men be made to see*. This we found in our own experience. In vain we struggled to behold the salvation of God. In vain we sought the help of godly people. No sight came to our souls, nor were the eyes of our understanding enlightened until the Lord, Himself, washed our eyes in the waters that go softly. Then we came seeing! And this we also discover when we try to lead others to the Light of God. We speak to them of the glories we, ourselves, behold, and set before them the Truth of God, but we cannot make them see. To bestow spiritual vision is as great a wonder as to make a world—and requires the same fiat of Omnipotence! Only He who created the eyes can give this second sight. "Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind." What folly, then, to attempt the greater task of bestowing the sight of the *heart*! How vain the boast of those who attempt to invade God's prerogative and imagine that human ordinances or observances can open blind eyes! Beloved, let us, after we have done our best to make the people see the Glory of the Gospel, always fall back on the God of the Gospel and entreat Him to do His own blessed work—

"He comes, from thickest films of vice,
To clear the mental ray;
And on the eyeballs of the blind,
To pour celestial day."

Do not try to hold up your tallow candles to reveal the chariots of fire nor parade your vain philosophy, as if that could clear away the darkness of the soul. Leave room for God to work and, in a moment, at the touch of

His finger, in response to the prayers of His people, the wondrous work shall be accomplished!

Most importunately do we pray when we see the people enquiring. The cry, "What shall we do?" sends us to our knees, for we know that what is necessary is, not something to be done, but something to be *seen*. And we feel persuaded that the Lord who awoke the desire in the hearts of the seekers will surely, also, open their eyes to behold His Glory. The very fact that we feel drawn to pray for them is already a token to us that, before long, the scales shall fall from their eyes and through their vision of the splendor and sufficiency of the provision that God has made for those who trust in him, the name of the Lord will be greatly glorified. Therefore, with much expectancy, we again utter our prayer, "Lord, open their eyes, that they may see!"

Another reason for this prayer is—*you are not aware of your own blindness*. You are trusting in yourselves that you can see all you need to see well enough. That young man, of whom I am now thinking, has no idea, whatever, that his eyes are stone blind to eternal things! He thinks himself a sharp and clever fellow and I do not deny that he is so, in his own line of things. I am glad that he has such quick faculties for this life. God bless him and may he prosper in his business and in the enterprise upon which he is just entering! May the good Lord be with him concerning the matter on which his heart is set! But still, dear Friend, I am rather afraid of your cleverness. I am somewhat frightened at that keenness of yours because I have seen sharp men cut themselves, and I have seen the self-reliant make miserable failures! Something is to be said for confidence in its proper place, but self-congratulation is a proof of inward weakness and forebodes a breakdown.

If you are depending on an arm of flesh, at the very best you are resting on a broken reed! You require a strength beyond your own to fight the moral and spiritual battle of life. Your self-reliance, in this case, is a piece of groundless self-conceit. Do you not remember one of whom we read in this very Book of Kings that, when he was forewarned of what he would yet do, he exclaimed in astonishment, "Is your servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?" Hazael could not think himself capable of such crimes—and yet he no sooner had the opportunity than he fell into the evil up to his neck! He was dog enough to be cruel, for he was dog enough to fawn upon himself! You do not believe, young man, that you will ever be dishonest, and yet that little gambling speculation of yours will lead to it. You cannot think that you will ever be godless—and yet you are even now departing from the good old ways of your home and making a jest of sacred things when in certain company! They that trust in themselves are storing up fuel for a great fire of sin! The pride which lifts itself up will throw itself down. Because the fine young fellow does not know how blind he is, we, therefore, lament his blindness and are the more earnest in bringing him to Jesus, that he may receive his sight. "Lord, open his eyes, that he may see!"

Next, we pray this prayer because we have reason to fear that *you are surrounded by those who will mislead you*. We know the young man well.

He has newly come to London from that sober, orderly, country home—and he has no notion of the snares which will be laid for him by fowlers, male and female. Oh, you who have no experience and little discretion, hear the voice of warning! Satan has cunning servants about him that hunt for the precious life with double diligence. Our Lord Jesus has about Him servants who too often slumber, but the devil's servants are not slothful in their dreadful business! You will find them waylay you in the streets and press around you in the haunts of pleasure. They are everywhere and they leave no stone unturned that they may entrap the unwary. And what if this blind young man is put down in the midst of all these bloodsuckers? They will devour him if they can—what if he is left to be their victim? It is like turning out a sheep among a pack of wolves! "Lord, open the eyes of the young man, that he may see!"

We pray this prayer for some of you because *you are going away from those who have watched over you* and this is a dangerous change for you. Your mother—ah, we can never tell what a blessing a godly mother is to a young man—your mother parts from you with great anxiety. Will you ever forget her tender words? Our fathers are all very well—God bless them!—and a father's godly influence and earnest prayers are of untold value to his children. But the mothers are worth two of them, mostly, as to the moral training and religious bent of their sons and daughters! Well, I say, you are going right away from your mother's holy influence and from your father's restraining admonitions. You will now have nobody to encourage you in the right way. You will miss your sister's holy kiss and your grandmother's loving persuasions. You are going out of the hothouse into a night's frost –well may we pray concerning you, that you may carry with you well-opened eyes to see your way and look before you leap! The young man is now to walk alone—"Lord, open his eyes, that he may see!" If he does not look before he leaps, he will soon be in the ditch—and who shall pull him out?

Again, we pray this prayer with the more pleasure because *you will do so much good if your eyes are opened*. A blind man in the midst of such a world as this, what can he do? He cannot help other travelers, for he has to seek aid for himself! You wish to *give* rather than to take, do you not? Some here have great abilities and I want them to use them aright. I am persuaded that I am speaking to young people whom God has ordained to be of great service to their age. That youth yonder does not as yet know what is in him. He is playing with himself. He is making a fool of himself! He is throwing his pearls before swine—he is wasting his strength. If the Lord should open his eyes, he would see what he is doing. What a man he would make if he were but right with God!

Think of Saul of Tarsus, how he harassed the Church of Christ! But when the scales fell from his eyes, the Lord had no better servant under Heaven than that once-furious persecutor! With both hands he diligently built up the Church which once he labored to cast down. "The thing which has been is the thing which shall be." Pray, therefore, O my Brothers and Sisters, for our young men who have sinned, that they may be restored! And pray for those who are as yet ignorant, that they may be en-

lightened. The cause of God has need of these and in these the Church shall find her champions! Little know we the wealth of comfort for the faithful which may lie in one young life. Surely, we ought to pile on our prayers and make our intercession flame like some great beacon light for the rising youth of our time!

There is yet another reason, fetched from the other side of the case. We should pray for the blinded one, since *he may terribly sin if not soon made to see*. How capable of doing mischief is a man blinded by ignorance, by passion, by ambition, or by any other form of sin! Who knows the capacities for evil that lie within a single soul? That once bright spirit, Satan, when he first thought of revolting against the God of Heaven, it was, perhaps, a single momentary flash of rebellious thought. But before long he had become proudly antagonistic to his Maker and the dragon had drawn down with his tail a third part of the stars of Heaven to quench them in the eternal night of endless wickedness! Then he came to this earth and polluted Paradise—and seduced our first parents from their happy innocence so that they became the progenitors of an unhappy race, steeped up to their lips in sin.

That one first thought of sin, oh, how pregnant was it with innumerable evils! So, too, among ourselves. A boy, his mother's pride, to whom she looks forward as the honor of the family, may, for a while, appear to be everything that love can hope. But he falls into the hands of one of those tempters to unbelief who are so abundant in this great city. He is taught to pour ridicule upon his mother's piety and soon he casts off the bands of his father's God. He forgets the sanctity of God's Holy Day and forsakes the House of Prayer—and then he learns the way to the houses of strange women and to the palace of strong drink. And he plunges into one sin after another, till he is, himself, the *leader* of others down to the abyss! That boy who used to kneel at his mother's knee, say his childish prayers and then stand up and sing of Jesus and His love, was fondly regarded as one who would honor Jesus in his life. But look at him, now—he staggers home after midnight, vomiting oaths! He is foul both in soul and in body and those who love him best are saddest at the sight of him.

Dear Friends, if we would not see our children or our friends running to this excess of riot and sinking in this superfluity of sin, let us, in agony of spirit, plead with God at once on their behalf! Oh, for an immediate entrance of the Light of God into their souls! Lord, open their eyes, that they may see! Lord, cause them to start back from the beginnings of sin, which are as the breaking out of the water floods! O Savior, quench in them the spark of evil before it grows into a fire and rages to a conflagration!

III. I must now close by mentioning what OUR HOPE is about men when we pray this prayer for them, as I have been doing all along—"Lord, open the young man's eyes, that he may see!" What is our hope in reference to this? What will they see if the heavenly eye salve is applied?

Elisha, no doubt, felt that the answer to his prayer would be precisely what it really was. "The Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." We want men's eyes to be opened, *that they may*

know, first, that spiritual forces really exist. The things which we see are not the *only* real things, nor even the *most* real things. The things that are seen are temporal—they are, in truth, but shadows of the unseen! The substantial realities are not seen by these poor eyes—the substance is only perceived by our true selves. All that is visible is the mere shadow—the very image of the thing is out of sight. Faith teaches us to believe in the existence of that most glorious of all Spirits—the great God—in whom we live, move and have our being.

Faith reveals to the heart the existence of that Divine and ever-adorable Person, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is at this hour with His Church, and will abide with her to the end of the world. Faith also makes us know the existence, power and Presence of the Holy Spirit who dwells with Believers and is in them, working out the eternal purpose of God in their sanctification. No knowledge is more sublime than to know the Trinity in Unity—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—one Jehovah! When we come to realize that the Lord God is the source of all things, that the Lord has made us and not, we, ourselves—and that *all things* come into being by His sovereign will and power—then we come to recognize His Presence, to consult His will and to lean upon His might. God then becomes real in our thought and apprehension. Since He whom we cannot see, nevertheless supports all things that are, we feel that the invisible is the basis of all things!

Oh, that we could get men's minds out of these time-worn ruts of things *seen*, these narrow bounds of space and time, and seeing, and handling! Oh, that they could rise into the region where the dim faculties, which are bounded by so small a circle, would give place to perceptions which know the infinite, the eternal, the true, the Divine! Oh, that the human mind, which was made in the image of God, could find itself at home with God, whose child it may become, by a second birth, of the living and incorruptible Seed, by the Word of God, which lives and abides forever!

Verily, if our eyes are opened, *we shall begin to recognize that God is greater than this world* and all worlds! And then the mighty Truths of God which concern His way of mercy in Christ Jesus will ennoble the soul! Then shall we become true comrades of those bright messengers of God that fly to and fro, fulfilling the behests of the Most High. That there are devils, I think no Christian man will ever doubt, for at certain seasons we have been sadly conscious of a singularly terrible presence with which our souls have been in agonizing conflict. In that tearful battle, it has gone hard with us—our armor has been battered, our comfort has been grievously wounded and our courage badly mauled. We have been saved as by the skin of our teeth. We hardly knew how to hold on at all, we were so sorely beset by unnatural temptations and suggestions nothing less than infernal!

Then, at the Lord's rebuke, this great adversary has taken sudden flight and angels have come and ministered to us new joys and fruits of consolation fresh from the Tree of Life! Then have we enjoyed communion with unseen messengers of God who have seemed to bind up our wounds and bring us on our way and whisper peace. Did not an angel come to

strengthen our Lord in Gethsemane? Have we not, in our measure, enjoyed a similar visitation? It is a grand thing to see the hosts of God attending us and to know that bright convoys of these shining ones will come to salute us at the last! It is a great gain to have our eyes opened, to see the Lord's goodness and mercy following us all the days of our life and ourselves, even here, dwelling in the house of the Lord forevermore! Open your eyes to spiritual things and at once you are encouraged! The present is grievous while you know only the visible, but the wilderness blossoms as the rose when you see the invisible! Project yourself beyond this narrow region and behold the Infinite—and sources of joy spring up around you everywhere! Poverty is forgotten in the midst of such riches—and even pain and disease have lost their sting.

Elisha's young attendant, when his eyes were opened, saw, next, that *God's people are safe*. He perceived that there were more *with* Elisha, after all, than could possibly be against him, and he felt that he, himself, was safe as the servant of the servant of God. Thus he believed in his master's God and found a shelter from his own fears. The invaders were flesh and blood, but the defenders were of fire and thus were able to consume the adversaries at once. He saw, and saw it so joyfully, that God's horses of fire and chariots of fire were more than a match for all the forces of evil! I pray that the eyes of every Christian person here may be so opened that they shall never doubt that the powers on the side of Truth and righteousness and God are, after all, mightier than the hosts of evil.

It may be that you live among those who scoff at your faith and despise all that you hold dear. Indeed, it seems that wherever you turn, everybody is against you in this day of doubt! I think I hear you cry, with David, "My soul is among lions: and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword." Courage, my Comrade, God is near you! His angels are keeping watch and ward about you! We are not alone, for the Father is with us. Oh, that our eyes may be so opened as to see that more are they that are with us than all that are against us! Indeed, "if God is for us, who can be against us?" Let us be strangers to fear! In holy confidence, let us be "steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." Never allow a doubt as to the ultimate issue. Is God, Himself, your shield and your exceeding great reward? Then, what can man do to you?

Perhaps, within a month, some of you to whom I now speak, may be in so severe a fight that you will be almost driven to throw down your weapons in utter despair, saying, "How can I stand against so many?—I that am so feeble?" I beseech you, remember this warning! Have not I told you of it? I would plead with you to play the man! Gird up the loins of your mind. Be sober and hope to the end, for if the Lord has opened your eyes, you will perceive that you are on the winning side and that HE is coming soon who will smite His enemies upon the cheekbone. If you are on the side of God and of His Truth. If you do the right. If you believe in the Lord Jesus. If you commit yourself to the keeping of the hands which were pierced with the nails, Heaven and earth may pass away, but the Lord can never desert you! The skies may be rolled up like a shriveled parchment

scroll and all the things that are seen may melt away like baseless fabrics of a vision—earth and sea may vanish—but a believing soul must live, triumph and be exalted to a throne with Christ, for He has said, "Because I live, you shall live also." Hold fast your integrity! Believe the Truth of God even to the end, for the Lord Jesus will not fail, nor be discouraged, till all His foes are beneath His feet!

If your eyes are opened, you will know that *saints are honored by their Lord*. Look! He dispatches His squadrons to be a bodyguard to one of them—would not you wish for such honors? See here the secret of the peace which abides with the man of God—as he has meat to eat that men know not of—so has he company that men cannot see! He lives like a prince in the center of a camp and sleeps securely. Faith makes the difference between the tranquil Prophet and his frightened boy. Oh, that you would believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and so enter into His peace! May this be the red-letter day in which your eyes shall be opened to see spiritual things and you shall begin to live a spiritual life! For this I have prayed. For this, let us all breathe, for a moment a silent prayer. (Here followed an interval of silence and then the preacher spoke in prayer), "Lord, I pray you, open the young man's eyes, that he may see: yes, Lord, open the eyes of all the blind among us, for Jesus' sake! Amen."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—2 Kings 6.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—560, 499, 461.

MR. SPURGEON UPDATE:

Very little can be added to what was printed concerning Mr. Spurgeon's illness at the end of last week's sermon. His condition has varied greatly during the past week and it still continues very critical. On Friday, the doctors decided that, in future, they would only issue one bulletin daily, viz., the one prepared after their morning examination and consultation. As soon as this was announced, many friends concluded that there was a great improvement in the dear sufferer. There is, at the time this note goes to the printers, an abatement in certain serious symptoms, but the need for continued supplication is as urgent as it has been at any time during this long period of terrible suspense. Our comfort is that the Lord lives, and loves His dear servant, and that whatever he does with him must be right. He has but to speak the word and the sufferer shall be healed.

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

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THE LAD'S LOAVES IN THE LORD'S HANDS
NO. 2216

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 9, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Jesus took the loaves."
John 6:11.

Look, there are the people! Five thousand of them, as hungry as hunters, and they all need to have food given to them, for they cannot, any of them, travel to buy it! And here is the provision! Five thin wafers—and those of barley, more fit for horses than for men—and two little anchovies, by way of a relish! Five thousand people and five little biscuits to feed them! The disproportion is enormous—if each one should have only the tiniest crumb, there would not be enough! In like manner, there are millions of people in London and only a handful of whole-hearted Christians earnestly desiring to see the city converted to Christ. There are more than a thousand millions of men in this round world and oh, so few missionaries breaking the Bread of Life to them! Almost as few for the millions, as were these five barley cakes for those five thousand!

The problem is a very difficult one. The contrast between the supply and the demand would have struck us much more vividly if we had been there, in that crowd at Bethsaida, than it does sitting here, nearly 1,900 years later, and merely hearing about it. But the Lord Jesus was equal to the emergency! None of the people went away without sharing in His bounty—they were all filled. Our blessed Master, now that He has ascended into the heavens, has *more* rather than less power! He is not baffled because of our need, but can even *now* use paltry means to accomplish His own glorious purposes. Therefore let no man's heart fail him. Do not despair of the evangelization of London, nor think it hopeless that the Gospel should be preached in all nations for a testimony unto them. Have faith in God, who is in Christ Jesus! Have faith in the compassion of the Great Mediator—He will not desert the people in their spiritual needs any more than He failed that hungry throng in their temporal need, long ago.

We will now look at these biscuits and sardines, which seem to be truly an insufficient stock-in-trade to begin with—a very small capital, indeed, on which to conduct the business of feeding 5,000 persons. I shall say of these loaves and fishes, first, that *they had a previous history* before being mentioned in our text. Secondly, when we get to our text, we shall find these little things *in a very grand position*—"Jesus took the loaves" and, therefore, thirdly, *they will have an after-history* which is well worthy of

being noted. When things get into Christ's hands, they are in the very focus of miracles!

I. We will begin by saying that THESE LOAVES AND FISHES HAD A PREVIOUS HISTORY. Andrew said to Jesus, "There is a lad here, which has five barley loaves, and two small fishes."

Notice, first, then, *the Providence of God in bringing the lad there*. We do not know his name. We are not told anything concerning his parentage. Was he a little peddler who thought that he could make some money by selling a few loaves and fishes and had he nearly sold out? Or was he a boy that the Apostles had employed to carry this slender provision for the use of Jesus and His friends? We do not know much about him, but he was the right boy in the right place that day! Be his name what it might, it did not matter—he had the barley loaves and fishes upon which the people were to be fed! Christ never is in need but He has somebody at hand to supply that need. Have faith in the Providence of God! What made the boy bring the loaves and fishes, I do not know. Boys often do unaccountable things, but bring the loaves and fishes he did. And God, who understands the ideas and motives of lads and takes account, even, of barley loaves and fishes, had appointed that boy to be there!

Again I say, believe in the Providence of God! Mr. Stanley tells us that when he came out of that long journey of his through the forest, I think after 160 days of walking in darkness, and found himself at last where he could see the sun, he felt that there was a special Providence of God that had taken care of him. I am very glad that Mr. Stanley felt that it was the hand of God that had brought him out of the noisome shade, but I do not need to go to Africa to learn that we are beset behind and before by His goodness. Many of us have felt a special Providence of God in our own homes—we have met with His hands in connection with our own children. Yes, every day we are surrounded by tokens of His care. "Whoever is wise and will observe these things, even *they* shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord." "I am sure God took care of me," said one, "for as I was going along a certain street, I slipped on a piece of orange peel and had what might have been a serious fall—yet I was not hurt in the least." To which his friend replied, "I am sure God has taken care of me, for I have walked along that street hundreds of times and have never slipped on a piece of orange peel, or on anything else." Full often God draws near to us in common life—

"He comes to us all unaware,
And makes us own His loving care."

Let us also believe in His Providence with regard to the Church of Christ—He will never desert His people—He will find men when He needs them. Thus it has always been in the history of the saints and thus it shall always be! Before the Reformation there were many learned men who knew something of Christ's Gospel, but they said that it was a pity to make noise and so they communed with one another and with Christ very quietly. What was needed was some rough bull-headed follow who would blurt the Gospel out and upset the old state of things. Where could he be

found? There was a monk named Luther who, while he was reading his Bible, suddenly stumbled on the doctrine of Justification by Faith—he was the man! Yet when he went to a dear Brother in the Lord and told him how he felt, his friend said to him, "Go back to your cell and pray and commune with God, and hold your tongue."

But then, you see, he had a tongue that he could not hold and that nobody else could, either! And he began to speak with it, the Truth of God that had made a new man of him! The God that made Luther knew what He was doing when He made him! He put within Luther a great burning fire that could not be restrained! And it burst forth and set the nations on a blaze. Never despair about Providence! There sits, tonight, somewhere in a chimney corner in the country, a man that will turn the current of unbelief and win back the churches to the old Gospel! God did never yet come to a point of distress as to His Truth but that suddenly one came forward—a David with a sling and a stone, or a Samson with a jawbone, or a Shamgar with an ox-goad—who put to rout the adversaries of the Lord! "There is a lad here." The *Providence of God* had sent him.

Next, *this lad with his loaves was brought into notic*e. When they were searching for all the provisions in the company, this obscure boy who never would have been heard of otherwise, was brought to the front because he had his little basket of biscuits. Andrew found him and he came and said to Jesus, "There is a lad here, which has five barley loaves, and two small fishes." So, rest assured, that if you have the Bread of Life about you and you are willing to serve God, you need not be afraid that obscurity will ever prevent your doing it. "Nobody knows me," says one. Well, it is not a very desirable thing that anybody *should* know you—those of us who are known to everybody would be very glad if we were not—there is no very great comfort in it. He that can work away for his Master, with nobody to see him but his Master, is the happiest of men. "I have only 100 people to preach to," said a country pastor to me. And I replied, "If you give a good account of those 100, you have quite enough to do." If all you have is very little—just that pennyworth of loaves and fishes—use that properly and you will do your Master service! And in due time, when God wants you, He knows where to find you!

You need not put an advertisement in the paper—He knows the street you live on and the number on the door. You need not go and push yourself to the front—the Lord will bring you to the front when He wants you and I hope that you do not want to get there if He does not want you. Depend upon it, should you push forward when you are *not* required, He will put you back again! Oh, for Grace to work on unobserved, to have your one talent, your five loaves and two fishes and only to be noticed when the hour suggests the need, and the need makes a loud call for you! We have thus seen, first of all, the loaves and fishes in the desert, quite unnoticed, but put there by Providence—and we now behold them by that same Providence, thrust into prominence.

When brought into notice, the loaves and fishes did not fare very well—*they were judged insufficient for the purpose,* for Andrew said, "What are

they among so many?" The boy's candle seemed to be quite snuffed out! So small a stock—what could be the use of that? Now, I dare say, that some of you have had Satan saying to you, "What is the use of your trying to do anything?" To you, dear mother, with a family of children, he has whispered, "You cannot serve God." He knows very well that, by sustaining Grace, you *can,* and he is afraid of how well you can serve God if you bring up those dear children in His fear. He says to the religious book salesman over yonder, "You have not much ability; what can *you* do?" Ah, dear Friend, he is afraid of what you can do and if you will only do what you *can* do, God will, by-and-by, help you to do what now you *cannot* do! But the devil is afraid of even the little that you can do now and many a child of God seems to side with Satan in despising the day of small things! "What are they among so many?" So few, so poor, so devoid of talent—what can any of us hope to do? Disdained, even by the disciples, it is small wonder if we are held in contempt by the world! The things that God will honor, man must first despise! You run the gauntlet of the derision of men and afterwards you come out to be used of God.

Though seemingly inadequate to feed the multitude, these loaves and fishes would have been quite enough for the *boy's* supper, yet *he appears to have been quite willing to part with them.* The disciples would not have taken them from him by force—the Master would not have allowed it—the lad willingly gave them up to be the commencement of the great feast. Somebody might have said, "John, you know that you will soon be able to eat those five cakes and those two little fishes. Keep them—get away into a corner—every man for himself." Is it not a good rule, "Take care of number one"? Yes, but the boy whom God uses will not be selfish! Am I speaking to some young Christian to whom Satan says, "Make money, first, and serve God, by-and-by. Stick to business and get on! Then, after that, you can act like a Christian and give some money away," and so on?

Let such a one remember the barley loaves and the fishes. If that lad had really wisely studied his own interests, instead of merely yielding with a generous impulse to the demand of Christ, he would have done exactly what he did, for if he had kept the loaves, he would have eaten them and that would have been the end of it. But now that he brings them to Christ, all those thousands of people are fed and he gets as much, himself, as he would have had if he had eaten his own stock. And then, in addition, he gets a share out of the 12 baskets full of fragments that remain. Anything that you take away from self and give to Christ is well invested—it will often bring in ten thousand per cent! The Lord knows how to give such a reward to an unselfish man, that he will feel that he that saves his life loses it, but he that is willing, even, to lose his life—and the bread that sustains it—is the man who, after all, gets truly saved!

This, then, is the history of these loaves. They were sent there, through God's Providence, by a lad who was sought out and brought into notice. His stock-in-trade was despised, but he was willing to give it, whether it was despised or not. He would yield it to his Lord. Now, do you see what I am driving at? I want to get a hold of some of the lads and some young

men and young women—I will not trouble about your age, you shall be lads if you are under *seventy*! I want to get hold of you who think that you have very little ability, and say to you, "Come, and bring it to Jesus." We need you! Times are hard. The people are famishing. Though nobody seems to need you, yet make bold to come out and who knows but that, like Queen Esther, you may have come to the Kingdom of God for such a time as this? God may have brought you where you are to make use of you for the converting of thousands! But you must first be converted yourself! Christ will not use you unless you are, first, His own. You must yield yourself up to Him and be saved by His precious blood and then, after that, come and yield up to Him all the little talent that you may have, and pray Him to make as much use of you as He did of the lad with the five barley cakes.

II. But now I want to show you that THESE BARLEY CAKES GOT INTO A GRAND POSITION. The text says, "Jesus took the loaves." He took them into His own hands! From the trembling hands of the boy, or from his little basket, they were transferred to the blessed hands which one day would bear the nail-prints! This may teach us several lessons.

First, *they were now associated with Jesus Christ*. Henceforth those loaves do not so much suggest the thought of the lad's sacrifice as of the Savior's power. Is it not a wonderful thing that Christ, the living God, should associate Himself with our feebleness, with our need of talent, with our ignorance, with our little faith? And yet He does so. If we are not associated with Him, we can do nothing. But when we come into living contact with Him, we can do all things! Those barley loaves in Christ's hands become pregnant with food for all the throng! Out of His hands they are nothing but barley cakes, but in His hands, associated with Him, they are in contact with Omnipotence! Have you that love the Lord Jesus Christ thought of *this*, of bringing all that you possess to Him, that it may be associated with Him?

There is that brain of yours—it can be associated with the teachings of His Spirit. There is that heart of yours—it can be warmed with the love of God. There is that tongue of yours—it can be touched with the live coal from off the altar. There is that manhood of yours—it can be perfectly consecrated by association with Christ. Hear the tender command of the Lord, "Bring them here to Me," and your whole life will be transformed! I do not say that every man of common ability can rise to high ability by being associated with Christ through faith, but I do say this—that his ordinary ability, in association with Christ, will become sufficient for the occasion to which God, in Providence, has called Him. I know that you have been praying and saying, "I have not this, and I cannot do that." Stay not to number your deficiencies—bring what you have and let all that you are, body, soul, and spirit—be associated with Christ. Although He will not bestow upon you new faculties, the faculties you have will have new power, for they will come into a new condition towards Him and what may *not* be hoped for by association with such wisdom and might?

But, further, *they were transferred to Christ*. A moment ago, they belonged to this lad, but now they belong to Christ. "Jesus took the loaves." He has taken possession of them—they are His property. Oh, Christian people, do you mean what you say when you declare that you have given yourselves to Christ? If you have made a full transfer, therein will lie great power for usefulness. But do not people often say, "If I might make some reserve"? "What is the meaning, then, of this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" What about that odd thousand that you put in the funds the other day? What about the money saved up for a new bonnet? You sometimes sing—

"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."

Ah, well, when you have *really* yielded all, you may sing that again! But I am afraid that there are but few who can truly sing it. Oh, that we had more real putting of the loaves into Christ's hands! The time that you have not used for self, but given to Christ! The knowledge that you have not stored, as in a reservoir, but given to Christ! The ability that you have not wielded for the world, but yielded to Christ—your influence and position, your money and home, all put into Christ's hands and reckoned to be not your own, but to be His—this is the way in which London's needs will be met and the world's hunger will be satisfied! But we are staggered, at the very outset, by the lack of this complete dedication of *everything* to Christ.

What is better, still, as these loaves were given to Jesus, *so they were accepted by Jesus*. They were not only dedicated, they were also consecrated! Jesus took the five barley loaves. Jesus took the two little fishes and, in doing so, He seemed to say, "These will do for Me." As the Revised Version has it, "Jesus *therefore* took the loaves." Was there any reason why He should? Yes, because they were brought to Him! They were willingly presented to Him! There was a need for them and He could work with them—"therefore"—He took the loaves. Children of God, if Christ has ever made use of you, you have often stood and wondered why the Lord could accept you. But there was a, "therefore," in it. He saw that you were willing to win souls—He saw the souls needed winning and He used you—even you! Am I not now speaking to some who might be of great service if they yielded themselves to Christ, and Christ accepted them, and they became accepted in the Beloved? Only five barley cakes, but Jesus accepted them! Only two small fishes, brought by a little lad, but the great Christ accepted them and they became His own! Let us join one now in Heaven who on earth brought her all, and pray—

"Oh, use me, Lord, use even me!
Just as You will, and when, and where.
Until Your blessed face I see,
Your rest, Your joy, Your glory share."

But, what is better still, *these loaves and fishes were blessed by Christ* as He lifted up His eyes and gave thanks to the Father for them. Think of it! For five little cakes and two sprats, Christ gave thanks to the Father!

Apparently a meager cause for praise, but Jesus knew what He could make of them and, therefore, gave thanks for what they would presently accomplish. "God loves us," says Augustine, "for what we are becoming." Christ gave thanks for these trifles because He saw into what they would grow! Do you not think that, having thanked the Father, He also thanked the boy? And in later years these words of gratitude would be ample recompense for such a tiny deed! Like the woman who cast in the two mites to the treasury, he gave his all, and doubtless was commended for the gift.

Though high in Glory, today, Christ is still grateful when such offerings are made to Him. He still thanks His Father when, with timid trembling hands, we offer to Him our best, our all, however small! His heart is still gladdened when we bring Him our scanty store that it may be touched by His dear hands and blessed by His gracious lips! He loves us, not for what we are, but for what He will yet make us! He blesses our offerings, not for their worth, but because His power will yet make them worthy of His praise! May the Lord thus bless every talent that you have! May He bless your memory. May He bless your understanding. May He bless your voices. May He bless your hearts. May He bless your heads. May He bless you all and forevermore! When He puts a blessing into the little gift and into the little Grace that we have, good work begins and goes on to perfection.

And when the loaves had been blessed, the next thing was, *they were increased by Christ*. Peter takes one, begins to break it, and as he breaks it, he has always as much in his hands as he started with! "Here, take a bit of fish, Friend," he says. He gives a whole fish to that man—he has a whole fish left! So he gives it to another, and another, and another, and goes on scattering the bread and scattering the fish everywhere, as quickly as he can! And when he is finished, he has his hands just as full of fish and as full of bread as ever! If you serve God, you will never run dry! He who gives you something to say one Sunday will give you something to say another Sunday! These 37 years and more, I have ministered to this same Church and congregation, and every time that I have preached, I have said all that I knew. Some very learned Brothers are like the great wine vats of Heidelberg—they can hold so much wine that there is enough to swim in—but they put in a tap somewhere up at the *top*, so you never get much out. Mine is a very small barrel, indeed, but the tap is down as low as it can be—and you can get more liquid out of a small tub, if you empty it, than you can out of a big vat if you are only permitted to draw a little from the top.

This boy gave all his loaves and all his fish—not much, truly—but Christ multiplied it. Be like he—give your all! Do not think of reserving some for another occasion. If you are a preacher, do not think of what you will preach about the next time—think of what you are going to preach about *now*. It is always quite enough to get one sermon at a time —you need not have a reserve, because if you get a lot piled away somewhere, there will be a stale odor about them! Even the manna that came down from Heaven bred worms and stank—so will your best sermons, even if

the message is God-given. And if it does not come down from Heaven, but from your own brain, it will go bad still more quickly! Tell the people about Christ! Lead them to Jesus and do not trouble about what you will say next time, but wait till next time comes—and it shall be given you in the same hour what you shall speak.

But, mark once more—when Jesus took the loaves, it was not only to multiply, but also to dispose of them. *They were distributed by Christ.* He did not believe in multiplication unless it was attended by division. Christ's additions mean subtraction—and Christ's subtractions mean additions. He gives that we may give away. He multiplied as soon as ever the disciples began to distribute—and when the distribution ended, the multiplication ended. Oh, for Grace to go on distributing! If you have received the Truth from Christ, proclaim it! God will whisper it in your ear and tell it *in*—but if you stop the telling *out*, if you cease the endeavor to bless others—it may be that God will no more bless you, nor grant you, again, the communion of His face.

Putting all this together, if we all would bring our loaves and fishes to the Lord Jesus Christ, He would take them and make them wholly His own. Then, when He should have blessed them, He would multiply them and He would bid us distribute them—and we could yet meet the needs of London and the needs of the whole world even to the last man! A Christ who could feed 5,000 can feed five millions! There is no limit! When once you get a miracle, you may as well have a great one. Whenever I find the critics paring down miracles, it always seems to me to be very poor work, for if it is a miracle, it is a miracle—and if you are in for a penny, you may as well be in for a pound! If you can believe that Christ can feed fifty, then you can believe that He can feed five hundred, five thousand, five millions, five hundred millions, if so it pleases Him!

Thus have I tried to stir up God's people to believe in the Lord and consecrate themselves to Him. But some of you are saying, "He is not preaching to *me*." No, I am not preaching *to* you, but I am preaching *for* you, for if God's people begin to be awakened, they will soon look after *you*. You will have somebody asking you about your soul before you get out of the Tabernacle! And during the week, if you meet some of them, they will be troubling you, rousing up your conscience and making you feel what an awful thing it is to be an enemy to God and to live without Christ! I hope that it will be so. Oh, you that do not love my Lord, what will become of you? Paul said that you would be Anathema Maranatha—cursed at His coming! I pray you, do not rest easy while that may be your portion! You are the people that we want to feed, you are the people whom we want to bless! Oh, that God, in His mercy, would but bless you! *We* do not ask to have the honor of it. We would be willing to have it quite unknown who it was that brought you to the Savior, so long as you did but come to Him. May the Lord in mercy bring you!

III. But now, thirdly, and to conclude, THESE LOAVES AND FISHES HAD A LATER HISTORY. They got into Christ's hands. What was the result?

First, *a great deal of misery was removed by the lad's basket of barley cakes*. Those poor people were famished. They had been with Christ all day and had had nothing to eat. And had they been dispersed as they were, tired and hungry, many of them would have fainted by the way—perhaps some would even have died. Oh, what would we give if we might but alleviate the misery of this world! I remember the Earl of Shaftesbury saying, "I should like to live longer. I cannot bear to go out of the world while there is so much misery in it." And you know how that dear saint of God laid himself out to look after the poor, the helpless and the needy all his days! Perhaps I speak to some who never woke up yet to the idea that if they were to bring their little all to Christ, He could make use of it in alleviating the misery of many a wounded conscience and that awful misery which will come upon men if they die unforgiven—and stand before the judgment bar of God without a Savior.

Yes, young man, God can make you the spiritual father of many! As I look back upon my own history, little did I dream, when first I opened my mouth for Christ, in a very humble way, that I should have the honor of bringing thousands to Jesus. Blessed, blessed be His name! He has the Glory of it. But I cannot help thinking that there must be some other lad here, such a one as I was, whom He may call by His Grace to do service for Him. When I had a letter sent to me by the deacons of the church at New Park Street, to come up to London to preach, I sent it back by the next post, telling them that they had made a mistake, that I was a lad of 19 years of age, happy among a very poor and lowly people in Cambridgeshire who loved me, and that I did not imagine that they could mean that I was to preach in London! But they returned it to me and said that they knew all about it, and I must come. Ah, what a story it has been since then, of the goodness and loving kindness of the Lord!

Now, perhaps, these words come to some Brother who has never yet laid hold of the idea that God can use him. You must not think that God picks out all the very choice and particularly fine persons. It is not so in the Bible—some of those who He took were very rough people. Even the first Apostles were mostly fishermen. Paul was an educated man, but he was like a lot out of the catalog—one bow out of due time—the rest of them were not so. But God used them and it still pleases God, by the base things and things that are not, to bring to nothing the things that are! I do not want you to think highly of yourself—your cakes are only five and they are barley—and poor barley at that. And your fish are very small and there are only two of them. I do not want you to think much of them, but think much of Christ! And believe that whoever you may be, if He thought it worth His while to buy you with His blood, and is willing to make some use of you, it is surely worth your while to come and bring yourself and all that you have to Him who is thus graciously ready to accept you! Put everything into His hands and let it be said of you, tonight, "And Jesus took the loaves." It is a part of the history of the loaves that they relieved a great mass of misery.

And next, *Jesus was glorified*, for the people said, "He is a Prophet!" The miracle of the loaves carried them back to the wilderness and to the miracle of the manna. They remembered that Moses had said, "The Lord your God will raise up unto you a Prophet from the midst of you, of your Brethren, like unto me." For this Deliverer they longed and as the bread increased, so grew their wonder, until in the swelling cakes they saw the finger of God and said, "This is, of a truth, that Prophet that should come into the world." That little lad became, by his loaves and fishes, the revealer of Christ to all the multitude! And who can tell, if you give your loaves to Christ, whether thousands may not recognize Him as the Savior because of it? Christ is still known in the breaking of bread.

But the people went further with reference to Christ, after they had been fed by the loaves and fishes—they concluded that He was a Prophet and they began whispering among themselves—"Let us make Him a king." Now, in a better sense than the text implies, I would to God that you and I, though humbly and feebly, might serve Christ till people said, "Christ is a Prophet. Let us make Him a King!" This sermon I offer my Master, if He will be pleased to accept it, though it is but a barley cake. And I pray that by it some may take Jesus Christ to be their King. Oh, that He had a throne in the hearts of many whom He shall feed at this time with the Bread of Heaven! Brothers and Sisters, I know that you wish to glorify Christ! Here is the way. Bring your loaves and fishes to Christ that He may use them in His Divine commissariat—and then He shall be magnified in the eyes of all the people!

When the feast was finished, *there were fragments to be gathered*. This is a part of the history of the loaves—they were not lost. They were eaten, but they were there—people were filled with them, but yet there was more of them left than when the feast began! Each disciple had a basketful to carry back to his Master's feet. Give yourself to Christ and when you have used yourself for His Glory, you will be more able to serve Him than you are now! You shall find your little stock grow as you spend it! Remember Bunyan's picture of the man who had a roll of cloth. He unrolled it and he cut off so much for the poor. Then he unrolled it and cut off some more—and the more he cut it, the longer it grew! Upon which Bunyan remarks—

"There was a man, and some did count him mad!
The more he gave away, the more he had."

It is certainly so with talent and ability and with Divine Grace in the heart. The more you use it, the more there is of it. It is often so with gold and silver—the store of the liberal man increases, while the miser grows poor. We have an old proverb, which is as true as it is suggestive—"Drawn wells have the sweetest waters." So, if you keep continually drawing on your mind, your thoughts will get sweeter. And if you continue to draw on His strength, your strength will get to be more mighty through God! The more you do, the more you may do, by the Grace of the Ever-Blessed One!

Last of all, it came to pass that *these loaves had a record made about them*. There is many a loaf that has gone to a king's table and yet never been chronicled, but this boy's five cakes and two little fishes have got

into the Bible—and if you look, you will find the barley cakes in Matthew; you will find the barley cakes in Mark; you will find the barley cakes in Luke! And you will find the barley cakes where we have found our text, in John. To make quite sure that we should never forget how much God can do with little things, this story is told four times over—and it is the only one of Christ's miracles which has such an abundant record!

And now, as a practical issue, let us put it to the test. You young people who have lately joined the Church—do not be long before you try to do something for Christ! You that have, for a long time, been trusting Christ and have never yet begun to work, awaken yourselves to attempt some service for His sake! Aged friends and sick friends can still find something to do! Perhaps, at the last, it will be found that the persons whom we might have excused on account of illness, or weakness, or poverty, are the people who have done the most! That, at least, is my observation. I find that if there is a really good work done, it is usually done by an invalid, or by somebody who might very properly have said, "I pray you, have me excused." How is it that so many able-bodied and gifted Christians seem to be so slow in the Master's service? If there is a political meeting, something about Liberals and Conservatives, how earnest you are! You are all there, every bit of you, over your politics, which are not worth a penny a year!

But when it comes to souls being saved, many of you are mute as fish! You go all the year round without caring even for the spiritual welfare of a little child! One of our friends gave a good answer to a Brother who said to him, "I have been a member of a Church, now, for 40 years. I am a father in Israel." He asked him, "How many children have you? How many have you brought to Christ?" "Well," the man said, "I do not know that I ever brought anybody to Christ." Upon which our friend retorted, "Call yourself a father in Israel and yet you have no children?! I think you had better wait until you have *earned* the title." So do I. It would be better that we had no professors of that sort, but that all our members, even were they much fewer, should be men and women constantly bringing forth fruit unto God in the conversion of others! The Lord set you all to work with this objective!

I am almost done, but again I cannot help reminding those who are not Christ's, that while I have not directly preached to them, I have tried, by a side wind, to be preaching to them all the time! Either you are the Lord's, or you are not. If you are Christ's servant, take a sheet of paper and write down, "Lord, I bring my loaves and fishes to You." And if you are not Christ's, confess the awful truth to yourself and face it. I wish that you would make a record of it in black and white, putting down both name and date, *"I am not Christ's*." Take a good look at it! Try and grasp what it means, to withhold yourself from Him who loves you and waits to save you. Then ask yourself why you are not His. I remember a woman, not long ago, who said that at her work it came across her mind, "I am not saved." She was sweeping the room and when she finished that, she said to herself, "I have to cook dinner, but I am not saved."

She went into the kitchen and had her fire all ready, and her food—but all the while she was putting things in the pot she kept saying to herself, "I am not saved." And so it was when she was busy all the afternoon and when her husband came home, she could not help blurting it out to him, "Oh, Husband, I am not saved!" But he was—and, by God's Grace, he pointed her to Christ! They knelt together, and oh, how he prayed with her! She found that which she so earnestly sought and it was not very many days before she could say, "Oh, Husband, by His Grace I am saved!" May that be the case with you! The Lord bless every one of you, wherever you may be! We shall all meet in the Day of Judgment. May you and I meet there without fear, to sing of the Sovereign Grace of God, which saved us from the wrath to come and helped us while we were here to bring our little, and put it into Christ's hands! The Lord be with you! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 6.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—504, 497, 888.

MR. SPURGEON UPDATE:

Another week has gone and still MR. SPURGEON remains in very much the same condition as was reported last week. The "abatement in certain serious symptoms," then mentioned, has continued, and this has been a cause for devout thanksgiving. But so far as the actual malady is concerned, there has been little or no real progress towards recovery. The message to all who love MR. SPURGEON and desire his complete restoration, is, "Pray! Always pray!" Is not this also an opportunity of giving a wider circulation to the sermons, that while the preacher's voice is, for a while, necessarily silent, he may continue to speak through the printed page, to an ever-increasing congregation? This sermon, like the lad's loaves, has been given to the Lord—let the Master's disciples distribute it among the multitude.

[That message was written in 1891—I write to you in the year 2006, begging you to print this sermon and give it to as many people as you possibly can—saved or unsaved—and in so doing, glorify God! And who knows what His Holy Spirit may do with it?—EOD]

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THREE NAMES HIGH ON THE MUSTER ROLL
NO. 2217

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 16, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer you in this matter. If it is so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of your hands, O king. But if not, be it known unto you, O king, that we will not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up."
Daniel 3:16-18.

IF YOU read the second chapter of the Book of Daniel, you will think that Nebuchadnezzar was not far from the Kingdom of God. His dream had troubled him, but Daniel had explained it. Then the king made this confession to Daniel, "Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing you could reveal this secret." He acknowledged that Jehovah, the God of the Jews, was the greatest of gods, and was a great interpreter of secrets, but in a short time we find this man setting up an idol and persecuting to the death those who would not worship it. He seems, indeed, to have turned the blessing into a curse, and made the image of his dream the pattern of the idol he set up for the nation to worship, thus making that through which God had graciously revealed His power and wisdom, the very instrument of his folly and vainglory.

Man's proud heart is the same in all generations and the same thing happens even today. Have you not seen in your time men seriously impressed? They could not hold their own. They seemed stricken down by the force of the Truth of God and you felt almost sure that they would become, like Saul of Tarsus, true converts, and even Apostles of the faith. But after a while they forgot it, forgot it all, and became, at last, the most bitter and determined opponents of the Truth of God before which they seemed once to bow. Every minister who has a congregation of any considerable size must have met with such people. I remember one who, being at a Prayer Meeting where there was much wrestling power with God, was so overcome that he prayed aloud and seemed to cry with all his heart for mercy—and before he left, he said that he had found it. But the next day he declared that he would never go to such a meeting again—that he had been almost caught, but he would not trust himself in such society any more.

And I fear that he never did, for he could always speak with great severity against the people who met for prayer and were earnest in the faith.

We know, then, what to expect—that some who seem like fish almost landed, will, nevertheless, slip back into the stream—that it will happen unto them according to the true proverb, "The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." They will go out from us because they are not of us, and the last state of such men will be worse than the first.

This great king of Babylon was an absolute monarch. His will was law. No man ever dared to dispute with him. Who would differ from a gentleman who could back up his arguments with a fiery furnace, or with a threat to cut you in pieces and to make your house a dunghill? And now, when it comes to this, that he sets up a god of his own, a huge colossal statue, and gathers all the princes and potentates of his world-wide dominion together to bow down before this image, it seems a strange thing to him that there should be *anybody* found who would not do so!

And yet there were three Jews who mastered him! Once before they had broken the laws of his court and refused to eat unclean meat—and though they ate nothing but vegetables and water, "At the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat." Having stood firm for the right, before, they were the bolder to face the more terrible ordeal. The king himself had exalted them in the land and he expected them, of course, to do his bidding and set an example to others. But these three of the despised race of the Jews were unconquerable even by the master of the whole world! They stood out before Nebuchadnezzar and carried their point for God and for conscience.

As we dwell upon this deed of noble heroism, may we become sharers in the courage and faith of these men whose names stand high on the roll of worthies in the Kingdom of God! Thirteen times their names recur in this chapter, like a refrain to the song which speaks of their deed of valor.

Notice, first, *the excuses they might have made.* Secondly, *the confidence they possessed.* And thirdly, *the determination at which they had arrive*d.

I. First of all, as we think of these three brave Jews, let us consider THE EXCUSES THEY MIGHT HAVE MADE. They were accused by the Chaldeans who had so recently been saved from death by Daniel and his three friends. The surest way to be hated by some people is to place them under an obligation. "What favor have I ever done him, that he should hate me so?" said one. But in this case the wrath of man was to praise God. The incensed monarch called the offenders before him and, scarcely believing that in his realm any could have defied his authority, he put the alternative plainly before them. "Here is the golden image; you three Jews are to bow down before it. If you do not, there is the burning fiery furnace—and into that you shall be cast at once. What is your answer?"

They might have said to themselves, "*It is perfectly useless to resist.* We cannot contend against this man. If we submit, we do it unwillingly and surely, being coerced into it, we shall be but little blamed. A man cannot be expected to knock his head against a brick wall, nor throw his life away and, therefore, we will bow our heads, as the rest of the multitude have done, and worship the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up."

It is a bad excuse, but it is one that I have often heard made. "Oh," says a man, "we must live, you know; we must live." I really do not see any necessity for it. We must *die*, but whether we must live or not, depends upon a great many things, and it is infinitely better to die than to sink your manhood and to violate your conscience at a tyrant's bidding!

Again, they might have said, "*We are in a strange land*, and is it not written by one of our wise men, 'When you are in Babylon, you must do as Babylon does'? "Of course, if we were at home, in Judea, we would not *think* of such a thing. We would remember how God has said, 'You shall have no other gods before Me. 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.' If we were at home, we would obey that Law of God, but we are many hundreds of miles away from Jerusalem, and surely we may be permitted to yield in this point." Thus have I known many who say they are Christians at home, act differently when they are abroad. They have not regarded the Sabbath, neither have they even regarded the decency or the indecency of the amusements to which they have betaken themselves, because, after all, they were not at home! "We would not do this in England, but we are in Paris, you see, and the case is altered," they say. Is the case altered? Is God the God of this island and not the God of the Continent? Has He ever given us permission to do abroad what we may not do at home? It is a vile excuse, but commonly enough made.

They might also have said, "*We are officers of the land,*" and seeing they were set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, they might have found some difficulty in detaching their private religion from their public duty. They were high officials! And what an excuse this is for a great deal of roguery and trickery everywhere! A man gets elected to a parish vestry, or a council, or a board—and when he once gets to sit on that board he seems to have left his honesty at home! I say not that it is always so, but I am sorry to say that it has often been so. The official has no sooner put on his robes of office than his conscience has vanished! But these men were not so foolish as to think that because they were made rulers in Babylon, they might, therefore, sin against the Most High God! It is true that they were bound to obey the lawful orders of their sovereign, but whether it is right to obey men rather than God, their conscience could easily enough judge. So they never made that excuse.

But, then, they were prosperous men. They were getting on in the world and I believe that God sent this trial to Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego because they were prospering. They might have said, "*We must not throw away our chances.*" Among the dangers to Christian men, the greatest, perhaps, is accumulating wealth—the danger of prosperity! Wesley sometimes used to fear that Christianity was self-destructive, for when a man becomes a Christian, the blessings of this life are his, too. He begins to rise in the world. He leaves his old position behind him and, alas, too often, with increasing riches, forgets the God who gave him all! There is much truth in this idea and unless the Spirit of God abides with His peo-

ple, we might, indeed, see our faith thus commit suicide! It is a danger to be guarded against, both by liberal giving and by frequent intercession!

We often pray for Christians in adversity and it is right that we should do so, but it is even more necessary to pray for Christians in prosperity, for they run the risk of gradually becoming soft, like Hannibal's soldiers destroyed by Capuan holidays, who lost their valor in their luxury. Many a man who was an out-and-out Christian when he was lower down in life has, when prosperous, become much too great a gentleman to associate with those who were his honored Brothers and Sisters before. I have seen it scores of times and it is a shocking thing. May God grant that we may never turn His mercies into an excuse for sinning against Him! You who are rich have no more liberty to sin than if you were poor. You who rise in the world have no more right to do wrong than you had when you were down in the world and his lordship is no more honorable at a prizefight than the bullet-headed boxer! We must do right! We must never do wrong, or plead our position in society, or our prosperity in worldly things as a reason why we may do what others might not do!

Again, further, they might have excused themselves thus. The putting up of this image was not altogether a religious act. It was symbolical. The image was intended to represent the *power* of Nebuchadnezzar and bowing before it was, therefore, doing *political* homage to the great king. Might they not safely do this? They might have said, *"We are politically bound."* Oh, how often we hear this brought up! You are told to regard the difference between right and wrong everywhere, *except* when you get into politics! Then stick to your party through thick and thin! Right and wrong vanish at once. Loyalty to your leader—that is the point! Never mind where he leads you, follow him blindly! You are even told that you may do wrong because it is politically right! I hate such an argument! These men never, for a moment, entertained that evil thought! It is true that politics were mixed up with this image, but whatever might be mixed up with it, they would not worship it, for God had said, "You shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them," and these sturdy Believers would do nothing of the kind under any pretense whatever.

A very soothing salve for their conscience might have been found in the absence of any command to renounce their own religion. They might have encouraged each other to submit, by saying, *"We are not called upon to deny our God."* They need not believe the idol to be divine, nor confess the least faith in it—in their hearts they might make a mental reservation as they bowed—and they might have whispered to one another and said that it was a devil, and not God. They might have excused themselves to their own conscience by saying that they prostrated themselves to the music and not to the idol—or that they made obeisance to the king rather than to his image. In fact, if their consciences had been as elastic as some modern ones, though that was hardly possible, as the virtues of India rubber were scarcely known, then, they might have said that, in bowing down before the image, they were praying to Jehovah, since He might be worshipped anywhere and under any circumstances! They might have said that, although they looked at the image, they did not worship it. But beyond the glitter of its gold, their thoughts rose to the God of Glory. Any-

thing, in fact, will serve for an excuse, when the heart is bent on compromise and, especially in these half-hearted days, it is very easy to find a specious reason for a false action if some temporal benefit is attached to it! Modern charity manufactures a multitude of excuses with which to cover sins.

A stronger argument, however, might have been secured from the fact of the universal submission to the decree. "*Everybody else is doing it*," they might have said. That morning, when the rising sun was saluted by the strains from those varied instruments of music from Persia, Greece and Babylon—when all the music of the world seemed gathered together—everybody bowed. There were Jews there, thousands of them—and they all bowed. There were *fire* worshippers there—men who hated the worship of graven images—but they all bowed. There were men there who had gods of their own which they reverenced—but they all bowed before Nebuchadnezzar's god. "What a singular being you must be to stand out against the fashion of the time!" the tempter might have said. "Your own countrymen have bowed and you will not—better men than you, let me tell you, have bowed, but you will not!"

No, they will not, these three singularities, these strange eccentricities! It is folly to be singular except when to be singular is to be right! And to be eccentric is not commendable unless the eccentricity consists in not being concentric with any kind of evil way! In spite of all the apostate crowds, these brave men would not yield—not they! Though millions bowed, what had that to do with them? My dear Hearers, I ask you to cultivate a brave personality. In the service of God, things cannot go by the counting of heads. You must follow the Lord's will wherever it leads you, whether you go alone or not—

"Dare to be a Daniel,
Dare to stand alone."

They might have said, *"It is only for once, and not for long*. Ten minutes or so, once in a lifetime, to please the king—such a trivial act cannot make any difference. At any rate, it is not enough to brave the fiery furnace for. Let us treat the whole thing as a huge jest. It would be ridiculous to throw away our lives for such a trifle." Have you never heard such arguments in these days? This indulgent 19th Century has plenty of easy maxims of a very similar sort. In the supreme hour many fail because the trial is seemingly so small. They mean to stand for God, but this is scarcely the right time! They will wait and choose a more worthy occasion, when something really heroic can be attempted. Were they to stand for such a little thing, the world would laugh with derision at such a straining out of a gnat! So Adam eats the apple, Esau the pottage and the one temptation, unresisted, issues in life-long loss! Not even for a few minutes in a lifetime would these three brave men deny their God. May their stubborn faith be ours!

Another excuse that they might have made was, "*We can do more good by living* than we can by being cast into that furnace. It is true, if we are burned alive, we bear a rapid testimony to the faith of God, but if we live, how much more we might accomplish! You see, we three are Jews, and we are put in high office—and there are many poor Jews who are captives. We can help them. We have already done so. We have always seen justice

done to God's people, our fellow countrymen, and we feel that we are raised to our high office on purpose to do good. Now, you see, if you make us bigots and will not let us yield, you cut short our opportunities of usefulness."

Ah, my dear Brothers and Sisters, there are many that are deceived by this method of reasoning! They remain where their conscience tells them they ought not to be, because, they say, they are more useful than they would be if they went "outside the camp." This is doing evil that good may come and can never be tolerated by an enlightened conscience! If an act of sin would increase my usefulness *tenfold*, I have no right to do it! And if an act of righteousness would appear likely to destroy all my apparent usefulness, I am to do it! It is yours and mine to do the right, though the heavens fall—and follow the command of Christ whatever the consequences may be. "That is strong meat," do you say? Be strong men, then, and feed on it.

But they might also have said, "*Really, this is more than can be expected of us*. If we had been asked to contribute our tithe to the support of the religion of Jehovah, we would cheerfully do so, but to yield our *lives* in this horrible way, to be cast into a burning fiery furnace is more than flesh and blood can bear!" Yes, and some of us could not answer that argument, for, perhaps, it is pressing upon ourselves. Remember what Jesus said to the multitudes who went with Him, "If any man come to Me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brothers and sisters, *yes, and his own life, also*, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me, cannot be My disciple." We must stand to a full surrender and say, "Let it cost what it may, I make no exception. I take all risks. I will follow Christ, the Lamb, wherever He goes, even should I die while I am following Him!" He that does not come to that has not taken the position which Christ demands of us—and which His Holy Spirit must work in us before we are fully converted to the faith. "Strong language again," says one. God make you strong enough to apply it to yourself!

Thus I have set before you the excuses that these three Jews, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, might have made.

II. In the second place, let us assure our own hearts by admiring THE CONFIDENCE WHICH THEY POSSESSED. They expressed it very emphatically and clearly. They had a very definite, solid, foursquare faith.

First, they said, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer you in this matter." The word, "careful," there, does not give you the meaning. Read it, "We are not full of care as to how to answer you." They did answer very carefully, but *they were not anxious about the answer*. It was not a thing that troubled them in the least. They knew what they were going to say. They did not deliberate. They did not hesitate. They said, "Nebuchadnezzar, we can answer you at once on that point." They were so calm, so self-collected, that they could talk to him, not as a king, but as Nebuchadnezzar. When it came to life-work, it was man to man, and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego to Nebuchadnezzar—and they told him that they had no difficulty in answering him.

In the second place, *they did not judge it theirs to answer at all*. I find that it may be read, as in the Revised Version, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter," meaning, "We will not answer you. It is not for us to answer you. You have brought another Person into the quarrel." Let me read the words that precede my text. Nebuchadnezzar said to them, "Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" In effect, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego replied, "It is not for us to answer you. There is Another that will do that. You have challenged God and God shall make His own reply." It was bravely spoken. They threw the onus of this matter upon God, Himself! So may you. If you will do right, it is God's affair to see you through. You have nothing to do with the consequences, except patiently to bear them—the consequences must be with God. Only you do right. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and obey Him and keep the command of the Most High, and then whatever comes of it, it is no fault of yours. That must be left with God.

Then notice what they say. "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace." *They avowed their faith in the Omnipotent God*, knowing that if He chose, no mighty man of Babylon could ever throw them into that furnace. The furnace itself must die down and become cool as ice if God so wills it. They tell the tyrant to his face, enveloped as he was in the flame of his wrath, that God can save them out of the fire. Their God was almighty and they put their trust in Him.

What is more, they add, "And He will deliver us out of your hands, O king." Whether they burned in the fire or not, *they were sure they would be delivered*. "If we die, we shall be out of your reach, but we may not die. We may live beyond your reach! You have asked the question, 'Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?' and we answer you, 'Our God will deliver us out of your hands, O king.'"

Now, Beloved Friends, if any of you are in great difficulty and trouble, tempted to do wrong, no, *pressed* to do it, and if you do what is right, it looks as if you will be great losers and great sufferers—believe this—God can deliver you! He can prevent your having to suffer what you suppose you may and if He does not prevent that, He can help you to bear it and, in a short time, He can turn all your losses into gains, all your sufferings into happiness! He can make the worst thing that can happen to you to be the very best thing that ever happened to you! If you are serving God, you are serving an Omnipotent Being, and that Omnipotent Being will not leave you in the time of difficulty, but He will come to your rescue! Many of us can say with Paul, "We trust not in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead: who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver: in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us."

The Lord has helped us in the past, He is helping us in the present and we believe that He will help us all the way through. He will help you, too, if you just follow His Word and, by a simple faith, do the right thing. I believe that we have reason to expect interpositions of Providence to help us when we are called to suffer for Christ's sake.

III. But here is the point that I want to make most prominent—the third one—THE DETERMINATION AT WHICH THEY ARRIVED. "If not," if God does not deliver us at all, "be it known unto you, O king, that we will

not serve your gods, nor worship the golden image which you have set up." Grand language! Noble resolve! "If not, if we have to go into the fire, into the fire we will go, but we will never bow the knee to an idol." So these gracious Jews were enabled to say!

They did not base their loyalty to God upon their deliverance. They did not say, as some do, "I will serve God if it pays me to do so. I will serve God if He helps me at such and such a time." No, they would serve Him for nothing! Theirs was not cupboard love. "If not, if He does not deliver us, if it is His will that we should be burned alive, we surrender ourselves to His will, but we will not break His Divine command, or make idolaters of ourselves by bowing before an image which has no life in it, which could not even set itself up, but which Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up."

They resolved that they would obey God at all costs. Now, I knew a young man, once, to whom a certain ordinance of Christ was made known as being Scriptural, but as far as he could see, if he followed that ordinance, every door would be shut against him. If he was bold to do as he thought he ought to do, according to his Master's command and example, it would be the ruin of everything! Well, he did it, and it was *not* the ruin of *anything*—and if he had to do such a thing again a hundred times over, he thanks God that he would do it. There is such sweetness in having to make some sacrifice for God. There is such a heavenly recompense, that one almost envies the martyrs! Rather than pity their sufferings, one feels an intense longing that such honor had been ours and that we had had the moral courage and holy stamina to suffer for God even as they suffered. Who among the bright ones are the brightest in the land of light? They that wear the ruby crown of martyrdom most certainly lead the van, for they suffered, even to the death, for their Lord. O Friends, it is a glorious thing when we make no calculation of costs, but with our whole heart and soul follow the Lamb wherever He leads us!

Let us walk in this heroic path. But some will say, "It is too hard. You cannot expect men to love God well enough to die for Him." No, but there was One who loved us well enough to die for *us*, and to die a thousand deaths in one, that He might save us. If Christ so loved us, we ought so to love Him. "Well," says one, "I think it is impossible. I could not bear pain." It is possible, for many have endured it! I remember that one of the martyrs who was to be burned on the following morning, thought that he would test himself—and there being a large stove in the cell, he put his foot into it to see whether he could bear to have it burnt—and soon shrank back. Therein he was foolish, for when he went out the next morning to stand on the firewood and burn, he stood like a man and burnt bravely to the death for his Master! The fact was, his Lord did not call him to burn his foot in the stove, and so He did not help him to bear it. But when He called him to give his whole body to the flames, then Divine Grace was given.

There is a story of a martyred woman who had a child born to her a few days before she was burnt and, being in great pain, she cried aloud. One said to her, "If you cannot bear *this*, what will you do when you come to burn?" She said, "Now you see the pains of nature which befall a woman

and I have not patience enough to bear them. But by-and-by you shall see Christ in His members suffering and you shall see what patience He will have, and what patience He will give to me." It is recorded of her that she seemed as if she had no pain at all when she yielded herself up to Christ. Do not judge, by what you are, today, what you would do if you were called into trouble! Divine Grace would be given to you. I have no doubt that many of the most timid of those who truly love the Lord would be the very bravest—while some who think they would be brave would be the very first to start back. You may never be called to such a trial as that, but still, if you cannot bear the small trials, how would you bear the great ones?

"I cannot bear to be laughed at," says one. But though there is something cruel about mocking, it does not break anybody's bones. And being laughed at—well, really, I have sometimes thought, when I have seen a good joke cracked over my poor head, that there is so much misery in the world that if I might be the cause of making a little more mirth, I should be glad. And even if it is told against me, if it made somebody feel a little merrier, it was not a matter for great sorrow. And then you go into the workshop and they point at you and say, "There comes a canting Methodist!" Remember, that is the way in which the world pays homage to Christianity! If there is anything genuine in the Christian religion, the world pays its respect by laughing at it and caricaturing it. Accept their compliments, not as they intend them, but as you choose to read them, and you will not be grieved.

You, Shadrach, not afraid of a burning fiery furnace, are surely not going to be frightened by the laughter of a silly boy or girl in the workshop! Alas, this unworthy fear enters into all relationships! I have known men afraid of their wives! I have known fewer wives, however, afraid of their husbands, for they are generally bold for Christ and can suffer for His name's sake. I have known children afraid of their parents and some poor parents, six feet high, afraid of their children! Oh, what poor worms it makes of us when we begin to be afraid of our fellow creatures! Do right and fear nothing—and God will help you.

To enable us to get the spirit of these three holy men, we must get, first, *a clear sense of the Divine Presence*. If a man feels that God is watching him, he will not bow his knee to an idol. Neither will he do evil, for God's eye is upon him. He will endure, "as seeing Him who is invisible." And though the floods of ungodly men lift themselves up, he will remember the Lord who sits upon the floodwaters and is higher than they. The man who realizes God's Presence is, by that invisible Companionship, rendered invincible! Greater is He that is for him, than all that can be against him—

"For right is right, since God is God,
And right the day must win.
To doubt would be disloyalty,
To falter would be sin."

We must, next, have *a deep sense of the Divine Law*. I have already reminded you of the Law of God, "You shall have no other gods before Me. 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." No Virgin Mary, no cross, no crucifix, no picture, no image, no visible object is to be regarded with reverence or worshipped instead of God. All this must be put away! That is clear enough and, therefore, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, feeling that God was near and knowing what God's Law was, dared not violate that Law of God, but would sooner die.

Above all, to keep us right, we must have *a mighty sense of the Divine love*. We shall never obey God till, by His Grace, we have new hearts and those hearts are full of love to Him through Jesus Christ. Then, if you love Him, you will say, "What? Put an image of gold in His place? Never! Join the multitude in worshipping a colossal statue instead of the invisible Jehovah? Never!" With holy indignation you will choose the furnace of fire rather than have that purer flame which glows in your heart quenched, or made to burn dimly.

To some of you this must seem very trifling because, you say, "I do not care about religious forms and ceremonies. Let me enjoy myself while I am here—that is all I ask." Well, you have made your bargain and a sorry one it is! If this life is all, how ought a man to live? I am sure I cannot tell you. Perhaps the wisest thing of all is, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." But there is another world and a life beyond! And it is sometimes incomparably wise to fling this life away that we may win the life eternal! Our Lord often reminded His hearers of this great Truth, "He that loves his life shall lose it; and he that hates his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."

"But what did these three men do?" asks one. "They simply did not bow their heads and they were cast into the fiery furnace. What did they do?" *They influenced their age, their people and all time*. These three men influenced the city of Babylon and the whole Babylonian empire! They certainly influenced King Nebuchadnezzar. They influenced the next age and, to this hour, the influence of their brave stand for God in His eternal Unity and for the non-worship of any visible thing has held the Hebrew race firmly to this one point! It was principally through these three men that the whole Jewish people were taught their deep hatred of everything like idol-worship. And they were, by such men as these, and some who followed after, weaned from their tendency to wander after idols—and tethered fast to the worship of Jehovah, the one living and true God. Would God that the Jews as a nation went further and knew our Lord Jesus Christ!

Still, it is something that they are yet alive upon the earth bearing witness that there is but one God, Creator of Heaven and earth, who only is to be worshipped. More than that, the influence of these three men lives in this audience and will live in thousands of audiences in days to come. Does it not make your pulse race? Does it not make your heart leap within you? Have you not said to yourselves, "This is a noble example"? Oh, that we may rise to it! In an age like ours, when everything is *sold*, when you can *buy* anybody, when the flute, harp, sackbut, dulcimer and all kinds of music carry everything before them, when a mask and a visor will infatuate even a saint—it is time that there were some men of the

stern old mold of these three Jews who could not and would not, yield—whatever might happen. The pillars of the earth might be dissolved, but these men would still stand upright and bear the whole world upon their shoulders by the grand power of God that made them strong.

These three men command the admiration of Heaven and earth. A fool would have pointed at them and said, "There go three fools—gentlemen high in office, with large incomes and wives and families. They have only to take their cap off and they may live in their wealth! But if they do not, they are to be burnt alive and they will not do it! They will be burnt alive. They are fools!" Yes, but the Son of God did not think so. When He, in Heaven, heard them speak thus to King Nebuchadnezzar, He said, "Brave, brave men! I will leave the Throne of God in Heaven to go and stand by their side." And invisibly He descended, till where the fires were glowing like one vast ruby, where the fierce flame had slain the men that threw the three confessors into the burning fiery furnace, HE came and stood! And there they walked! It was the greatest walk that they had ever had! On those burning coals the four of them were walking together in sweet fellowship! They had won the admiration and the sympathy of the Son of God who left Heaven, itself, that He might come and stand side by side with them!

It was, therefore, comparatively a little thing that they won the admiration of Nebuchadnezzar. That proud imperial tyrant cried to those about him, "Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" They answered, "True, O King." And he, with his visage white with ghostly fear, said, "Lo, I see *four* men *loose*, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." He himself could not but stand there and, awestruck, admire these three heroes! And today you do the same. These three men still live! From the glowing coals their voices call aloud to us, "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might."

To close—if we would be servants of God, we must be Believers in His Son, Jesus Christ. Come and trust Jesus Christ and you are saved! When you are truly saved, you are to be saved from all hesitation about obedience to God—so saved, that from now on God's Law is your rule. Then, with that holy Law imperative upon you, you will go forth into the world and say, "It is not mine to ask what others will do. It is not mine to shape my course by them, not mine to enquire what will bring me most profit, what will bring me most honor. It is mine to look up to You, my God, and ask, 'What would You have Me to do? By Your Grace, I will do it at all costs.'"

I wonder how many young men to whom these words are addressed have pluck enough in them to come out on Christ's side? I believe that many young men do not want an easy life. They would rather have a hard time and a stern battle. We still have brave spirits among us who like to lead the forlorn hope and are not afraid. I challenge such to come and serve my Master fully and thoroughly! They shall have a rough time of it, but they shall have glory, honor and immortality as their reward. Make a whole burnt offering of yourself, my Brothers and Sisters—body, soul and spirit—for Christ! These three young men "yielded their bodies," as we

read in the 28th verse. "I beseech you, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Let the faith of your spirit carry your whole body with it in hearty obedience to God's command, and let this be true of you—

"In full and glad surrender,
I give myself to You.
Yours utterly and only
And evermore to be.
O Son of God You love me,
I will be Yours alone!
And all I have, and am, Lord,
Shall henceforth be Your own."

But I fear that I speak in vain to many who will turn away and say, "This *world* is for me." Well, if you make a choice of this world and of ease and pleasure for yourself, then you have chosen Egypt's treasures and you have disdained the reproach of Christ—and you shall find, one day, how dreadful a folly you have committed! God grant that you may find it out soon and not in the world to come! God bless you and save you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Daniel 3.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—486, 670, 671.

MR. SPURGEON UPDATE:

Very little can be added to former notes concerning MR. SPURGEON except this—He firmly believes that our gracious God has spared his life in answer to the "effectual fervent" prayers of the Church of Christ all over the world. And it is his confident conviction that the Lord will, in due time, raise him up and fully qualify him for future service. He cannot yet be considered out of danger—therefore continued supplication for his complete restoration is earnestly entreated, with hearty thanksgiving for the answers to prayer already received. MR. SPURGEON is very desirous that friends everywhere should know that he is full of gratitude for their prevailing prayers and loving sympathy, and that from his sickroom he presents heartfelt petitions that rich blessings may be bestowed upon all of you.

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

"IS THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD STRAITENED?"
NO. 2218

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 23, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 26, 1891.

"O you that are named the house of Jacob, is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?" Micah 2:7.

THERE may be some who think they can convert the world by philosophy; that they can renew the heart by eloquence; or that, by some witchcraft of ceremonies, they can regenerate the soul. But we depend wholly and simply and *only* on the Spirit of God! He, alone, works all our works in us and, in going forth to our holy service, we take with us no strength and we rely upon no power except that of the Spirit of the Most High. When Asher's foot was dipped in oil, no wonder he left a footprint wherever he went! But if his foot had not first been anointed, there would have been small trace of him and, unless we have the unction of the Holy One, and are endued with power from on high, in vain shall we seek to preach good tidings to the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, or to proclaim the opening of the prison to them that are bound!

We need the Holy Spirit to prepare us for our work. He first gives the desire to go forth to the field of service and only He can equip us for the fight. "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord." Let us seek, then, to be charged with the Holy Spirit—to receive to the fullest the Divine influence—and go to our labor thus amply prepared. There is no preparation for the work of God like being with God! Go up into the solitude with Christ and then, when He calls you, you will be fit to go forth for Him and tell what you have seen with Him in the Holy Mount.

When we get at the work, our need remains. We long to see the people saved, but in order to that, they must be born again and this we cannot, ourselves, accomplish. Change a stone into flesh? Try that at home with a piece of stone on your table before you attempt it with the hard hearts of men! Create a soul between the ribs of death? Try that in a morgue before you pretend to create within a sinner, dead in sin, the spiritual life! Of regeneration we may say, "This is the finger of God." If our religion is not supernatural, it is a delusion! If the Holy Spirit is not with you, you are like Jannes and Jambres, attempting to work a miracle without Jehovah's aid—and you will be baffled and detected for an impostor. You will fail, like the seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, who tried to cast out devils. The devils do not know you—they know Jesus and they know the Holy Spirit—

but at your idle efforts they mockingly laugh! Only those people who never do any spiritual work talk about what they can accomplish. When you get into the sacred service, you find how great your weakness is! You feel out of your depth when you come to deal with souls and you must have the Holy Spirit or fail!

We must not conclude that because so many good people give their time to God's work, that necessarily the work is done. No, there is nothing done unless the Holy Spirit does it. We never personally go a step towards Heaven and we never lead another one inch in the way apart from the Holy Spirit! We must have the Holy Spirit and if we have Him not, all our machinery will stand still, or if it goes on, it will produce no effect whatever. I heard of a Christian man whose mill wheel was noticed to be in motion on a certain Sunday. The people going to worship greatly wondered about it, but one who went by set their minds at rest by pointing out that the wheel was only turning idly round because the water, by accident, was allowed to flow over it. And the man said, "It is very much like our minister and his sermons. There is no work being done, but the wheel goes round—clickety click, clickety click—though it is not grinding anything." It also greatly resembles many an organization for spiritual service—the water is passing over it, glittering as it flows—but the outside motion does not join on to any human need, nor produce any practical result—and nothing comes of the click and hum—

"Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,
With all Your quickening powers,"

or else all our service for the Lord is in vain.

I. The text asks this question, "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?" As we try and dwell upon it a little while, we remark, first, that THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS NOT STRAITENED BY THE COMMANDS OF MEN, for in a previous verse we find that the people said to their Prophets, "Prophesy you not." When men spoke in the name of God, these people had grown so besotted, through their evil doings, that they bade them hold their tongues! They did not want to hear any more about God. They had given Him up and they wished to have no more to do with Him! What was said by the Prophets was unpleasant. It provoked unhappy memories. It made them think of things that they would rather forget. So they said to the Prophets, "Prophesy you not."

And here comes the question of the text. These men speak under the impulse of the Spirit of God. What do you think? Is the Spirit of the Lord to be straitened, shut up, put down, silenced by the commands of men? *They* thought so! They thought that they had only to say to these men of God, "Be quiet. If you speak again, we will put you in prison, or we will banish you, or we will cut off your heads." By those means they thought to stifle the voice of the Spirit of God and make Him dumb in their midst! The question comes, "Have you done it? Can you do it? Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?"

Beloved Friends, this can never be! The Spirit of God is not straitened, for *any man in whom He dwells must speak*. They may tell Him to be quiet and He may even, for a season, consent to be so. But one of old said, "His

Word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing"—and he was obliged to speak out. If a man has made a message of his own, or if he has borrowed it from another, he may or may not speak it. But if God has given it to him to speak, speak it he must, and nothing can silence him! Throughout long ages men have felt moved of God to speak and they have had to speak in peril of their lives, but they have spoken all the same. When the light of the Reformation first came to England, those who received the Gospel were mostly very feeble folk. They felt the force of the movement and thought that it must have come from God, but they were not sure of their standing ground and the major part of them recanted when they were brought in presence of the fire, or even laid in prison.

Some of the best of them, during the early days of Henry the Eighth, having but a slight hold of the Truth of God, drew back, and the enemy thought that they would all be of this kind. And so he hunted and persecuted them. But, after a very little time, the very men who had been cowards when first they learned the Truth, were pricked in their conscience and they came forward, saying that they found it to be more unbearable to live after having recanted than they could find it to die—and in the power of God they stood up boldly to declare Christ! There was little Bilney, of whom Latimer speaks so lovingly—a man grandly taught in many things, but at first a trembler. He thought that he might be mistaken and so he drew back. But afterwards he gave himself up to die. And when opportunities were given to him to escape, he would not embrace them. He felt that he must die for his Master!

And there was Frith, who, when they brought him through Croydon and he was desired by the Archbishop of Canterbury (I mean Cranmer, who was in an almost similar spiritual state, himself, but then, by force of his position compelled to be a persecutor) to escape into the woods—the north wood or Norwood and elsewhere—made the notable reply, "The moment that you let me alone, I will go up to Lambeth myself. I am to die for Christ and if you make me fly away for a time, I will be back again, for I must acknowledge my Master." The persecutors began to be surprised at this, but the reason was that the men grew surer of the Truth of God and, as they grew surer of it, they grew bolder to confess it—and confess it they *must* when once they felt the power of it in their souls! God will not leave Himself without a witness, be you sure of this, and if there should come a time of trembling, when even the brave hearts seem staggered and begin to fail, there will again come a time of confidence when men will step out and say, "I was a coward once, but now, in the name of the Most High, I will avow His cause and stand up for the faith once for all delivered to the saints." The Spirit of the Lord is not straitened by the commands of men. He will make His servants speak!

Know, again, that if some of these servants are put to death, or silenced, the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened, for *He will raise up others.* He is never at a loss. They burned Huss, whose name was Goose, but he said that God would raise up a swan, a bigger bird than he! And that was Luther's motto, his coat-of-arms—and they could never roast the swan,

though they would have liked to have done so. Luther lived on, for God wanted such a witness as he and as long as God needed him, the hate of his enemies was vain! Thus it has been in all ages. Where did God find many of His first witnesses in the Reformation? In the places where you would have thought it least likely that there should have been any to bear testimony for Him—in the monasteries! He laid His hand on priests, monks and nuns—and He said to these, "Go and preach the Gospel of Christ" and they did it, and did it faithfully, even to the death. They fell before their persecutors, the Romanists, like mowed grass in the month of June—one swathe of martyrs, and then another, and then another—but though their enemies reaped on, they never reaped that field clean, for by the time they had got to one end, it was all green grass, up to their ankles again, at the other end!

God made men who could bear witness to His Word to grow faster than they could kill them! And so He will while the world stands. The Spirit of the Lord is not straitened. If the whole Church of God were to apostatize—and I should not be surprised if almost the entire visible Church were to do so, seeing that it has, to a great extent, done so already—it would make no difference whatever to the eternal purposes of God. Outside the professing church He would soon find His own people and soon build up for Himself a truer and better Church that would not be as the past, but would hold fast by the Gospel of the Grace of God with the energy and simplicity of faith. Therefore, fear not, but answer this question with confidence and say, "The Spirit of the Lord is not straitened."

But if those who believe in God's name should die and if no more were raised up, the Spirit of our Lord would not, even *then*, be straitened—*He could find other ways of reaching men's minds.* He could still speak by the Bible. Give us an open Bible and we shall never be in the dark. And He can speak by many a holy book that in the present evil age is despised. There are many good books, like the saints of old, wandering about in sheepskins and goatskins—old Puritans, "destitute, afflicted, tormented," that will yet bear witness for Christ! Just remember how Guthrie's, "Saving Testimony," long forgotten in Scotland, was found by a shepherd lad, taken to a minister and read—and how there broke out, from the reading of that old book that had well-near gone out of date and notice—a blessed revival of evangelical religion!

And if all books were gone, the Spirit of God could act directly upon the hearts of men. He is not straitened! He can still call some Saul of Tarsus without a Bible and without a minister. And if the enemies of the Lord were so to conquer that the very name of *Christian* should be forgotten—still the Spirit of God could begin again and, out of nothing, "create a new Heaven and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness." Despair? What have we who know the might of God to do with despair? What have we to do, even, with doubt or fear? The Lord lives and His eternal Spirit will work His Divine purposes without fail.

II. Our second remark is equally emphatic. THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS NOT STRAITENED BY ANY CONCEIVABLE CAUSE—if not by the commands of men, certainly not by any other cause.

The Spirit of the Lord is not straitened *by any change in Himself*. The Holy Spirit, as very God of very God, might truly say of Himself, "I am the Lord, I change not." He is today what He was at Pentecost, what He always was from that beginning which had no beginning. He is Divine, Omnipresent, Omniscient, Omnipotent, All-Wise, Infinite. He does as He wills. Therefore He is not straitened. He is not straitened *by the spirit of the age*, whatever that may be. I have heard a good deal about it and I believe that "the spirit of the age" is Satan. That is short and not very sweet—but that is the only spirit of the age that I know of. Ages have followed ages, but there has never been but one "Prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience." He has appeared in different forms—the spirit of ignorance, the spirit of intolerance, the spirit of superstition, the spirit of envy, the spirit of infidelity, the spirit of speculation. All these work one and the same spirit, dividing unto his disciples severally as he wills. And though the spirit of evil is mighty, he must fly before the Spirit of God, who is infinitely more powerful and who is not to be hindered, hampered or straitened by the spirit of the age!

Certainly the Spirit of God is not to be straitened *by the discoveries of science*. Last night, I think, they found out something very new. They will probably be finding out something new tonight. With reference to my faith in Christ, it does not make the slightest difference what is discovered, nor should any true revelation of science unsettle any preacher of the Gospel. The more that is known of God's works, the better! The more they are understood and rightly explained, the better! Let the Father's Words be magnified. But the Gospel that God's servants were bound to preach when our forefathers were in the utmost ignorance, is the same Gospel that we are bound to preach now, amid the dazzling electric light. If we had gone into the catacombs of Rome, illuminated by a few flickering lamps, we should have had nothing to preach down there but Jesus Christ and Him crucified!

And when we come together, now, in this enlightened 19th Century, we have still no other subject but Christ crucified, "the old, old story of Jesus and His love." Modern discoveries need not make us tremble, for that the Spirit of God is not straitened by science is proved by the fact that the most scientific men have been subdued by His power. He is as able to convert the learned as the unlearned. He has often done it and we have had those who have seemed to know all about the earth and the heavens, too, who yet were little children at the feet of Christ. Where the Spirit of God comes, He is not straitened in that way.

Neither is He straitened *by the worldliness of the great masses in the midst of whom we live*. As we look round about on the people, we are almost broken-hearted about them and seem to think the world was never so hard as it is now—and that men were never so indifferent, never so wrapped up with worldly gain as they are now. Oh, yes they were! It is only another phase of the same evil. "The whole world lies in wickedness," just where it has always lain. There is the same sin, the same hardness of heart, the same blindness, the same callousness—and the Word of God is as much able to work here in London as in old pagan Rome! It is as able

to subdue our cities in England as it was to subdue Athens and Corinth and the other cities where Paul preached it. Let us have confidence that nothing about the people today—their poverty, their love of drink, their search after pleasure, their indifference, or anything else—has at all affected the power of the Holy Spirit over the minds of men!

And the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened, *even, by the skill of His enemies*. Certainly they are now skillful beyond anything we have ever read of! We have those who pretend to preach the Gospel but, all the while, they are trying to stab it. They appear to give it a kiss, but they smite it under the fifth rib. Many, nowadays, claim to be evangelical, when they know that the very essence of the evangelical system is abhorrent to them. But the Holy Spirit is not straitened today, any more than when He met the sophistries of the Greek philosophers and overthrew them all! The simple Truth of God will win its way. The fog may darken and become so thick that a man cannot see his hand, but the Holy Spirit knows the road and He can see through the darkest midnight that the Church of God will ever have to endure! And He will bring out the righteousness and Truth of the Gospel as the light—and the glory thereof as a lamp that burns. He is not straitened by the skill of His enemies.

I do not know how to express all that I feel about this, but this I do know—that I cannot imagine anything that can really diminish the power of the Holy Spirit. If He is Divine, He is Omnipotent and, if Omnipotent, nothing can lay hands on Him to bind Him as the Philistines bound Samson. He would burst their bands asunder! He is the free Spirit of God and no power can hold Him—

"When He makes bare His arm,
What shall His work withstand?"

III. But now I come to a very practical part of my subject, which is this—THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD MUST NOT BE TREATED BY US AS THOUGH HE WERE STRAITENED. How can we do this? In many ways. I mention nine.

If we act towards Him *as if His holy Word would not, now, convert and sanctify, comfort and conquer*, as it used to do, we are, in this, in a horrible position of practical unbelief! His holy Book, in days gone by, did great wonders. It was like Goliath's sword, of which David said, "There is none like that; give it to me." It was double-edged and even he that played with it might wound himself to spiritual death. Many have wrested the Word to their own destruction. "But surely the Word has not, now, the same power?" Try it! Give the Bible to the wicked, to the careless and the thoughtless. Read it to them. Induce them to read it and see if it does not still convert! When you are in great trouble, turn to the Book and pray the Holy Spirit to bless it, and see if it does not comfort you! In your darkest hour you shall find light in it! When you are ready to give up in despair, you shall be strengthened and return to your labor with hope, if you do but search it and believe its message. It is full of consolation.

Never think that the Spirit cannot bless the Word to you, as He used to do. He is not straitened. When you hear and do not profit, it is your hearing that is wrong, not His power that has failed. When you read the Bible

and have not that enjoyment you once had, be sure that it is your own fault. The meat is as rich—you have lost your appetite. The Spirit of God is not straitened! There is as much Inspiration in this Book as when it was first penned. It is still Inspired and he that reads it aright still feels its inspiring influence, as God comes into his heart through His own Word. The Spirit of God in the Book and through the Book, is not straitened. Let us keep to it. Let us preach it more and more. Let us take care that our sermons are made out of the Bible, not out of our own heads! Then, speaking God's Word, we shall see that the Spirit of God is not straitened.

We behave as if the Spirit of God were straitened, in the next place, *if we conceive the present state of things to be hopeless*. If you are ready to fold your arms and say that nothing can be done, is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? The church to which you belong may be cold and dead and the ministry powerless, but is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Your own works seem to have no good results following from them and though you plod on, the service has become almost a monotony to you. But is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Perhaps I address some man, so far ungodly that he has no hope of salvation, yet still is anxious to be saved. Perhaps he says, "How can I ever become a Christian? How can I have a new heart and a right spirit?" Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Cannot He give you the tenderness you desire? Cannot He give you the desire that seems to be lacking? Cannot He give you faith in Christ at this very moment? Cannot He breathe into you, *right now*, that breath of spiritual life that shall make you a living soul, looking up to the Cross and finding life in the Crucified?

I pray, dear Friend, if you are under a horrible sense of sin—if you think yourself the worst wretch that ever poisoned the air and if you feel unfit to live as well as unfit to die—yet believe that the Holy Spirit can renew you and can turn the sinner into a saint and make you to glorify God even now, this instant! If not, you limit the power of the Holy Spirit and I come to you with this question, "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?" The case is desperate if it were not for the Divine hand. It is beyond all hope if there were no God. There is no balm in Gilead—there is no physician *there*—if there had been, the health of the daughter of my people would long ago have been recovered. Where, then, is the balm? Look upward for it! Where is the physician? Look upward for Him! There is the Christ of God, "mighty to save," and there is the living Father Himself, and there is the almighty Spirit! Oh, that you would no longer be filled with suspicions as to the power of God! With God all things are possible. "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Is the Lord's arm waxed short? Trust that He can do all things and do all things for you whether you are a saint or a sinner! I shall have to come again to you with the question, "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?"

Do you not think, again, that we very much act as if the Spirit of the Lord were straitened *when we only look for little blessings*? I am very glad to see 300 to 400 persons in a year converted and added to this Church and this has long been the case. But if I ever imbibed the idea that this were *all* that might be done, I would be straitening the Spirit of God! If you

have had a number of conversions in the Sunday school—and I thank God that you have and you have never been without them—yet if you conceive that you have reached the maximum of success, I must come to you with this question, "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?" Dear Friends, there is no reason that I know of why the sermon that brings one sinner into the Light of God, should not bring a thousand into the Light, supposing a thousand sinners to be hearing it! The same power which saves one is precisely that power that would save a thousand—

"The very Law which molds a tear,
And bids it trickle from its source—
That power preserves the earth a sphere
And guides the planets in their course."

The same Law, the same Power operates to little and to gigantic ends. Oh, for a mighty belief in that God who "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us"—and that Power is the Holy Spirit who cannot be straitened!

Why, then, should we not come up to the House of God with the prayer, "O Lord, work mighty marvels"? Is He not the God that does great wonders? Should we not expect Him to do large things? I know some will say, "Well, if I were to see a great many converted, I would be afraid that they would, many of them, go back." But my experience tells me that there is no reason to believe that when many are converted there are more mistaken persons in the number, in proportion, than when few are converted. In fact, I think that I have noticed that the more that are received into the Church, the better is the quality. And the reason is this—that, when few are coming, there is a strong temptation to accept them with less discretion. But, when there are a great many, we can afford to be somewhat more rigid so that the more the merrier, and the more the sounder! I think that it is often the case. Let us believe that the Spirit of God can save a parish, can save a city, can shake London from end to end! Oh, that God would enlarge the capacity of our faith! "According to your faith be it unto you." But we have not more than sixpenny-worth of faith and when we get as much as that represents, we think that we are getting rich! And yet there are mines of untold wealth of the Grace of God to be had. Oh, that we had the faith with which to take possession of them!

Again, dear Friends, do you not think that we also treat the Spirit of God as though He were straitened *when we imagine that our weakness hinders His working by us*? "Oh," says one, "I have no doubt that God can bless a great many by *you*!" Well, dear Fiend, if you knew what I am often obliged to feel of myself, you would never talk so. I am the weakest of you all, in my own apprehension. Another says, "I know that I am inferior in ability, in knowledge, in opportunity." Just so, dear Friend, and, therefore, you suppose that the Spirit of God cannot use you? Do you not see that though you think such a confession is an evidence of humility, you are straitening the Spirit of God? However weak and feeble you may be, He can use you! If you think that He cannot, you deprive Him of power in your apprehension. It is not *yourself*, you see, that you are lowering, you are really lowering the power of God! He can use a person who is very insignificant, very obscure, very unlearned, very feeble. No, He *delights* to do

this, and He makes even those that are strong feel weak before He uses them, so that they say, "When I am weak, then am I strong." He will use empty vessels and if you do not need emptying because you are already empty, then that is one little thing that needs not be done and God can begin with you at once! There is nothing in you—nothing! Now, if God will use you, He will manifestly have all the Glory. Believe that He can use you—and get to work and do something! Proclaim His Gospel! Tell it over and over again. Tell it where you have told it, or where you have never told it, and believe that God can use you—AND HE WILL! Otherwise, if you say, "He cannot use me," I shall put the question to you again, "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?"

But I hear another say, "I think, dear Sir, you do not know where I live. If you did, you would not think there could be any very great blessing." Where do you live? In No-Man's-Ground? At the other end of the world? At Land's End, just over the edge of the universe? Here is a word for the little places, little Churches, hamlets with scanty population, where only a few people come together for worship. Do not believe that the Spirit of the Lord is narrowed *by the smallness of the place*. Some of the greatest works for Christ have begun in hamlets and in small villages. The fire has commenced to burn there which has afterwards become a mighty conflagration, like the flames which are driven in terrible grandeur across the forests of America. It matters not how few begin, but where two or three are met together in Christ's name there He is! And if He is there, He will soon, by means of that little company, be somewhere else, and He will make the fire to fly abroad to the utmost ends of the earth! If you have only two or three souls committed to your charge, you have quite as many as you will give good account of. Do not hunger for big congregations—hunger to save those you have! If the Lord will but bless you to the Sunday school class, or to the two or three children in your own family, you cannot tell what good will come of it, for the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened by the scantiness of the population!

A great many persons are guilty of thinking the Spirit of God to be straitened *when they fancy that He must always work in one way*. When I am seeing persons who come forward to confess their faith, I find they often begin by telling me how they were brought low under a sense of sin—and I like that old-fashioned way of conversion. But when I find one beginning by saying, "The Lord met me and filled my heart with joy and gladness under a sense of pardon, almost before I had any sense of sin, and the sense of sin followed after," I say to myself, "Let the Lord do His work in His own way." I am not going to make a pattern and lay them all on it and say that they must all be just that length, or else be stretched out a bit, or be cut shorter. No! Let the Lord save His own people in His own way! And if one is made to go down to the dark dungeon of law-work and gets whipped till he has not a bit of whole skin in his soul, I hope that it will do him good. But if another is gently led to Christ and does not know that there is a rod, but through love and kindness is led to rejoice in his Savior, I trust that he will remember it, and be glad all his days. Conversions are not run into molds. You cannot get a gross of conversions

like a gross of steel pens. Each living child is different from any other living child. A great painter never paints exactly the same picture twice. There is always a difference, somewhere, be it ever so slight. And when there is a work for eternity done in a Church, it is done in very varied ways. If we begin to tie the Lord down to one way of work, we shall make a great mistake.

"Oh," says one, "we meet together, a number of us, and anybody speaks who likes—and that is God's way of working. I do not believe in a one-man ministry." But we are in great danger of grieving the Spirit of God if we think that *He only works with one set of men*, with one order of government, or with only those who have none. Another man, who goes to hear one particular individual, says, "I am profited by Mr. So-and-So's preaching and do not get so much good under anybody else. I do not like that other open way of worship." Brethren, let them worship as they like! God blesses a one-man ministry and God blesses a twenty-man ministry. If the ministry is in the power of His Spirit, let it take what shape it likes. God is not bound by our rules and regulations—if you see God at work, bless His name that He is there and let Him work as He wills. You must not think that God works only on one set of lines. "Oh," says one, "I always get a blessing from So-and-So." Yes, you expect it, and you pray God to send it. "But I do not expect a blessing from such-and-such a man. He has such a curious way of going to work." Very likely. God has some very strange servants and, may I add, He has some very strange children!

We have strange families, ourselves, sometimes. Some parents have very old boys and a number of God's sons and daughters are the oddest children that ever were born. Yet He bears with them and surely we may bear with them, too. Some of the most useful people one has ever known have also been very eccentric and have gone their own way to work. If you do not like their way, do not go with them—go your own way. They will not like your way, but they must not blame you, neither must you despise them. As the Lord directs you and as you find the Word of God guides you, set to work for Him and believe that the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened! God blessed William Huntington, the coal-heaver, to many souls, though he preached a very strong Calvinism, while, at the same time, He was blessing some who preached a very weak Arminianism—but God blesses neither the Calvinism nor the Arminianism—but the Christ that is in the sermon! The true, eternal, evangelical Truth of God that is brought out, God Himself will bless to the souls of men! Let us not, therefore, speak of the Holy Spirit as tied to any set of men. "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?"

Once more—we act as if we did not believe in this Divine Truth concerning the Spirit of God when we think that *some men are beyond His reach*. Let us never imagine that those who have been sitting under the sound of the Word for years are so Gospel-hardened as to be past hope—or those who have gone deep into sin are too deeply-dyed ever to be cleansed—or those who have wandered from the fold are too far away ever to be recalled! Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened, that we should despair of any whom God has permitted to remain on this side of His judgement

bar? Have faith for the worst of men and the worst of women, too—great sinners, when saved, bring great Glory to that God whose Spirit leads them to the Truth.

And again, we may treat the Spirit of God as straitened *if we cannot believe that He can bless us today*. "I feel so gloomy," you say. "I hope that I shall be better tomorrow." Brother, why should you not be converted at this good hour? "Oh," says some sister, "I mean to serve the Lord when I got a little older." Do you? Well, you are a little older since I began to speak to you, and I think that your best time to begin is now. Believe in God's *nows*. Believe that any moment is a good moment with God. "This day is a day of good tidings." Why should not I, at this moment, dedicate myself afresh to God? Why should I not come to Christ, again, and ask Him to give me more life, more faith, more hope, more joy, more likeness to Himself now? "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?"

IV. On the fourth and last point, our words must be few, though the Truth of God affords much scope for instruction. THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD WILL PROVE THAT HE IS NOT STRAITENED and at the last all men shall acknowledge His power, whether they have bowed to it or not! He will be magnified in those who are saved *and* in those who are lost.

He will exact punishment for resistance. Those who now despise the messages which are sent to them will, at last, be left to their own devices. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man," says the Eternal God. And continual rejection will, at last, end in the total withdrawal of His Presence and the eternal ruin of all who have resisted Him.

But notwithstanding the rejection of men, *He will fulfill the Divine Decre*e. Man's obstinacy shall not frustrate the purpose of God and the things which He has predestinated shall surely come to pass. In this shall be clear evidence that the Spirit of the Lord was not straitened. Not one of God's chosen shall be suffered to continue in the way to ruin—they shall all be effectually called and enabled to embrace Christ as He is freely preached to them in the Gospel!

Thus, the third proof will be given, in that *He will glorify Christ and prepare a people to welcome His Advent*. The Gospel shall be preached among all nations and out of every tribe and people witnesses shall be gathered to await the glorious appearing of the victorious Christ which cannot be long delayed. Then it shall be seen how grandly the Spirit of the Lord has perfected both the number and the character of the Church, which, like a chaste virgin, shall be presented to the Lamb as the reward of His agony and intercession!

You that are not converted, but are longing to be, what are you waiting for, seeing that the Spirit of the Lord is thus always ready to work and will never be more able at another time than He is now? The great point with many is to precipitate decision, to bring them across the border. You are almost over it! You have often been so. You are almost persuaded. O Spirit of God, make them believe in Jesus now! May they turn their eyes to Him who hung upon the Cross and look, now, and live! What reason should there be why tomorrow should be better for repenting than today? In what way can 1892 be better than 1891? I am at a loss to think, but I can eas-

ily find a great many reasons why delays are dangerous, why delays are expensive, why delays will end in rejections! May God the Holy Spirit come and turn you to God now, lest, at last, you should share in that awful judicial blindness which falls on those who spurn His entreaties—lest the Gospel should be hid from you because you are lost—lest standing in the way of God's purpose, you should be cut down as a cumberer of the ground! Lest, at last, you should miss being numbered with that glorious throng who are now being called away from their idols to serve the living God and to wait for His Son from Heaven!

Has He not said, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out"? *When* may they come? Whenever they come He will not cast them out! What sort of people will He receive? "Him that comes"—any, "him," that comes, no matter who he or she is! How do they come? They must just *trust*—trust Jesus! May the Holy Spirit enable you to trust Him now! The Lord bless you, for His name's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Micah 4.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—454, 957, 972.

MR. SPURGEON UPDATE:

During the past week MR. SPURGEON has not been making progress towards recovery. In fact, in most respects he has been going backward rather than forward. The increased inability to take necessary nourishment has produced great weakness and faintness, and left him very prostrate. As this note is being written, he appears to be again rallying. When weakest, he has been comforted by the assurance mentioned last week, that his life has been spared in answer to the prayers of Believers everywhere, and that the Lord will yet raise him up for further service. It may be many months before he will be fully restored and, meanwhile, perhaps the Lord will put the Church to the test and see how long His children can continue to plead for His servant who has been laid so much upon their hearts. "His ways are past finding out." "He has done all things well."

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

A HARP OF TEN STRINGS
NO. 2219

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 30, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"And Mary said, My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior."
Luke 1:46, 47.

IT is very clear that Mary was not beginning a new thing, for she speaks in the present tense, and in a tense which seems to have been present for a long time, "My soul does magnify the Lord." Ever since she had received the wonderful tidings of the choice which God had made of her for her high position, she had begun to magnify the Lord. And when once a soul has a deep sense of God's mercy and begins magnifying Him, there is no end to it. This grows by what it feeds upon—the more you magnify God, the more you can magnify Him. The higher you rise, the more you can see. Your view of God is increased in extent and, whereas you praised Him somewhat at the bottom of the hill, when you get nearer and nearer to the top of His exceeding goodness, you lift up the strain still more loudly and your soul does more fully and exultantly magnify the Lord!

"My soul does magnify the Lord." What does it mean? The usual meaning of the word, "magnify," is to make great, or to make to appear great. We say, when we use the microscope, that it magnifies so many times. The insect is the same small and tiny thing, but it is increased to our apprehension. The word is very suitable in this connection. We cannot make God greater than He is. Nor can we have any conception of His actual greatness. He is infinitely above our highest thoughts! When we meditate upon His attributes—

"Imagination's utmost stretch
In wonder dies away."

But we magnify Him by having higher, larger, truer conceptions of Him, by making known His mighty acts and praising His glorious name so that others, too, may exalt Him in their thoughts. This is what Mary was doing—she was a woman who was given, in later life, to pondering. Those who heard what the shepherds said concerning the Holy Child Jesus, *wondered*, but, "Mary kept all these things, and *pondered* them in her heart." They wondered—Mary pondered. It is only the change of a letter, but it makes a great difference in the attitude of the soul—a change from a vague flash of interest to a deep attention of heart. She pondered. She weighed the matter. She turned it over in her mind. She thought about it. She estimated its value and result. She was like that other Mary, a medi-

tative woman who could quietly wait at her Lord's feet to hear gracious words and drink them in with yearning faith.

It is no idle occupation, then, to get alone and in your own hearts to magnify the Lord—to make Him great to your mind, to your affections—great in your memory, great in your expectations. It is one of the grandest exercises of the renewed nature! You need not, at such a time, think of the deep questions of Scripture. You may leave the abstruse doctrines to wiser heads, if you will, but if your very soul is bent on making God great to your own apprehension, you will be spending time in one of the most profitable ways possible to a child of God. Depend upon it, there are countless holy influences which flow from the habitual maintenance of great thoughts of God—just as there are incalculable mischiefs which flow from our small thoughts of Him! The root of false theology is belittling God and the essence of true Divinity is greatening God, magnifying Him and enlarging our conceptions of His majesty and His Glory to the utmost degree.

But Mary did not mean, by magnifying the Lord, merely to extol Him in her own thoughts. Being a true poetess, she intended to magnify the Lord by her *words*. No, I must correct myself—she did not *intend* to do it—she had been doing it all along! She was doing it when she came, panting and breathless, into her cousin Elizabeth's house. She said, "My soul does magnify the Lord. I am now in such a favored condition that I cannot open my mouth to talk to you, Elizabeth, without speaking of my Lord. My soul now seems filled with thoughts of Him. I must speak, first of all, about *Him* and say such things of His Grace and power as may help even you, my goodly elder sister, still to think grander thoughts of God than you have ever before enjoyed. My soul does magnify the Lord."

We must recall the fact that Mary was highly distinguished and honored. No other woman was ever blessed as she was. Perhaps no other could have borne the honor that was put upon her—to be the mother of the Human Nature of our Savior. It was the highest possible honor that could be put upon mortal and the Lord knew, at the appointed time, where to find a guileless, lowly woman who could be entrusted with such a gift and yet not seek to filch away His Glory. She is not proud. No, it is a false heart that steals the revenues of God and buys the intoxicating cup of self-congratulation. The more God gives to a true heart, the more it gives to Him. Like Peter's boat, which sank into the waters the more deeply, the more fully it was laden with fish, God's true children sink in their own esteem as they are honored by their Lord! God's gifts, when He gives Grace with them, do not puff us up—they build us up. A humble and lowly estimate of ourselves is added to a greater esteem of Him. The more God gives you, the more do you magnify Him and not yourself. Be this your rule—"He must increase and I must decrease." Be you less and less. Be you the Lord's humble handmaid, yet bold and confident in your praise of Him who has done for you great things! From now on and forever, let this be the one description of your life—"My soul does magnify the Lord; I have nothing else to do any more but to magnify Him and to rejoice in God my Savior."

A week might be profitably employed were I to attempt to preach upon each part of Mary's song, but with quite another purpose in view I am going to present it to you as a whole. As I put before you this instrument of ten strings, I will ask you, just for a minute or two, to place your fingers on each of them as they shall be indicated and see whether you cannot wake some melody to the praise of the great King, some harmony in His honor—whether you cannot, at this good hour, magnify the Lord and rejoice in God your Savior! Luther used to say that the glory of Scripture was to be found in the pronouns and it is certainly true of the text. Look at the personal touch of them, how it comes over and over again! "*My* soul does magnify the Lord, and *my* spirit has rejoiced in God *my* Savior."

At one of our Orphanage Festivals, I put before our many friends who were gathered together, several reasons why everybody should contribute to the support of the children. Indeed, I said, nobody ought to go off the ground without giving something. I was struck with one Brother who had no money with him, but who brought me his watch and chain. "Oh," I said, "do not give me these, these things sell for so little compared with their value." But he insisted upon my keeping them and said, "I will redeem them tomorrow, but I cannot go away without giving something now." How glad I would be if every child of God here would be as earnest in adoration and say, "I am going to give some praise to God at this service—out of some of those strings I will get music—perhaps out of them all. I will endeavor with my whole heart to say, at some portion of the sermon, and from some point of view, 'My soul does magnify the Lord!'" Do I hear you whisper, "My soul is very heavy." Lift it up, then, by praising the Lord! Begin a Psalm, even if at first the tune must be in a minor key! The strain will soon change and the "Miserere" will become a "Hallelujah Chorus."

I. The first string which Mary seems to touch and which, I trust, we, too, may reach with the hand of faith, is that of THE GREAT JOY WHICH THERE IS IN THE LORD. "My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior." Let us bless God that our religion is not one of gloom! I do not know of any command anywhere in Scripture, "Groan in the Lord always, and again, I say, Groan." From the conduct of some people we might almost imagine that they must have altered their New Testament in that particular passage and thus woefully changed the glory of the original verse, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice." The first I ever knew of Christ, my Master, truly, was when I found myself at the foot of His Cross with the great burden that had crushed me, effectually gone. I looked round for it, wondering where it could be and, behold, it was tumbling down into His sepulcher! I have never seen it since, blessed be His name, nor do I ever want to see it again! Well do I remember the leaps I gave for joy when first I found that all my burden of guilt had been borne by Him and was now buried in the depths of His grave—

"Many days have passed since then;
Many changes I have seen."

I have been to a great many wells to draw water, but when I have drawn it, and tasted it, it has been brackish as the waters of Marah. But whenever I have gone to this well—"my God, my Savior"—I have never drawn one drop that was not sweet and refreshing! He who truly knows God must be glad in Him—to abide in His house is to be still praising Him—yes, we may exalt in Him all day long! A very notable Word of God is that which is found in the mouth of David—"God, my exceeding joy." Other things may give us pleasure. We may be happy in the gifts of God and in His creatures, but God, Himself, the spring of all our joys, is greater than them all! Therefore, "Delight yourself, also, in the Lord." This is His command—is it not a lovely one? Let no one say that the faith of the Christian is not to be exultant! It is to be a delight and so greatly does God desire us to rejoice in Him, that to the command is added a promise, "And He shall give you the desires of your heart."

What a religion is ours, in which delight becomes a *duty*—in which to be happy is to be obedient to a command! Heathen religions exact not only self-denials of a proper kind, but tortures which men invent to accustom themselves to misery. But in our holy faith, if we keep close to Christ, while it is true that we bear the cross, it is also true that the cross ceases to be a torture! In fact, it often bears *us* as we bear it—we discover in the service of our Master that "His yoke is easy and His burden is light," and, strange to say—His burden gives us rest and His yoke gives us liberty! We have never had anything from our Master but it has ultimately tended to our joy. Even when His rod has made us smart, He has intended it to work for our good and so it has! Praise Him, then, for such goodness!

Our religion is one of holy joy, especially with regard to our Savior. The more we understand that glorious word, "Savior," the more are we ready to dance with delight. "My spirit has rejoiced in God *my Savior*." The good tidings of great joy have reached us and as we, by His Grace, have believed them, He has saved us from sin, death and Hell! He has not simply promised to do it some day, but He has *done* it—we have been saved! What is more, we have, many of us, entered into rest by faith in Him. Salvation is to us a present experience at this hour, though we still wait for the fullness of it to be revealed in the world to come.

Oh, come, let us joy in our Savior! Let us thank Him that we have so much for which to thank Him! Let us praise Him that there is so much that we may rejoice in! No, so much that we *must* rejoice in! Let us adore His dear name that He has so arranged the whole plan of salvation—that it is calculated to bring Heaven to us while we are here—and to bring us who are here, into Heaven hereafter! Thus we lift up our hearts because of the great joy there is laid up for us in God. This is the first string. Touch it. Think of all the joy you have had in God. Praise Him for all the holy mirth He has given you in His House—the bliss of communion with Him at His table—the delights of fellowship with Him in secret. Sing to Him with a grateful heart, saying, "My soul does magnify the Lord."

II. The second string we would desire to lay our fingers on is THE GODHEAD OF OUR SAVIOR. "My soul does magnify the Lord." I have not a little Lord. "And my spirit has rejoiced in *God my Savior*." I know that

my Savior is a Man and rejoice in His Humanity, but we will contend to the death for this—that He is more than Man—He is our Savior! One human being could not redeem another, or give to God a ransom for his brother. An angel's arm could not bear the tremendous load of the disaster of the Fall, but Christ's arm is more than angelic! He whom we magnify as our Savior counted it not robbery to be equal with God. And when He undertook the wondrous task of our redemption, He brought the Godhead with Him to sustain Him in the more than Herculean labor. Our trust is in Jesus Christ, very God of very God! We shall never cease, not only to believe in Him, but to speak of Him, rejoice in Him and sing of Him as the Incarnate Deity. What a frozen religion that is which has not the Godhead of Christ in it! Surely, they must be men of a very sanguine and imaginative temperament who can pretend to receive any comfort out of a Christianity which has not the Divine Savior as its very center. I would as soon think of going to an iceberg to warm myself, as to a faith of that kind to find comfort! Nobody can ever praise up Christ too much for you and for me—they can never say too much of His wisdom, or of His power. Every Divine attribute ascribed to Christ makes us lift up a new song unto Him, for, whatever He may be to others, He is to us God over all, blessed forever! Amen.

I wish that I could sing instead of speaking to you of Him who was with the Father before all worlds began, whose delights, even then, were with the sons of men in prospect of their creation. I wish that I could tell the wonderful story of how He entered into Covenant with God on the behalf of His people and pledged Himself to pay the debts of those His Father gave to Him. He undertook to gather into one fold, all the sheep whom He pledged Himself to purchase with His precious blood. He engaged to bring them back from all their wanderings and fold them on the hilltops of the Delectable Mountains at His Father's feet. This He vowed to do and He has gone about His task with a zeal that clothed Him as a cloak—and He will achieve the Divine purpose before He delivers up the Kingdom to God, even the Father. "He shall not fail nor be discouraged."

It is our delight to hear this Son of God, this Son of Mary, this wondrous Being in His complex Nature as our Mediator, exalted and extolled, and made very high. Have you not sometimes felt that if the minister preached more about Jesus Christ, you would be very glad to hear him? I hope that is your inclination, yet I am afraid that we talk a great deal about many things rather than about our Master. Come, let me hear of Him! Sing to me or talk to me of Jesus, whose name is honey in the mouth, music in the ear and Heaven in the heart! Oh, for more praise to His holy name! Yes, some of us can touch this string and say with Mary, "My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior."

III. The third string has softer, sweeter music in it, and it may suit some of us better than the more sublime themes that we have already touched. Let us sing and magnify the LORD'S LOVING CONDESCENSION, for so the blessed virgin did when she went on to say, "for He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden." Here is something to sing

about, for ours was not only a low estate, but perhaps some here would have had to say, like Gideon, "My family is poor, and I am the least in my father's house" and, like he, you would have been passed over by most of the people. Perhaps even in your own family you were counted as nobody. If there was a jest uttered, you were sure to be the butt of it, and generally you were misunderstood and your actions misinterpreted. This was a trying experience for you, but from this you have been gloriously delivered. It may have been that, like Joseph, you were a little dreamy and, perhaps, you were a trifle too fond of telling your dreams. Yet, though because of this you were much put upon, the Lord, at last, raised your head above those round about you. It may have been that your lot in life was cast among the very poorest and lowest of mankind, yet the Lord has looked upon you in infinite compassion and saved you! Will you not, then, magnify Him?

If Christ wanted a people, why did He not choose the kings, princes and nobles of the earth? Instead of that, He takes the poor and makes them to know the wonders of His dying love! And instead of selecting the wisest men in the world, He takes even the most foolish and instructs them in the things of the Kingdom of God—

"Wonders of Grace to God belong,
Repeat His mercies in your song."

All of us who have been saved by Grace must still strike a more tender note, for we were sinful as well as lowly. We went astray like lost sheep and, therefore, we magnify the Lord who bought us, sought us and brought us back to His fold. It may be painful to remember what we once were, but it is well, sometimes, to go back in our thoughts to the time past when we lived in sin, that we may the better appreciate the favor of which we have been made partakers. When the Apostle Paul wrote out a catalog of those who shall *not* inherit the Kingdom of God, he added, "And such were some of you: but you are washed." Oh, let us bless the name of the Lord and magnify Him for this! Who else could have cleansed us from our sin, or in what other Fountain save that opened to the house of David could we have plunged to rid us of our awful defilement? He stoops very low, for some of God's elect were once the offscouring of all things—and even when converted, many of them remained so, in the estimate of the world which sneers at humble Christians.

If the professed followers of Christ happen to meet in some fine building and worship God with grand music and gorgeous rituals, *then* the people of the world put up with them! They may go even so far as to patronize them, though, even then, their respect is chiefly called forth, not on behalf of the people, but because of the building, the fine music and the carriages. The *carriages* are especially important, for without a certain number of them at the door, it is deemed *impossible* to have a proper display of cultured Christianity! But the more God's people cling to the Lord, the less likely are they to be esteemed by the vulgar judgment of unholy men. Yet the Lord has chosen such, blessed be His name! It is a great wonder to me that the Lord ever chose some of you—but it is a far greater wonder that He should ever have chosen *me*. I can somehow understand His love

for you when I look at the gracious points in your character, though I am fully aware that they are only worked by Grace, but I cannot understand the love which He has displayed to *me*, who am the least of all the saints. "Oh!" you say, "that is what we were going to say about ourselves." Yes, I know. I am trying to put it into your mouths, so that we may all join in adoring gratitude! It is a miracle of mercy that He should have loved any of us, or stooped in His Grace to have raised such beggars from the dunghill to set us among the princes at His right hand—

"Why was I made to hear Your voice,
And enter while there's room;
When thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come."

IV. The next string, however, is THE GREATNESS OF GOD'S GOODNESS, for Mary goes on to sing—"He has regarded the low estate of His handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." Oh, the Lord has done great things for His people! "He that is mighty has done to me great things; and holy is His name." God has made you blessed. You were once under the curse, but for you there is now no condemnation, for you are in Christ Jesus. If the curse had withered you, like some lightning-blasted oak, you would not have wondered, but, instead thereof, the gracious Lord has planted you by the rivers of water and He makes you to bring forth your fruit in your season and your leaf does not wither. "The Lord has done great things for us; whereof we are glad." To be lifted up from that horrible pit is such a great thing that we cannot measure it—but to be set up on that Throne of Mercy exceeds our highest thought—who can measure that? Take your line and see if you can fathom the depth of such Grace, or measure the height of such mercy! Shall we be silent when we behold such marvelous loving kindness? God forbid it! Let us break forth in our hearts, now, with gladsome hallelujahs to Him who has done such wonderful things for us!

Think, Brothers and Sisters, you were blind—He has made you see! You were lame—He has made you leap! Worse than that, you were dead—He has made you live! You were in prison—and He has made you free! Some of us were in the dungeon with our feet fast in the stocks. Can I not well remember when I did lie in that inner prison, moaning and groaning, without any voice to comfort me, or even a ray of light to cheer me in the darkness? And now that He has brought me out, shall I forget to utter my deep thanks? No! I will sing a song of deliverance that others may hear, and fear, and turn unto the Lord! But that is not all. He has not only taken us from the prison, He has raised us to the Throne of God—you and I could go in and out of Heaven tonight if God called us there—and every angel would treat us with respect! If we entered into Glory, even though we had come from the poorest home in London, we would find that the highest angels are only ministering servants to the chosen people of God! Oh, He has done wonders for us!

I am not so much attempting to preach as trying to wake up your memory, that you may think of the goodness of the Lord's Grace and say, "Oh, yes, it is so, and my soul does magnify the Lord!" Not one of the wonders of Divine Grace has been worked for us without deep necessity for its

manifestation. If the very least Grace which may, perhaps, up to now have escaped your attention, were taken from you, where would you be? I often meet with people of God who used to be very happy and joyful, but who have fallen into despondency, and who now talk about the mercies of God's Covenant love in such a way as to make me blush. They say, "I thought I once had that blessing, Sir, and I am afraid I have not got it now, though there is nothing I long for more. Oh, what a precious thing it would be to be able to have access to God in prayer! I would give my eyes to be able to know that I am really a child of God."

Yet those of us who have those blessings do not half value them. No, Brothers and Sisters, we do not value them a thousandth part as much as we ought! Our constant song should be, "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loads us with benefits, even the God of our salvation." Instead of that, we often take the gifts thoughtlessly and unthankfully from His hands. When a man is in the ocean, he may have much water over his head and not feel it, but when He comes out, if you then put a little pail of water on his head, it becomes quite a burden as he carries it. So some of you are swimming in God's mercy—you are diving into it and you do not recognize the weight of the Glory which God has bestowed upon you. But if you should once get out of this ocean of joy and fall into a state of sadness of heart, you would begin to appreciate the weight of any *one* of the mercies which now do not seem to be of much consequence, or to make any claim upon your gratitude. Without waiting to lose the sense of God's Grace, in order that we may know the value of it, let us bless Him who has done such inconceivably great things for us, and say, "My soul does magnify the Lord."

V. The fifth string that I would touch is THE COMBINATION OF GRACE AND HOLINESS that there is in what God has done for us. "He that is mighty has done great things for me; and holy is His name." I may not even hint at the peculiar delicacy of Mary's case, but she knew that it was wholly holy and pure. Now, when the Lord has saved you and me, who did not deserve saving, He did a very wonderful act of Sovereign Grace in making us to differ, but the mercy is that He did it all *justly*. Nobody can say that it ought not to be done. At the Last Great Day, what God has done in His Grace will stand the test of justice, for He has never, in the splendor and lavishness of His love, violated the principles of eternal righteousness, even to save His own elect. "He that is mighty has done to me great things; and holy is His name."

Sin must be punished—it has been punished in the Person of our glorious Substitute. No man can enter into Heaven unless he is perfectly pure—they who are redeemed shall take no unclean thing within the gates. Every rule and mandate of the Divine empire shall be observed. The Law-*Maker* will not be the Law-*Breaker* even to save the sinner! But His Law shall be honored as surely as the sinner shall be saved. Sometimes I feel that I could play on this string for an hour or two. Here we have Justice magnified in Grace and holiness rejoicing in the salvation of sinners! The attributes of God are like the amazing crystal shining out with its clear white light, but which may be divided into all the colors of the prism,

each different and all beautiful. The dazzling radiance of God is too glorious for our mortal eyes, but each Revelation teaches us more of His beauty and perfectness. In the ruby light of an atoning Sacrifice we are enabled to see how God is just and yet the Justifier of him that believes in Jesus. Glory be to His name for the power of Grace mingled with holiness! My soul does magnify the Lord for this wonderful salvation in which every attribute shall have its glory—justice as well as mercy, wisdom as well as might. "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Who could have invented such a plan and who could have carried it out when it was thought of? Only He who came "with dyed garments from Bozrah." "My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior."

VI. The sixth string is one which should be sweet in every way. Mary now goes on to touch the string of GOD'S MERCY. "And His mercy is on them that fear Him." The saints of old often touched this string in the Temple. They often sang it, lifting up the refrain again and again—"His mercy endures forever!"—

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

Mercy! Sinner, this is the silver bell for you—it is of the Lord's mercies that you are not consumed—because His compassions fail not. Listen to the heavenly music that calls you to repent and live! God delights in mercy. He waits to be gracious. Mercy! Saint, this is the golden bell for you, for you still need mercy. Standing with your foot upon the jasper doorstep of Paradise, with the pearly gate just before you, you will still need mercy to help you over the last step. And when you enter the choir of the redeemed, mercy shall be your perpetual song! In Heaven you will chant the praises of the God of Grace whose mercy endures forever.

Do you mourn over your own backsliding? God will have mercy upon you, dear child, though you have wandered since you have known Him! Come back to Him this very hour! He would woo you again. He would press you to His bosom. Have you not often been restored? Have you not often had your iniquities put away from you in the years gone by? If so, again, this moment, touch this string—a child's finger can make it bring forth its music—touch it now! Say, "Yes, concerning mercy, mercy to the very chief of sinners, my soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior."

VII. Time would fail us if we tried to dwell at any length upon these wondrous themes, so we pass to the next string, number seven, GOD'S IMMUTABILITY, because in the verse we have already touched upon, there are two notes. Mary said, "His mercy is on them that fear Him from generation to generation." He that had mercy in the days of Mary, has mercy *today*—"from generation to generation," He is the same God. "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed." You that once delighted in the Lord, do not suppose that He has changed! He still invites you to come and delight in Him! He is "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever." What a poor foundation we would have for our hope if God could change! But He has confirmed His

Word by an oath, "that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."

The God of my grandfather, the God of my father, is my God this day—the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is the God of every Believer! He is the same God and is prepared to do the same—and to *be* the same to us as to them! Look back into your own experience. Have you not found God always the same? Come, protest against Him, if you have ever found Him to change! Is the Mercy Seat altered? Do the promises of God fail? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Will He no more be favorable? No, even "if we believe not, yet He abides faithful: He cannot deny Himself!" And when all things melt away, this one eternal Rock abides! Therefore, "My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior." It is a blessed string to touch! If we had time, we would play upon it and evoke such harmonies as would make the angels want to join us in the chorus!

VIII. The next string which will awaken a responsive echo in your hearts is GOD'S POWER. "He has showed strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts." This string gives us deep bass music and requires a heavy hand to make it pour forth any melody. What wonders of power God has worked on the behalf of His people, from the days of Egypt, when the horse and his rider He cast into the Red Sea, even till now! How strong is His arm to defend His people!

In these days some of us have been driven to look to that power, for all other help has failed. You know how it was in the dark ages—it seemed as if the darkness of popery would never be removed—but how soon it was gone when God called forth His men to bear witness to His Son! What reason we have to rejoice that He "scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts"! They thought that they could readily burn up the heretics and put an end to this Gospel of theirs, but they could not do it. And today there is a dark conspiracy to stamp out the evangelical faith. First, on the part of some who go after their superstitions, they set up the *crucifix* to hide the Cross and point men to *sacraments* instead of to the Savior.

And then, worse than these, are those who undermine our faith in Holy Scripture—they tear from the Book this chapter and that, deny this great Truth of God and the other—and try to bring the inventions of man into the place that ought to be occupied by the Truth of God. But the Lord lives! Jehovah's arm has not waxed short! Depend upon it, before many years have passed, He will take up the quarrel of His Covenant and will bring the old banner to the front again! We shall yet rejoice to hear the Gospel preached in the most plain terms, accentuated by the Holy Spirit, Himself, upon the hearts of His people. Let us touch this string again! The Almighty God is not dead! "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear."

IX. The next string is one that some friends do not like. At least they do not say much about it—it is DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY. Listen to it. You know how God thunders it out. "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." God's will is supreme! Whatever the wills of men may be, God will not be

driven from His Throne, nor will His scepter be made to quiver in His hands! After all the rebellious acts of men and devils, He will still be eternal and supreme, with His Kingdom ruling over all. And thus the virgin sings, "He has put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He has sent empty away." Who can speak the wonders of His Sovereign Grace? Was it not strange that He should ever have chosen you?—

"What was there in you that could merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight?
'Twas even so, Father,' you must ever sing,
Because it seemed good in Your sight.'"

Is it not strange that the Lord should not take the Kings and mighty ones, but should so order it, that the poor have the Gospel preached to them? God is King of kings and Lord of lords—and He acts like a king. "He gives not account of any of His matters." But He lets us see right clearly that He has no respect to the greatness and fancied goodness of man—that He does as He pleases and that He pleases to give His mercy to them that fear Him and bow before Him! He dispenses His favors to those who tremble at His Presence, who come humbly to His feet and take His mercy as a free gift—who look to His dear Son because they have nothing else to look to and, as poor, guilty worms, find in Christ their life, their wisdom, their righteousness, their all! Oh, the splendor of this great King!

X. The tenth string is GOD'S FAITHFULNESS. "He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy; as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed forever." God remembers what He has said. Take those three words, "As He spoke." Whatever He said, though it was thousands of years ago, it stands fast forever and ever! God cannot lie. Beloved, are any of you in trouble? Search the Scriptures till you find a promise that suits your case. And when you get it, do not say, "I hope that this is true." That is an insult to your God! Believe it, believe it up to the hilt! Do as I have seen boys do in the swimming hole—take a header and go right into the stream of God's mercy! Dive as deeply as you can—there is no drowning here! These are "waters to swim in" and the more you can lose yourself in this blessed crystal flood of promised mercy, the better it shall be! You shall rise up out of it as the sheep come from the washing! You shall feel refreshed beyond measure in having cast yourself upon God!

When God's promises fail, let us know of it, for some of us have lived so long on those promises that we do not care to live on anything else! And if they can be proved to be false, we had better give up living altogether! But we delight to know that they are *all* absolutely true—what God said to our fathers stands good to their children—and will stand good even to the end of time and to all eternity.

If any of you have not been able to touch even one of these strings, I would bid you get to your knees and cry to God, and say, "Why is it that I cannot magnify You, O Lord?" I should not be surprised if you discovered the reason to be that you are so big, yourself. He never magnifies God who magnifies himself! Belittle yourself and magnify your God! Down with self

to the lowest depths and up, higher and still higher, with your thoughts of God!

Poor Sinner, you that have not yet laid hold on God, there is sweet music even for you in the virgin's song. Perhaps you are saying, "I am nothing but a lump of sin and a heap of misery." Very well. Leave the lump of sin and the heap of misery and let Christ be your All-in-All! Give yourself up to Christ. He is a Savior—let Him do His own business. If a man sets up to be a lawyer and I have a case in court, I should not think of giving him the case and then, afterwards, go into court and begin to meddle with it for myself! If I did, he would say, "I must drop the case if you do not let it alone."

Sometimes the idea may come into your mind that you will do something towards saving yourself and have some share in the glory of your salvation. If you do not get rid of that idea, you will be lost! Surrender yourself to Christ and let *Him* save you! And then, afterwards, He will work in you to will and to do of His own good pleasure, while you shall make melody in your heart unto the Lord—and from this harp of ten strings shall proceed such delightful music that many shall listen with such rapture that they shall go to your Master and take lessons in this heavenly music for themselves!

The Lord bless you, Beloved, and send you away happy in Him!

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke 1:39-80.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—152, 775, 245.

MR. SPURGEON UPDATE:

Mr. Spurgeon appeared to be rallying when the note for last week's sermon was being written and that rallying continued for three or four days. Towards the end of the week, however, the inability to take food and the consequent weakness once more returned. No progress can, therefore, be reported in his general condition—the serious malady from which he has been suffering remains much the same as it has been for many weeks. Readers of the sermons will see that the need for continued supplication is still as great as during any part of the past three months. Mr. and Mrs. Spurgeon are deeply grateful for the widespread sympathy and prayer on their behalf and they join in intercession for the many friends who have been remembering them at the Throne of Grace.

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

THREE DECISIVE STEPS
NO. 2220

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 8, 1891.

"And it came to pass, while the ark abode in Kirjath Jearim, that the time was long; for it was twenty years. And all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord. And Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, If you return to the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts for the Lord, and serve Him only: and He will deliver you out of the hands of the Philistines. Then the children of Israel put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the Lord only. And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray to the Lord for you."
1 Samuel 7:2-5.

Two enemies held Israel in subjection. The Philistines had fought against them and defeated them, even though they sent to Shiloh and brought the Ark of the Covenant, the symbol of Jehovah's Presence, into their camp. The Lord was not with them, so they were smitten with a great slaughter. The crowning disaster of the day was "the Ark of God was taken." The Philistines carried it away to Ashdod and set it in the house of Dagon, their idol. You remember how God, jealous for His honor and Glory, worked mighty wonders, causing Dagon to fall and inflicting punishment on every city where the ark came, until, at last, the Philistines, wearied with their trials, sent the Ark back to the people on whose behalf Jehovah had shown Himself so strong. Twenty years the Ark abode at Kirjath Jearim and, during all that time, Israel was under the hand of the Philistines.

But a worse enemy than the Philistines held sway over the land. Though the Ark had returned, the people had gone away from their God and had set up the abominable worship of Baal and Astarte, the idols of the Phoenicians and other heathen nations by whom they were surrounded. I will not stay to explain to you about these gods. Suffice it to say that the Baalim were the male gods and the Ashtaroth the female—and that worship of these idols was attended with great lewdness and filthiness—in fact, the holy things of Baal and Astarte we would call obscene and degrading. The people were thus in double bondage. The heavy yoke of the Philistines was upon them because the heavier burden of a false worship crushed out the life of their hearts.

It may very naturally be asked, "Where was Samuel all that time?" I know not what he was doing during those 20 years, but I have a suspicion. I will say I have a firm *persuasion* that he was going from place to place, preaching in quiet spots wherever he could gather an audience, warning the people of their sin and stirring them up to seek Jehovah, thus endeavoring to infuse some spirituality into their national life. But "the time was long." He plowed and seemed to plow a rock. For 20 years the good man spoke. For 20 years he acted like a battering ram upon a wall that did not seem to tremble beneath his strokes. For 20 years he went up and down, fleeing for his life from the Philistines, but venturing out, whenever he had an opportunity, to warn a household or a village group, or, perhaps, a township, that they could only be delivered from the Philistines by seeking God—that they had come into their present evil case by forsaking Jehovah and, that, unless they came back to the worship of the only true God, they would never again have their liberties.

"The time was long," very long, for him to keep on speaking, warning a people who did not seem to care for his message. But constant dripping wears away stones and, at last, the inert mass against which he had battered began to move and there arose a general feeling of enquiry all over the country—"all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord." Then was Samuel's time to strike, while the iron was hot! He had spent 20 years in getting it hot and he did not miss the opportunity when, at last, it came! He pleaded with the people and plainly showed them the only way in which they could expect help—namely, by putting away their false gods and returning with prepared hearts to the service of Jehovah.

That the continual prayers and efforts of Samuel were crowned with success should encourage all those who, in days of unfaithfulness and apostasy, still lift up their voices for the Truth of God! Keep pegging away, my Brothers, though the people may seem to be indifferent to your message, or stiffen their necks against it. Do not give up though in the service of the base idols they seem wholly to forget God! The Lord will yet arise in His own good time and His cause shall triumph! Prepare a way for Him, of whom it is written, "Your people shall be willing in the day of Your power." Now, I believe that my case, with regard to some to whom I am speaking, is something like that of Samuel. I have, at least, the same message to deliver.

I hope to be able to make this plain by showing you, first, that *these people were in a very hopeful condition.* That, secondly, *they were called upon to take very decided steps.* And, thirdly, *that they were helped to do so by faith.* True, it was faith in *Samuel*—and you get much more help if you have faith in a greater than Samuel who is still here among us, even our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

I. First, then, THESE PEOPLE WERE IN A VERY HOPEFUL CONDITION. "All the house of Israel lamented after the Lord." What does it mean?

It means, first, that they were *greatly oppressed.* Their goods were taken from them. They were beaten. They saw their children slain. They were the slaves of the Philistines and, therefore, they began to say, "Why

should we not return to our God? When we were true to Jehovah, there were no Philistines to trouble us. They were put to rout when we served God. It was better with us then, than now. Samson, when the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, slew a thousand of them with the jawbone of an ass. Oh, for a day of Samson back again! Oh, for a day of God back again!" Their oppressions made them think of God.

Do I not address some whose many troubles are compelling them to think of God? All went well with you, once, and then you were an atheist. Troubles are multiplying, now, and atheism does not suit you. You have buried those you loved. Ah, the grass has not yet grown on that newly-formed grave and your heart is aching after something, you scarcely know what! There were days with you, perhaps, in your youth, when you knelt at your mother's knee—and in your early manhood, when you went to the House of God and seemed to be one of God's people. You sigh as you think of happier days—but all goes wrong with you, now, and a voice seems to say to you, especially in the still of night, "Return, return, return!" You have wandered, like a sheep, from the pasture to the desert, from the shepherd's care into danger from the wolf. May God grant that you may, in this way, begin to lament after the Lord!

I think that by the house of Israel lamenting after the Lord, is meant, next, that they began to be *inwardly convinced that nobody could help them but the Lord*. "Ah," said one, "would God these Philistines were driven away!" "Ah," said his companion, "nobody can do it but Jehovah." And then the first one answered, "Then, would that Jehovah were here! Oh, for His mighty hand and His terrible power to drive away our enemies!" "Israel lamented after the Lord." Samuel had taught them to some purpose, seeing that when they saw their need, they did not look for help to him, but to his Master. Some teachers attract attention to themselves and are like the moon when it shines—everybody says, "What a beautiful moon!" The true Prophet of God shines like the sun and people do not say, "What a beautiful sun!" but, "How lovely is the landscape!" Let it be your ambition to so declare the Word of God that people will not say, "What a splendid preacher!" but, "How glorious is his Christ!"

No man must come between the seeker and God, for the best of men are but men at their best. Not even the ordinances of religion can meet the need of the people, though they are God-appointed—they were meant to lead us *to* God—and not to be a substitute for Him! When the Philistines triumphed, as we read in the fourth chapter, the elders of Israel said, "Let us fetch the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that, when *it* comes among us, *it* may save us out of the hand of our enemies." And lo, when *it* came, it did *not* save them! When people trust in the religious symbol instead of the spiritual power, they are idolaters in heart and invite disaster!

But the house of Israel did not lament after the Ark—they lamented after the Lord, without whose Glory, shining between the cherubim, even the Ark was void and valueless! Am I speaking to one who has come to this conviction—"Nobody can help me but God. I am so down at the heel, so broken in spirit, I am brought into such a condition, that unless the

heavens are rent and the right hand of God appears, there is no rescue for me"? I am right glad you are brought into that condition! There is much gained when you look away from all others and from all else, to God. Say now, "I will lift up my eyes unto the hills, from where comes my help. My help comes from the Lord who made Heaven and earth." And if your soul still sighs, "Oh, that He would help me! Oh, that it were true that He did hear me and would come to my rescue!"—remember His words, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me."

In some such case were the people of Israel and when it says that they, "lamented after the Lord," it seems to me that, while they desired Him, *they were afraid that He would not deliver them*. They prayed after a fashion, but there was a dash of doubt about it. So have I known many go up to their closet to pray and they have said, "O God, if so vile a sinner can be forgiven, if there is such a thing as salvation for a backslider, if sins like mine can be washed away, oh, that I might be saved!" They have prayed with an, "if," and a, "perhaps" and a, "maybe"—lamenting after the Lord with many a moan, sigh, cry of despair—and then, just a little *drop* or two of hope! Lamenting after the Lord—I do not quite know how to describe it. But I know the distressing condition very well—that state in which the soul feels it needs God and would give anything to be saved, is willing to submit to Him and is anxious to be forgiven, but always is haunted with the dark thought—"It is not for you. He will never stretch His arms of mercy so far as to reach you. You are outside the Covenant! You are past hope." Still, even though this is a very dark state of mind to be in, it is a hopeful state of mind. It is much better than presumption or carelessness.

Moreover, *these people had very little hope but they had very much desire*. "They lamented after the Lord." I suppose their lamentation after the Lord was in this fashion—"Oh, that God would be our God! But then He never will. Oh, that He would deliver us from the Philistines! But then He never will." Their prayer was damp for lack of faith. Their tinder would not burn. They did not rejoice to believe in the Lord, but they "lamented" after Him—they kept sorrowing and sighing, moaning and crying—needing Him, but never coming to Him. I know that I now address some who have regularly attended the preaching of the Gospel for years. You are not without a sense of sin. You are not without anxious desires. You are not without very anxious feelings at times. Sometimes you would give your eyes that you might know Christ and you feel as if you could willingly die if you could but know that you were saved. But, still, you cannot believe it possible—and that doubt still hangs over you. But it *is* possible! It is *more* than possible! It is absolutely *certain* that he who believes in Christ has everlasting life and he that comes to Him, He will in no wise cast out! He is ready to forgive. He delights in mercy. He overflows with compassion. "If you seek Him, He will be found of you." Your lamentations after the Lord may be sweetened with a good hope that, coming to Him, He will accept you!

If you read the third verse, you will see that, all this while, *they had not parted with their idols*. They lamented after the Lord, but they did not get

the Lord because they wanted to have the Lord and to have their idols, too. There are men in the world who want to go to Heaven, but they want to stay on the road to Hell! They would get to the north by traveling to the south. There are some who would go home to their Father, but they would like to take the swine, the swine troughs and the husks with them! A pretty sight, that prodigal would have been, would he not, driving the hogs and carrying the hog troughs on his back, to his father's house? Such a picture is not to be imagined. It never existed in fact and never can. John Bunyan tells us that when he was playing at the game of "cat," one Sunday, on Elstow Green, as he was going to strike the cat with his stick, he thought he heard a voice, crying, "Will you keep your sins, and go to Hell; or will you give up your sins and go to Heaven?"

That question, without an angel's voice, you may hear at this moment! I put it now to some of you who would like to keep your sins and yet go to Heaven! You lament after the Lord. You would be a saint, but then you want to be a sinner, too. You would be a child of God, but then you would not like to turn out of the devil's family. You would not like to be ridiculed by the world. No, you want the crown without the cross! You want the end without the way. You want Heaven without holiness and forgiveness without repentance—and this can never be. It is useless lamenting after the Lord if it does not lead you to give up your idols!

One thing, however, was meant by this lamenting after the Lord. It meant that *they could never rest till God returned*. Some of you have tried many ways to get rest. Some years ago you got harpooned at a meeting and though, like a big whale, you have dragged out miles of line and gone to the bottom of the sea of sin, the harpoon still sticks in you! I know what you have been doing to get rest. You have tried the world and now there is nothing there that pleases you. You have tried sticking to business, but you are unsatisfied. You have made money, but you are a poorer man than you were when you began business! Poorer, really, than when you had not a penny to bless yourself with! In fact, you have not a penny that *does* bless you—all your pennies seem curses as they come in.

And then you have tried philosophy. Oh, you are a wonderfully wise man, especially when you have just read a book full of infidelity! Then you are wiser than two Solomons rolled into one! And yet you are a fool and you know you are, for you cannot get any peace by that means. You try, sometimes, to talk big blasphemies, and that is because you are afraid. As boys will whistle when they go through the churchyard, and are afraid of ghosts, they whistle to keep their courage up. And some people talk very big things just to keep up their confidence—a confidence which they really do not possess, for they are dreadful cowards when they come to die! I wonder what you will try next? Will you try dissipation? Will you try drunkenness? Will you try the use of drugs? Well, well, if God means to save you, you will never rest till you are anchored in the port of Christ's atoning Sacrifice.

Until you come to God by Jesus Christ, you shall never rest! You shall be weary of foot; you shall be weary of brain; you shall be sick at heart; you shall feel that life is not worth living; you shall feel darkness over all

your brightness and you shall taste bitterness in all your sweets. If God means to save you, He will make you lament after Him. He has lamented after you—you cost your Savior many a tear. You cost your Savior nailed hands and feet. You cost your Savior bloody sweat. You cost Him His death and He will not have you trifle where He is so in earnest—and if you will not come without strong measures, He will make you come!

You shall be like Noah's dove. The raven rested on the corpses, but the dove could not. For her there was no resting place—she must drop into the water and drown—but her weary wings, at last, bears her back to the ark! Noah opens the window, puts out his hand, takes her in his grasp and pulls her in unto him into the ark. Then was she peaceful and quiet. She had found her Noah—she had found her rest. And it is to be so with some of you, now. You may stand out against my Master, but He means to have you. I sometimes hear of persons getting very angry after a Gospel sermon—and I say to myself, "I am not sorry for it." Sometimes when we are fishing, the fish gets the hook into his mouth. He pulls hard at the line—if he were *dead*, he could not—but he is a live fish, worth the getting, and though he runs away, for a while, with the hook in his jaws, he cannot escape. His very wriggling and his anger show that he has got the hook and the hook has got him. Have the landing-net ready—we shall land him by-and-by! Give him more line—let him use up his strength and then we will land him—and he shall belong to Christ forever!

Some of you know well what all this means, so I need say no more upon this point.

II. Let us notice, next, that THESE PEOPLE WERE CALLED UPON TO TAKE THREE VERY DECIDED STEPS. See how plainly and decidedly Samuel puts the matter—"If you return to the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts for the Lord, and serve Him only."

The first thing that they were to do was to "*put away the strange gods*." They were to go home and break the images of Baal, tear down the vile statues of Astarte and smash them to pieces, whether they were private images, or public ones. They were to clear out the whole tribe of idols! Now, if we would come back to God, we must get rid of all our false confidences—

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

Every man seems to have a different idol. One has pride—he is so wonderfully good, so self-righteous! He has *never* done anything wrong. He is quite as good as a Christian and some better. He gives himself an excellent character. He could not have a better. If it were not for the name at the bottom, which is his own, he could get any situation with such a character as he has! But then, you see, he has given it to himself. You will have to give up that nonsense, for you have not a good character, after all, and when you stand in the Light of God, you will see yourself to be defiled from head to foot!

Another man's god is his *self-confidence*. Hear him talk. He understands everything! He does not need to be taught anything—and if there is anything in the Bible that he does not understand, why then he does not believe it! He knows better than God Almighty and the Holy Spirit! He can judge the Scriptures and tell you what they ought to be and he could have, himself, written a better book. So he says, sometimes, in his talk, or so he thinks. Ah, poor Soul! You will have to break that image of pride or it will be your ruin. Self-confidence, in all its shapes and forms, must be hurled down if God is to be set up in the heart!

Alas, there are some that have the images of Baal and Ashtaroth in the form of lust. Ah, you cannot keep your sin and go to Heaven! Unchastity, fornication, adultery, uncleanness of body—these must be given up! God is ready to forgive the harlot and the fornicator, but they must quit their sins once and for all and forever. You cannot lie in the sty and yet go home to your Father. This abominable thing must be totally given up and never thought of again, if you would be forgiven and saved.

Others, who are more respectable, have the god of covetousness. To make money, to save money, to grab, to grasp—for this they will grind the workman in his wages. For this they will cheat in the quantity or the quality of their goods. All sorts of tricks in trade will be performed that they may get rich. Now, covetousness is idolatry. If you worship a god of gold, you will perish as much as if you worshipped a god of mud! Oh, that we might have this god driven out of us and have a living, generous spirit implanted!

How many do I know, too, who have for an idol the god of drink! Old Bacchus sits astride not only the wine cask, but many a man's heart. The man, when sober and "all right," is what everybody calls, "a good fellow." But he must drink and when once he is drunk, then he is by no means a good fellow, but foul and vile in language and one knows not what he may do! Sir, you must quit strong drink if you would be saved. No drunkard has any inheritance in the Kingdom of God! Drunkenness must be given up, and chambering, and wantonness, and gluttony, and all the sins of the flesh! These gods must be broken. "Put away the strange gods from among you."

There are others I know whose strange god is malice. They cannot forgive. Perhaps even while sitting in the House of God they are saying, "Well, I can forgive everybody except my brother. He served me a very bad turn. I can never forgive him." Or, possibly, some are like the man who, when dying, told the priest that he forgave So-and-So for all the wrong he had done him—"That is," he said, "if I die. But if I get up again, I'll make him rue it." Are there not many whose forgiveness of injuries is of that kind? It is a mere sham! But there is no going to Heaven unless, frankly and unreservedly, you can forgive others their offenses. Why, you cannot even pray the Lord's Prayer unless you do so! "Forgive us our sins; for we also forgive everyone that is indebted to us." You cannot get through that prayer, much less get through the narrow gate, so long as malice is in your heart!

But I must not stay to enlarge here. Every man must discover his own idol, whatever it may be. And now let me most solemnly put it to each one of you—"If you will return unto the Lord with all your heart, then put away the strange gods that have ruled over you—and turn unto the Lord." That is the first decided step.

Are you saying, "Well, I will put away these evil things; I will give up these sins"? I am glad you have come to that. But when? Can you put them away now, just now, do you think? "I was thinking," says one, "I have an engagement tomorrow that will be rather bad." Can you not put the thing away tonight? "Well, I should like to have one indulgence of the flesh." Ah, Sir, you will never put these sins away till you go and do it straight away! That prodigal son got back to his father because he went off directly. He ran away! I do not know upon what terms his master had engaged him, whether it was by the quarter, or by the week, but this I know—he no sooner came to his senses than off he went and never stopped! He ran off instantly. You must run away from your old master without giving him any notice, for if you give him any warning, you will never get away at all! God help us to break the images here and now! Down with them, whatever they may be, and turn at once to the Lord!

Now, notice the next step of decision—"Put away the strange gods, and *prepare your hearts for the Lord*." The mere outward reformation was not enough. They might have torn down every idol in the land and have been no nearer God for that. See, in France, today, how the people who have for long bent the knee in superstition and idolatry, have, many of them, flung away their vain worship only to sink into infidelity. What better are they, when they exalt the "Goddess of Reason" where before stood the altars of the Papacy, when the heart is untouched and God is not in all their thoughts? Still, there are many in that land, as, I trust, there are many here, who are lamenting after God and only await the preparation of the heart *which comes from Him*, to bow in allegiance before His Throne. What, then, is the way to prepare the heart?

The first thing is, confession of sin. The people said, "We have sinned against the Lord." Go and confess your sin unto God. The more particular you can be in that confession, the better. Go and acknowledge your iniquity with many sighs and tears—and with deep regret that you should have sinned as you have done. Lay every secret bare and let the Light of God explore every hidden corner. The surgeon who means to cure must first expose the wound and probe it to the bottom—and before we can be forgiven, we must make a clean breast of our guilt, calling a spade a spade, and not trying to excuse ourselves, or cover up the evil.

Then resolve in your soul that you will quit these sins. No half measures will do—chronic diseases require thorough cures. You remember when Augustine, after a life of sin, heard what seemed to him a voice bidding him, "Take, read," he went to his New Testament and his eye lighted on the passage, "Put you on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof." Then and there he determined to leave all his former lusts and, in the strength of Christ, to live a new life. It was the hour of his conversion—the axe was laid to the root of

the tree and the old profligate life was utterly renounced! The sinner became a saint who led others in the way of holiness! And when he died, he left behind him a rich legacy of experience and instruction for the people of God. Whatever the sin is, it must go—

"Repentance is to leave
The sins we loved before,
And show that we in earnest grieve,
By doing so no more."

Then there must be much prayer, for so it was with these people. Cry mightily unto God, "Lord, save me!" Cry again and again unto Him and make this to be your one cry, "Give me Christ, or else I die!" Nothing so prepares the heart for God as crying out after Him! The water brooks are sweeter to the hart that has panted after them. The blessing is twice valued that has been won by intercession. I have heard it said that a man who wins his wife too easily treats her too lightly. Whether it is true, I cannot say, but I am sure that the richest blessings of God come to those who urge their suit again and again and who will not be denied the Grace they seek. May the Holy Spirit give you this preparation of heart by a full confession, a strong resolve and mighty prayer!

Remember, too, that there must be trust, or else the heart is not rightly prepared. We must get beyond the stage of "lamenting" and begin the act of "consenting." Not only wish and pray for the blessing, but rely on the Lord to send it! He who smote the first-born of the Egyptians and, with a strong hand and mighty arm, brought their fathers out of the house of bondage centuries earlier, could easily deliver them! He who gave them at first the land for a possession could still scatter their enemies. Why should they not expect Him to work a work in their day? By the memory of what God did for your forefathers, I exhort you to trust in my Savior. "We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work You did in their days, in the times of old." Therefore, O great Jehovah, will we trust in You in this *our* day!

Then, break away from the world. These people of Israel went home and smashed their idols. And then they gathered at Mizpeh, once more a separated people. It was like a declaration of war! Declare war at once with evil of every shape. Now, come, and enlist beneath the blood-stained banner of the Cross and say, "I am a follower of the Lamb, and I will not parley with iniquity. Let the Philistines come, if they will—I will not submit to them again. I will break loose from the world, God helping me."

Perhaps you say this is not the preparation of the heart, but the beginning of the battle. I know it, but any old soldier who has been in the wars will tell you that the best preparation for the strife is the first encounter with the enemy! After the first shot or two, the coward heart becomes brave, and the trembling nerves are strung for action. Many a timid soul is kept from the joy of God's salvation simply for the lack of a bold separation from the world. A little moral courage is all that is lacking in the case of some of you. Come out boldly and declare your desire and decision. Difficulties will vanish in the act. The first confession of Christ is the best possible preparation for the next one.

This matter of heart-preparation is most important. It is God's work and yet, as His Spirit is ever present to help our infirmities, it is also ours. You remember how Solomon, in the Proverbs, says to his son, "Keep your heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life"? If the heart is divided, the life can never be true. You will notice how Samuel put before the people the necessity of being thorough in their decision—"Return unto the Lord with all your hearts," was his clarion call. If we expect God to be wholly for us, we must be wholly for Him, and keep back nothing from His control. The Thessalonians "turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God," and in like manner this preparation of heart, on the part of Israel, came between the two acts of turning from idols and serving God—and was the spring of both.

Then the next step is *the service of God*—"Serve Him only," said Samuel. "Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the Lord only." It is not enough to give up serving evil—you must come and serve the Lord! That is to say, from this time forth your great aim must be to glorify God. If you would be saved, you must give up every object in life as a guiding star to you except serving God! Whatever He bids you do, you are to do. His will must be your law. Christ will save you, but He will have you take upon you His yoke and wear it. And as He is meek and lowly in heart, He would have you learn to be so, too. And then you shall find rest unto your soul. This is Christ's way—that where He comes to save, He comes to sanctify and make us obey His will and live to His praise. His smile is reward enough for the poor service we can render Him. His, "Well done," at last will be Heaven to the heart that loves Him! Oh, that many here would say, "Yes, I wish to serve the Lord and serve the Lord only. Too long have I drawn near to Him with my lips, while my heart was far from Him. 'O Lord our God, other lords beside You have had dominion over us: but by You, only, will we make mention of Your name.'"

III. Now, I think that I hear one say, "But these three steps are pretty stiff ones—give up the idols, prepare the heart, serve only the Lord." Yes, they are, and I do not believe that these people could ever have taken these three steps if it had not been for my third point, namely, that THEY WERE HELPED TO DO ALL THIS BY HAVING FAITH. It was faith in Samuel, as we have already noticed. You can be much more helped, yes, graciously enabled, if you have faith in Christ!

They believed *Samuel's words*. He had spoken to them and they said to one another, "Samuel says that God will deliver us from the Philistines if we trust Him. Samuel speaks the truth." Well, now, God has sent a greater than Samuel—His Only-Begotten Son—and He says to you that, "Whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." You need have no doubt about it—the Word He has spoken shall never be broken! He means what He promises and not one jot or tittle of His Word shall pass away till all is fulfilled. Believe what Christ says, that there is salvation for everyone who puts his trust in Him! Believe that and take hope and, getting that hope, be bold to strike the decisive blow tonight and give up your idols and turn to God!

These people believed chiefly in *Samuel's prayer*s. He was a mighty man in prayer and when the Philistines came, the children of Israel cried to him, saying, "Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us." How much greater faith should we put in the Lord Jesus, who died and rose again and *always* lives to plead for us! "Therefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He always lives to make intercession for them." Sinners, Christ is praying for you! If you trust Him, His prayers will help you to break the fetters of sin—

"The Lion of Judah shall break every chain,
And give us the victory again and again."

The people had faith in *Samuel's sacrifice*, for Samuel took a lamb and burnt it whole upon the altar. And our glorious Christ has made Himself the Lamb of God and He has been wholly consumed as an offering unto God. Trust in His Word! Trust in His prayers! Trust in His Sacrifice! Believe that the precious blood can make you white! Believe that there is virtue enough in the death of Christ to make atonement for all the sin that is confessed and laid before Him! If you believe, the blood of Jesus Christ His Son *has* cleansed you! If you will trust Him, your sin is put away. This is the very errand on which He came, "To put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."

Hear what the Lord has said by the Prophet—"I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins." "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins: return unto Me; for I have redeemed you." Believe this and, believing it, you shall be helped to break the idols, helped to prepare the heart, helped to come and serve the Lord only! Let the prayer go up from your heart to Him who poured out His soul on Calvary, but who is now alive and attentive to the voice of our cry, "O Lord, I trust in Your Sacrifice, I rely on Your blood! Save me for Your name's sake, and cleanse me from my sin."—

"Lord Jesus, I long to be perfectly whole,
I want You forever to live in my soul.
Break down every idol, cast out every foe—
Now wash me and I shall be whiter than snow."

Israel also accepted *Samuel's rule*—"Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. And he went from year to year in circuit to Bethel, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh and judged Israel in all those places." You see, salvation means being delivered from the power of sin. Salvation means being made a new man—an honest man, a holy man, a gracious man. It means that Christ, who saves the soul, begins to govern the life and this salvation is to be gained through faith in Jesus Christ. The Lord help you to believe in God Incarnate, in God making sacrifice for sin, in Jesus dead, buried, risen, ascended, sitting at the right hand of God and soon to come in Glory! Let Him enter your life and, dwelling in your heart, judge your every action and rule over your entire life.

I trust that none of you will say, "We will keep our idols." Ah, if you do so, you will not keep them long! If your idols are not taken away from you, you will be taken away from your idols. What will some of you do in the next world when there is no gold to hoard and no revelry in which to in-

dulge? When you will have no occupation but to gnash your teeth upon yourself because you committed everlasting suicide and refused and rejected Christ for a few days' pleasure, or a few years' gain? Will any of you be mad enough to let eternity go, let Heaven go and let God go for the paltry lusts of the flesh, for the fleeting gains of the hour? As I shall confront you at the bar of God, I charge you, seek Him! Put away your idols! Prepare your hearts! Trust in Jesus and serve only the Lord! God grant that it may be so, for His name's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 Samuel 7.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—331, 572, 582.

MR. SPURGEON UPDATE:

In order to keep readers of the sermons informed as to MR. SPURGEON'S actual condition, it would be necessary to write reports daily instead of weekly. And even then it would be very difficult to convey anything like a true account of the changes through which he is constantly passing. During the early part of last week, the dear sufferer was very feeble and ill, but before the week closed, he appeared to be considerably better. Then, on Monday, he was not nearly so well, while on Tuesday, when this note was written, he had again improved a little. It is clear, therefore, that he needs the prayers of the Lord's people as much as ever—and he will be very grateful for them.

While the preacher is laid aside, friends can help him to address a larger audience by increasing the circulation of the sermons and *The Sword and the Trowel*. [http://www.pilgrimpublications.com/swtrowel.htm .]The current sermon is one that is likely to be very useful *to the undecided*. Will those who love the Lord see that all such who are known to them are furnished with a copy? And will they also pray to the Lord to bless the reading of it to them?

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

THE FIRST, LAST—AND THE LAST, FIRST
NO. 2221

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY,
SEPTEMBER 13, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 12, 1891.**

***"But many who are first will be last, and the last, first."
Matthew 19:30.***

***"So the last will be first, and the first, last."
Matthew 20:16.***

We must be saved if we would serve the Lord. We cannot serve God in an unsaved condition. "They that are in the flesh cannot please God." It is vain for them to attempt service while they are still at enmity against God. The Lord wants not enemies to wait upon Him, nor slaves to grace His Throne. We must first be saved—and salvation is all of Grace. "By Grace are you saved through faith." After we are saved and as the *result* of salvation, we serve. Saved—we serve! He that is saved becomes a child of God and *then* he renders a child-like service in his Father's house. That service is also all of Grace! He serves not under the Law of the old commandment, "This do, and you shall live," for he is not under the Law, but under Grace. Therefore, sin shall not have dominion over him, but Grace shall have dominion over him—and he shall seek to serve the Lord and please Him all the days of his life. When we are saved, we must never forget that we are saved that we may *serve*—made free from sin, that we may become servants of God. David says, "O Lord, truly I am Your servant; I am Your servant and the son of Your handmaid: You have loosed my bonds." Because our bonds are loosed, we are under new bonds, bonds of *love* which bind us to the service of the Most High.

Now, when we come thus to be servants, we must not forget that we are saved men and women, for if we begin to fancy that while we serve, we are working to *win life by our merits*, we shall get upon legal ground. And a child of God on legal ground is going backwards—he is departing from his true standing before God. But remember, "You are not under the Law, but under Grace." But if you begin to forget your indebtedness to your Savior, not only for eternal life, but for everything you are, have and do, you will be like the Galatians who began in the Spirit, but sought to be made perfect by the flesh. You will be like the young man whose question we have just read—"What do I lack?" You will be like Peter, who puts in a sort of claim for reward—"Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed You; what shall we have therefore?" You will be like the men who had worked in the

vineyard from early morning and who murmured because the penny was given to those who had only worked for a single hour.

Christ will not have His servants under bondage to a legal spirit! Wherever He spies it out, He strikes it on the head, for both the service and the reward are all of Grace. The service, itself, is given us of God and God rewards the service which He, Himself, has given! We might almost speak of this as an eccentricity of Grace. God gives us good works and then rewards us for the works which He, Himself, has given! So all is of Grace from first to last and must never be viewed with a legal eye. Into this subject I want, on this occasion, to conduct you.

I dare say that you have heard sermons from this text, but probably not preached from it in its connection. I like to take the text as it stands and get from it a bit of exposition for my own heart, which I may pass on to you, for, remember, although the text away from its connection may be true, yet it is not the truth which God there intended to teach us and it becomes us to look about us to see what comes *before* the text and what comes *after*, in order that we may catch the exact meaning of the Holy Spirit in giving the words.

I. I shall begin by dwelling upon this remark—IN THE SERVICE OF OUR LORD FREE GRACE IS MANIFESTED. It may not strike you as being upon the surface of the text, but it lies on the very surface of the whole connection—in the service of our Lord, Free Grace is manifested. Think that over.

It must be so, in the first place, because, although it is rewarded, *all our service is already due to God*. Under the Law of God we are bound to love the Lord with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind and with all our strength. There can be nothing beyond that. All that we can do, we are already bound to do under the Law. Works of supererogation must be impossible, since the Law comprehends all holiness and condemns every form of sin. When we have done all, we are unprofitable servants—we have done no more than it was our duty to do. Therefore, Brothers and Sisters, if there is a service to which we are called, and for which a reward is promised, it must be a service of Grace. It cannot be any other. Under the Gospel, the same thing is true—all that we can do is *already* due. "You are not your own; for you are bought with a price." There is no faculty, there is no capacity, there is no *possibility* of your nature which is not redeemed and which does not belong to Christ by virtue of the ransom price which He has paid for it!

You will gladly and gratefully acknowledge the obligation to do all that lies in you for Him who loved you and bought you with His precious blood—

"Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears forever flow."

surely they are all already due to my Lord in repentance and gratitude! All the zeal of missionaries, all the patience of martyrs, all the faith of confessors, all the holiness of godly men is Christ's by right and, therefore, there can be no reward for them, seeing that they are already His due! If there is a service for which a reward is given to us, it is a service granted to us of Grace, that we may receive Grace thereby.

But, next, there is this reflection—*all our services is in itself unacceptable*. When all comes to all, it is still, in and of itself, a thing so mean and poor, so imperfect and defiled, that it could not claim any reward! Job was made to feel this in the day of his humiliation. He said, "If I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse. Though I were perfect, yet would I not know my soul: I would despise my life." If it were possible for us to stand before God in any merit of our own, we feel so certain that we have come short of the Glory of God and that in many things we have offended, that we would tear off our righteousness from us and throw it away as filthy rags, even the best of it! "I count all things but loss," says Paul, "that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ; the righteousness which is of God by faith." If, then, we are so conscious of our failures, shortcomings, and transgressions—and if we have to cry for mercy even on our holy things and to confess sin in them—how can we suppose that any reward that may be given can be otherwise than of Grace, seeing that the whole service, itself, must be of Grace?

Think again. *The ability to serve God is the gift of God's Grace*. I refer not only to *mental* ability, but to the capacity which men of substance have to help the cause of God by their generous gifts. It is God who gives the power to get wealth, as it is He who gives the brain to think and the mouth to speak. "What have you that you did not receive?" If any here present are serving God with gifts and graces, I am sure that they must acknowledge that those were *given* to them. They did not win them themselves. Or, if some of them are acquirements, yet the power to acquire was given them of Him from whom comes every good gift and every perfect gift. Thus the *ability* to serve God is the gift of Grace!

Beloved, *the call to serve God in any special way is also of Grace*. If we are called to the ministry, remember how Paul puts it—"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this Grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." If our kings put upon their coins, "*Dei gratia*"—kings, by the Grace of God—well, well, let them say so—but we can put it on our *lives*. "Sunday school teachers, by the Grace of God." "Street preachers, by the Grace of God." "Students in the College, by the Grace of God." "Preachers of the Gospel, by the Grace of God." It is God who calls us to our several sacred employments! Our ordination, if it is an ordination at all, is from that great Shepherd and Bishop of souls who went up into a mountain and called unto Him whom He would and made them to be His first messengers. Before He left them, He gave them that great commission which is still binding upon all His followers, "Go you into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature."

It is of Grace that we are put into any sphere of service! And what a Grace it is to be permitted to do anything for Him! His shoelaces we are not worthy to unloose! His shoes we are not worthy to bear. Though it is a menial's work, it is a monarch's work to do anything for Christ! Blessed be His name if He will let me be *anywhere* in His service, though it were but as a dishwasher in the kitchen! The kitchen is in the palace and Christ's kitchen maids are maids of honor! He that serves God, reigns. To serve

Him on earth is to be glorified! To serve Him in Heaven will be a part of our endless glory. Surely this, then, is by Grace!

Still further, *every opportunity of serving God is a gift of Grace*. I am sure that when I have been shut out from the pulpit by sickness, I have thought it a great Grace from God to be permitted to creep into the pulpit once more. When one's hand has been unable to hold a pen, we count it a Grace to be able to write, again, some loving words that may be blessed to men. I think that it is God's Grace that puts people in your way to whom you may speak privately. It is God's Grace that brings those children to the Sunday school to you, that you may teach them. If we were wide awake, we should see, all day long, opportunities of usefulness—and we should be saying, "Blessed be God who puts me, by Providence, where I can be of some little service to Him and bring forth some fruit to His praise!" It is all of Grace! These Providential openings and the spirit and the power to avail ourselves of them, come as gifts from God!

Another thing I know—when you have the call to a work and the opportunity, still *it is a gift of Grace to be in a right state of mind to do your Lord's service*. Do you ever feel sluggish and dull? Would you not always be so if His Spirit did not quicken you? Are you not sometimes frostbitten so that your soul seems like a great iceberg? Would the waters ever flow unless the Spirit came with melting power? Do you not thank God, dear Brother, that you have had gracious occasions in which the Lord has made you like Naphtali, "a hind let loose"? When you have given forth goodly words, from whom has come the unction? Where did the power come from? You have spoken—ah, that is a poor thing! But *God* has spoken *through* you—ah, that is a *grand* thing! Is not that wholly the work of Grace? Every tear of sympathy that the preacher sheds when he is wooing men to Christ. Every heartthrob and all the anguish of his soul when he would gladly compel them to come in—the whole bearing and carriage of a Grace-taught minister or teacher—all this is of Grace and unto God must be the Glory for it. It is not under Law that we are working, for the Law of God provides no strength, no tone, no savor. It is Grace that makes us work, for it gives us the strength with which to work. "God has spoken once; twice have I heard this, that power belongs unto God. Also unto You, O Lord, belongs mercy: for You render to every man according to his work." You give him strength proportioned to his need and the guidance necessary because of the difficulties of his task. Here is Grace! Is it not so?

You will be sure to join with me in the next point without a single objection—*success in holy service is wholly of the Lord*. If we were so wicked as to attribute to ourselves the sowing, and to ourselves the watering, apart from Grace, yet we would not dare to attribute to ourselves the increase! "I have planted," said Paul. "Apollos watered; but God gave the increase." Would a single persuasion of ours prevail with man's hard heart if the Holy Spirit did not convince him of sin and make him repent? Would the preaching of the Gospel in our poor way ever enlighten a single eye if Jesus Christ were not seen in His own light? Could we comfort the broken-hearted, could we proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound if the Spirit of God were not upon us?

Why, if we did make the proclamation, would it not fall flat to the ground, apart from the work of God, who does all things through us and by us?

We are laborers together with Him. We lift our hand and God lifts His. We speak and He speaks. We would gladly lay hold of men's hearts, but He *does* lay hold of them! We would weep them to Christ, but He brings them weeping to Christ and saves them to eternal life! Blessed be His name! After many years of prophesying in His name, dare any of us say that we have made the dry bones to live? After having long given the invitation, do we say that we have persuaded one to come to the wedding feast apart from the Lord's Divine working? Do we take *any* of the glory of a saved soul to ourselves? It were treason! It were blasphemy! We dare not commit such a sin. Our work, if it succeeds at all—if it is worth calling a *good* work—is all of Grace!

And if, my dear Friends, any of you are called to suffer for Christ's sake, *the honor of suffering is a special gift*. If you have been reviled, if you have lost position, if you have suffered those moderate martyrdoms which are possible in a free country like this, then, "Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake." "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in Heaven: for so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you." But take no credit to yourself. You are elevated to the peerage of suffering—it is your King who brought you there. You have His gracious permission to pass through great tribulation. That were nothing to you if you had not washed your robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb!

You owe your patience, your courage, your steadfastness, *your all* to the Spirit of God. You would have long since been carried away by the fear of man, which brings a snare—you would have long since been a traitor to the Truth of God and to your Lord if He had left you. It is your duty to be faithful. When you are faithful, it is not in yourself that you are so. He works all our works in us and He must have the praise of them. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Work it out to the very fullest! Be thorough with it. "For it is God which works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." "Be you steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." God will reward you, but your steadfastness, your diligence, your patience—all these are the work of the Grace of God and you know it! If you, indeed, possess them, you ascribe them all to Him.

Now, then, we have established this, I think, beyond all contradiction among spiritual men—that in the service of the Lord, Free Grace is magnified.

II. So we take another step and we say, as our second head, THEREFORE THE LORD HAS HIS OWN WAY OF MEASURING WHAT WE DO. You see that in the case of these persons who had toiled in the vineyard, their master measured their work after his own fashion. He did not go by the regular way of pay as so much an hour, but, inasmuch as it was all of Grace, this great householder made the reward to be after his own measure—a penny for one hour and a penny for 12 hours! He made the last equal to the first! So shall it be—"The last will be first, and the first, last." This is because we are dealing here, not with a legal paymaster, but with

a God of Grace who measures our service, which itself is all of Grace, by His own measurement, and not by ours.

He will reward every worker, but not as we judge. He will do no man any injustice, even in the Omnipotence of His Grace. He will be able to say to every worker, "Friend, I do you no wrong." He will do no wrong to any of His servants, whoever they may be, rest sure of that, but still He will reply, "Is it not lawful for Me to do what I will with My own?" And He will reward His workers in His own royal, yet gracious way.

So, then, *He will not reward us as according to the time spent, or surface covered*. Some may be Christians for 30 or 40 years and may never be among the first. It is not the length of your service, good as that is, that will be God's gain! There may be some who shall come to Christ and go home to Heaven in a single year and yet shall bring great honor to their Master. It is not the length of time in which you are engaged in the lord's service. Neither is it the space that is apparently covered. Some seem to do a great deal, skimming over a wide surface, but it is not this that the Master measures—neither by the hour, nor yet by the acre. That might be a loyal way of measurement, but His gracious way of measurement is not so.

And *He will not measure out the reward according to our ability*, whether it is mental ability, ability of substance, or ability of opportunity, for some of us might come in for a large share and others might come in for a very little if this were the rule. But this is not the way the Master measures! If to one man He gives the gift of speech, to another the great gift of diving deeply into the meaning of His Words, to another experience and so on, yet the reward to the persons holding these various gifts will not be in proportion to the gifts they have, but after quite another rule.

The reward will not be according to the judgement of men. A Brother has served God in his way, and his brethren think much of him and appoint him to an office. He is a deacon, or an elder, or, perhaps, he becomes a pastor. It is a high reward to be allowed thus to increase our opportunities of usefulness, but we shall not, at last, be rewarded according to the height of office. That is not the standard in this Kingdom where Christ rules.

Above all, *no man shall be measured by his own judgement,* otherwise I know some friends who would have a very grand reward. They are free from sin! They are perfect, they say, but their Master knows, if they do not, whether that is true or not. Another says, "I have done this and I have done that." But it is not what you *say* that you have done, that will gauge your Master's reward to you. There are some that speak very loudly of what they have accomplished. I do not think that their brethren, for the most part, think the more of them for thinking so much of themselves. I believe that those who have lower opinions of their own capacity and usefulness are much more honored in the presence of the saints of God. No, our self-judgment, our tall talk, our loud profession and so forth, will not be the measure with which we shall be rewarded, otherwise those who said, "We have borne the burden and heat of the day," would have had two-pence, at least, if not three-pence, or, perhaps, even a shilling in pro-

portion to those poor creatures whom the master made equal to them, though they had only come in at the 11th hour!

Our reward will not be according to the impression made among men. We may have made our mark upon our age, neighborhood and surroundings. Some men's names will go down to posterity. Others have no fame at all. It will be found of some men that their lives are written and emblazoned everywhere. Others will live in the little circle of their family, but not beyond that narrow range. But God will not measure so. The godly housewife, with four or five children trained for God in her cottage, may be reckoned of God among the first. And the able speaker in his pulpit, who has thousands hanging on his lips, may be reckoned of God among the last. God has His own ways of measuring up men's works.

But let me add that *we shall not be rewarded even according to our success.* To some men, success is meted out in large measure—that success which really is not their own, but is the fruit of other men's labors. A man preaches the Gospel with many tears for years and sees little fruit. He dies. Another man, of earnest spirit, follows him and gathers in the old man's sheaves. The former man planted; the other man entered into his labors. To whom shall the reward be given? The success is not due to him who seems to have achieved it. You remember that old Romish legend which contains a great truth? There was a brother who preached very mightily and who had won many souls to Christ and it was revealed to him, one night, in a dream, that in Heaven he would have no reward for all that he had done. He asked to whom the reward would go and an angel told him that it would go to an old man who used to sit on the pulpit stairs and pray for him. Well, it may be so, though it is more likely that both would share their Master's praise. We shall not be rewarded, however, simply according to our apparent success.

Neither shall we be put down as one of the last because of no success. God intends that some men shall never succeed, according to the rule of success that appertains among men, for He sent even His servant Isaiah to go and make the people's hearts hard and their ears dull of hearing! And He sent Jeremiah to weep over a nation to whom his tears brought no repentance and no reformation! He may send you, like Noah, to preach for 120 years and never got a soul beside your own family into the ark! But if you are faithful, that is well pleasing in His sight. Here lies the good pleasure of God. I do not suppose that it will happen that you are to do all the plowing and all the sowing and there should never be an armful of sheaves for you in all your life—though, if it should be thus, and you shall have been, at the last, found faithful to the commission that your God has given you, verily, I say unto you, you shall have your reward! But the reward is not measured out according to *man's* rule of success.

Let me tell you what I think is a rule with God. It is a many-branched kind of rule. Some men stand first because of their strong *desire.* Oh, they would have saved the people if they could! They would have persuaded men to be Christians if they could. They would have laid down their lives to do it! They preached their very hearts out in their desire for their Hearers' salvation. Their souls ran over at their lips while they talked with

men. God knows their desires and He takes the will for the deed and, "so the last will be first."

God also measures *proportions*. The Brother never had more than one talent, but he did as much with it as some with ten, yet it did not seem to come to much in his eyes. He was always mourning because he was so little. He thought that he was like one of those coral insects at the bottom of the sea, just making a little bit of coral which never came above the waves—but it was part of a great whole that would afterwards rise into a fairy island of the sea! Our Lord will measure, not according to what a man has *not*, but according to what a man *has*.

And here is one who has little to commend him except his *spirit*. He waits upon God. He is very gracious. He trembles at God's Word. He speaks with His whole heart very reverently, very tenderly, desiring always to be silent if God would have him silent, and only to speak when God would move him to speak. His delight is to do the Lord's will and nothing but the Lord's will—and he is quite content to be *nothing*. Indeed, he cries for that—

"Oh to be nothing, nothing,
Only to lie at His feet."

Now, God may put that man among the first, whereas the self-contained man, who works sincerely for God, may, nevertheless, have to go into the back rank and be among the last.

Here is one, again, who, whatever he does, does it with thoroughness. He does not attempt many things, but he does one thing. It is all that he can do and he throws his whole soul into it and works at it like some Eastern artist working at a cameo for a prince. All his life is put into that little bit of a thing and, it may be, that our great King will count him first, while another who did much in a slovenly, slurring style and was thought to have done a great deal, will have all his work rejected, for it is not up to the Prince's mark and He will not adorn His palace therewith.

I think, dear Friends, that God will measure our work very much by our *thought of Him* in it. If we did it all *to* Him. If we did it all *for* Him. If He was always in our mind in the doing of it and we did not think of our friends, nor of our own reputation, God would be more likely to honor us, for He will put those who think much of Him among the first, and others among the last. "Them that honor Me," says the Lord, "I will honor."

And especially, again, if all that we do is baptized with *love*. Why, see that woman who brought her alabaster box, and broke it, and poured the precious ointment of spikenard upon Christ's head! She is put among the first and Christ makes honorable mention of her wherever the Gospel is preached! Some that did much have to go among the last, for they had not such love as she had.

Some work for God with great *faith*—and the Lord loves to see us working in faith. To do a great deal of work with a great deal of unbelief is to do very little, after all, for if a prayer that is unbelieving does not prosper, preaching or teaching that is unbelieving is not likely to do so. Put faith into your work and, maybe, you will be among the first.

I am sure that God measures much of our work ac cording to the *prayer* we expend over it. Oh, yes, it was a fine sermon! You could tell how

the preacher had worked at it—you could see how he had polished up that phrase and how he had cut that sentence into dice-pieces to make it sound great—but you could also see that he had never prayed over it. A sermon that is prayed over is worth 10,000 that are merely prepared, or copied, or that spring out of a man's mind without being worked by the Holy Spirit in his heart. Oh, to pray down the sermon and then to pray up the sermon and pray it all over, resting upon God, alone!

God will often look upon our work in *giving*, not according to how much we give, but I think that the Lord's rule is to take notice of *how much we have left*. That woman who gave all her living, gave more than all the rich men gave, because she had nothing left. It was but two mites that make a farthing, but then it was all her living and so she goes into the front rank! My lord has given a thousand pounds and we are very much obliged to him. He must go into the back rank, for all that, for he has so much left.

And then, it may be, that they will take the first place *who did not get any reward* for what they did. Our Lord tells us that when we are making a feast, we should call in the blind, and the halt, and the lame. Why? "For," He says, "they cannot recompense you." He speaks of the Pharisees, again, and says, "Verily I say unto you, They have their reward." You will not be paid twice! If you have done something for Christ—for instance, defended the faith—and you are denounced for it and traduced for it, very well, you have not had your pay for it. There remains the recompense for unrewarded services. It is a grand thing when, by the Grace of God, you have something standing in God's Book, not of law, but of Grace! You helped a poor man and he was not grateful. Oh, be so thankful that he was not grateful, because if he had been grateful, maybe you would have had your reward!

When those you relieve are very kind afterwards, and speak well of you, and do you some good service in return, it is very nice. Of course it is. Well, but you are *paid*. But those who have done good and suffered for it. Those who, for the best thing that they did have had the worst return—who have rendered kindness and have only received unkindness as the result—it may be that the Lord will say of them, "These were last, but they shall be first." Whereas many that stood first in men's esteem and in the gratitude they received, will have to go last.

III. Now, my time almost fails me, but you must bear with me on my third head, for here is the practical part of Free Grace in our service. Therefore WE HAVE INSTRUCTIONS AS TO OUR SPIRIT AS WORKERS. If the work is all of Grace and if God has a way of measuring up that work, which is not at all according to the Law, but of His own Grace, then there are two things to be observed. First, do not be proud. Secondly, do not be discouraged.

Do not be proud, for many that are first shall be last. Suppose, my dear Friend, that you really are first and are doing a great deal for God—will you be proud? Why, *you are only a greater debtor*! You owe all the more to that Grace which has enabled you to be of some service in the Kingdom of your Lord! Lie low at your Lord's feet and be very humble.

Next, remember that though you may think that you are first, *you may, even now, be among the last*. Your assessment of your service may not be

the Divine assessment at all. You may think that you are "rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing," but, in God's repute, you may be, "Wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Your work may be like very big trusses of hay, loads of straw and stacks of stubble! And yet, when God comes to try it, it may be all burned down to a handful of ashes, whereas the friend, of whom you think so little, may only have built a small portion, but he has built it of gold, silver and precious stones. Let us also remember that, even if it is true that we are among the first, we may, if we get proud of it, *find ourselves among the last*. Oh, how some of God's greatest servants have been shriveled up when they began to swell out with pride and vanity! God blessed them as long as they were feeble, weak and leaned upon His strength, but when they were strong and relied on themselves, there came a dreadful failure.

There is one thing which is absolutely certain. *If you are among the first, you will reckon yourself to be among the last*. He that is best, thinks himself worst. What a description Paul gives of himself in the 7th Chapter of Romans! "Oh," says one, "I heard a person say that Paul was not a converted man when he wrote that!" Let me tell you that he had been in the third Heaven when he wrote that bit of deep experience. He had so much likeness to his Lord that he excelled every other man then living, except, perhaps, John! And if it had not been for his extraordinary holiness, he would never have been able to pen those tremendous groanings wherein he says, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

The man who thinks that he is holy has never seen the holy God. If he had—if he had ever beheld Him, he would say with Job, "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear: but now my eyes see You. Therefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." The superlative perfection of the Lord God and the absolutely perfect example of our Lord Jesus Christ are such that if a man has ever had communion with these, he shrinks into nothing in his own esteem! He that is really first is always the man who is willing to be accounted last. Paul, though he is not a whit behind any of the Apostles, yet calls himself less than the least of all saints and describes himself as having been the chief of sinners. Ah, Beloved! A low idea of self is one of the labels with which God marks the best of His possessions! Therefore, do not be proud.

In the next place, do not be discouraged. If you feel that you are last, *God's measure is not yours*. Though you may think that you are last, He may not think so at all. Though you say, "I am not worthy to be an Apostle," yet He may think you worth putting into the apostleship. God's idea of your worthiness and your own may greatly differ—and His estimate is the true one!

Besides, suppose that you *are* last, yet "*He gives more Grace*." Christ has come, not only that we may have life, but that we may have it "more abundantly." Do not be content with what you have! "Covet earnestly the best gifts." Covet still more the best Graces. God is able to do for us "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." Go in for great things. Has not the Lord said, "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it." I spoke to a man of God this morning and I told him how God had graciously en-

abled me to draw near to Him in prayer and of the glorious way He had granted my requests. My Friend said, "Yes, and He has made your mouth bigger than it used to be." Is it not so? The faculty of believing prayer grows by being used! The more you ask, the more you *may* ask and the more you have asked, the more you *will* ask. The capacity to receive is increased by receiving. God grant that it may be so with us if we are last!

Remember, too, that if you really are among the least useful, yet a *right spirit may compensate* for your poverty and make your little service very precious. If you cannot get a wide sphere, do not want it. A young minister said to an old one, "Ah, Sir, I preach only to about 100 people. I wish that I could get where I could gather a thousand." His friend answered, "Young man, a hundred people are quite enough for you to be accountable for. And if you faithfully discharge your duty to their souls, you have quite enough to do." Wish for a larger sphere if you are capable of filling it, but remember that the best preparation for greater usefulness is to be faithful in your present position.

My last word to God's children is this— what does it matter, after all, whether we are first or whether we are last? Do not let us dwell too much upon it, for *we all share the honor given to each*. When we are converted, we become members of Christ's living body. And as we grow in Grace and get the true spirit that permeates that body, we shall say, when any member of it is honored, "This is honor for *us*." If any Brother shall be greatly honored of God, I feel honored in his honor. If God shall bless your Brother and make him 10 times more useful than you are, then you see that He is blessing you—not only blessing him, but you! If my hand has something in it, my foot does not say, "Oh, I have not got it!" No, for if my hand has it, my foot has it—it belongs to the whole of my body. If my mouth alone eats, yet it does not eat for my mouth, alone, but it eats for my brain, my hand, my backbone—for every part of me.

So, when you get to feel your oneness with Christ, and your oneness with His people, your only thought will be, "Let God be glorified; let Him be magnified. It does not matter whether I am first or last." You will stand up and say, "That Brother who was converted only a week or two ago, got his penny and I am glad of it." Here is another, who has done very poor work, but you will thank God that he got his penny. He is one of the family. It all comes from the same hand and it will all come home to the same house. We are something like men in a great shop where there are different people serving. One young man has a counter where ladies come and he serves them—and he takes a lot of money in the day. Another counterman, at the back, sells goods that take a deal of trouble to dispose of and upon which there is but a trifling profit. Does the master praise the men of the shop according to the quantity of money each takes? The one who is put in the back place and sells poor goods is just as diligent and just as worthy in his master's sight as the others! Suppose that they are all members of one family—when they meet at night, one will say, "I took in so much." Another will say, "I took 10 times as much as that," but they are all glad because it all goes into the firm—it is all a part of the same concern. Go then, dear Brothers and Sisters, and work away for Christ!

And do not envy one another, but all be glad to be permitted, in this work of Grace, to take any part or any portion for your Lord.

One thing more, and I am done. I have only been talking to God's people all this while because you that are not saved cannot serve Him. What a miserable position yours is! You are out of the pale of service. God will receive nothing of you till you come to Christ. The only way to bring sacrifice is to bring it through the great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ! "Except you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." Much less shall you be accepted as servants there. I beseech you, by the thought of the Grace of which I have been speaking, to rest not until you can say that Christ has saved you, made you a partaker of His Grace and sent you forth into His royal service. The Lord bless you! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
Matthew 19:16-30; 20:1-16.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—639, 663, 235.

MR. SPURGEON UPDATE:

There can be very little variety in the notes published week by week concerning MR. SPURGEON'S illness. His condition varies from day to day and almost from hour to hour. And yet, as week follows week, he remains practically the same. "Hope deferred makes the heart sick." This long waiting is very wearisome to the one who suffers and also to those who watch by him, but the Lord will not permit the suffering or the watching to continue one moment longer than is necessary for the accomplishment of His purposes of love and mercy. Prayer and patience must, therefore, continue to have their perfect work until they give place, in the Lord's good time, to praise and thanksgiving. Prayer has been so graciously heard and answered in the preservation of the life dear to so many, that we cannot do otherwise than continue our supplications. (After the above was written on Tuesday, MR. SPURGEON was carried downstairs and wheeled in the garden for half-an-hour—this may prove to be the turning point towards his recovery. God grant it)!

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LYDIA, THE FIRST EUROPEAN CONVERT
NO. 2222

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
SEPTEMBER 20, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple, from the city of Thyatira, who worshipped God, whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul."
Acts 16:14.

We may laudably exercise curiosity with regard to the first proclamation of the Gospel in our own quarter of the globe. We are happy that history so accurately tells us, by the pen of Luke, when first the Gospel was preached in Europe and by whom, and who was the first convert brought by that preaching to the Savior's feet. I half envy Lydia that she should be the leader of the European band! But I feel right glad that a woman led the van and that her household followed so closely in the rear.

God has made great use of women and greatly honored them in the Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Holy women ministered to our Lord when He was upon the earth and since that time much sacred work has been done by their patient hands. Man and woman fell together—together they must rise! After the Resurrection, it was a *woman* who was first commissioned to carry the glad tidings of the risen Christ. And in Europe, where woman was, in future days, to be set free from many of the trammels of the East, it seems fitting that a woman should be the first Believer. Not only, however, was Lydia a sort of first-fruit for Europe, but she probably also became a witness in her own city of Thyatira, in Asia. We do not know how the Gospel was introduced into that city, but we are informed of the existence of a Church there by the message of the ascended Christ through His servant, John, to "the angel of the Church in Thyatira." Very likely Lydia became the herald of the Gospel in her native place. Let the women who know the Truth of God proclaim it, for why should their influence be lost? "The Lord gives the word; the women that publish the tidings are a great host." Woman can be as powerful for evil as for good—we see it in this very Church of Thyatira, where the woman Jezebel, who called herself a prophetess, sought to seduce many from the Truth. Seeing, then, that the devil employs women in his service, let those women whom God has called, by His Grace, be doubly earnest in seeking to prevent or undo the mischief that others of their sex are working. If not called to public service, all have the home-sphere wherein they can shed forth the aroma of a godly life and testimony.

If the Gospel does not influence our homes, it is little likely to make headway among the community. God has made family piety to be, as it

were, a sort of trademark on religion in Europe, for the very first convert brings with her all her family! Her household believed and were baptized with her. You shall notice in Europe, though I do not mean to say that it is not the same anywhere else, that true godliness has always flourished in proportion as family religion has been observed. They hang a bell in a steeple and they tell us that it is our duty to go every morning and every evening into the steeple house, there to join in prayer. But we reply that our own house is better for many reasons—at any rate, it will not engender superstition for us to pray *there*. Gather your children together and offer prayer and supplication to God in your own home!

"But there is no priest." Then there ought to be! Every man should be a priest in his own household and, in the absence of a godly father, the mother should lead the devotions! Every house should be the House of God and there should be a Church in every house. And when this is the case, it will be the greatest barrier against priestcraft and the idolatry of holy places. Family prayer and the pulpit are the bulwarks of Protestantism! Depend upon it, when family piety goes down, the life of godliness will become very low. In Europe, at any rate, seeing that the Christian faith began with a converted household, we ought to seek after the conversion of all our families and to maintain within our houses the good and holy practice of family worship.

Lydia, then, is the first European convert, and we will review her history as far as we have it in Holy Writ. Towards her conversion, four things co-operated, upon which we will speak briefly. First, *the working of Providence*. Secondly, *the working of Lydia, herself.* Thirdly, *the working of Paul.* And fourthly, *the working of the Holy Spirit*.

I. First, notice THE WORKING OF PROVIDENCE. When I was in Amsterdam, I visited the works of a diamond-cutter where I saw many large wheels and much powerful machinery at work. And I must confess that it seemed very odd that all that great array of apparatus should be brought to bear upon a tiny bit of crystal which looked like a fragment of glass. Was that diamond worth so much that a whole factory should be set to work to cut its facets and cause it to sparkle? So the diamond-cutter believed. Within that small space lay a gem which was thought worthy of all this care and labor. That diamond may be, at this time, glistening upon the finger or brow of royalty! Now, when I look abroad upon Providence, it seems preposterous to believe that kingdoms, dynasties and great events should all be co-operating and working together for the accomplishment of the Divine purpose in the salvation of God's people. But they *are* so working! It might have seemed preposterous, but it was not so, that these great wheels should all be working for the cutting of a single diamond. And it is not preposterous, however it may seem, to say that all the events of Providence are being ordered by God to effect the salvation of His own people, the perfecting of the precious jewels which are to adorn the crown of Christ forever and ever!

In the case before us, the working of God's Providence is seen, first of all, *in bringing Paul to Philippi*. Lydia is there. I do not know how long she had been there, nor exactly what brought her there, but there she is, selling her purple, her Turkey red cloth. Paul must go there, too, but he does

not want to—he has not, indeed, had any desire to go there. He still has a kind of prejudice hanging about him, so that, though he is willing to preach to the Gentiles, he scarcely likes to go out of Asia among those Gentiles or the Gentiles over in Europe. He wants to preach the word in Asia. Very singularly, the Spirit suffers him not, and he seems to have a cold hand laid on him to stop him when his heart is warmest. He is gagged. He cannot speak. "Then I will go into Bithynia," he says, but when he starts on the journey, he is distinctly told that there is no work for him to do there. He must not speak for his Master in that region, at least not yet—"the Spirit suffered him not." He feels himself to be a silenced man. What is he to do? He gets down to Troas on the verge of the sea and there comes to him the vision of a man of Macedonia who begged him, saying, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us." He infers that he must go across to Macedonia. A ship is ready for him—he has a free course, a favorable passage—and he soon arrives at Philippi. God brings Paul to the spot where Lydia was, in this strange and singular manner!

But the working of Providence was quite as much manifested *in bringing Lydia there,* for Lydia was not originally at Philippi. She was a seller of purple, of Thyatira. Thyatira was a city famous for its dyers. They made a peculiar purple which was much prized by the Romans. Lydia appears to have carried on this business. She was either a widow, or perhaps had had no husband, though she may have gathered a household of servants about her. She comes over to Philippi across the sea. I think I see them bringing the great rolls of red cloth up the hill, that she may sell at Philippi the cloth which she has made and dyed at Thyatira. Why does she come just at this season? Why does she come just when Paul is coming? Why does she come to Philippi? Why not to Neapolis? Why not press on to Athens? Why not sell her cloth over at Corinth? Whatever reason she might have given for her choice, there was one cause of which she was ignorant, which shaped her action and brought her to Philippi at that time!

God had a surprise in store for her. She and Paul have to meet. It does not matter what their will is—their wills shall be so moved and actuated by the Providence of God that they shall cross each other's path—and Paul shall preach the Gospel to Lydia. I know it never entered into Lydia's heart, when she left Thyatira with her purple bales, that she was going to find Jesus Christ over at Philippi. Neither did Paul guess, when he saw, in a vision, a man of Macedonia and heard him say, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us," that the first person he would have to help would not be a man of Macedonia at all, but a woman of Thyatira and that the congregation he should preach to would be just a handful of women gathered by the side of the little stream that runs through Philippi! Neither Paul nor Lydia knew what God was about to do, but God knew! He understands the end from the beginning and times His acts of Providence to meet our deepest needs in the wisest way—

"His wisdom is sublime,
His heart profoundly kind.
God never is before His time,
And never is behind."

What an odd thing it seemed that this woman should be a woman of Thyatira in Asia—and Paul must not go and preach in Asia and yet, when he comes to Macedonia, the first person who hears him is a woman of Asia! Why, you and I would have said, "If the woman belongs to Thyatira, let her stay at home and let Paul go there, that is the shortest cut." Not so. The woman of Thyatira must go to Philippi and Paul must go to Philippi, too. This is God's plan and if we knew all the circumstances as God knows them, we would doubtless admire the wisdom of it. Perhaps the very peculiarity of the circumstances made Paul more alert to seize the opportunity at Philippi than he would have been had he gone on to Thyatira. Perhaps the isolation of the strange city made Lydia yearn more after spiritual things. God can answer a dozen ends by one act!

One of our evangelists tells of a man who was converted in a small Irish town and it was afterwards discovered that he and the preacher who led him to Christ, resided but a few hundred yards from each other in London! They had never met in this great city, where neighbors are strangers to each other, nor was it likely that they ever would have been brought into contact with one another here, for the man, who was a commercial traveler, was too careless to ever attend a place of worship in London. But to sell his goods, he went to Ireland, where, also, went the evangelist to preach the Gospel! And being somewhat at a loss to know what to do with his time, he no sooner saw the name of a preacher from London announced than he determined to attend the service—and there he met with Christ! We can see how natural this was in the case of which we know all the particulars—and it was doubtless as well arranged in the case of Lydia and Paul.

Now, I should not wonder tonight if there are a number of Providences that have worked together to bring some of my hearers into their places at this time. What brought *you* to London, Friend? It was not your intention to be in this city. Coming to London, what brought you to this part of it? What led you to be at this service? And why was it that you did not come on one of the Sundays when the preacher would have been here if he could, but could not be here by reason of his weakness? It may be that only from these lips can the Word of God come to you—and only tonight—and you must come to this place! Perhaps there is someone who preaches the Gospel much better in the town where you live. Or, perhaps, you have had opportunities of hearing the same preachers near your own door, and you did not avail yourself of them. And yet God has brought you here. I wish we watched Providences more. "Who is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord." If the Lord should meet with you and convert you tonight, I will guarantee you that you will be a believer in Providence, and say, "Yes, God guided my steps. He directed my path and He brought me to the spot where Jesus met with me and opened my heart that I might receive the Gospel of His Grace."

Be of good courage, you ministers of the Gospel! Providence is always working with you while you are working for God. I have often admired the language of Mohammed, when, in the battle of Ohod, he said to his followers, pointing to their foes, "Charge them! I can hear the wings of the

angels as they hasten to our help." That was a delusion on his part, for he and his men were badly beaten, but it is no delusion in the case of the servants of Christ! We *can* hear the wings of the angels! We may hear the grinding of the great wheels of Providence as they revolve for the help of the preacher of the Gospel. Everything is with us when we are with God. Who can be against us? The stars in their courses fight for the servants of God! And all things, great and small, shall bow before the feet of Him who trod the waves of the Sea of Galilee and still is Master of all things and rules all things to the accomplishment of His Divine purposes!

So much, then, for the working of Providence.

II. The next thing is, THE WORKING OF LYDIA. God's intention is that Lydia shall be saved. Yet, you know, no woman was ever saved against her will. God makes us willing in the day of His power and it is the way of His Grace not to violate the will, but sweetly to overcome it. Never will there be *anybody* dragged to Heaven by the ears—depend upon that! We shall go there with all our hearts and all our desires. What, then, was Lydia doing?

Having, by God's Grace, been made willing, the first thing was that *she kept the Sabbath*. She was a proselyte and she kept the seventh day. She was away from Thyatira and nobody would know what she would do, yet she observed the Lord's-Day carefully. She was abroad when she was at Philippi, but she had not left God behind her. I have known some English people, when they once reached the Continent, go rattling along, Sundays and weekdays, as if God did not live on the Continent and, as if at home they only observed the Sabbath because they happened to be in England, which is very probably the case with a good many. When they get away, they say, "When you are at Rome, you must do as Rome does." And so they take their pleasure on God's day. It was not so with Lydia. There was no selling of purple that day—she regarded the Sabbath. Oh, I would to God that everyone would regard the Sabbath! May God grant that it may never be taken away from us! There is a plot now to make some of you work all the seven days of the week—and you will not get any more pay for seven days than you get for six. Stand out against it and preserve your right to rest upon the Lord's Day! The observance of one day in seven as a day of rest materially helps towards the conversion of men because then they are inclined to *think*. They have the opportunity to hear and, if they choose to avail themselves of it, the probabilities are that God will bless the hearing and they will be saved!

Now, notice next that not only did Lydia observe the Sabbath, but *she went up to the place of worship*. It was not a very fine place. I do not suppose there was any building. It may have been a little temporary oratory put up by the river side, but very probably it was just on the bank of the river that they met together. It does not appear that there were any men, but only a few women. They only held a Prayer Meeting—"where prayer was known to be made." But Lydia did not stay away from the gathering. She might easily have excused herself after her long journey and the wearying work of setting up a new establishment, but her heart was in this matter and so she found it no drudgery to meet where prayer was offered. She did not say "I can read a sermon at home," or, "I can read in the Book

of the Law indoors." She wished to be where God's people were, however few, or however poor they might be. She did not go to the gorgeous heathen temple at Philippi, but she sought out the few faithful ones that met to worship the true God.

Now, dear Friends, do the same! You that are not converted, still attend the means of Grace and do not go to a place simply because it is a fine building, or because there is a crowd, but go where they are truly worshipping God in spirit and in truth. If they should happen to be very few and very poor, yet go with them, for in so doing you are in the way of blessing. I think you will yet have to say, "Being in the way, God met with me." If it is what some call, "only a Prayer Meeting," you will do well to go. Some of the best blessings that men have ever gained have been received at Prayer Meetings. If we would meet with God, let us seek Him diligently, "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is." Though you cannot save yourself, or open your own heart, you can at least do what Lydia did—observe the Sabbath and gather together with God's people.

Lydia, being there with the assembly, when Paul began to speak, we find that *she attended to the things that were spoken*, which is another thing that we can do. It is very ill when people come up to the House of God and do not attend. I have never had to complain of people not attending in this house since the day I first preached in it, but I have been in places of worship where there seemed to be anything but attention. How can it be expected that there will be a blessing when the pew becomes a place to sleep, or when the mind is thinking about the farm, or in the kitchen, or in the shop, forgetting altogether the Gospel which is being preached to the outward ear? If you want a blessing, attend with all your might to the Word of God that is preached—and of that we will speak more, by-and-by.

So far we have spoken upon the working of Providence and the working of Lydia.

III. Now, next, THE WORKING OF PAUL, for this, too, was necessary. In order to the conversion of men, it is necessary that the person who aims at their conversion should work as if it all depended upon him, though he knows that he cannot accomplish the work! We are to seek to win souls with as much earnestness, prudence and zeal, as if everything depended upon ourselves—and then we are to leave all with God, knowing that none but the Lord can save a single soul.

Now, notice, Paul, wishing for converts, is *judicious in the choice of the place* where he will go to look after them. He goes to the spot where there should be a synagogue. He thinks that where people have a desire to pray, there he will find the kind of people who will be ready to hear the Word. So he selects devout people, devout worshippers of the one God, that he may go and speak to them about Christ. It is sometimes our plain duty to publish the Word from the housetop to the careless crowd, but I think you will generally find that more success comes when those on whose hearts the Spirit of God has already begun to work, are sought out and instructed. When Christ sent out His disciples on their first journey, He told them, when they entered a town, to, "Enquire who in it is worthy; and

there abide till you go thence," evidently showing that even among those who do not know the Truth of God, there are some whose hearts are prepared to receive it, who are of a devout spirit and in that sense are worthy.

These are the people who should first be sought after. In the same limited sense was Cornelius, to whom Peter was sent, worthy to hear the glad tidings of great joy. His reverent spirit was well pleasing to God, for we read, "Your prayer is heard and your alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God." We must not, of course, think that these things give any *claim* to salvation, but rather that they are the expression of hearts prepared to receive the message of salvation, seeking the Lord, "if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him." One of our greatest difficulties in these days is that so many have lost all reverence for authority of any kind, even God's—having risen against human despotism, they also foolishly try to break God's bands asunder! We are cast back on the infinite power of God when we come to deal with such people, but when we meet with others who are willing to listen and pray, we know that God has already begun to work. Now, dear Worker, choose the person who is evidently pointed out to you by God's gracious Providence. Choose judiciously and try to speak with those with whom you may hopefully speak—and trust that God will bless the Word.

When Paul goes down to the river, you notice that he is very *judicious as to his manner* of introducing his subject. He did not preach at all. He found only a few women—and to stand up and preach to them, as he did to the crowds at Corinth, or at Athens—might have seemed absurd. But we read this—"We sat down and spoke unto the women which resorted there." He took his seat on the river's bank where they were all sitting still at prayer. And he began just to have a talk. A sermon would have been out of place, but a talk was the right sort of thing. So he talked the Gospel into them. Now, be careful of the way in which you go to work with people, for much of the result must depend upon that. Some people can be preached right away *from* Christ, for the moment you begin to preach they say, "Oh, thank you, I do not need any of your sermon!" Perhaps you could slip a word in edgewise. Just drop a seed in a crack, or leave a word with them, just one word. Say at once, "If you do not need any preaching, I do not need to preach to you. I am not so fond of preaching as all that, but I read a very curious story in the newspapers the other day!" And then tell the story and wrap the Gospel up in it. If they do not want pills, do not give them pills. Give them a bit of sugar! They will take the sugar and when they get it, there will be a pill inside. I mention this because we may miss opportunities of doing good through not being wide awake. "Be you wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." Paul, therefore, just sat down and had a friendly talk with the women who were there.

But whether Paul preached, or whether Paul talked, it was all the same—he was *judicious as to the matter* of his discourse. He had but one subject and that was Christ—the Christ who had met him on the way to Damascus and changed his heart—the Christ who was still able to save! His Subject was the Christ who bled upon the Cross to bring men to God and cleanse them in His blood. The Christ in Heaven, interceding for sinners. The Christ waiting to be gracious. Paul would not end his talk with-

out saying, "Trust Him. Trust Him. He that believes in Him has everlasting life." So, whether he preached or whether he talked, it was the same story of Jesus Christ and Him Crucified. That is how Paul worked. He might have acted very differently. If his heart had not been all aflame for Jesus, he would very likely not have spoken at all, or if he had, it would have been a commonplace remark about the weather.

He might have been eager to learn the method by which the beautiful purple dye was obtained and not have remembered that Gospel message, written long ago by Isaiah, which would come with special force to the hearts of his hearers—"Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." He might have been so interested in his enquiries about Thyatira as to forget to speak of the way to the City of Light. A dozen subjects might have claimed his attention if his heart had not been set upon one Subject! He could have spoken of his journeys and even of his plans without actually preaching Christ to them. He might have spoken about the Gospel, as I fear we often do, and not have spoken the Gospel, itself.

Some sermons which I have heard, though faultlessly orthodox, have contained nothing that could convert anybody—for there has been nothing to touch the conscience or heart. Others, though very clever and profound, have had no possible bearing on the needs of the hearers and so it was little wonder that they were without result. But I am sure Paul's talk would aim straight at the center of the target—it was evidently addressed to the heart, for we are told that Lydia heard it with the heart. After all, it is not our most orderly discourses, nor our most apt illustrations which bring people to Christ—but some little sentence which is slipped in unawares, or some burning word which comes straight out of our own heart's experience. There would be sure to be many such that day in that earnest simple talk by the side of the river. Let us multiply such conversations if we would win more Lydias for the our Master's Church!

IV. But, now, fourthly—and here is the main point—let us notice THE WORKING OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD. Providence brings Paul and Lydia together. Lydia comes there because she observes the Sabbath and loves the place of worship. Paul comes there because he loves to win souls and, like his Master, is on the watch for stray sheep. But it would have been a poor meeting for them if the Spirit of God had not *also* been there! So we next read of Lydia, "Whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." It is not amazing that the Lord can open a human heart, for He who made the lock knows well what key will fit it!

What means He made use of in the case of Lydia, I do not know, but I will tell you what might have happened. Perhaps she had lost her husband—many a woman's heart has been opened by that great gash. The joy of her soul has been taken away and she has turned to God. Perhaps her husband was spared her, but she had lost a child. Oh, how many a babe has been sent here on purpose to entice its mother to the skies! A lamb taken away that the sheep might follow the Shepherd! Perhaps she had had bad trade—the price of purple may have fallen. She may have been half afraid she would fail in business. I have known such trouble open

some people's hearts. Perhaps she had had prosperity. Possibly the purple had gone *up* in price. I have known some so impressed with God's temporal blessings that they have been ready to think of Him and turn to Him. I do not know. I cannot guess and I have no right to guess what it was.

But I know that God has very wonderful plows with which He breaks up the hard soil of human hearts. When I have been through the Britannia Iron Works, at Bedford, I have wondered at the strange clod-crushers, clod-breakers and plows made there by the Messrs. Howard—and God has some marvelous machines in His Providence for turning up the soil of our hearts. I cannot tell what He has done to you, dear Friend, but I trust that whatever has happened has been opening the soil so that the Good Seed may drop in. It was the Spirit of God who did it, whatever the instrument may have been, and Lydia's heart was "opened." Opened to what? To attend. "She attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul."

So, first, her heart was opened *to listen very intently*. She wanted to catch every word. She did as some of you do, put her hand to her ear, for fear she should not hear all that was spoken. There are many ways of listening. Some people listen with both their ears, allowing it to go in one ear and out the other, like that wit, who, when he was being seriously spoken to, yet seemed very inattentive. At last wearied, the friend who was discoursing, said, "I am afraid it is not doing you much good." "No," came the reply, "but I think it will do this gentleman some good," pointing to one who sat beside him, "for as it has gone in at this side, it has gone out at the other." Oh, how I wish that you had only one ear, so that the Truth of God you hear could never get out after it had once got in! Well did the Lord speak through Isaiah the Prophet unto the people, "Hearken *diligently* unto me and eat that which is good." Many people can listen for an hour or two to a scientific lecture, or a political speech, without feeling in the least weary. They can even go to the theater and sit there a whole evening without dreaming of being tired! Yet they complain if the sermon is a minute beyond the appointed time! They seem to endure the preaching as a sort of penance, scarcely hearing the words, or, at least, never imagining that the message can have any application to their own case.

Lydia's heart was so opened "that she attended," that is, she listened to the Word of Salvation until she began *to desire it*. It is always a pleasure to entertain guests who relish the food placed before them and it is a great joy to preach to those who are eagerly hungering after the Truth of God. But how heart-breaking a task it is to keep continually praising the pearl of great price to those who know not its value, nor desire its beauty! Daniel was a man, "greatly beloved"—the Hebrew word means, "a man of desires." He was not one of your conceited, self-satisfied individuals. He longed and yearned for better things than he had yet attained and, therefore, was, "greatly beloved." God loves people to thirst after Him and to desire to know His love and power. Let us explain the Gospel as we may, if there is no desire in the heart, our most plain messages are lost! A man said, about something he wished to make clear, "Why, it is as plain as A B C!" "Yes," said a third party, "but the man you are talking to is D E F." So, some of our hearers seem to turn away from the Word of God. But when a

person says, "I need to find salvation. I need to get Christ this very day and I am going to listen with the determination that I will find out the way of salvation," surely, if the things spoken are the same things that Paul spoke of, few in that condition will go out of the house without finding salvation! Lydia's heart was opened to attend to the Gospel, that is, to *desire it*.

But, next, her heart was opened *to understand it*. It is amazing how little, even well-educated people sometimes understand of the Gospel when it is preached in the simplest manner. One is constantly being astounded by the misapprehensions that persons have as to the way of salvation. But Lydia had grasped the Truth. "Thanks be to God," she said, "I see it! Jesus Christ suffered in our place and we, by an act of faith, accept Him as our Substitute, and we are saved thereby. I have it! I never saw it before. I read about a Paschal lamb and the sprinkling of the blood, and the passing over of the houses where the blood was sprinkled. I could not quite make it out. Now I see! If the blood if sprinkled upon me, God will pass over me, according to His Word, 'When I see the blood, I will pass over you.'" She attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul, so as to understand them.

But more than that. Her heart was so opened that she attended to the Gospel so as *to accept it*. "Ah," she said, "now I understand it, I will have it. Christ for me! Christ for me! That blessed Substitute for sinners! Is that all I have to do, simply to trust Him? Then I will trust Him. Sink or swim, I will cast myself upon Him right now." She did so then and there! There was no hesitating. She believed what Paul said—that Jesus was the Son of God, the appointed Propitiation for sin and that whoever believed in Him should, then and there, be justified—and she did believe in Him—and she was justified, as you will be, my Friend, if you will believe in Him at this moment! You, too, shall have immediate salvation, my dear Sister sitting yonder, if you will come, like this Lydia of old, and just take Christ to be yours and trust Him now! She attended unto the things which were spoken by Paul, so that she accepted Christ.

Having done that, she went further—her heart was so won, that she was, by the Spirit, led *to obey the Word and confess her faith*. Paul told her that the Gospel was this—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." He said to her, "My commission is, 'Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.'" Perhaps she said, "But why must I be baptized?" He said, "As a testimony of your *obedience* to Christ, whom you take to be your Master and your Lord. And as a type of your being one with Him in His burial, you are to be buried in water as He was buried in the tomb of Joseph. And you are to be raised up out of the water even as He rose again from the dead. This act is to be a token and type to you of your oneness with Him in His death and burial and resurrection."

What did Lydia say? Did she say, "Well, I think I must wait a little while—the water is cold"? Did she say, "I think I must ask about it. I must consider it"? No, not at all. Paul tells her that this is Christ's ordinance and she at once replies, "Here I am, Paul, let me be baptized and my servants, too, and all who belong to my household, for they, also, believe in

Jesus Christ! Let us have the Baptism at once." Then and there, "she was baptized, and her household." She did at once obey the heavenly message and she became a baptized Believer. She was not ashamed to confess Christ! She had not known Him long, but what she did know of Him was so blessed and joyous to her soul that she would have sung, if she had known the hymn—

"Through floods and flames, if Jesus lead,
I'll follow where He goes!
'Hinder me not,' shall be my cry,
Though earth and Hell oppose."

You can imagine her saying, "Did He go down into the Jordan and say, 'Thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness'? Then I will go where He leads the way and be obedient to Him and say to all the world, 'I, too, am a follower of the Crucified Christ.'"

Now, lastly, after Lydia was baptized, *she became an enthusiastic Christian.* She said to Paul, "You must come home with me. I know you have not anywhere to go. Come along. And there is your friend, Silas. I have plenty of room for him and Timothy, too, and also Luke. We can make room for the four of you among the purple bales, or somewhere, but, at any rate, I have house-room for you four and I have heart-room for 40,000 of you! I wish I could take in the whole Church of God." Dear good woman that she was, she felt that she could not do too much for the men who had been made a blessing to her, for she regarded what she did to them as done to their Lord and Master! They might have said, "No, really, we cannot trouble you. You have the household. You have all this business to look after." "Yes," she would answer, "I know that. It is very kind of you to excuse yourselves, but you must come."

"No," Paul might urge, "my dear good woman, I am going to find some tent-makers and make tents with them. We will find a lodging where we find work." "Ah!" she would say, "but I mean to have you. You must come to my home." "She constrained us." She would probably put it thus, "Now, I shall not think that you fully believe in me if you do not come home with me. Come, you baptized me, and by that very act you professed that you considered that I was a true Believer. If you really believe it, come and stay in my house as long as you like and I will make you as comfortable as ever I can."

So, at last, Paul yields to her constraint and goes to her home. How glad they would all be, and what praise to Christ would rise from that household! I hope that the generous spirit which glowed in the heart of the first convert in Europe will always continue among the converts of Europe till the last day! I trust that when they are called not merely to entertain God's ministers, but to help all God's people of every sort, they may be ready and willing to do it for Christ's sake, for love shall fill them with a holy hospitality and an earnest desire to bless the children of God. Love one another, Brothers and Sisters, and do good to one another, as you have opportunity—for so will you be worthy followers of Lydia, the first European convert, whose heart the Lord opened!

The Lord open your hearts, for His name's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Acts 16.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—531, 560, 589.

MR. SPURGEON UPDATE:

The following letter, written by MR. SPURGEON, was read at the Tabernacle last Lord's-Day, September 13, 1891. There has been no material alteration in the dear sufferer's condition since he wrote this note—

Westwood, Beulah Hill,
Upper Norwood,
September 13, 1891.

"DEAR FRIENDS—I cannot write much; but I cannot withhold my heart and my pen from saying, 'O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together!' This week has, by its fine weather, set me free from a three months' captivity. Those Believers of all denominations who so lovingly prayed for me will now help me to praise the Lord. Verily, the living God hears prayer!

"I fear my doctors would have a mournful tale to tell of my disease and from inward consciousness I must agree with them, but I *feel* better, and I get into the open air and, therefore, I hope my face is turned toward recovery. Reading, writing, thinking, etc., are not yet easy to me. I am forced to vegetate. I fear it will be long before I can be at my beloved work.

"I send my hearty love to you all, and my humble gratitude to that great army of praying people who have been heard of the Lord in their cries for the prolongation of my life. May we believe more, pray more and, therefore, receive more!

"Yours, in bonds of true affection,
C. H. SPURGEON."

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ABRAHAM'S TRIAL— A LESSON FOR BELIEVERS
NO. 2223

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 12, 1891.

"And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am." Genesis 22:1.

WE may regard the father of the faithful as being a pattern of his children. As God dealt with Abraham, so will He deal in measure with all those who, as Believers, are the children of believing Abraham. Everything that will abide the fire shall go through the fire, that it may be both proved and improved. We clearly understand that when God is said to "tempt" Abraham, the word used does not carry its ordinary meaning. "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempts He any man." But Jehovah is accustomed to *try* and *test* His people and this is what we are here to understand. The Revised Version renders the words, "God did *prove* Abraham" and, as I have said, God works by the same method with all His saints.

Of course, we shall not all attain to the same stature that Abraham reached, neither shall we all be tried by the same tests that were applied to him, but every one of us shall be tested, like Abraham, if, indeed, we are Believers in God. He was the Columbus who, by faith, went out and discovered a better country, that is, a *heavenly*—and his track has been followed by many other voyagers. Not without storms did he cross the sea and we, too, who venture after him on the voyage of faith, must expect to meet with contrary winds and waves sweeping high. We may look for a considerable measure of conformity in our lives to the life of the great Patriarch and we must not be astonished, as though some strange thing had happened to us, if great and severe tests should be put upon us before the chapter of life is over.

None of us ought to object to this. Shall the child of faith be otherwise than the father of the faithful? I may say of Abraham what our Lord said of Himself—"The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord." Shall the Believer, saved and justified by faith, as Abraham was, rebel against sharing in Abraham's lot? We shall sit down, by-and-by, at the same table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of our God. Surely we may be content to fare on the road as they fared. In fact, I hope you will say, concerning Abraham, "Where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people and

your God my God." We are willing to take the portion of the righteous. We will not say, with wretched Balaam, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!" We would have a far better desire than that—"May my way be the way of the righteous, that my end may be like his! May I have a portion with Your people, O God: and do You deal with me as You do with all those who love Your name!"

Let us look at our text. It is a kind of preface to this unique, this unparalleled story of Abraham's test. First, "It came to pass after these things, that God did tempt (or "prove") Abraham"—here we see *the Lord's way with Believers*. And, secondly, when God, "said unto him, Abraham," the Patriarch instantly answered, "Behold, here I am"—here we learn *the Believer's way with the Lord*. These two heads will not be difficult to remember—the Lord's way with Believers and the Believer's way with the Lord.

I. First, THE LORD'S WAY WITH BELIEVERS. He deals with His own people as He does not with the world. To be loved by God with the love He bears to His chosen is a wonderful honor, but it carries with it the Father's authority. "Whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives." All disciples are subject to this blessed discipline.

First of all, then, let us notice that *God does deal with His people*, He is never far away from them. He leaves them not to themselves, but is always near those who are truly His. God did test Abraham. It is a great thing that God should take any notice of us, poor creatures that we are. "When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars which You have ordained; what is man, that You are mindful of him? And the son of man, that You visit him?" Job wondered that God dealt with him in the way of affliction, for he says, "Am I a sea, or a whale, that You set a watch over me?" We are so insignificant that it is a great wonder that God should come to deal with us at all. If you saw some tall archangel, whose wand might make a mast for some great man-of-war, bending down over an ant's hill, or talking with an ant, you might wonder at his stoop. But this would be nothing compared with the infinite God, the Maker of all things, condescending to deal with us worms of the earth! Yet He does so. We are precious in His sight, therefore, as the goldsmith assays the metal, as the silversmith refines the silver again and again in a furnace of earth, so does God test, purify and try us—He sets a high value upon us and, therefore, He tests us. O child of God, be glad that God comes near you! I would sooner feel His hand heavy upon me than be forgotten of Him! I would rather see His face wreathed in frowns than never see Him at all! Oh, what an awful thing it will be for those who will be cast away from Him! To hear Him say, "Depart," will be like an infinity of wretchedness. But if He even calls us to Him that He may chasten us, His voice has music in it! Lord, blessed be Your name, You think upon Your servants! You think upon them even when You chasten them and when You test them—for this we would bless Your holy name.

Notice, next, that God not only deals with Believers very intimately, but *He tests them*. "God did tempt Abraham." "God did prove Abraham."

Abraham was a man whose life gave good evidence of his faith in Jehovah, but the Lord is a jealous God and He loves to have still more evidence of the fidelity of His people. He hungers after clear proofs from them that they really are His—and He works in them, by His Grace, until He casts out all other loves and all other confidences that He may have the whole of their hearts—and that they may love Him and trust Him supremely.

Some of you have nothing to do with my text tonight. God does not test you because He knows very well what you are and He knows that you are not precious metal. The spurious coin is nailed down on the counter, or cast into the fire—and they that are not true people of God and have none of the silver of Grace in them will come to such an end one day and be, with shame and everlasting contempt—nailed down on the counter as counterfeits, or thrown into the fire that never shall be quenched! "Reprobate silver shall men call them because the Lord has rejected them." It is the true coin that we try and test—and God, because He loved Abraham, valued him and saw His Grace in him, tested him.

He tested, first of all, his fear of God. That was the main point, as you will see in the 12th verse—"Now I know that you fear God." The Lord delights in a man who has a holy reverence for his God. I do not hesitate to say that this is a very scarce article nowadays. When I hear of one saying that he has received "a straight tip" from God, I feel that a man capable of speaking in such a manner was never spoken to by the Infinite Jehovah! Communion with God bows a man to the dust and causes him to use lowly and reverent language. No, God never comes near to us and then leaves us in a frame of mind in which we could speak flippantly or irreverently of Him!

When I hear professing Christians arraigning God's conduct and setting up to criticize God's Word, I stand in doubt of them. O Sirs, God's true children *tremble* at His Word—they never question Him! "Why do you strive against Him? For He gives not account of any of His matters." "Who are you that replies against God?" The spirit of criticism is altogether alien to the spirit of the child of God! It is not what they say in their criticism that I care about. It is the spirit that dares to say it that is the evil thing. The Lord will try each one of us whether we really fear Him or not—and if the test is not so severe as that which Abraham was called to endure, still the test will come. If we say, "No, I cannot do that. I am afraid of the consequences," that shows that we do not fear God enough, for the man who fears God fears nothing else. The path of duty made clear, he says, "I must do it, cost what it may, for it would be infinitely more costly not to do it." His fear of God ejects all fear of men and all fear of consequences—it is the backbone of all real holiness and all true godliness. And God tries us to see whether we have this holy awe of Him and leads us to follow in the steps of Abraham, His friend.

God also tried Abraham's faith. Could he believe that God was right when He commanded him to slay his son? All the promises were wrapped up in Isaac! If Isaac dies, how can Abraham have a seed? He had been told, "In Isaac shall your seed be called," not in Ishmael! What, then, if Isaac shall die? All hope of a seed must pass away. How can it be? But it

was not any matter of question with Abraham. "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief." You know what a man does when he staggers. Perhaps he does not go quite down, but he can hardly keep his feet. Abraham was never in that condition. He believed God and, therefore, he stood firm. His faith was able to face difficulties and to surmount them. When the promise of the birth of Isaac was given, we read that, "being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead."

This was, indeed, a triumph of trust—but he went further than that. The Revised Version shows that he fully faced the difficulty and yet believed as much as ever. "Without being weakened in faith he considered his own body now as good as dead." The faith that was undismayed when the promise of a son was uttered was still undaunted when the Lord demanded the life that He had so strangely given. Perhaps God gave such a supreme test because of its very grandeur. The trial was terrible, but still, Abraham believed. Possibly he did not understand the trial—he did not need to understand. He believed and he took God at His word and he would do what God bade him do, whatever that might be. He would leave the Lord to extricate him out of any difficulties into which his obedience might bring him. Thus God tried his faith.

Above all, God tried Abraham's love. It may be that Isaac, though a gift from God, began to usurp God's place. An Isaac may became an idol. The dearest thing we have, the most precious, the most beloved, may still become an abomination by being made an idol to keep us away from God. Some of the heathen worship gods of mud, others worship gods of gold, but there is no difference in the idolatry, whether the image is made of mud or of the most precious metal. Have you any idols, dear Friends? I will not press the question too closely, but whatever your idols may be, they will bring you a world of trouble, for you must love nothing in comparison with God. He must be first and everything else far away in the background. He will endure no rivals. He will permit no Dagon to stand in the place where the Ark of the Covenant abides. So God tests Abraham to see which has most of his heart's love—Jehovah who gave Him Isaac—or Isaac whom Jehovah asked from him back again.

Thus God deals with Believers and tests them.

But the next point here is that, in some cases, *God Himself tests Believers*. "It came to pass after those things, that God"—"Elohim," that is the word—"Elohim did tempt Abraham." This does not always occur. Job is tried by the devil and the devil tests him, though even then God is permitting the devil to be His instrument. But God Himself was here, He, Himself, testing His servant, Abraham. I never read that He tested Lot. Poor Lot! He was a poor "lot," indeed! There was just enough Grace in him to keep him alive and no more—but he could not stand any tests. Lot failed wretchedly in Sodom. He was a righteous man and proved that he was so by being grieved with the filthy conversation of those round about him, but still, God did not test him. There was not enough true metal in him for God to try him—He left the Sodomites to do that. They were quite good enough to test Lot, but Abraham was a man of very different metal, or, at least, there was a much larger percentage of gold in Abraham than was to be found in Lot. Therefore *God* tested Abraham.

O Friends, there is something here to think of! Here is a peculiar character whom God, Himself, deals with. Here is a special honor put upon the servant when Elohim, Himself, tests Abraham. Have you ever prayed, "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"? Invite Divine inspection and, if God shall come and by some extraordinary trial, test you, be not cast down on that account, but rather take it as a very choice favor that the King, Himself, should put you to the proof to know whether you are, indeed, His!

Further, I want you to notice that, in God's dealings with Believers, *He tests them again and again*. Read the text through, "It came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham." After all his life of holy obedience, he was still not free from trials! God still tested him. He had received great and precious promises, more than any other man of his time—and He believed them and sucked the sweetness out of them—but after these things God did try Abraham! He had had rare enjoyments. Did not angels come and sit at his table? Did not the great Melchizedek, himself, come forth with bread and wine to feast him? But after these things God tested Abraham. He had been tested before. He had left his country. He had sent away Ishmael, whom he loved, when the command came, "Cast out this bondwoman and her son." He had been tested, but, after all this, he must still be tested!

These things are an example to all the people of God. We are not yet out of the wilderness and we may, even at the very last, have our highest test yet to come. "After these things, God did tempt Abraham." Abraham had reached a very high point of faith and, after a time, he had enjoyed great quiet of spirit. Everything went well with him. By faith he had fought four kings and led captivity captive. By faith he had trampled on the riches of the world and told the king of Sodom that he would "not take from a thread even to a shoelace" of him. By faith he had become great with God and God had put part of His own name into Abram's name, and made Him Abraham, blending the name of God with the name of His servant! And yet God tested Abraham—not *Abram* only—but even Abraham!

Note here, that God did not try Abraham like this at the beginning. It is "after these things" God tried Abraham. There was a course of education to prepare him for this great testing time and the Lord knows how to educate you up to such a point that you can endure, in years to come, what you could not endure today—just as today He may make you to stand firm under a burden, which, ten years ago, would have crushed you into the dust! After all the tuition that God had given to him—after close communion with God, receiving the Spirit of God into his soul in rich abundance— "after these things" God tested Abraham.

And here I go further and say that *God tests His people by actual experience*. He did not test Abraham only by words. He did not say to him, "Will you do this? Are you willing to do that?" It is always easy to say that we will do a thing if we do not expect to be compelled to do it. We can make large promises when we think we shall never be called upon to fulfill them. We can even think large things today about what we intend to

do tomorrow. It is always easy to rise up early overnight. But God does not prove His people in only word, but in deed and in truth. The plain command came to Abraham which must at once be obeyed. He must go into the land of Moriah and he must offer his son there for a burnt offering. It must come to real *action*. How big you and I are in words! How great some people are in profession! "Oh," they say, "we will never fail our Lord!" Like Peter they swear that, "Though all men shall be offended because of You, yet will we never be offended." They become bold in their boasts and proud in their own conceit, "professing themselves to be wise, they become as fools." They may even turn the very Grace of God, which has enriched them, into an occasion of vainglory. "I am perfect," says one, "and completely dead to the world. Therefore there is no fear that I shall fall. In time of trial I shall be strong—if only the martyr times were here, again, how gloriously would I testify for God!" But, after all, it is the test of real life, the test of actual experience that will show what a man is. When God comes to real filing and hammering—and puts us *into* the crucible, then it is that He proves how much is dross and how much is true metal!

Some Believers are *tested more thoroughly than others*. In this case, the Lord tried Abraham most severely. I cannot imagine a greater test than that which the Lord applied to Abraham. The Jews usually say that Abraham was tried 10 times. Surely on this occasion he was tried 10 times in one. Here you have trial carried to the 10th degree. Here the furnace is made 10 times hotter than it was known to be heated. There was no other in the whole universe that ever, by Divine command, offered up his only son, save One, and that One was He who commanded *this* sacrifice and who consummated such a sacrifice, Himself, for He will never ask of us what He will not Himself do! He gave freely for us His only-begotten Son and Abraham stands alone, the only one of woman born, that in this was called to be a close imitator of his God. God tried him because he could bear it. He tried him in this way because of him it was said, he was the friend of God. He was the father of the believing family and, because of his high position, he must have the very greatest of troubles, trials and tests!

My last thought, under this head, shall be that if God does thus try Believers, He blesses them greatly thereby. All this testing was meant to be a great blessing to Abraham. Do I see you start back? Do you seem to say that I have used terrible language in speaking thus about God's testing His people? Oh, but, Beloved, the tests and trials of God's servants, though they rumble a little in our ears, as did the wagons that Joseph sent from Egypt to fetch Jacob, bring blessings to us! Those wagons came to take Jacob down to a land where he would behold the face of his Beloved and should be with him all his life! And our trials come to prepare us for the glorious meeting with our Lord. God sends us letters in black-edged envelopes, but they are all love letters! And the blacker the letters look outside, the brighter they are inside! The Lord paints the galleons of His Grace with dark colors and we dream that they bear us evil—but they are loaded down to the water's brim with gold and rare and precious things! Therefore, be confident, tried Believers—

"Trials make the promise sweet.
Trials give new life to prayer.
Trials bring me to His feet,
Lay me low and keep me there."

The first blessed effect of God's test of Abraham was that thus he avoided evil. This trial prevented him from thinking too much of Isaac and allowing Isaac to divide him from his God. Perhaps he was in danger of falling into that sin and God saw it—and He sent this test in order to put Isaac into his right place, that Isaac might not die. He would have Abraham offer him up that he might keep him. He would have him offer Isaac up to God, that he might receive him back, for he was not Abraham's son in a *spiritual* sense, until that day. Isaac was his son after the flesh, but, when he received him back, again, by faith, he became his son in the new Covenant of Grace, one of the seed of Abraham after the Spirit. He received his son that day in the highest sense from God.

Do you not think, also, that it did Abraham great good in assuring his own heart and enabling him to know, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that he really did fear and love God? Some of you get to doubting whether you really do fear God. Would it not be worth while to pass through some tremendous trouble, to get that settled once and for all? I think that the Lord gives some of His people full-assuring tribulations so that when once these are past, all doubts and fears are at an end. I spoke to a child of God the other day, who said, "I do not know that, for 20 years, I have had the slightest hesitation in saying that I know whom I have believed. But," he said, "I had an awful fight just before that time." It is good to kill the lion and have done with him and then go and find honey in his carcass! It is an ordinary lion, however, that only needs killing once, for some lions I have met with have been killed a good many times, but they seem to come to life again very quickly! This test, however, Abraham needed only once and, after that, since God Himself said, "Now I know that you fear God," He doubtless enabled *Abraham* to say, "Now I know that I fear God."

The trial blessed him further in revealing Christ. Do you not think that, on this occasion, Abraham had a clearer view of Christ than he ever had before? Our Savior says, "Abraham rejoiced to see My day: and he saw it, and was glad." When did Abraham see Christ? He may have seen Him at other times, but on the top of Moriah, when his own son was on the wood and his own hand was lifted up, he must have seen the Son of God and the uplifted hand of God offering the Great Sacrifice. When He took the ram from the thicket and so saved the life of his son, how clearly he must have understood that blessed doctrine of Substitution which is the very center of the Gospel! I have no other hope than this. Nor can I conceive anything else that would be good news to me but the fact, "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures," that there was offered another Life instead of mine through which I live! By a life I do not live and by a death I do not die, I am saved! So it was with Isaac when he was saved by the ram taken in the thicket. It was worth while for Abraham thus to be tested to have a view of Christ!

And, lastly, Abraham was blessed by the test in communing with the Father. To this day, perhaps, Abraham enters more into the heart of God

than any other man in Heaven. I will not speculate, but it seems to me that none of us can ever know such fellowship with the great Father as Abraham has known, now, these thousands of years—for when he thinks of the great Father who surrendered His Son for the salvation of men, he humbly adores the infinite mind. But he seems to say, "And I, too, was helped in my little way, as small things may be compared with great, to stand and offer up my son as a burnt offering unto the Most High." I think that he is still the father of the faithful. I think that Abraham still holds wonderful pre-eminence. I do not wonder that we read of being in Abraham's bosom—to get as near to Abraham as we can is one of the things to be desired—that we may have sympathy and fellowship with the eternal Father forever.

I notice that some of the old translators render the passage, "It came to pass, after these things that God did lift up Abraham." It is a strange translation and probably inaccurate, but it is wonderfully true, for all that—for God did lift up Abraham to a higher platform, altogether, and brought him into a greater nearness to Himself than he could have known in any other way.

So far, I have occupied your mind on a grand subject, the Lord's way with Believers.

II. My second subject is a very practical one. THE BELIEVER'S WAY WITH THE LORD—for if God has dealings with the Believer, the Believer also has communion with the Lord.

It takes two to make communion and fellowship. Is it not a wonderful thing that men can thus meet God and commune with Him face to face? This is the glory of faith, for, "he that comes to God must *believe* that He is." This is not an arbitrary condition, but arises from the nature of things. Just as in a map of the two hemispheres, the circles only touch and only can touch at one point, so God can only meet men by faith. Thus, to be a Believer in God is to have a faculty by which we can touch the Eternal.

It is not enough, however, merely to know God as the Creator. "You believe in God, believe also in Me," says the Lord Jesus. "No man comes unto the Father, but by Me." Better be a Believer in Christ than have all the wealth of the Indies rolled to your feet and all the thrones of the world at your disposal, for you then possess the unsearchable riches of Christ and will, one day, share His Throne of Glory! Oh, that all who now hear my words were, indeed, among those who believe! Why should you not venture at this moment to launch out on the ocean of Divine Truth? It is no venture, for a Believer in Christ is one who cannot be lost! God deals with those who believe as He dealt with Abraham and only those who believe can have dealings with Him. How, then, does the Believer act towards God? Let us look at the case before us.

God said to the Patriarch, "Abraham," and he said, "Behold, here I am." When God speaks to the Believer, he, on his part, is *honored by the call*. Have you ever heard God speak to you? I do not mean that with your ears you have heard any *audible* voice, but has He not spoken to your heart in such a way that, if there were no other men alive, God could not have spoken more pointedly and definitely to you? God called

Abraham. It is the way with Him to say, "Samuel, Samuel." It is the way with Him to call, "Saul, Saul." "I have called you by your name; you are Mine." "He calls His own sheep by name and leads them out." What greater honor can we have than this? The King knows our name and addresses us! In a law court, one day, a man who was quite at the back began to struggle and press his way forward. And the people angrily told him to be quiet. "Did you not hear?" he said, "I am called." Instantly they opened a way for him to the front and admired his prompt action. How much readier we should be to reply to the voice of God, recognizing the privilege and honor thus bestowed upon us! Have you not had such a call and responded to it?

Next, the Believer shows himself *ready to be taught*. As soon as God said, "Abraham," he answered, "Here I am." He seemed to say, "Here I am, Lord, all attentive. Master, say on! Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears." Are you always in that condition, ready to be taught of God? Is His Word precious to you? Is His Holy Spirit greatly reverenced by you, so that the moment you hear Him call, you wait to hear what God the Lord will speak to you, knowing that "He will speak peace unto His people and to His saints"? Happy is the man who is thus ready to be taught!

Moreover, the Believer must be *ready to obey* as well as ready to be taught. He must be willing to say, "Here I stand as Your servant. I know not what the orders are going to be, but here I am. Send me where You will with what burden You will, as long as You will. Here I am." If you are not willing to obey, you may be quite sure you are not a Believer, for obedience is the natural outcome of belief. You remember the last verse of the third of John—"he that believes on the Son has everlasting life. "And then, immediately, another word is used which bears a stronger sense and may be rendered, "He that *obeys* not the Son shall not see life." For, truly, if we believe on Christ, we shall also obey Him. Are you, dear Friend, willing to say to God, "Here I am. Send me—let me be actively engaged in Your service. Or, if it pleases You better, bid me go up to my bed, lie there and suffer sickness and pain. I am ready to obey, just as You will"? Abraham was ready to be taught and ready to obey.

And, more than that, the Believer will be equally *ready to surrender*. "Abraham." "Here I am." He does not know what God is going to ask of him. It may be Sarah. It may be Isaac. I dare say that Isaac was the last person that he expected would be asked of him, seeing that all his hopes were bound up in him and he was the child of promise. God often does the unexpected with His servants. However, there was no reserve about it. Abraham said, "Here I am"—

"Yes, should You take them all away,
Yet will I not repine.
Before they were possessed by me
They were entirely Thine."

And they are still entirely Yours! Oh, what a glorious state of mind—to be ready to learn, ready to obey and ready to surrender!

And Abraham was also *ready to be inspected*. He says, "Here I am." Adam went and hid himself in the garden and God had to call after him, "Where are you?" Abraham was ready when God called him. It will be

well if you can say, when you kneel at your bedside tonight, "Lord, I have nothing to conceal. I am sincere before You. I would have You acquainted with all my faults and sins, that You may wash them away. I would have You know all my mistakes and errors, that You may correct them all. You know all things. You know that I love You. I am no hypocrite. I have made no pretence of being Your servant while I have been serving self and sin." O blessed man, that dares to open his bosom, to lay bare his very heart and say, "Shine into me, O Lord, and let Your searching light go through and through me, for in truth I am Your servant!"

The Believer who is prepared to respond to the Lord in such a way has much cause to praise, for *he has been made ready by the Grace of God*. Abraham could not have said, "Here I am," with all this promptness, if it had not been for the education of Divine Grace that had brought him up to it. Beloved, you may think yourself ready for any service or any trial, but you are not unless Divine Grace has done great things for you. Then every act performed by Grace becomes, through Grace, an apprenticeship for a greater one!

For God's sake, Abraham had left his country and his father's house. Have you come out from the world? If you have not, you cannot say, "Here I am." Poor Soul, still siding with the world, you are where you ought not to be! "Come out from among them, and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." Abraham had boldly obeyed God's command and separated himself from his old companions.

Next, Abraham had yielded to Lot. He let him take his choice of the best part of the land, even the well-watered plain of Sodom. He had not disputed with him. Are you willing to let the worldling have the best of it here, below, and to take your portion, by-and-by, in the Promised Land? If not, you cannot say, "Here I am," because you will probably be up to your neck in worldliness and as greedy after gain as anybody else! You are taking your portion among the men of Sodom and Gomorrah—how can you say, "Here I am"? Lot could not have said it, but Abraham could.

Moreover, Abraham had defied foes. Four kings came into the country and he had only a handful of servants and friends, yet he went after them like a flash of lightning and smote the four kings. Well, now, if you are a cowardly fellow and have never dared to, "Stand up, stand up for Jesus," you cannot say, "Here I am." Where are you? Hiding away, trying to save your precious skin and to avoid being laughed at for Christ? You will not be ready for the Lord's call till you come out and "fight the good fight of faith."

But God had trained His servant Abraham to do yet more. He had despised the world when he told the king of Sodom that he would not take anything of his, "from a thread even to a shoelace." And now he can say, "Here I am." Until we get free from all worldly entanglements and cease, even in the least thing, to rely on an arm of flesh, or to resort to worldly expedients, we shall not be prepared to respond instantly to the call of God!

Abraham had gone even further. He had cast out the bondwoman and her son and now he could say, "Here I am." As long as you hold on to legalism and trust in your own good works, you dare not rise to meet God, for you are under the Law and not under Grace! But when that is all gone, you can say, "Here I am, in the Covenant of Grace, standing in Christ Jesus, ready for anything."

Again, Abraham had prevailed with God in prayer. You remember how he had pleaded for the wicked cities of the plain and God had allowed him to continue his intercessions with great boldness? O Beloved, you cannot say, "Here I am," if God has never known you as a suppliant at His Throne of Grace! Sometimes I have said to myself, "The Lord Jesus Christ can never say to me at the last, 'I never knew you: depart from Me,' for He has known me as I know a poor man in the street who has begged of me every day." 1 am always begging of my Lord, clamoring at Him for one thing or another. He knows me well enough. Why, when I was but a youth, I trusted Him for my eternal salvation! He called me to Himself and blessed me. I know that He will never be able to say to me, "I never knew you." Beloved, this is why Abraham was so quick in responding to God's call, because he was God's friend who was on such intimate terms with his Lord that he could intercede with Him on the behalf of guilty men!

My last thought is most precious. Since the Believer is thus prepared by Grace to respond to the Lord's call, as Abraham did, when he said, "Here I am," *he will be kept ready to the end*. My great desire is that you and I should be ready for anything that the Lord wills and keep always ready for it, so that if Christ should come at cock-crowing, or should come at midday, or midnight, we would be ready! And if death should come, we would be ready. And if we should lose our dearest friend, our choicest treasure, our health—anything or everything—yet still we would, each one, say, "Lord, I never made any bargain with You. I never had anything reserved from You. If it is Your will, it is my will. If You say it, so be it, for who am I, and what is Your servant, that I should dare to dispute with the Infinite Wisdom of Infallible Love?"

Happy is the man who can say, "Here I am." The Lord put you into that frame of mind and then it shall be said of you, "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." You shall go merrily through life and joyfully to death—and you shall rise triumphantly in the glad morning—for when God shall call you, then you will each one answer, "Here I am, for You did call me."—

"From beds of dust and silent clay,"

we shall arise with songs in our mouths to answer to the Resurrection trumpet and so shall we be forever with the Lord. Thus shall all the children of faith be blessed with faithful Abraham! God bless these words to you, dear Friends, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Genesis 22.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—208, 750, 703.

MR. SPURGEON UPDATE:

The following letter, written by MR. SPURGEON to the congregation at the Tabernacle last Lord's-Day, will give the latest information as to his progress towards recovery—

Westwood, Beulah Hill, Upper Norwood,
September 20, 1891.

"BELOVED FRIENDS—May this Sabbath be a high day with you! May this be a day wherein the Good Shepherd shall find His lost sheep and lay them, rejoicing, on His shoulders! Mr. Fullerton, whom I greatly love in the Lord, has won many souls abroad—may he again have many gracious captives among us at home!

"I would not write of myself, only you need to know, and you desire to know all that I can tell. I am sitting up this morning to write you before the doctor comes at 8:30 and so I cannot tell what he will say of me. The affectionate and effectual prayers of the saints dragged me back to life and only by the same means shall I recover strength. I will not touch upon my present affliction. You will guess at it when I say that, although the stairs to my bedroom are very easy, I cannot ascend them, but have to be carried up by others. The heart as yet will not endure even that small climb, therefore I still need your prayers and I know I shall have them, for your love never ceases.

"You have kept together most lovingly during the four months now nearly over. Can you abide my further absence, which is painful to me, and yet absolutely needed? The Lord grant it, I shall come among you fit for service, but it cannot be for months. The Lord does not give half-mercies. He will perfect that which concerns us. How He has heard prayer! Had I died, all infidelity would have noted it as a proof that prayer was useless—we have a right, now, to score one on the other side. *You* would have been much discouraged if prayer had not been answered and it is fair that now you should be equally encouraged and established in your confidence in the prayer-hearing Jehovah!

"The Lord bless every one of you! Let our love continue in all patience of hope.

"Yours ever heartily,
C. H. SPURGEON."

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

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

"IF YOU CAN"—"IF *YOU* CAN"
NO. 2224

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 4, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN, NEWINGTON.

"If You can do anything, have compassion on us, and help us.
Jesus said unto him, If you can believe, all things
are possible to him that believes."
Mark 9:22, 23.

WE are all familiar with the story of this youth who was possessed by a dumb spirit which caused him to fall into violent fits of epilepsy and worked worse evils, casting him, at times, into the waters and into the fire to destroy him. The father intended to bring his child to Jesus, of whom he had heard so much, but our Lord, being absent, he made his application to the disciples. They failed to effect a cure but, by-and-by, the Master came from the mountaintop and then the father addressed himself to the Lord. I shall need you to notice some lessons from this story before I come to the text.

The main thought which I would emphasize is that our Lord would have us clearly know, when we seek a blessing, what it is we really seek. If you go to Jesus Christ for anything, either for yourself, or someone else, the Savior will earnestly desire that you should know what it is that you are asking of Him. You know there is much blind praying—asking for mercies because you know that such and such words are proper, without having a clear and vivid idea of what the blessing is which is intended by those words. Now, our Savior loves us to pray with the understanding and to have a consciousness of our need and some perception of what it is that we want Him to do. Therefore try to got into your own heart a clear notion of what it is that you are seeking, for Christ would have you know why you are pleading with Him.

Hence, when this man came with his sick child, the Savior permitted him to give a statement of the case and, with the eagerness of love, the father entered into full particulars of the evil which had befallen his son. This was not needed by the Savior for His own information—He knew all about the dumb spirit's possession of the poor lad and all the misery that had resulted from that possession—but the heart-rending account was given, first, in order that the father might distinctly remember the evil from which he desired his child to be saved and, then, that those who were standing round might know what kind of miracle it was which Jesus Christ was about to work. Sometimes it will be a very healthy thing for seekers to stop a while and say to themselves, "What is it we are seeking?" Christ may say to you, "What do you want that I should do for you? What

is it are you really asking for?" There are many that cry, "Lord, save me!" who, perhaps, have no distinct idea *from* what they are *to* be saved, or to what they are to be saved.

In connection with this statement of the case, our Lord had permitted this poor man to make an application to His disciples. I will not say that it was on purpose that he might meet with a failure, but I do believe that failure was meant to teach the man a valuable lesson—and certainly it was designed to instruct the disciples—showing clearly to both that all hope lies in Jesus Christ, Himself. You have been seeking, dear Friend. Now, how have you hoped to get saved? "Why, by attending the means of Grace," you say. Quite right and I have not a word to say against the means of Grace any more than I should have had a word to say against the Apostles! But the means of Grace cannot save you any more than the Apostles could cast the devil out of that child! It is not the means of Grace, but it is *Christ*, Himself, that you must go to, just as it was not the Apostles, but the Apostles' Master who had to work this miracle!

Perhaps you have been sitting in these pews for years, expecting something to come to you by your constant and continued attendance. The Lord wants to get you thoroughly convinced that you will *not* be saved except by going to Jesus Christ, Himself. No Bible-readings, no sermon-hearings, no, not even prayers, if they are relied upon, can save you! Your reliance must be upon the wonder-working Christ of God! If you will trust the Savior, you shall be saved at once. If you can believe, *now*, you shall have immediate forgiveness of every sin and instantaneous salvation by the power of the Christ of God! But, it may be, you have not thought of this. You have been going round about and now you are to be sickened of all that, so that you shall say, like the man in the narrative, "I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast him out, and they could not. I have used the means of Grace, I have heard Your ministers, I have read good books, but neither books, nor ministers, nor services, nor all combined, can cast the devil out of me. Lord, You must do it." The failure of every other hope is another thing that Christ would have us know when we come to Him for a great blessing.

Yet further, when the poor father had stated the case and had confessed that he was disappointed with the disciples, yet the Savior caused him to see another exhibition of the mischief from which he would have his child saved. Then and there, before them all, as they brought the boy to Jesus, the devil began to treat him, perhaps, more violently then ever! He foamed at the mouth and seemed, at last, to fall into such a condition that those who looked on said, "He is dead. The case is utterly hopeless." In the very Presence of Christ, the evil spirit made a supreme effort to retain his hold of his victim, or to destroy the body in which he dwelt before he left it!

Now, Beloved, the Lord may, in your case, if you are a seeker, permit sin to break loose in you in a possibly worse form than you have ever seen before He drives it out. It may be you will give yourself up for dead. In fact, I hope you may, for when death strikes every carnal hope and you utterly despair of salvation in yourself, *then* is the very moment when the Om-

nipotent Power of Divine Grace comes in and manifests itself without limit! Oh, you who are driven, tonight, to utter self-despair, I am glad of it! I expect to see Christ come to you and raise you up and say to the evil spirit, "Depart, and enter into him no more." God grant it may be so!

Or, if your anxiety is about somebody else, it may be that God will permit the sin in the dear one to break out worse than ever. You have been praying for months, perhaps for years and, at last, it will seem quite hopeless. You will bring your husband or your child to Christ and instead of seeing any change for the better, there may appear, at the time, to be even a change for the worse! Yet, remember, it was then that Jesus said, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him that believes." It may be that He will let us see, more vividly than we have ever perceived before, the desperateness of the case in order that we may the more clearly understand the greatness of the mercy which we are seeking at His hands.

I shall run the text, as it were, with two handles. You see, properly, it should be confined to the case of a person who is praying for others, for this was spoken to a father who was pleading for his son. But the same principle applies all round and so I beg those who are praying for *themselves* to take as much of the sermon home as they can—and may God the Holy Spirit make it suitable to them! Come we, then, with this introduction, to our text.

There are two "ifs" here. The poor, troubled man said to Christ, "if," implying some measure of doubt—"If you can do anything, have compassion on us, and help us." Then comes the other "if," Jesus said unto him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him that believes."

I. Let us begin by saying, in the first place, that THE "IF" IS NOT IN REGARD TO CHRIST as to whether He can save you, or as to whether, in answer to prayer, He can save the object of your anxiety. There really is no, "if," in reference to Christ, though it is quite probable that *your unbelief* is suggesting some doubt about His love, or power, or willingness to save.

There cannot be an, "if," about Christ being able to save a sinner, or to do anything because, first, *He is God's beloved Son.* Upon the snowy slopes of Hermon, adown whose steeps He had come to confront the multitude in the plain, Christ had been transfigured and in all His Glory He had shone like the sun in the presence of His three disciples, whiter than the snow which lay around them and out of the cloud which overshadowed them there had come forth a Divine Voice, "This is My beloved Son: hear Him." Now, if Jesus Christ is such a favorite of Heaven, the darling of the eternal Father, will He deny Him anything? I do not say that, "if," as being at all doubtful about the matter. The revelation of the Glory on the mount and the Voice out of the opened heavens are evidence enough of His Sonship. Even Satan, himself, could not deny that Jesus was the Son of God. In the wilderness of temptation, he, indeed, said, "*If* you are the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread," but he knew in his heart that Christ was truly the Son of the Most High God. On many occasions, the demons, whom Christ cast out, cried aloud to Him, "You are Christ, the Son of God." Being God's true Son, can anything be impos-

sible for Him? Did He not say, "All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth"? When I think of the love which God bears to His dear Son, I cannot imagine Him stinting Christ in power to bless. He is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him, for He is the Everlasting Son of the Eternal Father!

And remember, next, if that argument is not enough, that *Jesus Christ is God*. After that, can there be an, "if," as to His power? What is there that God cannot do? He has made this world! He has made those millions of worlds that stud the midnight skies, but all that God has ever made, though it is far beyond our conceptions, is but as a speck compared with what He could make if He pleased. He has done exceedingly great marvels, such as have astounded men, but all that God has ever done is as nothing compared with what He could do if He willed to do it, for with Him all things are possible! And Jesus Christ being very God of very God, all things are possible with Him. He can save everyone present in this house right now. Breathe a believing prayer to Him and you will prove His power, for He will save you! His word runs very quickly and if He does but send it forth, it will belt the world and, within the next few years, if He chooses so to work, all nations shall call Jesus blessed! But when you and I have one of God's promises to plead with Him, we may know most surely that He will keep it—we never need insert an, "if," as to whether He can or not! O Beloved, if we were more wicked than we are, He could change us! And if our children or our friends were sunk in sin more deeply than they are, which God forbid they should be, He could still save them! "The Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear." Fie on you, you doubting one! Shame on you, you trembling heart! There cannot be an, "if," with the Christ of God, God's favored Son—yes, God's *equal*—who is girded with Omnipotence!

And, in the third place, remember that, *as Savior, works of Grace are easy to Him*. If you will but think, for a minute, of what He has done in order to man's salvation, I think you will see there cannot be an, "if," with Him. See Him hanging on the accursed tree, nailed up to the gallows that He may die. His pains of body are inconceivably great, but meanwhile He is forsaken of His God and is brought into unknown tortures of soul. That is the Son of God who is dying so! It is He, whose face is the glory of Heaven, who is thus dying the death of a felon, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." I have such a conviction of the power of Christ's death that if it were revealed to me that on the Cross He redeemed not only one world, but as many fallen worlds as there are stars, I could well believe it!

Oh, the blood of the Son of God! What merit there must be in such a Sacrifice as that! Infinite Deity united to perfect manhood and the whole life laid down that men might live! Tell me that Christ cannot save! Tell me that His blood will not wash out the most scarlet sin that ever defiled man! I know better. There must be infinite virtue in the atoning Sacrifice of Christ. There cannot be an, "if," about the power of the Crucified to forgive all who come to Him and trust in His great Sacrifice!

If you question the power of His death, remember that He rose again from the dead and upward He went into Glory and there, today, He sits enthroned. I think I can see Him, now, at the right hand of the Father, clothed with everlasting honor and Divine majesty! What is He doing? Look! He lifts His hands. He pleads for sinners! Will the Father deny Him anything? He makes intercession for the transgressors! Will God refuse to bless them? Oh, by the living Christ at God's right hand, pleading the merit of His own Sacrifice, I would have you confident that there cannot be an, "if," about His power to save any of the children of men!

Do not tell me that you are the worst sinner that ever lived. I will take it for granted that you are and I will go further than that and suppose you are a lot worse than you think you are! I have sometimes had people coming to me as enquirers and sitting in a chair opposite me. They have begun by telling me about their dreadful sins. I have generally said to them, "You need not tell me that. I have not the slightest doubt that you are a thousand times worse than you tell me, or than you think you are. You are only fit to be cast into Hell." And then they say, "Ah, it is so; it is so." Right glad am I to hear them consent to the verdict, for that is the sort of people that Jesus Christ came to save! Do you think that He came to redeem some little miserable morsel of a sinner who never did anything very much that was wrong? Well, very likely He did, but He came to be a great Savior for great sinners. Suppose that, some day, you come and with glowing enthusiasm tell me there is a great doctor in London. I would probably say, "What does he do?" "He has a large number of patients," you answer. "But what does he do?" At length you give the astonishing reply, "He cures bad fingers." Well, I do not see much in that.

But suppose, on the contrary, that in answer to my question, "What does this great physician do that you are crying up so much?" you are able to give a true report and say, "He has restored a great many persons who were given up by everybody else. He can cure the very worst diseases. In fact, they say that if a man were almost dead, he could make him alive." Why, then, indeed I would begin to sing his praises, too! And if I were diseased, I would go to him for cure. But I am more confident about the power of Christ to heal, for to Him I went when my sin was past all human remedy—and He made me every whit whole! There is no language strong enough to tell of His power to save and bless. If you believe that my Master can only save a small sinner, who has only a little imperceptible sin about him, I tell you that you do not know Him! He is a great Savior for great sinners and, however grossly guilty you may have been, lament it, mourn over it, but remember that Christ is able to save even the very chief of sinners. He is able to save them now, right now, where they are standing or sitting—and to send them out of this house new creatures in Him!

Thus you see that the "if" is not in Christ.

II. But now, secondly, where *is* the "if"? THE "IF" IS IN OUR LACK OF FAITH. Jesus said to the man, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him that believes." But why is faith needed?

The answer is, first, that it is *a reasonable demand* and that it is most unreasonable to expect Christ to do anything for us if we will not believe in Him. The very least thing that a great surgeon could expect of a patient would be confidence in his skill. Do not marvel, therefore, that Jesus Christ expects you to believe in Him and, "if you will not believe, surely you shall not be established." If you refuse Christ your confidence, you cannot wonder if He refuses you His salvation! "If you can." It seems almost as if the Lord, in astonishment, echoed this poor father's words, starting back in wonder that He should be so misunderstood—that any human being should come to Him, who created all things—and yet doubt His power! The poor leper, who came to Him after the sermon on the mount, had a different way of expressing his misgiving. He said, "If you will," doubting not Christ's power to heal, but His *willingness*. I know not which is the worse, but I am sure that both are unreasonable, for if either the willingness or ability is absent, Christ cannot be a Savior for sinful men. But, as we often sing—

"He is able,
He is willing; doubt no more."

Faith is needed, in the next place, because it is *for God's Glory*. It would not be for Christ's Glory to bless those that do not believe in Him. Shall He reward unbelief? Will you have it said that Christ came to this earth and that He lived and died for the salvation of sinners and that, after that, though a man would not believe in Him, He still gave him pardon and mercy? No, there shall never be such a thing as a pardoned unbeliever! A saved man who does not believe in Christ? That would be to the dishonor of Christ and would make Him to be rather the *patron of sin* than the Savior from sin! Faith is required, then, that God may have the glory of man's salvation.

This faith is also *for our own good*. Our Lord means to bless that poor man by healing his child, but He means to bless him doubly by healing him of his unbelief, for it is, indeed, a horrible weakness, for a man to lack faith in His Creator! It is a loathsome disease of spirit for a man to be doubtful of his God! I have looked down the list of crimes and though there are some that are truly abominable, yet when I have looked into the very foulest transgression, I have not seen anything so vile as the sin of a man who doubts the love and power of Christ, who died that men might live! This is the masterpiece of Hell's temptation. We are led farthest away from God when we doubt the love which He has sealed with the blood of His own heart. It is, therefore, for our own good that we should believe. Here and always, God's Glory and our good are closely joined. To glorify God will be to enjoy Him forever.

Faith, then, is a reasonable, glorious and blessed thing and, in the sinner's case, *it is absolutely necessary to salvation*. We must believe in Jesus Christ if we would be saved. But cannot we be saved without believing? No. What will become of us if we do not believe in Jesus Christ? Well, I will make no "ifs" nor "ans" about *that*—"He that believes not shall be damned." I do not care to beat about the bush, or seek for a more refined version of the text—let it stand there in its own terrible simplicity, "He

that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned." If you do not believe in Jesus Christ, you will be damned, whatever that means—and it means something truly terrible, to be condemned of God and driven from His Presence because we do not believe in Him! There is no help for it, for there is no other salvation and no other door of hope except through faith in the appointed Savior of mankind! As John Newton, that great sinner saved by marvelous Grace, says—

"The worst of all diseases
Is light, compared with sin!
On every part it seizes,
But rages most within.
'Tis palsy, poison, fever,
And madness, all combined—
And none but a Believer
The least relief can find."

Here is where the, "if," is, then—it is in our *lack of faith*.

III. But now, in the third place, let me ask, WHAT PUTS THE "IF" THERE? Why is it that we cannot believe? If some unprejudiced person who before had been totally unacquainted with the Bible, read it for the first time, and was asked, "Is it a hard thing that God asks of men in order to their salvation, that they should believe in Jesus Christ, whom He has sent?" any unsophisticated mind would reply, "No, that must be the easiest thing in the world, for God cannot lie!" Such a verdict would be absolutely true, for the gift of His Son, whom He loved as He loved Himself, proves the honesty of God and leaves no room for doubt as to the certainty and the heartiness of His willingness to bless the sons of men. God could not be false and go so far with the falsehood as to give His own Son to die—that is altogether inconceivable! It seems of necessity, then, that God is true in declaring that He will save those who trust in His Son. And it looks, at first sight, as if it would be the simplest thing in all the world to trust in Jesus Christ—and so, indeed, it is. But why is it that there are *any* "ifs" about it? Why is it necessary that Christ should say, "If you can believe"?

The reason is because *we are alienated in heart from God*. If we were right with God, faith would be a matter of necessity. But we do not love God. By nature we even *hate* Him and that is why we do not trust Him. It would be a very wretched thing to meet with a young man who, if you were speaking to him in praise of his father, should say, "I do not believe in my father." If you continued, "But your father is a man of the highest integrity," would it not be sad to hear him reply, "I cannot trust him"? "Oh, but your father is kindness, itself," you might add. And if the lad said, "Yes, I hear what you say, but I do not believe it—I cannot trust him," you would know that there was some dreadful family feud, some most unhappy circumstance that had twisted that youth's mind so that he did not love his father and, therefore, did not believe in him! Supposing his father to be a man of undoubted repute and integrity, the last thing that you would expect to happen would be that his own son would say, "I cannot believe him."

Now, concerning God, who among us will so blaspheme Him as to say that He was ever false? Yet men say it and do not seem at all startled at what they have said! Though it is written, "He that believes not God has made Him a liar," men will still calmly tell us, as if it were an amiable weakness rather than a sin, "Sir, I cannot believe in Christ. I cannot believe in God." It is, then, because you are alienated from Him because you do not love Him! Lament this! Confess it before God and when your heart is renewed, by His Grace, then faith will come as a matter of course.

Another reason for this, "if," is that *we are idolaters by nature*. "No, no," you say, "*we* are not *idolaters*!" I say we are idolaters by *nature*—all of us—for what is an idolater but one who needs to have an idol, or a something which he can see, trust in and which shall represent to him the invisible? The Romanist becomes an idolater as he puts before him the "crucifix," or some precious relic of the saints. But you may become an idolater, too, without seeming to be so superstitious. You are such, indeed, if, in Providence, for instance, you cannot trust God. If before you trust Him you need to have your income regularly guaranteed, it is not God, you then trust—it is the money. So with your soul. You could trust God, you say, if an angel were to come from Heaven to speak, or if you heard a voice in the night. So, then, it is not *God* that you would trust, but an angel, or a voice! You need something to see and something to hear. It is ingrained in human nature thus to seek a sign—and what is that but idolatry? Oh, that we would get rid of this and say, "God is invisible. I am not to expect to *see* Him—I am to *trust* Him. I am to believe that He who made the heavens and the earth, and who gave His Son to die, will save me, and lo, I put my trust in His dear Son once and for all!"

Another reason why this, "if," comes in, is *because we measure God by ourselves*. We cannot think that God can forgive us because we find it so hard to forgive our fellow creatures. We cannot conceive that God will do it freely, from no motive but that of pure Grace, because we are so mercenary. We need to be *paid* for what we do and unless we can see some chance of reward, somewhere or other, we are very slow to make anything like a sacrifice! And so we think that God is altogether such as we are, whereas you remember it is written, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." We get to measuring God by our fellow men. We say, "Such-and-such a one is very good, but he would never forgive after *this* fashion. He would give generously, but he certainly would not give after the style that *God* is spoken of as giving." Thus, as the Ethiopians are said to make their angels with black faces, we imagine God to be like ourselves or other men and, therefore, find it difficult to believe in Him.

Dismiss from your thoughts all such ideas of God! You might sooner hold the ocean in the hollow of your hand, or span the heavens with your fingers than, unaided by Grace, get an idea of the greatness and glory of God by all your searching! Never forget that He is as great in mercy as in any other of His attributes. He delights to forgive! It is the joy of His heart to press to His bosom His prodigal children! Nothing gives such intense satisfaction to the heart of God as the manifestation of His boundless

Grace. I wish you could believe this. But it is because we thus limit the Holy One of Israel that we find the simple matter of faith so difficult. Because of this, there stands that great, ugly black, stiff, "if." "*If* you can believe."

IV. In conclusion, let me ask another question and seek to answer it. HOW CAN THIS "IF" BE REMOVED? Are there any in this house who are longing to be saved and who have been putting an, "if," upon Christ, and saying, "Lord, if You can"? First, let them know that the "if" lies with themselves. And then let us join hands and see if we cannot turn this "if" out. Come, Brother, let me help you. If this "if" has been too strong for you, I would ask God's Spirit to bless a few words to you, that this "if" may be got rid of. With reference to that other "if" which came from the lips of the leper and to which I have already referred, I heard of a little girl whose mother found her, one day, with a carving knife and the family Bible. "What are you doing?" she asked her child, in some anxiety for the safety of both the child and the Book. "O Mother," she said, "I was reading about that man who came to Jesus and said, 'If You will, You can make me clean,' and I thought He ought not to have said, "if," to Jesus—so please, Mother, I am scraping it out." A very good thing to do with all our "ifs"! How shall we go to work with this one? Well, we had better imitate this man with his epileptic child possessed of a devil.

First of all, *you must confess the faith you have*. This man said, "Lord, I believe." There is something in that. If you cannot go as far as you would, go as far as you can. What do you believe about Jesus Christ? Come, poor, dear, trembling Heart, run over in your mind what you believe about Him. I think I could have said, before I really trusted Christ, "Lord Jesus, I believe You are the Son of God." I believed that, I never doubted it. "And I believe that You are sent to be the Savior of men." I do not know that I ever doubted that. Some of you from your childhood have believed that, too. Your mother taught you that and when you read the Scriptures, you were sure of it. Well, now, just turn that over. "Lord, I believe You are the Son of God. I believe You are God. I believe You are able to save. I believe Your precious blood takes away the sin of all who trust You. I believe that whoever trusts in You has everlasting life. I believe that You have sent Your Gospel into the world, saying, 'He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.' Lord, by Your Grace, I believe all this."

That is a matter to be very thankful for and yet, do you know that is a matter that will condemn you unless you go farther? If you believe as much as that, you ought to believe more! I can understand the atheist or deist not trusting Christ. I can understand the Socinian not trusting Christ—but if you are sound in your doctrinal beliefs, I cannot think of an excuse for you why you should not *trust* Christ! If a man says to me, "I believe you, Sir, to be a thief. I cannot trust you," that is perfectly consistent, is it not? But if he says, "Sir, I believe you are an upright man who would not, on any account, do a doubtful thing and yet I cannot trust you." I am not anxious to answer such a man as that, for out of his own mouth he condemns himself.

So, some of you go so far that if you do not go farther, you will condemn yourselves. Surely, in all reason, if a man can say to Christ, "I believe that You are the Christ that should come into the world. I believe that You are the Son of God; I believe that You were raised again from the dead. I believe that you sit at the right had of God, pleading for sinners," that man must also add, "Therefore I trust You." It is the natural inference to be drawn! God help you, then, to confess such faith as you have!

The next way to knock this, "if," over, is to *appeal to Christ to be helped against it*. "Lord, I believe," said this poor man, "help You my unbelief." He cried out of the depths of his soul, "O Lord, help me against my unbelief!" So poor Heart, you have been trying to believe! Did you ever try this man's plan of believing that Christ could make him believe? That is odd, is it not? You see, he must have had faith in Christ, or else he would not have said, "Help You my unbelief." Let us imitate him and cry with Cowper—

"Heal us, Emmanuel, here we are,
Waiting to feel your touch!
Deep-wounded souls to You repair,
And, Savior, we are such!
Our faith is feeble, we confess,
We faintly trust Your Word,
But will You pity us the less?
Be that far from You, O Lord!
Remember him who once applied
With trembling for relief,
'Lord I believe,' with tears he cried,
Oh, help my unbelief!"

Oftentimes there is a great deal more faith in a poor sinner's heart than he thinks there is. He really is trusting the Savior, but does not know he is doing so. He is saved and yet is afraid to think it can be possible. Long after I knew the Savior and believed in Him, I used, at times, to be staggered with the thought that it was too good to be true. The tempter would say, "It cannot be that you are really forgiven, that you are Christ's own, that you are washed in His blood and saved forever!" Well, it *does* almost seem to be too good to be true but, then, nothing is too good to be true when you are dealing with a king! If it is a king who is about to act, we say that the grander and kinglier a thing it is, the more likely it is to be done. But rise *higher* than kings! If it is superlative, if it is infinite, if it is altogether inconceivable but for its having been revealed, then is it the more likely to be true, for it is the more like God! Oh, then, I pray you, bring your unbelief before Christ and let it die in His Presence! Unbelief does not like the Cross. If you look up to the dying Savior, to the risen Christ of God, unbelief dies! God help you, then, to say, "Lord, I believe; help You my unbelief"!

One other thing you must do if you are to follow the example of this father. *Bring the case to Christ*. This poor man brought his child to Christ. It was a hard tug and he asked others to help him. Do you not see how the suffering child was tossed about—sometimes this way, sometimes that? You may have seen some poor man or woman who is subject to fits and noticed in what a way such people are convulsed. But this poor child was much worse—he was foaming at the mouth, raving, tearing and full of the

fiend! The father is trying to help his boy. Sometimes he holds him by the waist. But the child tears away. Then another helps grasp one hand, while the father gets hold of the other. He drags him to Christ—pulls him almost piecemeal to Christ—but he gets him there at last. "Bring him to Me," said Christ, and what better could the father do, or can you do, than obey the command and bring your loved one? So he did and he laid him down at Jesus' feet. Where else is so fitting a place for the sick or devil-possessed as the feet of the Savior? "To whom shall we go" if we turn away from His tender heart? When the boy in the harvest field cried out in pain, his father said, "Carry him to his mother." Where else could he be so soothed and helped—and where else but in Christ can you or your children hope for blessing?

That is what I want you to do with your friends— somehow get them to Jesus Christ by mighty, vehement, determined prayer! And when you have prayed about them, try to get them to hear the Gospel. I like to preach to people who have never heard the Gospel before—it is grand work! There are some of you upon whom I fear that I shall never make an impression. You have been hammered upon so long that I am afraid you have become Gospel-hardened. Take a person out to look at the stars—some countryman who has always been able to see. Perhaps he does not make any remark, or he simply says, "Oh, I have gone across the moor many a night! I don't see anything particular in the stars." But here is an old man brought from the Ophthalmic Hospital! He has been blind for many years. In fact, he forgets whether he ever could see. By a skillful operation, the film is taken from his eyes.

Take *him* out at night and the first things he sees are the stars! He says, "What a sight! How glorious! How Divine!" Those are the kind of people to whom it is a joy to preach, for when the Lord gives sight to those who were blind and they see for the first time, how glad they are to see Him! Persons who do not often have flowers are charmed with the sight of them and find much delight in their fragrance. Yet I have heard of a flower girl who sold violets in the street and had to take those that remained home to her poor miserable room every night till she said that she hated the smell of violets! She could not bear them, having got so accustomed to them.

"That is strange," says one, yet that is how some of our Gospel hearers speak. They say that we preach too long and they begin to criticize our sermons. I dread above anything that your nostrils should become so familiar with the sweet smell of the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valleys that their fragrance should become nauseous to you! How sad it would be that any of you should get so familiar with the Gospel that, at last, you would say, "What a weariness it is!" May this *never* be the case and, lest it should, come, now, and bring your case before Christ! It is no use to bring it before *me* and let me preach to you. It is no use to bring it before the mere means of Grace! Turn to the Lord Jesus, who is beside you, and tell Him all the case—say to Him that you renounce all other hope and trust yourself in His hands. Believe in Him this moment, lest haply the very Gospel, itself, should be a "savor of death unto death" to

you. If you trust to Christ, you must have life! O Spirit of God, help many to come this very hour and trust in the Crucified, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Mark 9.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—241, 435, 394.

MR. SPURGEON UPDATE:

Westwood, Beulah Hill, Upper Norwood,
September 24, 1891.

"DEAR FRIENDS—Every time I see a Church officer, I am cheered by tidings of your good condition as a Church and people. In this there is joy for me. May our Lord keep us always united in love, fervent in prayer and diligent in service!

"As for myself, I have made no progress this week, but have rather gone backward than forward. When a man cannot eat, how can he gather strength? I would have left home for the seaside if I had felt equal to the effort, but I am without energy and must stay where I am. Oh, that I could be among you! But I must be patient and wait our Father's will. Your prayers included health and strength for me and these I shall yet have, for mere life is scarcely a blessing without them. May I beg you to continue in supplication? I am sure you will.

"If sharp pruning makes fruit-bearing branches bring forth more fruit, it is not a thing to be lamented when the great Vine-Dresser turns His knife upon us. If I may, in the end, be more useful to you and to those who come in and out among us, I shall rejoice in the woes which I have endured. May you each one, when tried with sickness, improve your school-time, that you may be the sooner able to learn and know all the Master's mind!

"God bless you this day by my dear Brother, A. G. Brown. May he be happy in your midst and may God be glorified! Few are the men like-minded with Mr. Brown, a Brother tried and proved. Peace be to you and to your families!

"Yours most lovingly,
(SIGNED) C. H. SPURGEON."

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

A CLARION CALL TO SAINTS AND SINNERS
NO. 2225

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
OCTOBER 11, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 2, 1891.**

***"Arise you, and depart; for this is not your rest: because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction."
Micah 2:10.***

THERE is a miserable tendency in men to cling to things that are seen. Though that which we behold is only temporal and shadowy, lacking any true substance or permanence—though the things round about us can only endure for a little while and then will vanish away—yet we give our hearts to them and are ensnared by their false glitter and glamour. Like the poor birds that light on birdlime and cannot get away, we are entangled by the things of time and sense, instead of rising, as on eagle wings, to a higher sphere. Forgetting that the soul of man cannot be satisfied with the poor baubles of earth, nor his yearning heart filled with the fleeting joys of time, we often put away from us the things that are unseen and eternal. One of the most necessary words for us to hear at such a time is this, "Arise you, and depart; for this is not your rest."

Suppose that the children of Israel, when they came out of Egypt and were on the way to Canaan, instead of living in tents and moving as the fiery cloudy pillar guided them, had taken it into their heads to build houses and cities and temples wherever they stopped—as if they were to stop in the wilderness forever? Would they not have missed much by such a plan? In the wilderness, not only would all who came out of Egypt have perished, but their children and their children's children would also have found graves in the desert, nor ever have seen the goodly land promised to their fathers. On the contrary, as you know, they lived in their canvas cities and when the cloud moved, every tent was struck, and they began the march. When the cloud halted, they rested under canvas, never knowing how long they would continue in any one place, always expecting that they would be on the move, again, seeing that they had not yet come to the land that flowed with milk and honey. They well knew that in the wilderness was no abiding place for them, for the sand which was all around them yielded them no meat—and if their food had not dropped from above, they would have had no supply from the barren desert. They were strangers and pilgrims with God—and sojourners—as were their fathers.

Now, our sad tendency is to be building cities, digging out foundations, laying courses of brick and saying, "Here I am going to rest. I have jour-

neyed long enough and now I have come to a place where I can say, 'Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years. Take your ease—eat, drink and be merry.'" It is a sorry business when the heirs of Heaven wish to dwell in the wilderness and when men who have an inheritance on the other side of Jordan forget the land that God has given them by Covenant and seek to enjoy their portion in this life! We do not wonder that the *ungodly* do so—they may well make as much as they can of their little enjoyment here, for, unless they repent of their evil ways, that is all that they will ever have! I do not wonder that such as have their lot in this life should seek after carnal merriment, fleshly pleasures and the giddy dance. What more do they have? It is not astonishing to see the swine greedy at the trough, pushing one another aside as they struggle to get their mash. But when those who have been redeemed with a strong hand and an outstretched arm sink into worldly conformity, worse, because more deadening, than the slavery of Egypt, then, indeed, we see the sad havoc sin can work and mourn because of it.

Unawakened men have not a thought above these minor things and yet, if they could for once shake off the spell that has lulled to sleep their immortal spirits and turned them into comrades of the brutes, they would begin to feel that this is not their rest and would hear a voice saying to them, "Arise you, and depart." Perhaps they would even answer, "I will arise and go to my Father. I will leave the husks with which I gladly would have filled myself, and I will eat of the bread, whereof in my Father's house there is enough and to spare." But the trumpet call to "arise" is not only needed by prodigals in the far country! Careless professors who once ran well, but have been hindered, and who now rest content with the world, as if they were to stay here forever, require to be awakened from their slumber. "Awake you that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light." God means His Church to be a separated people on the earth. Our citizenship is in Heaven, yet too many of us and, perhaps, all of us, at times, fall into the ways of the unregenerate and have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness—even if we, ourselves, do not do them. Because of this slothful and carnal tendency, even in the best of us, it is continually necessary that the awakening call should come, "Arise you, and depart; for this is not your rest."

I am going to talk, first, to God's people and sound an alarm for them. Then I shall have a word for awakened sinners and shall also sound the trumpet in their midst.

I. First, I shall view the text as A CLARION NOTE FOR BELIEVERS IN CHRIST. As a soldier hears the bugle in the early morning and starts up ready for the duty of the day, so may every servant of Christ who hears these words, arise girded for service! The soldier, at the sound of the awakening call, must forsake the warmest bed and turn out to take his place in the ranks. With hope of a similar result would I sound the trumpet today. Let the clarion note ring out shrill and clear, "Arise you, and depart."

To begin, I remark that *there are occasions when this call comes especially to us.* It may be heard in our everyday life above the din and bustle,

but it is most needed when, perhaps, we are least inclined to listen to it. "Arise you, and depart." This note needs to be sounded in the ears of saints when they begin to be comfortable. When you have been going up the Hill Difficulty with a very heavy pull, you have come to the arbor on the side of the hill which has a seat very hospitably provided by the Lord of the Way. There is a table put in front of the seat so that you can sit down and, if so minded, put your arms on the table and have a good nap. Now, these arbors are built for the refreshment of pilgrims, but they are not meant for them to sleep in! They may sit still and gather strength with which to go on up the hill. They may look back and be grateful that they have climbed so far. But they must *not* go to sleep! If they do, it will happen to them as it did to one Christian of whom Mr. Bunyan wrote, who lost his roll of assurance, there, and had to come back and search for it with many tears. If any of you are very comfortable just now and things are going well with you. If, after a long struggle, the tide has now turned and you are floating along without needing either oar or sail, I would caution you to beware—

"For more the treacherous calm I dread
Than tempests bursting over my head."

Dear child of God, when you begin to be very comfortable, unless you take care to be very *grateful* and sanctify your prosperity, you will be likely to drift into a sad state. I take down the trumpet and venture to come very close to you and, though it may seem a rude thing to blow a blast right in your ear, yet I will do it! And this is the sound—"Arise you, and depart; for this is not your rest." God has given you many blessings, but you will turn them into curses if you make them to be your god. Jonah had a gourd, but when he made a god of his gourd, it was very soon withered! Take heed when all things go well with you here below, lest you begin to be glued to this world and find your comfort here. It will not do—God will not permit it! If you say, like David, in his prosperity, "I shall never be moved. Lord, by Your favor You have made my mountain to stand strong," you may soon have to add like he, "You did hide Your face, and I was troubled."

This note, also, is very necessary in the ears of Christian people when they begin to fraternize with the world. Nothing but evil can come of such association, for, "what communion has light with darkness? And what concord has Christ with Belial?" But you will say, "We have had some nice company lately. We have invited to our house some very decent people. It is true that we had no family prayer that night—we could not bring out the Bible and read a chapter before them, for we did not know if they would like it. But, in spite of that, they were a nice sort of people. We are going to *their* house another night—we do not quite know how they will propose to spend the evening, but we shall have to put up with their way of doing things because, you see, if you are in the world, you must do as the world does."

Now, Friends, I shall, without asking your leave, blow my trumpet on both sides of your head! And I shall give a very loud blast, too, as my friend, Mr. Manton Smith, sometimes does when he uses his silver cornet.

"Arise you, and depart; for this is not your rest: because it is polluted!" Beware when the world loves you, lest that which attracts them towards you is something that ought not to be there! Beware when men of the world are very fond of your society, for then surely you must have got out of touch with your Master, who says, "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." It is well, if consistent with righteousness, to have everybody's love, but when saints begin to be the admiration of the ungodly, depend upon it, there is something about them that God does not admire—there is an unhallowed conformity that is a signal of danger!

When the world patronizes the Church, the Church will need tenfold Grace to maintain her spirituality, just as on an ocean steamer any speed beyond a certain limit is only attained by an expenditure of power altogether out of proportion to the increase of the distance traveled. "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you!" Such praise is not for good soldiers of Jesus Christ! If the enemy begins to love one of the king's generals, the king may half suspect that his general is turning traitor. God save us from such treachery! "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." So again I sound the trumpet—"Arise you, and depart; for this is not your rest."

Perhaps there are some who are neither beginning to be comfortable, nor to fraternize with the world, but to whom this trumpet note will still come with special emphasis, for the Lord's people need this call when they dream of long life on earth. You may, perhaps, have lived a long time, now, without any sickness or illness. You are certainly getting a little gray, your hair tells of the passing of years. Still, your father lived to a good old age. So did your grandfather and you reckon that you, also, will live for a long time to come. You have heard, this last week, perhaps, of the deaths of several people who were younger than you, but you do not reckon upon dying. Far from it—you have not even made your will yet, nor have you anything in order for your departure. A long stretch of health has a tendency to make us think that we are immortal. But though we may imagine this to be the case, the worms do not think so! The wood which will make your coffin may already be sawn and the linen which will be your shroud may be all ready. There is a spot of land where you must lie unless the Lord should suddenly come to His Temple. Here, certainly, we have no continuing city and, therefore, we ought not to make this world our rest.

Dear Friends who have been here one Sabbath have been called away before the next came round—and some who have seemed to be best in health have been the very persons who have gone first. Therefore, my Soul, stand on tiptoe—be not flat-footed as some beasts are—have your wings always ready for flight so that if your Lord should come at cock-crow, or at daybreak, or at midnight, you shall be equally ready, at His bidding, to be up and away! I sound for myself and for my beloved friends, this clarion note—"Boot and saddle, up and prepare! Arise you, and depart." To whom that note may come with greatest point I cannot tell, for I

am no Prophet, but let it come to us all. Let none of us begin to strike root here below, for this is not our rest!

Having thus sounded this note, I make a second remark. *There is an argument by which this call is greatly strengthened.* The bugle note "Arise you, and depart," is made doubly shrill by the statement that follows, "This is not your rest." You see, that is given as a *reason* for our action. The word, "for," which joins these two clauses of the text, is being used in the sense of, "because." At times this argument appeals to us with special force. Of this reason and these seasons let me now speak.

Remember, child of God, that you have a rest of another sort. "This is not your rest." "There remains, therefore, a rest for the people of God." That happy home, that flourishing business is not to be your abiding place. You would not like the change, I am sure, if the best portion here below might be yours forever instead of your dwelling place up above—

"Oh, the delights, the heavenly joys,
The glories of the place
Where Jesus sheds the brightest beams
Of His overflowing Grace."

What must it be to be *there*, where saints and angels find a Heaven in beholding the face of the Lord of Glory and paying their humble adoration before Him! O Sirs, if we had a palace here, below, and parks and gardens reaching too far for a man to travel through them in a day—yes, if we had all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them—we would not even, then, say, "This is our rest," nor consent to exchange Heaven for such things as these! What is there that we could possess on this round globe, with all its treasures, at all comparable with the eternal felicity, the rivers of pleasure that are at God's right hand forevermore? As you attempt to make the comparison, you will, each one of you, say, "I must not and I cannot cleave to these poor things below, for my rest is not here. Thank God that it is not here!"

I think you will hear this call very distinctly when troubles come. When a man begins to have pain of body. When the one who is dearer to him than his life, sickens before him and is carried to the grave. When everything goes amiss with him in business and daily life, he does not, then, so much need my trumpet, for he already has heard the call sounding very loudly and there are many things saying to him, "This is not your rest." He knows that it is not! He is so troubled that he begins to let loose of all earthly things. He is like one at sea, tossed up and down with the billows—wave upon wave comes rolling over him and he says, "Now I clearly see that this is not my rest." Come, then, tried child of God, at this moment! Let this Word of God sound as sweet music to you rather than as a disturbing trumpet blast. Let it be as a heart-note that can lull you to peace. "This is not your rest." Do not wonder, therefore, if you find thorns and thistles growing here—your paradise lies in another land where no thorn or trial shall be brought forth to trouble and annoy you—

"There everlasting spring abides
And never-withering flowers.
Death, like a narrow sea, divides
This heavenly land from ours."

The troubles of this life cause us to hasten forward to cross that Jordan and the call is thus all the more powerful. "Arise you, and depart; for this is not your rest."

We hear this same note when success is enjoyed. I think that the time in which I have been most humbled before God and in which I have been lowest in spirit, is the time when mercies have been multiplied and I have met with some great success. Though it seems very strange, I look back upon the hours which have immediately followed some great triumph in the service of my Lord as the saddest which I have spent. I could fight my Lord's battles with both hands, but when the day was won, those same hands seemed nerveless. When this House of Prayer was being built, I was able to face every difficulty, as it arose, full of earnestness, zeal and with unshaken confidence! But when the place was opened and the work completed, I felt like Elijah who was faint after he had done the Master's service with the priests of Baal.

Ah, dear Friends, God has only to give you what you want to make you feel the emptiness of it! If you are His child, the more you have the less you will see in it. The child of God who has possessions in this life, is just the man who says, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity!" When you look at that which has been bestowed, you say, "Why was I so anxious to get this? I thank God for it, as His gift, but there is nothing in it apart from His giving it to me! Toil and trouble and care come with increase of goods. This, this is not my rest." If any young man here thinks that if he gets on in business and reaches a point when he can retire upon a competence, he will then have reached his rest, he is very greatly mistaken! If he is a child of God and if he gets all that his heart wishes for, he will find that there is nothing satisfying in it whatever. There is, in God, an all-sufficiency, but in all the things of this life, apart from the Grace of God, there is no solid satisfaction or rest!

Beloved, I am sure that we feel that this is not our rest when we have gracious seasons. Do we not sometimes sit in this House of Prayer and feel as if we would like to sit here forever? Last Sunday morning, when I had done preaching, Brother Stott said that he did not want to go. He said that his willing soul would stay in such a frame as this and I suspect that there were a great many more in the congregation who, like the preacher, felt the same! A Brother was describing to me the effect of a certain amusement upon him—a very proper amusement in which there was no wrong whatever—but he said, "Well, you know, I felt like a man who had gone out of a warm house into the cold. There was nothing in it for me, though I saw others very much enjoying it. But I have been used to better things than that and I cannot get on with it." I believe that such is the experience of all God's people who delight themselves in Him, with reference to the pleasures of the worldly.

You will generally notice that when the Believer gets near to God, tastes the unseen joys and eats the bread that was made in Heaven, all the feasts of earth, all its amusements and all its glories seem very flat, stale and unprofitable! It is like drinking ditch water after having slaked your thirst from the cool brooks that come from the snows of Lebanon! After

having laid our heads on Jesus' bosom, we feel, with regard to the world, "No, this is not our rest." We have laid hold on something better, more substantial, more satisfying and enduring—and when we come to the best the world can give, we, somehow, turn our backs upon it and cry—"This is not our rest."

Surely we feel this strongly and hear very clearly the clarion note, "Arise you, and depart," when our many friends are taken Home. I can scarcely look upon any part of the Tabernacle without saying to myself, "Such a friend used to sit there, and such a friend there, and here, behind me, certain of my kind and good Elders and Deacons used to sit." I cannot look round without missing many. When you got well on in years, you will find that your best friends are on the other side of the river and that some of the dearest you have had are gone before you. When you think of it, you say to yourself, "I, too, must arise and depart; for this is not my rest." I have heard that sailors, when they leave England, drink to the health of those they leave behind them till they get a certain distance. And within so many weeks of the port to which they are sailing they change the toast and drink to the health of those that are before them, whom they hope soon to see. It might be better for the sailors and none the worse for their friends if they grasped the idea that such drinking tends to the health of neither, but such I understand is their custom and, undoubtedly there is such a change of outlook in the Christian life. I have nearly reached that state in which I am thinking more of those before me than of those behind me or with me! We are looking forward to the grand reunion when those who went before us shall again appear and we shall, with them, be welcomed by our Lord into everlasting habitations! With such anticipations we can rejoice to hear the bugle sound again and again, "Arise you, and depart; for this is not your rest."

In the third place, notice that *there is a fact by which this call is further enforced*. In the text there is another expression which puts confidence into this bugle note and gives us a new reason for continuing our pilgrim march. The reasons which exist in ourselves for answering the trumpet call are not the only ones—others may be found all around us—and I ask your attention to this for a moment. "This is not your rest: because it is polluted." You cannot go out into the world without feeling that it is polluted—therefore heed well the Word of God which comes to you, "Arise you and depart."

The call receives new strength by the pollution which is around us. Where do you live? You are a very happy man if you live in a part of London which is not defiled. Can you go down any of our streets without hearing conversation that makes you feel that the place is polluted? This region, indeed, I may say with deep sorrow, is polluted! And there are still lower depths. The newspapers bear daily testimony to the awful extent the pollution has reached. And the terrible poison seems to be continually spreading. Do you not feel, if you know anything of the Grace of God, that you cannot forever live in the midst of such evil? Even Lot, among the people of Sodom, "dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds." To him, one

day, there came, by angelic messengers, the call to arise and depart! In his heart of hearts he must have been glad to get away! We, too, because of the pollution that surrounds us, should learn that this is not our rest.

But what shall I say of the way in which the call is enforced by the pollution which comes home to us, even the defilement of our own house, of our own business and of our own daily experience? I am sure that if you look well into it, you will see sin in even your holy things! And if there is sin in your holy things, certainly there will be much that grieves God and should grieve you in your ordinary daily life. Within your domestic circle you may have those that make you feel, "This is not your rest: because it is polluted." You have those whom you love, for whom you pray with deep anxiety, who make you often realize that your relationships in life are both strained and stained. How many a godly man has to say with David, "Although my house is not so with God; yet He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure"! Yes, this is not our rest—the evil comes into such close contact with us that we long to be away from it all! We seek to arise and depart from the pollution which seems to cling to us like a wet garment. Thus the call is greatly enforced.

It becomes more forcible because of the holiness for which we sigh. Look at your own heart. Examine your own thoughts, your own words and even those actions which are right in motive. How often *pride* comes in! You say to yourselves, "I did that very well, indeed," and then the good deed becomes polluted, for you trust in yourself and distrust God. And the little self-confidence, or the little lack of faith in God will soon pollute that which you bring to the Lord. Oh, no, we can never rest till we got where there is no sin!—

"Then shall I see, hear and know
All I desired or wished below,"

but we shall never be content until we get up where Satan cannot tempt and where corruption will be done with forever—

"Far from a world of grief and sin!
With God eternally shut in!"

Blow the bugle again! Ring out the note with clarion clearness—"Arise you, and depart; for this is not your rest; because it is polluted."

In the fourth place, we must not forgot that *there is a danger by which this call is rendered loudest*. There is one more note that gives new intensity to it, when it is added, "Because it is polluted, it shall destroy *you, even with a sore destruction." Upon this I will say to the children of God that the things of this* world are our destruction. There is nothing here that helps us on our way to God. It is a wilderness at the very best—

"Pricking thorns through all the ground,
And mortal poisons grow.
And all the rivers that are found
With dangerous waters flow."

God keeps His own and preserves them to the end, but they get nothing out of this world save the discipline of avoiding it. Vain world! It is no friend to Grace! It does not help us on to God. Were it not for Grace, it would be our destruction!

Look at the temptations around you. Are you ever forced to cry, "Good Lord, help me"? Remember Bunyan's pilgrim, Mr. Stand-Fast, when Madame Bubble encountered him? It was on the Enchanted Ground that she met him and offered him her purse and all manner of carnal delights. What did poor Stand-Fast do? In an agony he fell down and prayed! Because he was poor, he was tempted by her purse and his heart began to go after vanity—what could he do but kneel down and pray? Ah, this is not your rest! It is a place for wrestling rather than for resting! A place for prayer, not for sleep! It is not your rest, for it is polluted and, "because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction," unless the Grace of God shall prevent it! Does not this consideration make the call become very loud?

Have you not felt the deadening influence of the world? Can you busy people be up and down the city, or in your shops all day, without feeling that these things tend to harden you? Grace comes in and raises you above it, but the thing, itself, and the care and the thought that you are obliged to give to it have a tendency to make you sink instead of rise. How grateful you ought to be for your Sabbaths! And how thankful you should be for this little sanctuary in the middle of the week, this appointed evening when you can steal away and shake the earth off your feet and brush the dust from your clothes and go back to your toil refreshed and strengthened! God grant us Grace to live above the world! The world, itself, will not help us—it will be our destruction if we do not arise and join the company who "Ask the way to Zion with their faces toward it, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten." Thus the call waxes long and loud.

But it becomes loudest of all when we have to always mourn the fatal effect of worldliness in others. When I look over the Church Book, sometimes I cannot help shedding tears. There is the name of a Brother who used to pray so sweetly—where has he gone? There is the name of a Sister who used to be one of the most earnest followers of Christ—where is she now? I should hardly like to know where they are and yet they did once seem to run well. I remember a Brother who fell into gross sin, of whom I never heard any more, and one said, "If that man is not a child of God, I am not one, myself." I could not help saying, "Hush, hush! Do not talk of staking your soul against any other man's. You know but little about yourself and you do not know anything about him."

I do not like to hear such a thing said and yet I have known some of whom I could almost have said the same! We have thought, "He *must* be a child of God" but, after all, the man has turned aside to crooked ways and proved that he never had the Grace of God in his heart. Ah, dear Friends, while those things happen, "this is not your rest." As well seek for shelter in an enemy's country, or seek rest in a storm at sea, as expect to find anything like rest here. No, "Arise you, and depart; for this is not your rest: because it is polluted, it shall destroy you, even with a sore destruction," unless the God of Infinite Love and Mercy shall keep you as the apple of His eye!

Thus I have spoken to those who are Believers in Christ. God bless them! Now I turn to others for the few minutes that remain.

II. Secondly, my text may be viewed as AN AWAKENING NOTE FOR AWAKENED SINNERS. "Arise you, and depart; for this is not your rest." In dealing with this head, I want to say a word to those who are thoughtful, but are not yet Believers in our Lord Jesus Christ. I desire to take my silver trumpet and come to each one of you and sound in your ear that same note which I tried to sound in the ears of God's people. "Arise you, and depart." Get up! Sleep no more! Lie in indifference no longer! God help you to say, "I will arise and go to my Father"! You must clear out of your present position or you will be lost. The name of the place where you now dwell is the City of Destruction and if you would escape, you must run from it. Flee from the wrath to come!

You are called upon to depart from sin and self. You must, through Divine Grace, be ready to quit self and the righteousness that is of self—and sin and the follies that go with sin. "Arise you, and depart." O man, or woman, if you stay where you are by nature, you stay in a land which, like Sodom and Gomorrah, is given up to destruction by fire from Heaven! "Escape for your life; look not behind you, neither stay you in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed." You that are in a state of nature, a state of guilt and condemnation, arise you and depart. "Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near: let the wicked forsake his ways 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."

And here is the reason why you should thus arise and depart—*you have found no rest in the world*—"This is not your rest." I put it to you—have you found any true peace in the ways of sin? Ah, if you have been awakened to see your state before God, you know that you are not happy! How can you be? An immortal soul contort with mortal things? "Too low they build who build beneath the stars." He has a poor treasury who has not a treasury in Heaven. If all your possessions are here, it is a poor all, for you lose it when you die, or it may at any moment be taken from you while you live. You now have no rest. You know many men and women who may enjoy themselves as much as they can, so far as means are concerned, but they never really enjoy themselves at all. They used to get pleasure when they were younger, but now they go to the same places and they come away dissatisfied. I am glad of it. I am glad that the Lord will not allow them to find satisfaction in the joys of this life.

And if you had a rest, here, you would soon have to leave it. What if you had to leave all you have tonight? What if, tonight, instead of my voice, it should be the angel who should sound the trumpet, "Arise you, and depart"? What if, instead of going home tonight, you went into the eternal state to meet your God and Judge? How would it be with you? How can you rest if you are unable to give a joyful answer to these questions? You are hanging over the mouth of Hell by a single thread and that thread is breaking! Only a gasp for breath, only a stopping of the heart for a single moment and you will be in an eternal world, without God, without hope,

without forgiveness! Oh, can you face it? I pray God that you may not have a bronze countenance, but may feel that it is time for you to listen to the voice that says, "Arise you, and depart; for this is not your rest."

But another reason why you should hasten to flee is because of the sins of your life. *You have polluted it.* And what happens to you? Why, the older you get, the more polluted you are! What a mercy it is that men do not live eight or nine hundred years, now, as they used to do! What monsters of sin would be on the earth if men kept on doing evil at the rate some of them do now! Living 80 years, sinners get to be quite sufficiently putrid in talk and life. But if they lived 800 years, this world would almost be a second Hell! Well might God, in the olden days, wash the world clean when there were sinners upon it so ripe for destruction, so rotten in their lives! Because sin thus fouls your nest, "Arise you, and depart."

With all the earnestness of my heart would I urge you to arise from your sin and hasten away from your peril, for *destruction threatens you.* You that have sinned cannot afford to always live here, for, even now, your sins begin to come home to you. They will come home even more as you grow older. When sickness begins to take away your spirits and departed health leaves you without the possibility of your present joys, your state will be almost too terrible for contemplation! Oh, I would not be the man who has lived a sinful life and who is about to die without hope! A pack of wolves around a man must be nothing to it! I heard the other day of one, in India, who was thought to be dead and the Parsee method, you know, is not to bury their dead—they leave them naked in what are called the "Towers of Silence," where there are vultures always waiting and, within three or four hours after a corpse is laid there, there is no flesh left upon the bones.

One poor man, who was only in a swoon, was thought to be dead and was laid out in the tower. The vultures came and one or two of them tore his flesh so terribly that he started up as from a dreadful dream! There were the vultures coming to devour him while he was yet alive and, defending himself as best he could, he managed to escape. What a plight to be in, lying in the place of the dead, surrounded by the cruel beaks of those fierce, ravenous birds! But in a far more awful position is a sinner when his sins come home to him. Only the Lord can drive those vultures away and restore him to life and safety. He comes for your deliverance and it is His voice that says, today, "Arise you, and depart; for this is not your rest." Fly to Him now, for if not, this rest of yours that you seem to have, will destroy you! You will grow more worldly and more callous as the years go on!

He that is filthy will become yet more filthy! As an old man, you will say, "It is no use talking to me. If I could have my curly hair back again and sit on my mother's knee once more, I might feel something, but now I am given up to hardness." The world will ruin you as the world has ruined its millions and is still ruining its thousands! Fly to Jesus, fly to Jesus! Sinner, fly this moment! God help you! I shall be well rewarded for having preached if but one soul should be awakened to flee away to Christ, my

Lord! And why should not many more, in answer to our prayers? The Lord bless you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Micah 2.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—854, 847, 848.

MR. SPURGEON UPDATE:

The following letter from MR. SPURGEON to the congregation at the Tabernacle will show friends the progress he is making. He bore the journey well and at the time this note was sent to the printers, there was, on the whole, a little improvement in his condition—

Westwood, Beulah Hill, Upper Norwood,
October 3, 1891.

"DEAR FRIENDS—I write a line on Saturday because the bright sun has tempted me to get to the seaside and I could not write you in time if I did not write now. As I have lost almost entirely my powers of eating, I feel it is time to do something and I steal away to the sea in the hope that God will there revive me.

"Your sacred unity and zeal are daily a comfort to me. Oh, that I could be well and serve you without a pause! But perhaps I am worth all the more as a worker because I have so fully been a sufferer!

"I am sure you will continue your prayers for me. May our God bless every one of you!
"Yours most lovingly,
"C. H. SPURGEON."

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

"LAY HOLD ON ETERNAL LIFE!"
NO. 2226

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
OCTOBER 18, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 19, 1891.

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

PAUL was very anxious about Timothy, his own son in the faith. He loved him greatly and he had much confidence in him, but still he felt that the work of preaching the Gospel was such a responsible undertaking that he could not be too prayerful for him, nor too earnest in exhorting him to continued steadfastness in those things which he had received. So "the old man eloquent," whose very pen seems to have borrowed some of the burning fervor of his heart, pours out his very soul to young Timothy in the earnest desire that he may find in him a true successor—one who, when Paul is compelled to lay down his trusteeship—will take it up and be faithful to his Lord and to the Gospel when his father in Christ is taken away from him. We cannot be too anxious about our young Brothers who are to preach the Gospel of the Grace of God. Always pray for students! Let them continually be mentioned in your private prayers than when those who have borne the burden and heat of the day shall rest with their fathers, God may raise up better men than they, who shall yet more faithfully proclaim His Word.

This passage of Scripture, "Lay hold on eternal life," is suggestive from its connection. In the same verse Timothy is told to, "Fight the good fight of faith." From this it is evident that if he lays hold on eternal life, he will have to fight for it and that if he has to fight, he can only fight by laying hold upon eternal life with a tenacious grip. Every Christian man is a soldier and no man will war a good warfare unless he lays hold upon eternal life with all his heart and soul. A man may fight the battles of earth with the life of earth, but our warfare is of a different kind—"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." With such foes we can only contend successfully when we are made invulnerable by the reception of the life of God within our souls. In a classic story we read of one who was dipped in the river Styx before he went forth to the battle so that the arrows of the foe might fall harmless about him. That fable becomes a fact for us when we "lay hold on eternal life." The fiery darts of the wicked are quenched by our shield of faith!

The whole chapter forms a sort of preface to the text. Three classes of people seem to have existed in the community where Timothy was called to labor—each with different views of the best method of teaching those around them. First of all, there were some who intermeddled with social politics. They told the slaves that they might conspire against their masters and try to rectify the unquestionable wrongs which existed in that day. Paul desires, as much as anybody could, that injustice should come to an end and especially that *slavery* should be swept off the face of the earth, as it has largely been by the influence of the Gospel. But, taught of God, and seeing that it was by the proclamation of the Gospel that these evils would be most surely overcome—rather than by any hasty social change—he says to Timothy, "Leave that matter alone. Lay hold on eternal life! You are not sent to cleanse the Augean stable of politics and to set things socially right—let it be sufficient for you to lay hold on eternal life and to call upon the people to do the same. Every man to his own calling and this is yours, "Lay hold on eternal life." Today many a young preacher and, perhaps some of the older ones, would do well to take heed to this advice of Paul given by the Spirit, for while every real social improvement, based on the principles of right and justice must have the sympathy of all Christian men, depend upon it that, in the long run, the surest way to raise men is to preach the Gospel to them! This will change their character and regenerated lives will soon result in altered social conditions.

Round about Timothy, too, there buzzed a set of men full of questions and difficulties—and discoveries of a false science which Paul calls, "profane and vain babblings." These were in a most unhealthy state, "sick about questionings and disputes of words," as the Apostle's language in verse four may be literally rendered. Concerning such, he says to Timothy, "Do not answer such wrangling of men corrupted in mind and bereft of the Truth of God. Do not worry yourself about them! Let the bees or the wasps buzz as much as they like. As for you, lay hold on eternal life! Stick to your business. Go in for the one thing for which God has called you, the glorious work of saving souls! Let those who like such questions fight them out to the bitter end, but, as for you, lay hold on eternal life!"

Then Paul had noticed that, at Ephesus, there were certain men who were striving to be rich. Certain men, even of the members of the Church, who seemed to be sacrificing everything else for gain. They were counting that gain was godliness and that if they could get rich, they really were the better men for it. But Paul says to Timothy, "Leave money alone. Having food and raiment, let us be content. Your hand is not big enough to lay hold of two things. Therefore, since you can only have one, see that it is the *vital* thing. Lay hold on eternal life!" To use the rough old proverb, "Let the cobbler stick to his last." "Timothy, stick to your business! Lay hold on eternal life—that is your main concern—'Whereunto you are also called and have professed a good profession before many witnesses.'"

I like this plain dealing of the Apostle. He seems to say, "Come to the all-important point, Timothy, and stick to it. Let others go in for this, and that, and the other—but as for you, set before yourself the highest aim. Say to them, as I wrote to the Philippians last year from Rome, 'This one thing I do'—'Lay hold on eternal life.'"

The great complaint which we have to make against many is that they seem to be looking after the odds and ends, the paraphernalia, the minor affairs of life. They do not seem to aim at this point—*eternal life*! Is it not so in praying? Is there not much that passes by the name which is not real prayer? We might often say, "Get to the point, Man, and ask of God what you need! Come to real prayer and downright grips with the Angel! Wrestle with Him and prevail!"

Paul seems, also, to hint that there was in the preaching, even in his day, a great deal that was extraneous, ornamental, superfluous—and so he says to young Timothy, "Aim at the center of the target. Go in for this, the main business, first of all—lay hold on eternal life!

How much there is of our prayer which is only language. How much of our praise which is only music! How much there is in our Churches which is something that may have to do with the betterment of the people, but is not salvation, not winning souls for Christ! How much there is of teaching which may be Christian teaching, but is not the teaching of Christ! But here we clearly see that the Apostle focused *everything* to this one point and brought Timothy to this one thing—that he should "lay hold on eternal life"—and having laid hold on it, himself, should then set it forth before others with such vehemence and strong emphasis that they, also, might be persuaded to lay hold on it and be saved!

Oh, my dear Hearers! What does it matter what I have preached to you unless you get eternal life? What does it matter how I have said this or that to you, unless you have received, at the hand of my Master, that life-giving stream which shall be in you "a well of water springing up into everlasting life"? With all your getting, I beseech you, get the understanding of the great mystery of godliness and become wise as to the life which is life, indeed!

I am now going to take this exhortation and press it upon each one here present, asking God to bless it. "Lay hold on eternal life."

I. First, then, WHAT IS ETERNAL LIFE?

In attempting to answer this question, I remark what should be perfectly obvious—it is a *gift of God*—the fruit of a Divine operation upon the heart. One of the first works of the Grace of God is to put within us eternal life. No man can create it, either in himself, or in his fellow men. Just as our physical life was bestowed upon us apart from any effort of our own, the Divine life cannot be evolved by any device of man—it must be imparted by the Spirit of God. At first, God created man "and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." And when, in Christ, man becomes a new creation, the work is as wholly and as really God's. Eternal life is what no man has by nature, for he is dead in sin. No man can earn it, for carnal works cannot purchase a spiritual gift. And if a man toiled for a whole eternity, he would be no nearer the possession of eternal life than when he began.

That it does not come by *effort* is clear, for how shall the dead, by any kind of effort, if effort they could make, attain to life? It does not come by outward *ceremonies*—these could never purchase that which God bestows freely. Yet how natural it is to the proud heart of man to seek to make *payment* for that which is to be obtained without money and without

price! It is strange that men should expect God to take *their* gift when they refuse to accept His! If they would but remember that all their giving cannot enrich God—that they cannot give Him anything that He does not already possess—it would be quite evident to them that eternal life can come in no other way than by the gift of God! It is foolish to try to fill an already full vessel! It is profane as well as foolish to seek to be saved by giving to God instead of receiving from Him, or by anything we can bring to attempt to buy this eternal life. This is to imitate Simon Magus, to whom Peter said, "Your *money* perish with you, because you have thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money." Neither with money nor with *ceremonies* can it be purchased. It is purely and solely the *gift* of God by Jesus Christ. "The wages of sin is death; but the gift"—the *free* gift—"of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."—

"Life is found alone in Jesus,
Only there 'tis offered thee—
Offered without price or money'
'Tis the gift of God sent free!
Take salvation,
Take it now and happy be."

This eternal life, given thus freely, is *a present possession*. "Eternal life" may sometimes be employed to set out the glories of Heaven, but not often—it is a thing possessed *here*. In the day in which we are regenerated, we receive the first germs of this everlasting life. When we are born again, it is, "not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which lives and abides forever." It is a gift of God, a gift not reserved for the future, but given *now*, the moment a sinner believes in Christ! One of the first tokens of eternal life being given is the cry of prayer—and then come repentance of sin—and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. This is eternal life—the gift of God and a present possession. Have you received it? I do not ask you whether you know exactly the day or the hour when you received it, but are you alive unto God with a life you had not by nature, but which has been planted in you by God the Holy Spirit?

This life is, in fact, *the life of God in the soul*. The Holy Spirit comes and breathes God's life into dead men. There is nothing everlasting in itself but *God*—and there is no life that is everlasting except that which comes from the Everlasting One! The gift of God is not only the gift God gives, but God *is the gift* that is given! He it is who breathes into us this eternal life which is really Christ living in us! He, Himself, is "that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." The Holy Spirit comes and dwells in the man! "We will come to him," says Christ, "and take up Our abode with him." The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, each in a certain way, comes and dwells within the man—he becomes a Temple of the Holy Spirit and so he is alive unto God.

Again, eternal life is *a life which never dies*. We speak very positively here. Eternal life cannot have an end! If it can come to an end by any process, whatever, then it is *not* eternal! This is as clear as words can make it. The life, then, which God gives to every soul in its regeneration, can never die! Hear these words of Christ—"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." We

do not teach that if the life of God in a Believer were to die out, he could, nevertheless, be saved. No Scripture teaches that!

We teach that if there is the life of God in a man, it is eternal—not only that it is *going* to be eternal, but that *now*, in its nature and essence, it is eternal and can be nothing but eternal life and, therefore, can never come to an end! It may be lessened; it may be sick; it may be obscure; but if it is there, since it is *eternal life*, it cannot come to an end! If it did, it could by no possibility be correctly said to be eternal life at all. Do you see, then, what a blessing is yours if you have received the gift of God? If by Grace you have received life through Jesus Christ, you have a life which will never die, a life which will outlast the sun and moon! You will see this world turned to a black coal. You will see all things expire, but your life and the life of God shall run on forever and ever. Well might Paul urge Timothy and well may we urge you to lay hold on such a life as this. So—

"Take, with rejoicing, from Jesus at once
The life everlasting He gives!
And know, with assurance, you never can die,
Since Jesus, your righteousness, lives."

Once more, this eternal life is *the life that is perfected in Glory*. It goes on developing and matures, even in this world, to a very high degree. There is a very great difference between the new-born babe and the full-grown man and there is a great difference between the Believer who has just received eternal life and that riper saint who has come to the fullness of the stature of a man in Christ Jesus. But it is the same life! It is the same life that says, "God be merciful to me a sinner," which afterwards says, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." It is the same life, but a fuller measure thereof. One is life, the other is life more abundant. As certainly as the eternal life begins, even in the tiniest bud, so will it blossom and become fruitful until it comes to its full perfection in Glory. The life of Believers in Heaven, the life that never sins, the life that is absolute obedience, the life that is undiluted bliss is exactly the same life that is in the Believer right now! The same life that God gave him when he first believed is that with which he beholds the face of God—without a veil between them—as he treads the golden streets of the New Jerusalem!

This, then, is eternal life—a new principle, a Divine principle, an inexhaustible, unquenchable, immortal principle. He that has it is blessed, indeed, among the sons of men! He that has it not is dead while he lives!

Having thus considered the nature of this possession, we come back to the question we have already asked —Have we this eternal life? Have we received it as God's gift? Is it, within our hearts, a lamp burning there, never to be put out? Do we know its present power and reality and have we joy therein? Yes, do we delight ourselves in God, who has brought us out of death into life—out of the region of the Valley of the Shadow of Death into that great light which is the beginning of Heaven, the dawn of the day that shall never end? If we do, let us unitedly lift up our hearts in praise and say, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!" Can we ever cease to adore His name, since He has bestowed such a treasure

upon us? But if you have not yet become a possessor of it, I beseech you at this moment to hold out your empty hands and take the gift so freely offered! "And this is the record, that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that has the Son has life, but he that has not the Son of God has not life."

II. In the second place, the Apostle tells us to "lay hold on" eternal life. That is the main point of my present discourse. How DO WE LAY HOLD ON ETERNAL LIFE? There are degrees in the reception of this life, but happy is the man who fully apprehends that for which he is also "apprehended of Christ Jesus." The Spirit of God lays hold of us in order that we may lay hold on eternal life! How we are enabled to do this is our present subject for consideration.

First, if you would grasp this gift, *believe in it as true*. The very beginning of our hope is when the Lord leads us to believe that there is such a thing as eternal life—and that it is a *tangible* thing, not a dream or a vision—but a reality to be laid hold of. I certainly believe in the existence of a thing that I can lay hold upon. If "seeing is believing," laying hold is even a more thorough mode of believing! Believe, then, that there is a higher life than Nature can ever create. If unconverted, you do not know anything about this in your own experience, but there is such a thing. There is life in Christ which He can give you. There is life by the Holy Spirit which He can work in you. He can strip you of those grave clothes of sin and raise you from your tomb. The words which Christ once addressed to Martha still sound in our ears—"I am the resurrection and the life: he that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

Answer this question of my Master, "Do you believe this?" If you do, there is hope that you shall yet be a partaker of His Grace. Nothing can hinder when He begins to work! Though you feel as if you did not feel at all. Though you seem paralyzed and unable to repent or to believe—this life shall be given to you and it shall be given to you *now* if you look unto Him who was lifted up upon the Cross, that, "whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Believe, my Brothers and Sisters, you that have this eternal life, in the power and reality of it! And whenever Satan tempts you to think that it is a fiction, a dream, a piece of enthusiasm, an idea born of fanaticism—resist him by the plain testimony of the Word of God—and the abundant witness of those who have gone before you, rejoicing in the power of it! Every child of God has times when he questions himself, but he can still truly say, "I am not what I used to be. I have feelings both of pain and joy that come not of the old life, but of the new, which has come to me by God's gracious gift."—

"Lord, I was dead. I could not stir
My lifeless soul to come to Thee!
But now, since You have quickened me,
I rise from sin's dark sepulcher."

If any of you have not yet experienced such a change, begin, as I have told you, by believing that there is such a thing as eternal life. I wish that you who have not yet obtained this blessing would make a point of regu-

larly attending some place where the Gospel is preached, saying, "It is to be had and I will have it. It is to be had by faith. 'Faith comes by hearing.' I will be an earnest hearer! 'Hearing comes by the Word of God.' I will take care to read and hear only the Word of God, so that faith may come to me and life may come by faith, for there is such a thing as receiving a new and spiritual life that shall make me far other than by nature I am. I believe it is true." That is the first way of laying hold.

But you do not lay hold of a thing by simply believing that there is such a thing! You must go farther. *Appropriate it.* There is a book and I believe that it is there, but if anybody told me that it was a present for me and said, "All that you have to do in order to have it is to lay hold upon it," I should understand that he meant not only that I was to believe in its existence, but that I was to take it up and carry it home with me. That is how you are to "lay hold on eternal life." Strange as it is, this is a thing which, though it is so simple, we cannot make awakened sinners understand! That eternal life is God's free gift put within their reach and that they are to take hold of it for their own salvation seems harder for some to grasp than if it were the most intricate puzzle! Yet this is, perhaps, the clearest aspect of the great matter of salvation.

It was Dr. Chalmers, I think, who used to say that he had no such comfort in the Gospel as when he viewed it as a simple offer on the one side, and a simple acceptance on the other. God gives—and we take! The Lord who has been chastening you, making you feel your sinnership and showing you that you are condemned and only fit to die, now says, "Lay hold on eternal life. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Take Him to be yours. Accept Him as your Substitute, bearing the death justly your due and, having given His life *for* you, now giving it *to* you. Make the exchange! Christ took your death—take His life! He bore your evil—take His good! *Appropriate* it. *Lay hold* on eternal life." When people are sinking in the water and there is a life buoy or a rope near, they do not need much exhorting to lay hold upon it, nor any elaborate explanation of the way! They simply grip anything that gives them half a hope of being saved from the devouring deep. Now, Soul, you are not to bring anything with you. That would be to fill your hands and then you could not lay hold of anything else! You are to come empty-handed, just as you are, to Christ, who is set before you. Be bold enough to take Him and let Him be yours! You need no worthiness. How could *you* be worthy of *Him*? He gives Himself freely to your unworthiness and sinnership! Confess these and lay hold on eternal life—appropriate it to yourself.

The exhortation means more than that, however. Having appropriated it, keep it. *Hold to it* and never let it go. Hide it in your heart as a choice treasure and, if any would rob you of it, or frown you out of it, or laugh at you because you prize so highly what they so lightly esteem, lay hold on it still more! This is the work of the Grace of God which enables you, first, to take and then to keep it! Oh, what efforts will be made from within and from without to get you to give up eternal life! But here comes, in the exhortation, "Cling to it. Hold fast by it constantly. As with a death grip, grasp it with new energy. If you have held it with one hand, hold it with both hands. Yet more and more lay hold on eternal life."

And then, furthermore, *keep yourself upon it*. According to the text, you have to "Fight the good fight of faith." Every now and then you will get an ugly knock, a bruise, a bleeding wound from your enemy. What are you to do? Always lay hold on eternal life, again, and it will strengthen you, stanch your wounds and make you, once more, strong in the day of battle. I would have you think much of this. If you believe in Christ, there is a life within you, like the life of God, which will never die—a life within you which will bring you to stand before the glorious Throne of Christ, "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." Do not, therefore, ever give up hope! Do not be staggered by what you may have to suffer here. In the midst of all the agony of the way, keep your heart upon God and upon the gift He has given you. "Lay hold on eternal life." If between here and Heaven you could be burned as a martyr every day, it would be worth your while to bear it, laying hold on eternal life—

"The King above in beauty,
Without a veil is seen!
It were a well-spent journey,
Though ten deaths lay between."

If between here and Heaven you had nothing to bear but the cruelty of men and the unkindness of the enemies of Christ, you should bear it right manfully, and even *joyfully*, because you can say, "I know in myself that I have in Heaven a better and an enduring substance. Even here I have a life which the world did not give me and cannot take from me—therefore I hold to it, still, and I comfort myself with this sweet thought, that it is mine, the gift of God to me! It bears me up amid seas of grief. 'My flesh and my heart fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.'"

Further, I think that the Apostle, by the exhortation, "Lay hold on eternal life," meant, *let other things go*. Here is a Brother, lately converted, who has been accustomed to keep his shop open on Sundays. He lives in a street where the best business is to be done on that day and if he closes his shop he will very likely be a great loser. What should he do? I thank God that the man has not asked anybody what he should do—he has done the right thing and trusted in his God! The Apostle seems to say, "Let anything else go, let everything else go, but lay hold on eternal life. Hold to that." "Oh, but I should lose a living!" Yes, but if you lost a living and saved your life, what would you lose? Have you ever heard of the one who had a bag of gold on board a ship coming home from Australia? The ship was sinking and he went down to his cabin, put as much gold as he could into a belt, and then fastened the belt around his waist. When he leaped for the boat and missed it, it was not possible to pick him up, for he sank with the weight of his own gold round his loins! There was no hope for him—his treasure was his ruin!

And many a man, in like manner, is, by all his toil, but preparing sure destruction for himself—toiling and working hard only that he may effectually ruin his own soul! Let these things go. "For what is a man advantaged if he gains the whole world and loses himself, or is cast away?" Even for the fleeting life of the body, a man will sacrifice all, thankful if he can get out of the burning house alive, though all his worldly goods are de-

stroyed—glad to escape from the hands of the brigands, though they strip him of every possession. "All that a man has will he give for his life." If this is wise for a transient life, how much more for the life which is eternal! We shall be gainers by losing everything, if by the loss we gain everlasting bliss! Let all that opposes go—friends, kindred, comfort, this present life—let them all go if, by the sacrifice, we may more firmly lay hold on eternal life! To keep that—and hold fast to it amidst the stress of temptation—is the main business of the Christian man! "Lay hold on eternal life."

And it means, in my text, more than that. Fight, and as you fight, lay hold upon the victory. While you are running for Heaven, often *anticipate the joys of Heaven*. I think you and I do not go to Heaven often enough. "Well" says one, "I thought we should go there when we died." Yes, if you are a Believer in Christ, that is secure, but why not go there *now*? The Christian's position is unique—he is in two worlds at once! Our Lord has quickened us, "and has raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavenlies in Christ." Do you not know that the lower ends of all the streets of Heaven are near here? Victory—that is Heaven! Well, we even now overcome through the blood of the Lamb! Peace with God—that is Heaven! And at this moment, "Being justified by faith we have peace with God." Holiness—that is Heaven! Yes, but we are made holy, now, by the work of the Spirit of God in our hearts. Communion with God—that is Heaven! But even today, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ."

Is it not good, sometimes, to sit down and anticipate the day when you will come into your inheritance? You have heard of the young prince, who, when his father wakened one morning, was found putting on the king's crown. It was awkward in his case, but your Father will not object to your often putting on your crown! Try it and see how it fits. You will have a new song to sing—begin to sing it here! You will have holy work to do—"They serve God day and night in His Temple"—serve Him here! Christ is to dwell among us in Heaven—let us know that He dwells among us here! I like that verse of our hymn—

"I would begin the music here,
And so my soul should rise!
Oh, for some heavenly notes to bear
My passions to the skies!"

It was said of an old Puritan that Heaven was in him before he was in Heaven. That is necessary for all of us—we must have Heaven in us before we got to Heaven. If we do not get to Heaven before we die, we shall never get there afterwards. An old Scotchman was asked whether he ever expected to get to Heaven. "Why, Man, I *live* there," was his quaint reply. Let us all live in those spiritual things which are the essential features of Heaven! Often go there before you go to stay there! If you come down tomorrow morning, knowing and realizing that Heaven is yours, and that you will soon be there, those children will not worry you half so much! When you go out to your business or to your work, you will not be half so discontent when you know that this is not your rest, but that you have a rest on the eternal hills where your heart has already gone—and that *there* your portion is in the everlasting dwellings! "Lay hold on eternal

life." Get a hold of it now! It is a thing of the future and it is a thing of the present—and even your part of it that is future can be, by faith, so realized and grasped as to be actually enjoyed while you are yet here. "Lay hold on eternal life."

I have not explained my text so fully or so clearly as I could wish. The life of which it speaks is beyond all language, but if you will obey the exhortation of the text, that will be the best exposition of it. Let him that has not this eternal life believe that it is to be had. Let the man whose heart aches for it, grasp it and appropriate it *now*—he need not be afraid that he will be repelled! Let him that has it, hold it fast as a jewel for which, sooner than part with it, he would sell house and home! Let him that has it, enjoy it even now. God help you in this manner to "lay hold on eternal life"!

III. Now I have to finish with just a special word. WHO ARE THE PEOPLE THAT OUGHT CHIEFLY TO LAY HOLD ON ETERNAL LIFE?

First, those who are called. This is the reason the Apostle gives to Timothy—"whereunto you are also called." Beloved, there are some of you that have been called. A boy, who had come upon an errand, stood at my window this afternoon. Suddenly he ran away and I thought, "What made him go?" I found out that though I had not heard the voice, someone had called him and, therefore, he was gone. Imitate that boy! Go about this world as men who have been called by a voice that nobody has heard but you! Has God called you to Himself? He means you to come away from your old self and cease to live the old life—He would have you lay hold on eternal life! God never singles us out in this way unless He means to bless us! He never says, "Seek you My face," in vain! Has God called you out from among men? Do you feel what your parents and friends at home do not feel? Is there a call to you like that call, "Samuel, Samuel," and have you responded, "Here I am, for You did call me. Speak, for Your servant hears"? Oh, if God has favored you with a special and effectual call, then lay hold on eternal life with your whole heart and soul—and never let it go! Come what may, resolve that you will hold to this gift of God in life, in death and throughout eternity!

Next, *those who have confessed Christ* ought especially to lay hold on eternal life—"whereunto you are also called, and have professed a good profession before many witnesses." Timothy had been baptized and probably there had been a great number of persons to encourage or watch him as he came forward to confess Christ. This, then, was a double reason why he should hold fast that on which he had laid hold. O you that have named the name of Christ and have put Him on by that wonderful symbol of death and burial and resurrection, "Lay hold on eternal life." Do not play at Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Let these be stern, no, *sweet realities* to you! Lay hold, not only on the symbol, but on what the symbol means! Have you been "Buried with Him by baptism into death"? Then grasp the soul of the symbol. It is not a mere empty form, or only the badge of a sect, but a picture of the end of the old life of the flesh dying to the world and sin, that we may rise in "newness of life" to walk before God in the land of the living! Of all men, he who has been baptized should "lay

hold on eternal life," for, in proportion as his Baptism is true, he has no other life to lay hold of, having died and been buried with Christ!

Then, also, we come to His Table and there we eat His flesh and drink His blood after a spiritual sort, receiving not merely bread and wine as memorials, but Himself, by faith, into our hearts! "Lay hold on eternal life," for profession without eternal life is a fearful mockery. Without eternal life, to come to the Lord's Supper will be to eat and drink condemnation to yourself, not discerning the Lord's body! You that have professed Him before many witnesses, "Lay hold on eternal life."

And, especially do I say this to *those who have been consecrated*, like Timothy, to the service of the Christian ministry. You that have been permitted in any way, even in the Sunday school, to speak of Christ to children. You to whom the Lord has committed His Gospel, that you may impart it to others, "Lay hold on eternal life." You will never do much in this work unless you have eternal life within your own soul. See to that first. A dead preacher—what is he but a mocker of dead souls? A dead teacher—what can she teach? A dead instructor of a Bible class—how shall the Word of Life have free course and be glorified? A blind man teaching about colors, or a dumb man teaching music is not more out of place than a man without eternal life trying to tell out the Gospel! What can he do? "Lay hold on eternal life," or else quit this false position lest, when the Lord comes, He should say to you, "What have you to do to declare My statutes, or that you should take My Covenant in your mouth?" Ah, I am speaking to myself, now, and I will take it home. Will you also open your heart to whatever in the sermon belongs to you? And when it is done and my voice is silent to your ears, I pray that you may hear, for many a day, a gentle whisper saying to you, "Lay hold on eternal life."

You, poor Sinner, as you go after your follies and amusements, may the call, "Lay hold on eternal life," come to you until you shall obey it and quit such trifles! And you, Christian, when you get into the world and are tempted to make gain by sin, while you will suffer loss by righteousness, may you hear a voice say, "Lay hold on eternal life"! And any of you who get the "cold shoulder" and the rough side of men's tongues, when you begin to think that you cannot bear it, may you hear the voice saying, again, "Lay hold on eternal life." Cling to that, for God, for Christ, for eternity, for Heaven! The eternal life is the only life worth living! God help you to live for it always and, if you do, it will be of His own Grace—and to Him shall be all the Glory, forever and ever! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 Timothy 6.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—567, 435, 538.

MR. SPURGEON UPDATE:

The following letter from MR. SPURGEON to the congregation at the Tabernacle, will give the readers of his sermons the latest available information concerning him—

Eastbourne, October 10, 1891.

"Dear Friends—I was rightly directed to this place, for I have found a measure of appetite and feel much better. I think I shall soon be able to reach a warmer climate. This is the great desire of my doctor. The deaths of others cause anxiety about a chill, especially as I have lost one skin and the new one is exceedingly tender and would feel the influence of cold most readily. However, I am in those hands which control temperature and everything else! I am, indeed, happy in being borne up by the prayers of saints as by the hands of angels. I am relieved of great anxiety by the Lord's plainly directing me to secure DR. PIERSON to fill the pulpit during my absence. He is a man after my own heart and a great winner of souls. He will not aim at anything but the Glory of God. He begs that the whole Church will grant him the aid of their united prayers and efforts. He is just now leaving America and will be ready to preach October 25, if the Lord wills. I shall be among you as soon as I feel that it would be right and wise—and then he will be ready to return to his own land. He has set aside everything to serve us. I was guided to him at the same moment that he was led of God to think of helping me.

"May our Lord be with you and grant you, each one, His Presence, power and peace! Oh, that many might yield to Jesus, now, that all may see that the Lord saves by every instrument! When MR. NEWMAN HALL bids sinners, 'Come to Jesus,' may the Holy Spirit draw them and the same in the evening! May you have a glorious day! MRS. SPURGEON'S company here makes me feel very happy, but when shall I meet with all the companions of my nearly 40 years' service and feel that each one adds to my joy?

"Yours very heartily,

C. H. SPURGEON."

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WANTED!—VOLUNTEERS
NO. 2227

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY,
OCTOBER 25, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 22, 1891.**

***"And next to him was Amasiah the Son of Zichri, who willingly offered himself to the Lord; and with him two hundred thousand mighty men of valor."
2 Chronicles 17:16.***

IT was a great thing for King Jehoshaphat to have such a pious lord-lieutenant, one who could command an army and, at the same time, obey the commands of God. Christian men ought greatly to value Christian servants, especially if such persons are employed in positions of trust. If we can have godly men to occupy our offices and transact our business, we should be very grateful and do our best to encourage and cheer them. It is true that sometimes those who make the loudest profession of religion are the least trustworthy, but that very fact shows that there is something in the religion they falsely profess, which, if really laid hold of, makes a man more upright and reliable. Otherwise why should it be counterfeited? The larger the responsibility, the more necessary it is to have men who can be depended upon to manage the business. It was for the great benefit of Jehoshaphat, as king, that he should have a godly captain over so large a part of his army as 200,000 mighty men of valor.

It was also a great thing for the country of Judah to have a godly man in such a position. "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked bear rule, the people mourn." I hope that in England there will be an increasing desire that those persons who represent us in Parliament, or who legislate in any way, should be men of good character. The day will yet come when it will be judged that those who are immoral are not the men to make our laws or to see that those laws are carried out. It is, however, a great blessing to a country to have godly men in high places who will see to it that right is done, that justice is maintained and that the ends of true religion are promoted. Happy is the nation that has godly officers to discharge its business—men who fear God and fear no one else!

I wonder how this man, Amasiah, the son of Zichri, came to be a servant of God? We have no history of his experience. We could almost wish that we had, but since it is not recorded, it makes us feel that although men and women cannot tell us the way in which they were led to yield to Christ, yet if their lives *show* that they are serving God, we must be well content. If you are saved, even though you cannot tell us when or how the great change was worked, we will rejoice in the fact of your salvation! Amasiah is a man of whom we do not know anything beyond this—he

"willingly offered himself unto the Lord." There must have been a turning point in his career—a time when first he knew the Grace of God which worked such a change in him. There must have been a waking up to the feeling that God deserved his love and his life. There must have been a time of quickening into spiritual consecration. We are told nothing about that—therefore we must leave it under the veil which Scripture draws over his history. But if I say little about his exercises of soul and press onward to a very practical point, I earnestly desire that the inward enlightenment that he enjoyed may be known by many of you—and that God, the Holy Spirit, may work upon your hearts and bring you out of the bondage and servitude of sin into the glorious liberty of the Gospel which will make you capable of willingly offering yourselves to the Lord!

I am here as a recruiting sergeant. I have no ribbons with me, nor shillings, but I cast a longing eye on many here present who, as yet, do not belong to my Master! And I fervently hope that they may be enlisted in His service. Often have I seen the recruiting sergeant lingering about certain streets and looking at every young man passing by. I have known him address some young gentleman who was amazed that he should ever have been spoken to him about such a thing—and who, in his offended dignity, felt a deal more inclined to kick the sergeant than to give him a civil answer! And the officer has said to him, "I beg your pardon, Sir, but I thought such a smart looking fellow as you would be just the kind of man to take the Queen's shilling," and, soothed by the compliment, the gentleman has gone on his way laughing. He wanted no Queen's shilling and was not at all inclined for army service!

I would desire to be as bold in addressing you as the sergeant is in his calling. And if I should intrude upon some young gentleman who should feel angry because of my importunity, I shall not at all object. I shall say, "Very well, but you must excuse my feeling that the more ability and influence you have, the greater is the reason why you should be converted to Christ that you might serve my Master." God knows how I rejoice over the poorest, the most ignorant, the most depraved of men or women when they are brought to Christ! But I do like, sometimes, to see those come to Him who have *some* life in them, *some* talent about them and who can, by consecrating themselves to the Lord, do for His cause and Kingdom, by His Grace, a real service in days to come! There is hard fighting to be done and my Lord calls for men who will not be afraid to do it! Let all the heroism of your manhood impel you to this blessed service. You are not asked to serve the Lord because He promises you ease and pleasure—you are, rather, called to "endure hardness" as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. As we sang just now—

"You that are men, now serve Him
Against unnumbered foes!
Your courage rise with danger,
And strength to strength oppose."

I am going to use the account of this Amasiah, the son of Zichri, who willingly offered himself to the Lord, as an illustration of what, I trust, will be true about many of my hearers. Oh, that the Holy Spirit may draw out somebody who shall become a very Apostle in these times! A standard-bearer for the Lord Jesus, who shall—

"Lift high His royal banner,"

among the sons of men!

I. First, let me say that Amasiah is distinguished from the other mighty men of King Jehoshaphat by the fact that HE MADE IT HIS LIFEWORK TO SERVE THE LORD. He "willingly offered himself to the Lord," and he was accepted and became a life-long servant of Jehovah, the God of Israel!

It should not need much talk to make men feel that *this is reasonable service*. To serve your Maker, who created you that you should glorify Him, is surely a natural thing to do. And it becomes a thing to be more expected when you are asked to serve your Redeemer who shed His blood that you might be set free from sin and, "yield your members servants unto holiness." Would it not be a right thing for you to offer yourself to Him who yielded Himself to the death for us?—

"Offered was He, for greatest and the least;
Himself the Victim, and Himself the Priest."

This is an argument Amasiah had not, yet did he find reason enough to serve the Lord. How much stronger is the claim upon you! And if this plea needs to be strengthened still farther, think that you are called to serve Him with whom you hope to dwell forever in Heaven. It ought to be an instinct of every reasonable soul to set about such service instantly! Ordinary gratitude should cause every Christian to say to his Lord, "Whom else should I serve? I owe You my very being, my new life and all I possess. In You I live. By You I am daily fed. Why should I not serve You?"—

"Yours am I by all ties,
But chiefly Yours
That through Your sacrifice
You, Lord, are mine.
By Your own cords of love, so sweetly wound
Around me, I to You am closely bound."

Moreover, *this is honorable service.* Men like a service that seems to reflect some kind of glory upon them. To serve a great man makes even the footman feel as if he were, himself, a great man, too—at least I have seen some of these gentlemen give themselves mighty airs under the notion that they were as grand as their master! But to serve God *really* gives honor and glory! O Sirs, if this is not done in mere pretense, but in reality, what a grand life a man must lead who is the servant of God! To serve Him whom angels serve, whom arch*a*ngels serve—whose service is perfect freedom—is the most honorable service to which a man can attain! There is nothing humiliating or debasing about it, but everything that tends to lift us upward and to make us grow in spiritual force. To serve God is to reign! Every man becomes a king in proportion as he really serves the Lord!

Further, *this is remunerative service*, the most remunerative in all the world! The devil spoke a Truth of God that he did not mean to speak when he said, "Does Job serve God for nothing?" God never lets His servants serve Him for nothing! He may not always give them gold or worldly prosperity, but He will give them a reward more satisfying to them than these things—more grateful to their hearts than all the treasures of the Indies! I never met with a man that served God who complained of his wages. No, it is so much a work of Grace that the work, itself, is a gift to us. The privilege of serving God—yes, call it the high honor, the delight, the great

gain of being a servant of God—if there were no other reward, this would suffice us! I can sympathize with him who said—

"Dismiss me not Your service, Lord,
But train me for Your will,
For even I, in fields so broad,
Some duties may fulfill.
And I will ask for no reward
Except to serve You still."

But the fact is that, in serving the Lord, we have, through Grace, "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." We realize that the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given to us. "We know that all things work together for good" to us while we are here and that the best part of our religion is yet to come, for—

"After death its joys shall be
Lasting as eternity."

He whose life is devoted to the service of God must have a blessed life! It is not always a happy life in the judgment of men, yet is it still happy in the judgment of God—and in the estimation of the Believer, himself! The servants of God have a happy service.

I may also say that *this is safe service*. God will not put you into a position of danger when you enter His service. If you serve men, they may tempt you to do wrong. Many a young man who has entered an office or a shop has found himself commanded to do what no honest man ought to expect another to do. Many a young woman has taken her position in a family where temptation has been like Nebuchadnezzar's furnace to her. But if you serve God, He may try you, but He will never tempt you to sin. In following hard after Him, you will be in safe places, and the more you are obedient to the will of God, the more secure will you be from temptations within and without. Obedience will keep you from peril. The Grace of God will preserve you from all evil.

After all, I am not like that recruiting sergeant, who, if he tries to get a man to serve under the colors, has to put it very prettily. He tells about the merry times that soldiers have, but he does not say much about wounds and wooden legs. He does not talk much about bleeding to death on the battlefield, nor about being discharged, at last, with *nothing* a week to live upon after your best days have been given in your country's service. No, he always picks out the bright colors and praises "Her Majesty's Service" as if it were all pipe clay and red coats and fine feathers and glory and I know not what besides!

Now, I have not to do that. There is no fault in my Master's service that I need to conceal from you! All round it is the best, the happiest, the most glorious position that a man can occupy! And though I would bid you count the cost before you enroll yourself under His leadership, you may rest assured that you can never calculate the value of the reward that Christ has in store for all His faithful followers! Therefore, without any reserve, I may fairly come to each man here and say, "Like Amasiah, the son of Zichri, offer yourself willingly to the Lord."

II. Now, to go a step further, notice, in the second place, concerning this man Amasiah, HE WAS A READY VOLUNTEER "who willingly offered himself to the Lord." There is much truth in the old proverb that "one vol-

unteer is worth 20 pressed men." Service willingly rendered has a fragrance and a bloom about it that make it most delightful and acceptable!

He needed no pressing. Some of you need so much persuading that you are hardly worth having when, at last, we get you. There is such a thing as pressing a man so long that all the juice is gone out of him and you have only the husk of the man when you do manage to get him. Amasiah needed no pressing at all, for in his soul there was an ardent desire to serve the living God—he "willingly offered himself to the Lord."

He needed no hunting out. How many, even of Church members, seem to be like Saul when he was elected king and they could not find him! "Where is that tall fellow, head and shoulders above the rest of the people?" At last somebody said that he had hidden himself among the stuff! Many of our young men, today, are among the stuff—and there are numbers both of men and women who ought to be coming forward for the Lord's service instead of hiding among the rubbish! My dear friend, Mr. Pearce, the superintendent of our Sunday school, says that he needs more teachers. There are plenty who might engage in the work, but they are among the stuff! Let them imitate Amasiah, "who willingly offered himself to the Lord."

Amasiah was a self-contained man. *He needed no looking after* when he had once come out. We have some Christians who will stay right as long as somebody else looks after them. How many such there are in all Churches! You must always be watching them or else they will be up to mischief, or growing cold, ceasing to attend the means of Grace, getting into evil company and going back to the world! Amasiah was not of that kind. He "offered himself willingly to the Lord" and, having done so, he stood to his consecration vow.

He needed no leader. On the contrary, he took the lead, himself, over 200,000 men! We have many that will follow pretty well. We need some that will not need leading except by our great Leader, the Lord Jesus—men who know what they know, believe what they believe, know how they ought to act and are resolved so to act—and will do it even to the end. It was a fine motto which a distinguished worker once adopted—"Resolved, that I will act as if there were no one else to act, not waiting for others." This is the spirit which we long to see among the Lord's people—not a spirit of lawlessness and disorder—but of loyalty and independence! A spirit which will not timidly wait until everybody is ready, but, knowing the will of God, will at all hazards go forward to do it!

Amasiah, the leader of this host of "mighty men of valor," would be certain to be a man, himself, of valor! Like leader—like followers. He that would lead brave men must, himself, be brave! We need in this generation more men, who, in Christ's service, shall perform deeds of daring as British soldiers do to win the Victoria Cross which has inscribed upon it the words, "For valor." Christ has right royal rewards for those who faithfully serve Him. I should like to meet with a band of brave young men, ready to render valiant service to my Lord, young men with backbones—there have not been many of that kind made lately—they are, today, generally soft down the back. Most men I meet are very squeezable, men of India rubber that yields every way!

But we need for Christ and for His cause, some who cannot be turned aside to offer themselves willingly to the Lord, doing it decidedly, at once, and from the bottom of their hearts! God grant, by His Spirit, that some such may, by this sermon, be led to the knowledge and service of the Lord!

III. The third point about Amasiah is that, while he was a volunteer, HE OFFERED HIMSELF TO THE LORD. "*Himself*"—it was the best thing he had! Some of you, perhaps, have not anything else to offer. Then, do as he did—willingly offer yourself! I have heard of a little boy at a public meeting where there was a missionary collection. When the collector came to him, he asked him to hold the plate a little lower. Thinking he wanted to see his money drop on the plate and, being a kindly man, he held the plate down low. "Please, Sir, it is not low enough. Would you mind putting it on the floor?" The collector good-humoredly put it down and then the boy said, "I have not even a penny to give to the collection, so I want to get into the plate and give myself to God." It was a simple thing to do, but that is exactly what we desire that many may do at this good hour. Willingly offer yourselves, like Amasiah, to the Lord!

He made no reserve as to what he had. He gave himself, his money, his ability, his position, his influence. All was yielded up to the Lord. "Well," says one, "I give so much to the weekly offering." Do you? I am glad to hear it, but have you given *yourself*? "I sometimes go out and sing a sacred song at a meeting," you say. That is quite right—you give your *voice*—but have you given *yourself*? "I have joined the Church," another says. That, too, is a very proper thing to do if you are really a Believer. But it is not all, nor is it the first thing—you have given us the distinguished privilege of having your name written on our Church Roll—but have you given *yourself* to the Lord? It is said of Amasiah, that he "willingly offered *himself* to the Lord."

You have often found, I doubt not, a chrysalis. You have perhaps said, as you stooped to pick it up, "I will take that home and see what kind of butterfly comes out of it." You have kept it and kept it and nothing has ever come out of it because the butterfly had already flown away. Many people about us are like that. We hope that they are going to do something, but nothing ever comes out of our chrysalis! There is nothing living inside and, therefore, there is never any flutter of life, nor flight of wings. But when a man gives *himself* willingly to the Lord, making no reserve as to what he has, *then* we have something worth the having! I like to sing—

"Yet if I might make some reserve,
And duty did not call,
I love my Lord with zeal so great
That I should give Him all."

Notice yet another thing about Amasiah, which, I think, must have been true—*he made no reserve as to what he did.* He gave himself to the Lord, as much as to say, "Lord, put me here and I will stay here. Put me there and I will stay there. Make me a great man and I will serve You. Make me a little man and I will serve You. Give me health and strength, and I will serve You. But if You choose, rather, to send me sickness and lay me on a bed of languishing, still I will serve You." In some such way I can fancy that Amasiah gave himself up to the service of the King of

Kings! This is how we should come willingly to Christ—when He says, "Go"—to go! When He says, "Come"—to come! When He says, "Do this"—to do it! We must be willing to do His will as the little girl said the angels do—"without asking any questions"—and thus numbering ourselves among the company who stand ready to obey their Master's least word—

"Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs but to do or die."

Christ must be the absolute Master of the saved soul—and the soul that is truly saved is willing either to go or stay as may seem best to his Lord. For it is to the Lord that he has given himself—to One who henceforth is to rule and reign over his whole life! I trust that some to whom these words come will thus offer themselves, making no reserve as to what they shall do, and—

"Where duty calls or danger,
Be always wanting there."

When Amasiah willingly offered himself for the Lord's service, *he made no reserve as to when it should be*. He probably gave himself to the Lord while he was a young man. He began with all his heart to serve God in his youth. And when he was in middle life and his children were round about him, he was still unfalteringly the servant of God. When he grew gray and others ventured to think that he had better retire from active service, he might think it wise to give up *some* of his work, but never would he retire from the service of his God, for he had willingly offered himself to the Lord! He made no reserve about serving up to a certain time and then stopping—but he would serve his God while he had breath in his body!

And *he made no reserve as to how that service should be rendered*. As I have already said, he would serve in health, but he would serve Him in sickness, too. Yes, and he would serve God by doing nothing at all, if such was His will. One of the hardest works for saints to do is to do nothing. When they get so infirm that they cannot leave their room, or even their bed—perhaps their very voice fails them so that they cannot speak—then what difficult work it is to say with the heart, "Lord, I served You when I labored for You, and I will serve You when I cannot labor for You. I trusted You when I could speak about You and I will trust You now that I cannot speak about You. I am Your servant. If my Lord bids me do anything, I will do it. If He gives me no command, yet I will still be His servant. In life and in death my ear shall be bored to my Master's doorpost!" In this fashion, I suppose, Amasiah willingly offered himself to the Lord. Have you not sometimes seen the telegraph boys, standing or sitting still at the Post Office when there is no message to be delivered? They are as much doing their work by *waiting* as when they carry to its destination the dispatch which has been flashed along the wires! In waiting they serve and, in like manner, they most truly serve the Lord who give up all idea of self-pleasing and, go or stay, as best pleases Him, to whom they willingly offer themselves to be His servants.

I have been explaining what kind of volunteers I want to enlist for my Lord. I wonder whether the Holy Spirit is saying to some young man, "You are the man. You are the man. You should willingly offer yourself to the Lord," or whether he is gently suggesting to some dear Sister, "You are the beloved of the Lord and may serve Him like Deborah or Dorcas if you will

but give yourself now." You remember how Zinzendorf was converted to Christ by seeing, at Düsseldorf, Stenburg's picture of Christ on the Cross, and at the bottom these words—

"All this I did for thee.
What have you done for Me?"

I pass on the question to you, though I cannot paint the picture or make you see the vision. If Christ has redeemed you, why, it follows, as a matter of course, that you will reckon that you are not your own, for you are bought with a price and, like Amasiah, you will willingly offer yourself to God! As you survey the wondrous Cross on which He died, you will surely be constrained to say with Dr. Watts—

"Were the whole realm of Nature mine,
That were a present far too small.
Love so amazing, so Divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

IV. Now, I have a fourth observation to make which is important, though it may not seem so. When Amasiah willingly offered himself to the Lord, HE DID THIS IN A SECULAR CALLING.

He did not stipulate to be a Prophet. I do not know how it is, but when a certain type of young man gets it into his head that he will serve God, the next thing is that he wants to *see* me about how he can get into the *ministry*. Perhaps I look at him and I see that his mouth was never made for preaching. You can see by the appearance of his eyes that they were never made to look a congregation in the face. When he begins to talk, you can tell that he might *possibly* make a good student for the next 20 years and then, perhaps, he would be able to teach a class of boys—but the boys would soon be tired of him, for they would probably find out, even then, that they knew as much as he did.

Some have no gift for instructing others, but that need not hinder them from serving Christ as they can. Remember, Amasiah did not say, "Lord, I will give myself to You if You will let me be a Prophet." No! He willingly offered himself to the Lord to be what the *Lord would have him to be*— and so he remained a soldier. He was in the army and never went to any college and never preached a sermon in his life—but he "willingly offered himself to the Lord." You may willingly offer yourself to the Lord and go and keep a shop, selling articles unadulterated—sixteen ounces to the pound and 12 to the dozen—unless you make it thirteen! You may willingly offer yourself to the Lord and be a shoemaker—there have been consecrated cobblers before now, as both Sunday schools and foreign missions can testify! You may willingly offer yourself to the Lord, even though your daily calling is that of a chimney-sweep—that is a very necessary business and though your face may become blackened in it—your heart may be clean all the time!

You may willingly offer yourself to the Lord and be breaking stones on the roads, praying your Master, all the while, to break stony hearts. There is no lawful occupation in which a man cannot thoroughly serve the Lord! It is a great privilege and blessing to be set apart to the work of winning souls, but we must never separate that work from all the rest of the callings of life as though it, alone, were sacred, and all the rest were secular and almost sinful! Serve God where you are! Good Woman, go on looking after those dear children now that your husband has been called Home—

you will be serving God by bringing up those boys and girls in the knowledge of Christ—God help you to do it! Go on, dear Daughter, helping Mother. You need not aspire to be shaking a kingdom—shake the bed, well, tomorrow morning! There are many persons who have some very exalted ideas in their heads about who will serve God best by just doing commonplace work in a commonplace way—and will probably never be permitted to do anything else—at least that will be the case until they step down from their stilts and get rid of their lofty notions.

Yet it cannot have been very easy for Amasiah to live wholly to God as a soldier. *His was a difficult calling*, though, I suppose, in his days it was not so difficult as it is now. But he did it, whether his occupation was difficult or not. Wherever your lot is cast, abide in your calling and glorify God in it, as this man did! "For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant." Even if your lot is cast in the barracks, be bold to confess your Master! Many a man has become a soldier of Christ by seeing his comrade in the regiment kneel down and pray. With the memory of many a hero, both in the army and out of it, we may be certain that however difficult the place, the Grace of God is sufficient for us as it was for Amasiah.

Not only did he serve the Lord in this hard place, but *he rose to eminence in it*. I do not know how he began. When I saw him last—that is, when I last looked at my text—he was the commander of 200,000 mighty men of valor! A fine position that! He had become one of the five great generals of Jehoshaphat's army. Where he began, I cannot tell, but it is quite certain that, in fearing God, he was not hindered in his promotion. The man who fears God need not be hindered one whit in rising in the world! That is to say, if it is worthwhile rising in the world, for there are some kinds of elevation so disgraceful that they are better shunned than sought! It is, in many cases, a great thing for a man to be kept down. A good doctor of divinity, whom I well knew, met a Christian man in the street, shook hands with him and congratulated him. The man said, "I do not know, Dr. Jeter, why you congratulate me, for I have had a world of trouble. In fact, I have failed in my business." To which the good doctor replied, "I congratulate you because you failed *honestly*—you are the only man that I have seen for years who has done that." Then he shook hands with him again and said, "My dear fellow, I do thank God that you failed honestly." But no man need fail because he serves God. No man need stick in the mud forever because he becomes a Christian, for, "godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come."

Yet another thing we may venture to say of Amasiah. *He left an honorable record*. Here is a man in Jehoshaphat's army who willingly offers himself to the Lord and rises to be commander of 200,000 mighty men of valor. It reminds me of Havelock and his saints in the Indian Mutiny. There was a stern fight to be fought and the general said, "Send for Havelock and his saints"—and they soon accomplished the task! When you get men who thoroughly serve God in whatever position of life they are, they are terrible fellows! They will do the thing where others only talk about it, for God does help, even in the ordinary concerns of daily life, those that

put their trust in Him. They shall never be confounded. "The angels of the Lord encamps round about them that fear Him, and delivers them." They can say, "By You I have run through a troop: by my God have I leaped over a wall." Moreover, "The memory of the just is blessed"—the footprints they leave behind them help others on in the blessed way. And when they fall asleep, they are among the blessed dead who "rest from their labors"—they could *not do that* if here they had been *idle*—"and their works do follow them."

I am still working away, you see, at my main point. I am wanting to get that fine young fellow into my Lord's army! I am praying God the Holy Spirit to influence men and women to say, "We will willingly offer ourselves to the Lord. We will serve Him with our whole heart and soul." God grant that it may be so!

V. I have done when I add these words—Amasiah not only served the Lord, but HE IS AN EXAMPLE TO OTHERS. Let us make the best application of the sermon by working it out in our own lives.

First of all, he is an example *to the young*. He was probably a young man when he "willingly offered himself to the Lord." Why wait to grow older in sin before entering the glorious service of Christ? The world has nothing that can satisfy your heart—turn from its folly and choose the nobler path! If you are only a child, still I appeal to you—the earlier you offer yourself to the Lord, the better will it be for all the future of your life!

Amasiah is an example, also, *to men of position*. He held a high office, but he "willingly offered himself to the Lord." Young man of fortune and rank, I have a message from the Lord for you! Offer yourself willingly to the Lord. As you would be saved by the precious blood of Christ and the Free Grace of God, come and lay yourself down at those dear feet that bled for your salvation—you know not what work the Lord has yet for you to do!

He is also an example *to men who are rising in the world*, for he was such. I speak to some of you who have not risen, yet, but are rising. You are doing well, as the world has it. God is prospering you. I would lay my hand upon your shoulder, young man, and say, "Since God is blessing you so, willingly offer yourself for His service. You know that you are not saved by the offering of yourself to Christ—you are saved by Christ offering Himself for you—a Sacrifice for sin. But if He has saved you, then come and offer yourself to the Lord! The children do not now cry for bread to you, as they used to do. No, thank God, those sad days are over with for you! The wife has not to wear rags, as once she did. God has been gracious to you and helped you on in the world and now, by the gratitude that you have for Him, ask yourself whether you cannot serve Him and may He, by His sweet love, bring you to do so!" My Lord ought to have you. Shall He not have you?

I recollect how Mr. Rowland Hill once held an auction over Lady Anne Erskine, who drove up in her carriage to the edge of the crowd while Mr. Hill was preaching. He said "Ah, I see Lady Anne Erskine." A careless, thoughtless woman she was, then, and he said, "There is a great contention about who shall have her! The world wants to have her. What will you give for her, O World? 'I will give her fame and name and pleasure!' And sin wants to have her. What will *you* give for her, O Sin? 'A few paltry

transient joys.' And Satan wants to have her. What will you give for her, Satan? 'And the price was very low.' At last Christ came along and He said, 'I give Myself for her. I give My life for her, My blood for her.'" And turning to Her Ladyship, Mr. Hill said, "You shall have her, my Lord Christ, if she does not object—My Lady, which shall it be?" he asked. And she bowed her head and said that she accepted Christ's offer and would be sold to Him, and be His forever.

I do not know how to pick anybody out, here, for auction, but I would sell some of you to my Master if I could, without money and without price, save that which He paid for you when He poured out His life on the accursed tree! Where are the volunteers? Perhaps it is some bright boy that I have to get for Christ; or some dear girl whom the Lord means to have now; or some of these young men. Never did anyone truly *offer* himself to the Lord without being accepted—no, your offer of yourself to the Lord proves that you are already His in the Covenant of His Grace! Oh, how happy are they who, in their youth, willingly offer themselves to God! But, indeed, my Lord will take into His service people of all ages, both sexes, all ranks and conditions! He cares not what your possessions may be, but, whatever they are, offer yourself and them to Him to whom they rightfully belong! He will take the poorest and weakest, but still, I would like to win for my Master some man in the very strength of his days, with ability to think and power to speak, who will now say, "I have found my vocation. God calls me to Christ to find salvation in His wounds and to be His servant. It shall be all my business here below to magnify His blessed name!" God grant it, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
2 Chronicles 17; Romans 12.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—119 (SONG II), 674, 606.

MR. SPURGEON UPDATE:

Mr. Spurgeon's letter to the congregation at the Tabernacle will tell sermon readers how he is and also his plans for going away. He and Mrs. Spurgeon especially ask that no letters be sent to "Westwood" during their absence, as there will be no one there to answer them. All donations should be directed to the Secretary, Stockwell Orphanage, Clapham Road, London. The work of the Book Fund, both as to receipts and grants, must absolutely cease while Mrs. Spurgeon is away from home.

October 18, 1891.
"TO MY BELOVED FLOCK AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE:

"Dear Friends—Since you all prayed for me so importunately, I would entreat you to praise with me most heartily. My stay by the sea has worked wonders. I feel a different man, altogether, and my doctor gives me hope that when I have received a solid building up, I shall not be much the worse for the terrific processes through which I have passed. 'O magnify the Lord with me and let us exalt His name together.' I am very, very weak, and restoration to strength must be expected to be gradual. The inevitable fall of the temperature is a great peril to me for several reasons

and, therefore, my medical friend wishes that I were away. I hope to leave on Monday, the 26th. Pray that I may safely perform the journey and Mrs. Spurgeon, also. 'A thousand miles is a serious word for such feeble folk!' The Lord will perfect that which concerns me and when I return to you in peace, we will hold a public thanksgiving and bless our healing Lord.

"I shall leave you in the hands of our God. As a Church of the living God, you are as 'a city set on a hill, which cannot be hid.' Your love and unity and prayer and faith are known everywhere. Will these bear the further strain which will be put upon them by the absence and feebleness of the Pastor? I believe they will, but let each one see to it that the service with which he or she may be individually concerned is carried on with more than past efficiency. Souls must be saved and Jesus glorified whether the usual leader is present, or another, or no leader at all. The Lord hears my prayers for you, even as He has heard yours for me! I am far too feeble to make any public appearances, or I would come and plead that now, in the hour of your testing, you may be found as pure gold which fears not the continuance of the heat.

"I beg your co-operation with my brother and Mr. Stott and all the officers, in all the regular work and service of our Lord. I have called Dr. Pierson from America with the view of an advance all along the line. I was bearing the cause on my heart and thinking that as you had heard so many different men it might be well if, before my return, someone could be with you for a season—the same preacher for a time. No one suggested Dr. Pierson to me—it came from my heart and I think I was led of the Lord. This beloved Brother is the author of several powerful works on the side of the Truth of God and a man of burning missionary zeal. I have had the closest fellowship of heart with him as a champion of the faith. Long ago he said to me that he would give up every occupation to serve me and I believed him. I sat down and wrote him, but the remarkable fact is that *he had already written me*, so that the *next day I heard from him*, hinting that a time had come when his former offer might be renewed!

"I believe it is of the Lord. I am responsible for the action and I look not for blame, but for the manifest approval of my Lord. Let nothing flag! There may be some deficiencies to be made up on my return but let these be as light as possible. If friends took the seats there would be none. I am not going to burden myself with any care. I leave the flock with the Great Shepherd of the sheep and feel that you will be both led and fed. The Lord grant that whether I speak or am silent, rejoice or suffer, live or die, all may be to His Glory and the progress of His Gospel! I am now a debtor to all the churches and to all classes of society. The sympathy shown me every day almost breaks my heart with gratitude. What am I? One thing I know—I am your loving servant in Christ Jesus and the Lord's messenger to many souls who never saw me—but who have read the sermons. To you at the Tabernacle I am very near of kin. **GOD BLESS YOU!**
"Yours in our One Head,
C. H. SPURGEON."

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

THE LAW'S FAILURE AND FULFILLMENT
NO. 2228

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
NOVEMBER 1, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 1, 1891.**

"For what the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned in the flesh. That the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."
Romans 8:3, 4.

THE Law of God is perfect. You cannot add anything to it, nor take anything from it, without spoiling it. If you will read the Ten Commandments and understand them in their spiritual meaning, you will find that they are far-reaching and that they deal with every sin. I noticed, some time ago, that a learned prelate said that he could not find any Commandment against gambling. Where were his eyes? Is it not plainly written, "You shall not covet"? What is gambling but covetousness in action? Most manifestly, the gambler desires his neighbor's goods and this desire gives zest to the vice which the Law of God quite plainly condemns. Depend upon it, there is nothing wrong but the Law of God condemns it and there is nothing right but the Law approves it. The Decalogue is an absolutely perfect Law.

If you take the soul of it, what I may call the *summary* of the Law, it seems to me to be even larger in brief than it is in the lengthy form. Here it is. First, in the Old Testament in two different passages, one in the Sixth Chapter of Deuteronomy and the other in the Nineteenth of Leviticus, and then as given by Christ in answer to the question of a lawyer—"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." Wonderful Law, summed up in one word, "LOVE" but comprehending in its circle every form of duty which springs out of our relationship to God or man! Well may Paul say, as in the previous chapter, "Therefore the Law is holy and the Commandment holy, and just, and good." If evil is worked, it is not the Law of God which works it, for that Law is the expression of the Nature of the Eternal and reveals His holiness and justice—but as "God is Love," the Law which He gives is also

comprehended in the same word—love. "We know that the Law is good, if a man uses it lawfully."

But there are some things which the Law cannot do. It cannot produce a new heart in a sinner. It cannot save a lost soul. It cannot justify a guilty person. It cannot draw a wanderer back to God. The Law, as originally given to Adam, a perfect man, had he carried it out, would have glorified God and would have produced in him a perfect life. But we are not in the same position towards God as Adam was and we are not free from the taint of evil as he was. We have fallen and there is now in our nature that which Paul calls, "the flesh," which lusts to envy, and turns aside from God. This has made the Law weak for the accomplishment of God's purpose of justification or salvation. The law of England, where it is true and good, protects honest men and deters many from committing crime—but it is practically powerless in the case of some habitual criminals who seem to have inherited the tendency to criminality. The defect is not in the law, but in the person with whom it has to deal. So the Law of God becomes weak through *our weakness*. There are some who cling to the Law and expect to be saved by their own doings, but they are leaning on a broken reed! To free from guilt and condemnation is what the Law *cannot* do, not on account of any fault in itself, but because it is weak through our flesh.

What, then, is the purpose and limit of the Law? *It sets before us a straight path*. Right up the mountain side I see the way to the summit. But I have fallen into an abyss. I am bruised and broken—I cannot stir an inch. What is the use of a straight road to me? Here I must lie, at the bottom of the crevasse, and perish unless something more than a straight road is shown to me. The way is before me, but I am weak and cannot stir. The Law of God tells us what we ought to do, but that does not enable us to do it! Still, it is useful to know the way in which we should go, for that will show us how far we have fallen, cause us to be discontented with our present state and prepare us to accept help, if help should come. The Law *can* do *that*.

The Law is also very useful because *it shows us our deflections and stains*. It is like the mirror which my lady holds up to her face that she may see if there are any spots on it. But she cannot wash her face with the mirror! When the mirror has done its utmost, there are the stains, all the same. It cannot take away a single spot—it can only show where it is. And the Law, though it reveals our sins, our shortcomings, our transgressions—it cannot remove the sin or the transgression. It is weak for that purpose because it was never intended to accomplish such an end.

The Law also serves another purpose—*it upbraids us for our sin*. Did you ever feel its ten-thronged lash coming upon the back of your conscience? What furrows these plowers make! "Condemn him," says whole ten-throated Law of God! The First Commandment says, "Condemn him—he has broken me." And the Second Command says, "Condemn him—he has broken me." And the Third says, "Condemn him—he has broken me."

Not one of them is silent! All clamor for their due and if you truly know your own heart, you confess that not one charges you falsely, seeing that hate is murder and the thought of folly, sin! When conscience is really awake, what pain, what anguish the Law will bring to the spirit! But it cannot heal you. It cannot speak peace to you. It cannot forgive you. To convince and to condemn is all the Law can do. It is too weak to save even one poor sinner!

Again, the Law can tell you what you *ought* to do, but *it gives no inclination to do the right*. On the contrary, without any blame to the Law, it often creates inclination to do otherwise. Paul says, "I was alive without the Law once: but when the Commandment came, sin revived, and I died." There are some things men would not think of doing if they were not forbidden—but the very forbidding of them makes some desire to do them! Many a thing which is commanded, we might have freely done if it had been left to our own choice—but such is the perversity of our nature that, being commanded to do it, straightway we refuse! We kick against the Commandments. The Law does not sweetly incline us to holiness, but, through the weakness, or, rather, *wickedness* of our flesh, it often stirs up the obstinate and rebellious propensities which are in our nature. Certainly the Law does not incline us to righteousness, but, "sin, taking occasion by the Commandment," works in us all manner of evil.

The Law is weak in another way. *It does not lend us any aid* towards the fulfillment of its Commands. It says, "This do, and you shall live. Make the bricks; make the bricks," but it gives us no straw with which to make them, nor can we find any in all the land—so we are worse off than Israel in Egypt! The Law, in and of itself, does not contribute to our obedience to its commands, nor does it restrain us when we go astray. It thunders out, "You shall not kill," but when the heart darts its thought of bitterness, or the hand raises the assassin's knife, it does not hinder—it looks on, cold and unmoved. It aids us not in any way because it cannot! Only Divine Grace can do that. We have to look to another source for help in holiness.

And when we have broken the Law of God, *it brings no remedy*. Of mercy the Law knows nothing. You have broken the Law—there is the penalty and you must bear it. Through having committed sin, you have brought upon yourself a grievous malady. The Law points out the malady, but it never brings any medicine with which to cure it! It pours in no oil and wine—it is no good Samaritan. It is not the Law's business to do that. When Her Majesty's judge is on the bench, his business there is to administer the law and to see that the rules of the nation are carried out fairly and justly. He does not sit there to provide for the poor or to help the sick, but to judge men and condemn the guilty! This is all that the Law of God was meant to do. In that it is weak through our flesh, there are some things which the Law cannot do.

On one occasion some workmen were quarrying some rocks and, having made all ready for a blast—drilled the holes, filled them with guncotton and connected the fuses—they then warned everyone away from

the place of danger. Then the fuses were lighted and the workmen, themselves, withdrew. But, to their horror, they saw a little boy, attracted by the lights, running towards them! Those strong men raised their voices and shouted to the boy, "Go back! Go back!"—they could do no more. But of course the boy, having the same nature as the rest of us, only went the more quickly forward and into the danger. Still the men cried, "Go back! Go back!" They were like the Law, powerless. Not because their voices were weak, but because of the material with which they had to deal.

But the mother of the boy heard the call and, seeing the fearful peril in which her child was placed, she dropped on one knee, opened her arms wide and called, "Come to mother! Come to mother!" The boy stopped, turned, hesitated a moment, and then ran to her embrace and, in listening to her call and obeying it, escaped the danger which threatened him. What all the shouts of the strong men could not do, the gentle voice of the mother accomplished. Their voices were like the Law which says, "Go back! Go back!" Her voice was like the sweet sound of the Gospel, "Come to Jesus! Come to Jesus!" "For what the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son" easily accomplished. Behold here the wisdom and might and love of Jehovah!

Is it not a grand thing when a wise person, seeing a difficulty which he did not produce, comes in and sets everything right? Through our sinful flesh, there has come a great warp in the original order of things! God cannot be glorified by the Law, for we have broken it! And we cannot be saved by the Law, for we still continue to break it! But God, Himself, comes to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. I want to show you, first, *God's glorious method.* And when I have shown you that, I will speak of *God's glorious accomplishment*. These two things will serve us both for instruction and stimulus.

I. First, GOD'S GLORIOUS METHOD. Here we are with a Law which we have not kept, any one of us—a Law which we never shall keep! There is no hope of salvation by the Law of God. What happens, then? Does He devise means that His banished be not expelled from Him forever? If He does, what are those means?

Hear these words, "For what the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending"—*listen*!—"God *sending*," not God waiting till we went to Him, but, seeing our misery and helplessness, *He sends*. From yonder Throne, beyond your sight, and higher than your loftiest imagination, He sends! His thoughts are with poor, struggling, guilty, unworthy men—He sees that the Law cannot help men and that they will never glorify God by the Law, except it be by being made to suffer the punishment due for their sin. Therefore Jehovah interposes! God *sends*! I say again, He does not wait for us to come to Him. If we had sent an embassy to Him and waited at Heaven's gate many long years and He had, at last, deigned to answer us, it would have been a wonderful instance of love. But now He *sends* an Ambassador! It is He who has been offended who seeks to make peace—not the guilty and the offending ones!

Read on farther. "God sending"—an angel? An archangel? No! "God sending His own Son." Hear this! *He sends His Son.* The case was so desperate that only God, Himself, could meet it! Well, Jesus Christ, God's own Son, is very God of very God—and He can do it. But shall He leave Heaven? Shall He come down to earth? Will He be a Servant? Will He who can command be humble, Himself, as to be *sent*? Will He, before whom angels bow with veiled faces, go on an errand down to earth? It is even so—"God sending His own Son." He had but one, His Only-Begotten—but He determined to have many and so He sent His one Son that He might, in "bringing many sons unto Glory," show to all worlds the riches of His love and Grace! From all eternity the Son was in the bosom of the Father—and no less than He shall be chosen to be an Ambassador of peace to the sons of men—

"Hark, the glad sound, the Savior comes,
The Savior promised long!
Let every heart prepare a throne,
And every voice a song."

But how does He send Him? *He sends Him in the flesh.* This is the amazement of angels, the astonishment of all thoughtful beings! God sends His Son to take our flesh into communion with Himself! Not to be an angel—"for verily He took not on Him the nature of angels"—but to be a *man* and to come here, as you and I came here, by *birth*! In Bethlehem's manger He lies, the offspring of a woman! At that woman's breast He hangs, a Babe. Yes, He that made the heavens and the earth, "being in the form of God, counted it not a thing to be grasped," as the Revised Version gives it to us, "to be on an equality with God." Yet—oh, the amazing condescension—He has "emptied Himself, taking the form of a Servant, being made in the likeness of men." He has veiled Himself under the form of an Infant and there He is, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh! "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." The Incarnation of Christ is a great reality which we can never understand, but which we devoutly believe and, believing it, we have before us God's way of doing what the Law could not do. He sent His own Son in human flesh!

But Paul puts it in a way which increases the wonder. God not only deigns to send His Son, but *He sends Him in the likeness of sinful flesh.* Christ did not come in sinful flesh, but He came in the *likeness* of sinful flesh. He came in the *reality* of flesh, but not in the sinfulness of flesh. His flesh was *like* sinful flesh, but it was *not* sinful flesh. It was real flesh, but it was not *sinful* flesh. It was the *likeness* of sinful flesh, for, as you looked upon Him, you could not tell Him from anyone else. That marvelous prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled—"He has no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him." He was "a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief." This was the likeness of sinful flesh which He assumed—to be poor, to be hungry, to be thirsty,

to be despised, to be rejected, to be homeless, to be friendless, to be forsaken, to be betrayed, to be scourged, to be put to death! Yes, it was necessary that He should be "numbered with the transgressors," though without fault. "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh."

There is in the world this strange thing called sin—a discord which mars the harmony of God's universe—a blight which makes evil that which God at first pronounced to be "very good." Sin! We cannot get away from it. We know more of it than of our most familiar friend—it meets us everywhere and in everything. Sin! It is the history of humanity. It is the history of the Bible, for why else was it written? It is the history of this building—why else was it built? It is the history of the ordinances of worship—why else were they instituted? Best of all, it is the history of the Christ of God!

This is a very amazing story which I am telling you, but I have not yet told you all. When the Father sends His Only-Begotten and Well-Beloved Son, *He sends Him on account of sin.* "For sin." Why did You come here, sweet Babe, away from the royalties of Heaven? "I came because of sin." What brought you here, dear Child, sojourning 12 years at Nazareth? "Sin brought Me here," says the Boy. "I came on My Father's business, and that is to put away sin." What brought You here, dear Lord, coming up dripping from the waters of Jordan? "Ask My servant John," He says. And John answers, "Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world." If I question our Divine Savior at any period of His life—and even at His death, "Why are You here?" He will tell me, "I am here for two reasons—for love and for sin—here because men have sinned and here because I love them and would save them from their sin."—

"'Twas love that sought Gethsemane,
Or Judas never had found Thee.
'Twas love that nailed You to the tree,
Or iron never had bound Thee.
'Twas love that lived, 'twas love that died,
With endless life to bless us!
Well have You won Your blood-bought bride,
All hail! You glorious Jesus."

I must ask you to notice the marginal reading here—"by a sacrifice for sin." The Revised Version has it, "God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." *He sends Him to be a Sacrifice for sin.* Christ came here to be offered up as a Sin Offering! Our sin was laid on Him and when God came to visit sin, He found it laid on Christ—and He smote it there. There God cursed the evil thing, for Christ "was made a curse for us." Yes, He *killed* it—for Christ drank of the cup of death, even as we read, "that He, by the Grace of God, should taste death for every man." Wonderful is this doctrine! In that the Law was weak through the flesh and could not save us, God sent His own Son to be Incarnate here in the likeness of sinful flesh, to be offered up as a Sacrifice, to be presented as the Atonement for human guilt—"For Christ also has once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust,

that He might bring us to God." He has once suffered, "to declare at this time, God's righteousness, that He might be just, and the Justifier of him which believes in Jesus."

Only one other word and I have completed the first verse. God does all this and *He thus condemns sin in the flesh*. "For sin" or, "by a sin offering," we read, He "condemned sin in the flesh." Christ's death condemned sin! You may find strong words with which to censure sin and you may talk of the bitter effects of sin, but no words can be too strong, no picture too dark to set forth the evil thing! What a curse sin is to this world of ours! You point me to the graveyard and you ask, "Who slew all these?" Sin! You point me to the prison and you ask, "Who bound all these?" Sin! You point me to the misery of this great city—the drunkenness, the wantonness, the selfishness, the crime—and ask, "What caused all this?" Sin! And you may even lift the veil and bid me gaze into the awful future where souls lie beneath the ban of God, accursed forever, and ask, "What brought man into such a plight?" Sin! Sin did it all, and we will, we *must*, condemn the cause of such horrors!

But, I tell you, sin was never so condemned as when Jesus died. By His death, Jesus, in effect, said, "Sinners have died—sinners have been cast into Hell. Their sin deserved it." But He said more than that, for when sin was laid on Him, it was taken by Him as a deed of love! It was not *His* sin. *He* had done no evil. That the sin was on Him was an act of supreme Grace! He took the awful load willingly and bore it in the place of guilty men. He was innocent, yet, because of man's sin, He must die—even *He* must die! This blot must put out, not the candles and the moon and the stars, but the sun, itself! This poison is so virulent that not only must the mortal die, but the *Immortal* must bow His head and give up the ghost. Oh, Sin, you are a poisonous thing, indeed, to slay God's own Son! All Heaven and earth unite with one voice to say that you are hateful and abhorrent! You are condemned!

If there is a king in a country and he has made a law, and there is one who is brought before him and condemned—and that person is his own son—we may be assured of his strict justice. If the king carries out the law upon the prince and puts him in prison, everyone is assured that he respects the law. If there is proved against the prince an offense whose penalty is death and the king gives up, even, his own guilty son to death, you see how he vindicates the law and how he abhors the offense charged against the prince. And God never showed His justice, as well as His love so much as when He gave up His Son! And He never showed His hatred of evil so much as when, sin being by imputation laid upon Christ, He bade Him die and Christ, "became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross." Now is sin condemned as the vilest thing in the universe! It has slain the Christ! It has forced the hand of Divine Justice to smite down even Christ, Himself, instead of guilty men!

This is the story more marvelous than all the annals of earth! I have told it to you in simple language. You will hear some men talk very

grandly about it—with much argument and vain philosophy. That is not my business! I have only to tell you the story as it stands. "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." This is God's glorious method of salvation and deliverance from sin!

II. Now I am going to show you, in a few words, what is, through this, GOD'S GLORIOUS ACHIEVEMENT. The result is "that the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." This righteousness is fulfilled in two ways.

First, *in Christ the righteousness of the Law is fulfilled*. It is vindicated. This is how the matter stood. God has justly annexed a penalty to sin. It is right that the offender should be punished. I, guilty by God's Law, am condemned to punishment. But I am one with Christ. Christ is my Adam. He stands for me. I am a member of His body, joined to Him in mystical, yet real, union. He comes in and answers for me. He takes the sin as though He had committed it, though He could never commit sin. He bares His neck to the ax and suffers what I ought to have suffered, or suffers what is more than equivalent, thereunto, and so God's Law is vindicated. I have died, for I am one with Christ and He died for me, and I have died in Him. I have borne the wrath of God, for I am one with Him and He bore the wrath of God for me. Thus the righteousness of the Law is fulfilled in every Believer because his accepted Substitute and Surety has borne the punishment! The two doctrines of "Substitution" and "Union to Christ" must always go together. The second explains the first, and the first becomes possible because of the second! Christ's death was a substitution for me because in the Covenant of Grace I am united to Him by bonds which can never be broken.

"Then that is an end of the Law," says one. Stop—the Law of God has one great demand—obedience! If a man disobeys and is punished, he does not, thereby, escape from the duty of *obedience*. The law is still upon him, saying, Obey, obey! "Oh, but I have been punished for past offenses." Even so, but you still are bound to *obey*. The law is always our creditor for a perfect obedience. Where, then, have we this? I answer, Christ fulfilled the Law. There never was such a Law-fulfiller as He! He did it willingly. He did it from His heart. "Lo, I come," He said, "in the volume of the Book it is written of Me, I delight to do Your will, O My God: yes, Your Law is within My heart." He did it scrupulously. In Him was no sin. "I do always those things that please Him," said He of His Father. He was perfect. He kept the Law in every jot and tittle.

There could not have been such obedience rendered to the Law even by sinless Adam as the Christ rendered to it. Adam had not the quality of being which would have rendered him capable of offering such an overflowing obedience as Christ rendered. Christ is God and if He becomes obedient to the Law—if He is born under the Law, comes under it and carries it out—the Law receives from such a Person, so marvelously constituted, a higher fulfillment than it could have received from any mere man! I take,

today, the perfect obedience of my Lord and, appropriating it by faith to myself, I call Him, "The Lord my righteousness." I do not presume in so doing, for it is written, "This is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" and, "of Him are you in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." In Christ Jesus you have done for you what the Law could never have done. The righteousness of the Law has been fulfilled in you. You have borne the penalty—you have obeyed the Law of God in the Person of your Covenant Head and Representative.

Now I take the words in the second and inferior sense, which is still very precious. *The righteousness of the Law is fulfilled in the Christian by the Grace of God.* When we believe in Christ we not only receive pardon, but we also receive renewal. I am told that the teaching of certain people, nowadays, is that the Believer only gets pardon to begin with and a long time afterwards he gets the clean heart. But I say, on the authority of God's Word, that no man is pardoned unless he *has* a clean heart! God gives the clean heart at the time He gives the pardon! You must never divide the renewing of the Holy Spirit from the pardon of sin. They go together and he that receives the pardon of sin receives a new birth—and is made a new creature in Christ Jesus then and there. The work of regeneration and the act of faith which brings justification to the penitent sinner are simultaneous and must, in the nature of the case, always be so.

At the present moment, the righteousness of the Law is fulfilled in the new-born, Grace-renewed mind. There is a present obedience actually rendered. We have to admit to faults, imperfections and sins, but, at the same time we strive to be holy. I speak for all of you who love Christ. You long to obey Him. Yes, and you *do* obey Him. You have laid aside the works of the flesh. If you are Believers, you cannot do what you used to do, and you are striving to do things which once would have been irksome to you. You are honest, you are true, you are righteous, you love the Lord. You make *Him*—not an *idol*—to be your God. You are seeking to do to others as you would that they should do to you. You love God and you love your neighbor.

And though not perfectly, yet, in a large measure, by the exercise of the Grace of God, the Law is fulfilled in you in a way that it never could have been fulfilled as mere law. You now obey God and attain a measure of holiness through what Christ has done for you—a measure of holiness that you never reached when you tried to be saved by good works. It is a noteworthy fact that while work-mongers cry up works, they never have any worth talking about—and while Believers in Christ decry their own good works, they abound in them! I try to live as if my salvation depended only upon my works—and yet I do so knowing all the while that I am justified by faith, through Jesus Christ—and not by the works of the Law. Thus present obedience is actually rendered.

Now we must go a little further. There is perfect obedience rendered in heart. You know how Paul puts it. He says that the things that he *would*

do, somehow he did not always do and that caused him grief. And the things that he would not do, but hated to do, he sometimes did and *that* caused him grief. But he says, "If I do that I would not, it is no more I that does it, but sin that dwells in me." The child of God is not perfect in his life, but he wills to be so—he sighs to be so—his heart is set on it. It reminds me of Mr. Bunyan when he says, "You see a man sent to get the doctor and riding on a horse that is rather sluggish. But look how he keeps kicking and whipping; whipping and kicking; pulling and tugging. He would go quicker if he could. So in his heart he is all the way to the doctor's when he is only half-way! He is all the way there in his mind, though, alas, his horse keeps him back." It is thus that we are hindered through the weakness of the flesh.

O Brothers and Sisters, if we could be perfect, we would be in Heaven, for I cannot imagine a higher Heaven than to be perfectly like Christ! A sinner, if he could have his way, would like to have some nice little smug sins all to himself and never be called to account for them. He would choose forever to have no God and no Law of God. How delicious that would be to him! And then if he let his evil heart have *full* sway, he would desire to have his glass, his merriment, his debauchery free from any restraint! His liberty would soon run into license. That would be the highest pleasure to the child of the flesh. But the child of God hates sin as sin! He loves holiness as holiness and if he could go to Heaven and sin, it would be no Heaven to him! And if God could reward him for sin—though such a thing is impossible and the very thought of such a thing is almost blasphemy—yet would he hate sin as sin and flee from it!

Even when it most condemns him, he would have the Law of God no other than it is. Not even for his salvation would he have God bate one jot or tittle of His justice. He is jealous for holiness and seeks not to be saved *in* sin, but to be saved *from* it. As far as his renewed heart is concerned, he cannot sin because he is born of God. His new nature clings and cleaves to holiness and the new nature is *perfect*—made perfect in the image of Christ—and it will never rest till it has stamped out the last spark of sin in the members. Thus a perfect obedience is rendered in his heart. The child of God says, "I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. I will set no wicked thing before my eyes—I hate the work of them that turn aside—it shall not cleave to me."

Once more, what the Law could never do—for it never made a man even *wish* to be holy, much less made him live a holy life—Christ, by coming in the likeness of sinful flesh, has done, for there is that in every Believer which will be perfect holiness before long. Absolute obedience is observed in Heaven. We shall, by-and-by, break through all the enthrallments of the old life and come into the land of the hereafter, where, says the Christ who has done all for them, "They shall walk with Me in white: for they are worthy." Up yonder the life that is in every palm-bearer is the life that he had here below. "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life," that is, he has it *here—and* in Heaven it will be the same life, but it will be that

same life *developed*—and when developed it will be absolute perfection! Not perfection in name, nor perfection in measure, but *absolute* perfection and fully developed! We shall be absolutely free from every disobedience and absolutely perfect in every good work, doing God's will and delighting to do it, world without end!

In the third place, I would have you remember that *this righteousness is fulfilled through the Lord Jesus Christ.* We fulfill the Law, but not in any strength which the Law gives to us, nor in any power of our own. The obedience to the Law is fulfilled in us out of gratitude to Christ for what He has done for us. We flee from sin out of hatred of the things that nailed Christ to the Cross and put Him to death. What the Law could not do, the dying Christ has done! His Sacrifice makes us hate evil. Naming the name of Christ, we "depart from iniquity," for we realize that it was not only Roman soldiers and rabble Jews who nailed Him to the tree, but it was our sins that did it! Those little sins of ours were like thorns in His blessed brow. Those ordinary commonplace sins were like nails in His hands and feet. That giant sin was like a spear to pierce His side. And yet—

"His love to man, so sorely tried,
Proved stronger than the grave!
The very spear that pierced His side
Drew forth the blood to save."

O you who have long toiled in the vain endeavor to give up your sins, come and look at the Cross! See there what your sins have done and learn to hate them with a perfect hatred! See how sin stooped to the meanness of betrayal and killed the Prince of Life who went among men healing and helping them, doing nothing but good! Your instinct rises against oppressors—will you not seek to throw off the chains of the sin which worked so cruel a deed that day at Calvary? Sin is your enemy! To you who believe in Christ, I would say—Remember that on the Cross *you* were crucified, for when Christ died, *you* died. Now, say to yourself that if sin that day crucified you, then today you will crucify sin. "I am crucified with Christ," says Paul, "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." Thus, because God sent His Son and condemned sin in the flesh, we condemn it, too. His death becomes to us the gate of life!

More than that. Not only do we seek to avoid the evil because of the Sacrifice of Christ, but gratitude to Him incites us to do good. Shall He do all this for me and I do nothing for Him? Shall He die for me and shall I henceforth not live for Him? If He gave His life for me, then I will give my life to Him! He has bought it. He deserves it and He shall have it. I will no longer live to the flesh, since in the flesh Christ condemned my sin. What a wonder it is that the Lord Jesus, by His Atonement, could condemn sin and let the condemned sinner go free! Surely, the delivered soul will henceforth count it the greatest joy of life to serve Him "who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification." Thus, what

the Law could not do, the Sent One, by His wondrous work, fulfils! He takes us from under the bondage of the Law and, in being delivered *for* our sins, He also delivers us *from* our sins! "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under the Law, but under Grace." Thus, Grace triumphs against the flesh in giving us liberty. "Being then made free from sin, you became the servants of righteousness." Thus the holy Law of God is cheerfully fulfilled!

To crown all, *this righteousness is fulfilled in the energy of the Spirit*—"in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." God not only works *for* us, but He also works *in* us "both to will and to do of His good pleasure." The Spirit applies the work of Christ to the soul, since it is *because* of the work of Christ the Spirit is given, while both are to the praise of the Father. "It needs the three Persons of the Trinity to fill up the triangular heart of man," as one of the Puritans puts it. Why should not everyone whom I address receive, by the Spirit, this new life at this moment? Then it will grow, for we *"walk* after the Spirit"—we do not stand still! As we obey the Law of God, we shall receive more and more of His power, for it is written of the Holy Spirit that He is "given to them that *obey* Him." He first teaches us to obey and then, when we obey, He dwells with us in greater fullness! And, when we are filled with the Spirit, then "the righteousness of the Law is fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

I have now set before you God's glorious method and achievement. May you accept the one and have your part in the other! Sin is condemned and righteousness fulfilled for everyone that believes! That is what the Christ has done by coming here below. Blessed be His name! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Romans 8.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—240, 298, 299.

MR. SPURGEON UPDATE:

Readers of the Sermons will rejoice to know that on Monday (October 26th), Mr. and Mrs. Spurgeon traveled in safety from London to Calais, and bore the journey as well as could be expected. By the time this Sermon is in the hands of our readers, they hope to be at their destination in the sunny South. Praise for past mercies and prayer for blessings still needed may be sweetly blended under the present happy circumstances.

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

GOD'S GLORIOUS AND EVERLASTING NAME
NO. 2229

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY,
NOVEMBER 8, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 15, 1891.**

***"To make Himself an everlasting name...To make Yourself a glorious name."
Isaiah 63:12, 14.***

MAN'S chief end is to glorify and enjoy God. God's greatest and highest objective is to make to Himself a glorious and an everlasting name. Since God is God, it must be so, for He is full of love and kindness to His creatures, and He cannot more fully bless His creatures than by making Himself known to them. Everything that is good, true, holy, excellent and loving, is in God. He is not only the Giver of "every good and every perfect gift," but He is, Himself, the sum and substance of all blessing! And it is for the highest good of all the creatures He has made, that they should know their God. "Man, know yourself," is a frequent exhortation of the philosophers of earth—and self-knowledge is said to be the highest form of knowledge, but it is not. "Man, know your God," is a far wiser precept, for knowledge of God as far excels all other knowledge as the heavens are higher than the earth! It is life eternal to know Him, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent. Know your God, then, for here your hope, your comfort, your holiness, your Heaven will be found!

God may well desire to make to Himself a name—that is to say, to make Himself known—because He is worthy to be known. There is no name so well worthy of publication. There is no Character like His. There is none that can be compared to Him. Even among the gods of the heathen, if they *were* gods, there is none like our God and, indeed, there is none other. He can truly say, "I am Jehovah, and there is none beside Me." He ought to be known and it is a worthy motive of His actions that He should make unto Himself a great name.

This knowledge of God is the Heaven of the perfect! I believe they have no higher joy in the Land of Light than to know God. The blaze of their glory is the Presence of Deity. The height of their Heaven is that God is near them and that they are near to Him. Heaven would be no Heaven if God were not there. It would be a circle without a center, a sky without a sun! The holy song of the seraphim would be hushed—they would cease to veil their faces with their wings and the Hosannas of the redeemed

would languish if they could no longer raise the hymn—"The Lord God Omnipotent reigns." Without the Presence of the Eternal, Heaven would be shorn of the bliss for which we long—and emptied of the Glory we have been led to anticipate! To know God perfectly and to behold Him in righteousness will be all that any heart can need—

"How wonderful, how beautiful,
The sight of You must be!
Your glorious wisdom, boundless power,
And awful purity."

While the knowledge of God is the Heaven of the perfect, it is the help of the growing. Men can only get holier and better as they know more of God. Here is the copy—look well at it, that you may write after it. Here is that Character which you are to imitate, according to the exhortation, "Be you, therefore, followers of God, as dear children." Know God as He makes Himself known by His works and ways, that you may grow to be like He. Continue to know Him until you shall be able to say that He is the gladness of your joy and may join with the Psalmist and say, "I will go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy."

The knowledge of God is also the great hope of sinners. O child of earth, if you knew Him better, you would fly to Him! If you understood how gracious He is, you would seek Him! If you could have any idea of His holiness, you would loathe your self-righteousness! If you knew anything of His power, you would not venture to contend with Him. If you knew anything of His Grace, you would not hesitate to yield yourself to Him. The more God reveals Himself to you and the more you know of God, the more are you in the way of hope and mercy! "They that know Your name will put their trust in You."

Therefore I do not attempt to defend my God, nor stand here to apologize for Him when I assert that the one great end of all that He does is to make to Himself a name—since it is by the making of that name that men are blessed in the very highest degree—and helped to holiness and happiness! I would rather ask you to praise Him who sits upon the Throne, as He thus manifests Himself—for our good can only be achieved by the glory of God's name—

"Who is a pardoning God like Thee,
Or who has Grace so rich and free?"

In seeking to open up this subject, I shall say, first of all, that *God's design in making to Himself a great name has been accomplished*. Secondly, *this design is still being accomplished*. And, thirdly, *the design is, in itself, exceedingly delightful*.

I. First, GOD'S DESIGN HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED. From everlasting He was God most glorious! He existed, but He had as yet no name. For a name is that by which someone is revealed—and until His power called into being the hosts of Heaven, God was God, and there were none to whom He could be known! Then the angels lifted high His praise in their songs and bowed low before His Throne. In creation His name was manifested and magnified—when the foundations of the earth were laid, "the

morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy." Man was made in the image of God for His own Glory and all things existed for His praise. "He is over all, God blessed forever. Amen." But our subject is how God has made His name glorious among men. Let us consider it.

The text speaks of God as making to Himself a great and glorious name, *in redeeming Israel*. When He poured His plagues on Egypt and afflicted the fields of Zoan, proud Pharaoh would not yield. He thought himself able to contend against Jehovah, but the tyrant trembled. He sought the intercession of Moses and, at last, he was glad to let Israel go! God triumphed over Pharaoh. When Pharaoh gathered up his spirit once more—his heart being hardened—he pursued Israel to the Red Sea and God permitted him to follow His people into the midst of the waters until the waves returned, in all their might, and quickly swallowed him up!

Then sang the children of Israel, "The depths have covered them: they sank into the bottom as a stone." God's name was glorious that day insomuch that they sang again, "Who is like unto You, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" And not only that day, but as long as there is a man alive, the song of the Red Sea will be remembered and our ears shall hear the refrain of Miriam's song—"Sing you to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea." All the nations of the earth heard of that event, especially the heathen races of Palestine! God intended to drive them out to make room for His people and a fear took hold of them. They trembled as they heard what God did at the Red Sea. He had made to Himself an everlasting name, for that one event goes ringing down the centuries! Throughout eternity the redeemed will continue to "sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb." Then God brought His people through the wilderness, guiding them by His Presence, and He led them into the Promised Land. The revised Version renders verse fourteen—"As the cattle that go down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord caused them to rest: so did You lead Your people, to make Yourself a glorious name."

Now, as God got to Himself a great name at the Red Sea, He has done much more by the great works of salvation *in the gift of Jesus*. Ah, here Egypt is eclipsed and the destruction of Pharaoh is no more to be remembered! We were lost—sin had taken us captive, but God brought us out with a high hand and an outstretched arm. But for our redemption it was necessary that He should become Man, that in a human form God should tabernacle on earth! Would He come to Bethlehem's manger? Would He, the Infinite, come robed as an Infant? Yes, He came and made Heaven wonder till the angels sang and sang again! They could not understand the marvelous condescension of the Incarnation. Being here in fashion as a Man, it was necessary, if He would save us, that He must bear the wrath of God on our behalf. There must be a bloody sweat from that blessed body! There must be a scourging of those sacred shoulders! There must be

a piercing of those dear hands and feet! There must be a rending open of that loving and holy heart!

Shall it be done? Will the Son of God die like a felon on a gallows? Will the Lord of Glory give His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that pluck off the hair? Will He yield His face to shame and spitting? Will He, *can* He *die*? Death, you have slain your millions—will you also slay the Son of God? It must be so if we are to live—He must die, or we must die, or justice must die! Which shall it be? Jesus solves the problem—He deigns to die. As I see Him bow His blessed head and hear Him utter His death-cry, "It is finished," I say that the Most High has gotten to Himself an everlasting name, a glorious name—"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." All other deeps are shallow! This is an abyss! All other heights of goodness can be climbed—but *this*—never! Pile Andes on Pelion, Alp on Alp, the Matterhorn on Mont Blanc and the Andes on the Himalayas—*all* are not great enough to be a symbol of His love! The Incarnate Son of God condemned! The Son of God slain! The Son of God in the grave! And all this for us! Truly, He has made Himself a glorious name! Saints on earth and saints above unite to sing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain!" And forever and ever we shall know no choicer song.

Furthermore, I am sure you will agree with me that He has made Himself a glorious name by taking so many of the saints already into Heaven. His design has been accomplished *in the saints in Glory*. Some of our dearest ones are there, where no trouble can ever reach them again. Yes, they are now beyond gunshot of the enemy! I am sure that they give Him a glorious name. Oh, how they stand and wonder that ever they should have been brought there! How they lie adoring at His feet, marveling that by such a stoop of His love, they should be lifted to such a height of Glory! Listen how their hearts ring out the never-ceasing music! You sleep and your songs are suspended—but day without night they circle His Throne rejoicing—and this is the strain of all their music—"Glory, glory, glory unto the Triune Jehovah who has brought us to stand before the Throne of God."—

"Father of Jesus, love's reward,
What rapture will it be!
Prostrate before Your Throne to lie,
And gaze, and gaze on Thee!"

When you and I get to Heaven, we will give God a glorious name, will we not? I have often told you of the old woman who said that if Christ saved her, He would never hear the last of it. Nor shall He ever cease to receive the praises of us all when He once gives us an opportunity of joining yonder happy choir! We will not wish to pause in the perpetual outpourings of our adoration and worship. "I heard a voice from Heaven," says John, "as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder." I do not wonder at that description of the songs of the redeemed, for when we all together shall praise His everlasting and glorious name, our united

thanksgiving will be like the sound of oceans upon oceans piled, Atlantics upon Pacifics, Arctics upon these, Indian Oceans upon them all—and all together roaring with the fullness thereof in the majesty of praise unto the great Eternal! God has, indeed, made Himself a name! There is no name like the name of Jehovah-Jesus under Heaven, or in Heaven itself! At that name the angels pause! To speak its praise they fly! All the earth worships You, the Everlasting Father. To You, O God, we cry aloud with hearty voices of praise and when we have paid our fullest homage, we feel that we have scarcely reached the lowest note of the anthem we long to sing! Faint is our song compared with what You deserve!—

"Weak is the effort of my heart,
And cold my warmest thought!
But when I see You as You are,
I'll praise You as I ought."

So much for the first point.

II. Now, secondly, GOD'S DESIGN IS BEING ACCOMPLISHED. In many ways the grand work is still going forward. God is carrying out His gracious plan. "My Father works hitherto, and I work," Christ might still truly say, as He once said at Jerusalem. And the Holy Spirit, whom He has given, also labors towards the same end—that the name of the Triune God may be exalted!

This purpose is being fulfilled, first, *in sparing the provoking*. There was one who said, "If there is a God, let Him prove it by striking me dead." God proved His Godhead by letting that sinner live! Had He been a man such as we are, He would have struck the blasphemer on the spot! But God will not be provoked. He is "long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy." Oh, if some of us had been treated with a thousandth part of the hatred that men have poured on God, we would have struck out in strength of indignation—and we might have been excused—but God has borne it all! They have denied His existence. They have blasphemed His Word. They have resisted His Spirit. They have questioned the Deity of His Son. What have they *not* done? And yet He has been patient to get to Himself a name as the "God of Patience," and that name will stand forever. Would that this long-suffering of God might lead men to repentance!

Next, God gets to Himself a name *in turning the rebellious to Himself*. Oh, I delight to see this done! It is the minister's joy! We know men that have been, for years, set in opposition to God, and we had almost thought it impossible that they should ever be turned, but, all of a sudden, Christ has manifested Himself to them and we hear that they are seeking after God! Such conversions very often surprise me, especially when persons come or write to me out of families that have been famous for unbelief, or out of wealthy families where there is all manner of gaiety and worldliness, or out of poor families where there has been a disregard of God's Holy Day. Such cases, in which the work is evidently God's, seem to me like miracles of mercy!

Last Wednesday, when seeing those who came to join the Church, to one after another I said, "Have you a godly father or mother?" and many of

them answered, "No, Sir." Then I said, "perhaps it was your brother or sister who influenced you for Christ," to which several replied, "I am sorry to say none of my brothers or sisters are Christians." In several cases I asked further, "Have you, then, some friend who fears God?" and often the answer was, "I do not know one of my family that has been accustomed, even, to pay any outward reverence to religion." Yet the Grace of God has come into that home and taken one of a family—to bring that one to Zion—and it has sometimes happened that the least likely has been the very one who has been called! I should not wonder but some young man who came to this service to make fun of the whole thing will find something better than fun before the service is over—and be among those who shall preach the Gospel which once he despised!

It has often happened that when men have gone far in sin, they have been stopped by Grace. There is a strange incident in Bunyan's life which tells us of the strange reason with which he comforted himself about the next generation. He said that the young men of his day were so wicked, that he hoped that God meant to make great saints of them. It was an extraordinary way of looking at evil, but there is a basis of the Truth of God in such a view. "Where sin abounded, Grace did much more abound." Is it not written of the very offcasts and outcasts, the enemies to God, those in the isles afar off, who have not heard God's fame, neither seen His Glory, "I will also take of them for priests and for Levites, says the Lord"? God will take these, in the Sovereignty of His Grace, to conquer them and make to Himself a name! Then everybody will say, greatly wondering, "Has that notorious blasphemer really been converted? Has that gay butterfly actually become serious? Does that careless, godless person at last begin to think of these things?" Ah, glory be to God, it is by these conversions that He gets to Himself a glorious name!

Again, He gets to Himself a name *in forgiving the guilty*. When the great sinner comes, or the person who, though he has not openly offended, is yet conscious of great inward sin—when these come and in a moment are washed whiter than snow, and realize that their sin is put away, forever, they cannot help crying, like a man in Scotland, of whom I heard, who, when he spoke the praises of Christ who had saved him from the wrath to come, said, in his joy—"Oh, He is a great Forgiver! Oh, He is a great Forgiver!" You remember how the Prophet Micah writes of this great Forgiver, "Who is a God like unto You, that pardons iniquity, and passes by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retains not His anger forever, because He delights in mercy. He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities and will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea"? Hallelujah! Every soul that gets the pardon of all its sin must magnify the Lord! And if you know to the fullest what that pardon is, it will make you give God a great name—

"Here's pardon for transgressions past,
It matters not how black their cast.
And, O my Soul, with wonder view,
For sins to come, here's pardon, too."

Who would not give God glory when He gives such mercy?

Further, God glorifies His name *in purifying the unholy*. It is a great honor to God when we see men and women who were once very wild and self-willed, walking carefully and graciously. I do not know that I have ever praised God more than I did in the case of a Brother of a very savage temper who was, indeed, just like an incarnate devil at times! But after he was converted, he became as quiet as a lamb and just as gentle as he had formerly been ferocious. God got a great name through that change—and such things happen a great deal more frequently than some doubters imagine! The man who was so stingy that he would have drawn the teeth of his motherless child to sell them if he could, after he is converted becomes so generous that he can keep no money in his pocket when there are any poor people in need! The Grace of God makes such a difference, turning things upside down and completely altering the character! Grace renews the man and God is greatly glorified thereby! It is, in fact, the fulfillment of the ancient promise—"Instead of the thorn, shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle tree." Instead of vice, lust, passion and self-seeking, there comes up holiness, love to God, love to men and every amiable virtue. Then God's name is glorified! Dear Christian people, do try to glorify His name. May your life be such that whoever watches you shall be compelled to say, "Truly, God's name is glorified in them!" Let all behold the clear shining of your light until they "see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven."

God also glorifies His name *in preserving the tempted*. Oh, what stories each one might tell of himself! How God has kept us in the time of great temptation! I know that some of you here are fiercely tempted. God has brought you out from sin, but the devil pulls you back as far as ever he can. And your surroundings do not help you. Your companions would, if they could, drag you with them into Hell. Now, if the Lord keeps you, it will be greatly to His Glory and He will get to Himself a glorious name! I have noticed that Christian men who seem to live in the greatest danger are not those who fall, but those who backslide are often those whose circumstances appear to be peculiarly favorable. Yet they wander and go astray. God will keep you if you stay yourself upon Him, though your business sometimes leads you to the edge of a precipice! God will keep you, if you rely upon His power, though your position in society surrounds you with dangers.

Be of good hope and continue to put your trust in Him. In your case, He will make to Himself a name, even now! And at the end what praise shall be His when you are brought safely home! Here comes into Heaven the man who has been between the jaws of death! He has walked right straight between the lions—they sniffed at his heels and they would have devoured him if they could. He went through the Valley of the Shadow of Death where the hobgoblins were on either side, where the fierce Apollyon met him and he had to fight him, foot to foot! But God has brought him

safely home. Hallelujah! Oh, what a name will God have in saving His people from all their temptations!

To change the subject just a little—I believe that God gets a great name to Himself *in using weak instruments*. If you go to hear a great and learned man preach the Gospel—some doctor of divinity, some famously eloquent man—if there are souls saved, you say, "Ah, well! He is a wonderful man, a clever man. It is to be expected that great blessing will come of such preaching." But if, on the other hand, if it is some person by whom God is pleased to speak who makes no pretense of learning, but who uses common words—and yet many are led into the Light of God by him—you say to yourself, "Well, *I* could speak better than *that*! What a wonder that God can do such a mighty work with such a poor implement!" When God speaks by the feeble. When He uses the insignificant, then does He not get to Himself a glorious name? I hear almost every day in the week of souls converted to God by sermons preached here, which go to the ends of the earth. And when I hear about them, I always wonder that God should have blessed those sermons to anybody. And any man whom God favors with His Presence and help will marvel that God should use such a poor, dry stick! But He does and He will, for, "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." And all this to make unto Himself a glorious name!

Sometimes our God makes to Himself a glorious name *in doing great things for His people* by sending very wonderful seasons of refreshing and reviving to His Church. Some misunderstood me the other day to speak against revivals. I never did such a thing in my life! The more revivals we have of a true sort, the better. What I do speak against is the kind of thing which works people up into an excitement and then lets them drop. I read only last night of a Methodist congregation, of which the writer says, "They are a wonderfully nice people. They have a revival about once in seven years and then everybody seems to feel intensely, and you can preach with great power. But in between the times of those revivals, they are as hard as old nails."

Well now, I do not want that kind of thing! Spasms of any sort are not desirable things, least of all spasmodic religion! I want a revival that keeps on every day in the year, all the years in the century! That is the kind of revival that glorifies God—not a temporary ripple on the surface—but a great swell that comes rolling up from the depths! May God send it! He can do such a work by His Spirit and there are indications that He is going to permit us to see greater things than ever. All these many years, in this place, souls have been saved in one continued stream by the preaching of the Gospel—scarcely ever more and very seldom less—but oh, for a grand spring tide, a mighty flood that shall bring many to Christ and to the Church! Then it shall be that God will get to Himself a glorious and an everlasting name!

In this manner God is now accomplishing His gracious design and will, still, in days to come, get to Himself a name most glorious. These are but the beginnings of His ways—the fullness of them will overwhelm us with their grandeur and majesty! Having begun to reveal His name and Character, He will go on to do it. He will carve it deep on the history of His redeemed. Blessed be His name for the seasons of revival we have already had and are having, but our hearts look forward with high hope to even better times when, as Peter preached after Pentecost, "Times of refreshing shall come from the Presence of the Lord and He shall send Jesus Christ." Then, indeed, the Lord will get to Himself a glorious name! "The times of restitution of all things" will begin and, as Habakkuk tells us, "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

God has not ceased His working. He will go on doing great things. It is His purpose to make to Himself an *everlasting* name, as well as a *glorious* name. Everlasting and glorious! That can only mean to us everlasting Glory! Beyond this, we have the promise of some Grace not yet revealed, for it is written concerning the man who overcomes, "I will write upon him My new name." Yes, God will yet accomplish His purpose and fully manifest His Glory!

III. Having thus tried to show you how God carries out the purpose of making to Himself a glorious name, let me go on, in the third place, to say that GOD'S DESIGN IS VERY DELIGHTFUL. I will advance five reasons why we should rejoice in this fact.

For God to save and bless men, in order to get to Himself a glorious name, is a very delightful thing, first, because *it hides pride from men.* And anything that does that is glorifying to Him. Remember these words—"Not for your sakes do I this, says the Lord God, be it known unto you; be ashamed and be confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel." God did not choose His people because of anything in them. Christ did not redeem His people because of anything in them. The Holy Spirit does not call a man because of anything in him. We are not justified because of our own merits—we are not accepted because of our own excellence. It is all of Grace from first to last! "Where is boasting, then? It is excluded." There is no place where pride can come in. Salvation is "not of works, lest any man should boast."

The second reason is because *it opens a great door for sinners.* Now, listen to this. Perhaps there is one here who says, "I am so guilty. I am so unworthy. I am so vile that God cannot save me on account of anything in me. I am everything that I ought *not* to be." Stand to that, Brothers and Sisters! Tire not there. You have a hold of the Truth this time! "Then why should He save me?" you ask. "It cannot be because of any use that He can make of me, for I am ignorant. I am obscure and I am weak-minded. God can never get much out of *me*—He cannot save me for the sake of that." But look, Sir, He can save you that He may make a great name for Himself, for if He pardons *you*, a great sinner, that will bring great praise

to His mercy! If He changes *you*, who has been desperately set on mischief, that will bring great credit to His power! If He takes *you* who are so insignificant and obscure, that will clearly show the greatness of His condescension and the wondrousness of His love!

I am not sure, but I think that if God were to save *any* of you, I should not wonder at it so much as I often wonder that He should have saved me! I sometimes ask myself whether I was converted because I was so headstrong and obstinate, that God might show how He can overcome obstinacy and how self-will can be made to sit at His feet. You remember what the Scotchwoman said to Rowland Hill when she stood looking at his face? He said, "Well, good woman, you have looked at me a long while. What are you looking at?" She said, "I was looking at the lines of your face." "Well, and what do you make of them?" he asked. "I was thinking what an awful rascal you would have been if you had not been converted," was her unexpected answer!

Now, I think that we might say the same of a good many, and if it is God's intent to get to Himself a glorious name, I see hope for big rascals! I see hope for great sinners! If a doctor has come into a parish and needs to get a reputation. And if he can cure those who have a finger-ache, those who have something the matter with a corn, he will not get much credit by that. But here is a man who has cancer—here is a woman ill in consumption. If he can cure these two, I guarantee you that all the world will know of it before long! If he can manage these desperate cases, that all the other doctors have given up, then he will get to himself a name!

Now, is there some cancerous sinner here, some soul in a dread consumption of evil? I pray you, come to Christ, for He wants to get to Himself a name—and why should He not save you? Is there not reason to believe that He is likely to begin with the worst, that He may get to Himself glory out of such? Would God you would pick the comfort out of this Truth of God, for there is a vast amount of consolation lying hidden in it! Great sinners make great saints! God loves the love of His people! And those who have been saved from deep sin are often most fervent in their devotion. To procure such love to Himself and such honor to His name, God lays hold of the rebellious sinner, who afterwards sings—

"Love I much? I've more forgiven;
I'm a miracle of Grace!"

Next, this grand Truth that God does what He does for the Glory of His own name, is delightful because *it gives comfort to strugglers*. You who are laboring after holiness. You who are striving after purity, in full obedience to the Divine will, do you not see that if God will help you in your struggles and give you victory, it will be to the Glory of His name? The weaker you are, the more glory to Him if He makes you strong! And the more beaten you seem to be, the more nearly defeated, the more glory to God if He will come to your rescue and help you through. Therefore *expect* that He will do it! "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runs into it and is safe." Run into it and, for His name's sake expect the Lord to

keep you! At length He will deliver us from our enemies and bring us into the place of peace—and "there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall any gallant ship pass thereby. For the Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King: He will save us." For the glory of His own name He will do this.

The confidence that God is working out His designs is delightful, again, because *it sustains in trying times*. I think that this ought to gladden you very much. You should be delighted that God seeks His own Glory, for He will find it in helping you in the time of trouble. "Call upon Me," He says, "in the day of trouble. I will deliver you and you shall glorify Me." It is not for God's Glory to leave one of His poor children to perish. It is not for God's Glory to leave the least lamb in all His flock to be eaten by the wolf. If the devil could get one who trusted Christ, what a triumph they would make in Hell over that soul! "Here is one whom Christ could not save, or would not save," they would mockingly shout. "Here is a soul who trusted in Christ and yet is lost, after all!" Oh, the gibes and jests which would then be uttered against the Savior who is mighty to save! But this shall never be! It would make such a stain upon the honor, fidelity, Immutability and Glory of God, that it cannot even be imagined! His Glory will never be compromised in such a way as that—

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

And, once more, it is most delightful that God should seek His own Glory, for you and I, and all of us who know anything of His Grace, are seeking it, too. *It answers our chief prayer*. We are the children of God and His honor is dear to us. When we come to Him and say, "Our Father who are in Heaven," our first desire is, "Hallowed be Your name." I speak to many who can add their, "Amen," to this! If you could have your greatest, chief, highest wish, would you not say, "I wish that God may be glorified"? I met a dear Brother minister last week and he said to me, "My wife is sick and ill, and I have a world of troubles, but I do not feel them half so much as I do the burden of the present condition of the professing Church. God is dishonored in His own Church and that weighs me down." I could respond and say, "That is my case, too." The heaviest trouble of my soul is to see things as they now are in Christendom—and if I might have but one prayer, and pray it, it would be, "O God, glorify Yourself in Your own Church and in the salvation of men!" And do you not think that the desire of every true Christian is, "Let God be magnified"? Is not this the wish of Heaven? What is Heaven, but a perpetual magnifying of God? It will be the crown of all rejoicing to be able to—

"Crown Him with many crowns,
The Lamb upon His Throne."

Therefore we rejoice and think it delightful that God is aiming at the manifestation of His own Character and, is in all His works getting to

Himself a great, eternal, and glorious name! Come, you sinners, poor and wretched, come and glorify the bounty of God! Come, you that are at Hell's dark door, arise and glorify the greatness of the love of God in Christ Jesus! Whoever among you will believe in Christ shall have *eternal* life! Trust the living Christ who is gone into the heavens to intercede for sinners! Trust Him and you shall live and God shall be glorified in your life. Come, saying—

"No preparation can I make,
My best resolves I only break!
Now save me for Your own name's sake,
And take me as I am."

He will do it! He will do it now! When He does it, He does it *forever*. I pray the Holy Spirit to bless these words to the salvation of many, that the Triune Jehovah may get to Himself a glorious and everlasting name, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 63.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—233, 245, 586.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:

Beloved Friends—I was supremely thankful to telegraph to London that I was not wearied by my journey of a thousand miles, but rather refreshed by it. I wrote that this was "*almost* miraculous," and my dear brother observed that I might wisely leave out the, "almost," and so save two pence, which is the rate per word! Well, it does seem to me to be beyond all that I could have asked or even thought. Blessed be the healing Lord! I am waiting and watching for news from home as remarkable in regard to a Tabernacle revival as these tidings from me about my restoration to health. I now look for great things in connection with Dr. Pierson's labors and those of all my friends at home. Good news has already reached me as to the usefulness of the printed sermons, but I long for more. To spread my sermons is to help on the cause in the most efficient manner. To pray for a blessing is to share in it. Why should we not see a renewal of faith, a reenthronement of the Truth of God, a deep and widespread revival of religion at home and a grand advance of missions abroad? According to your faith be it unto you, you heirs of the heavenly Kingdom!

Your fellow servant,
Mentone, October 31, 1891.
C. H. SPURGEON.

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LOVED AND WASHED
NO. 2230

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
NOVEMBER 15, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 22, 1891.**

"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."
Revelation 1:5, 6.

John was the beloved disciple, the choicest spirit of the twelve, the one nearest to the heart of Christ. Not only was he that disciple whom Jesus loved, but he was full of love to his Lord in return. John leaned his head on Christ's bosom. All his soul seemed to be aflame with affection towards Christ. "We love Him, because He first loved us," are words which come with great power from such a heart—they were so wonderfully true in his own experience. But now, when he comes to sing a Psalm of praise to his Lord, he does not mention his love to his Master. He dwells not on that, for his confidence lies deeper than anything in himself, even in the love of the Son of God to him. Would you not wish to be like he? Then "keep yourselves in the love of God," as, on the opposite page of your Bible, you read in the Epistle of Jude. Meditate much on your Master and on your Master's love—dwell with Christ—and whether you realize your love to Him or not, drink in daily the sweetness of His wondrous love to you. Live on that and often let your heart lift up a song of praise because of it. Then shall the blessing of Benjamin be yours—"The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by Him; and the Lord shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between His shoulders."

This verse seems to me to be fit to be the song of Heaven. It is indeed the epitome of all those choral symphonies with which redeemed spirits circle the Throne of our great Lord and King. John, in vision, had caught glimpses of the Glory Land and had heard the great multitude which no man can number raise their hallelujahs, as they cast their crowns before Him that sat upon the Throne of God. And, as the refrain of a song hums itself over and over, again, even after the singer has ceased, John, when he began to write this Book, seems to have remembered the chorus of those who "came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." I think that I hear them, now, while we are listening, and this is the grand *chorale* of the skies—"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." We, in feebler strains, fervently add our, "Amen."

Would you not wish to be in Heaven when your life on earth is over? The time will come when you must die—would you not desire to have a good hope of entering into the felicities of the perfected ones? I am sure you would! But if you are at last to be numbered among the redeemed host on high, you must learn their song *here*! You cannot be admitted into the choirs above without having practiced and rehearsed their music here below! Therefore you must think much and believe much concerning Christ's love to His chosen and how He showed it in washing us from our sins in His own blood. He is coming again! The next verse tells us, "Behold, He comes with clouds." When He shall come and earth shall rock and reel, and the skies shall shrivel up like worn-out parchment, and the stars shall fall like fig leaves from the trees—in that day you will wish to be found at the right hand of the King and to cry with rapture—"Welcome, welcome, Son of God!"

But you cannot be there unless you first know Him as the Christ who has loved you and washed you from your sins in His own blood. I pray, therefore, that while I talk feebly enough, myself, God's Divine power may go with the word that you who know the Redeemer's love may know it better and feel your hearts swell with glad emotion till you are ready to stand up and shout, "Glory and majesty, dominion and power be unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood!" I pray, too, that others who are strangers to the blood-washing and have never yet known the power of Christ's atoning Sacrifice, may say, "By the Grace of God, we, also, will know something of that love, if it is to be known, and we will pray that in us, also, that wondrous washing may take place, that we, also, may be clean through Jesus' blood and stand among the ransomed throng to shout His praises forever and ever!"

Notice very specially that the exile of Patmos, having known much of Christ and lived in His Presence for many years, sings of love as manifested in the *washing away of sins*. Some years before he had written, by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, those marvelous Words, "God is love." But now, as the end of his life approaches, all love seems for him to be summed up in the blood-washing. This is the climax and summit of the love of Christ! I delight to dwell on this glorious theme! They tell me of God in Nature and speak of the warbling of birds and the beauties of the summer as revelations of the love of God, as doubtless they are. I read of the matchless life of Christ and I am charmed with its beauties and its blessedness. But when I would speak of the fullness of His love, I can find nothing to express it but the blood which He shed on Calvary!

It is a wonderful work which that blood-shedding accomplishes in taking away our sins, for they are taken away at once and forever when we trust in the Crucified! This is a blessed Truth of God about which the Word of God leaves no manner of doubt. I do not know whether, "washed," is the best word to express the meaning of the text. We need something more than the mere removal of outside sin. If, however, this idea is to be kept, I prefer the word, "laved," which gives us a suitable expression of the thought and also carries us back to the laver used in the typical ordi-

nances of the Tabernacle and Temple of old. The text may be read, "Unto Him that loved us and *laved* us from our sins in His own blood." If we prefer it, we may render our song as the Revised Version has it, with a deeper shade of meaning, "Unto Him that loves us and *loosed* us from our sins by His blood" and, with adoring hearts may add, "to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever." In His great love He laves away the defilement of our sins and then looses us from the chains that those sins had thrown around our life—

"Oh, for this love, let rocks and hills
Their lasting silence break!
And all harmonious human tongues
The Savior's praises speak."

I shall have only two things to talk about on this occasion. First, *let us think of the love of Jesus* in the particular way mentioned in the text, as shown in His washing us from our sins in His own blood. And secondly, when we have meditated on His love, *let us glorify Him for it.* I will not attempt to take the whole of verse six—that would be too much for one sermon.

I. First, LET US THINK OF THE LOVE OF JESUS and as we muse upon it, may the fire burn in our souls! May we be raised out of ourselves and be seated in the heavenlies, "because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us"! Our subject at this time is—The love of Christ as shown in His washing us from our sins in His own blood.

Upon which I remark, first, that *He loved us freely.* That is clear if you reflect that He did not love us because we had no sin. If that had been the case, He would not have needed to have washed us in His own blood. He did not love us because we were righteous, because we were obedient, because we had neither omitted any duty nor committed any offense. No, but He saw us foul with sin and yet He loved us! We are described in Scripture, sometimes, as crimson and, again, as scarlet with sin. These are glaring colors and sin is a glaring, staring thing that must be seen. God has seen it—God abhors it! But though He saw it, He loved us—"Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it." What wondrous love it is that Christ should love a thief! Yet He did, and took a thief to be the first to enter His Kingdom with Him! What amazing condescension that Christ should love an outcast! Yet there was one who loved Him much, because she had been forgiven much! How marvelous that Christ should love a swearer! Yet He loved Peter, whose swearing was of the worst kind, for he denied his Master with an oath!

'Twas passing strange that Christ should love a persecutor! Yet He loved Saul of Tarsus, who was exceedingly mad against His people. Is not this the greatest marvel of all, that He should love *you* and that He should love *me*—that He has loved us though we have been utterly unworthy of His love, full of sin and keeping to the sin, persevering in it, refusing to turn from it when bid to repent? I ask, again, is not this an amazing marvel that He should love us while we were yet rejecting all His love and, year after year, continuing with a high hand to rebel against Him? Yet He loved us while we were dead in trespasses and sins, loved us out of free,

rich, Sovereign Grace—not because we were lovely, but because He is loving—not because we were gracious, but because He is full of Grace! You see, the text does not say that He washed us and loved us as if from some high sense of duty He took away our sin and then loved us when we were clean. No, it is not "washed and loved," it is, "loved and washed." The love is *first* and because He loved us *in* our sins and in spite of them, He cleanses them all away! Proclaim this glorious Gospel, all you who know the glad tidings! Let men and angels hear it again and again! He loved us while our sin was yet upon us and, therefore, He washed us and made us white through His own blood! It is love most freely given. When I think of it, I feel that I can join with the children and say—

"Oh, if there's only one song I can sing
When in His beauty I see the great King,
This shall my song in eternity be—
'Oh, what a wonder that Jesus loves me!'"

As I think of Christ's love, I say, next, *He loved us condescendingly*. He loved us "and washed us." Does God take to washing black sinners white? That He should *create*, I understand. That He should *destroy*, I also understand. But that He should wash and cleanse those who have made themselves foul with sin is marvelous! God is so full of power that if a thing is broken, it is never worth His while to mend it. It is the poverty of our resources that compels us to put up with defiled and broken things and make them better. But He could, with a word, or *without* a word, make another race of creatures and leave sinful men to die if He would! Yet He loved us so that He stooped to wash us from our defilement. Oh, when you see the Christ of God kneeling down, girding Himself with a towel, like a slave, and bringing forth the ewer and the basin. When you see Him pouring water on His disciples' feet, then taking foot after foot with His own dear hands and washing them, you see a great sight of love!

But when He opens His own side. When He gives His hands and feet to be sacred fountains of blood and we are cleansed through His death and agony—this is compassion like a God! This is a sight the likes of which Heaven and earth have never seen! What love must He have to sinful men, that He should stoop so low as this? The Maker of Heaven and earth washing filthy hearts and sinful souls! It almost surpasses human thought, yet it is most certainly true! Glory be unto His name! Well may we sing praises "unto Him that loved us, and washed us." It is amazing mercy that Christ should ever deal with sin except to punish it. That He should ever take it on *Himself*, that He might remove it from *us*, is a thing that we shall never fully understand even in Glory, itself! Condescending love, indeed, it was that loved us and washed us—

"On such love, my Soul, still ponder,
Love so great, so rich, so free!
Say, while lost in holy wonder,
Why, O Lord, such love to me?
Hallelujah, Grace shall reign eternally."

But, next, *He loved us in a holy manner*. The love of Christ was as holy as everything else about Him. We do not read that He loved us and, therefore, winked at our sinfulness. Oh, no, that could never be! The love of Christ never becomes an unholy thing! It never panders to our lust, nor

does it cover up our iniquity so that it shall not be punished. He loved us, but *because* He loved us He must wash us! He could not take us to Heaven unwashed. A man cannot remain a sinner and be at peace with God. Even the Almighty could not make us happy and let us remain in sin. You cannot be at rest till you are right with God and you cannot be right with God till you give up evil! He is a holy God and the love of Christ, mighty as it is, cannot bless you without washing you. You drunks must give up the cup. You that are dishonest must become honest. You that are unchaste must be rendered pure. You that are selfish must become loving. You that are hot-tempered must be made meek and lowly. It must be done! There is no other way by which you can be saved. Even He that loves you can only bless you thus. You must be washed! Holiness requires it. Oh, what a love it is that will not leave us foul, but loves us out of our sins! Christ "loved us and washed us." This, indeed, is holy love—

"Love that condemns the sinner's sin,
Yet, in condemning, pardon seals!
That saves from righteous wrath, and yet,
In saving, righteousness reveals!"

Christ's love is seen, next, in that *He loved us at a costly rate.* He has washed us from our sins "in His own blood." Ah, Brothers and Sisters, I wish that I had a tongue that could speak of this wondrous work as it deserves to be spoken of, but human lips are slow and stammering when they approach this theme! Who can measure or express the love which proves itself by the outpoured blood of the Son of God? Yet this is the gift His love has bestowed upon us. By, "His own blood," I understand not merely the actual blood of His body, but the whole of His griefs and woes and sacrificial death—His giving up Himself, instead of us, to bear the righteous wrath of God, justly our due. It means just that. There could be no washing for us except He should be in a bloody sweat. There was no washing us unless there was—

"A fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins."

There was no making us clean, except by His coming into contact with human sin—and that meant to Him what the fire meant to the bull on the altar. It meant being burnt up with a Divine wrath on account of human sin—wrath most just, most true—for God cannot bear iniquity! It is not right that He should do otherwise than hate it with all the infinite hate of His righteous soul. Christ has washed us "in His own blood."

The priests could only cleanse with blood of bulls and goats, but He has washed us from our sins "in His own blood." Men are willing enough to shed the blood of others. How readily they will enter war! But Christ was willing to shed His own blood, to pour out His soul unto death that we might be saved! No language can ever fully set forth this marvelous mystery—and as the mighty master of painting threw a veil over a face that he could never depict, so would I leave unspoken the great marvel of Christ's washing us with His own blood! But let us, who know it to be true in our own experience, lift a glad song in our hearts—

"To Him that loved the souls of men,
And washed us in His blood.
To royal honors raised our head,

And made us priests to God."

We cannot meditate on the love of Christ without saying that *He loved us effectually*. The text says that Christ "loved us, and washed us from our sins," or, "loosed us from our sins." You that believe in Christ are washed from all your sins! There is no sin remaining upon you now in the matter of guilt before God. "Who is He that condemns? It is Christ that died." You are justified, through Christ, from every sin! You are clean every whit if you have believed in Him. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." But we can go further than this and join with the saints in Heaven in saying—"He has loosed us from our sins"—that is, from the *dominion* of sin. When Christ pardons sin He kills it, He crucifies it—and crucifixion, you know, means death. But it is a *lingering* death and a crucified man lives in pain, without power to work or act—he suffers and lingers.

So is it with sin in the Believer. It is nailed up, crucified with Christ. You cannot do now what your evil nature suggests to you. A respectable man whom I know said that the other night he was driving along with his old horse. Another man came through the fog and their horses touched each other. "But," he said, "we passed very civilly." But there came along one who looked like a gentleman, driving rather fast. He drove into the poor man's cart and, instead of making any apology, he cut him across the face with his whip. My friend is a decided Christian, yet he said, "I felt that the old man was in me, and I wanted to give him a cut of my whip in return, but I did not. When I got home I said, 'The old man is not dead.' If he had been dead, I should not have felt even a momentary passion. I kept him down, but I felt very angry, and I said to myself, 'Ah, though you have been a Christian a great many years, the old man is still alive.'"

So he is in every one of us. He lies like a sneak in the corner, but the day shall come when there shall be no remains of the evil, no trace of sin left in us, and in Heaven we shall sing, "He has loosed us from our sins in His own blood. He has taken the last relic of sin away—every tendency to evil, every possibility of evil," for it is written, "They are without fault before the Throne of God," and no sin shall ever come into their hearts again! Glory be to His name that such a sanctification as this is possible and that we shall yet have to sing of it as perfected! Praise to His holy name for the love which ends in such bliss! Hallelujah! He looses us from the chains of sin that He may bind us with the bonds of love! This is royal liberty."—

"Drawn by such cords, we onward move,
Till round Your Throne we meet,
And, captives in the chains of love,
Embrace our Conqueror's feet."

Once more, this love of Christ is perpetual—*He loves us still*. Turning to the Revised Version we do not read, "Unto Him that *loved us*," but, "unto Him that *loves* us." I like that. Jesus loves me still! He did not finish His love by His death. He loves you still! When He was poor on earth and despised and rejected of men, He loved you. And now that a royal diadem adorns His blessed brow and all angels fall down and worship Him, He loves you still and He will always love you. You who believe in Him are His pride, His Hephzibah, His delight is in you. You can hardly love yourself,

can you? When you see your own face in the glass of God's Law, is there any beauty there? Did you ever stand and spiritually admire yourself? If you did, you were a fool! If you truly know your own heart, you cannot find, there, anything to delight in. You blush. You hide your face for shame. But Christ loves you. "I am black," said the spouse. She felt that she was very black, but when she looked to her Beloved and saw what He thought of her, she added, "but comely."

And we can appropriate her language. In myself, "as the tents of Kedar, smoke-dried by the Bedouin, yet am I by Grace as the curtains of Solomon, bedight with gold lace and all the embroidery of the workman's needle! I am both—to myself a thing undone, but in Him washed and saved! Unlovely, but by Him, beloved." Oh, it makes my heart race within me! I feel as if I could leap into Heaven when I think, "He loves me! He loves me! He loved me when He died for me. He lives for me and He loves me still."—

"Now though He reigns exalted high,
His love is still as great.
Well He remembers Calvary,
Nor let His saints forget."

If you feel as I do, you will go with me into the other part of the subject—"To Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

II. So, in the second place, LET US GLORIFY THIS LOVING, LIVING SAVIOR. If we were to do it fitly, we should need to have music such as Handel wrote. And when we would sing of it, if we all of us had perfect voices, we should go home and say, "Ah, it was poor praise compared with what He deserves." So we will not try any singing, but will talk about something practical.

If we are to glorify Christ, *we must gladly confess His name*. If you have never acknowledged Him and confessed Him, begin now, and say, "Unto Him that loved me, and washed me from my sins in His own blood; to Him be glory." If you really mean that, you are bound to come out and acknowledge that you are His disciple. You cannot say, "To Him be glory," and then hide yourself away and never seek to bring glory to His name by openly declaring that He is your Lord and Master. Some of you are very much like a mouse behind the wall. You are in the Lord's house, but you are not known as one of the family—sometimes you give a little squeak in your hiding place—and sometimes come out at night, as the mouse does, to pick up a crumb or two, without being seen. Is this worthy of yourself? Is it worthy of your Lord and Master?

You are a Christian, you say, but you do not want to be known to be a Christian. A soldier in the Lord's army, but you never put on your uniform! You like to always be in civilian clothes. You are afraid lest anybody should know that you are a soldier! If a man behaved like that in the British army, they would drum him out of the regiment! What would be the good of such a fellow? If he is ashamed of Her Majesty's uniform, let him be gone. He is not loyal to his sovereign. I am not going to condemn you who have never come out and acknowledged yourselves followers of Christ—I wish that you would hold a little court and condemn yourself—and then, instead of my drumming you out, you would drum yourself out and say, "I will not stay any longer in a position where I can be talked to

like that. Glory be to Him who has loved me and washed me in His own blood! I will openly confess Him. I will unite myself with His people. I will say, 'I am His and He is mine.'"

Remember that there is no salvation promised to an unconfessed faith. I boldly put it according to the Word of God. "If you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved." There is no question that *confession* is here required. And again it is clearly stated, "He that believes and is *baptized*"—which *is* the *confession* that Christ requires—"shall be saved." And though confession with the mouth and baptism cannot save, yet the *faith* to which the promise is made is a faith that dares to confess and come out!

"Then, I should have to bear a lot of ridicule," says one. And are you afraid to follow your Master for fear of ridicule? Remember what, for love of you, He bore! Think what scorn from the Pharisees and hatred and malice from the rulers of the Jews, Christ cheerfully accepted that He might save you! He shirked not the heavy Cross for you—will you not take that little cross for Him? He shed His blood to cleanse you, but it is not likely that you will *ever* be called to shed your blood for Him—yet many have done this and counted it all gladness! Oh, by the martyrs who dared to die for Jesus—three of them on this very spot where we are now meeting, many of them across the water in Smithfield—I beseech you, if you love Him that loved you and washed you from your sins in His own blood, to give Him at least the glory which would come of a *confession* that you are saved by Him—

"It passes telling, that dear love of Yours,
My Jesus, Savior. Yet these lips of mine
Would gladly proclaim to sinners, far and near,
A love which can remove all guilty fear,
And love beget."

Next, if we really do wish to glorify Him, *we must shun all sin.* A man cannot say, "Unto Him that loved me, and washed me from my sins be glory," and then go off to the ale-bench and drink with the drunkard. You dare not say, "Unto Him be glory," and then, as a professed Christian, go and do a dishonest deed, or speak a lie, or do that which would be discreditable to yourself and would bring dishonor to His dear name! If He washed me from my sin with His blood, I must *hate* sin. It murdered my Lord. It cost Him His life to save me from it. How, then, can I—how *dare* I—toy with it? How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? How shall we that are washed in His blood, go and stain our garments, again, and play with iniquity and trifle with transgression? Remember that you are "loosed" from sin. It no longer holds you captive—the chains are dissolved by the blood of Atonement. Why, then, should you go about as if you were in bondage? We shall never have done with sin while we are *here*, but that is no reason why we should be defiled by it, for the Fountain wherein we were first washed is always open! As the spring of love never ceases to flow, so the efficacy of the blood is never lost. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." Since death has no more dominion over Christ, sin need have no more dominion over us. "It is written, Be you holy, for I am holy," and I beseech you to obey the exhor-

tation, for then, and then only, will you bring glory to Him who washed you from your sins in His own blood—

"Blest be your love, dear Lord,
That taught us this sweet way,
Only to love You for Yourself,
And for that love obey."

Again, if we truly say, "To Him be glory and dominion," then *we must give Him dominion over ourselves*. Each man is a little empire of three kingdoms—body, soul and spirit—and it should be a united kingdom. Make Christ King of it all! Do not allow any branch of those three kingdoms to set up for itself a distinct rule—put them all under the sway of your one King. My eyes must not look on vanity; my tongue must not talk uncleanness; my hands must not minister to evil; my feet must not carry me where I should not go; my heart must not wander; my thoughts must not go astray; my imagination must not find pleasure in evil. Every faculty of my nature ought to be given "unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins." Every ability and possibility, every growth and progress made in knowledge and learning, must be laid at Jesus' feet. Say, "To Him be glory and dominion," and then make a full surrender of yourself to His sway.

So many in these days seem only to want the salvation of Christ without the Christ who gives the salvation. Both go together. He must be Lord of the forgiven soul. He only washes those who will enter His Kingdom and come under His government. Are we not glad to proclaim Him King? Reign, blessed Jesus, reign! Reign over my body, soul and spirit—completely reign. Bring every thought into captivity to Your holy love! Is not that what you are now saying, you that have been washed in His blood?—

"Lord, You have won. At last I yield!
My heart, by mighty Grace compelled,
Surrenders all to You.
Against Your terrors long I strove,
But who can stand against Your love?
Love conquers even me."

And then, next, if we say, "To Him be glory and dominion," *we must seek to bring others under His sway*. There is some way in which every one of us can do it. Dear Brothers and Sisters, if you have yielded yourselves to Christ, do not be satisfied till you see your children saved! Begin at home! Do not be content till the boys and girls all belong to Christ. Then look after your neighbors. You that are large employers, care for the men who work for you. Do not treat them as "hands"—look at them as souls and regard them as beings made in God's image and for His praise. Not only talk, but act! When they are in need, help them. Succor them that you may, by any means, draw them to think of their souls and to desire and pray that they, also, may be washed from their sins in Christ's own blood. O Beloved, if He is to have dominion, let us, each one, win a little bit for Him! You cannot convert idolatrous China, or heathen India, or the dark continent of Africa. These big things are too much for any one of us, but there is a little kingdom for each one of us to win for Christ, a little bit

committed to us, that we may go and conquer it and fulfill the desire expressed in the text—"To Him be glory and dominion."

Watch for souls. Be on the lookout for new ways of serving the Master. As African travelers now seem very eager to be the first to make a treaty with certain chieftains, that their territory may be annexed to this kingdom or that, so seek to win new conquests for Christ and attach people to His cause before they are hopelessly lost to the devil! Perhaps the friend sitting next to you at this service does not yet know the Lord. Could you not have a word with that person before you leave the building? Perhaps, through your message, that heart will be won for Christ!

If we really wish that Christ should have glory and dominion because He has washed us from our sins in His blood, *we must do nothing to dishonor Him*—and we shall do *anything* sooner than see His blessed Gospel and His holy name dishonored by others. Oh, I would sooner be accounted as the offscouring of all things than have any part with those who reject or dim the Gospel of my Lord and Master! I would sooner be accounted the greatest bigot on earth, or the most stupid fool that ever breathed, than enter into any partnership or brotherhood with those who keep back the Cross of Christ, or cast a slur upon the Inspiration of holy Scripture! Shall I, who am washed from my sin in the blood of Christ, have any fellowship with those who speak of this highest exhibition of my Lord's love as "the doctrine of the shambles"? Or with one who "has counted the Blood of the Covenant, with which he was sanctified, an unholy thing"? This were a poor return for the love that bled and died to save me—any dishonor is better than that.

When Queen Elizabeth came to a miry place in one of her progresses, you remember how Sir Walter Raleigh, without a moment's thought, took off his new cloak, which had cost him much, and spread it in the way, so that Her Majesty might walk over it. Have I any honor? Have I any reputation? Have I any name? I will throw it down! Let it go on the miry place that my Lord may tread on it and no mire may come on Him! May we all, who know that we are loosed from our sins, get into just that spirit which, whenever men are finding fault with the Gospel, will say, "Here, find fault with *me*! Turn all your attention to me—only spare my Lord." Christ is set in the pillory and men are pelting Him. He is the true lover of Christ who comes up to the pillory and stands in front of Him, ready to take the blows aimed at his Lord.

He is the true lover of Christ who drinks in so much of the Character of Christ that he can truly use that language which is first employed with reference to the zeal of Christ, Himself—"The reproaches of them that reproached you are fallen upon Me." He is not honored whom men honor. He is honored who is made a laughingstock for Christ's sake. "Blessed are you when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in Heaven." Get this spirit into you—"Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins, be glory and dominion."

"There," said a dying man, who was in a ditch when the great Emperor Napoleon rode by and he heard a shout of victory, "let me die—the Emperor has conquered." And oh, may not you and I be well content to be

blotted out and forgotten, so long as Christ the King shall come to His own, again? He soon shall triumph! With the ear of faith you may almost hear His chariot wheels. He comes! He comes quickly and happy shall he be in that day who now has been despised lest Christ should be dishonored! With what joy shall we meet our Lord when He takes to Himself His great power and reigns! With what rapture shall we fall at His feet if we have been true to Him and to His Truth! For His love is founded on His Truth and triumphs through it.

I am done when I have added this one thing more. Unto Him that loved and washed us, let us give all glory and dominion. But if we would do that, *we must not be cold and indifferent about holy things*. You know what kind of hearers some people are. You may say what you will to them, but they are never moved. I believe that if a half-hundred-weight of dynamite were put under the seat, it would hardly move them. They are so solid, so cold. Can I hear of that dear name, and never catch the sacred fire? Can I think of Calvary and still my heart remain cold and chill? Can I behold that marred face, that, "sacred head once wounded," and my soul not thrill with gratitude? Can I see those cruel nails and that terrible crown of thorns—can I taste the vinegar and handle the sponge—and yet never feel one warm affection within my spirit? God forbid! Oh, my Savior, let my heart rejoice or ache, but let it not be hard and cold! Let me adore You with every power of my redeemed manhood all aglow with holy fervor."—

"But ah, how faint our praises rise!
Sure, 'tis the wonder of the skies
That we, who share His richest love,
So cold and unconcerned should prove."

Surely, if "we have known and believed the love that God has to us," we shall find some answering spark of affection to Him in our hearts! If we mean to give Him the glory and dominion, we must give Him our love and devotion. Our love must always be as the echo to His. It cannot be that we can receive such abounding, overflowing bounty, and remain indifferent to the Giver! His interests must surely be our chief concern. We must be moved to seek first the things which concern Him who has bestowed on us such wonderful Grace. Wake up, dear Brothers and Sisters, if you are getting into a cold state!

Some religion seems to be altogether a matter of the drum—that will not do. But there are occasions when the drum may rightly be used. There are seasons when the cornet, harp, dulcimer and all kinds of music ought to be heard. There are times for the holy dance and the joyous song. There are periods when enthusiasm must rule the hour, when the spirit must feel that she is all wings, that she mounts and soars—and whether in the body or out of the body, she cannot tell. May such a moment as that be yours just now! Blessed be the name of the Lord forever! To Him be glory and dominion! Hallelujah! Let us all say it. Let us all feel it. Let us all live it. Amen, and Amen!

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Isaiah 53.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—410, 411, 416.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:

BELOVED READERS OF SPURGEON'S SERMONS—I desire my hearty love to you all. You are the outer ring of my congregation and are far more numerous than those to whom I speak with my voice. With many of you I feel well acquainted, for you have cheered me by letter and by your practical help to my many institutions—and I owe more than I can tell to your prayers. Thank you much. To you all I send sincere good wishes, desiring that the sermons may be spiritually profitable to you and that the best blessing of the Triune God may be your heritage.

I am far away in body, but not in spirit. I am a sick man, physically, but in heart I am strong in the Lord. A great waste of life-force still weakens me, but it is not so great as it was, and HE who has spared my life, will in His own right time spare me this weakening of my strength by the way. It is a great trial to be unable to preach in the pulpit, but it is no small comfort to be able to preach through the press. By the aid of friends, the sermons which I delivered in former times have been piloted through the press in a masterly manner and could continue to be forthcoming for several years even if I were taken Home to God, for hundreds of manuscripts are in my publishers' stores. This is a happy reflection to me, for it is my life to proclaim the everlasting Gospel of the Grace of God and so I shall live and speak long after I am dead.

[Brother Spurgeon went Home to his Master on January 31, 1892, and, in fact, 26 more volumes of his sermons were published, one volume a year, through the year 1917.—EOD]

Will each kind reader do me the great service of increasing my congregation by increasing the circulation of the sermons? The loan of a copy, or a kindly word, may win me another reader, to whom the message may be life, or light, or liberty. I earnestly desire a still wider audience. If I could not, myself, preach, I think that the next best thing would be to spread the sermons of one whose words were useful to my own heart. Please do not *think* of fulfilling my desire, but DO IT.

It has been so many years since these sermons began to be issued (nearly 37 years) that I cannot but look back with gratitude and forward with hope. Better days may yet come. It may be we shall live to see a reaction in favor of the old Gospel. If not, we will, many of us, die contending for it! "O Lord, plead Your own cause!" I am, dear Readers, your fellow servant in Gospel work!

Mentone, November 7, 1891,

C. H. SPURGEON.

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

AN URGENT REQUEST FOR AN IMMEDIATE ANSWER
NO. 2231

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 22, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORDS-DAY EVENING, MAY 10, 1891.

"And now if you will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me: and if not, tell me; that I may turn to the right hand, or to the left." Genesis 24:49.

THE chapter from which the text is taken bristles with points. There is a remarkable parallel between Eliezer seeking a wife for Isaac and the ministers of Christ seeking souls for Jesus. It is something more than an allegory. It is really a very instructive parable of how we are to deal for our Master with the souls of men and women. For as truly as Abraham sent his servant to seek a bride for his son, we are commissioned to search for those who shall be brought into the Church, and at last, as the bride of Christ, sit down at the marriage feast in the Glory Land above!

You will notice how Eliezer prayed all along the way. He had no doubt in his mind as to whether God interfered in human affairs, but boldly and simply sought to know His will. Then, having presented his petition, we find him in quiet confidence holding his peace, "to wit whether the Lord had made his journey prosperous or not." And when success crowned his efforts, he was forward to acknowledge that the speedy fulfillment of his objective was in answer to his supplication. It was the guidance of God and not his own acuteness or wisdom, which led to such a favorable issue. Thus it is also with every true minister of the New Testament. Oh, if we do not pray for you, my dear Hearers, our preaching to you will be hypocrisy! We shall never speak to men for God with any power of *persuasion* unless, first, we speak to God for men with power of *supplication*! Not without many a prayer and many a heaving of my heart in sighs have I come here to speak to you tonight. I believe that I am sent to find out some appointed for Christ in the Divine purpose and Covenant and I pray my Master that there may be many such!

While this trusty servant thus prayed to his master's God, see how loyal he was to his master. He evidently realized that he was not on his own errand, but was the chosen instrument to do his lord's will. The phrase, "my master," is the refrain of this chapter. The word, "master," occurs 22 times. Eliezer did not aspire to any independence of Abraham, or of Abraham's son. His thoughts were of his master—his words were in praise of his master—his deeds on behalf of his master. He was not his

own, but the bond-servant of another. This is also *our* position. Woe to the minister who loses sight of the true relationship between himself and his Lord, or who begins to think of serving his own interests rather than that of Him who called and sent him! My Brothers and Sisters, we are not our own, but the slaves of Christ! May our hearts be always kept loyal to Him! May our lips constantly speak His praise! May our lives always witness to our devotion to our Lord! Nothing we have is our own—all is His—and His absolute ownership of us and ours is our highest delight!

George Herbert speaks of the "Oriental fragrance" which dwells in the words, "My Master." It is, indeed, a name full of sweet savor and holy gladness. Even *here* it is Heaven to serve Him! But what will it be to see His face, when His bride is brought safely home?—

"O Jesus, You have promised
To all who follow Thee
That where You are in Glory,
There shall Your servant be!
And Jesus, I have promised
To serve You to the end.
Oh, give me Grace to follow,
My Master and my Friend."

See how alert Eliezer was to seize the opportunity of obeying his master's orders. His love to Abraham made him quick to carry out the commission with which he was charged. When Rebekah came to the well, he began the conversation in the same way as the Lord Jesus, long afterwards, at Jacob's well, began to talk to the woman of Samaria. He asked her to give him a drink. The two scenes by the well might almost form companion pictures. Then he very skillfully found out her name and was invited to her father's house as a guest. I always feel a special joy when I hear of the visit of a servant of God to a house being the means of winning some member of the household for his Master! We should always aim to make our visits a blessing to those with whom we visit. It speaks much for the consistent life of the man who is enabled to do so. If we realize that we are always on our Master's service, we shall bear a good testimony before those with whom we come in contact, making it quite clear that we watch for souls as those that must give account—that we may do it with joy—and not with grief.

One other thing in this man is noteworthy. He meant business and went with unerring aim straight to the mark. He had not many purposes, but only one. He did not go there for anything else but to find a wife for Isaac. And when he got into pretty comfortable quarters and had been called, by Laban, "the blessed of the Lord," he was not satisfied. He meant business and would not even eat the meat set before him until he had explained his errand. Like every true servant of Christ, he put his Master's business before his own ease or comfort—even before the question of necessary food. When a man begins to think more of his eating than of doing the will of God, he ceases to be a true-hearted minister! Let us imitate the thoroughness of Abraham's servant in this matter. He told Bethuel and Laban what he came for and, before he finished his address, he turned to them and said distinctly, "Now, what answer do you mean to give to my

master's message? I cannot be kept in suspense. If you will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me. And if not, tell me, that I may turn to the right hand, or to the left."

I. Notice, first, that HE STATED HIS CASE. You must not expect men to come to a decision upon a matter which has not been laid before them. Our good young Brother who goes into the pulpit and cries, "Believe, believe," but does not tell his hearers what is to be believed, has not accomplished much! You cannot ask people to buy if you have no goods to show them. But Eliezer opened his pack, exposed his wares and sought, at once, to do business on his master's account. What did he say to his interested listeners?

To begin with, *he told them that his master was great* and gave them some idea how rich he was, for he went over the list of his possessions—his flocks and herds, his silver and gold, his camels and asses, his menservants and maidservants. Thus did he commend his master, as I would also seek to commend mine. Language fails me to speak of His greatness! This world is His and all the worlds that He has made. "The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine, says the Lord of Hosts." He lays claim to all things in the earth, animate and inanimate. "Every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills." None other can be mentioned beside Him. "Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand and meted out Heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?" So great is He that all other things are small compared with Him. "Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, He takes up the isles as every little thing." Is He not a glorious Master to serve? "How great is His goodness and how great is His beauty!"

Having first spoken of his master, *he told them that his master's son was his heir*. That was a very important point in the business. And he spoke about how his master had put all that he had into the hands of his son—that the promises were his and that the inheritance would come to him. He called the son, "master," equally with the father. I also desire to glorify God and to magnify Christ Jesus, His Only-Begotten and Well-Beloved Son. It is the Father's will "that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." He is His Father's heir—He claimed the title in His parable of the wicked husbandmen. When we come on our Master's business, we seek those who shall become "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ."

This is the third point with Eliezer—*he wanted one who would leave her home and go and be one with his master's son*. He said that his master's son needed a wife and he had come to seek one for him. He needed one who would be willing to go on a long and venturous journey and be a pilgrim in a strange land with her husband. He would have no other than one who would give herself up to the God of Israel and take a full share with Isaac in the Covenant blessing. Well, now, that is my case, too. The Lord God, the Creator of Heaven and earth, has all manner of good things to bestow upon the sinful sons of men. There is no measuring the Grace

and love of God and He would have you to be His people that He may be your God. He wants those who will be willing to leave all and be united to His Only-Begotten Son, the Lord Jesus, who for our salvation came down from Heaven and took our nature, and lived in it—who took our sin and died for us—that we might be pardoned and forever saved. The Son must see of the travail of His soul. There must be souls that shall be eternally saved through believing on Him. He cannot die in vain! He must have a people who shall be to Him a bride, with whom He shall delight Himself forever and ever. And the question is, are there any such *here*? Are there any here who will yield themselves to His sweet love, who will trust themselves with Him, as Rebekah trusted herself with Isaac—who will come out of the world—and live the separated life with Him? This is the errand on which we have come.

And Eliezer added that *he hoped that he had found the right person*. He believed that it was Rebekah, for he had put it before God in prayer—and in answer to his prayer she had come. She had done exactly as he had laid it down in prayer that she should do. Now, I have a hope dancing in my heart that I have, on this occasion, found the right person. I often wonder why some people are here. There has come into the Tabernacle on the Lord's-Day, many a time, a runaway from his father's house in the country. He has come to London to sin and he has little thought that he came to London to be saved—but here the Word of God has laid hold upon him! There has dropped in here a sailor who had only been a day or two in port, and the last thing that he ever thought was that he should be converted! But here he came and found eternal life! Your coming here in such numbers and your eyes, as you look at me, encourage me, while your willingness to hear what I have to say inspires me to fearlessly deliver my Master's message! Surely God means to bless you! If He gives the hearing ear, will He not give the broken heart? And if He has led you to be anxious to listen to my message, are you not, many of you, the very persons whom He has appointed to be forever united to His beloved Son?

The case being thus faithfully stated by Eliezer, *he now pressed for a reply*. "If you will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me. If Rebekah will go with me to be the wife of Isaac, tell me." So I put it to you. If you are willing to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and are ready to leave the world and all its temptations and come to Him, say so! Tell me. Let us know if you have now come to a turning point. You remember how the Roman ambassadors demanded of some who came to them that they should, on the spot, decide whether they meant war with Rome or submission to it? When they asked for time, the ambassadors drew a circle round them, and said, "Before you exit that circle, you must settle whether it is to be peace or war." I would draw, here, a circle round some of you and say, "Your portion must be either salvation or damnation. You have already been hesitating and halting too long. Do not leave that seat till you have decided, one way or the other."

There is, just under the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral, a spot which I once had pointed out to me—it must have been 40 years ago—where a workman, busily engaged at the top of the dome, fell, and, of course, was

dashed to pieces on the floor. And I saw the mark of his chisel on the place where he was killed. I wonder whether there are any marks in these pews where souls were lost, where some have parleyed with God, refused His Grace, resisted His Spirit and gone thenceforth the downward road? I would to God that, instead thereof, there might be some mark where the Grace of God has worked effectual salvation! I believe there is not a single pew or seat in the aisles in this place, that might not legitimately be marked as a place where souls have been saved, for, time out of mind, when friends come here and speak on Monday nights, you must have noticed how one of them says, "The third seat from that pillar over yonder was the place where I sat when the Light of God came." And another says, "Christ found me in a back seat in the top gallery," and so on, until they have pointed to almost every part of the building as the place where God has called someone by His Grace! I hope that some of you are now sitting in the very spot where you are predestinated to be born again unto everlasting life!

II. In the second place, it is clearly set before us, that when Eliezer had stated his case, HE WISHED TO HAVE A FAVORABLE REPLY. I might almost say he *expected* it. After his wonderful guidance and his hospitable reception, his hopes would rise high that his quest would be speedily brought to a satisfactory end.

If a favorable reply was given to him, *it would enable him to execute his errand.* Whereas, if the answer was against him, he could not, then, carry out his master's orders. If no soul gets saved through this discourse, I cannot carry on my business. "Oh, well," says one, "a man may preach very faithfully and yet he may have no souls saved." Yes, a fisherman may fish and never catch any fish, but he is not much of a fisherman, and so, if there were no souls saved, perhaps I might find some way of satisfying my conscience, but it is unknown to me as yet! I have never sought such a solace and hope I never shall. With me it is, "Give me children, or else I die." If you are not saved and brought to Christ, I feel as if I must give up my work of preaching to you. I cannot stand here beating the air. If my hearers are not converted, I have lost my time—I have lost the exercise of brain and heart! I feel as if I had lost my hope and lost my life unless I find for my Lord some of His blood-bought ones—and I must find some of them by this sermon!

I think that Eliezer longed for a favorable reply because it would be an answer to his prayer. Possibly you have not prayed for yourself, but we have prayed for you—not that we know your name, or your case—but we have often gone over in secret a case just like yours, and we can say that we have brought you before God in earnest supplication. And perhaps there are godly people at home who are praying that as you are here, you may get a blessing. I frequently see people who come to join the Church and they say, "My husband is not converted," or, "My daughter is not converted." "Do you get them to come and hear the Word?" I ask. "Oh, yes, Sir, they come and hear!" "Well," I have said, "if you get them into the battle, where the shots are flying, they are very likely to be wounded." So we have often prayed that when some of you have been persuaded to come

and hear the Word of God, the Spirit of God may get hold of you and that you may fall wounded beneath His sharp sword, or receive an arrow between the joints of the harness!

The principal reason, however, why this good man wanted to find a willing response about Rebekah was because *it would gladden his master's son*. "Oh," he thought, "what joy I shall give him if I take back to him the right woman, the wife whom God has appointed for him! He has lost his mother, Sarah, and he is pining and grieving. But if I can take him back one who will fill her place in his tender heart, I shall rejoice." As for us, our one business is to make glad the heart of Christ! His heart was pierced with a spear after having been broken with great anguish—and there is nothing that will refresh Him like a soul yielding itself to His care. Who will do that here? Are there any in this house who are now saying, "I will belong to Christ from this time forth. I will trust Him, for He loved me, and gave Himself for me"? Happy messenger, to stand here and tell His story, and to say, "My Lord is waiting for you in the far country. He has sent me to invite you to share with Him all that He has! If your heart is willing to take Him, He gives Himself to you."

His only complaint is, "You will not come unto Me that you might have life." And His declaration is, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." Any, "him" that comes to Him, He will receive and bless! Eliezer was quite sure his master would deal tenderly and truly with Rebekah, therefore he asked her father and brother to "deal kindly and truly" with him. I am quite sure that my Master will deal "kindly and truly" with you—He could not do otherwise! If you but knew His heart, or had a glimpse of His beauty, you would hesitate no longer. Will you not give Him a favorable answer, and say, "Yes, we will deal kindly and truly with your Master, and will yield our hearts to Him at once and forever"?

I think, too, that Eliezer had begun to feel that *it would be for Rebekah's benefit* to go to his master. He had seen her face at the well. He liked the style of the young woman and he thought, "If I can get her for Isaac, she will be settled in life; she will be the mistress and queen of a great household; she will have a happy husband and all that her heart can desire." As I think of some here who have never found peace, I say to myself that if I could only get you to Christ, how happy you would be! If you would come and trust Him, your everlasting fortune would be made. If you would yield yourselves to Him, there would be an end of sin, an end of doubt, an end of fear and an end of terror. You would be saved! Your morality, which is now so precarious, would rise into a solid spirituality, for you would be made holy through the indwelling Spirit. Seeing that this would be the case, could I do you a better turn than to lead you to Jesus?

John B. Gough tells a story of how he was fetched from a railway station to speak. one night, and the cab that was sent for him had a broken window. He noticed that the man who came in the cab put a handkerchief over his head as he sat close up against the hole in the window—and then he observed that he put his head against the window. Mr. Gough said, "Have you a cold in your head?" "No," he said, "but there is a nasty hole in this pane of glass and I am afraid that *you* may take cold. I am sticking

my head into the hole to shield you, for you taught me to be a man and a Christian." Such gratitude as that was most touching—and if we can bring any to Christ, I am sure they will be very grateful to us. If we can lead them to Jesus, they will feel as if they could not do too much for us. therefore out of love to them, having so many who are now our dear children in Christ, we would plead with them, and say, "Give us a good answer and say 'Yes' to the overture of our Master's Son."

III. But now the point of the text is that HE WAS DETERMINED TO HAVE AN ANSWER. He says, "If you will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me: and if not, tell me." He would have their answer, whether it was, "Yes," or, "No." "If not, tell me." May I ask that everyone here will say, "Yes," or, "No," to the invitation to give himself up to Christ? If you will do so, say, "I will." If you will not do so, say deliberately, "I will not." I wish I could get hold of an undecided man and, taking his hand, could say to him, "Now, you must tell me which it will be." I can imagine some of you would say, "Oh, give me time to consider!" and I would reply, "You have *had* time to consider. Your hair is getting gray." In spite of all our entreaties, people say, "Oh, but I do not like to decide so suddenly!" If I asked you whether you would be honest, I hope that you would not take many minutes to answer that! Why, then, should you hesitate so long in giving your adherence to Christ? I am like Abraham's servant—I must have an answer!

But can we rightly press men to decide if we fear that they will answer, "No"? I think we may, because, from the nature of the case, *no answer means a denial*. How many of our hearers have thus, for years, turned their back upon Christ by the simple method of giving no answer at all? "We hear what you say, Sir," they murmur, "and thank you for saying it," but, nevertheless, they go out and go on their way—and forget what manner of men they are! Such a response is a refusal—and it is none the less a refusal because you will probably retort, "But I did not say, 'No,' Sir. Indeed, one of these days I may, perhaps, say, 'Yes.'" But, meanwhile, you reject the proposal and refuse to give yourself up to the Lord! The question is, Will you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? The absence of an affirmative answer means, "No, I will not." I am sure that it does in every case. No argument can be raised about that.

But if you will answer me, "No, I will not have Christ. I will not believe on Him. I will not become a Christian. I will not leave my old ways—I mean to go on in them," well, I thank you for the answer, pained as I am, because now we can talk it over! This is better than no response, for *now* we have something to work upon. *An ill answer can be considered*, while no answer baffles all our efforts to help you! It is far more hopeful to encounter opposition than to meet with indifference. It is a great thing, when a ship is at sea, for the captain to know whereabouts he is—and when we meet with those who distinctly reject Christ—we at once know our bearings. If you say, "No, I am not a Christian and I do not want to be," so far you are honest and I need you, now, to think it over.

Would you like to die in this frame of mind? You may die where you are sitting! Are you wise to come to this determination? Do you think that this

is a resolution which you can justify before the judgement bar of God? You will certainly have to appear there! After death you will rise again when the trumpet of the archangel sounds and, as surely as you are here, you will have to stand before the Great White Throne whereon Christ will sit as Judge! How will the resolution which you have now made stand the light of that tremendous Day? I pray you, think of it, and I hope that you will alter your decision as many another man has done when he has calmly considered the magnitude of the issues at stake and the awful result which must come of rejecting Him who is now the Savior, but who will one day sit as the Judge!

But we are the more determined to press you for some decision because an *ill answer will set us free to go to others*. You see, Eliezer says, "If not, tell me; that I may turn to the right hand, or to the left." Do not suppose that if you refuse Christ, He will lose the effect of His death! "He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied." If *you* will not come unto Him, others will. If you reject Him, He has a people who will accept Him, by His almighty Grace. O Sirs, if you that hear the Gospel will not have my Master, we will go and bring in the publicans and harlots—and they shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven before you! Sons of pious parents, children of Sunday schools, if you believe not, you shall be cast into "outer darkness" where shall be "weeping and gnashing of teeth"—while the people whom you despise—infidels and profligates, the very scum of society, shall accept the Savior and live!

Oh, I charge you, think not that your refusal of the Gospel invitation will leave any gaps in the ranks of the redeemed! Our Savior, in His parable of the marriage of the king's son, foretold what will happen. The king said to his servants, "The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go you, therefore, into the highways and as many as you shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests." But I would urge you to yield yourself unto the Lord, that you may be found at the marriage supper of the Lamb. Do not trifle with eternal matters! If you want to play the fool, do it with counters or with pebbles, but not with your *soul* that shall live forever in bliss or in woe!

My importunity with you is strengthened when I think that, perhaps, if you give me the answer straight out, "No, I am not a Christian and I do not mean to be one," you may, in saying it, see more clearly what a terrible decision you have arrived at. *An ill answer may startle you* and ultimately lead you to repent of your folly and reverse your decision! If you would write down—"I am not a Christian and I never mean to be one," it might startle you still more. I challenge you to do so! And when it is written, put it over the mantelpiece and look at it. It will be far better to do that, horrible as it is, than to continue in this state of wicked suspense, indifferent as to whether you are lost or saved, undecided whether you are for Christ or against Him and yet, in your heart of hearts, dead in trespasses and sins! In this very place, I once urged those who were undecided to go home and write down, either the word, "Saved," or, "Lost," and

sign their name to the paper. One man, when he got into his house, asked for pen and paper. And when his wife enquired why he wanted it, he said he was going to do what the parson said and write down, "Lost." She refused to fetch him the paper if he was going to do that.

So he got it himself and put down a capital L. At that time his little girl climbed up in the chair behind him and said, "No, father, you shan't do that! I'd rather die than you should do that"—and the child's tears fell on his hand as she spoke. What my sermon had failed to do, those tears accomplished! The strong man was bowed and yielded himself to Christ—and when they got up from their knees in that little room, he took the pen, and changing the L into an S, wrote "Saved." He was saved because he came face to face with the fact that he was lost! His ill answer startled both himself and his child! May God work the same change in you, both for your own sake and also for the sake of your loved ones!

I want to press you for some kind of answer because, like Eliezer, I have promised my Master to make a search for you and *an ill answer will clear me of my oath*. If I can get a, "No," from you as your answer, and am certain that you will not go with me to my Master's Son, I shall be clear. It was so with Abraham's servant—he and his master agreed to that at the first. When men say, "No," and entreaties are of no further use, and the preaching of the Gospel has no power over them, then we must leave them and carry the glad tidings to others, just as Paul and Barnabas of old said to the angry Jews at Antioch, "It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing you put it from you and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." I beseech you, do not put Christ away from you! And I press you for a definite answer. I say, as Eliezer said, "If you will deal kindly and truly with my Master, tell me: and if not, tell me; that I may turn to the right hand, or to the left."

Now I want to have a little talk with you over this matter. My dear Friend, you are in peril of eternal death. While you are hesitating, life is ebbing. During the past few months, how many of our dear friends have been taken away by influenza and other causes! This congregation has suffered from sickness, in family after family, as I never knew it suffer before! May you not be taken? I charge you, therefore, do not act as though you had plenty of time. Possibly you have not another week to live! The clock, as it ticks, seems to me to say, "Now, now, now, now, now, now." And for some of you, there is an alarm in the clock, which, when it runs down, utters this warning, "Now or never, now or never, now or never."

After all, the matter that we have in hand is not one that requires great debate! Whether I will believe the Truth of God or not should not be a matter of discussion. Whether I will receive the gift of God or not should not be a thing to be argued about if I am in my right mind! Whether, being lost, I am willing to be saved—whether, having the Gospel of eternal life proclaimed to me, I should accept it by faith—well, I need not ask the sages as to what I shall answer, nor need I go to the Law Courts to consult the judges as to my reply! This is a thing so simple that it requires no

argument! Who will choose to be damned? Who will refuse eternal life? Surely these are questions that should be decided at once!

Waiting and trifling have done you no good up to now. The countryman, when he wanted to cross the river, and found it deep, said that he would sit down and wait till the water was all gone by. He waited, but the river was just as deep after all his waiting! And with all your delay, the difficulties in the way of your accepting Christ do not get any less. If you look at the matter rightly, you will see that there are no great difficulties in the way, nor were there ever such obstacles as your imagination pictures.

Another countryman, having to cross Cheapside one morning, was so confused by the traffic of omnibuses and cabs and foot passengers that he said he felt sure he could not get across the road and would wait till the people thinned out a little. But all day long they never did thin out. Unless he had waited till the evening, he would have found little difference in that perpetual stream of hurrying people. O Friends, you have waited until you can get "a convenient season" to become a Christian and, after all your delay, the way is not any clearer! Twenty years ago some of you were as near decisions for Christ as you are now. No, you seemed nearer! I then thought, "Oh, some of them will soon believe in Jesus and yield their hearts to Him!" But you said, then, that it was not quite time. Is it time *now*? Is the day without difficulty any nearer? Is the season any more suitable? No, indeed, there is no improvement!

Let me say that I believe that your waiting has not only done you no good, but has positively done you great harm! There were times when it seemed easy for you to yield to the pressure of the Divine Spirit. It certainly is not easier *now.* Indeed, it is more difficult. I think sometimes God treats men as Benjamin Franklin treated the man who stood loafing in his bookshop and, at last took up a book and asked, "How much is this?" Franklin replied, "A shilling." "A shilling?" Franklin said, "a shilling." And he would not give the price. After staying about 10 minutes, he said, "Come, Mr. Franklin, now what will you take for it?" Franklin answered, "Two shillings." "No," he said, "you are joking!" "I am not joking," said Franklin, "the price is two shillings." The man waited and sat a while, thinking. "I want the book," he drawled out, "still, I will not give two shillings. What will you take for it?" Franklin said, "Three shillings." "Well," the man said, "why do you raise your price?" To which Franklin responded, "You see, you have wasted so much of my time that I could better have afforded to take one shilling at first than three shillings now."

Sometimes, if men come to Christ at the very first invitation, it is a sweet and easy coming. See how dear young children often yield themselves to Christ and how peaceful is their entrance into the rest of faith! But when people wait. When they postpone believing. When they violate conscience. When they tread down all the uprising of holy thoughts within them, it becomes much harder for them to trust in Christ than it would have been when He was first preached to them. I come, therefore, to you, again, and say, "If you will deal kindly and truly with my Master, tell me. And if not, tell me, and tell me now."

"Well," says one, "I am glad you have spoken to us. I will think it over." No, Friend, I do not mean that. I do not want you to think it over. You have had enough of thinking! I pray that God's Spirit may lead you to an immediate decision. "Well, suppose that we consider it during the week?" you ask. No, that will not suit either my Master or myself. I want the answer *now*. I am like a messenger carrying a letter on which is written, "The bearer will wait for a reply." I was once in a country town and I said to my host, when I went to bed, "I have to be in London tomorrow and I cannot get up in time for my work unless I leave by a train which I can catch readily enough if you wake me at six o'clock." Well, my host was an Irishman, so he woke me at *five* o'clock. And when I sat up in bed, I said, "What time is it?" He said, "You have only another hour to sleep."

The consequence was that I missed my train. If He had only wakened me at the proper time and said, "Now you must get up," I would have dressed at once, but as he said, "You have only another hour to sleep," of course I slept that hour and another one as well, for I was weary. The same principle applies to you. If I say to you, "Go home and think it over all the week," I shall be giving you a week in which to remain in rebellion against God! And I have no right to do that. I shall be giving you a week in which you are to continue an unbeliever—and he that is an unbeliever is in peril of eternal ruin, for, "He that believes not shall be damned." Worse than all, the week may lead to many other weeks—to months, perhaps, and years—perhaps to a whole *eternity* of woe! I cannot give you five minutes! God the Holy Spirit speaks by me, now, to souls whom God has chosen from before the foundation of the world! And He says, "Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." The Holy Spirit says, "Today, even today." "Turn you, turn you from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?" The question comes to you, Will you be Christ's? "If you will deal kindly and truly with my Master, tell me: and if not, tell me."

The best answer you can give is in the verses that follow the text. "Laban and Bethuel answered and said, The thing proceeds from the Lord: we cannot speak unto you bad or good. Behold, Rebekah is before you; take her." Oh I wish some of you would thus respond to my appeal this day! This thing is also from the Lord—it was He who gave me this message—it was He who brought you to hear it! Surely you will not be found fighting against God! Your heart is open to Him—He sees the faintest desire that you have toward Him. Breathe out your wish, now, and say, "My heart is before You—*take it.*"—

"Take my poor heart, and let it be
Forever closed to all but Thee!
Seal You my breast and let me wear
That pledge of love forever there."

He will not be slow to accept that which is offered to Him! He will take you now and He will keep you forever!

"How is it to be done?" says one. The plan is very simple. Jesus Christ took upon Himself the sins of all who ever will trust Him. Come and rest upon His atoning Sacrifice. Give yourself up to Him wholly and unreservedly and He will save you. Take Him to be your Savior by the simple act of faith. The pith of the matter is that I, being lost, give myself over to Christ

to save me. I believe that the act of faith was very well set forth in the statement of a poor imbecile. They said that he was an idiot, but I think that he had more real sense than many a man who boasts of his intellect. Someone said to him, "John, have you got a soul? "No," he said, "I ain't got no soul." "Why, John, how is that?" He replied, "I had a soul once, but I lost it, and Jesus Christ found it, so I have just let Him keep it." There is the whole philosophy of salvation. You have lost your soul. Christ has found it! Let Him keep it! God bless you! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Genesis 24.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—508, 670, 568, 658.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:

DEAR READER—This sermon is an urgent appeal to the undecided. And if you are in that condition, I would by this letter press the suit home in the most personal manner. I am a sick man who has narrowly escaped the hand of death and I feel that the things of eternity ought not to be trifled with. To be saved at the last, our wisdom is to be saved at once. If I had left my soul's matters for a sick bed, I could not have attended to them there, for I was delirious and the mind could not fix itself sensibly upon any subject. Before the cloud lowers over your mind, give your best attention to the Word of the Lord. I beseech you, dear Reader, to do this, for you cannot tell how soon the hour of life may end.

It has been life to me to hear of souls saved by God's Grace through these sermons and I am praying the Lord to give me a deep and long draught of this heart-reviving joy, by causing me to hear that this discourse is made to thousands the means of life from the dead! It is a large request, but the Lord has said, "Open your mouth wide and I will fill it." Thus would I open my mouth in prayer for you, dear Reader, and thousands like you. Do you not, in your heart of hearts, desire that the Lord would hear His servant's petition?

Yours to serve as strength returns,
Mentone, November 14, 1891
C. H. SPURGEON.

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CHRIST'S MOTIVE AND OURS
NO. 2232

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
NOVEMBER 29, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.**

***"For your sakes."
2 Corinthians 8:9.***

***"For His sake."
Philippians 1:29.***

The true test of any action lies in its motive. Many a deed which seems to be glorious is really mean and ignoble because it is done with a base intention. While other actions which appear to be poor and paltry, if we truly understood them, would be seen to be full of the glory and beauty of a noble purpose. The mainspring of a watch is the most important part of it. The spring of an action is everything. My sermon from these two texts will be on the motive which inspired Christ's redeeming work and the motive which should inspire our service for Him. He *did all* for our sakes—we should *do all* for His sake. Fix your attention, then, chiefly, not on the deed, but on the *motive* which is its root.

The less of self in any effort, the nobler it is. A great work, undertaken and completed from selfish motives, is much less praiseworthy than the feeble endeavor put forth to help other people. Selfishness is, perhaps, the worst of all meanness, but *spiritual* selfishness is the form of the evil most to be dreaded. With Christ there was no self-seeking. Not for Himself did He come to earth—not for Himself did He suffer. He lived for others and died for others. "For you know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you, through His poverty, might be rich." In this glorious unselfishness Christ is not only our Savior, He is also our Example. As He did not live for self, we, too, must learn to deny ourselves and live like He. It is in living and acting, "for His sake," that we shall most truly "follow His steps."

We are often told, in these days, that we should live for the good of others, and we ought to heed the call. But there is so little in our fellow men to call forth the spirit of self-sacrifice that if we have no higher motive, we shall soon become tired of our efforts on their behalf. The true way is to live for *Christ* and then, "for His sake," seek to save our fellow men. With such a constraining power we shall not be weary in well-doing, for though men may fail us, and frequent discouragement meet us in our toil, our impelling force will always be the same. As we whisper it to ourselves again and again, "for His sake," we shall be made strong to do or to suffer.

If you thus go forth to the service of each day, "for His sake," realizing that He, "for your sakes," gave Himself to toil and agony, and even to death, itself, you will daily grow into sympathy with Christ. His Divine compassion for men will take hold upon you—you will be lifted up above the life of the world and, as you go about doing good, you will be able to touch the sorrow of the earth with a tender hand. You will grow like He you serve.

I have heard of a man who lived in a certain town and while he lived, was greatly misunderstood. It was known that he had a large income, yet he lived a miserly life, and loud were the murmurs at the scanty help he gave to those around him. He stinted himself in many ways and hoarded his money. But when he died, the popular verdict was reversed, for *then* the motive of all his economy was manifested. He left his fortune to build a reservoir and an aqueduct, to bring a constant supply of pure water to the town where he had been despised and misunderstood! This was the chief need of the people and for a long time they had suffered much from drought and disease because of the scanty water supply. All the years that they had misjudged him, he was silently and unselfishly living for their sakes. When they discovered his motive, it was too late to do anything for him further than to hand down to future generations the memory of his noble and generous deed. But *we* can do much, "for His sake," who has brought to us the *living water* and who, though He died for us, is now alive, again, and will live forevermore. If He thus loved me, and lived for me, nothing that I can do is too much for Him—

"When often, like a wayward child,
I murmur at His will,
Then this sweet word, 'For Jesus' sake,'
My restless heart can still.
I bow my head and gently led,
His easy yoke I take—
And all the day, and all the way,
An echo in my heart shall say—
'For Jesus sake!'"

Without dwelling on the immediate connection of the words which I have chosen from two familiar and beautiful verses, I would, with these two texts, weave a fabric of love. See what Jesus did for us and then think what we can do for Jesus. "For your sakes" Christ did His deeds of love. "For His sake" we are called upon to live and labor among the sons of men. May His love enkindle ours!

I. First, let us consider THE MOTIVE OF CHRIST'S WORK. "*For your sakes*." As many of you as have believed in Christ Jesus may know that, "*for your sake*s," the Lord of Glory stooped to be a suffering, dying Man.

In meditating on the motive that moved the Lord Jesus to come to your rescue, consider, first, *the august Person* who undertook your salvation and died, "for your sakes." He was God. "He thought it not robbery to be equal with God." He made the heavens. "Without Him was not anything made that was made." The angels delighted to do Him homage! Every seraph's wing would fly at His bidding—all the host of Heaven worshipped at His feet. All the powers of Nature were under His control. He needed *nothing* to make Him glorious—all things were His and the power to make

more than all! He might truly say, "If I were hungry, I would not tell you: for the world is Mine and the fullness thereof."

Hymned day without night by all the sacred choristers, He did not lack for praise. Nor did He lack for servants—legions of angels were always ready to do His commands, hearkening unto the voice of His word. It was this God, this Ever-Blessed One who was, from eternity with the Father, and in whom the Father had infinite delight, who looked upon men with the eye of love! He that was born in Bethlehem's manger was the Infinite as well as the Infant. And He that lived, here, the life of a peasant, toiling and suffering, was that same God who made the heavens and the earth, but who deigned to be Incarnate for our sakes. Well might Isaiah, in his prophetic vision, proclaim the royal titles of the "Child" who was to be born and the "Son" who, in the fullness of time, would be given to us and for us—"The government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

Let this Truth of God sink into your souls, that it was *God* who came from Heaven, "for your sakes." It was no inferior being, no one like yourselves, but it was very God of very God who loved you with an everlasting and infinite affection! I have often turned that thought over in my mind, but I have never been able to express it as I have wished. If I were told that all the sons of men cared for me, that would be but as a drop in a bucket compared with Jehovah, Himself, regarding me! If it were said that all the princes of the earth had fallen at some poor man's feet and laid aside their dignities that they might relieve his necessities, it would be counted condescending kindness—but such an act would not be worthy to be spoken of in comparison with that infinite condescension and unparalleled love which brought the Savior from the skies to rescue and redeem such worthless rebels as we were! It is not possible that all the condescension of all the kind and compassionate men who have ever lived should be more than as a small grain that could not turn the scale compared with the everlasting hills of the Savior's wondrous love!

Think, too, of *the insignificant clients* on whom all this wealth of affection was poured. As you remember the Person who came here, "for your sakes," and then, wonderful stoop! consider who you are—who *we* are—for whose sakes He died, do not our hearts melt at the thought? Brothers and Sisters, if we truly know ourselves, we have a very poor opinion of ourselves when compared with Christ! Humility has been rightly said to be a correct estimate of ourselves. What were we but the most insignificant creatures? If our whole race had been blotted out, there need have been no gap in the creation of God, or if there had seemed to be a void for a moment, He had but to speak the word and myriads of creatures, prompt to obey His will, would have filled up the space! How was it that Jesus, the Son of God, should suffer for such insignificant worms—such insects of an hour as we are?

But we are not only insignificant, we are also wicked. "We have sinned with our fathers. We have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly." Even the Lord's children have to confess, "All we, like sheep, have gone

astray; we have turned, everyone, to his own way." But, oh, wonder of love, they can add, "and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all!" As sinners, we deserve nothing but God's thunderbolts, yet, trusting in His dear Son, we receive nothing but His mercy! Having desperately sinned and broken all His Commandments, if He had said, "Perish forever, you guilty rebels," He would have spoken only the sentence that strict justice required. Instead of that, He said to His Only-Begotten, "You shall die that they may not die. I will take You, My Son, My Isaac, and offer You upon the altar of sacrifice that through Your death men may live." This is, indeed, a marvel of Grace! This must be one of the things the angels desire to look into! Our thoughts cannot compass this wondrous work, nor can our words describe it!

Many of us, also, were not only sinful, as the whole race is, but we were peculiarly sinful. Some of us feel inclined to dispute with Saul of Tarsus for the title, "chief of sinners." It will always remain a wonder to me that the Son of God should have condescended to die *for me*. Were you a drunk and has the Holy Spirit shown you that Jesus died for you? And are you now rejoicing that you are washed in His precious blood? Were you one of the women who, like Mary Magdalene, were rightly called sinners? And have you, like she, washed your robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb? Then you are constrained to exclaim with wonder and gratitude—

"Depth of mercy, can there be
Mercy still reserved for me?
Can my God His wrath forbear?
Me, the chief of sinners, spare?"

I fancy that I hear one and another of you adoring God's matchless mercy and saying, with wonder and surprise, "Is it really true that mercy is brought *to me* by God's own Son? Could nothing less than the death of the Only-Begotten save my sinful soul? Did He condescend to *die* for *me*? Well may I admire the Grace thus manifested and raise my glad song of thanksgiving to Him who has done such great things for me!" Each of us can see some peculiarity in his own case. Some of us have not offended so grievously in outward conduct as others have done, but, then, we had better instruction in our childhood and, consequently, our sins were *doubly* heinous, for we sinned against light and knowledge! Some of us have had to violate our conscience terribly in order to sin as we have done. It may be that some of you lived 40 or 50 years as unbelievers and yet, at last, you were brought to bow at the dear feet that were pierced for you. Oh, I am sure you bless His name that ever He shed His blood for you—and I dare say you feel as I do, sometimes, that none in the Glory Land will be able to raise such a song of adoring gratitude as you will when all Heaven shall ring with the grand chorus of those who have been redeemed from among men!

Thus have we considered, first, the august Person who accomplished the great work of our redemption. And, secondly, the poor sinful creatures for whose sake He suffered.

Now let me invite you to consider *the wondrous work* which this master motive inspired. "For your sakes" God became Incarnate—the Son of God

took into union with Himself *our nature*—without which He could not have suffered and died. We read concerning Him, "Being found in fashion as a Man, He humbled Himself." If we had never heard of that fact, before, our ears and heart would be astonished at the words! At the end of each clause I feel inclined to pause, and say, "Look! Look! Was there ever such a wonder as this—the Infinite became Incarnate! He ate and He hungered! He drank and He thirsted! He needed to be housed from the wintry storm, but He "had not where to lay His head." He wanted human sympathy, but, "all His disciples forsook Him and fled." He was the "Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief," and all, "for your sakes."

The words that follow our text tell us that, "He became poor." You know that, in this world, the poverty of a man is usually reckoned in proportion to the position of affluence from which he has come down. One who was born a pauper is not relatively so poor as the man who was once a king, but has been reduced to beggary, for in the one case there is no experience of the luxury which riches can command, and in the other no adaptability to the shifts and privations of those who have always been in poverty. When the Christ of God, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, was forsaken by His Father, deserted by His friends, and left alone to suffer, "for your sakes," that was the direst poverty that was ever known!

See your Lord beneath the olives of Gethsemane! Bloody sweat falls to the ground as, being in an agony, He prays more earnestly—"If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me"—but it must not pass from Him. "For your sakes" He must drink it! "For your sakes" every bitter drop must be drained! Then see Him as He stands, without an advocate, before Herod, Pilate and Caiaphas—"taken from prison and from judgment." Mark His sufferings as they hound Him through the streets of Jerusalem, along the Sorrowful Way! Behold Him as, at last, they fasten His hands and His feet to the cruel wood and lift Him up 'twixt earth and Heaven, to suffer the death of the Cross! Let those who will, depreciate the sufferings of Christ—I believe there was in the God-Man, Christ Jesus, an infinite capacity for suffering and that His body, so wondrously formed, was able to endure and did endure, infinitely more than human thought can imagine—while, at the same time, the sufferings of His soul were the very soul of His sufferings! Well did the Spirit-taught poet, Joseph Hart, write—

"Much we talk of Jesus' blood,
But how little's understood!
Of His sufferings, so intense,
Angels have no perfect sense.
Who can rightly comprehend
Their beginning or their end?
'Tis to God and God alone
That their weight is fully known."

All this Christ suffered, "*for your sakes.*" What love and gratitude ought to fill your heart as you think of all that Jesus bore on your behalf! If you had a wife who, when you lay sick, watched you with such anxious care that she undermined her own health and brought herself down to the grave through her devotion to you, oh, with what love you think of her, that she should suffer even unto death for your sake! If you were ever delivered from a watery grave, and the brave fellow who rescued you, him-

self, sank back into the water and was drowned, you can never forgot his noble self-sacrifice, but you will always cherish his memory, for he died for your sake!

There is a story I have often read, of an American gentleman who was accustomed to go frequently to a tomb and plant fresh flowers. When someone asked why he did so, he said that when the time came for him to go to the war, he was detained by some business and the man who lay beneath the sod became his substitute, performed his duty and died in the battle. Over that carefully-kept grave, he had the words inscribed, "He died for me!" There is something melting in the thought of another dying for you—how much more melting is it when that One is the Christ of Calvary! Why, you feel, "Here is One of whom I never deserved anything, taking my place! Here is One whom I have badly treated and against whom I have offended—yet *He* suffered for me—He took my place, He bore my sins, He *died* for me! Therefore I will live for Him. I will love Him. I will give myself wholly and unreservedly to Him and to His blessed service." "For your sakes" Christ died. If you believe that, you cannot help loving and serving Him! It is an old theme which I am bringing before your minds, but it is the grandest theme that ever inspired a mortal tongue, or stirred a human heart!

I want you that love the Lord to consider, next, *the comprehensive motive* for which He worked the wondrous work which I have so imperfectly described—"For your sakes." I would have you remember that everything He was and everything He did was, "for your sakes." "For your sakes" the midnight prayer upon the bleak mountain's side. "For your sakes" the scoffing and the jeering that followed Him wherever He went. "For your sakes" the agony in the garden. "For your sakes" the flagellation of the Roman lash. "For your sakes" He gave His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. "For your sakes" the shame and the spitting. "For your sakes," He "became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross." Say it, my Brothers and Sisters! Let your hearts say it now and wet the words with tears—"For our sakes He suffered all this."

Think of Him for a moment as He is taken down from the Cross. In fair white linen they wrap that blessed body, covered with its own blood. I think I see Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, and Joseph of Arimathea, looking on that poor mangled frame. Those dear eyes, once so bright with love, now closed in death. Those wonder-working hands that multiplied the loaves and fishes, now stiff and cold. And those blessed feet that trod the sea, now all lifeless. O Joseph, and you, Mary, this was for you—"for your sakes"! But also for mine and for the sake of all my Brothers and Sisters who are resting by faith on that finished Sacrifice! They laid the dear body in Joseph's new tomb, the virgin sepulcher wherein never man had lain, and there they left our great Champion sleeping a while in the darkness of death. As He lay there, it was "for your sakes."

Yes, and blessed be His name, when the appointed morning came, He lived again, the stone was rolled away from the sepulcher and He came forth from the tomb! It was, "for your sakes," He rose. The 40 days He lived on earth were "for your sakes." And when from off the brow of Olivet

He ascended to His Father's right hand, it was, "for your sakes." He said to His disciples, "I go to prepare a place for you." There, seated on His Throne of Glory, He holds the scepter and rules all worlds, "for your sakes." There as an Intercessor, He pleads with God, "for your sakes." There is not a gem in His crown but it is there, "for your sakes." There is not a jewel on His breastplate but it is there, "for your sakes." From head to foot He is what He is, "for your sakes." And when He shall come a second time—as soon He will—to judge the world in righteousness, and to "gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of Heaven to the other" to usher in the reign of truth and establish His Throne forever, it will be all, "for your sakes," who have believed on His name! "For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant Grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God."

We might thus continue, but we will not. May God make this thought burn in your heart—All that Christ has done for us is for our sakes! I suppose it is because we are such fallen creatures that these considerations do not move us as they should. Granite is wax compared with our hearts! Oh, that we did but feel the fire of Jesus' love! Like coals of juniper which have a most vehement flame, our hearts should burn within us while we talked of that dear love which brought Him to the grave and took Him from the grave to the heavens—and shall bring Him back from the heavens to take His people up to be with Him where He is and to live with Him forever!

II. Having meditated on the motive which moved Christ in the work He accomplished for us, let us consider THE MOTIVE WHICH SHOULD INSPIRE ALL OUR SERVICE FOR HIM—"*For His sake.*"

This second text is in the Epistle to the Philippians, first chapter, and 29th verse. "Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake." What are we that we should be allowed the high honor of suffering, "for His sake"? It is a great privilege to do, or to be, or to bear *anything* for Him. Our suffering can never be worth a thought when compared with His—and any sacrifice that we could offer, "for His sake," would be small, indeed, when contrasted with the infinite Sacrifice that He has already made for our sakes. If you are rejoicing in the fact that Christ died for you, it will be very easy to prompt in your hearts the desire to do something, "for His sake."

I find in Scripture that the thought expressed in the words, "for His sake," may be enlarged and assume six or seven phases. For instance, in the Gospel of Matthew, fifth chapter, and 10th verse, our Lord puts it, "*for righteousness' sake*"—"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake." I understand, then, that if a man suffers as a Christian for doing that which is right, he is suffering for Christ's sake. If he cannot and will not act disreputably and contrary to the commands of God, as others do, the suffering which he willingly bears, the loss which he cheerfully incurs because of his uprightness, is so much borne for Christ's sake.

If a man is out-and-out righteous in this world, he will be sure to be pointed at by certain persons as an oddity. He cannot lie, as others lie,

nor practice tricks in trade as others do—nor frequent their places of amusement, nor indulge in their lusts and, therefore, straightway they say—"He is a hypocrite! He is a cant!" And as they cannot understand the principle which inspires him, they impute to him motives which he abhors. This is how they talk—"He is doing it for the sake of being thought a saint," "He is paid for it." "He has some sinister motive or other." Or else they sum up the whole matter by declaring, "He is a downright impostor."

Now, if in any of these ways you are made to suffer for that which is right—for speaking the truth and acting the truth—never mind, Brothers and Sisters, but rather rejoice that you are permitted to suffer for Christ's sake! Say within yourself, "If my dear Lord lost all things for me, I may well lose some things for Him. If He was stripped to the last rag for me, I may well be content to be poor, 'for His sake.'" Set your face like a flint and say, "We can be poor, but we cannot be dishonest. We can suffer, but we cannot sin." Many men say, when we talk to them thus, "But, you know, we must live." I do not see that there is any necessity for your living if you cannot live honestly. It would be better to die than to do wrong—any amount of suffering would be better than that we should deny our Lord and Master! Remember Peter's words, "If you suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are you: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts," or, as the Revised Version has the last clause, "Sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord."

In the Word of God, yet another form is given to this suffering or doing for Christ's sake, and it assumes this shape—"*for the Gospel's sake*." In His first Epistle to the Corinthians, ninth chapter, and 23rd verse, Paul writes of what he did, "for the Gospel's sake," and our Lord speaks of some who, when there was persecution, "for the Word's sake," were offended. Now, if you are put to any shame for the sake of the Gospel, you suffer, "for His sake." And if you labor to spread the Gospel and publish the Word of God—if it is your daily endeavor to tell to others God's way of salvation, you are doing something, "for His sake," for the Gospel and Christ are so wrapped up together that what is done for the Gospel's sake, is done, "for His sake."

Yet another view of the subject is given to us when the Apostle, in his letter to the Colossians, first chapter, and 24th verse, speaks of certain saints honoring Christ by suffering, "*for His body's sake*, which is the Church." That is another form of rendering homage to Christ and doing what we do, "for His sake." O Brothers and Sisters, we ought to do much more than we do for God's people! They are the body of Christ. We should, everyone of us, feel it an honor to be allowed to unloose the laces of His shoes and to wash His feet—well, poor saints are Christ's feet! When you are feeding them, you are feeding Him, for certainly, if Paul, in persecuting them, persecuted Christ, it is clear that you, when you are helping them for Christ's sake, are doing it for Him! Oh, lay out your lives for His Church's sake! His dear people deserve it at your hands and their Lord deserves it, too.

Then, again, Paul, in His second Epistle to Timothy, second chapter, and 10th verse, uses the phrase, "f*or the elect's sakes*," by which I think he

comprehends, not only those who are in the Church as yet, but those who are to be. Happy is that man who spends all his time in seeking out poor wanderers, that he may bring in God's elect! Happy is he who lays all his talents and all his strength upon the altar of God, consecrated to this aim—that he may find out the chosen of the Father, the redeemed by the blood of Jesus and, in the hand of the Spirit, be the instrument of bringing them back to their Father's house from which they have wandered. When you serve Christ's people, always do it, "for His sake."

Further, we have the expression, "*the Kingdom of God's sake*," when our Master tells Peter, as recorded in the 18th chapter of Luke, 29th verse, that no one who has left anything for Him and for it, shall fail of present and eternal reward. This is another way in which we can serve Christ our King, by being willing to sacrifice "house, or parents, or brothers and sisters, or wife, or children, for the Kingdom of God's sake."

There is one other remarkable expression used by John in his second Epistle, at the second verse. He there speaks of something done, "*for the Truth's sak*e, which dwells in us." Ah, it is not merely the Gospel we are to defend, but we are to defend that living Seed which the Holy Spirit has put into us, that Truth of God which we have tasted, handled and felt—that theology which is not that of the Book, only, but that which is written on the fleshy tablets of our hearts. I hope there are many of you who keep back your hand from sin because the Truth that is in you will not let you touch it—and who put forth *both* your hands to serve the Lord because the Truth that is in you compels you to it! The new nature, that living, incorruptible Seed, constrains you and you judge that if Christ died for you, you must live and, if necessary, you will die for Him. I would ask great things from those for whom Christ has done great things. When you make sin little, and Hell little, you also make Christ little—and then, in consequence, you think you owe Him but little and you will render Him but little. But when you feel the weight of sin and see the preciousness of your Redeemer and feel, in some measure, the obligations under which you are to Him, then you say—

"Oh! what shall I do, my Savior to praise."

There have been, in the Christian Church, at different times, men and women of highly consecrated spirit who seem to have realized what their Lord expected of them. I dare say that they were very dissatisfied with themselves, but as we read their biographies, we are charmed with their consecration of spirit. The Truth of God and especially the Christ, who *is* the Truth, had such influence over their lives, that they truly lived, "for His sake." May we have many such in our ranks! I do not know whether it may be the duty of any of you to go to foreign lands, "for His sake." I only hope there are some young men here who will offer themselves for missionary service, for blessed are they that bear the Gospel into "the regions beyond," carrying their lives in their hands! They shall stand very near to the eternal Throne of God in the day when the King rewards His faithful servants.

I do not know whether there may be any of our Sisters here who are bound to consecrate their lives to the nursing of the sick where fevers are rife, or where pestilence abounds, but they who can do such service to

humanity, for Christ's sake, shall receive no light word of approbation at the Last Great Day. But, probably, the mass of us will have to abide in our calling and, therefore, I would say, if we must do so, let our life be all, "for His sake." I would desire never to come to this platform but, "for His sake." Never to say even a word about the Gospel but, "for His sake." And you, in your home, dear mother, go and bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, "for His sake." Take those dear little ones and present them to Him. Say, "Jesus, I give them to You—accept and save them. I devote them to Your service, as Hannah gave Samuel to the Lord." Then, "for His sake," teach them holiness. "For His sake" be patient with them and, "for His sake," bring them up, always, in the fear of the Lord.

You men of business, go out and labor, "for His sake." I could almost envy some of you who have acquired an adequate income. Keep the warehouse or shop open, "for His sake," and give more largely to His cause. And you who are not in a position of competence, but are struggling for your daily bread, "for His sake," never do a wrong thing. Sometimes, when you are half inclined to yield to the tempter, imagine that your Savior is standing by your side and that He puts His pierced hand upon your shoulder and says, "If you are, indeed, bought with My blood, let there be justice in all your dealings with your fellows. No, more, be generous as well as just, for My sake, for I would have you so act that all men shall know that you are My disciple."

Perhaps some of you, who profess to be Christians, are living altogether for yourselves, instead of living unto God. When you are at home tonight, sitting quietly in your room, alone, I could half wish that the Lord Jesus would enter and say to you, "I have loved you with an everlasting love, and laid down My life for you. What are you doing for Me in return?" Suppose He looked at you with those gentle, yet heart-searching eyes of His, and you looked into that face which was marred more than any man's, what would you say? Oh, I think I should have to cover my face for very shame! And yet I am not living in forgetfulness of Him and I am trying to do Him some humble service. But as for those who do nothing, with the exception of sitting to hear sermons, or sometimes dropping in at a Prayer Meeting, or, now and then, giving a little to the cause of God—perhaps as little as they dare—oh, what would they say in His Presence? You will all be in His Presence, soon! Perhaps sooner than you expect—and among the sorrows that will trouble you on your death-bed, if you are unfaithful to your Lord, will be this—that you have done so little for Him while you had the opportunity.

When sitting by the side of one of our dying members, a poor weak girl, wasted by consumption, I was charmed as she whispered in my ear that when she was brought to Jesus, she had such joy that she had striven to do something for Him but mourned that she could accomplish so little. Poor child! She tried to teach a class of boys and half killed herself in the struggle to keep them quiet. She felt constrained, by love to her Lord, to try to do something for Him, and as there happened to be nothing else to do, she began to teach some rough children who were far too wild for her.

But she did not regret it. Oh, no! I am sure, if she could be raised up, she would take to such work, again, "for His sake." And I am sure that any of you, if you have given of your substance, or given of your time, or given of your abilities, "for His sake," will never have to say, when you are lying as she was, and breathing out your life, "I did too much for my Savior." You will rather bless His name that He accepted the little that you could do! And like our young Sister, mourn that it is so little compared with what He deserves!

I therefore say to each one of you, Brothers and Sisters—If you have, indeed, been washed in the blood of Christ, spend yourself for Him—do not mock Him. If it was in play that you were redeemed and if the Crucifixion was but a sport, then go and trifle with the service of Christ. But if, indeed, the blood-mark of a real Savior is upon you and you have been washed in the fountain filled with His precious blood, go and live really useful, consecrated lives into which you shall throw your whole heart and soul and strength, "for His sake!"

Who shall pile a monument worthy of the Savior who did so much, "for your sakes?" Who shall compose a song sweet enough for the Christ of God who came for our redemption? Who shall sound the trumpets loudly enough for Immanuel, who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor? Who shall bring offerings of gold and frankincense rich enough for Him who gave up all for His people? Crown Him, you angels! You seraphim, adore Him! O God, You alone can give Him the recompense of honor which He merits! Glory be to His name forever! Let us take as our motto, from now on, these words, "For His sake." "For His sake," let us put up with poverty, counting it to be richest to be poor if He would have it so. "For His sake," let us cheerfully endure bodily sufferings, being glad if they make us more useful for Him. "For His sake," let us live in toil and die in obscurity, if so we can best glorify Him. Let our song be that of the gifted songstress, of whose hymn I have already quoted one verse—

"In suffering sore, or toilsome task,
His burden light I'll bear;
'For Jesus' sake' shall sweeten all,
Till His bright home I share.
And then this song more sweet, more strong,
In Heaven my harp shall wake—
Led all the way, till that glad day
Eternally, my heart shall say,
'For Jesus sake.'"

I will close when I have only added that if any of you have not at present any interest in this sacrifice and this service of which my two texts speak, I have just this word for you. It is, at least, a blessing that you are still permitted to listen to the Gospel. Let me very briefly tell once more, "the old, old story of Jesus and His love." Jesus Christ died in the place of sinners. We deserved to be punished for our sins. Under the Law of Moses there was no pardon for sin except through the blood of a sacrifice. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is *the one Sacrifice* for sins forever, of which the thousands of bullocks and lambs slain under the Law were but types. Every man who trusts to the death of the Lamb of God may know that Jesus Christ was punished in His place, so that God can be just and yet for-

give the guilty. He can, without violating His justice, remit sin and pardon iniquity because a Substitute has been found whose death has an infinite value because of the Divine Nature of the Sufferer. He has borne the iniquities of all who trust Him. "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall go your way a saved soul, even though you came into this house steeped in sin, or through terrible conviction on the very verge of despair. God grant that many of you may trust in Jesus this very hour, "for His sake!" Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—2 Corinthians 8.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—282, 296, 709.

TO THE READERS OF MY SERMONS:

MY DEAR FRIENDS—This morning I read in *The Times* that "Mr. Spurgeon is *rapidly* recovering." These words exactly describe what I am *not* doing. The symptoms are the same as when I was at home. I am tossed up and down upon the waves of my disease and what is thought progress, today, is gone tomorrow. I have seasons of utter prostration. Always weak, it seems at times that I have no strength whatever and must altogether collapse. *I shall recover*, for this is the tenor of the prayers which our God has so far answered, but there are no traces or signs of anything *rapid* about my condition. *Emphatically*, any advance I make is *the slowest of all slow things*. I write this at once to prevent disappointment to sanguine friends. I know not why I should be the object of so much tender sympathy, but as I am thus privileged I would have a sensitive regard for the feelings of such benefactors and warn them against statements for which there is no basis in truth. Their friend remains feeble and has no hasty recovery to expect. Please continue prayer. Have great patience. Relieve me of anxiety as to the institutions and praise God for what He has already done.
Your deeply-indebted servant, for Christ's sake,
Mentone, November 21, 1891,
C. H. SPURGEON.

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BOTH SIDES OF THE SHIELD
NO. 2233

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
DECEMBER 6, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 14, 1891.**

***"Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand."
Exodus 17:8, 9.***

IN trying to understand the Truth of God we are in great danger of being one-sided. One man catches at part of a Truth of God and says, "That is it and that is the whole of it." Another man lays hold of another side of the Truth of God and he says, "This is the whole of it" and, straightaway, there arises a contention between them. They are like the men who quarreled as to the material of which a certain shield was made. One of them said that it was a golden shield. The other was equally sure that it was a silver one, whereas it so happened that it was gold on one side and silver on the other. So they fiercely wrangled when they might very well have been agreed if they had known a little more. Most Truths of God have two sides and it is well to try to see both of them. Nearly every doctrine in the Word of God is balanced by some other doctrine and many of the differences among the people of God have arisen from the undue stress which has been laid on one aspect of the Truth while the other side has been altogether neglected. This danger very frequently besets us.

For instance, some see the Sovereignty of God and are so carried away with that sublime Truth, that they deny the responsibility of man! They thus both wrest the doctrine they do know and fight against the doctrine they do not know. Others can see the universality of the Gospel invitation and, with large hearts can urge all men to turn unto God and live—but they have never seen the specialty of this redemptive work of Christ and so fail to understand the eternal purpose of God to save His chosen people. Running away with half a Truth, they are like men that go through the wilderness wearing only one shoe—they become lame in one foot—and that makes them limp all over. It does not matter which foot it is that is lame—the man is a *cripple* if either foot is thus afflicted.

It is essential for us to hold our minds ready to receive whatever the Holy Spirit teaches—and frequently to accept Truths of God which we cannot harmonize. I have long ago given up all attempts to reconcile what

God has revealed in one part of the Bible with what He has made known in another part. If I find, in God's Word, doctrines which appear to me to be at variance with the teaching in other passages, I say to myself, "God knows where these things harmonize and if He had wanted *me* to know it, He would have told me. As He has not told me, why should I worry myself about the matter? I am not going to speculate and theorize as to where these Truths meet. Nor will I cast a bridge of gossamer across the deep gulf which I fancy I see and then trust myself to a thread that cannot bear my weight! "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but those things which are *revealed,* belong unto us and to our children forever."

One said to me, the other day, concerning two great doctrines, "How do you make these two agree?" I answered by first asking another question, "How do I make two things agree that never fell out? There is no need for me to attempt anything of the kind. These two Truths are perfectly reconcilable and as they come from God's mouth, it would be as difficult for you to show that they do not agree as it is for me to show that they do agree." God does not say, "Yes," and "No." The Lord does not blow hot and cold. If He reveals two doctrines which apparently contradict each other, yet are they both true, since both are spoken by the God who cannot lie! And if I cannot see how they can both be true, it comforts me to think that I am not asked to see it—I am expected to *believe* it—and God's Grace gives me the faith to do even that. In fact, I rather like a difficulty, for then there is an opportunity for the exercise of faith. It is glorious, when one is sailing, to come right up under the lee of a great rock and to be compelled to say, "Well, I cannot proceed any further this way." What then? Why, just let your anchor down and make a harbor of the rock, and lie there at rest while stormy winds blow.

That is what you should do with difficult doctrines—make a quiet haven of the mysterious Truth of God and let it shelter you in time of doubt or despondency! When the storm is passed, you will find that there are other ways for you to go where it is perfectly plain sailing. Seeing that the Revelation is *Divine*, there must be mysteries which *mortals* cannot understand at present. Let us comfort ourselves with our Savior's words, "What you know not now, you shall know hereafter." Some day the way will be made plain before us, but meanwhile our attitude should be that of trustful children who believe implicitly whatever their loving father tells them, whether they comprehend it or not.

In the present discourse I am going to take up two sets of Truths which are rather varied and yet are very practical. My range of thought will be extensive, but I will not wander from the incident before us. There are four things which have been suggested to my mind while meditating upon this text and its surroundings, each of which may be viewed from two standpoints. First, in this assault of Amalek on the people of God, we see *persecution in its double aspect.* Secondly, in the rod of Moses we behold *instrumentality in its double relation.* Thirdly, in the battle we observe *prudence in its double activity*. And lastly, in the leaders of the people we are

reminded of *Christ in His double capacity* as He pleads for us yonder and fights for us here.

I. First, let us look at PERSECUTION IN ITS DOUBLE ASPECT. On the one hand, notice that this attack upon Israel was Amalek's great sin, on account of which the nation was doomed to be extirpated. Because of this, God said, "I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under Heaven." But, on the other hand, this assault was the result of Israel's sin, for it is significantly put after the strife of Massah and Meribah, "*Then* came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim." The point is this—persecution may come to you from evil men, distinctly from them—and it may be their wicked free will which makes them assail you. But, at the same time, it may be your sin which lies at the bottom of it, and because you have erred, they have been permitted and even *appointed*, to bring trouble upon you. Let us think of these two things.

Notice well that *assaults upon us may arise from the sins of others*. It is right that we should recognize this, lest in the dark day we should become unduly discouraged. Persecution often arises because we come into conflict with wicked men, but God will judge our adversaries—He will remember His Covenant with His people and deliver us from the hand of all our enemies.

These Amalekites attacked Israel and greatly sinned in so doing, for they were the first that made war against God's people. He who had so graciously chosen and kept them, who, with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm had brought them through the Red Sea, had espoused their cause, and His Word, "Touch not My anointed, and do My Prophets no harm," had been a kind of shield to Israel in her earliest days. Though Abraham and others had, at times, gone forth to battle, nobody had fought with Israel since she had become a nation and, by mighty signs and wonders, had been delivered from the hand of Pharaoh and the bondage of Egypt. But Amalek was the first among the nations which dared to assail the chosen people of God and, therefore, a stern doom was decreed against him. He had heard what great things God had done for His people and yet he presumed to fight against them! And in so doing, he impiously lifted up his hand against Jehovah, Himself! He became the leader in this particular form of evil and thus assumed a fearful responsibility—and assured to himself a terrible judgment.

But the impiety was still worse, for Amalek went out of his way to attack Israel. The people had not come into his territory—they were a good way from it and were passing quietly by—but we read, "Then *came* Amalek." His envy was stirred up so much that he came away from his own region to fight with Israel without any provocation. Amalek was a descendant of Esau and the hate of Esau towards Jacob so burned in the breast of Amalek towards Israel that he came a long journey in order that he might at once, without proclaiming war, fall suddenly upon the hosts of Israel. Because the attack was thus wanton, he had to suffer the stern judgment of God. Let not wicked men imagine that because God is in Heaven and they are upon the earth they can, with impunity, oppose His

people. "He that sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision." Woe be to the man who wantonly attacks the saints of the Most High God! Be not disquieted, O child of God, if this is your case! "Fret not yourself because of evildoers, neither be you envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass and wither as the green herb."

Moreover, Amalek in this act went forth to fight against God, Himself. It was not with Israel, alone, that he warred—he also battled with Jehovah, the God of Israel. In the words of the 16th verse, as some translate them, Amalek had laid his hands upon the Throne of God and, therefore, God laid His own hand upon the Throne and swore by His Throne that He would uproot Amalek from among the nations. It was because the opposition to the Israelites was distinctly on account of God, Himself, that, therefore, Amalek had to be cut off. Dear Brothers and Sisters, you and I may be assailed by wicked men and we may distinctly trace the whole of it to their malice and to their enmity against God, Himself, but though that may be all true, yet we must not, therefore, be, ourselves, malicious towards them. Neither must we be proud, as though we were innocent and they, alone, were guilty.

Wicked men nailed our Savior to the Cross, but His prayer for them was, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Dearly Beloved, if the ungodly hate you and persecute you, avenge not yourselves, but rather give way to wrath, for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, says the Lord." When you are persecuted for righteousness' sake, the Lord takes notice of it. "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute *Me*?" was the word which came from the excellent Glory to him who journeyed to Damascus, "breathing out threats and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord." When he persecuted them, he was really persecuting their Master! Be not, then, troubled if men revile you, persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for Christ's sake, but rather, "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in Heaven: for so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you." Leave the issue with the Lord—the battle is His and He will, in His own time and way, overthrow all His and your adversaries.

Let us now turn our thoughts to the other aspect of this subject. The guilt of ungodly men in persecuting God's people is not inconsistent with my next statement, that *assaults upon us may also arise from our own sins*. We may have brought the evil upon ourselves and we had better look to it that there is not a sin of our own that lies at the root of what we suffer, for it was so with these people. When they had chided with Moses and murmured against God, "*Then* came Amalek."

Israel had been quarrelling with God. Do you wonder, then, that other people quarreled with *them*? You may often read your sin in its punishment and, if you had prophetic eye enough, you might see your chastening in your offense. Many a time our severity to others is the reason for God's apparent severity with us. If we have withheld from the poor, we need not wonder if God withholds from us. And if we have been slow to

forgive, we need not marvel if we do not soon get a sense of forgiveness for ourselves. We often urge people to do unto others as we would that they should do unto us. Let me reverently say another thing—do unto *God* as you would that God should do unto you, for, "with the froward God will show Himself froward." That ink with which we wrote the ill word, God will use in the writing down of our sentence. It was so in this case—Israel quarreled with God—and now Amalek quarrels with Israel.

They put a question about God, "Is the Lord among us, or not?"—a horrible question, since it involved a doubt as to the veracity of Moses and as to the reality of all the great wonders which were worked in Egypt and in the wilderness! And, because they questioned God, God makes it a serious question between them and Amalek—a question which, for a while, seemed to be answered favorably, for Israel prevailed. But soon it was answered unfavorably, for Amalek prevailed. The conflicting hosts sway to and fro on the battlefield—first victors, then vanquished—again conquering, then once more conquered! How will the terrible struggle end? No wonder that God puts the issue in question, when they had put Him in question! If you question God, He will soon leave you to question yourselves. I do not wonder that men say, "Have I any faith?" when they begin to doubt the very Inspiration of Scripture! What is the good of having any faith when there is nothing left for you to believe? You may well fear to build upon that Scripture whose very foundations you have undermined! If we question God, God will make our safety a question—and we shall have a stern fight for it.

Moreover, we find that Israel had uttered threats against Moses, so that he said, "They are almost ready to stone me." Now, if they would stone the man of God, is it at all amazing that the men of the world were ready to kill them? If you go against Moses, God will send Amalek against you, for remember that God chastens His people! Though He forgives, He chastens. And He chastens all the more because He forgives. He condemns us in our consciences, that He may not condemn us at the Judgement Seat. He afflicts us *here*, that we may not be destroyed with the world at the end! Now is the day of the Believer's *chastisement* for his benefit. By-and-by will be the time of the unbeliever's *punishment* which shall bring him no benefit, but shall be the just reward of his evil deeds. Child of God, do you wish to receive chastisement? You have only to go into sin and you may rest assured that you will not escape the rod! If you are a bastard, you may, perhaps, sin and prosper, but if you are a true-born child of God, you cannot sin without smarting for it—

"Did I meet no trials here,
No chastisement by the way,
Might I not, with reason, fear
I should prove a castaway?
Bastards may escape the rod,
Sunk in earthly vain delight;
But the true-born child of God
Must not, would not if he might."

So there is our first point. We may sometimes justly charge our afflictions upon the evil intent of ungodly men and yet, at the same time, we may have to also charge them upon ourselves. It may be equally true that we have procured them by our own slips and stumbling in the ways of the Lord, as that evil men have wickedly raised their hands against us. So, when attacks are made upon us, let us be more careful to search our own hearts and examine our own lives, than to condemn the faults of other men. To their God they will have to render their own account.

II. In the second place, let us think of INSTRUMENTALITY IN ITS DOUBLE RELATION. Here, again, another contrast is to be found in the text and its connection. If you will notice, in the fifth verse, God says to Moses, "Take with you of the elders of Israel; and *your rod*, with which you smote the river." But when Moses talks about the rod, in the ninth verse, which forms our text, he says, "Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with *the rod of God* in my hand." In both verses it is the same rod which is spoken of. God calls it the rod of Moses. Moses calls it the rod of God and both these expressions are true. I want you to remember that. The first is true—it *is* the rod of Moses—that is the *human* side. And in this connection it is sometimes called the rod of Moses and sometimes the rod of *Aaron*. But the *Divine* side is just as noticeable and then it is called the rod of God. With reference to the instrumentality which God is pleased to use, we must thus remember its twofold nature and look on both sides of the shield.

One side is that God *calls it the rod of Moses and so honors Moses*. Wherever there is an opportunity of doing honor to the faith of His own servants, God is never slow to use it! He is a King who delights to give glory to His warriors when they behave themselves bravely in the heat of battle. It gives Him pleasure to knight them on the field and let them know that they have done well. At the end He will say to those who have been valiant for His cause, "Well done, good and faithful servants." Even here He gives His chosen a foretaste of that full approval which will make their Heaven complete. God is not afraid of spoiling His people by saying a good word about them. You remember the story of the man who had a good wife and one said to him, "Why, she is worth her weight in gold." "Yes," he said, "she is worth a Gibraltar rock in gold, but I never tell her that. You know that it is necessary to maintain discipline and if I were to tell her how much I really value her, she would not know herself."

Well, now, that is wrong! It does people good to be told how highly we value them. There is many a Christian man and woman who would do better if, now and then, someone would speak a kindly word to them and let them know that they had done well. God Himself gives us an example of this, for He, here, puts honor on His servant, by saying to Moses, "*Your* rod, with which you smote the river, take in your hand, and go." Moses was the instrument whom God used against Pharaoh and though his rod was, in itself, only a common stick, yet it was Moses who used the rod and it was really that rod with which he smote the river. God actually did use him and it is not God's way to use a man and then say nothing about

it. God ascribes to Moses what Moses really did! We must never despise the instrumentality which God uses. The tendency of our nature is to run to the other extreme and to rest in instrumentality. We often need to remember that word, "Cursed be the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the Lord." But in trying to avoid that rock, we must not run on the other and slight all instrumentality. God will have His servants esteemed and, if He puts honor upon them, we cannot be wrong if He also honors them.

Moreover, it really was the rod of Moses and would not so well have fitted any other hand. God does not put into a position of influence a man unfit for the post. Even Moses did not work wonders with the rod until he had renounced the riches of Egypt and borne the burden of life in the wilderness. There was a fitness in the fact of the rod being in the hand of such a man. He had no rod when, in his fleshly energy, he slew the Egyptian whom he found oppressing the Hebrew slave. Had it then been in his hand, what sad havoc he might have made! But now he used it as God directed. In fact, the rod was the symbol of his authority and that authority was not bestowed upon him until he was qualified to exercise it! Thus, in a very real sense, it was the rod of Moses. In addition to this, it was the *faith* of Moses which gave power to his rod—he, himself, was the conductor of the Divine energy. Had the rod been wielded by another man, self-appointed and lacking the confidence which Moses had come to possess in God, it would have been simply a powerless stick. But because of his authority and because of his faith, it was right to call it, "the rod of Moses." When a man is evidently used of God, let us be quick to recognize the special qualities which render him worthy to be used, and let us esteem him very highly in love for his work's sake. Thus we see that God calls the almond branch, which did such wonders in Egypt and at the Red Sea, the rod of Moses.

On the other hand, *Moses calls it the rod of God and so honors God.* He whom God uses, gives God the praise, for God is *always* the source of our strength. And if any work is done that is worth doing, unto Him must be ascribed all the glory! It was not in his own might that Moses turned the waters of the Nile into blood and caused the fish to die. It was not by any power inherent in himself that he made the dust of Egypt to live and become a terrible plague to the people. It was not by any human magic that Moses divided the Red Sea and made a way for the ransomed nation to march through its depths. No one knew better than he that the instrument that branded the breast of the Red Sea and left a dry mark where it fell, was the rod of God, not man's! It is He, alone, that does great wonders, and unto His name be all the praise! "*Non nobis, Domine*," must always be our Psalm of adoration unto Jehovah—"Not unto us, O Lord; not unto us, but unto Your name, give glory."

Let us learn, from these words of Moses, that instrumentality is not to be decried or despised, for God uses it. But the *instrument* must never be allowed to usurp the place of God, for it must be always remembered that it is *God* who uses it. The axe must not exalt itself against him that cuts

with it, but, when there are trees to be felled, it would be folly to throw the axe away! The net must not be made a god that we may sacrifice to it, but it would be idle to go fishing without a net! Use your agencies and your instrumentalities to the very fullest extent, but understand that it is *God* that works *in* you, and God that works *by* you, if anything is accomplished that is worthy of record.

Thus I have given you two sets of things in which it is easy enough to blunder if you shut one of your eyes, or if you only look at them in one light—first, the persecution of God's people and, secondly, the instrumentality used in God's service.

III. And now, for a third thing. Behold, in this incident, PRUDENCE IN ITS DOUBLE ACTIVITY. You have that in the text. Moses said unto Joshua, "Choose us out men and go out, fight with Amalek." To which Joshua might have replied, "Yes, I will gladly do that, and you will go, too, Moses, and fight, will you not?" No, no, he will not! "Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand." You see, as Oliver Cromwell would have put it, prudence trusts in God and keeps its powder dry. Prudence prays with Moses while it fights with Joshua. In like manner, in the activities of our holy faith, we must learn to balance work and worship, prayer for victory and conflict with the enemy. In the case before us, we see that *the means are not neglected*. Moses did not call all the people to pray when it was time for fighting! He prayed, but at the same time he set the battle in array. This is true wisdom, for, "faith without works is dead." We cannot expect to have souls saved if we pray and never preach! We cannot expect to have our children saved if we only pray for them night and morning, and never speak to them about eternal matters, and do not instruct them in the things of God. The *means* must not be neglected!

Observe how Moses prepared to fight the Amalekites. He said to Joshua, "*Choose us out men*." He did not lose sight of the necessity of having the most fit warriors because his trust was in God. If someone, seeing only one side of the question, had come to him, and said, "The battle is the Lord's, why do you want to pick out men? Will not one man do as well as another?" Moses would probably have replied, "These Amalekites are mighty warriors. Take *chosen* men—men that are able-bodied—men that are expert in war, the choicest men you can find, and go to war with Amalek. We shall need our best men to overcome such a foe. Choose us out men."

This is a rule without exception when you go to work for Christ—bring forth the best of everything that you have—your best thought, your best knowledge, your best ability! Let the Church always see to it that she tries to get the best men she can to fight the battles of the Lord. It is a mistake to suppose that just anybody will do for Christian work. Christ may use whom He wills, even the weakest things and the things that are despised—but as for us, we must always look to that which is most adapted to the work, most suitable for it, always hearkening to the words of Moses to Joshua, "Choose us out men."

The leader was also chosen—"Moses said unto *Joshua*." He did not pick up the first youth that he met and say to him, "Go and fight these Amalekites," but he took the man whom God had fitted for the post of leader in the war, even Joshua, and said to him, "Go out and fight with Amalek." It is well for us, in carrying on the work and warfare for God, to rally round those whom God has qualified to be leaders. Means are not to be neglected, nor may God's work be done in a slovenly style. Choose you out men and let the leader of them be a choice man, the man of God's choice.

The time for the battle was also chosen. "*Tomorrow* I will stand on the top of the hill." Why not tonight, Moses? These Amalekites have just been falling upon you. Why not fight them at once? Well, because the people were not ready. It would take a little time to get the fighting men in order. Tomorrow was quite soon enough. Besides, Moses felt by instinct that he would fight these children of the wilderness best when he could *see* them—not by night, when they knew the way better than he did—but by daylight. To those of you who earnestly desire to serve God, I would say—Do not be in too great a hurry, lest your indiscreet zeal should bring disaster upon you. "He that believes shall not make haste." Choose the best time! Serve God wisely. Go about the work as if all depended upon you—and then trust in God, knowing that all depends upon Him! Use the same foresight, the same judgment, the same care that you would use if it were solely your own work. And then, when you have done that, fall back upon God, feeling that all your care and all your foresight will be in vain unless He stretches forth His hand to help and to ensure success!

Note, again, that the battle was most real. Moses did not say, "Choose you out men and go and drive Amalek away like a flock of sheep." No, but, "Go out and *fight with Amalek*." Believe me, Brothers and Sisters, we make a great mistake if we think that this world is to be conquered for Christ without mighty efforts. Some talk as if the expenditure of a few pounds and the going forth of a few men will end the whole war. It will do nothing of the sort! If nations are to be subdued to Christ, His Church must exert all her power. All her power without Him is *nothing*, but if He chooses to use her power, He will have the whole of it brought into use before He gives the blessing! "Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek." When the battle began, it was no child's play! It was a hand-to-hand conflict, a struggle for life or death, and the end of it was that, "Joshua vanquished Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword." Not merely by *praying*, but, "with the edge of the sword." Moses on the hilltop is doing his part by holding up the rod—but you must have Joshua down below with the sharp edge of the sword, or else Amalek will laugh at the prayers of Moses! I should like to have this rule written on every man's mind, that if he is to serve God, and get a blessing from God, he must have both the prayer of Moses and the sword of Joshua!

But, on the other hand, in this battle, *reliance on God is not neglected.* Moses ascends the hill holding up his banner—and that banner is the rod of God. The staff on which God's servant had been accustomed to lean, God had blessed, and made it to be a scepter, the sign of His royal Pres-

ence and a wonder-working thing in the land! Moses holds this up. The banner is the rod of God and the banner-bearer is the chosen servant of God. Everything on Israel's side is of *God*—Moses and Joshua are ordained of God and the rod chosen of Moses is, at the same time, the rod of God! This is held up where all the people can see it and every warrior, as he turns his eyes, can behold that rod of God which had worked such wonders before, still held aloft above the conflicting armies! When Moses' hands are heavy, the symbol of God's Presence need not be lowered, for Aaron and Hur are at hand to hold up his arms. Israel is continually reminded of the interest of God in the battle against Amalek. The rod in the hand of Moses seems to say, "God is fighting for you! God's servant is holding up the appointed standard!" Undoubtedly that assurance must have largely aided them to go through the battle with a brave heart. The meaning of it would be clear—"Fight, but trust. War with Amalek with the edge of the sword, but prevail over Amalek by prevailing with God in prayer."

Unfortunately, in our work for God, we generally fall into one of two blunders. Either we get a lot of machinery and think that we shall accomplish everything by that, or else we are like some whom I have known, who have confided so much in prayer that they have done nothing but pray! Prayer is a downright mockery if it does not lead us into the practical use of means likely to promote the ends for which we pray. I have known friends take medicine when they have been ill and never pray about their sickness. There are some others who pray about their sickness, but never take the proper medicine. They are *both* wrong! You must have Joshua and you must have Moses, too, in the time of trial! Go before God with your sickness, but if there is an appointed means that has been made useful to others, use it, for God will bless you by the use of means.

Try to see two sides of a thing. Do not trust exclusively to either one or the other. It is a very heinous fault to trust the means without God, but, though it is a much smaller fault to trust in God and not use the means, yet still it *is* a fault. Practical prudence will lead you to do both. It gives to Joshua his sword, that he may make it red with the blood of the enemy and it gives to Moses his rod, that he may go with it up to the top of the hill and hold it up there in the sight of the people—that all may know that the battle is the Lord's—and that He *will* deliver the enemy into their hands. God make you wise in these things and enable you to use both the rod of God and the sword of man!

IV. I have to speak of one other Truth and then I am done. Behold here, in a wondrous type, CHRIST IN HIS TWOFOLD CAPACITY. Christ is represented to us here as Moses on the hill, pleading, and as Joshua in the valley, fighting!

Learn, first, that *Christ is pleading for us*. He is not here. He is risen and He has ascended to the right hand of God, even the Father, and there He is making intercession for His people. It is because He intercedes for us that we win the victory! Cannot your faith's eyes see Him now, on the top of the hill, with the rod of God in His hand, with all power given to

Him in Heaven and in earth, pleading with authority before the great Throne of Jehovah? Here is the secret of our strength! He never fails. He never needs to sit down upon a stone, nor does He need any to hold up His hands because they grow weary. No, blessed be His name, He pleads and prevails from generation to generation—and will continue to do so until He shall descend from Heaven a second time to complete the victory of His people! In His mediation is our confidence.

But, then, do not forget that *He is also warring for us*. He is here, though I have just said that He is not here. In one sense He is gone and in another sense He remains. On the very eve of His departure, He said, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." And His promise is forever true, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." So, though He has gone into Glory, He is yet here in a *spiritual* sense by the Holy Spirit—He is His Lieutenant, who takes the Kingdom and presides over it, and works in it on behalf of King Jesus. He is that "other Comforter" whom the Lord Jesus promised to send to His disciples. And so, though Christ has ascended, that blessed Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, has taken His place and, by the Holy Spirit, Christ is still here! We need not pray for the Holy Spirit to be poured out. He never will be poured out, again, since He was once poured out at Pentecost and is still here! You may very properly ask to be baptized into the Holy Spirit if you desire to know His power to the fullest and you may go down into His influences till you are immersed therein, but how can we ask that the Spirit should again be poured out, when He has not gone back to Heaven? He came down once and here He stays. "He shall abide with you forever." This is the dispensation of the Holy Spirit and, in Him, Christ is always with us, our greater Joshua, fighting for the people whom He will one day lead into the Promised Land, the heavenly Canaan!

I think that I see our Joshua now, sword in hand, chasing our adversaries. And I turn my eyes upward and see our Moses, rod in hand, pleading for His people. Let us see Him in both capacities and thank God that Christ is All—not one type of the Law, but all the types—not one of the ceremonials, but all the ceremonials, and all the shadows melting into one great substance! Glory be to His name! Believe in Christ in Heaven and trust Him with your prayers! Believe in Christ on earth—range yourself on His side and rest assured that no foe will be able to stand against Him! He is on the battlefield, today, and in the thickest of the fray! When His own people are driven back and His adversaries begin to rejoice, friends and foes, alike, shall yet prove the power of His almighty arm! "Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O most Mighty, with Your glory and Your majesty; and in Your majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and Your right hand shall teach You terrible things."—

"Fight for Yourself, O Jesus, fight,
The travail of Your soul regain."

So, you see that though two things may look contradictory, they are often both really true, and are both different sides of one shield. Try, then, to always see both sides of every Truth of God revealed in the Scriptures.

Divine Truths often resemble tramcars which travel upon two lines of iron, and yet the two lines make but one tramway. The lines are parallel and do not touch each other. How could the car travel if they did? This is the Truth of God—it is but one Truth—but it has two sides which run parallel to each other. Do not try to join them, nor take them up and make them cross each other, but travel along them till you come to the great terminus above.

God bless you, if you are His people! If not, all is wrong. Oh, may you now trust the living Christ! He is here, ready to hear your cry for mercy! He is there in Glory, ready to plead your cause. He waits to be gracious to sinners here below. He waits in Heaven till His enemies shall be made His footstool. May you bow before the silver scepter of His mercy, that you may not be broken in pieces by the iron rod of His justice—and may the Lord be with you all! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Exodus 17.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—686, 665, 664.

TO THE READERS OF MY SERMONS:

DEAR FRIENDS—I had much enjoyment in preaching the sermon of this week and I trust the same will be the case with its readers. The lessons are rather wide in their range, but they serve as illustrations of the great fact that there are two sides to most questions, and that progress in the Truth of God is along two fixed lines which cannot be made to meet according to human judgment, but are, nevertheless, each of them laid down by Revelation upon the same basis. We believe in the Sovereignty of God *and* in the responsibility of man—and while we conceive that everything is fixed by Divine decree, we perceive that man is a free and self-contained moral agent! We no longer ask, "How can these things be?"—we make inscrutable mysteries into footstools for faith to kneel upon!

The hour of your friend's death is appointed and the length of his illness—and yet you will pray for the prolonging of his life and the restoration of his health—and your prayer will be answered!

May the Lord deal graciously with all my readers! So prays
Your hearty friend,
C. H. Spurgeon,
Mentone, November 28, 1891.

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THE BEST DONATION
NO. 2234

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY,
DECEMBER 13, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 5, 1891.**

***"And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave themselves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God."
2 Corinthians 8:5.***

HERE we see the Apostle Paul disappointed, though he was never discontented. God had taught him how to abound and how to suffer need. In the School of Grace he had learned contentment, but at this time he had met with disappointment. Things had not happened as he thought they should have done and now he tells the Corinthians how the Churches of Macedonia have disappointed him. "This they did, not as we hoped."

Paul's disappointment, too, was concerning money, although that was a thing the Apostle never cared about at all. He never lived with any idea of gain—he held it almost in contempt. Yet here he is disappointed about money matters and he is writing of his disappointment. But do not run away with a mistaken idea of what Paul meant. Though this is one of the many unexpected things which happened to him, it is different in its character from most of his other disappointments. His expectations were not realized on this occasion because they were *exceeded*! He was disappointed with the Churches of Macedonia because they did a great deal *more* than he ever expected them to do. "This they did," he says, "not as we hoped." He had only hoped that they would give a little, for they were not rich people—and a little would show their generosity to the poor saints in Jerusalem. And he was ready to make much of that little and thank God that they were willing to remember those who were more in need than themselves. But they went far beyond anything he expected of them. Paul bore record that their liberality was up to the utmost limit of their power, "yes, and beyond their power." A little from them would have been more than a much larger sum from richer people. Our gifts are not to be measured by the amount we contribute, but by the surplus kept in our own hands. The two mites of the widow were, in Christ's eyes, worth more than all the other money cast into the treasury, for, "she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living."

Not only did those Macedonian Believers give much, but they gave it willingly. "They were willing of themselves." This added fragrance to their gift. They needed no pressing or urging—the Apostle did not have to or-

ganize a "Fancy Fair" to wheedle the money out of them, nor even to preach loud and long to awaken them to their duty. "They were willing of themselves." I thank God that you, my people, have always abounded in "the same Grace, also." Still, what we have done is nothing compared to the need which lies before us. May those who have, up to now, been ready to bestow their goods, be found even more willing now to contribute to the cause of God and generously give towards the spread of the Gospel, the education of ministers and the needs of the orphans! Let there be no necessity laid upon you except the sweet compulsion of love, remembering that "God loves a cheerful giver."

But these Macedonians gave more than money—they gave themselves. Paul writes, "They first gave themselves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God." This was the best donation—better, even, than the two mites of the poor widow. She gave her living, but they gave their *lives*, their very being! They also gave the best donation in the best way. They did not stop with giving themselves to the Lord, they also gave themselves to the Lord's *people*. This is the will of God, that those who yield themselves up to Him should join those who are already His.

In speaking to you concerning these Churches of Macedonia, I would say, first, that *these people are an example to us* in several particulars. And when I have spoken a little upon that subject, I will say, in the second place, *Let us follow their example*.

I. First, then, THESE PEOPLE ARE AN EXAMPLE TO US. The Grace of God seems to have been so largely bestowed upon them that they, of whom but little was expected, sprang at once into the chief place of honor. Sometimes we see this in Churches today—poor and despised communities suddenly excel all their Brothers and Sisters. "The lame take the prey." The great works of the world are not done by the great people of the world, but as the tiny coral insects, patiently working unseen, produce large results, it often happens that the weakest Brothers and Sisters bestow a large legacy of blessing upon us! This was the case in Macedonia—"The abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality." As an ounce of example is worth a pound of precept, let us study the conduct of those early Christians very carefully.

First, they are an example because *they followed the right order*. They did the first thing, first. Paul says, concerning them, "This they did, not as we hoped, but first gave themselves to the Lord." You know that it spoils even good things when you reverse the right order in which they should be done and, as we commonly say, put the cart before the horse. Did you ever hear of the servant who was told to go and sweep a room and then dust it, who went and dusted the room and *then* swept it? She did not obey her orders because she did not observe the right order. Her work might as well have been left undone! Great mischief always comes of departing from God's method in spiritual things. When the Lord tells you to believe and be baptized, if you are baptized, first, and believe afterwards, you have upset the Scriptural order and have practically disobeyed it! You have not kept to God's Word at all. There is nothing like doing the right

thing in the right order. Do *what* Christ tells you and do it *as* Christ tells you. These Macedonian Believers put the first thing, first. They first gave themselves to the Lord and afterwards they gave themselves to the Church of God!

This is the first thing, because it is of the first importance. If you are Christ's, join Christ's people. But the first thing is, see to it that you are Christ's! Yield yourself unto Him. Trust in Him. This is the first thing and everything else is a poor second in comparison with it. Dear Friend, have you given yourself to the Lord? Can you truly say, "I am my Lord's, and He is mine. I have, by His Grace, made sure of that"? Especially you young people who are just starting out in life—let this be your prime care. May God give you Grace to yield yourself to Christ even now, before you meet the fiercer temptations of the world! Stand still and consider the matter, and say, "I will now unreservedly yield myself to Him who died for me—

'Now that my journey's just begun,
My course so little trod;
I'll stay before I further run,
And give myself to God."

Yielding ourselves to the Lord comes first and thus makes the second thing valid. If it does not come first, the second is good for nothing! If a man gives himself to the Church, he must not, therefore, suppose that he has given himself to God. To give himself to the *people* of God, before giving himself, first, to *God*, will do the man no good. It will, indeed, do him a positive injury. The man who acts in this way is either self-deceived, or else a deceiver—he does wrong to God, to the Church, to himself and is thus a threefold offender! You have no right to either of the ordinances of Christ if you do not belong to Him—they are only for Believers—and until you first give yourself to the Lord, you have no right to be reckoned among the people of God! If you come to the Lord's Table as an unbeliever, so far from getting any good there, you will eat and drink condemnation to yourself, for you cannot discern the Lord's body and, therefore, you cannot rightly use the bread and cup which are the emblems of His broken body and poured out blood. Dear Friend, do that first thing, first! First give yourself to the Lord and *then* give yourself to us by the will of God!

This is the first thing, again, because it leads to the second. I do not think that those Macedonians would ever have thought of giving themselves up to the Church if they had not first given themselves up to God, for in those days, you know, to join the Christian Church meant enduring shame, persecution and frequently death! They had to steal away by night to the private assemblies of the saints—and if they joined the Church and it was once known—there would probably soon be the cry, "Christians to the lions!" And they would be taken to the amphitheatre, first to be exhibited, and then to be devoured by wild beasts!

Men did not care about joining Christian Churches in those days unless they first gave themselves to the Lord. The persecution of the early Christians was a wonderful means of keeping the Churches pure. Church

officers, then, did not need to examine those who sought fellowship with them as we are obliged to do, for not many were likely to present themselves unless they loved their Lord and His Gospel better than life, itself. But even then some hypocrites did profess to be the Lord's people, though their heart was far from Him. In these soft and silken days I would be the more earnest in saying to you—Do not give yourselves to us. Do not think of joining any Christian Church, until, first of all, you have given yourselves to the Lord. Make a very searching enquiry into your own spiritual state before you offer yourself as a candidate for Church fellowship. Many of you do this. I have been struck, again and again, with the fact that the results of our special services in this place are not garnered quickly. Sometimes people come in numbers to join us who trace their first impulse to some special effort put forth here a year or two before. I fear that many wait too long, but there should be no undue haste in the matter. Make sure that, first, you are the Lord's—then come and be baptized, confessing your faith. Now, do you trust Christ? Have you become Christ's servant? Have you taken His Cross upon your shoulders to bear it after Him? Then come and welcome, and join with His people! But you must not do it until, first, you are the Lord's.

These Macedonians are examples, next, because *they were free in what they did*. They "first *gave* themselves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God." They did not come to God by compulsion. There was a gentle pressure put upon them by the Holy Spirit, which made them willing in the day of God's power—and they willingly and cheerfully gave themselves up to God. Are you doing so, dear Friend? Is your religion a thing which has been impressed upon you by your surroundings, by your Christian friends, or by the demands of society? Such a religion is not worth having! To be truly the Lord's, there must be a voluntary giving up of yourself to Him and to His service. You must be able to say—

"'Tis done! The great transaction's done;
I am my Lord's, and He is mine;
He drew me, and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice Divine."

Then you will be able to sing the chorus at the end of it—

"Happy day! Happy day,"

and you will not feel it to be a misery to have given yourself up to God, but your soul's greatest delight! And so be like those who gave themselves to the Lord and did it cheerfully and freely.

They gave themselves, also, wholly and unreservedly. This is proved by the fact that their money followed the gift of themselves. The dedication of their persons was followed by the consecration of their purses. It was no half-hearted offering of a languid devotion, but a real and practical yielding up of every bit of their being to be entirely and forever the Lord's. Now, this is the sort of conversion that delights both God and His people—when the whole man is all aflame with love to Christ—when there is no attempt to compromise matters, or to keep back any part of that which is the Lord's. When we are able truthfully to sing—

"Take my life, and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee.
Take my silver and my gold,
Not a mite would I withhold.
Take myself, and I will be
Always, only, all for Thee."

These Macedonians were so eager to be out-and-out for Christ that they, without any constraint, gave themselves to His people. I delight to see young Believers coming forward promptly and cheerfully, feeling, "Yes, I belong to Christ, and I should like to join those who also belong to Him." To have it pressed upon you by one and another and to be urged to do it almost spoils it. I think that it is with our *gift of ourselves* to Christ and His people as it is with plucking a peach—if it is handled much, or pulled off the tree by a rough grasp of the hand—the beautiful bloom is quickly gone from it. Christ loves to have our hearts with the bloom on them! He delights to see us willingly yielding ourselves!

I remember the difficulty that I had, when I was converted and wished to join the Christian Church in the place where I lived. I called upon the minister four successive days before I could see him. Each time there was some obstacle in the way of an interview and, as I could not see him at all, I wrote and told him that I would go down to the Church Meeting and propose myself as a member. He looked upon me as a strange character, but I meant what I said, for I felt that I could not be happy without fellowship with the people of God. I needed to be wherever they were and if anybody ridiculed them, I wished to be ridiculed with them. And if people had an ugly name for them, I wanted to be called by that ugly name, for I felt that unless I suffered with Christ in His humiliation, I could not expect to reign with Him in His Glory. Beloved Friends, give yourselves, first, to God and afterwards to His Church, as these people did, cheerfully and promptly, without pressure or excitement. They came forward, not even as the Apostle hoped, but they went beyond all that!

In the third place, these people are good examples, not only in following the right order and doing it willingly, but because *they had a sense of obedience in both*. What they did, they did because they found that it was "the will of God." It was the calm decision of hearts made sensitive by the Holy Spirit. Their faith was a living one and produced these good fruits. They were not carried away by emotion, but led by reason and conscience to give all to Him who deserved more than all they could give.

They felt that it was right to give themselves first to the Lord. They said, "How can we do otherwise? Christ has bought us with His blood—we must give ourselves to Him. God has chosen us from before the foundation of the world—we must choose Him. The Holy Spirit has renewed us. This new nature of ours must belong to Him. We are God's by election, by creation, by Providence, by redemption, by new creation, by adoption—and His we will be forever and ever." They felt that they could not do otherwise, but must be wholly the Lord's because of what the Lord had done for them. This is the Apostle's argument when He says, "For the love of Christ

constrains us; because we thus judge that if One died for all, then were all dead: and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again." I wish that, under the sweet constraint of Divine Love, many of you might be led at once to give yourselves to the Lord!

Well, then, they felt the same thing about giving themselves to the Apostle and giving themselves to the Church! They said, "We will give ourselves up to this Apostle who has brought the Word of the Lord to us. He shall lead us. He has been a messenger from God to us—we will let him be our captain. What he bids us do, we will do, for we are persuaded that he is a man of God and he seeks not himself, nor ours, but us! He seeks to glorify God by leading us to nobler deeds of Grace and to greater heights of excellence. We will give ourselves to him and to the Church." Surely, dear Friend, if a man of God has been used to bring you out of darkness into Christ's marvelous light, you may well feel that such a man shall still lead you on! As long as he is faithful to his Master, you may very naturally and gladly be faithful to him. "They first gave themselves to the Lord, and unto *us* by the will of God."

They also had a sense of obedience in helping the poor, especially the poor saints, and, most of all, the poor saints at Jerusalem. Perhaps, mindful of that ancient promise, "Blessed is he that considers the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble," they recognized that the care of those in poverty and distress was specially pleasing to Him to whom they had given themselves. For that reason they would gladly make their contribution to the utmost limit of their power. Doubtless, they had heard the word that the Lord Jesus spoke to His disciples, "You have the poor with you always, and whenever you will, you may do them good: but Me you have not always," and as they could not directly bestow their goods on Christ, they willingly bestowed them, out of love to Him, upon the poor who knew His name! If we cannot give gold and silver to the Head of the Church in Heaven, we may help His poor members on earth. The reception of Christ into the heart and the yielding of the life to His sway has always been fruitful of beneficence to the poor.

Zacchaeus has not been the only one who, when he received Christ, has said, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor." Some men, today, in their zeal for the poor, deliberately shut their eyes to this fact that before the time of Christ the poor were left to their hard lot—and that any alleviation which has come to them has come from disciples of the lowly Jesus who was so poor that He had not where to lay His head. Christ is the poor man's truest Friend—and those who give themselves to Christ must always see to it that they also give of their substance to the poor and thus lay up "treasure in Heaven."

Paul distinctly states that these Macedonian Christians gave themselves to the Church "by the will of God." Beloved, it is the will of God that you who love Him should be numbered with His people. It is for your comfort. It is for your growth. It is for your preservation. If you belong to Christ, you should belong to Christ's Church. You already owe something

to the Church. By its means, the preaching of the Gospel has been kept alive in the world. Through its preaching you have been converted. Through someone of its members you were brought to Jesus' feet. It is your duty and the Church's due that you should give yourself to the Church by the will of God! Think it over and see if it is not so. I say not that you should join *this* Church. You may be quite a stranger to us, but there is a place where God has fed your soul. There is a company of people somewhere, among whom you have often been taken up to Heaven's gate. There is an assembly where you first of all found the Savior. Go, I pray you, and, by the will of God, give yourself to that Church, as you have given yourself to Christ.

You cannot tell the joy I have had today in visiting one who is lying grievously ill. My dear friend, in talking with me just now, as I sat by his bedside, said to me, "Pastor, do you remember what you said to me when you baptized me?" I said, "No, I do not." "Well," he said, it was 35 years ago, and when I was stepping into the water, you said, 'Let us praise God for this, Brother. I hope He will make you a gift, a precious gift, to this Church.' And then you stopped before you baptized me, and said, 'Lord, make him useful, grant him Grace to serve You for many years to come!' It was 35 years ago," he said, "and yet I remember it as if it were but yesterday, how you prayed for me, and how you finished up by saying, 'And, when your feet shall touch the cold waters of the river of death, may you find it firm beneath you!' Oh, dear Pastor," he said, "it IS firm beneath my feet! I was never so happy or so joyful as I am now, in the expectation of soon beholding the face of Him I love."

Our Brother also added, "How little does modern theology supply to a man on the brink of eternity! I want no theories about Inspiration, or about the Atonement. The Word of God is true to me from beginning to end and the precious blood of Jesus is my only hope." I said to him, "My brother said to me, the other day, what John Wesley said to Charles. He said, 'Brother, our people die well.'" "Yes," my friend who is ill answered, "they do, for as an elder of the Church, I have visited very many, and they always die with sure and confident faith." I never see a doubt in any of our friends when they come to die! I have more doubts than they seem to have. Alas, that it should be so! But I expect to play the man when I die, as they do, resting in that same Savior! But, Brothers and Sisters, we would have been great losers if that Brother had not, 35 years ago, having given himself to the Lord, also given himself to me and to the Church over which the Lord had made me overseer. Blessed be God, who has kept him and us even to this day!

Thus you see that these people of Macedonia are an example to us.

II. Secondly—and this I will urge very strongly on you all—LET US FOLLOW THEIR EXAMPLE. What use can we make of that example if we do not follow it? Let us make those Philippians, who are now citizens of a better city, glad when they hear that some, even in this 19th Century, were fired by their example to yield self and substance to their Lord and ours—to give all to Him who is the King of the country where they now have

their blessed abode and where every man who now gives himself to Christ shall also reign with Him! Do you think that, if they came back to earth, they would behave differently? Do you think that they would give less, now, that they know their Lord more? No! Had they a chance of living here, again, they would even more willingly yield themselves and more ungrudgingly give of their substance to their dear Lord and Master!

First, imitate their example in this particular—*give yourself to the Lord*. You who have done it, do it again! And you who have, up till this moment, kept back that which He claims, make a full surrender right now! Do not wait to make yourself better, or to feel better, but, just as you are, determine to be His and to be His forever! Say, "I do *now*, first of all give myself to You. I trust in the death of Christ as my only hope of eternal life and I give myself up to Him, believing that He will save me. There are many reasons why I should do this, but the chief reason is that Jesus gave Himself for me—shall I not, then, give myself to Him 'who loved me, and gave Himself for me'? What is there that I should like to keep back? I know of nothing. No, let Him take all."—

"Savior! Your dying love
You gave me—
Nor should I anything withhold,
My Lord, from You.
In love my soul would bow,
My heart fulfill its vow,
Some offering bring You now,
Something for You."

The best offering you can bring to Christ is yourself, for until you have given yourself to Him, He cannot accept any other offering at your hands. Unless you are really Christ's, you cannot be truly happy. Surely, this is a motive that will appeal to you! You wish to live a happy life, do you not? There is no happiness without holiness—and no holiness without faith in the Lord Jesus Christ! Give yourself to Him and He will make you holy and happy, too. True joy will never be yours until "the joy of the Lord is your strength." To abide in Christ is Heaven begun below. "Blessed are they that dwell in Your house: they will be still praising You." Those who know the Lord best, praise Him the most! Therefore would I urge you to give yourself to Him at this good hour.

Furthermore, we are only safe as we are given up to Christ's keeping. Only His power can save us from our adversary the devil, who, "as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour." If you give yourself to the Lord, you will be "safe in the arms of Jesus." He will hold you despite all the assaults of your foes and none shall pluck you out of His hands, so that you may exultingly say with Paul, "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

Some of us gave ourselves to Christ 40 years ago. Oh, how thankful I am that I can say, "Forty years ago"! Some of you came 30 years ago; some 20; some ten. Some of you only gave yourselves to Christ quite lately, when my dear Brothers Fullerton and Smith were at the Taberna-

cle. Well, do you wish to run back? If any of you do, I know one who does not, but who says, "Lord, I come again, as if I never had come before, and my heart's desire is to be fully Yours, more entirely Yours than I have ever been! Take heart, and hands, and feet, and eyes, and ears, and tongue—take life, and will, and all my powers of body, mind, and soul! Take all I am, and all I have, and all I ever shall have—take it all, for it is all Yours!" Will you not say so? While I am speaking, say it in your own souls! These Macedonians, "first gave themselves to the Lord." May some do this for the first time, even now! Each one of them shall then be able to sing—

"Oh, I am my Beloved's,
And my Beloved's mine!
He brings a poor vile sinner
Into His 'house of wine.'
I stand upon His merit—
I know no other stand—
Not even where Glory dwells
In Immanuel's land."

In the next place, follow this example and *give yourself to the Church*. You that are members of the Church have not found it perfect and I hope that you feel almost glad that you have not. If I had never joined a Church till I had found one that was perfect, I would never have joined one at all! And the moment I did join it, if I had found one, I should have spoiled it, for it would not have been a perfect Church after I had become a member of it. Still, imperfect as it is, it is the dearest place on earth to us—

"My soul shall pray for Zion still,
While life or breath remains;
There my best friends, my kindred dwell,
There God my Savior reigns."

All who have first given themselves to the Lord, should, as speedily as possible, also give themselves to the Lord's people. How else is there to be a Church on the earth? If it is right for anyone to refrain from membership in the Church, it is right for *everyone*, and then the testimony for God would be lost to the world! As I have already said, the Church is faulty, but that is no excuse for your not joining it, if you are the Lord's. Nor need your own faults keep you back, for the Church is not an institution for perfect people, but a sanctuary for sinners saved by Grace, who, though they are saved, are still sinners and need all the help they can derive from the sympathy and guidance of their fellow Believers. The Church is the nursery for God's weak children where they are nourished and grow strong. It is the fold for Christ's sheep—the home for Christ's family.

It is due to the minister that you should join some Christian Church. If the Lord has blessed you under our ministry, tell us. I think that I once told you the story, which I know to be accurate, of a Church clergyman, a sincere, earnest Brother, who had preached for years and, to the best of his knowledge, had never seen a conversion and, therefore, concluded that his ministry had been useless. On the day he was buried, a gentleman was observed to stand and weep much at his grave, and someone asked him why he did so. He said, "Nobody can tell what that man was to

me. He led me from darkness into the Light of God and his word has been my comfort for years." Yet that gentleman had never told the minister! He had never spoken to him of the blessing he had received under his ministry and he had let the good man die under the impression that he had been useless! When someone told him how the clergyman had grieved over his apparent failure, he said, "Oh, I did not know that he felt like that! I wish that I had told him what a blessing his sermons were to me."

Now, if we say anything foolish, or if we are reported to have said something silly which probably we never did say, we have plenty of friends to write and correct us, to whom we are greatly obliged, of course! But there are some who are so afraid that we might be puffed up that they will not tell us even though they get a blessing from us. At any rate, be just, be grateful and let the servant of God know that his Master has blessed his message to your soul.

If it is not due to the minister that you should join the Church and help in its work, I think it is due to our fellow workers. Some of them are working for Christ with all their might and in the schools and elsewhere they are fainting for lack of helpers. Let me tell you what you are like. It is a hot autumn day and a man is reaping. The sweat pours from his face as he bonds to his task, and he fears that he will never get to the end of the field. And all the time you are pleasantly occupied leaning over a gate and saying to yourself, "That is an uncommonly good laborer." Or, perhaps, instead of doing that, you are saying, "Why, he does not handle the sickle properly! I could show him a better way of reaping." But as you never attempt to show us, we have only your own word to go by—and you must excuse us for being a little skeptical on the subject! The work of the Church is generally left to a few earnest folk. Is that right? Is it right that a *few* should do all the work, while many others, who profess to belong to Christ, are doing nothing at all? Let that not be *your* case—if you have given yourselves to the Lord, give yourselves to His Church—according to His will.

Think again, what a lack of fellowship there will be if those who have given themselves to the Lord do not also give themselves to His people. Possibly you ask, "What should I gain by joining the Church?" That is a miserable question to ask! I will answer it by asking another—Do you know how much you will lose by *not* joining the Church? You will lose the satisfaction of having done your Lord's will. You will lose the joy of fellowship with your Brothers and Sisters in Christ. You will lose the opportunity of helping, by your example, the weak ones of the flock. Your question should not be, "What should I gain for myself?" but, "What can I do for others?" And the answer should be, "I will join the Church because this is the will of God and there I shall be of benefit to my fellow Christians."

In the third place, you should follow the example of these Macedonian Believers and *give yourself both to the Lord and to His Church*. Put the two together and thus begin to place yourself wholly in the line of God's will. Joining the Church without being the Lord's, no matter from whatever motive it is done, is a course of action fraught with great danger to the

soul, for none are more dead than those who only have a name to live. On the other hand, much blessing is missed if those who are the Lord's do not unite themselves with His people.

If you have given yourself to the Lord, give yourself, next, to His people, that you may, with them, bear witness for Christ. Here is a certain number of people who, with all their faults, are the true followers of Christ. Join them and say, "I, too, am a follower of Christ." That is what membership with the Church means. It is as if you should say, "If the world is divided into two camps, I am on the side of King Jesus, and under His banner I will fight as one of those who bear witness to the Truths of God that He has revealed."

Do it, next, to spread the Gospel. Everybody is needed in this service, today, for the clear light of the Gospel is sadly obscured in many places. We cannot all be preachers, for if all were preachers, where would be the hearers? But we need everybody to be talking about Christ, by lips and life, by the printed and the spoken word—telling about salvation by the precious blood for all who believe, forgiveness through the Grace of God for the guilty, renovation by the Holy Spirit for the depraved. Come, then, and give yourselves to the Lord, and then to His Church in order that you may spread the Gospel!

Do this, again, to maintain the Church. Nothing in the world is dearer to God's heart than His Church. Therefore, being His, let us also belong to it that by our prayers, our gifts and our labors, we may support and strengthen it. If those who are Christ's refrained, even for a generation, from numbering themselves with His people, there would be no visible Church, no ordinances maintained and, I fear, very little preaching of the Gospel. Therefore follow the Macedonian example for the sake of the Church.

And finally, do it that you may grow in love and continue to prove your love to your Lord and His Church. And also that you may continue to live unto the Lord and increase your life by mingling with others who are alive unto God. My dear friend, who is now lying so ill, of whom I have told you, does not regret that he joined the Church, for, being a commercial traveler, he had opportunities of preaching Christ in different places. And that he might render the best possible service to his Lord, he always lived wherever his pastor told him to live, seeing that his business interests did not tie him down to any particular place. If there was no Church in a town, he went and lived there till he had raised one! Then he moved off to another spot and founded another Church. And so he continued to spread the knowledge of his Lord and Master! He is now lying between life and death and if he is raised up, again, it will be a miracle—yet perhaps the Lord will do that work of healing if He has yet further service for our Brother on earth. [The Brother referred to has been raised up, as by a miracle. His recovery was a great encouragement to many as they prayed for their Pastor's restoration.] Though he is so ill, he does not regret anything that he has done, but only wishes that it had been in his power, as it was in his will, to do still more for his Master! Those who are about to

be welcomed into the Church, as we gather around the Communion Table, may regret it if they are not good men and true, but if they have first given themselves to the Lord, they will never regret the step they are now taking in identifying themselves with His Church.

The sum of all that I have said is this—let all who are not the Lord's come and, first of all, give themselves to Him and then give themselves to His people and to His service. And let those of us who are already Christ's, keep together and fulfill our vows more than ever we have done—and so prove continually that we have given ourselves to the Lord and to His people, according to His will. Thus shall God be magnified, Christ glorified, His Church increased and the world blessed. God grant it, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—2 Corinthians 8.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—427, 661, 944.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:

MY DEAR FRIENDS—The last month of the year is upon us, and mercy, like a river, continues to flow side by side with the pathway of our lives. It is for us to abide faithful to our Lord and to His Truth since He is always faithful to His promise and to His Covenant. We should be foolish, indeed, if we sought for other comfort or confidence than that which we daily find in Jehovah, our God. In HIM let us remain steadfast and immovable while life remains.

I hope I am climbing the hill of returning strength. As yet I have hardly crept upward enough to be quite sure that I am, on the whole, a little above where I was when I left home. My publishers wished to begin the year with a portrait, but I submitted to be taken off—the result is too painful. I do not think that any of my friends would wish to see the picture twice. To those who meet me I do not appear to be much the worse for wear, but when I sit down before the camera, the unflattering sun puts down details of countenance which it would not be pleasing to remember. So the publishers must wait a little, as they will, right cheerfully.

I mention this that I may ask a continuance of the prayers of the sermon readers. I am anxious to be soon in my place, or at least to be making progress toward fitness for it. Meanwhile, may our Lord use these printed sermons for the good of His Church and cause!

Yours very truly,
C. H. Spurgeon,
Mentone, December 5, 1891.

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

A WARRANT FOR YOUR APPREHENSION
NO. 2235

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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***"The word of the Lord is against you."
Zephaniah 2:5.***

The word of the Lord was against the land to which these words were spoken. The whole verse reads, "Woe unto the inhabitants of the seacoast, the nation of the Cherethites! The word of the Lord is against you; O Canaan, the land of the Philistines, I will even destroy you, that there shall be no inhabitant." This contest could have only one end, for behind "the word of the Lord" was the Lord Himself. "Woe unto him that strives with his Maker!" Who shall dare to oppose His sovereign will? All forces are at His command and they are foolish, indeed, who say to Him, "What are You doing?" I have not come here, however, to speak to you simply about the land of the Philistines and the sinners who dwelt there. The burden of my sermon is concerning men and women who are now living and to whom I may truthfully say, "The Word of the Lord is against you." May you wake up to see the truth of this terrible sentence and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, be at once moved to flee from the wrath to come!

The Philistines were one of the Canaanite nations and they were so prominent that they gave their name to the whole country. Palestine was the land of the Philistines. These people had a fine physical development and among them were persons of unusual stature. There were giants in their cities—Goliath of Gath is the one most familiar to us because of his encounter with David—but there were many others. They were, moreover, a very warlike race. When God brought His people out of Egypt into the land of promise, the five lords of the Philistines were to be destroyed and their cities were to be taken by the Israelites. But they were not destroyed and neither were their cities captured, for the Israelites had not faith enough and the Philistines were men of courage and stubbornly defended their country. They even came to be the oppressors of Israel and, becoming a great and powerful nation, held the Hebrews in subjection for many a year. Even when Israel was strong and brought Philistia under tribute, the Philistines constantly revolted and harassed the Israelites. They were always against God and against God's people—and though Jehovah waited long and patiently, that they might have space for repentance, yet they repented not. When this prophecy was given, their cup was full. They had so sinned against God that, at last, the day of their doom came and

the Prophet Zephaniah, in the name of God, said to them, "The word of the Lord is against you."

I do not know that anybody else was against them. They were a people who feared nobody and, for many years, when they were attacked, first by one and then by another, they held their own. They had strongly-fenced cities, some of which stood, after the time of Christ, even in the age of the Crusaders, so that they had no reason to fear the other nations of the earth. They could maintain their rights against all comers and it seemed as if they would never be moved. But prosperity is often deceitful. Their fancied security was only like a thin crust over a lava bed—and the volcano lay beneath ready to burst forth at any moment.

They had one overwhelming cause for dread, though they knew it not. They could conquer all nations, but a foe was marching upon them, against which they would fight in vain. When the Prophet delivered the message, "The word of the Lord is against you," he rang the knell of their doom. What an adversary is this, "The word of the Lord"! This enemy is more powerful than Egypt, or Assyria, or any of the tribes of men on the face of the earth. It is more terrible, too, than the voice of the storm. Many times the Lord had thus scattered those that opposed themselves against Him—"The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave His voice; hail stones and coals of fire. Yes, He sent out His arrows, and scattered them; and He shot out lightning and discomfited them." Those who have the Word of the Lord against them have an enemy to fear more dreadful than the most fearful convulsion of Nature, more terrible than the simoom of the desert, the sirocco of the plain, or the Euroclydon of the sea! The Prophet does not attempt to show the Philistines by what instrumentality God would break them in pieces, whether by plague, or famine, or pestilence, or war. He simply says, "The word of the Lord is against you." That is enough. He states the cause—the effects are sure to follow.

Today, as the result of the warfare mentioned in my text, Philistia is swept away and its cities are destroyed. Gaza and Ekron, Ashdod and Askelon have perished by the judgment of God. I have not time to give you the evidence of travelers to prove that the prophecy against them has been kept to the very letter. Where it seemed as if it had failed, there has been only a more complete fulfillment of the sentence against the Lord's enemies.

My main business at this time, is not, however, with the Philistines. God's Word is against a good many other people besides them and I am going to try to talk to some of them in words of solemn warning. My message to many must be, "The Word of the Lord is against you." Oh, that God may help me so to speak that your life may be changed and that the Word of God may be against you no longer! Hearken, then, to this word, you that are living in sin, you that are refusing the Savior, you that are delaying the time of repentance, you that have backslidden, you that are opposing the Gospel—"The Word of the Lord is against you." I would like to get hold of some man who is in this terrible condition of rebellion against God and hold him by the hand while I speak to him, in a kind and

friendly and fraternal way, this solemn word of warning—"The Word of the Lord is against you."

First, I shall simply state the general fact, that *it is so*—the Word of the Lord is really against many men and women. Secondly, I shall endeavor to make it clear that if you are living with the Word of the Lord against you, *it is a very terrible thing*. And, thirdly, if you are awakened to see your danger, I shall try to set before you *what can be done in the matter*.

I. First, concerning many people, my text is literally true, "the Word of the Lord is against you." It is so. Just as surely and as sorrowfully as we can say, today, that the law of England is against some of the people in England, we can affirm that the Word of the Lord is against many of the inhabitants of the earth. The Word of the Lord will not, *cannot* change—and there it stands, bearing testimony against many, who, in due time, unless they become partakers of the Grace of the Lord Jesus, shall be overwhelmed and destroyed without remedy!

I am quite sure that "the Word of the Lord" is against some of you, because *you are against the Word of the Lord*. There is war between you and this wonderful Book. You do not enjoy the reading of it, no, perhaps, you have even come to hate it! You oppose it—possibly you even wish there were no Bible. Perhaps you have been drinking in theories of Inspiration that make it to be practically no Bible—deposing it from its rightful position as a full and authoritative guide in all matters of faith and practice. If you do not accept it as such, you are against it! If this is true of you, I fear that it is because you do not understand the Bible. God's Word carries within itself the evidence of its Truth. It teaches men who are not encased in prejudice. It enlightens those who will open their eyes to see. You cannot be against it unless you have a clear suspicion that it is against you! The fact is, the Bible does not please you—it does not let you sin with impunity—it presents to you a way of salvation that does not pander to your pride, or flatter your intellect. Therefore, you do not like the Book. "The Word of the Lord is against you." Now, be you sure of this, that if you are against the Word of the Lord, it is because the Word of the Lord is against you.

Again, I am sure that the Bible is against you, for you do not care to read it. Your conscience will be with me when I urge this reason, for many of you know well that you have a strange distaste for the Bible. Can you tell me why, in some countries, Romanists are forbidden to read the Scriptures? Why do the priests or their emissaries take from the people the Bibles which the booksellers have scattered? The reason is to be sought for in the false teaching and superstitious observances of the Church of Rome! If you went into a shop to buy an article and the first thing that the man did was to turn down the gas or blow out the candle, you would say to yourself, "He is going to sell me bad wares and he does not want me to have too much light lest I should find him out."

The reason why the priest of the Catholic church is against the Bible is because the Bible is against *him*. Now it is just so with you. You would read the Book willingly enough if you were agreed with it, but because it is too truthful, too faithful and exposes your faults too much, therefore you

do not like it and you do not read it. How long is it since some of you have read even a *chapter* of Scripture? How long is it since you have thought over one gracious text? Oh, my dear Friends, if I probe you, if I press this matter upon some of you, it will be clear enough that the Word of God is against you, for you, yourself, know that it is and, therefore, do not read it. You do not want to be plagued by it. It condemns your sins. It disturbs your false security. It robs you of your sleep in evil. "The Word of the Lord is against you"—your neglect of the Word shows that this is true.

And truly the Word of the Lord must be against you, for it must be against sin and *you delight in sin*. If you live in sin and love sin, should God send you a Book to pacify your conscience in such a state? If that which is unjust, intemperate and unholy, is hidden in your heart, and is practiced in your life, would you expect the Holy Spirit to write a Book to help you on in such a way as that? It is blasphemy to think that it could be so! All through the Book sin is uniformly and universally condemned, from the day when Adam was driven out of the Garden because of his transgression, until the flood came upon guilty man because "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." On Sinai the same Truth was thundered out. This was the burden of the Prophets' messages. The Word of God is always against sin and many times the warning is given, "The soul that sins, it shall die." If you are a sinner steeped in sin, depend upon it that this Book is against you and ought to be against you You could not wish it to be otherwise if you are a right-minded person. You will say, "Whatever I may be, I do not want the Bible tampered with, to make it suit my ungodly life, nor do I wish Holy Scripture to favor me in an evil pursuit."

This Book must be against some of you because *you have refused Christ*. God has given His dear Son to die to save men. He has appointed the one way of salvation to be through faith in the precious blood of Christ. If you will not have the appointed way. If you refuse the ordained Savior, this Book may well quarrel with you, for you quarrel with God! What? The blood of His dear Son given to redeem and yet you reject it? Mercy dressed in crimson to save you and yet you fly from it? Love Incarnate in a bleeding Savior and yet you spurn it? Perhaps you imagine that you are good enough to be saved without Christ, but what infamous pride this is on the part of a poor sinful worm of the dust! Perhaps your whole confidence is in your own good works and you hope they will be found sufficient without the blood of Calvary—that is presumptuous arrogance and vain conceit for a man who is born in sin and shaped in iniquity! Truly "the Word of the Lord" cannot side with you!

If it is given to reveal Christ as the Savior of men, it cannot take the part of him who refuses that Savior, slights the blood of Christ and does despite to the Spirit of Grace. Oh, my dear Friend, when I used to read the Bible and had not yet looked to Christ, how sternly it used to speak to me! It had an angry look. It threatened me. It seemed to draw a sharp sword and thrust it into my heart! I bless the Bible for being severe with my unbelief! It was the wound of a friend which it gave me—when I was wounded, I fled to Christ for cure. If the Word of God were not against you

in your rejection of Christ, it could not be the Word of God and, if you did not know it to be against you, it would be an unhappy thing for you to be rocked in the cradle of unbelief and allowed to remain far from God without a warning. Until you believe in Christ, be you sure of this—"the Word of the Lord is against you!"

Even if you do not read God's Word and thus discover that it is against you, *your conscience tells you that it ought to be*. Many men and women who are sitting here, if they did but begin to think, would say, "I must be wrong. God's Book, which is Truth, itself, must be against me." Men will not allow conscience to speak, but if they do, it soon bears testimony in the same line as God's own Word, for you cannot very readily make your conscience a false witness. There are some who preach, today, that all men will be saved, whether they believe in Christ or not. I remember what a certain hearer said to a minister who preached that doctrine—"Sir, if what you have preached today is true, we do not need you. Indeed, we do not need any minister at all—we can get along all right without one. And if what you have preached is *not* true, we do not need *you*—so in either case we have no need of your ministrations." The hearer knew that what the minister had preached was not the Truth of God—conscience confirmed the declarations of the Word of God.

The Word of God would be true, however, whether conscience confirmed it or not, but conscience does tell men that it cannot be the same with the wicked as with the righteous—it cannot be the same with those who reject the Savior as with those who accept Him. You cannot silence that voice within the heart! A Unitarian minister who preached that wild doctrine of universal salvation which is so popular just now, once met an old-fashioned Baptist preacher who was not a well-educated man, but who had a crowded congregation—while his learned friend had only a dozen or two to hear him eloquently discourse. The Unitarian said, "I cannot make out how it is that there is such a difference in our congregations—you get so many to hear you, and I get so few. I preach a very pleasing doctrine. I tell the people that all will be right with them all at last. I do not worry them with any doctrines of repentance and faith and Atonement—and yet they will not come to hear me.

"You preach a very dreary doctrine and you tell the people that unless they repent they shall perish and be cast into Hell, and yet they crowd your place to hear you. How is that?" "Well," said the old man, "I think it is, my Friend, because they have a shrewd suspicion that what I say is true, and that what you say is not true." There he hit the nail on the head! It is so. The conscience of men bids them distrust the word which tells them that there will be no difference between the righteous and the wicked! God has somehow written on the heart of man this judgement—"Sin must be punished. It cannot be the same with the godly and the ungodly at the last." Hear that voice of your conscience! Listen to it and it will tell you that "the Word of the Lord is against you."

One thing more. You who live in sin and will not have a Savior may be sure that "the Word of the Lord is against you." *Your efforts to harden your heart prove it*. The struggle you have to make in order to keep all things

quiet within your own bosom leaves no room for doubt that, "the Word of the Lord is against you." Sometimes, when you are being spoken to about your soul, you do not like it. You feel irritable. You make some jest, or you utter some blasphemy, or repeat some old worn-out slander to stiffen yourself to reject the Word of God. And when you get home it takes you all your time to press down the sparks which the Gospel has kindled in your heart! You are kept very busy trying to stamp them out, for you know that you have some inflammable stuff in your soul—and you are afraid that there will be a fire within. If you did not think the Word of God was against you, you would not have to make such a vigorous effort to prevent its having its due effect upon your mind! Oh, that you would yield, young man! Oh, that you would let God's Word do its will with you, young woman! Oh, all you of whom it is true—"The Word of the Lord is against you"—I pray that you would let it break you in pieces, wound you, kill you and then make you alive and heal you!

II. In the second place, I want to say that if "the Word of the Lord is against you," IT IS A VERY TERRIBLE THING. When the word of Pharaoh was against the Israelites, they suffered cruel bondage, but the Word of the Lord was stronger than the word of the mighty despot—and when He spoke by Moses and Aaron, His people were brought out free. When the word of King Saul was against David, he was hunted like a partridge upon the mountains. But the Word of the Lord was confirmed to him and he was delivered from the hand of his enemy and, at last, seated on the throne. When the word of Nebuchadnezzar was against the three Hebrew youths, they were cast into the burning fiery furnace—but the Lord delivered them, as He also delivered Daniel when the word of Darius was against him. But when "the Word of the Lord is against you," its judgment is more to be dreaded than the bondage of Egypt, more to be feared than the fiery furnace or the den of lions, for there is none that can deliver you from the power of the Lord, whose Word has gone forth against you. If this is your case, you are truly in a terrible state!

If "the Word of the Lord is against you," you have great cause for trembling, for *it cannot be bribed*. Many a wealthy man has escaped the punishment he deserved because he has used his silver and his gold judiciously. It cannot be so easily done, now, in this country, as it used to be, though there is still a gift that blinds the eyes and many a man of position has escaped his deserts because of his wealth. But you cannot bribe the Word of God, though there are some who seem to try to do it! They live a whole life regardless of God and His Word, amassing money by fair means or foul, and then, when they cannot use it further, they leave it for some religious purpose in the hope of thus meriting favor with God, taking care all the while, generally, to have their own name lastingly associated with the gift! But there is nothing which you can give that will be taken by the Word of the Lord as a payment for your wrong. It will speak and it will effect its purpose in spite of all your bribes!

If "the Word of the Lord is against you," you may well be dismayed as you remember that *it will never be changed*. You cannot, by any possibility, so long as you are what you are, make it cease to be against you! If a

man is against me, today, he may be my friend tomorrow. The wind does not always blow from the same quarter. Tides that flow will also ebb, but God's Word never changes. From everlasting to everlasting it never turns an inch aside from the straight path. If you remain the same and that Word is against you, it will be against you in life and against you in death—against you at the Day of Judgement—and against you through all eternity. Oh, my dear Hearer, it is a dreadful thing to have this immutable, unchanging Word of God against you!

It is a terrible position, again, to have the Word of the Lord against you because *it cannot be escaped*. You may get away from the Queen's writ by flying to the Continent. You may escape a warrant of arrest by fleeing to certain countries, though I scarcely know where you can *now* go—but how can you escape from the Word of God? That Word changed chaos into order! That Word came into the thick darkness and there was light! "He spoke, and it was done." The Word of the Lord can come into your bedchamber. If you journey to the ends of the earth, the Word of God can find you out, even though you never read it! It can reach you even if you should become a seven-fold infidel! You cannot change the threat by disbelieving it, nor escape the vengeance by professing that there is no such thing! The Psalmist's words about God's Omnipresence apply, also, to the Word of the Lord—"Where shall I go from Your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from Your Presence? If I ascend up into Heaven, You are there. If I make my bed in Hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Your hands lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me." The Word of the Lord is everywhere—it cannot be escaped.

Furthermore, it is a terrible thing to have the Word of the Lord against you, for *it cannot be resisted*. If a man is against you, you can fight it out with him. You may oppose force to force and cunning to cunning—but if the Word of the Lord is against you, what power have you? By His Word were the heavens made! By His Word the heavens and the earth shall pass away and be dissolved! How can you fight against the Word of God? As well might Pharaoh fight with the plagues that Jehovah sent upon him. God's Word is too strong for you. "Woe unto him that strives with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth," but strive not you with Him who has all power and whose Word is "quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

And now let me speak to you very solemnly. If "the Word of the Lord is against you," *what a state you must be in*, for God is Love and He will not say a word against a man if He can help it. God is gracious, tender, loving—and when God Himself has to be against a man, the condition of that man's heart must be something very terrible—his state of life must be so depraved as to demand that Love should give place to Justice. Why, this Book of God was written for sinners, written to cheer penitent hearts, and if *it* is against you, what a state you must be in! Here is food prepared for an invalid—if you cannot eat it—if it turns your stomach, how diseased

you must be! If the medicine becomes poison; if the sweet is sour; if the Light of God, itself, is darkness to you, O wretched madman, you have come into an evil plight, indeed! God have mercy upon you! If God's Word is against you, you are in an awful state, indeed!

Not only is this true, but *what a sad state you will soon be in*! Whether you believe it or not, you will soon be dead and, dying, you will pass into another world. And, being there, you will come to the seat of judgment to be tried for the things done in the body. You will need witnesses in your favor and this Book will be called to give its testimony. What will it say about you? If the Book could speak, it would say, "Great God, he never read me! I bear witness to his neglect of You, for he never read me." And many a text of Scripture would rise up in that last day and say, "I was preached to him! His mother quoted me to him. His sister wrote this in a letter. A friend sent him this verse and pleaded with him to take it to heart, but he heeded none of them." If "the Word of the Lord is against you," the Law of God will say, "He knew me and he broke me!" The Gospel will say, "He knew me and he refused me!" The Bible, itself, will say, "He understood something of me, but he ridiculed me."

It will go hard with a man who has such testimony against him at the bar of the Great Judge. Let me have the Bible on my side and I will fearlessly face the whole world. But if the Bible is against me, I must be conquered. If it is against me in the Last Day, I must be speechless. He whom the Word condemns has the foretaste of that final condemnation which shall be his in the next state unless, by Sovereign Grace, he shall be constrained to turn to God before it is too late! I cannot speak as I would on this awful theme, but I am trying to plead with you from my very soul. Oh, that God the Holy Spirit would send home the Word of God to many!

Remember, my dear Hearers, there is not a wasted word in this Book. Whatever God says will happen to the ungodly, will happen to them. Judgment is God's strange work, but what He threatens, He will certainly perform. How terrible will it be when the threats of His Word come to pass! See, even in the verse from which our text is taken, a glimpse of what it may mean. First, there is woe. "Woe unto the inhabitants of the seacoast." Then there is destruction, "I will even destroy you." When the woe is past, there is utter destruction—"There shall be no inhabitant." Oh, the woe of having the Word of the Lord against you! Behold, again, how those cities which Christ would have blessed so highly were cursed when they rejected His message. "Woe unto you, Chorazin! Woe unto you, Bethsaida! Woe unto you, Capernaum!" These repeated, "woes," sound like a funeral knell! Today those cities are wholly swept away because the Word of the Lord was against them.

Learn, also, from the history of Jerusalem, how surely the Word of the Lord against a man or against a city is fulfilled. Christ was rejected by the people of Jerusalem, so that it is not surprising that, "when He was come near, He beheld the city and wept over it," for He knew what a terrible doom awaited the guilty capital. Well might that demented man, of whom Josephus tells us, go through the streets of the city, when it was being besieged by Titus, and call out in tones of horror, "Woe, woe to Jerusa-

lem!" Rest assured that the Lord will "render to every man according to his deeds." Those who obey His Word shall be forever blessed. But those who have the Word of the Lord against them shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the Presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.

I have been accused, sometimes, of picturing the wrath to come in too horrible a way, but I have never described it more sternly than Christ, Himself. It was His gentle lips that declared, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." It was He who spoke of a place "where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched." It was He who uttered the most awful words about the wrath to come. I pray you, do not wish to know, in your own experience, all that "the wrath to come" may mean! Flee from it! Seek rather to know what *salvation* means—and God help you to obtain it even now! If I am addressing any person who feels that the Word of God is against him, I do beseech and conjure him not to rest any longer in that condition! If you have a quarrel with God's Word, *you are wrong*! God's Word cannot be in error. If the Word of God offends you, you must be offended, or, rather, you have offended against it. It will never beg your pardon—you must beg its pardon, or, rather, seek forgiveness from the Lord whose Word is against you, and who is, Himself, also against you! Said I not truly that when "the Word of the Lord is against you," it is a terrible thing? If that is your position, may it soon be changed!

III. Now I come to my third and last point. If it is true that "the Word of the Lord is against you" and that it is a terrible thing to be in such a state, WHAT CAN BE DONE IN THE MATTER? Is there any way of escape, any loophole through which deliverance may come? If the Word of God cannot be bribed, changed, escaped, or resisted, what are we to do, since we cannot sit calmly beneath the curse of God?

I think that the first thing to be done, if you would escape out of this direful position, is to *confess that you are wrong*. There is a writ out against you. You have run away from it. Come home! Submit yourself to the court. Be willing to be put under arrest. There is no other right course. I knew one who, being charged with embezzlement, fled the country. He still has to stay away. If he had submitted himself to whatever punishment might have come upon him, he would have passed through it long ago. But now he still remains under the censure of the law and cannot return. Now, you runaway from God, come home at once! Sinner, against whom the Lord has issued His warrant, yield yourself to the officer of Divine Justice at this moment! You need not move from your present position—but just where you are—humbly whisper in your heart, "Lord, I am guilty. I submit to Your Word. Whatever Your Word says, is true, and I will no longer fight against it. But here, bowing my head, I confess that the wrong is with me, not with Your Word. I confess that." Have you made this confession? Then it is well, for if, "the Word of the Lord is against you," your only hope lies in taking the side of the Word of the Lord and against yourself!

But when a man gives himself up to justice, he has next to stand his trial. If "the Word of the Lord is against you," it is against you in your pre-

sent position, in your present character and you must *change your position*. Come, then, and escape the hostility of the Word of the Lord by altering your attitude towards it! If you have loved sin, repent and hate it. May God the Holy Spirit work in you a loathing of evil things which the Word condemns, for when you are no longer a sin-lover, but a sin-*loather*, the Word that was against you will be for you! God has no thunderbolts for those who hate their sins. If your soul and sin are divorced, your soul and mercy may be married, but not otherwise. When you give up your sin, God will give up His suit against you. If you turn not, He will whet His sword—but if you turn, He will sheathe that sword and speak comfortably to you.

Another change must take place. You must no longer stand in yourself, but in Another. The Word of the Lord is against you, but what if you could change places with Another, on whose side the Word of the Lord is, and in whom you could lawfully and rightly stand? What if Christ stood in your place and you should stand in Christ's place? Then this Word would not condemn you, but it would acquit you! And more than that, it would defend you against all your adversaries. Behold a miracle of mercy! Christ Jesus, the innocent Son of God, dies for the guilty sons of men, that they may be covered with His righteousness and accepted in His name! This is the pith and marrow of the Gospel—"I stand in Christ's place because He stood in mine. The Law cannot be against Him, for He fulfilled it and made it honorable. The Word of the Lord cannot be against Him, since He hid it in His heart, that He might not sin against God. And if I come to be in Him, where the Word is hidden, it can no longer be against me."—

"Confounded, Lord, I wrap my face,
And hang my guilty head,
Ashamed of all my wicked ways,
The hateful life I've led.
I yield—by mighty love subdued;
Who can resist its charms?
And throw myself, by wrath pursued,
Into my Savior's arms."

Let me say to you further, that if you have, up to now, had the Word of the Lord against you, *be very careful to be right with the Word*. In seeking to be saved, avoid, above everything, a sham salvation. When a man has a bad sore, it is a mischievous thing to let it heal with proud flesh in it. To cover over a wound may be to create seven dangers instead of one. Come to the Word of God and search yourself. Use the lances, take the probe, examine into the depth of your wound and sore. Let your prayer be, "O God, let me never be comforted apart from Your Word. Let me have no foundation apart from Christ to build upon! Let me never think that I am saved unless Christ is my Savior." My dear Hearer you would be better off hungry than to eat poisoned meat! And you would be better off in despair than get comfort that does not spring out of the Word of God! If you think that you are saved and yet find that "the Word of the Lord is against you," you may be sure that you are *not* saved and should hasten to cast away your false confidence as quickly as possible! You can never be saved unless you are right with the Word of God—

"This is the judge that ends the strife,
Where wit and reason fail.
My guide to everlasting life
Through all this gloomy vale."

One more thing and I have done. If to have the Word of God against you is an overwhelming calamity, *how happy are they who have the Word of the Lord with them*! I have heard of two Romanists, a man and his wife, who purchased their first copy of the Scriptures. The man began to read it and, one night, as he sat beside the fire with the open Book, he said, "Wife, if this Book is right, we are *wrong*." He continued reading and a few days afterwards he said, "Wife, if this Book is right, we are *lost*." More eager, now, than ever to see what the Word of the Lord was, he studied the Book until, one night, he joyfully exclaimed, "Wife, if this Book is true, we are *saved*." The same word that showed them that they were undone, revealed also the Gospel of salvation! This is the glory of the Word of God—it is against us until it leads us out of our sins and then we find that death becomes the gate of life to our souls—and the Word of God is on our side!

The same Word that reveals the terrors of the Lord, also says, "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." I believe on the Son of God as my Savior, therefore I have everlasting life! The Word of the Lord is now for me and assures my deliverance. It further says, "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world, through Him, might be saved." When I read this, my heart sings for joy, for the Word of God which was against me, now justifies me! Again it says, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." As I tremble because it is written, "He that believes not shall be damned," I rejoice because the same Word says, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." I believe, and I have been baptized—therefore I am saved! If you have the Word of God for you, you need no other advocate. Even your own conscience may be lawfully overridden by the Word of the Lord. "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart and knows all things."

This is the sum of the whole matter! Come just as you are and trust Christ as your Savior! Leave your sin and seek after holiness. Have done with your own willfulness and seek the meek and lowly mind that was in the Man of Sorrows. In a word, come and lie at Jesus' feet and lift your tearful eyes to His loving gaze, and say—

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On Your kind arms I fall.
Be You my strength and righteousness,
My Jesus, and my All."

Trust Christ! Trust Him now! Trust Him only! Trust Him wholly! Trust Him forever and you shall be eternally saved! As surely as the Bible is true, you are safe for time and for eternity if you believe in Jesus!

God bless this feeble word of mine! I have tried to preach the Word of God faithfully, that, at the day of account, I may be clear of the blood of all men. I shall not, then, be asked whether I spoke eloquently, or whether I had energy of mind or power of voice—but I shall be asked if I warned you to escape from sin and seek the Savior! And that, by the Grace of God, I have done to the utmost of my power. I wish that I knew how to

persuade men to seek the Lord. Oh, that I could learn the art of reading the hearts of men! What do you want with fine speeches? Escape for your lives! What do you want with polished phrases and rounded periods? "Lay hold on eternal life." Repent! Believe the Gospel and be saved! O God, the Holy Spirit, lead men to this blessed decision at this very moment, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Jeremiah 26.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—501, 520, 589.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:

BELOVED READERS—This sermon was preached with great anxiety for the souls of those who heard it. And now that it comes forth from the press, I again lift my heart to God with the prayer that it may awaken many who are slumbering in indifference. Believing readers will greatly oblige me if they will place their copies in the way of persons for whose salvation they are pleading with God. It may be that the Lord will use this discourse to the end they so much desire. My silent Sabbaths breed in me a great hunger for the salvation of those to whom I can only speak through the press. Oh, that my Lord would honor me by making me fruitful in this winter of my weakness!

I have a word for this season which I must not forget. Christmas is near. Our orphan children must have their festival, though I cannot have the joy of presiding at it. Will my kind friends remember my family of 500, keep up the general funds, and add some little treat for the boys and girls?

I am sending a Christmas letter to all the subscribers whose names we have on our list, but as we may miss some, let them not feel that they are left out. I invite their thoughtful consideration of the matter. Direct to the Secretary, Stockwell Orphanage, Clapham Road, London, and thus gratify
Your old friend,
C. H. Spurgeon,
Mentone, December 12, 1891.

[Brother Spurgeon went Home to the Christ he loved so much on January 31, 1892—EOD.]

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

PRODIGAL LOVE FOR THE PRODIGAL SON
NO. 2236

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
DECEMBER 27, 1891,
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 29, 1891.

"And kissed him."
Luke 15:20.

IN the Revised Version, if you will kindly look at the margin, you will find that the text there reads, "and kissed him much." This is a very good translation of the Greek which might bear the meaning, "Kissed him earnestly," or, "Kissed him eagerly," or, "Kissed him often." I prefer to have it in very plain language and, therefore, adopt the marginal reading of the Revised Version, "Kissed him much," as the text of my sermon, the subject of which will be the overflowing love of God toward the returning sinner.

The first word, "and," links us on to all that had gone before. The parable is a very familiar one, yet it is so full of sacred meaning that it always has some fresh lesson for us. Let us, then, consider the preliminaries to this kissing. On the son's side, there was something, and on the father's side, much more. Before the prodigal son received these kisses of love, he had said in the far country, "I will arise and go to my father." He had, however, done more than that, otherwise his father's kiss would never have been upon his cheek. The resolve had become a *deed*—"He arose, and came to his father." A bushel full of resolutions is of small value—a single grain of practice is worth the whole. The determination to return home is good, but it is when the wandering boy begins the business of really carrying out the good resolve that he draws near the blessing. If any of you here present have long been saying, "I will repent. I will turn to God," leave off resolving and come to practicing! And may God, in His mercy, lead you both to repent and to believe in Christ!

Before the kisses of love were given, this young man was on his way to his father, but he would not have reached him unless his father had come the major part of the way. When you give God an inch, He will give you a mile. If you come a little way to Him, when you are "yet a great way off" He will run to meet you. I do not know that the prodigal saw his father, but his father saw him. The eyes of mercy are quicker than the eyes of repentance. Even the eyes of our faith are dim compared with the eyes of God's love. He sees a sinner long before a sinner sees Him!

I do not suppose that the prodigal traveled very fast. I should imagine that he came very slowly—

"With heavy heart and downcast eye,
With many a sob and many a sigh."

He was resolved to come, yet he was half afraid. But we read that his father *ran*. Slow are the steps of repentance, but swift are the feet of forgiveness! God can run where we can scarcely limp and if we are limping towards Him, He will run towards us. These kisses were given in a hurry. The story is narrated in a way that almost makes us realize that such was the case—there is a sense of haste in the very wording of it. His father "ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him"—kissed him eagerly! He did not delay a moment, for though he was out of breath, he was not out of love. "He fell on his neck, and kissed him much." There stood his son ready to confess his sin—therefore did his father kiss him all the more. The more willing you are to acknowledge your sin, the more willing is God to forgive you. When you make a clean breast of it, God will soon make a clear record of it. He will wipe out the sin that you willingly acknowledge and humbly confess before Him. He that was willing to use his lips for confession found that his father was willing to use his lips for kissing him!

See the contrast. There is the son, scarcely daring to think of embracing his father, yet his father has scarcely seen him before he has fallen on his neck! The condescension of God towards penitent sinners is very great. He seems to stoop from His Throne of Glory to fall upon the neck of a repentant sinner. *God* on the neck of a *sinner*! What a wonderful picture! Can you conceive it? I do not think you can, but if you cannot imagine it, I hope that you will *realize* it. When God's arm is about our neck, and His lips are on our cheek, kissing us much, then we understand more than preachers or books can ever tell us of His condescending love!

The father "saw" his son. There is a great deal in that word, "saw." He saw who it was. He saw where he had come from. He saw the swineherd's dress. He saw the filth upon his hands and feet. He saw his rags, saw his penitent look, saw what he had been, saw what he was and saw what he would soon be. "His father saw him." God has a way of seeing men and women that you and I cannot understand. He sees right through us at a glance, as if we were made of glass. He sees all our past, present and future.

"When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him." It was not with icy eyes that the father looked on his returning son. Love leaped into them and as he beheld him, he, "had compassion on him." That is, he felt for him. There was no anger in his heart towards his son. He had nothing but pity for his poor boy who had got into such a pitiable condition. It was true that it was all his own fault, but that did not come before his father's mind. It was the state that he was in—his poverty, his degradation—that pale face of his so wan with hunger that touched his father to the quick. And God has compassion on the woes and miseries of men. They may have brought their troubles on themselves and they have, indeed, done so.

But, nevertheless, God has compassion upon them. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not."

We read that the father, "ran." The compassion of God is followed by swift movements. He is slow to anger, but He is quick to bless. He does not take any time to consider how He shall show His love to penitent prodigals—that was all done long ago in the Eternal Covenant. He has no need to prepare for their return to Him—that was all done on Calvary. God comes flying in the greatness of His compassion to help every poor penitent soul—

"On cherub and on cherubim,
Full royally He rode!
And on the wings of mighty winds
Came flying all abroad."

And when He comes, He comes to kiss! Master Trapp says that if we had read that the father had *kicked* his prodigal son, we should not have been very much astonished. Well, I would have been very greatly astonished, seeing that the father in the parable was to represent God! But still, his son deserved all the rough treatment that some heartless men might have given and, had the story been only that of a selfish human father, it might have been written that, "as he was coming near, his father ran at him and kicked him." There are such fathers in the world, who seem as if they cannot forgive. If he had kicked him, it would have been no more than he had deserved. But no, what is written in the Bible stands true for all time and for every sinner—"He fell on his neck, and kissed him"—kissed him eagerly, kissed him much!

What does this much kissing mean? It signifies that when sinners come to God, He gives them a loving reception and a hearty welcome. If any of you, while I am speaking, shall come to God, expecting mercy because of the great Sacrifice of Christ, this shall be true of you as it has been true of many of us—"He kissed him much."

I. First, this much kissing means MUCH LOVE. It means much love truly *felt*, for God never gives an expression of love without feeling it in His infinite heart. God will never give a Judas kiss and betray those whom He embraces. There is no hypocrisy with God—He never kisses those for whom He has no love. Oh, how God loves sinners! You who repent and come to Him will discover how greatly He loves you! There is no measuring the love He bears towards you. He has loved you from before the foundation of the world and He will love you when time shall be no more! Oh, the immeasurable love of God to sinners who come and cast themselves upon His mercy!

This much kissing also means much love *manifested*. God's people do not always know the greatness of His love to them. Sometimes, however, it is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given to us. Some of us know, at times, what it is to be almost too happy to live! The love of God has been so overpoweringly experienced by us on some occasions that we have almost had to ask for a stay of the delight because we could

not endure any more! If the Glory had not been veiled a little, we would have died of excess of rapture, or happiness! Beloved, God has wondrous ways of opening His people's hearts to the manifestation of His Grace. He can pour in, not now and then a drop of His love, but great and mighty streams! Madame Guyon used to speak of the torrents of love that come swooping through the spirit, bearing all before them. The poor prodigal in the parable had so much love manifested to him that he might have sung of the torrents of his father's affection. That is the way God receives those whom He saves, giving them not a meager measure of Grace, but manifesting an overflowing love!

This much kissing means, further, much love *perceived*. When his father kissed him much, the poor prodigal knew, if never before, that his father loved him. He had no doubt about it. He had a clear perception of it. It is very frequently the case that the first moment a sinner believes in Jesus, he gets this "much" love. God reveals it to him and he perceives it and enjoys it at the very beginning. Think not that God always keeps the best wine for the last—He gives us some of the richest dainties of His table the first moment we sit there! I remember the joy that I had when first I believed in Jesus and, even now, in looking back upon it, the memory of it is as fresh as if it were but yesterday! Oh, I could not have believed that a mortal could be so happy after having been so long burdened and so terribly cast down! I did but look to Jesus on the Cross and the crushing load was immediately gone—and the heart which could only sigh and cry by reason of its burden, began to leap and dance and sing for joy! I had found in Christ all that I needed and I rested in the love of God at once. So may it be with you, also, if you will but return to God through Christ. It shall be said of you as of this prodigal, "The father saw him and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him in much love."

II. Secondly, this much kissing means MUCH FORGIVENESS. The prodigal had many sins to confess, but before he came to the details of them, his father had forgiven him. I love confession of sin after forgiveness. Some suppose that after we are forgiven we are never to confess, but, oh, Beloved, it is *then* that we confess most truly because we know the guilt of sin most really! Then do we plaintively sing—

"My sins, my sins, my Savior,
How sad on You they fall!
Seen through Your gentle patience,
I tenfold feel them all.
I know they are forgiven,
But still their pain to me
Is all the grief and anguish
They laid, my Lord, on Thee."

To think that Christ should have washed me from my sins in His own blood makes me feel my sin the more keenly and confess it the more humbly before God. The picture of this prodigal is marvelously true to the experience of those who return to God. His father kissed him with the kiss of forgiveness and yet, after that, the young man went on to say, "Father, I

have sinned against Heaven, and before you, and am no more worthy to be called your son." Do not hesitate, then, to acknowledge your sin to God, even though you know that in Christ it is all put away!

From this point of view, those kisses meant, first, "*Your sin is all gone* and will never be mentioned any more. Come to My heart, My son! You have grieved Me sorely and angered Me, but, as a thick cloud, I have blotted out your transgressions and as a cloud, your sins."

As the father looked upon him and kissed him much, there probably came another kiss which seemed to say, "*There is no soreness left*—I have not only forgiven, but I have forgotten, too. It is all gone, clean gone! I will never accuse you of it any more. I will never love you any the less. I will never treat you as though you were still an unworthy and untrustworthy person." Probably at that there came another kiss, for do not forgot that his father forgave him, "and kissed him much," to show that the sin was all forgiven.

There stood the prodigal, overwhelmed by his father's goodness, yet remembering his past life. As he looked on himself, and thought, "I still have these old rags on and I have just come from feeding the swine," I can imagine that his father would give him another kiss, as much as to say, "My boy, I do not remember the past. I am so glad to see you that *I do not see any filth on you, or any rags on you, either*. I am so delighted to have you with me once more that as I would pick up a diamond out of the mire and be glad to get the diamond, again, so do I pick you up, you are so precious to me." This is the gracious and glorious way in which God treats those who return to Him. As for their sin, He has put it away so that He will not remember it. He forgives like a God! Well may we adore and magnify His matchless mercy as we sing—

"In wonder lost, with trembling joy
We take the pardon of our God!
Pardon for crimes of deepest dye,
A pardon bought with Jesus' blood.
Who is pardoning God like Thee?
Or who has Grace so rich and free?"

"Well," asks one, "can such a wonderful change ever take place with *me*?" By the Grace of God it may be experienced by every person who is willing to return to God! I pray God that it may happen now and that you may get such assurance of it from the Word of God, by the power of His Holy Spirit, and from a sight of the precious blood of Christ shed for your redemption, that you may be able to say, "I understand it now! I see how He kisses all my sins away and when it rises, He kisses it away again! And when I think of it with shame, He gives me another kiss. And when I blush all over at the remembrance of my evil deeds, He kisses me again and again, to assure me that I am fully and freely forgiven." Thus the many kisses from the prodigal's father combined to make his wayward son feel that his sin was, indeed, all gone. They revealed much love and much forgiveness.

III. These repeated kisses meant, next, FULL RESTORATION. The prodigal was going to say to his father, "Make me as one of your hired servants." In the far country he had resolved to make that request, but his father, with a kiss, stopped him. By that kiss, *his sonship was acknowledged.* By it the father said to the wretched wanderer, "You are my son." He gave him such a kiss as he would only give to his own son. I wonder how many here have ever given such a kiss to *anyone*. There sits one who knows something of such kisses as the prodigal received. That father's girl went astray and, after years of sin, she came back worn out, to die at home. He received her, found her penitent and gladly welcomed her to his house. Ah, my dear Friend, you know something about such kisses as those!

And you, good woman, whose boy ran away, you can understand something about these kisses, too. He left you and you did not hear from him for years. And he went on in a very vicious course of life. When you did hear from him, it well-near broke your heart. And when he came back, you hardly knew him. Do you recollect how you took him in? You felt that you wished that he was the little boy you used to press to your bosom, but now he was grown up to be a big man and a great sinner—yet you gave him such a kiss and repeated your welcome so often that he will never forget it, nor will you forget it either. You can understand that this overwhelming greeting was like the father saying, "My boy, you are my son. Despite all that you have done, you belong to me. However far you have gone in vice and folly, I love you. You are bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh." In this parable Christ would have you know, poor Sinner, that God will acknowledge you if you come to Him confessing your sin through Jesus Christ. He will gladly receive you, for all things are ready against the day that you return—

"Spread for you the festal board,
See with richest dainties stored.
To your Father's bosom pressed,
Yet again a child confessed.
Never from his house to roam,
Come and welcome, sinner, come."

The father received his son with many kisses and so proved that his *prayer was answered*. Indeed, his father heard his prayer before he offered it! He was going to say, "Father, I have sinned," and to ask for forgiveness, but he got the mercy, and a kiss to seal it, before the prayer was presented! This also shall be true of you, O Sinner, who are returning to your God through Jesus Christ! You shall be permitted to pray and God will answer you. Hear it, poor, despairing Sinner, whose prayer has seemed to be shut out from Heaven! Come to your Father's bosom, right now, and He will hear your prayers and, before many days are over, you shall have the clearest proofs that you are fully restored to the Divine favor by answers to your intercessions that shall make you marvel at the Lord's loving kindness to you!

Further than this, you shall have all your *privileges restored*, even as this wandering young man was put among the children when he returned. As you see him now in the father's house, where he was received with the many kisses, he wears a son's robe, the family ring is on his finger and the shoes of the home are on his feet. He eats no longer swine's food, but children's bread! Even thus shall it be with you if you return to God! Though you look so foul and so vile—and really are even more defiled than you look—and though you smell so strongly of the hogs among which you have been living that some people's nostrils would turn up at you, your Father will not notice these marks of your occupation in the far country with all its horrible defilement! See how this father treats his boy. He kisses him and, kisses him again, because he knows his own child and, recognizing him as his child, and feeling his fatherly heart yearning over him, he gives him kiss after kiss. He kisses him much to make him know that he has full restoration.

In this repeated kissing we see, then, these three things—much love, much forgiveness and full restoration.

IV. But these many kisses meant even more than this. They revealed his father's EXCEEDING JOY. The father's heart is overflowing with gladness and he cannot restrain his delight. I think he must have shown his joy by *a repeated look*. I will tell you the way I think the father behaved towards his son who had been dead, but was alive again, who had been lost, but was found. Let me try to describe the scene. The father has kissed his son and he bids him sit down. Then he comes in front of him and looks at him, and feels so happy that he says, "I must give you another kiss." Then he walks away a minute, but he is back again before long, saying to himself, "Oh, I must give him another kiss!" He gives him another, for he is so happy. His heart beats fast. He feels very joyful. The old man would like the music to strike up. He wants to be at the dancing, but meanwhile he satisfies himself by a repeated look at his long-lost child. Oh, I believe that God looks at the sinner and looks at him again, and keeps on looking at him, all the while delighting in the very sight of him, when he is truly repentant, and comes back to his Father's house!

The repeated kiss meant, also, *a repeated blessing*, for every time he put his arms round him, and kissed him, he kept saying, "Bless you, oh, bless you, my boy!" He felt that his son had brought a blessing to him by coming back and he invoked fresh blessings upon his head. Oh, Sinner, if you did but know how God would welcome you and how He would look at you, and how He would bless you, surely you would at once repent and come to His arms and heart—and find yourself happy in His love!

The many kisses meant, also, *repeated delight*. It is a very wonderful thing that it should be in the power of a sinner to make God glad. He is the happy God, the Source and Spring of all happiness—what can we add to His blessedness? And yet, speaking after the manner of men, God's highest joy lies in clasping His willful Ephraims to His breast, when He has heard them bemoaning themselves, and has seen them arising and

returning to their home! God grant that He may see that sight, even now, and have delight because of sinners returning to Himself! Yes, we believe it shall be so because of His Presence with us and because of the gracious working of the Holy Spirit! Surely that is the teaching of the Prophet's words—"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." Think of the eternal God *singing* and remember that it is because a wandering sinner has returned to Him that He sings! He joys in the return of the prodigal and all Heaven shares in His joy!

V. I have not got through my subject yet. As we take a fifth look, we find that these many kisses mean OVERFLOWING COMFORT. This poor young man, in his hungry, faint and wretched state, having come a very long way, had not much heart in him. His hunger had taken all energy out of him and he was so conscious of his guilt that he had hardly the courage to face his father. So his father gives him a kiss, as much as to say, "Come, boy, do not be cast down; I love you."

"Oh, *the past, the past*, my Father!" he might moan, as he thought of his wasted years. But he had no sooner said that than he received another kiss, as if his father said, "Never mind the past. I have forgotten all about that." This is the Lord's way with His saved ones. Their past lies hidden under the blood of Atonement. The Lord says by His servant, Jeremiah, "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."

But then, perhaps, the young man looked down on his foul garments and said, *the present*, my Father, *the present*, what a dreadful state I am in!" And with another kiss would come the answer, "Never mind the present, my Boy. I am content to have you as you are. I love you." This, too, is God's word to those who are "accepted in the Beloved." In spite of all their vileness, they are pure and spotless in Christ, and God says of each one of them, "Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable, and I have loved you. Therefore, though in yourself you are unworthy, through My dear Son you are welcome to My home."

"Oh, but," the boy might have said, *"the future*, my Father, *the future*! What would you think if I should go astray again?" Then would come another holy kiss and his father would say, "I will see to the future, my Boy. I will make home so bright for you that you will never want to go away again." But God does more than that for us when we return to Him. He not only surrounds us with tokens of His love, but He says, concerning us, "They shall be My people, and I will be their God: and I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear Me forever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: 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." Furthermore, He says to each returning one, "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. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments, and do them."

Whatever there was to trouble the son, the father gave him a kiss to set it all right and, in like manner, our God has a love token for every time of doubt and dismay which may come to His reconciled sons. Perhaps one whom I am addressing says, "Even though I confess my sin and seek God's mercy, I shall still be in sore trouble, for through my sin I have brought myself down to poverty." "There is a kiss for you," says the Lord—"Your bread shall be given you, and your water shall be sure." "But I have even brought disease upon myself by sin," says another. "There is a kiss for you, for I am Jehovah-Rophi, the Lord that heals you, who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases." "But I am dreadfully down at the heel," says another. The Lord gives you, also, a kiss, and says, "I will lift you up and provide for all your needs. No good thing will I withhold from them that walk uprightly." All the promises in this Book belong to every repentant sinner who returns to God believing in Jesus Christ, His Son!

The father of the prodigal kissed his son much and thus made him feel happy then and there. Poor souls, when they come to Christ, are in a dreadful plight, and some of them hardly know where they are. I have known them talk a lot of nonsense in their despair and say hard and wicked things of God in their dreadful doubt. The Lord gives no answer to all that except a kiss, and then another kiss! Nothing puts the penitent so much at rest as the Lord's repeated assurance of His unchanging love. Such a one the Lord has often received, "and kissed him much," that He might fetch him up, even, from the horrible pit and set his feet upon a rock and establish his goings. The Lord grant that many whom I am addressing may understand what I am talking about!

VI. And now for our sixth head, though you will think I am getting to be like the old Puritans with these many heads. But I cannot help it, for these many kisses had many meanings—love, forgiveness, restoration, joy, comfort—were in them and, also, STRONG ASSURANCE.

The father kissed his son much to make him quite certain that it was *all real*. The prodigal, in receiving those many kisses, might say to himself, "All this love must be true, for a little while ago I heard the hogs grunt and now I hear nothing but the kisses from my dear father's lips." So his father gave him another kiss, for there was no way of convincing him that the first was real like repeating it—and if there lingered any doubt about the second, the father gave him yet a third. If, when the dream of old was doubled, the interpretation was sure—these repeated kisses left no room for doubt! The father renewed the tokens of his love that his son might be fully assured of its reality.

He did it that in the future it might *never be questioned*. Some of us were brought so low before we were converted that God gave us an excess of joy when He saved us, that we might never forget it. Sometimes the

devil says to me, "*You* are no child of God." I have long ago given up answering him, for I find that it is a waste of time to argue with such a crafty old liar as he is—he knows too much for me. But if I must answer him, I say, "Why, I remember when I was saved by the Lord! I can never forget even the very spot of ground where first I saw my Savior—then and there my joy rolled in like some great Atlantic billow and burst in mighty foam of bliss, covering all things. I cannot forget it." That is an argument which even the devil cannot answer, for he cannot make me believe that such a thing never happened. The Father kissed me much and I remember it full well. The Lord gives to some of us such a clear deliverance, such a bright, sunshiny day at our conversion, that, from that day, forward, we cannot question our state before Him but *must* believe that we are eternally saved!

The father put the assurance of this poor returning prodigal beyond all doubt. If the first kisses were given privately, when only the father and son were present, it is quite certain that, afterwards, he kissed him *before men*, where others could see him. He kissed him much in the presence of the household, that they, also, might not be calling in question that he was his father's child. It was a pity that the elder brother was not also there. You see he was away in the fields. He was more interested in the crops than in the reception of his brother. I have known such a one in modern days. He was a man who did not come out to weekly evening services. He was such a man of business that he did not come out on a Thursday night and the prodigal came home at such a time—and so the elder brother did not see the father receive him. If he lived now, he would probably not come to the Church Meetings—he would be too busy. So he would not get to know about the reception of penitent sinners. But the father, when he received that son of his, intended all to know, once and for all, that he was, indeed, his child! Oh, that you might get those many kisses even now! If they are given to you, you will have, for the rest of your life, strong assurance derived from the happiness of your first days.

VII. I have done when I have said that I think that here we have a specimen of the INTIMATE COMMUNION which the Lord often gives to sinners when they first come to Him. "His father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him much."

You see, this was *before the family fellowship*. Before the servants had prepared the meal, before there had been any music or dancing in the family, his father kissed him. He would have cared little for all their songs and have valued but slightly his reception by the servants, if, first of all, he had not been welcomed to his father's heart. So is it with us—we need first, to have fellowship with God *before* we think much of union with His people. Before I go to join a Church, I want my Father's kiss! Before the pastor gives me the right hand of fellowship, I want my heavenly Father's right hand to welcome me! Before I become recognized by God's people here below, I want a private recognition from the great Father above—and

that He gives to all who come to Him as the prodigal came to his father. May he give it to some of you now!

This kissing, also, was *before the table communion*. You know that the prodigal was afterwards to sit at his father's table and to eat of the fatted calf. But before that, his father kissed him. He would scarcely have been able to sit easily at the feast without the previous kisses of love. The Communion Table to which we are invited is very sweet. To eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ, in symbol, in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, is, indeed, a blessed thing. But I want to have communion with God by the way of the kiss of love before I come there. "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth." This is something private, ravishing and sweet. God give it to many of you! May you get the many kisses of your Father's mouth before you come into the Church, or to the Communion Table!

These many kisses, likewise, came *before the public rejoicing*. The friends and neighbors were invited to share in the feast. But think how shamefaced the son would have been in their presence, if, first of all, he had not found a place in his father's love, or had not been quite sure of it. He would almost have been inclined to run away again! But the father had kissed him much and so he could meet the curious gaze of old friends with a smiling face until any unkind remarks they might have thought of making died away, killed by his evident joy in his father! It is a hard thing for a man to confess Christ if he has not had an overwhelming sense of communion with Him. But when we are lifted to the skies in the rapture God gives us, it becomes easy, not only to face the world, but to win the sympathy of even those who might have opposed. This is why young converts are frequently used to lead others into the Light of God—the Lord's many kisses of forgiveness have so recently been given to them that their words catch the fragrance of Divine Love as they pass the lips just touched by the Lord. Alas, that any should ever lose their first love and forget the many kisses they have received from their heavenly Father!

Lastly, all this was given *before the meeting with the elder brother*. If the prodigal son had known what the elder brother thought and said, I would not have wondered at all if he had run off and never come back! He might have come near home, and then, hearing what his brother said, have stolen away again. Yes, but before that could happen, his father had given him the many kisses! Poor Sinner, you have come in here and, perhaps, you have found the Savior. It may be that you will go and speak to some Christian man and he will be afraid to say much to you. I do not wonder that he should doubt you, for you are not, in yourself, as yet a particularly nice sort of person to talk to. But, if you get your Father's many kisses, you will not mind your elder brother being a little hard on you!

Occasionally I hear of one who wished to join the Church, saying, "I came to see the Elders and one of them was rather rough with me. I shall never come again." What a stupid man you must be! Is it not their *duty* to be a little rough with some of you, lest you should deceive yourselves and

be mistaken about your true state? We desire lovingly to bring you to Christ and if we are afraid that you really have not yet come back to God, with penitence and faith, should we not tell you so, like honest men? But suppose that you have really come and your brother is mistaken—go and get a kiss from your Father and never mind your brother! He may remind you how you have squandered your living, painting the picture even blacker than it ought to be—but your Father's kisses will make you forget your brother's frowns!

If you think that in the household of faith you will find everybody amiable, and everyone willing to help you, you will be greatly mistaken. Young Christians are often frightened when they come across some who, from frequent disappointment of their hopes, or from a natural spirit of caution, or perhaps from a lack of spiritual life, receive but coldly those upon whom the Father has lavished much love. If that is your case, never mind these cross-grained elder brothers and sisters—get another kiss from your Father! Perhaps the reason it is written, "He kissed him *much*," was because the elder brother, when he came near him, would treat him so coldly and so angrily refuse to join in the feast.

Lord, give to many poor trembling souls the will to come to You! Bring many sinners to Your blessed feet and while they are yet a great way off, run and meet them! Fall on their neck, give them many kisses of love and fill them to the full with heavenly delight, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Luke 15.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—568, 521, 548.

The publishers desire to call special attention to the first sermon in the new volume of *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*. It is entitled, "Gratitude for Deliverance from the Grave," and is the first sermon that Mr. Spurgeon has been able to revise since his long illness. The text is Psalm 118:17, 18—"I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord. The Lord has chastened me sorely: but He has not given me over unto death." Both preacher and publisher would be glad if friends who have been profited by reading the sermons would introduce them to others who at present are not acquainted with them.

An Illustrated Catalog of Mr. Spurgeon's Works, got up in a most attractive style, has just been issued by Messrs. Passmore & Alabaster, who will, on application, be pleased to forward it, accompanied by a List of Texts and subjects of more than 2,200 Sermons.

END OF VOLUME 37.

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