A NEW YEAR'S RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT
NO. 2342

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JANUARY 7, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THE EVENING OF NEW YEAR'S DAY, 1871.

"LORD, You have heard the desire of the humble: You will prepare their heart, You will cause Your ear to hear."
Psalm 10:17.

IT has been sometimes said that a good Sabbath makes a good week. Sir Matthew Hale long ago said—

"A Sabbath well spent
Brings a week of content,"

while George Herbert quaintly wrote—

"The Sundays of man's life
Threaded together on
Time's string,
Make bracelets to adorn the wife
Of the eternal, glorious King.
On Sunday, Heaven's gate stands ope,
Blessings are plentiful and rife;
More plentiful than hope."

Sunday is the market day of the week and if a man does well at market, he considers that he has done well for all the week. The Sabbath oils the wheels of the week—its bodily rest is useful, but its spiritual anointing is far more so!

Now, if that is the case, and I think it is, I might venture to say that a good first Sabbath in the year will go a long way towards making a good year. Very often things go on as they begin. It is very seldom that troubles come alone and it is still more seldom that mercies are given to us singly. We may always say, when we get a blessing, "Gad, a troop comes." So I would that we might receive a great blessing on this first Sabbath of another year, that a troop of blessings might follow on the heels thereof, and that a host of mercies might continue to come to us even till we reach the last day of the year—and then that we might begin, again, with new tokens of our Lord's loving kindness and tender mercy~

I thought our text might be a very serviceable Word of God for this first Sabbath evening in the year of Grace, 1871. It is intended to be of use, not only for tonight's sermon, but to be remembered all the year round. I think there is something in it which will render it suitable to all of us at

all times during the next 12 months and, indeed, during the whole of the rest of our lives. We do not know, as we said in prayer just now, which way our pilgrimage may lead us, but I feel persuaded that, with this Inspired passage laid up in our hearts, if we make a right use of it, beneath the cover of Jehovah's wings we may go happily on from this place till again we pitch our tent upon the borders of another year.

Looking at the text, we may divide it into two parts. In the first portion, we have *a very blessed fact*—"Lord, You have heard the desire of the humble." In the second part, we have *two very blessed assurances*—"You will prepare their heart, You will cause Your ear to hear."

I. We will begin with what the text says about A VERY BLESSED FACT—"Lord, You have heard the desire of the humble."

I call this a very blessed fact, first, because *it always has been a fact*. In all ages and in all places, wherever there has been a humble heart that has lifted up its desire to God, the Lord has heard that desire! Whether Jew or Gentile, whether in the palace or in the poorhouse, whether in sickness or in health, whether in poverty or in wealth, whether in life or in death, no difference has ever been made—if the desire has been a humble one, from the first man who ever prayed down to this present time—God has always been ready to hear.

And, blessed be His holy name! It is not only an old fact, *it is as much a fact, tonight,* as it was when David first penned these words, "Lord, You have heard the desire of the humble." At this very moment, God's ear is hearing the beating of your hearts. O humble Soul, Jehovah's heart discerns the throbbing of your desire though they are unexpressed in words! His eyes of fire, which pierce us through and through, are reading every longing desire of every anxious bosom here.

It is so now and *it will be a fact all through this year*, God will hear the desire of the humble. It is a fact of the olden times, but it is also a fact of present import and of the future, too. Notice how the Psalmist puts this fact—"Lord, You have heard the desire of the humble." David does not say, "You have heard the *prayer* of the humble." He means that, but he also means a great deal more. Sometimes we have desires that we cannot express—they are too big, too deep—we cannot clothe them in language. At other times we have desires which we dare not express—we feel too bowed down, we see too much of our own unworthiness to be able to venture near the Throne of God to utter our desires—but the Lord hears the desire when we cannot or dare not turn it into the actual form of a prayer. I know you have sometimes said, "I wish I could pray like So-and-So." Often you have thought, "If I could only put a great many beautiful sentences together into goodly shape, then I might be heard." Do not talk so foolishly! If you cannot put two words together correctly, if your *desire* is right, God will hear the desire—

"Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Uttered or unexpressed."

Prayer is not in the expression or the non-expression—prayer is the soul's sincere desire. The very heart of prayer is in the desire—the essence of the whole matter, the kernel of the nut—is the desire of the heart, not the utterance of the lips. Words without the desire are mere empty husks, but the desire, even without words, is sweet to God, and He accepts it. Can you catch the blessedness of this thought? I say again, before your desire takes a shape in which language could cover it, God will hear it!

You sometimes can hear people's desires, yourself. Many a mother hears her boy's desire. He has gone to sea, but before he went, his mother packed his box. She did not tell him all she put into it—there are some things there that he has not yet seen and he will not find them till he searches to the bottom of the chest. How did she know that he would desire those things? Because she foresaw the position in which he would be placed and the needs which would arise in such a case—and she gathered, from that foresight—what her boy's desire would be. You have seen a poor hungry person shivering in the cold. If he has not accosted you and asked you for alms, yet you have heard the desire beating beneath that ragged coat and you have said to yourself, "That man needs help." You have heard his desire by just looking at him—his very silence seemed to speak to you of his great need. O Soul, God can hear your needs! Jehovah can hear your anguish! The Lord can hear what no one else can hear and what you cannot express!

I have always thought that to be a very clever way of begging, when a man sits down and huddles himself up at a street corner and just writes on the pavement with a piece of chalk, "I am starving." But perhaps it is quite as efficient a plea if the beggar does not write the words—but only if his face looks like starvation and his whole body appears emaciated with need and hunger. You know the man's desire from his very looks. And oh, how sweet it is to think that God looks down with a comprehensive glance, upon humble souls, takes in their whole condition and position with His compassionate eyes and hears their desire though they are unable or afraid to express it!

Notice, however, that David does not say, "Lord, You *will* hear the desire of the humble," but, "Lord, you have heard the desire of the humble. As soon as ever it was born, You heard it." You desire and God hears the desire at the same moment! No, let me correct myself and say that *before it was a desire in your heart*, God knew it would be there and He heard it. He had looked on you when as yet you had not looked on Him and, even then, it might have been truly said, "Lord, You have heard the desire of the humble."

What kind of a desire is it that God hears? He does not accept all desires. Some are trifling, some are vain, some are foolish, some are wicked and He is not pleased with such desires. It is the desire of the *humble* that the Lord hears. "Ah," says one, "I am afraid I am not humble." Brother, Sister, it is one mark of a truly humble man that he does not *think himself humble*. If you meet with a person who says he *is* humble, you may con-

clude at once that he is proud, for, usually, there is no boasting in the world that is so full of pride as the boasting of the man who talks of his humility! You humble? Ah, Sir, you need to be humbled a great deal before that will be the truth! The very man who mourns over his pride is, probably, the really humble man.

A humble desire, or the desire of a humble man, has this characteristic—the man knows there is no merit in his desire. If it is a good desire that he has in his heart, he feels, "It will be all through the infinite mercy of God if this desire is realized." He does not compliment himself and say, "Well done, Self, you have right desires in your heart—there is something good in you." No, but he fears lest the desire should not be sincere and, when it is deepest and truest, he still strips himself of all rags of self-righteousness, for he cannot see any good, whatever, in the desire that is in his own heart.

A humble man does not desire anything of God for his own honor. He thinks too little of himself to wish to exalt himself and he longs, in all things, to glorify God. He desires his own salvation, but he knows that he does not deserve it, and he, therefore, gives God all the glory even while he rejoices in his own deliverance from going down into the Pit. He sings, with Toplady—

"Not to myself I owe
That I, O Lord, am Thine.
Free Grace has all the shades broke through
And caused the light to shine.
Me You have willing made
Your offers to receive—
Called by the voice that wakes the dead,
I come to You and live."

A humble desire is one which leaves everything in God's hands. The man who has it, says, "Now, though I desire this, it may be it is not a right desire. Lord, I desire only to desire what I ought to desire! My desire is that Your desire should be written on my heart, that I may desire what You desire. Your will be done in my Soul, in my body, in my circumstances and in me, in all respects."

Now, beloved Friends, I think it will not be very difficult for you to see whether you have that desire of the humble which God hears. But to help you still further, let me give you some of these desires.

This is one of the desires of the humble—"Lord save me! I am lost unless Your mercy comes to my rescue. I am guilty! Forgive me! I have been an enemy to You! Reconcile me! I am diseased with sin! Heal me, for You are the only Physician!" *I* cannot hear your desires. Let me stop and listen as long as I may, I cannot hear the longings of anyone here who wants God to save him, but, oh, dear Soul, wherever you are and whoever you are, there is a better ear than mine that has *heard* your desire, and that ear belongs to One who will fulfill your desire! Surely, some of you are praying that prayer that I uttered just now—perhaps one who seemed least likely to offer it—God has dropped a hot coal of desire right into his

bosom, right into her soul, and he or she is saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

That is one of the desires of the humble that God hears. I will suppose, however, that the Lord has heard that desire in your case and that He has graciously fulfilled it. Now I think I hear some humble soul saying, "Lord, save my children! Lord, convert my boys and girls! I have tried to train them up for You, but I dare not hope that any teaching of mine will be effectual for their salvation unless You put Your hand to the work." I cannot hear the beating of your hearts as you plead for your children. I cannot hear the wife's desires as she inwardly cries, "Lord, save my husband!" Neither can I hear that Sister's longing as she says within her spirit, "O Lord, let my sister live before You! May my brother learn to know Christ!" But, though I cannot hear those desires—and no human being can hear them—God hears them! "Lord, You have heard the desire of the humble." Make yours a large desire, beloved Friends! Take in all your kinsfolk, take in mine, take in my hearers, take in all this congregation, take in this city of London and let the desire go up that God would save tens of thousands of souls, for He will hear the desire of the humble!

Another desire should be this—"Lord, guide me aright this year!" The young man who feels the force of his passion, should pray, "Lord, lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil!" The merchant who knows the deadening influence of the cares of this world, should cry, "Quicken me, O Lord, according to Your Word!" The housewife who looks forward to, she knows not what, of trouble in the family—a suitable prayer for her is, "Let Your Grace, O Lord, be always sufficient for me! Guide me, O Lord, lead me in a plain path! Direct my footsteps and let me, this year, walk in holiness!" I say again, I do not know who is breathing that petition. I hope many of you are doing so, but there is One sitting in the highest heavens, hearing the songs of cherubim and seraphim, who yet condescends to hear the desire of the humble when it takes such a form as this.

I think I know some of you, tonight, who are saying, "Lord, glorify Yourself in me!" I *do* hear that desire in one heart here, I *can* hear it in my own heart. And God hears it, I trust, in many others. The Sunday school teacher is saying, "Lord, honor Yourself in my class this year! Bring my boys, my girls, to the Savior's feet." You who are preachers are saying, "Lord, glorify Yourself in our ministry. Give us many souls that shall be our crown of rejoicing, but Your Glory forever!" You who have not had any particular form of duty are saying, "Lord, give me something to do this year! Do not let me be an idler—suffer me not to be a barren tree—get honor to Yourself out of me this year, I beseech You!" Now, wherever such a desire is going up, God hears it! I trust, also, that you are not only desiring God's Glory through yourself, for, if so, that may *not* be a humble desire, but that you are also desiring God's Glory through *all* His servants. Let this be your petition, "O Lord, prosper every minister of Christ, every Sunday school teacher, every visitor of the sick, every tract distributor, everyone who is doing anything for You! O Lord, revive Your work in the

midst of the years! O send out Your Light and Your Truth! Let multitudes of sinners be saved!" If that is your heart's desire, be thankful that God hears the desire of the humble this night and be earnest in presenting that desire at the Throne of Grace.

Now I will leave this first part of my subject. I really think there is much in it which, while it causes you joy as you think of it this evening, may also cause you joy tomorrow and every other day in the year. Suppose you are in a workshop and cannot kneel down to pray—you can *desire* and God will hear that desire even if it is not expressed in words. Perhaps you work where there are ungodly men and you cannot vocally offer your petition to the Lord. If so, you can *desire*. Therefore, thank the Lord that He hears the desire of the humble. Whatever can stop my voice, *nothing* can stop my heart's desire! I can go on desiring and, Glory be to God, He will go on hearing the desire of my heart!

II. Now we must pass on to the second part of our subject, TWO VERY BLESSED ASSURANCES—"You will prepare their heart, You will cause Your ear to hear."

The first assurance is this, "You will prepare their heart." Turn this declaration into a prayer, "Lord, prepare my heart!" We ought all to make some sort of preparation for coming days as far as prudence suggests and circumstances allow. There is a laying up in store for a rainy day that every sensible man will make as far as he is able, but, Brothers and Sisters, the best preparation for the future lies in having a prepared heart! If you get all else prepared, but the heart is not, you have left the major part undone. But if the heart is prepared and a good deal else, unprepared, things may yet come right in the end. All gets right when the heart is right. Out of the heart are the issues of life and those issues of life are true and good when the heart is right. God only can prepare the heart for that which is right—He alone can prepare it for holy living, for happy dying—and for eternity! I want you to get hold of this assurance as a promise for you all through this year, "You will prepare their heart." How shall we understand this expression?

First, God will prepare the heart of the humble *to receive Christ*. "Oh," says one, "I do not feel fit to come to Christ." All the fitness that is needed, God will give you. "You will prepare their heart." You need to be empty, to be broken, to be wounded—all this, the Spirit of God will work upon your conscience by the operation of the Law of the Lord. Do not stand back from Christ because you are unprepared to come to Him. God will prepare you for Christ as He has already prepared Christ for you.

Next, "You will prepare their heart" *to receive more of Christ*. Those of us who have had Christ as our hope and our trust want to get more of Him. I should be very sorry if I thought that, this year, I should not learn something more of my Master than I have known before. I should think it a dreary year if it should pass over my head and I should have no fresh instruction concerning the beauties of His Person and the excellence of His Character. Oh, that we might all receive Christ more fully into our heart!

The heart needs sweeping, cleaning and preparing—and here is the promise that this work shall be Divinely performed! "You will prepare their heart." Not only for Grace, but for more Grace, will God prepare the heart of the humble!

This year, dear Brothers and Sisters, we shall need heart-preparation for the many *duties we shall have to perform for God*. Look forward to them with trust in God. Those who examine the palms of the hand and pretend to foretell the future are fools! Those who believe them are not wise. We cannot tell what a day may bring forth, but we know that every day will bring its need of service. Well then, God will prepare our hearts for it. "You will prepare their heart." I like to think that nothing shall come for me to do but God will fit me for it. I may be called to a work that I have never attempted before. If so, I shall have Grace given which I never had before! You may change your condition of life this year, my dear Friend, but you shall be prepared for that change! You may have to emigrate to the other side of the world and find fresh duties awaiting you there—but you shall be prepared for your new sphere of service. You may be called from being a servant to be a master, or you may have to come down in the world and from being a master, you may have to become a servant, yet, whatever God shall put before you to do, He will prepare your heart for it. Only plead this declaration in prayer and you may expect to have it fulfilled!

In addition to our active service, there may be and probably will be, for many of us, a great deal of passive service—*we may have to endure suffering this year*. Poverty may fall upon some who are now in a comfortable position in life. Bereavement may make a widow of that smiling sister, or that happy father over yonder may be left childless. Before the year has run its course, who of us may have to toss upon the bed of sickness by the month, together? Who may be slandered? Who may be persecuted? It is not for us to know, but here is something we *may* know—"You will prepare their heart." It is wonderful how God gets His people ready for trouble when it is coming. You remember what Solomon said about the wise woman? "She is not afraid of the snow for her household, for all her household are clothed with scarlet." She has made such warm garments for them that she says, "Let the snow come if it likes. They are prepared to resist the cold." So God's wisdom and Grace will clothe us all with such warm garments of consolation that, when trouble comes, we shall be fully prepared to bear it. For duty, or for suffering, "You will prepare their heart."

And ah, this year, *some of us may have to die*. Many of our members passed away last year. Some dear sweet souls—the very pick of this Church—were taken up to Heaven. It may be my lot, it may be your lot, dear Brother or Sister, to go Home this year, but we will fall back on this gracious assurance, "You will prepare their heart." Why, it seems to me that if I can keep this Word of God in my heart and on my tongue all this year, nothing shall be able to disturb me! I shall be like the man of whom

it is written, "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings—his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." "You will prepare their heart" and, therefore, they shall not be afraid of all the enemies that can come against them! You shall not be afraid of sickness, of famine, or of death, itself, for God will prepare your heart to meet it! Slip aside, now and again, during this year, when an unexpected trouble comes, and say, "Lord, prepare my heart for this sorrow!" When you meet with a strong temptation that comes all of a sudden, hasten away into some quiet corner and pray, "Now, my Master, prepare my heart to resist this assault of the adversary!" He will keep your sword sharpened for you! He will have your shield well bossed for you! He will keep you strong, He will keep you happy, He will keep you blessed, He will prepare your heart!

Now for the last part of my text. You do not know, perhaps, that I have a license to keep on as long as I like, to-night, for my pulpit clock has stopped! I am obliged to look round to see how the time flies. Before I close, I should like to say a little about this last part of my subject, the second blessed assurance—"You will cause Your ear to hear." I think, Brothers and Sisters, that this preparation of the heart means, in the first place, that God will prepare His people's hearts to pray and then He will cause His ear to *hear* their prayers. But I will take it out of its connection for just a minute or two.

"You will cause Your ear to hear." I understand by this phrase that *the Lord will hear us soon*. Sometimes, when we pray, the answer does not come directly. Pray again, Brother, Sister, for if God has not caused His ear to hear, yet, He *will* cause His ear to hear! The answer to your prayer shall come speedily. Do not postpone your expectations too long. Prepare to wait if God tarries, but be prepared for the reply if He does not tarry. Some Christians do the first, but not the second—they seem so ready to wait that God makes them wait! Oh, prepare with such vigor and earnestness, when you are pleading for your own salvation, or for the salvation of others, that God shall make haste and at once cause His ear to hear! He will hear you soon—expect, during this year, many speedy answers to your prayers!

"You will cause Your ear to hear." That means, next, I think, that *the Lord will always hear us*. He will, as it were, exert Himself to hear your supplication. "You will cause your ear to hear." This is a blessed Word of God for this new year! My God, how earnestly I will pray, now that I know I have Your ear! I remember that dear Mr. Cowper said, when he was in despondency and distress, writing to Mr. Bull, of Newport Pagnell, "You have advised me to pray, but there is no reason in the world in my praying, there is no passage of Scripture that gives me any right to pray." He was, of course, insane at the time. Yet he said, "If there were such a text, I would never leave off praying as long as I lived. You tell me that Jonah prayed in the whale's belly, but I am in a worse plight than he was in. If I were only as bad as Jonah was, I would pray to God night and day."

I catch at that thought—if I am permitted to pray, then I will pray. And if I may have whatever I ask of God in the name of Jesus, oh, I will ask! Do use your privilege in praying to the Lord, for He will cause His ear to hear. If you had the ear of the great ones at court and could get whatever you liked, I am sure that you would use the privilege! And now that you have the ear of the great King of Kings, O you intercessors, you who are the Lord's remembrancers, plead with Him day and night "and give Him no rest till He establishes, and till He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth," for He will cause His ear to hear you! The Lord will always hear you, Sinner, if you call upon Him! He will soon hear you—He will effectually hear you.

When it is said, "You will cause Your ear to hear," does it not mean that *the Lord will so hear as to answer our petitions*? As a Church we have prospered by prayer. Glasgow flourished by the preaching of the Word and the Tabernacle has flourished by the prayers of Believers. That has been the secret of our strength! Therefore let us still believe in the efficacy of prayer. God listens to the voices of His children. He regards the cry of the humble. He is moved by the desires of His own people. Let us, then, during this year, be more in prayer than ever! Let us pray in faith, pleading the precious blood of Jesus and the promises of God's Word. And let us hear the Lord saying to us, "Thus says the Lord, the Holy One of Israel and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning My sons and concerning the work of My hands, command you, Me." There is need of a great revival of religion—the wave of the late revival has gone and now we need another. We have had a long winter, spiritually—we need to have an awakening springtime, a glorious summer and a golden autumn in the Church. Let us pledge ourselves to pray for it—and not merely pledge ourselves, but really pray! Let us cry mightily till the Lord shall hear us and bring in tens of thousands who shall be the reward of the Savior's sufferings and death! The Lord bless you, dear Friends, and make this year to be very rich in fruit-bearing to God's Glory in every one of us!

And as for such as were not saved when they came into the Tabernacle this evening, I trust that God will, this very night, make them desire to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ—and He will hear their desire and lead them to look to the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! As we who love the Lord come to the Communion Table, we can use our text, for I am sure the desire of the humble is that they may see Christ in the Supper. "Lord, You have heard the desire of the humble: You will prepare their heart." Oh, it is sad to go to the Lord's Table with an unprepared heart! Lord, prepare our heart to come to Your banqueting table, tonight and then, "You will cause Your ear to hear." You will grant us Grace to feed upon Christ and to be satisfied! May it be so to every communicant! The Lord bless you all, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 103.

One's heart naturally turns to this passage when one desires to magnify the Lord. It is specially suitable for a New Year's meditation.

Verse 1. *Bless the Lord, O my Soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name.* Come, my Soul, wake up! Bestir yourself! You have great work to do, such work as angels do forever and ever before the Throne of God. Let no power or faculty exempt itself from this Divine service! Come, my memory, my will, my judgment, my intellect, my heart—all that is in me, be stirred up to magnify and bless His holy name! "Bless the Lord, O my Soul"—for the music must begin deep down in the center of my being—it must be myself, my very self, that praises God!

2. *Bless the LORD, O my Soul, and forget not all His benefits.* This shall be the first note—"We love Him because He first loved us." We have not to go abroad for materials for praise, they lie at home. Forget not all His benefits to you, my Soul—His overwhelming, His innumerable benefits which have to be summed up in the gross as "all His benefits"—forget them not!

3. *Who forgives all your iniquities.* Come, come, my Soul, can you not praise God for sin forgiven? That is the first note, and it is the sweetest note in our song of praise. "Who forgives all your iniquities"—not *some* of them but the blessed Scapegoat has carried into the, "No man's land of oblivion," the whole mass!

3. *Who heals all your diseases.* He is the Physician for you, my Soul—your diseases are the worst of all diseases, for they would drag you down to Hell if they were not cured. But Jehovah Rophi heals all your diseases!

4. *Who redeems your life from destruction.* Oh, my Soul, praise God for redemption! If you cannot sing about anything else, sing of Free Grace and dying Love. Keep on ringing those charming bells.

4. *Who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies.* What? Can you wear a crown and not praise Him who placed it on your head? Can you wear such a crown as this, made up of loving kindness and tender mercies, and not bless the Lord? Oh, let it not be so! Let us each break forth in spirit in one song, tonight, and say, "My soul does magnify the Lord."

5. *Who satisfies your mouth with good things; so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.* Heavenly feasting on heavenly bread! Divine satisfaction from the finished work of Christ! Oh, my Soul, pray to God to give you new life, tonight, so that your youth may be renewed, so that your wing feathers may grow, again, and that you may mount as eagles do! Surely, dear Friends, this little list of mercies, so small in number, contains an immensity of mercy! Let us bless the Lord for every one of them.

6. *The LORD executes righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.* Let the poor and the down-trodden sing unto the Lord. He will take care of you! He is the Executor of the needy and the Executioner of the proud. "The Lord executes righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed."

7. *He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel.* Therefore, let us bless Him, the God of Revelation, who does not hide Himself from His creatures, but who makes known His ways and His acts unto His people! An unknown God is an unpraised God, but when He shows Himself to His people, they cannot refrain from blessing His name.

8. *The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.* Praise Him for this! Bless His name at every single mention of His Divine attributes. Let your hearts beat to the music of praise tonight!

9. *He will not always chide: neither will He keep His anger forever.* Let the afflicted praise Him! Let the downcast and the despondent sinner praise Him! If he cannot sing about anything else, let him bless the name of the Lord that He will not keep His anger forever.

10. *He has not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.* Let us thank God we are not in Hell—we are yet on praying ground and on pleading terms with Him. Some of us will never go into Perdition, for He has saved us with an everlasting salvation. Truly, if we did not bless Him, every timber in this building and every iron column beneath this roof might burst out in rebukes for our ingratitude! We must bless His name!

11. *For as the Heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him.* Look up into the blue sky—up, up beyond the stars and say to yourself—"So great is His mercy." Let us, therefore, praise Him accordingly. "Loud as His thunders, shout His praise and sound it lofty at His Throne."

12. *As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.* There is neither latitude nor longitude for praise. God's Grace is boundless! Let us, therefore, unstintedly praise Him.

13. *Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him.* He has a tender heart. He never strikes without regret, but His love always flows freely. No father or mother is half so mild and loving as is the Lord of Hosts!

14. *For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.* Our bodies are but animated dust and even our souls might be compared to dust in His sight. Not iron or granite, but we are mere dust. It is a wonder that men live so long when there are such mighty forces, even in Nature, arrayed against them. Who can control earthquakes and volcanoes? And when men Cross the sea in times of storm, it is a wonder that they come to land, again!

15. *As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourishes.* You are like the primrose by the river's brim, or the buttercup and the daisy in the field that is visited with the scythe. That is all we are—not cedars, not oaks, not rocks—but flowers of the field.

16. *For the wind passes over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.* Some of the hot winds of the East come over a meadow and it is immediately burned up. I have seen the fairest and loveliest flowers look, in a short time, as if they had been burned with a hot

iron when the Sirocco had blown across from Africa—and such are we. We speak of the breath of the pestilence—it is but a puff of wind—and we are gone.

17, 18. *But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him, and His righteousness unto children's children to such as keep His Covenant, and to those that remember His Commandments to do them.* "But"—and this is a blessed, "but." "But the mercy of the Lord"—that is *not* a fading flower, that is *not* a withering wind—"But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting." Here are ten thousand blessings in one! You have everlasting mercy, Covenant mercy. Oh, if we do not praise God when we think of the Covenant, what has happened to us? We must be possessed with a dumb devil if we do not praise the name of Him whose mercy is from everlasting to everlasting!

19. *The LORD has prepared His Throne in the heavens; and His Kingdom rules over all.* Now, children of a King, will you go mourning all your days? You that dwell in the Light of His Throne, will you not be glad? Rejoice, O Zion, for your King lives and reigns forever! "The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice."

20. *Bless the LORD, you His angels, that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word.* "Bless the Lord, you His angels." We cannot do it well enough, but help us, then, you angels that excel in strength. Put out all your strength when you praise Him, "you that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word." Your actions are your praises, O you angels! Would God that we had learned to do His commandments as you do them! We are praying for this, even as our Lord taught His disciples to say, "Your will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven."

21. *Bless you the LORD, all you His host; you ministers of His, that do His pleasure.* All living things, and all the forces and powers of Nature are calling upon men to praise the Lord! And all the hosts of God, the organs of Omnipotence, ring out the grand chorus, "Bless you the Lord."

22. *Bless the LORD, all His work, in all places of His dominion: bless the LORD, O my Soul.* I must not go grumbling up to Heaven, nor stumbling among the works of God. I must gratefully come to Him and, myself, praise Him! And so, with the Psalmist, I cry, "Bless the Lord, O my Soul."

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—1037, 10, 1042.

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

FAINT—BUT NOT FAINT-HEARTED
NO. 2343

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JANUARY 14, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.
ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 17, 1889.

"Faint, yet pursuing."
Judges 8:4.

THESE three hundred men, though faint, were not faint-hearted. If they had been cowards, they would have left Gideon when he made the proclamation, "Whoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from Mount Gilead." Twenty-two thousand accepted that permission and left their general with ten thousand. Out of that smaller company, which was yet too large, these 300 had been selected as the men that lapped. While others unloosed their helmets and lay prone upon the grass to take a luxurious drink, these men acted like a hasty dog who, running by the side of a stream, laps and runs, and laps and runs—and wastes no time in drinking. They were men who had given themselves wholly up to this holy war and who were determined to smite these foes of God and His people—and yet they were faint. They were not faint because they were dispirited, for they had just won a great victory. They had broken the pitchers, unveiled the lamps, blown the trumpets and had shouted, "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon," and they had seen the vast host of Midian melt away before their eyes! They had plunged with fervor into the battle, chasing the flying foe and laying tens of thousands dead at their feet. Every man among them was a hero—and yet they were faint.

When you see men faint, do not blame them. Perhaps, by their faintness, they have proved of what true stuff they are made. They have done as much as flesh and blood can do and, therefore, they are faint. They may not have been defeated—they may have gained a glorious victory—and yet, for the moment, they may be faint. Faintness, by itself, is a poor thing, but if you can truly say, "Faint, yet pursuing," faintness becomes the foil to set off perseverance—and the man is all the nobler because, when faint, he still pursues.

I am going to talk, tonight, to some of God's people who may be in the condition which the text describes—"Faint, yet pursuing." I shall dwell a little, in the first place, upon *the weakness of the flesh*—"Faint." Secondly, I shall ask you to admire *the strength of Divine Grace*—"Faint, yet pursuing." When we have done that, I trust that we shall have a few minutes in which to learn *the lessons of example*, for these men shall be our schoolmasters.

I. First, let us think about THE WEAKNESS OF THE FLESH. What is man, after all, at his very best? The best of men, at their best, are but

men, and human nature, even at its best, is but a poor thing. And the strongest man may very soon be too weak to do anything and the heroic man, who could stand against the shock of arms, may lie upon the ground, weary, and unable to go a step further. Why were these brave, strong men of Gideon's band faint? I shall mention certain reasons which apply to us as well as to them.

Well, first, they grew faint because *they had lost their rest*. It was at night that they broke the pitchers, at night that they made that surprising attack upon the camp of their enemies and they had, ever since, with hot feet, been pursuing the flying crowd. There had been no time for them to have any sleep, that "tired nature's sweet restorer" which is so necessary to us all. And there are Christian minds that have not rested—they have not had time to rest. And upon some there comes what is called insomnia, the inability to sleep. This, of course, is a physical malady, and overburdened men may be afflicted by it, but Christian men may suffer from *spiritual* insomnia. They may get so exercised about their work, so worried about the Lord's work—they may lay so much to heart the needs and woes of men, they may be so fretted about how little they can do, and how feebly they do it, and how small is the result that follows from all they have done—that they may get into a state of spiritual insomnia and restlessness.

Now, this is always evil. Christ would have Martha care and to serve, but He would not have her cumbered with much serving—He would prefer that she should sit, like Mary, at His feet. We can do much for our Lord—some can do a great deal more than they are now doing—but it is very possible to attempt too much and really to do next to nothing because we have put ourselves into a condition in which we cannot do anything well! You may see a man who is strong and vigorous achieve with one blow what another cannot accomplish with 20 feeble strokes. It is not the doing much that is the important matter—it is the doing what you do with real force and power. You lose the ability to work unless you have necessary rest. Did you never notice how the Master makes rest a privilege of the worker? "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me...and you shall find rest unto your souls." You will never work like Christ unless you can rest like Christ! He had a great capacity for resting as well as great power for working. When He was in that little boat which was tossed in the storm, He was asleep in the back part of the vessel while the storm was at its height! To go to sleep was the best thing that He could do and, at certain times, the best thing that a Christian can do is to "rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him," for in that way he will get back his lost strength and power for service. If he neglects to rest in Christ, he will become faint. But it will be a happy circumstance if, when faint, he is still pursuing!

In addition to losing their rest, *these men had endured a very heavy strain*. There is much work to be done that we might go on doing for a century if we lived so long, yet we should never be worn out by it—the ordinary everyday work does not kill men. But there are superhuman efforts to be made on special occasions and those extraordinary tasks put a tremendous strain upon the soul. It was a superhuman effort when the 300 brave warriors remained with Gideon—over thirty thousand of his first

great army melted away—but the 300 stalwarts stood fast. It may seem to you to be simple enough to stand fast when thirty thousand flee, but you will not find it so if ever you are put to the test! And then to go down, in the dead of night, under Gideon's leadership—against at least a hundred and fifty thousand Midianites—with lamps, pitchers, and trumpets as their only weapons, might seem a small thing to do, but it took courageous men to do such a daring deed as that, and to believe that by such a simple stratagem God would defeat their numerous foes! O Sirs, believe me, faith is not child's play! And though a simple faith, exercised from day to day about ordinary things, is not to be despised, yet there come special moments when you must have the faith of God's elect, and an elect faith, too, and a high degree of it! And if you have that and exert it to the fullest, you will find that it will tell upon your whole frame.

These men had also experienced the strain of great success. Stand still and see that mighty host dividing into parties and beginning to slay one another! Behold the whole power of Midian suddenly broken! Oh, the joy that must have filled the hearts of Gideon's three hundred! Their spirits must have leaped within them with ecstasy and delight—they must have felt that they could hardly contain themselves for very joy while God was working such a glorious deliverance! And if you have ever been indulged by your heavenly Father with some great success in service for the King, you have felt, afterwards, as if your moisture was turned into the drought of summer! It takes the very soul out of a man to see God at work and himself to be the instrument in the Lord's hands, of accomplishing some high and wondrous purpose of judgment or mercy! These three hundred men had endured a great strain upon their faith and they had also had that which is a greater strain, still—the triumph of their faith in God! And so, exhausted and worn out, they were ready to faint.

Beside that, remember, dear Friends, that *these men had put forth great strength.* It was not merely mental wear and tear that they had to endure, but there was much actual conflict with the enemy. At first the Midianites killed one another, but after they took to flight, Gideon's men pursued them up hill and down dale, slaying them wherever they could, for they would not leave one of these enemies of their country who had dared to invade the land of the holy. They resolved to cut them all off. It was a hard day's work and they had done many deeds of daring and now, as they go by Succoth, they are faint though they are still pursuing the flying foe. If you, dear Brothers and Sisters, will give yourselves wholly to God's work, although you will never get tired *of* it, you will often get tired *in* it. If a man has never tired himself with working for God, I should think he never has done any work that was worth doing. If a Sister has never spent herself in trying to win souls, I should suppose that the number of souls which she will win will be very few, indeed. We can never expect God's blessing on our work till every faculty of our being is awakened and the whole of our strength is put forth in the Divine service. Now, if this is the case with us, it is no wonder if sometimes we get weary and feel ready to faint.

Note, also, that *these brave men had endured a long march.* They had first fought the battle in the night and this had been followed by the pursuit of the enemy during the day. They needed to prevent them from

crossing the fords and, all along that forced march there had been fighting—and the fighting after a battle is often the most severe. Many generals have been able to win a battle, but they have not known how to use it after they have won it. The toughest part of the fight full often is after the enemy begins to flee—and these men had endured a long day of this trying work. Now, dear Friends, I believe that it is very often not the pace, but the *time* that makes Christian people tired. When I have thought the matter over, I have many times said that I could die for Christ, by His Grace, if I might lay my head down on a block and have it chopped off at once. I think that I could endure that. But what about being roasted alive by a slow fire? Well, that is a different matter. One might feel, in such a case, that human strength would very soon be dried up. Ah, dear Friends, to stand bravely for Christ for a week or two is a simple matter—but to keep on, month after month, and year after year, is another affair!

It is the length of life that tries the reality of religion. Some are able to stand against the temptations of youth and yet succumb amid the business of middle life. And alas, as many horses fall at the bottom of the hill, so we have known many men who have sinned sadly in old age. In fact, as nearly as I can recollect, all the great falls recorded in Scripture are those of old men, or of persons far beyond the age of youth—as if to teach us that when we think that we have grown wise by experience, we shall be great fools if we trust, even then, to ourselves. But it is that length of endurance, that year after year of trial, that long fight of affliction, or that long-continued temptation that tries the man—and it is of little wonder if, sometimes, the very heroes of the Cross are faint and weary.

And, once more, *these brave men had taken no refreshment*. We read that the people took victuals in their hand when they went down to the fight, but that food was all gone, for soldiers have fine appetites when they have had much to do, and they grow very faint if they cannot get refreshment. Ah, dear children of God, if you live where you do not hear the Gospel faithfully preached, I do not wonder if you faint! Or, if you have given up hearing the Word, and have been busying yourself, always teaching, it may be that you have been giving out too much and taking in too little. I like the plan adopted by many of our dear friends who come here on Sunday mornings—they are always here in the morning, but they are never here on Sabbath evenings. Where are they? They are happily engaged in some good and gracious work! But they will not give up the hearing in the morning, for that, they say, is their week's meal and strengthens them for service during the rest of the day. I think that they do wisely.

Young Christians, especially, cannot do without their food. There are not many of us who would be in vigorous health if we did not have our regular food and I do not think that the majority of Christians can afford to be so busy in the Master's service as not to get opportunities for meditation, contemplation and hearing and studying the Word of God. Perhaps some Brother here may be faint, tonight, for that very reason, and he may receive a hint that it is necessary for him to take refreshment if he is to go on with his work. "Come you, yourselves apart, into a desert place, and rest awhile," said Christ to His disciples and, as to the people who fol-

lowed Him, when He saw them hungry and faint, He multiplied the loaves and fishes and fed them to the fullest, and they were revived.

But, Beloved, what child of God, who engages faithfully in the work and warfare of this life, does not, at times, feel ready to faint? Stand in the position of one who finds himself deserted by those who seemed to be his friends but who prove faithless and, without a protest for the Truth of God, glide away in the general current of error—your heart grows sick as you think of the cowards who ought to have been at your side in the battle for the standard. Your soul is ready to faint as you note the slackness of others whom you do not suspect of going astray, but who, in the day of battle, are like Meroz and come not up to the help of the Lord against the mighty! Battling for Christ in the midst of the crowd where you need hundreds of helpers, but can scarcely find one—trying to carry the Light of God into some of the dark slums of London, thinking that every Christian will sympathize with you, but finding that none do so—these are the trials that make even brave hearts feel faint!

Well, Brothers and Sisters, I think I have said enough, and, perhaps, too much, upon that first point—the weakness of the flesh—so I turn with great pleasure to the next point.

II. In the second place, let us admire THE STRENGTH OF DIVINE GRACE. These 300 men were "faint, yet pursuing." They could march but slowly, but they did march! They could strike but feebly, but they did strike!

Observe that although they were faint, *they were not faint in heart*. They still believed. They still had a brave stomach for the fight. They had not wavered in their resolution—they meant to still go forward—they intended to conquer the enemies of their country before them, or die in the attempt, and not one of them proposed to turn back! They were "faint, yet pursuing." Every man of them kept on the track of the Midianites. They were still determined to go forward. They did not demand substitutes, saying, "We have done so much, now let somebody else come in and finish the work." No, no, they were still pursuing, each man resolved that his own right arm should wield his weapon till the fray was over.

Nor did they rest on their laurels. Some of us, perhaps, would have done so if we had been in their places. We might have said, "We have done bravely, we have already broken the neck of Midian, we are victors—there is no need to do more." No, but they reckoned that nothing was done while there was anything undone! They were not content while a single enemy lived! They must carry the warfare right through to the bitter end and they meant to do it. Sternly resolved were they that though they were faint, and even if they died, they would die with their faces to the enemy, fighting for the Lord God of Israel! Brothers in Christ, is not that our resolve tonight? My Christian Sisters, do you not feel the same? We have lifted our hands to the Lord and we will never go back—we could not give up His Truth, His love His service! To whom should we go if we left our Lord? If we did not keep on pursuing, what would we do? Lie still we cannot—there is a something in us which will not let us rest while there is work to be done for God—by which Christ can be glorified!

These men were driven forward by hope. Although they were faint, they felt that He who had brought them so far would bring them through to the end. He had done so much for them that they might have said—

"His love in time past forbids us to think
He'll leave us, at last, with hunger to sink,"

and so they kept on, hopeful, still, that they should win a complete victory! They were resolved that if it were not so, yet they would still keep on. So let it be with us. If I am faint, I will still continue fighting against sin. If everybody else forsakes the Cross, yet a genuine Christian cannot. If every flag were taken away and rolled in the mire, our Master should still find us, by His Grace, prepared to bear disgrace and dishonor for His sake, and to still cling to the grand old cause, "faint, yet pursuing."

Now, Beloved, you who are here, tonight, may belong to various classes and faintness may come upon you in reference to different things. Let me just mention them in the hope that the strength of Grace may come to you even as it did to Gideon's band.

Are you a student, my dear Brother? Are you studying the Scriptures? Are you endeavoring to learn the deep things of God? Do you know that you have learned very little as yet? Do the great mysteries stagger you? Are you driven to feel what a fool you are? Have you come to those great deeps where such as you can never see the bottom? Ah, well, though you are faint in your study of the Scripture, still pursue it! Get close to the Word of God—search it through and through, study it, meditate on it, give yourself wholly to it, seek to know all that God has revealed—for the things which are revealed, however mysterious they are, belong to you. If you are faint in the pursuit of Divine Truth, yet continue to pursue it!

Perhaps you are fighting against some inbred sin. It may be that I address some who see a swarm of sins within their nature. By God's Grace you have determined to put every sin to the sword, but you have been baffled by their numbers and their strength. This very morning, when you got up, you thought that you would make this the holiest day you have ever lived, but it has been a very poor day, after all. The other week, when you went to business, you said to yourself, "By God's help, I will show all I meet today how a Christian can live." But you tripped and stumbled very sorrowfully. Well now, my dear Brother, you are faint because of these failures. Yet, I pray you, do not give up the struggle, for God will help you! In the power of His Spirit you are able to overcome these sins and you may yet sing, "Thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Up and at them, Brothers! If faint, yet still be pursuing! The Lord help you in this battle!

Possibly, you are a worker for Christ. You have begun well—I am thankful that you have *begun*. After continuing a little time in the Lord's service, you do not want to give it up, but you do not seem to get on at it, and Satan has been saying to you, "You might as well give it up, for you are doing no good. Do not worry yourself with that work any longer." There is a friend who is not Satan, but perhaps Satan is using that friend and getting that friend to say to you, "This work will be too much for you. I know it will. You are not adapted for it, why do you not take things more easily?" Ah, but, dear Friend, permit *me* to say to you, "If you are faint, yet still be pursuing. There is a great blessing coming and the devil does not

want you to receive it. Defeat the devil by giving yourself more earnestly than ever to the cause of your Lord, for, depend upon it, there is something going to happen, soon, that will abundantly repay you and the arch-enemy wants to prevent you from getting the blessing."

Is the conflict concerning prayer? Have you been pleading for a soul and you have not yet won the victory? Is it your husband? Is it your wayward boy? Is it a friend? Have you been at Jabbok, near where Gideon was at this very time? Have you wrestled with the Angel? Have you been expecting to prevail and have you not yet been successful, and has something said to you, "Do not pray about it any more"? Oh, Beloved, if that is the case, I beg you to pluck up courage! Though faint, yet still be pursuing! Continue pleading with God and do not let the Angel go until He blesses you!

Or, once more, have you been bearing witness for the Truth of God and, in bearing witness for it have you met with losses and crosses? Have you been brought under suspicion and misrepresentation? Have you lost some of your dearest friends and have they even become your bitter enemies? Do you get very faint and are you tempted to say, "Why should I protest? Let things go as they will. The age is rotten through and through—what is the use of my standing out?" Oh, say not so! Where would the Reformation have been if it had not been for two or three brave hearts? How will any Truth of God be preserved in the world if men are craven and chicken-hearted? No, my Brother, speak not so, but rather say, tonight, "Though I may appear to achieve nothing by my protest, that is not my affair. My business is to do my duty—*results* must rest with God and, by His Grace, faint as I am, I will still be pursuing."

III. Now I close by pointing out to you THE LESSONS OF EXAMPLE that we may learn from Gideon's brave men.

The first lesson is this—*Serve the Lord.* Brothers and Sisters, we are saved by Grace. Some of us were saved years ago. We were washed in the blood of the Lamb and clothed in the righteousness of Christ. We rejoice in a finished work whereby we are saved. Now let us *serve* because we have been saved and let us serve our Lord to the last fragment of strength! I do not think that Christ can be rightly served with half our manhood—it must be with the whole of our powers. All my goods, all my alms, all my talents, all that I can invent, all that I can achieve I must give to Him. Is there any part of us that we dare reserve for self? Shall the broad arrow of the King never be stamped on this or that portion of our being? Ah, then, a curse will come upon us! No, let it not be so, but let us give Him all the strength we have until we become fairly exhausted and are ready to faint—and even then let us be pursuing!

Let us also serve the Lord when every movement is painful, when even to *think* is wearisome. These men were faint. You know what it is for a soldier to be faint—it is no nonsense, no pretence, it is real fainting. To go running on when you are ready to faint—to keep right on when you are ready to drop—this is very trying work, but let us do it, Brothers and Sisters, by God's Grace! Some people only pray when they feel like praying, but we need most to pray when we feel that we *cannot* pray. If we were only to preach—some of us—when we felt like preaching, we would not of-

ten preach! If some people I know would only give when they felt like giving, they would never give! Perhaps, for that matter, they never do. But you are not to do a thing merely when it is a pleasure to you. Do it when it is a pain to you! When faint, yet be pursuing! When, instead of your legs carrying you, you have to drag your legs along the ground, yet still pursue the enemy! When you feel that, absolutely, you could not go another foot, yet still go many another *yard*, for there is such a thing as doing as much as you can and yet, by Divine Power and Grace, keeping on after that. The work that you felt you could not do will have more acceptance with God than that which you performed in your ordinary strength.

Serve the Lord when every movement is painful and serve Him when difficulties thicken. There were only 300 of Gideon's men and there were fifteen thousand of the enemy—and the people who ought to have been their friends would not even give them a loaf of bread to eat. Then is the time to serve the Lord! There is little in your service when everybody says, "Hurrah"—but there is something in the man who can follow the Lord when they cry, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" To run with the crowd—any fool can do that. But to face that crowd and go the other way. To stand alone, like a bronze pillar that cannot be stirred though the whole earth should push against you—there is something in such action that is worthy of the Grace of God! And it is true Grace, alone, that helps a man to act thus. Brothers and Sisters, do not count the difficulties—count your God as everything and let the rest go which way they will. The more difficulties there are, the better, and the fewer friends, the better—there shall be the more glory to the Grace that helps you in your loneliness to stand firm and to be faithful to your God.

Next, *be stimulated by past success*. Success for God is good. You win a victory over the Midianites and you feel faint. Do not faint. Why? It does not become you to faint after that victory. You who are red to the elbows with the blood of the enemy, are you going to faint? You who just now smote Oreb and Zeeb, are you going to turn cowards? You know what confusion there is in battle when a standard-bearer faints. Look, the standard begins to tremble! It falls almost down. Somebody holds it up, but the standard-bearer faints, and down goes the banner and everybody thinks that the battle is lost! Standard-bearer, standard-bearer, I beseech you, do not faint! Cry to your God, standard-bearer, for so many depend upon you! Teacher of a class, minister of a congregation, leader of a clan—stand in the strength of Jehovah, Himself, and having done all, stand!

Lastly, *be hopeful when you are feeblest*, just as these men were. "Faint, yet pursuing." When there were so very, very, very few of them, and they were faint, *then* they expected victory! And when there are very, very few of us, and we, too, are weary and fainting, then, perhaps, our extremity will be God's opportunity. Watch the hourglass. How fast the sands are falling! The time is almost up—there are only two or three grains, yet, to trickle down. Just so, but when the hour is up, then God's eternity comes in! When our time comes to an end, then God's great leisure shall come to an end, too, and He will pluck His right hand out of His bosom and He will do a work in our day that shall make the ears of them

that hear thereof to tingle! Therefore, beloved Brothers and Sisters, let us give ourselves more to Christ than ever!

As for you who do not belong to Jesus, to whom do you belong? You who are not servants of Christ, whose servants are you? Tremble, I pray you, for your master pays terrible wages—"The wages of sin is death." Remember the rest of the verse, "but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." God grant us that glorious gift, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON:
Judges 7:19-25; Judges 8:1-27.

Judges 7:19-21. *So Gideon, and the hundred men that were with him, came unto the outside of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch; and they had but newly set the watch: and they blew the trumpets, and broke the pitchers that were in their hands. And the three companies blew the trumpets, and broke the pitchers, and held the lamps in their left hands, and the trumpets in their right hands to blow with: and they cried, The sword of the LORD and of Gideon! And they stood, every man in his place, round about the camp: and all the host ran, and cried, and fled.* This was in the dead of night, when the hosts of Midian were fast asleep. They were startled from their slumbers by the blast of 300 trumpets, and the flaming of 300 torches. They gathered that these were only the bugles and the lamps at the *head* of vast regiments of the Israelites and they hardly dared to calculate how great the whole host must have been! Filled with fear—astonished at the sound of the trumpets and the shouting of Gideon's band all round their camp, they took to their heels—"all the host ran and cried and fled."

22. *And the three hundred blew the trumpets, and the LORD set every man's sword against his fellow, even throughout all the host.* They were a motley company, every man afraid of his fellow. They had gathered together to share the spoil and now, when fear demoralized them, the hordes of wild warriors began to destroy one another!

22-23. *And the host fled to Beth-Shittim in Zererath, and to the border of Abel-Meholah, unto Tabbath. And the men of Israel gathered themselves together out of Naphtali, and out of Asher, and out of all Manasseh, and pursued after the Midianites.* If some have the courage to strike the enemy, there are others who will come out of their hiding places to hunt the *beaten* foe. When you really need help, often you cannot get it. But when you can afford to do without assistance, you will sometimes be embarrassed by it.

24. *And Gideon sent messengers throughout all Mount Ephraim, saying, Come down against the Midianites, and take them before the waters*—"Secure the fords in the streams which flow into the Jordan from the mountainous region of Ephraim so that the refugees cannot get away."

24-25. *Unto Beth-Barah and Jordan. Then all the men of Ephraim gathered themselves together, and took the waters unto Beth-Barah and Jordan. And they took two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb; and they slew Oreb upon the rock Oreb, and Zeeb they slew at the winepress of*

Zeeb, and pursued Midian, and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the other side Jordan. So that, though they had been very backward at the first, yet, when they were once awakened, these men of Ephraim did their part in ridding the land of the common foe and, among the trophies of war, the heads of two of the princes of the Midianites fell into their hands.

Judges 8:1. *And the men of Ephraim said unto him, Why have you served us thus, that you called us not, when you went to fight with the Midianites. And they did chide with him sharply.* We have some friends like these men of Ephraim who do not like being left out of the battle for the Lord. They say, "Why are we not asked for our help? Why are we not allowed to take our share?" These are very good people, but we have known some of them who have made these enquiries rather late in the day! These Ephraimites knew all about the war and they might have volunteered to help Gideon—and we would have been glad of the earlier help of some who tarried till the victory was won!

2. *And he said unto them, What have I done now in comparison of you?* Gideon answered them very kindly and very wisely. He flattered them. He attached great importance to what they had done and took little credit to himself for his valiant service. In this he showed his self-command and his discretion. When persons chide sharply, it is a pity to chide back—the best way of dealing with them is with a soft answer to turn away their wrath.

2-5. *Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abi-Ezer? God has delivered into your hands the princes of Midian, Oreb and Zeeb: and what was I able to do in comparison of you? Then their anger was abated toward him, when he had said that. And Gideon came to Jordan, and passed over, he, and the three hundred men that were with him, faint, yet pursuing them. And he said unto the men of Succoth, Give, I pray you, loaves of bread unto the people that follow me; for they are faint, and I am pursuing after Zebah and Zalmunna, kings of Midian.* This was a very natural and a very reasonable request. Gideon did not ask the men of Succoth to come with him, nor even to give a lodging to his soldiers. The fear of Midian was upon Israel and the people were afraid to do anything against their oppressor, but surely they might have relieved the hunger of their fellow countrymen. Instead of doing so, they answered Gideon with arrogant and cruel words.

6. *And the princes of Succoth said, Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in your hands, that we should give bread unto your army?* As much as to say, "What have you done, after all? There are fifteen thousand men with Zebah and Zalmunna, and there are only 300 of you. You have not even captured the leaders yet." They forgot that Gideon's band had slain a hundred and twenty thousand already—they underrated and mocked him—and would not give him the help he asked for.

7. *And Gideon said, Therefore when the LORD has delivered Zebah and Zalmunna into my hands, then I will tear your flesh with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers.* Some have said that this showed resentment and harshness, but when a man is at war, he is not in the habit of sprinkling his adversaries with rosewater. War is, in itself, so great an evil that

there are many other evils necessarily connected with it. It seems to me that if, when Gideon was trying to deliver his own countrymen, they scoffed at him and refused him bread for his soldiers in the day of their hunger, they deserved to be punished with great severity.

8, 9. *And he went up to Penuel, and spoke unto them, likewise: and the men of Penuel answered him as the men of Succoth had answered him. And he spoke, also, unto the men of Penuel, saying, When I come again in peace, I will break down this tower.* They took liberty to speak rudely because theirs was a fortified city, guarded by a strong tower. And Gideon, not doubting that he would come back that way, God having given him the victory, said, "When I come again in peace, I will break down this tower."

10, 11. *Now Zebah and Zalmunna were in Karkor, and their hosts with them, about fifteen thousand men, all that were left of all the hosts of the children of the East: for there fell an hundred and twenty thousand men that drew sword. And Gideon went up by the way of them that dwelt in tents on the east of Nobah and Joybehah, and smote the host: for the host was secure.* He went by an unusual route and took them at night, again unawares when they felt perfectly safe, and were sound asleep—"for the host was secure." As I read these words, I think, what a pity it is ever to fancy ourselves secure while we are really in peril! Carnal security is a great danger. To be "safe in the arms of Jesus," is a most blessed condition, but to be secure in self-confidence is a thing that has a curse upon it.

12. *And when Zebah and Zalmunna fled, he pursued after them, and took the two kings of Midian, Zebah and Zalmunna, and discomfited all the host.* That was the end of the tyranny of the Midianites. Gideon slew great numbers of them and drove away such as yet remained alive.

13-17. *And Gideon, the son of Joash, returned from battle before the sun was up, and caught a young man of the men of Succoth, and enquired of him: and he described unto him the princes of Succoth, and the elders thereof even threescore and seventeen men. And he came unto the men of Succoth, and said, Behold Zebah and Zalmunna, with whom you did upbraid me, saying, are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna now in your hands, that we should give bread unto your men that are weary? And he took the elders of the city, and thorns of the wilderness and briers, and with them he taught the men of Succoth. And he beat down the tower of Penuel, and slew the men of the city.* He probably slew the most public revilers, the leading men of Penuel, even as he had chastised the princes and elders of Succoth with thorns and briers. I have often observed that you and I have been taught a great many things, "with the thorns of the wilderness and with briers." If we refuse to help God's weary and tried people, it is highly probable that, one of these days, we may have to learn a great deal from the thorns of the wilderness and from the briers! Do we ever learn much apart from the thorns of the wilderness? Surely, trials and troubles have been our great instructors from the first day even until now.

18, 19. *Then said he unto Zebah and Zalmunna, What manner of men were they whom you slew at Tabor?" And they answered, As you are, so*

were they; each one resembled the children of a king. And he said, They were my brothers, even the sons of my mother. In the East, there is much greater affection between those who are the sons of one mother than between those who are only sons of one father.

19. *As the Lord lives, if you had saved them alive, I would not slay you.* But now it devolved upon him to be an avenger of blood according to Oriental law, and to put to death those who had slain his brothers.

20-22. *And he said unto Jether, his firstborn, Up, and slay them. But the youth drew not his sword: for he feared, because he was yet a youth. Then Zebah and Zalmunna said, Rise you, and fall upon us: for as the man is, so is his strength. And Gideon arose, and slew Zebah and Zalmunna, and took away the ornaments that were on their camels' necks. Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule you over us, both you, and your son, and your son's son also: for you have delivered us from the hand of Midian.* There was always an itching among the Israelites to have a king, an earthly monarch to rule over them, but God did not so design it. It was lack of loyalty and love to God that led them to make this request.

23-27. *And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the LORD shall rule over you. And Gideon said unto them, I would desire a request of you, that you would give me, every man, the earrings of his prey. (For they had golden earrings, because they were Ishmaelites). And they answered, We will willingly give them. And they spread a garment, and did cast therein, every man, the earrings of his prey. And the weight of the golden earrings that he requested was a thousand and seven hundred shekels of gold; beside ornaments, and collars, and purple raiment that was on the kings of Midian, and beside the chains that were about their camels' necks. And Gideon made an ephod thereof, and put it in his city, even in Ophrah: and all Israel went there whoring after it: which thing became a snare unto Gideon, and to his house.* He did not set up an idol, but he made an ephod—an imitation of that wonderful vestment worn by the High Priest. Perhaps he made it of solid gold, not to be worn, but to be looked at, simply to remind the people of the worship of God and not to be, itself, worshipped. But ah, dear Friends, you see here that if we go half an inch beyond what God's Word warrants, we always get into mischief! You hear people say, "We have such and such symbols, not to worship, but to help us in worship." Ah, yes, but the tendency of the *symbol* is to act as a dam to the stream of devotion and to make it end there! God forbid that we should ever violate the rules that Christ has laid down for us! The slightest deviation from the simplicity of the Gospel may lead us away into sheer apostasy! Where have all the errors of Rome come from but from little accretions and alterations? A little ornament here, a little symbol there, and a little variation of the Truth of God yonder and the gigantic system of Romanism has thus been created! Gideon probably meant well and we may do wrong even though we mean well. May the Lord preserve us from the smallest departure from the Way that He has marked out for us in his Holy Word! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—676, 677, 681.

CHRIST'S DYING WORD FOR HIS CHURCH
NO. 2344

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JANUARY 21, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 3, 1889.

"It is finished."
John 19:30.

IN the original Greek of John's Gospel there is only one word for this utterance of our Lord. To translate it into English, we have to use three words, but when it was spoken, it was only one—an ocean of meaning in a drop of language, a mere drop, for that is all that we can call one word! "It is finished." Yet it would need all the other words that ever were spoken, or ever can be spoken, to explain this one word. It is altogether immeasurable! It is high—I cannot attain to it. It is deep—I cannot fathom it. "Finished." I can half imagine the tone in which our Lord uttered this word, with a holy glorying, a sense of relief, the bursting out of a heart that had long been shut up within walls of anguish. "Finished." It was a Conqueror's cry—it was uttered with a loud voice! There is nothing of anguish about it, there is no wailing in it. It is the cry of One who has completed a tremendous labor and is about to die—and before He utters His death-prayer, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit," He shouts His life's last hymn in that one word, "Finished."

May God the Holy Spirit help me to handle aright this text that is at once so small and yet so great! There are four ways in which I wish to look at it with you. First, I will speak of this dying saying of our Lord *to His Glory*. Secondly, I will use the text *to the Church's comfort.* Thirdly, I will try to handle the subject *to every Believer's joy.* And fourthly, I will seek to show how our Lord's Words ought to lead *to our own awakening.*

I. First, then, I will endeavor to speak of this dying saying of Christ TO HIS GLORY. Let us begin with that.

Jesus said, "It is finished." Let us glory in Him that it is finished. You and I may well do this when we remember how very few things *we* have finished. We begin many things and, sometimes, we begin well. We commence running like champions who must win the race, but soon we slacken our pace and we fall exhausted on the course. The race commenced is never completed. In fact, I am afraid that we have never finished *anything* perfectly. You know what we say of some pieces of work, "Well, the man has done it, but there is no, 'finish,' about it." No, and you must begin with, "finish," and go on with, "finish," if you are, at last, able to say broadly as the Savior said without any qualification, "It is finished."

What was it that was finished? His lifework and His atoning Sacrifice on our behalf. He had interposed between our souls and Divine Justice and He had stood in our place to obey and suffer on our behalf. He began this work early in life, even while He was a Child. He persevered in holy obedience 33 years. That obedience cost Him many a pang and groan. Now it is about to cost Him His life and, as He gives away His life to finish the work of obedience to the Father, and of redemption for us, He says, "It is finished." It was a wonderful work, even to contemplate—only Infinite Love would have thought of devising such a plan! It was a wonderful work to carry on for so long—only boundless patience would have continued at it—and now that it requires the offering of Himself and the yielding up of His earthly life, only a Divine Savior, very God of very God, would or could have consummated it by the surrender of His breath! What a work it was! Yet it was finished while you and I have lots of little things lying about that we have never finished. We have begun to do something for Jesus that would bring Him a little honor and glory, but we have never finished it. We did mean to glorify Christ—have not some of you intended, oh, so much? Yet it has never come to anything. But Christ's work, which cost Him heart and soul, body and spirit—cost Him everything—even His death on the Cross! He pushed through all that till it was accomplished and He could say, "It is finished."

To whom did our Savior say, "It is finished"? He said it to all whom it might concern, but it seems to me that He chiefly said it to His Father, for, immediately after, apparently in a lower tone of voice, He said, "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit." Beloved, it is one thing for me to say to you, "I have finished my work"—possibly, if I were dying, you might say that I had finished my work—but for the Savior to say that to God, to hang in the Presence of Him whose eyes are as a flame of fire, the great Reader and Searcher of all hearts. For Jesus, I say, to look the dread Father in the face and say, as He bowed His head, "Father, it is finished; I have finished the work which You gave Me to do"—oh, who but He could venture to make such a declaration as that? We can find a thousand flaws in our best works! And when we lie dying, we shall still have to lament our shortcomings and excesses. But there is nothing of imperfection about Him who stood as Substitute for us and, unto the Father, Himself, He can say, concerning *all* His work, "It is finished." Therefore, glorify Him tonight! Oh, glorify Him in your hearts, tonight, that even in the Presence of the Great Judge of all, your Surety and your Substitute is able to claim perfection for all His service!

Just think also, for a minute or two, now that you have remembered what Jesus finished, and to whom He said that He had finished it, *how truly He had finished it*. From the beginning to the end of Christ's life there is nothing omitted, no single act of service ever left undone! Neither is there any action of His slurred over, or performed in a careless manner. "It is finished," refers as much to His Childhood as to His death. The whole of the service that He was to render to God, when He came here in human form, was finished in every single part and portion of it. I take up a piece of a cabinet-maker's work and it bears a good appearance. I open

the lid and am satisfied with the workmanship. But there is something about the hinge that is not properly finished. Or, perhaps, if I turn it over and look at the bottom of the box, I shall see that there is a piece that has been scratched, or that one part has not been well planed or properly polished.

But if you examine the Master's work right through—if you begin at Bethlehem and go on to Golgotha and look minutely at every portion of it, the private as well as the public, the silent as well as the spoken part—you will find that it is finished, completed, perfected! We may say of it that, among all works, there is none like it! It is a multitude of perfections joined together to make up one absolute perfection! Therefore, let us glorify the name of our blessed Lord. Crown Him! Crown Him, for He has done His work well! Come, you saints, speak much to His honor and in your hearts keep on singing to the praise of Him who did so thoroughly, so perfectly, all the work which His Father gave Him to do!

In the first place, then, we use our Lord's words to His Glory. Much might be said upon such a theme, but time will not permit it.

II. Secondly, we will use the text TO THE CHURCH'S COMFORT.

I am persuaded that it was so intended to be used, for none of the Words of our Lord on the Cross are addressed to His Church but this one. I cannot believe that when He was dying He left His people, for whom He died, without a word. "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do," is for sinners, not for saints. "I thirst," is for Himself, and so is that bitter cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" "Woman, behold your son!" is for Mary. "Today shall you be with Me in Paradise," is for the penitent thief. "Into Your hands I commend My spirit," is for the Father. Jesus must have had *something* to say, in the hour of death, for His Church and, surely, this is His dying word for her! He tells her, shouting it in her ear that has become dull and heavy with despair, "It is finished." "It is finished, O My redeemed one, My bride, My well-beloved for whom I came to lay down My life. It is finished, the work is done!"—

"Love's redeeming work is done.
Fought the fight, the battle won."

"Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it." John, in the Revelation, speaks of the Redeemer's work as already accomplished and, therefore, He sings, "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." This Truth of God is full of comfort to His people.

And, first, as it concerns Christ, do you not feel greatly comforted to think that He is no longer to be humiliated? *His suffering and shame are finished.* I often sing, with sacred exultation and pleasure, those lines of Dr. Watts—

"No more the bloody spear!
The Cross and nails no more,
For Hell itself shakes at His name
And all the heavens adore.
There His full glories shine
With uncreated rays,

And bless His saints' and angels' eyes
To everlasting days."

I also like that expression in another of our hymns—

"Now both the Surety and sinner are free."

Not only are they free for whom Christ became a Surety, but He, Himself, is forever free from all the obligations and consequences of His Suretyship. Men will never spit in His face again! The Roman soldiers will never scourge Him again! Judas, where are you? Behold the Christ sitting upon His Great White Throne, the glorious King who was once the Man of Sorrows! Now, Judas, come and betray Him with a kiss! What, man, dare you not do it? Come, Pilate, and wash your hands in pretended innocence and say, now, that you are guiltless of His blood! Come, you scribes and Pharisees, and accuse Him and oh, you Jewish mob and Gentile rabble, newly risen from the grave, shout now, "Away with Him! Crucify Him!" But look! They flee from Him! They cry to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him that sits on the Throne!" Yet that is the face that was more marred than any man's—the face of Him whom they once despised and rejected. Are you not glad to think that they cannot despise Him now, that they cannot entreat Him now?—

"'Tis past—that agonizing hour
Of torture and of shame"

and Jesus says of it, "It is finished."

We derive further comfort and joy as we think that not only are Christ's pangs and sufferings finished, *but His Father's will and Word have had a perfect completion.* Certain things were written that were to be done and these are done. Whatever the Father required has been rendered. "It is finished." My Father will never say to me, "I cannot save you by the death of My Son, for I am dissatisfied with His work." Oh, no, Beloved, God is well pleased with Christ and with us in Him! There is nothing which was arranged in the eternal mind to be done! No, not a jot or tittle—Christ has done it all! As His eyes, those eyes that often wept for us, reads down the ancient writing, Christ is able to say, "I have finished the work which My Father gave Me to do. Therefore, be comforted, O My people, for My Father is well pleased with Me and well pleased with you in Me!"

I like, sometimes, when I am in prayer, to say to the great Father, "Father, look on Your Son. Is He not all loveliness? Are there not in Him unutterable beauties? Do You not delight in Him? If You have looked on me and grown sick of me, as well You may, now refresh Yourself by looking on Your Well-Beloved. Delight Yourself in Him—

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

The perfect satisfaction of the Father with Christ's work for His people so that Christ could say, "It is finished," is a ground of solid comfort to His Church forevermore!

Dear Friends, once more, take comfort from this, "It is finished," for *the redemption of Christ's Church is perfected!* There is not another penny to be paid for her full release. There is no mortgage upon Christ's inheritance. Those whom He bought with blood are forever clear of all charges, paid for to the utmost! There was a handwriting of ordinances against us,

but Christ has taken it away, He has nailed it to His Cross. "It is finished," finished forever. All those overwhelming debts which would have sunk us to the lowest Hell have been discharged—and they who believe in Christ may appear with boldness even before the Throne of God, itself. "It is finished." What comfort there is in this glorious Truth of God!—

"Lamb of God! Your death has given
Pardon, peace, and hope of Heaven!
'It is finished,' let us raise
Songs of thankfulness and praise!"

And I think that we may say to the Church of God that when Jesus said, "It is finished," *her ultimate triumph was secured.* "Finished!" By that one Word He declared that He had broken the head of the old dragon. By His death Jesus has routed the hosts of darkness and crushed the rising hopes of Hell. We have a stern battle yet to fight—nobody can tell what may await the Church of God in years to come—it would be idle for us to attempt to prophesy. But it looks as if there are to be sterner times and darker days than we have ever yet known, but what of that? Our Lord has defeated the foe and we have to fight with one who is already vanquished! The old serpent has been crushed, his head is bruised, and we have, now, to trample on him. We have this sure Word of promise to encourage us, "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Surely, "It is finished," sounds like the trumpet of victory! Let us have faith to claim that victory through the blood of the Lamb! And let every Christian, here—let the whole Church of God, as one mighty army take comfort from this dying Word of the now risen and ever-living Savior—"It is finished." His Church may rest perfectly satisfied that His work for her is fully accomplished!

III. Now, thirdly, I want to use this expression, "It is finished," TO EVERY BELIEVER'S JOY. When our Lord said, "It is finished," there was something to make every Believer in Him glad. What did that utterance mean? You and I have believed in Jesus of Nazareth. We believe Him to be the Messiah, sent of God. Now, if you will turn to the Old Testament, you will find that the marks of the Messiah are very many and very complicated. And if you will then turn to the life and death of Christ, you will see in Him *every mark of the Messiah plainly exhibited.* Until He had said, "It is finished," and until He had actually died, there was some doubt that there might be some one prophecy unfulfilled—but now that He hangs upon the Cross, every mark, every sign and every token of His Messiahship has been fulfilled and He says, "It is finished." The life and death of Christ and the types of the Old Testament fit each other like hand and glove. It would be quite impossible for any person to write the life of a man, by way of fiction, and then in another book to write out a series of types, personal and sacrificial, and to make the character of the man fit all the types—even if he had permission to make both books, he could not do it. If he were allowed to make both the lock and the key, he could not do it, but here we have the lock made beforehand! In all the Books of the Old Testament, from the prophecy in the Garden of Eden right down to Malachi, the last of the Prophets, there were certain marks and tokens of the Christ. All these were so very singular that it did not appear as if they

could all meet in one Person. But they did all meet in One—every one of them—whether it concerned some minute point or some prominent characteristic! When the Lord Jesus Christ had ended His life, He could say, "It is finished; My life has tallied with all that was said of it from the first Word of prophecy even to the last." Now, that ought greatly to encourage your faith! You are not following cunningly-devised fables, but you are following One who must be the Messiah of God since He so exactly fits all the Prophecies and all the Types that were given before concerning Him!

"It is finished." Let every Believer be comforted in another respect, that *every honor which the Law of God could require has been rendered to it.* You and I have broken that Law, as all the race of mankind has broken it! We have tried to thrust God from His Throne. We have dishonored His Law. We have broken His Commandments willfully and wickedly. But there has come One who is, Himself, God, the Law-Giver, and He has taken human Nature, and in that Nature He has kept the Law perfectly! And, inasmuch as the Law had been broken by man, He has in the Nature of man borne the sentence due for all man's transgressions. The Godhead, being linked with the Manhood, gave supreme virtue to all that the Manhood suffered. And Christ, in life and in death, has magnified the Law and made it honorable. And God's Law at this day is raised to even greater honor than it had before man broke it! The death of the Son of God, the Sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, has vindicated the great moral principle of God's government and made His Throne to stand out gloriously before the eyes of men and angels forever and ever! If Hell were filled with men, it would not be such a vindication of Divine Justice as when God spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, and made Him to die, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God! Now let every Believer rejoice in the great fact that, by the death of Christ, the Law of God is abundantly honored! You can be saved without impugning the holiness of God! You are saved without putting any stain upon the Divine statute-book! The Law is kept and mercy triumphs, too.

And, Beloved, here is included, of necessity, another comforting Truth. Christ might well say, "It is finished," *for every solace conscience can need is now given.* When your conscience is disturbed and troubled, if it knows that God is perfectly honored and His Law vindicated, then it becomes easy. Men are always starting some new theory of the Atonement and one has said, lately, that the Atonement was simply meant as an easement to the conscience of men. It is not so, my Brothers and Sisters—there would be no easing of the conscience by anything that was meant for that, alone. Conscience can only be satisfied if God is satisfied! Until I see how the Law is vindicated, my troubled conscience can never find rest. Dear Heart, are your eyes red with weeping? Look to Him who hangs on the tree! Is your heart heavy, even to despair? Look to Him who hangs on the tree and believe in Him! Take Him to be your soul's atoning Lamb, suffering in your place. Accept Him as your Representative, dying your death that you may live His life, bearing your sin that you may be made the righteousness of God in Him! This is the best *quietus* in the world for every fear that conscience can raise—let every Believer know that it is so.

Once more, there is joy to every Believer when he remembers that, as Christ said, "It is finished," *every guarantee was given of the eternal salvation of all the redeemed.* It appears to me that if Christ finished the work for us, He will finish the work *in* us. If He has undertaken so supreme a labor as the redemption of our souls by blood and that is finished, then the great, but yet minor labor of renewing our natures and transforming us even unto perfection, shall be finished, too! If, when we were sinners, Christ loved us so as to die for us, now that He has redeemed us, and has already reconciled us to Himself, and made us His friends and His disciples, will He not finish the work that is necessary to make us fit to stand among the golden lamps of Heaven and to sing His praises in the country where nothing that defiles can ever enter?—

"The work which His goodness began,
The arm of His strength will complete!
His promise is yes and Amen,
And never was forfeited yet!
Things future, nor things that are now,
Not all things below nor above,
Can make Him His purpose forego,
Or sever my soul from His love!"

I believe it, my Brothers and Sisters. He who has said, "It is finished," will never leave anything undone! It shall never be said of Him, "This Man began, but was not able to finish." If He has bought me with His blood and called me by His Grace, and I am resting on His promise and power, I shall be with Him where He is, and I shall behold His Glory, as surely as He is Christ the Lord and I believe in Him! What comfort this Truth of God brings to every child of God!

Are there any of you, here, who are trying to do something to make a righteousness of your own? How dare you attempt such a work when Jesus says, "It is finished"! Are you trying to put a few of your own merits together, a few odds and ends, fig leaves and filthy rags of your own righteousness? Jesus says, "It is finished." Why do you want to add anything of your own to what He has completed? Do you say that you are not fit to be saved? What? Have you to bring some of your fitness to eke out Christ's work? "Oh," you say, "I hope to come to Christ one of these days when I get better." What? What? What? What? Are you to make yourself better and *then* is Christ to do the rest of the work? You remind me of the railways to our country towns! You know that, often, the station is half-a-mile or a mile out of the town, so that you cannot get to the station without having an omnibus to take you there. But my Lord Jesus Christ comes right to the town of Mansoul! His railway runs close to your feet and there is the carriage door wide open—step in! You have not even to go over a bridge, or under a subway—there stands the carriage just before you. This royal railroad carries souls all the way from Hell's dark door, where they lie in sin, up to Heaven's great gate of pearl where they dwell in perfect righteousness forever! Cast yourself on Christ! Take Him to be everything you need, for He says of the whole work of salvation, "It is finished."

I recollect the saying of a Scotchwoman who had applied to be admitted to the communion of the Church. Being thought to be very ignorant and little instructed in the things of God, she was put back by the elders. The minister also had seen her and thought that, at least for a while, she should wait. I wish I could speak Scotch, so as to give you her answer, but I am afraid that I would make a mistake if I tried it. It is a fine language, doubtless, for those who can speak it. She said something like this, "Aweel, Sir; aweel, Sir, but I ken ae thing. As the lintbell opens to the sun, so my heart opens to the name of Jesus." You have, perhaps, seen the flax flower shut itself up when the sun has gone and, if so, you know that whenever the sun has come back, the flower opens itself at once. "So," said the poor woman, "I know one thing, that as the flower opens to the sun, so my heart opens to the name of Jesus." Do you know that, Friends? Do you know that one thing? Then I do not care if you do not know much else! If that one thing is known by you, and if it is really so, you may be far from perfect in your own estimation, but you are a saved soul!

One said to me, when she came to join the Church, and I asked her whether she was perfect, "Perfect? Oh, dear no, Sir! I wish that I could be." "Ah, yes!" I replied, "that would just please you, would it not?" "Yes, it would, indeed," she answered. "Well, then," I said, "that shows that your heart is perfect and that you love perfect things; you are pining after perfection—there is a something in you, an, 'I' in you, that sins not, but that seeks after that which is holy. And yet you do that which you would not, and you groan because you do, and the Apostle is like you when he says, 'It is no more I, the real I, that do it, but sin that dwells in me.'" May the Lord put that "I" into many of you, tonight, that "I" which will hate sin, that "I" which will find its Heaven in being perfectly free from sin, that "I" which will delight itself in the Almighty, that "I" which will sun itself in the smile of Christ, that "I" which will strike down every evil within as soon as ever it shows its head! So will you sing that familiar prayer of Toplady's that we have often sung—

"Let the water and the blood
From Your riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power!"

IV. I close by saying, in the fourth place, that we shall use this text, "It is finished, TO OUR OWN AWAKENING.

Somebody once wickedly said, "Well, if Christ has finished it, there is nothing for me to do, now, but to fold my hands and go to sleep." That is the speech of a devil, not of a Christian! There is no Grace in the heart when the mouth can talk like that. On the contrary, the true child of God says, "Has Christ finished His work for me? Then tell me what work I can do for Him!" You remember the two questions of Saul of Tarsus. The first enquiry, after He had been struck down, was, "Who are You, Lord?" And the next was, "Lord, what will You have me to do?" If Christ has finished the work for you which you could not do, now go and finish the work for Him which you are privileged and permitted to do. Seek to—

"Rescue the perishing,

Care for the dying,
Snatch them in pity from sin and the grave.
Weep over the erring one,
Lift up the fallen,
Tell them of Jesus, the Mighty to save."

My inference from this saying of Christ, "It is finished," is this—Has He finished His work for me? Then I must get to work for Him and *I must persevere until I finish my work, too*—not to save myself, for that is all done—but because I am saved! Now I must work for Him with all my might and if there comes discouragements, if there comes sufferings, if there comes a sense of weakness and exhaustion, yet let me not give way to it, but, inasmuch as He pressed on till He could say, "It is finished," let me press on till I, too, shall be able to say, "I have finished the work which You gave me to do." You know how men who go fishing look out for the fish. I have heard of a man going to Keston Ponds on Saturday to fish and staying all day Sunday, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday! There was another man fishing there and the other man had only been there two days. He said, "I have been here two days and I have only had one bite." "Why," replied the other, "I have been here ever since last Saturday and I have not had a bite yet! But I mean to keep on." "Well," answered the other, "I cannot keep on without catching *something*." "Oh!" said number one, "but I have such a longing to catch some fish that I shall stay here till I do." I believe that fellow would ultimately catch some fish if there were any to be caught! He is the kind of fisherman to do it and we need to have men who feel that they must win souls for Christ—and that they will persevere till they do! It must be so with us, Brothers and Sisters—we cannot let men go down to Hell if there is any way of saving them!

The next inference is that *we can finish our work, for Christ finished His*. You can put a lot of "finish" into your work and you can hold on to the end and complete the work by Divine Grace! And that Grace is waiting for you, that Grace is promised to you. Seek it, find it, get it! Do not act as some do, ah, even some who are before me now! They served God, once, and then they ran away from Him. They have come back—God bless them and help them to be more useful! But future earnest service will never make up for that sad gap in their earlier career. It is best to keep on, and on, and on, from the commencement to the close. May the Lord help us to persevere to the end, till we can truly say of our lifework, "It is finished"!

One word of caution I must give you. *Let us not think that our work is finished till we die*. "Well," says one, "I was just going to say of my work, 'It is finished.'" Were you? Were you? I remember that when John Newton wrote a book about Grace in the blade, and Grace in the ear, and Grace in the full corn in the ear, a very talkative body said to him, "I have been reading your valuable book, Mr. Newton. It is a splendid work and when I came to that part, 'The full corn in the ear,' I thought how wonderfully you had described *me*." "Oh," replied Mr. Newton, "but you could not have read the book rightly, for it is one of the marks of the full corn in the ear that it hangs its head very low." So it is and when a man, in a careless, boastful spirit, says of his work, "It is finished," I am inclined to ask, "Brother, was it ever begun? If your work for Christ is finished, I should

think that you never realized what it ought to be." As long as there is breath in our bodies, let us serve Christ! As long as we can think, as long as we can speak, as long as we can work, let us serve Him! Let us even serve Him with our last gasp and, if it is possible, let us try to set some work going that will glorify Him when we are dead and gone! Let us scatter some seed that may spring up when we are sleeping beneath the hillock in the cemetery. Ah, Beloved, we shall never have finished our work for Christ until we bow our heads and give up the ghost!

The oldest friend here has a little something to do for the Master. Someone said to me, the other day, "I cannot think why old Mrs. So-and-So is spared—she is quite a burden to her friends." "Ah," I replied, "she has something yet to do for her Lord, she has another word to speak for Him." Sister, look up your work and get it done! And you, Brother, see what remains of your lifework yet incomplete. Wind off the ends, get all the little corners finished. Who knows how long it may be before you and I may have to give in our account? Some are called away very suddenly—they are apparently in good health one day—and they are gone the next! I should not like to leave a half-finished life behind me. The Lord Jesus Christ said, "It is finished," and your heart should say, "Lord, and I will finish, too—not to mix my work with Yours, but because You have finished Yours, I will, by Your Grace, finish mine."

Now may the Lord give us the joy of His Presence at His Table! May the bread and wine speak to you much better than I can! May every heir of Heaven see Christ, tonight, and rejoice in His finished work, for His dear name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 121. AND 122.

Psalm 121:1. *I will lift up my eyes unto the hills, from where comes my help.* No help comes from anywhere else but from the eternal hills. Let us lift up our eyes, therefore, hopefully expecting help from the hills—it is on the road—it "comes." The Psalmist, with the eye of faith, could see it coming, so he watched its approach.

2. *My help comes from the LORD, who made Heaven and earth.* He would sooner unmake them than desert His people. He that made Heaven and earth could certainly find shelter for us either in Heaven or in earth. He cannot, He will not leave us, He will make room for us in Heaven when there is no room for us here. What a blessed thing it is to look right away from the creature to the Creator! The creature may fail you, but the Creator is an ever-springing well of all-sufficient Grace.

3. *He will not suffer your foot to be moved.* He will not endure it, He will not suffer it. Many would like to trip you up, but He will not allow it—He loves you too well.

3. *He that keeps you will not slumber.* You may slumber, for you are frail, but He is a Watchman to whose eyes sleep never comes. You are always safe. Alexander went to sleep, he said, because Parmenio watched.

And you may take the sleep of the beloved because Jehovah watches over you.

4. *Behold, He that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.* Behold it, that is, mark it—put a *nota bene* at the side of it, take cognizance of this as a great and sure Truth of God! Jacob went to sleep with a stone for his pillow, but He that kept him did not sleep. He came to him in the night watches and revealed to him His Covenant.

5. *The Lord is your keeper: the LORD is your shade upon your right hand.* Oh, what a Keeper we have! Can you not trust Him? Will you not be at peace in your mind if it is, indeed, true that Jehovah keeps you and is your Guard in the hour of danger?

6. *The sun shall not smite you by day, nor the moon by night.* Then, when can you get hurt? If you are protected both day and night, these make up all the time! God does not make a new sun for His people, the sun would smite us as well as others, but He takes the sting out of the sun's excessive brightness. And we have the same sickly moon as others have, with the same influences over us, but God takes care that the moonbeams do not harm His people. Neither the sun of prosperity nor the night of adversity—neither the light of Truth of God nor even the dimness of mystery shall injure one of the chosen seed.

7. *The LORD shall preserve you from all evil: He shall preserve your soul.* That is the soul of our preservation—if the life, the soul, is kept, then are we altogether kept.

8. *The LORD shall preserve your going out and your coming in*—Your early days of youth, when you are going out into life—and your coming in when the older days creep over you and you are coming into God and Heaven. Your going out into business and your coming in to private devotion.

8. *From this time forth, and even forevermore*. Let us, therefore, feel restful at this time, and even forevermore, having the Lord for our Keeper and Preserver.

Psalm 122:1. *I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD.* I was glad for their sake, glad to think they were so willing to go. I was glad, also, for my own sake, for I was glad to go, too.

2. *Our feet shall stand within your gates, O Jerusalem.* Happy men who were citizens of such a city! Happy worshippers coming together to the place whose very name signifies the vision of peace, the metropolis of God, type of the New Jerusalem which is from above!

3. *Jerusalem is built as a city that is compact together.* Not a conglomeration of huts, but built as a city with substantial structures. And not a straggling city, like some we read of, that have been called, "cities of magnificent distances"—but it was "compact together." Happy is the Church that is at peace—blessed are the people who are joined together by a gracious brotherly love.

4. *Where the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the LORD.* The Church is the point of meeting—"Where the tribes go up." The Church is the place of "testimony"—and saints go to hear testimony and to bear it. I wish there was

more of this bearing testimony among Christian people and that they looked upon it as a sacred duty to tell others what God has told them. "To give thanks unto the name of the Lord"—that is another part of true worship—praise, joyful thanksgiving should be one of the saints' continual avocations. Let us not forget it at this time. Some are here who have been sick—let them give thanks unto the name of the Lord. Some are here who are still weak, yet able to come up with God's people—let us give thanks unto the name of the Lord. We have all some special mercy, some choice favor for which to praise His name. Then let us all give thanks unto the name of the Lord!

5. *For there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David.* If any of the people had been wronged by the petty magistrates, they went up to Jerusalem and made their appeal to the king. Here may we bring our suit before God and order our case before Him, for He is true and just, and nothing shall go amiss that is left with Him.

6. *Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.* Pray for it now, breathe a silent prayer to God.

6. *They shall prosper that love You.* God loves those who love His Church and love His cause—and He rewards them with prosperity, as much of earthly prosperity as they can bear, and prosperity to their *souls* beyond measure.

7. *Peace be within your walls, and prosperity within your palace.* The Psalmist bade us pray and now he, himself, prays. He who bids others do a thing should be prepared to set the example.

8. *For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now pray, Peace be within you.* Let us say it, for the sake of beloved ones in Heaven, and dear ones on earth who are on the way there, "Peace be within you."

9. *Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek your good.* Not only pray for it, but work for it, give for it, live for it! "I will seek your good!" God bless to us these two Psalms and put us all in a right state of heart tonight! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—122 (SONG 1), 944, 300.

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

MOSES' DYING CHARGE TO ISRAEL
NO. 2345

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JANUARY 28, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 17, 1888.

"And you shall remember all the way which the LORD your God led you these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you, and to prove you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments, or no."
Deuteronomy 8:2.

These are the words of Moses, the man of God, when he was near his departure. They make up a part of what has been called his "swan song." He did not often sing—he did give us at least one song, but when he came near the time he was to die, like the fabled swan, he began to sing—and most sweetly did he sing!

Notice the intense earnestness of this address. It is, every way, that of a saint who has spent his life in loving anxiety for the people committed to his charge. And the ruling passion is very strong upon him to the last. He knows that he is about to depart from them, for he has had his marching orders—"Get you up into the top of Pisgah and lift up your eyes westward, and northward, and southward, and eastward, and behold it with your eyes, for you shall not go over this Jordan." Knowing that he is about to leave the people, he is very anxious about their welfare and he addresses them with this deep earnestness.

Note, also, how practical his earnestness is—it is concerning their lives that he speaks to the children of Israel. He knows how liable they are to fall into the superstitions of their neighbors, how likely they, who made a golden calf and angered the Lord and His servant, will be to turn, again, unto graven images and strange gods. And so he beseeches them, as with his dying breath, to observe all the Commandments of the Lord and to cleave closely unto Jehovah, their God.

Then, like an old man, again, for this is a point that would be sure to come out in a venerable, soon-departing saint, he talks about the past. He has been preserved by his God for 120 years and, during the last 40 of those years, he has been king in Jeshurun and the Lord has made him ride upon the high places of the earth in the wonders that he has worked by His hand. And he cannot help reminding the people that the marvels God has accomplished must not be dead things to them, not things to be laid by like mummies wrapped up in sere clothes—and hidden away in a sarcophagus—but they must be living mercies to them, still, since they came from a living God and they must continue to produce in them living

gratitude and living service. I like this thought—it seems to teach us how, as we mature in life, we shall become more and more anxious about practical holiness and we shall, more and more, draw the argument for it from our own experience of the goodness of God. With the Psalmist, we shall cry, "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even with cords to the horns of the altar," and what cords can be stronger than the cords of love and the bands of a man, even gratitude at the remembrance of all the loving kindness of the Lord? I cannot imagine that the iron chains of necessity, or the steel bonds of fear can ever hold men so firmly to duty and virtue as these silken bands of thankfulness at the recollection of all the Lord's Grace and mercy to us. May we feel these love-bands about us as we meditate upon these words of Israel's great leader!

I invite you, then, first of all, to consider *the leading of God which is to be remembered. A*nd, secondly, *the objectives of that leading,* which also are well worthy of remembrance.

I. First, then, consider THE LEADING TO BE REMEMBERED—"You shall remember all the way which the Lord your God led you these forty years in the wilderness." Some of you can knock out that word, "forty," and put in, "fifty," or, "sixty." I know some here who can say, "seventy!" I can even see some who can put in, "eighty," years, not of life, merely, but of Divine leading, for there are some, here, who have been led of the Lord, in their own experience, no less a space than that longest period I have named!

The first thing that we note, here, about the children of Israel is that *they had a God.* And the first thing for us to remember, tonight, is that God ever had anything at all to do with us, that we ever had a God. "You shall remember all the way which the Lord your God led you." We have not been led by a stranger, but by our own God! And we have not been led by a human shepherd, but the Lord has been our Shepherd! Though He counts the number of the stars and calls them all by their names, and leads the hosts of Heaven in their marches through illimitable space, yet has He not disdained to lead us! Unhappy men, who have no God! Saints are poor, sometimes, but they do not know the poverty of the man who has no God! No gold, no silver—this is an inconvenience, but no God—*this* is death in the midst of life! Glory be to God, there are some of His people who, though they have barely sufficient food and raiment, and though scant is the portion of their lot below, yet they have a God—and he who has a God is rich to all the intents of bliss! There are infinite mines of unfailing wealth just beneath his feet—he has but to dig a little to find all that he needs in God. It is a blessed thing to have God when you have all things beside, and to find God in all things, but it is an equally blessed thing to have God when you have *nothing* else and to find all things in God! There is but a slight change in the order of the words and I think there is not much change in the real sense as to true happiness.

Oh, Brothers and Sisters, what a wonder it is that God should have looked upon you and me with eyes of love! Well, I can leave off wondering that He should have loved some of you, but I never shall leave off being astonished that He should ever have regarded me with complacency and

love! Nobody in this place sings with greater emphasis than I do, that verse of which many of you are also so fond—

"What was there in you that could merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight?
'Twas even so, Father,' you always must sing,
'Because it seemed good in Your sight.'"

The Sovereign Mercy of God, born in His own bosom, nurtured from His own heart, could only have induced Him to look with love upon us!

But what love it has been! No commonplace love, no ordinary affection. Mothers have loved us, fathers have loved us. We know the love of a fond spouse and the love of children and of friends, but these are only like twinkling glowworm sparks, while the love of God seems, to us, to be the very sun, blazing in full glory in the heavens! He loved us—to what shall I compare His love? He loved us as He loved His only-begotten Son. No, He seemed to love us even more than that, for He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all. He loved us better than He loved Himself, for, in order that we might live, He put Himself to that great loss of tearing His Only-Begotten from the place of His everlasting abode in peace. Oh, wonder of wonders, that God should ever have loved us so! "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This glorious Truth of God is enough to make us all spring to our feet, feeling that we are in the Presence of the miraculous and the Divine, as, indeed, we are!

More than that, if more can be, we have to tell the wonderful story of the love of God, the Son, and of the love of the Spirit, which made the love of the Father and the love of the Son to be effectual, for the Spirit came to us and turned our hearts into the way of faith and we embraced the Son, whom, in our blindness we had despised. Oh, let us tell, tonight, tell to our own hearts if we cannot speak it out, the wondrous love which has given us a God at all, that Father, Son and Holy Spirit should have such condescending dealings with us!

In the next place, Moses not only said that Israel had a God, but that *God had led them*. I am not going to preach, to-night—I am only going to try to get you to think of how God has led you—and you will do that all the better if I keep gratefully thinking in my own mind of how He has led me. Oh, how He led some of us—

"When Satan's blind slaves,
We sported with death"!

We would have damned ourselves before conversion if we had been left to ourselves, but God, every now and then, held back our rebellious hand and checked our wayward will. "I girded you," said He to Cyrus, "though you have not known Me." And so it was with us, full often, the Lord girded us—what if I say that He put the bit in our mouth when we were like leviathan and a hook in our jaws when we were like a crocodile and wildly refused to know anything that could tame us? He held us back from evil and led us in the right way and oh, the sweet way in which He led us to the Cross! He drove us and he drew us/ With the Law He sternly lashed us. With His love He deftly drew us. And oh, the Glory of the Light when

He brought us to it! Yet we shut our eyes and rushed back into the darkness!

But He would have us see the Light of God, so we were sweetly forced to come and the scales dropped off our eyes and we saw that sight, the like of which we have often seen since then, but the like of which we never imagined in our blind estate! Oh, to be led to Jesus! If there were nothing else for us but just to be led to lie at His feet and weep ourselves away in penitence, and get back, again, to joyous communion with Him by a believing confidence—If there were no other leading than that, we might well ask for a well-tuned harp and never wish to rest our fingers, but continue forever to smite its strings in sweetest minstrelsy of praise!

Many days have passed since then, Beloved, with some of us, since those early days when we hoped for salvation, when we grasped the promises, when we rested on the finished work of Christ, when we had our first trembling joy in believing—and all the way we have been led so singularly. I could not tell you how I came to be where I now am except by saying, "He leads me! He leads me!" Could you tell how *you* came to be where you are? Was there not a time when, if anyone had said you would be what you are, and where you are, you would have despised him, for you hated the thought of it? And was there not another time when you would have laughed outright and said, "It can never be. What? I have a good hope of Heaven? I who now stand trembling on the brink of the abyss? What? Be numbered with the children, when it will be a marvel of mercy if I am ever allowed to eat a crumb with the dogs under the table?" Yet it is so and the Lord has led you. He has led some of us where the track was as narrow as a razor's edge. He has led us where black darkness was on either side and with half a slip we would have been in Hell! He has led us where we could not see our way and where, if we could have seen it, we might have swooned for very fright, yet we are safe. He has led us through the furnace and not so much as a smell of fire has been upon us! He has led us when we have been, like Jonah, in the depths of the sea in very despair! And yet we are safe on dry land. Glory be to the Divine Leader who has led us by a right way, bringing us by a way that we knew not, thus far *en route* for the City that has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God! We praise Him tonight for having led us thus far.

But that is not all. Moses bade the Israelites remember that they had a God and that He had led them. But he also wanted the people to remember that *their way had been through the wilderness*—"You shall remember all the way which the Lord your God led you these forty years in the wilderness." So far as any ministry to our spiritual needs is concerned, this world is a wilderness. There is every temporal comfort provided for us and yet, with all those temporal comforts, there is such a thing as having a starved soul. What is there in this world that can minister to the requirements of a spiritual man? Nothing! As well might Israel in the wilderness have devoured the stones of the desert as any man live upon what this world can furnish him of spiritual meat. It is a wilderness and there are scorpions in it, perhaps one of them has bitten you today. And there are

fiery serpents—you may meet a lot of them tomorrow. And there are Amalekites that seek to destroy the hindmost of us!

And there are all kinds of other evils and mischiefs in this wilderness. Do not let us imagine that we have got to Heaven just yet! I think I have known some Brothers and Sisters who have thought that they were almost there. They have taken off their winterproofs and overcoats, and laid them by, thinking they would never need them again. Ah, my good mariner, you will need that oilskin suit yet! There may be many a rough night for you, yet, before you cross the narrow sea! We have not yet come unto the fair havens of eternal peace. You sing, sometimes—

"My willing soul would stay
In such a frame as this."

Well, perhaps you would like to stay there, but you are not to do so. "Go forward," says the Lord, and in going forward, you may have to endure many trials of which you have never dreamed—for it is still a wilderness through which you are journeying.

Now, I want you to remember that all these years God has led you through the wilderness and, still being in the wilderness, this fact ought to comfort you. If you should be in the wilderness for another 20 years, the God who has led you 40 years can lead you another twenty. The God who has led some of you dear Sisters here present 80 years—can you not trust Him for the other four, five, 10, or whatever number it may be? You do not expect to reach a thousand years old, I am sure, but if you did, the God who kept Methuselah could also keep you! And if Enoch could walk with God for 300 years at a stretch, so may we, with God leading us! If we live as many years as there are days in the year, God has said, "As your days, so shall your strength be," and He will bring us safely through. Let us not forget that.

Then we have to remember something more about the children of Israel and that I have already anticipated, namely, that *God had led them forty years in the wilderness*. It is often the length of an experience that is the trial of it. "In the wilderness"—that is bad enough, but, "forty years in the wilderness"—that is the test of endurance! Plenty of people seem to start rightly but they have no staying power. With all the foes we have to face in the wilderness, who is able to endure? Who? Why, the man who has God with him and God within him! He will endure to the end and, "He that endures to the end shall be saved." But here is that which makes a long life so trying—that all the while you are in *the wilderness*. Yet here is, also, your consolation, for, long as your life has been, yet the Lord has led you through that very respectable period of 40 years. Surely you cannot, now, doubt as to His ability to lead you and keep you even to the end! Remember those past 40 years—do not forget them, I pray you. If you have an old friend whom you have tried and tested for a long period, if you are a wise man, you will grapple him to your soul with hooks of steel and, as to your God in Heaven, who has been with you all these years and kept you from childhood, even until now, you will say, "I cannot doubt Him! I cannot look elsewhere for a leader. I remember the God who has led me through the wilderness these 40 years."

Again, according to the text, *all the way that God had led His people was worth remembering*—"And you shall remember all the way which the Lord your God led you." "All the way." It is always a pity to look at things only in parts. If we would see them aright, we must examine them as a whole. Sometimes it is our lack of dealing with things as a whole that leads us to make mistakes. "All things work together for good to them that love God." Not this thing, that thing and the other thing, by themselves, but *all* things *put together* work together for good. Now, remember, *"all the way"* whereby the Lord has led you. I know you remember the day when God led you by that grave, where half your heart and all your joy seemed buried—you went to see it, the other day, in the cemetery. Now you remember that part of the way—but the exhortation is to remember, "all the way," whereby the Lord has led you. Put this and that together, and you will have something more to remember than that one grave and that dark day when they said that everything was lost—when your household goods were sold and you were left penniless. Yes, and the Lord led you through even that trial! You must remember all the way He led you—how He helped you and brought you through that dark day into the light again—"Remember all the way which the Lord your God led you."

I would desire, tonight, to think of all the loving kindness of God. I think it is worth while to remember those rough bits of road, for we are to remember all the way, but remember, also, those beautiful walks by the river of the Water of Life and those happy climbs to the top of Mount Clear. Yes, you may remember Giant Despair's Castle and By-Path Meadow, to sorrow over them, but then *God* did not lead you there! You had better remember the Interpreter's House and the Delectable Mountains where He did lead you, for where He led you all was well! As to where you went of your own accord, the only leadings that you can remember with joy were those in which He led you back with weeping and supplication, till you were almost glad to kiss every flint that cut your feet, so long as you really felt that you were back in the old road, again, for there you loved to be, and anywhere else you knew you were in great danger! Let us sing of mercy and of judgement! Unto You, O God, will we sing with mingled strains! We will run up the scale to the highest notes of a joyous Hallelujah and every note shall be for You! But we will go down to the deepest tones as well, and still, every note shall be unto You, O God! "Remember all the way which the Lord your God led you these forty years in the wilderness."

Observe this one thing more, dear Friends, *that the children of Israel were commanded to remember the Lord's leading,* and I do not, this evening, merely *invite* you to remember all the way that the Lord has led you, but, as my text puts it as a command, so I give it to you as a command from God! There is a, "you shall" to it and, therefore, I leave my text in your hands, not to be accepted or rejected at your option, but as a positive *command* binding upon every man, woman, or child who has been led of God. If you are, indeed, the sheep of His pasture, this command comes to you with all the force of Divine authority!

II. Now, in the second place, I ask you to think upon THE OBJECTIVES OF THAT LEADING THROUGH THE WILDERNESS—"To humble you, and to prove you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His Commandments, or no."

God has led you and the time—the 40 years. The place—the wilderness. And the method of His leading have all co-operated to erect two purposes.

First of all, *to humble you*. In the review of your life of mercy, do you not feel humbled? I think that there is everything about it to make us all feel humble.

The first thing to humble us is the remembrance that we have, all along, been receiving gifts. That is always a humbling experience. We like better to give than to receive. There is great pride about giving, but all this while, as far as God is concerned, we have been what one called, "gentlemen commoners upon the Lord's bounty." We have been pensioners at His gate, we have been beggars at His door and the only garments that we could put on and call our own are the garments of a beggar. We have been allowed to beg and we have always had alms given to us according to our faith. That ought to humble us. We have not earned a penny, but have been always living on charity. We have been supported on Divine alms all this while.

I will tell you what often humbles me. If I attempt any work for God and I do not succeed at it, I am disappointed, but I make up my mind to try again. But if I succeed, then do I not begin to boast? Certainly not! Have you ever noticed what Peter did when he went fishing and got his boat full? The boat began to go down as soon as it was loaded with fish—and so did Peter till he went down so low that he cried out to Jesus, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" He felt that he was not worthy to have Christ in the same boat with him! The more God blesses you, if you are a man of God, the humbler you will be. It is His mercies, His favors, His loving kindnesses that will tend to humble you, and make you say with Jacob, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which You have shown unto Your servant." God humbles some of His people with favor and love. Others, who may not be humbled that way, have to be brought low in another manner.

Now, in looking back, do not your prayers humble you? Is there one prayer you have prayed of which you dare to be proud? Do not your sweetest communings with God humble you? In hearing of Him by the hearing of the ear, you may not be humbled, but when your eyes see Him, you lie low, with Job, and abhor yourself and repent in dust and ashes. Are you not humbled at the recollection of what you have not done, your sins of omission? How many they have been! Are you not humbled at the thought of the many other people's sins, as well as your own, that are laid to your charge—sins that grew out of your example, or that were not rebuked as they ought to have been—so that you became, by your negligence, a partaker in them? Ah, dear Sirs, if we have anything of which we think we could glory for a *moment*, it must be because we have forgotten all those 40 years in the wilderness, for there is a crowd of memories that will come before the mind of any thoughtful man to humble him!

The point that humbles one most is to think that we should need all this humbling, that God should have to put us in a wilderness for 40 years to humble us! What proud wretches we must be—pride must be ingrained in us if we need all this discipline to get it out! The children of Israel were proud and when I mention the ways in which *they* manifested their pride, I think that I shall only be holding the mirror up to ourselves. They were proud because they murmured. As soon as they began to be a little thirsty or hungry, they complained—and what was that murmuring but a proof of their pride? "I am such a very great person that I ought not to suffer hunger! I am such an important individual that I ought not to endure thirst!" That was part of the Israelites' pride. And then they began to doubt God. They had scarcely heard the last rattle of the chariots of the Egyptians when they said to Moses, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness?" They pretended that they knew better than God! And unbelief is only a kind of veiled pride in which we begin to set up our own judgment against the wisdom of God. They were also very proud because they were so hot and fiery—and passionate and eager. Moses had only been gone from them 40 days when they said to Aaron, "Up, make us gods which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we know not what is become of him." So they must have a god of their own making, a molten calf, to take the place of Jehovah who had delivered them from the hand of Pharaoh! If God waited, they could not wait—not they! All this was the effect of pride.

Now, do you not find murmuring, unbelief and a wicked impetuosity still clinging to you? Well then, that is what God is trying to get out of you. All the experience of the 40 years in the wilderness has been meant to humble us and if it does not humble us, what is to become of us? If our experience of God's love and of our own frailty does not lay us in the dust, what must we be? O God, by Your blessed Spirit, cause all these experiences to be effectual that we may be really humble before You! Yet I am afraid, that, if the Lord does not work another miracle, we shall still get more proud, for we are very apt, as we grow in years, to think, "Well now, I am an experienced person. I shall not fall like those silly boys." The man who talks like that is the very man who does fall! I have often had to tell you that, in Scripture, you have scarcely an instance of a young Believer falling into sin, but nearly all the cases of backsliding recorded are those of old men and, "old fools are the worst fools." We who are getting on in years and have had a long experience are just the kind of stone that the devil likes to carve into monuments of our own folly! Do not, therefore, think that because any of you know more than you did, and are walking nearer to God than you used to, there is anything for you to glory in! No, the distinct tendency of all this should be, by Divine Grace, to make us more cautious, more timorous, more trembling, more fearful of ourselves and, at the same time, more confident in God, more humble and, therefore, more believing, for I think that until self-confidence is emptied out of us, there is no room for confidence in God. Pride is the enemy of faith and

humility is the brother of true assurance. God bless, then, all our wilderness experience to our humbling!

The second objective of the Lord's leading appears to be, according to our text, *to prove us*. Does not the Lord know us? Yes, He does, but He still wants to know us, in another sense, by actual tests. God has given us these 40 years in the wilderness on purpose to *test* us. Will Richardson, a friend of mine, an old farm laborer in Essex, said to me, once, "Do you know, Sir, all through the winter I am thinking that when the hay-time comes, I will earn a good lump of money at hay-making. I am thinking about how well I will use my scythe and make a long day's work. And then I think I will reap many an acre when it gets to harvest-time. But," he added, "I have not been in the field above half-an-hour before my poor old back aches and I begin to find that Will cannot do much, now that he is getting on to eighty-six." He said, "It is wonderful what strength I have when there is not any grass to cut and when there is no corn to get in." So is it with many of us—we have a lot of faith till the trouble comes—and God, therefore, leads us, again, into the wilderness, and leaves us there, just to prove us and to show us that we are not the rich people, the great people and the believing people that we fancied we were! Thus the Lord tests us and, in the testing, 99 parts out of a hundred evaporate, perhaps 999 parts out of a thousand vanish away, and we have to bless God if there is even a thousandth part left of what we thought we had!

Well, Brothers and Sisters, beside this testing of our faith, and our love, and our graces, of which I have not time to speak, the Lord also leads us through the wilderness in order to point out to us something of the mischief that lurks within our nature. We have no idea what bad folk we are. I do not think there are any men or women here who have the slightest idea of what evil they may be capable of if they are only put under certain conditions and the Grace of God is taken away from them! Blasphemies, murders and foul lusts still lurk within that old mind of the flesh that abides even in the nature of the regenerate! And if those vile dogs once get loose, oh, Sirs, they will bite like the dog of the most unrenewed man! Every now and then, even we who are God's children find out what we can do, what we can say, and what we can feel. Oh, I wish we would believe in the sanctifying power of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit—and have no confidence in self at all—but cry for its mortification, its death and its burial with Christ, for that is the only thing to be done with it! While there is any life in the old flesh, the flesh is still flesh and none of us can tell what evil it will work if it once gets the opportunity! God leads us through the wilderness that we may discover this.

And, once more, I'm sure that the Lord also leads us through the wilderness as He led Israel, that He may see whether we really will keep His Commandments, or not. Yes, you have behaved well as an apprentice, so the Lord lets you become a journeyman. You have done well as a journeyman, but yet you may fail when you come to be a master. There was a young man who attended this House of Prayer regularly. He was much persecuted by his father and mother, but all the while he seemed wonderfully earnest. His parents are dead and he is his own master and the pos-

sessor of a good deal of wealth but, alas, I do not think he ever goes to the House of God, now, or has any care about it. I have often noticed that persons, downtrodden and oppressed, will hold on to Christ—but when they get their liberty, they will run away from Him! It is an amazing thing, but it is true.

Some seem to change their religion with their coats. When their coat is half-worn out, they do not mind mixing up with all classes of people that worship God. But when they wear respectable broadcloth and especially when Her Ladyship puts on satin, then they want to go somewhere else. Now, the Lord leads people about, up high and down low, to see whether they will keep His Commandments, for that religion that will not stand the test of all weathers is worth nothing! If we do not so love God that whether He puts a hedge about us, or whether He permits Satan to break through the hedge and take away all that we have—if we do not still cling to Him, fair or foul—we do not love Him at all! And to separate between the precious and the vile is often the reason of the working of the hand of the God of Providence towards professors of religion. O God, help us to know ourselves and to know You—and make us right towards You!

I have not spoken much directly to unconverted people, tonight, yet my subject has all been for them as well as for the Lord's people. I should like them to look back over the years in which they have lived without God, yet God has not left them, altogether, and He has, tonight, brought them into this Tabernacle where there sounds forth a silver trumpet of which this is the note, "Turn unto Me and live! Whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ has everlasting life! Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." May you, tonight, as you take a review of your past life, be moved to feel, "Surely, God must mean to bless me, or He would not have been so good to me!"

I was speaking with an officer who rode in the charge at Balaclava, one of the very few who came out alive, and, though I had not seen him before, I could not help putting my hand on his shoulder and saying to him, "Surely, the rest of your life, so strangely spared, must be dedicated to God." It may be that you have been in a shipwreck and that you barely escaped. Or you were in a terrible collision on the railway. Possibly you have had typhoid fever. It may be that you were laid low the last time the cholera was raging here, or you have been kicked by a horse, or you have escaped from all sorts of tragedies—yet here you are. Should not the life which has been so specially spared be dedicated to God? We read of John Bunyan, that in his godless days he was foolhardy to the last degree, and once, when a serpent came in his way, he took it up and plucked out the poison gland from it. It was a wonder that he was not stung, but he was not—and the reason was that God meant him to write *The Pilgrim's Progress*—and he could not die till he had done that.

And I believe that the Lord has some design of love towards some of you who are here, tonight. Go and seek His face and cry to Him for mercy and He will grant it to you tonight! We prayed that all who came in here might

be saved. I trust they will be. I believe they will be. What a joyous thing it would be for all of us to be bound for Glory! Let us begin to praise the Lord's name that all of us are to go to Heaven in answer to that prayer! Well, as you are going there, you had better begin to learn something about it and get ready for it—and I invite you to do so. Let us begin the music of Heaven by singing this one verse—

"All hail the power of Jesus' name,
Let angels prostrate fall!
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 139:1-18.

Verse 1. *O LORD, You have searched me, and known me.* "You have explored me, as men dig in mines and make subterranean excavations. You have searched into my secret parts and known me."

2. *You knew my sitting down and my raising up.* "My simplest acts, those which I scarcely premeditated."

2. *You understand my thoughts afar off.* "Before I think it, when I think it, and when I forget it, You understand my every thought."

3. *You compass my path and my lying down.* "Making a ring around me, so that I am entirely under Your observation. My roving and my resting are both known to You."

3. *And are acquainted with all my ways.* "My habits, and the exceptions from my habits, are all known to You."

4. *For there is not a word on my tongue, but, You, O LORD, You knew it altogether.* "When it is on my tongue, and not spoken, like a seed sown, hidden away, not yet sprouted, You, O Jehovah, knew it altogether!"

5. *You have beset me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me.* "I am like a prisoner, with guards before me and behind me, and the officer's hand upon my shoulder all the while. You have arrested me, O Lord. I can never get away from You."

6. *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain up to it.* "I believe it, but I cannot understand it; even my imagination cannot picture it to me."

7. *Where shall I go from Your Spirit?* "If I want to do so. If I desire to avoid You, where can I go to escape from Your Omnipresent Spirit?"

7, 8. *Or where shall I flee from Your Presence? I ascend up into Heaven, You are there.* The true glory of that bright world.

8. *If I make my bed in Hell, behold, You are there.* "The terror of that place of woe, in the land of death-shadow and darkness, You are living, whoever else is dead. If I make my abode in Hades, in Hell, You are there."

9, 10. *If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Your hand lead me.* "If the breath of the morning breeze should bear me far away across the pathless sea, You are there before me. If I ride upon a flash of light, You are swifter than the sunbeam—even there shall Your hand lead me." The lone missionary in the

furthest parts of the earth is led by God. When he knows not his way, God leads him, and when he has no companion to cheer him, God's hands upholds him. What a comfort to any of you who have to journey far away from your kindred! You cannot be alone, for God is there! Be of good comfort and go as bravely as if you walked the crowded streets of this great city!

10-12. *And Your right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darknesses cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yes, the darkness hides not from You, but the night shines as the day: the darkness and the light are both right to You.* It is impossible to conceive that God should need the light in order to see. He can see as well in the midnight shades as in the blaze of noon. Let no man think that he may sin in secret because he is not seen of the eyes of man—God's eyes are on him in the dark as much as in the light.

13, 14. *For You have possessed my reins: You have covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are Your works; and that my soul knows right well.* He was no Agnostic, he never dreamed of being a know-nothing.

15-17. *My substance was not hid from You, when I was made in secret, and curiously worked in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in Your book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them. How precious, also, are Your thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!* How sweet to be thought of by God! How charming and how cheering to be the perpetual object of the Lord's thoughts! The Psalmist does not tell us how precious are God's thoughts, but he sets a note of admiration to them—"How precious, also, are Your thoughts unto me, O God!" He does not try to calculate the total of their value, but he says, "How great is the sum of them!"

18. *If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with You.* "You have thought of me when I was asleep—and when I wake, I think of You." Happy living, happy dying, to feel that, if we never wake again on earth, we shall wake up with God! How precious it is to think that when good and useful men fall asleep, when they awake, they are forever with the Lord! Our turn will come soon, my Brothers and Sisters. May it be our portion to die in harness and to be taken away while yet we have the Light of God's sustenance resting upon our work!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—214, 139 (SONG I), 1035.

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

EARTH'S VANITIES AND HEAVEN'S VERITIES
NO. 2346

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, FEBRUARY 4, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING NOVEMBER 7, 1889.

"Surely every man walks in a vain show: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heaps up riches and knows not who shall gather them. And now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in You. Deliver me from all my transgressions: make me not the reproach of the foolish."
Psalm 39:6-8.

These are solemn words. Sometimes we have a more joyful theme than this, but I believe that, spiritually, as well as naturally, it is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting. A meditation of a quiet kind, on things not as they are in fiction, but as they prove to be in fact, is always salutary. There is a great mass of sorrow in the world and all of us meet with something, every now and then, to calm our spirit and cool our blood. So, tonight, if we think a little of the fleeting character of *this* world, and of the *real* world where certainty, alone, is to be found—and if we school ourselves to learn facts and realities, by the blessing of God's Spirit—we may go away even more lastingly refreshed than if our hearts were made to leap for joy by meditation upon some transporting theme.

I will have no further preface. There is too much in the text, itself, to allow time for a lengthy introduction. Therefore, notice, first, that *David records his view of human life*—"Surely every man walks in a vain show: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heaps up riches and knows not who shall gather them." Then, next, *David expresses his own emotions in contemplation of these things*—"And now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in You." And, then, in the third place, *David offers an appropriate and necessary prayer*, for he cries, "Deliver me from all my transgressions: make me not the reproach of the foolish."

I. First, then, let us notice that in our text DAVID RECORDS HIS VIEW OF HUMAN LIFE.

You will notice that he puts, "surely," twice over in this verse, and with the, "verily," of the fifth verse, which has the same meaning, but might have been translated, "surely," he has uttered the same word three times, "surely, surely, surely," or, if you please, "verily, verily, verily." He half reminds us of his greater Son, the Son of David, whose speech was often emphasized with that sacred assuring word, "Verily, verily, I say unto

you." David here seems to tell us that there is nothing sure except that nothing is sure. "Surely," he says, "nothing on earth is sure. Verily there is not verity, or happiness, anywhere here below." There *is* a land of verities. There is a home of "surelies"—some of us are on the way there and already have the earnest of our inheritance. But as for you who have your portion in *this* life, you have vanity, not verity—change is written on everything earthly.

Having thus given us the keynote of certainty—for the Psalmist did not write haphazardly, but he wrote what he *knew*. He wrote what he had *experienced* and he wrote under the Inspiration of the Spirit of God—we should the more carefully look at what he has written. If it is so, surely, let us be sure to know what it is.

And, first, he seems to me to speak of life as a walk. And of that he says, "Surely every man walks in a vain show." Then he speaks of life as a worry. And of that he says, "Surely they are disquieted in vain." And then he speaks of life as a success, as men call it. And of that he says, "He heaps up riches and knows not who shall gather them."

David first speaks of *life as a walk.* He seems to have had in his mind the idea of a great procession—"Surely every man walks in a vain show." If you choose to go to the Lord Mayor's show next Saturday, you may see a vain show, and may know precisely what David meant. Such things were more common in Oriental countries than they are with us, but whether it is the Lord Mayor's show or any other, it is a picture of what this mortal life is! The procession, if you see it, or if you do not see it, but only read and hear of it, may remind you of what life is—what you see of it is all show. There are kings in the show, princes in the show and heroes of old time in the show. But there are neither kings, nor princes, nor heroes there in reality! It is all show and such is this mortal life to a large extent.

Among some classes of society, show is everything—they must "keep up appearances." Just so and, all the world over, that is about all there is—"appearances"—a vain show! If you want reality, you cannot see it—only the *unseen* is real. If you want shadow, you *can* see it—"the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." I wish we could get a hold of that idea as a practical thing—that everything we can see is shadow, but what we cannot see is the real substance. When we talk about faith, men call us "visionary." Well, well, you may call us that if you like, for we have a vision of a very high order. But we beg to return the word to you in its ordinary meaning, for if you make your treasure of what you can see and handle, *you* are the visionaries—for this is but a vain show in which you rejoice and that which you see with your eyes is but a vision—a dream that vanishes when one awakens! Earthly life is only a show.

Oh, Friends, I wish we really thought this! We would not be so hot-brained as we are if we said to ourselves, "These are only shadows." We would not be so vexed and worried as we are if we often said to ourselves, "These are shadows. I could not see them if they were not. If they were real, they would not be perceptible to my senses—they would only be perceptible by the higher faculty of faith." "Surely every man walks in a vain show." It is a show and nothing more.

But it is a passing show, for David does not say, "Surely every man sits down in a vain show and remains in the same place," but, "every man *walks* in a vain show." It is with life as with a procession which passes before your eyes. It comes—listen to the shouts of the people! It is here in a few minutes. There are the people crowding the streets! But presently it has vanished and is gone. Does not life strike you as being just that? I remember, oh, I remember so many figures in the procession! I have seemed to stand as at a window, though that, itself, has been but seeming, for I also have been in the procession. I remember the great hearty men of my boyhood, whom I used to hear pray—they are now singing up yonder! Then, when I think of you, dear Friends, I remember a long procession of saintly men and godly women who have all passed before me and have gone into Glory. What a host of friends we have in the unseen world, "gone over to the majority!" As we get older, they really are the majority, and our friends on earth are outnumbered by our friends in Heaven! Some of you will fondly remember dear ones who have passed away in the procession, but please remember that you, also, are in the procession. Though they seem to have passed before you, you have been passing along with them and you may reach the vanishing point before long! And then there will be this talk among the brotherhood you love, "he, too, has gone," or, "she has fallen asleep," for we are all walking as in a procession and passing away to the land of substance and reality!

A show which is passing away is, in itself, if it is measured by this mortal life, vain—"a vain show." To a man who has no hope hereafter, it is all, "vanity of vanities; all is vanity." Within the narrow compass of this poor globe there is nothing that is worth a man's opening his mouth to ask for or to receive. Take the broader, larger circle of the heavens and there, within that boundless circumference, there is something to be found that is worth finding! Dwell in God and you have something substantial! Dwell out of God and you make "much ado about nothing." Life is a vain show when it is lived apart from God.

If you will only consider, for a minute, you will see that it is so. Think of the armies of Babylon and Assyria, the palaces their kings built, the mighty cities that they built—where are they now? Think of the Medes and Persians, with all their pomp and power—where are their glories now? And Greece—her palaces and her temples are a desolation. Listen to the tramp of Roman armies up the *Via Sacra*—listen to the acclamations of the people as they climb the very chimney-tops to see the conquerors come home—where have they all gone? Fame did but blow one blast upon her bronze trumpet and the echoes sounded, for a while, and then there was silence. "Surely every man walks in a vain show." Get the idea of a procession and you have caught the thought which David would convey to you. Such, too often, is the whole of a man's life—just the passing of a pageant—and nothing more.

The Psalmist then speaks of *life as a worry,* and he says, "Surely they are disquieted." So they are. How few people are so free from the spirit of the things of this world as to pass through this life quietly? If we could once live in the eternities, we would be calm, still and restful. But we live by the moment and the day and we are all on the worry, the fidget, the

fret, the fume and we know no real rest. The work of this world, if carried on only as for this world, is well described here—"Surely they are disquieted in vain." See how they begin life, eager for its joys, its honors, its wealth. Note how they plod, toil and labor. How much of brain-work is done by the light of the midnight oil! Many a man agitates his mind and wearies his spirit till his life is lost in finding a livelihood. They are trying to live and lo, life is gone! And they wake up and wonder how it is that they have let it go and have not really lived at all. Some are all for getting, never for enjoying in any measure. When such men get wealth, it is not sufficient for them. When they get twice that, they are still eager for more and live on in a perpetual worry.

Then one has more than another and envy comes in—of all passions, one of the most wearing—and when a man has, at last, all he thought he would ever need, then he is afraid of losing it! Now he is anxious about this and worried about that, and fretting about the other. Believe me, there are no people who take the fret of life so much as those who ought to have sense enough not to—"having food and raiment" they are not "therewith content"—and having taken all that is good for them to carry, they are like a traveler who, having one good substantial staff to help him in his walking, must carry a bundle of sticks with him, and so loads himself unnecessarily. Is it not so?

Did you ever stand in the Bourse at Paris, or did you ever, by any chance, hear the noise of our own Stock Exchange? The latter place is more difficult to see than the former, but when I have stood upstairs in the Bourse in Paris, and have looked down upon the raving multitude below, I have wondered whether if bedlam had been emptied out, there would be more noise, more uproar, more calling out, more pushing and rushing, first this way, and then that way! I could not understand what they were doing! Perhaps that made the scene appear the more maddening. Every man seemed all alive and as though he would eat up every other man in the place!

And I believe that the Bourse is but a picture of mercantile life *everywhere*—competition, competition, everybody buying cheaply and grinding down everybody that works, and then complaining that, in his turn, he is ground, too—his own measure being measured back to him! Ah me, what a life it is! Had David penned this Psalm, today, he might have written in capital letters, "SURELY THEY ARE DISQUIETED IN VAIN!" Oh, for a little quiet! Oh, for time to think! Oh, for opportunities to get near to God and unload all your thoughts and all your cares before Him—and then to go away feeling patience mingled with joy, and joy with the expectation of unutterable bliss, helping us to really live, instead of being disquieted in vain!

Well, next, David passes on to speak of *life as a success,* and he mentions those who were supposed to have been successful in life, though, mark you, it is not success in life, after all, to accumulate riches. When you read in *The Illustrated London News* that somebody died, "worth" such and such, do not believe it! A man is not worth what he has when he dies! A man may not be worth two-pence—although he may possess a million, he, himself, is worth nothing—poor grabber of everything! But you say

such and such a man died and left £200,000. Yes, there are several of us who, when we die, will leave much more than that. I shall leave all the world behind me and there are many others here who will do the same—and leave all the millions that there are, all the estates that ever were and all the treasures of the world! And I suppose that every one of us, when he dies, will leave everything behind him, for shrouds have no pockets and men carry nothing with them into their graves.

But even when a man is successful in heaping up riches, see how David describes it—"He heaps up riches." That is all—he does not partake of them. He does not use them, he merely heaps them up. He accumulates without enjoyment. When a man has food and raiment, and has what he needs for comfort, all that he has beyond, if counted by thousands, might as well be a thousand pins as a thousand pounds, so far as any good it is to him! But the bigger heap will not give more comfort, for there is the additional anxiety of taking care of it. When riches are consecrated to God's Glory, they assume quite another character, but I am now talking about this world and the mere possession of its treasures. David calls it the heaping up of riches and that is all that it is, getting a big heap, like children do at the seaside—one gets a bigger heap of sand than another has, but what is the good of that?

The Psalmist also says that when the man heaps up riches, he, "knows not who shall gather them." He hoards without security. This is probably an allusion to the husbandman who has cut down his corn and put the sheaves together. And then at night, before he can gather them into the garner, much less before he can thresh out the grain and grind it, some marauder comes and runs off with it all. The miser heaps up his gold, but he does not know who may gather it. Have we not seen the fruit of many years toil vanish in an hour? The reaping of a lifetime has disappeared by a panic in a moment.

"He heaps up riches and knows not who shall gather them." He leaves his wealth without pleasure. The Psalmist alludes to the fact that men cannot tell what will become of their possessions when they die. I am sure that there is many a man who would turn in his grave if he knew what was being done with his hard-earned wealth! To live wholly to enrich somebody about whose character you know so little seems a poor objective in life. And yet it is the only objective which many are pursuing. Without chick or child, it may be, still men will go on scraping together riches for some unknown heir who, if they knew him, would be, perhaps, beneath their contempt—yet they go on working like slaves for one who will never be grateful to them when they are dead!

Now does not the whole of this put together make up a very sorry picture? Yet it is true of the worldling, of the man who has no hope hereafter—of the man who has never projected his soul, by Grace, into the spiritual and the heavenly realm!

II. And now, glad to get away from this part of our subject, we notice how DAVID EXPRESSES HIS OWN EMOTIONS IN CONTEMPLATION OF THESE THINGS.

And first, *he has come to a decision.* Having turned these matters over, he begins the expression of his own feelings, thus, "And now, Lord." I like

that mode of speech. It is a great thing to come to God with a, "now." You know how the Lord comes to us. He says, "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord." I like a man, sometimes, to come close up to God and sit down, and seem to say, "Now, Lord, You see that I have realized the vanity of this world. I may well let it all go, for it melts away in my hands—it is a mere shadow which is not worth living for—and I have to live in eternity with You. I have to live in Heaven or in Hell. O my God, bring me to my bearings! Bring me close up to You and let us reason together, and have the question out. And now, Lord." Every moment is solemn if we would but make it so, but there are certain turning points in life when a man has had his eyes opened to see the fallacy of his former pursuits, when, stopping where the roads meet, he looks up to the signpost and says, "And now, Lord, guide me. Help me to take the right turn, to avoid the shadow and to seek after that which is substantial. Now, Lord."

I also like this expression of David's emotions because he *consults with God.* "Every man walks in a vain show, but," he says, "and now, Lord, there is no vanity with You, no deception, no delusion with You, behold, I turn away from this mirage, which just now deluded me, to You, my God, the Rock of my salvation, and I look to You. And now, Lord." I would to God that somebody here would say, "I have to spend eternity *somewhere*. I will not waste this present time and live as if this world were all, but I will lift up my prayer, tonight, and say, Now, Lord. Now that I have passed my childhood and am a young man. Now that I have reached my 21st birthday. Now that I am 30, forty, fifty—now that my hair is turning gray it is time for me to be wise if ever. Now, Lord." And if I am so unhappy as to have a person here who has advanced to the very end of his lease and has become 70 and yet is still living for a world that is slipping away from him, I would to God that the Holy Spirit would make him say, tonight, "And now, Lord. Now I seek You, now I turn to You."

You can see at once that David *feels that he is out of place,* for he says, "Lord, what wait I for?" He says, "What wait I for? I can see what these *fools* are waiting for—they are waiting to take their place in the show. They put on their masquerading garments and go out there to take part in the pageant. But I will not go there. I do not belong to any of the classes that make up that show. What wait I for, then? I see the men worried in vain, but, Lord, I have learned to trust in You. Then, what wait I for? And, O my God, I see how others clutch the treasure which they cannot keep, which is not worth the having, for they are soon to leave it, or it quickly leaves them. By Your Grace I am not after that kind of thing. Now, Lord, what wait I for?" He is like a fish out of water, he is a man out of his native country, evidently a stranger and an exile, who is turning to his God. He is a fellow-stranger with his God and he says to Him, "Now, Lord, what wait I for?"—a question only God, Himself, can fully answer!

You observe, also, that *he has his eye on the future.* He is a man who is waiting for something. Faith is a high virtue. And waiting upon God is a flower that grows out of it. "What wait I for? I have not found it yet. I am waiting for it, for here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come." Our treasure is not here—it is away there upon the eternal hills,

where Christ sits at the right hand of God! The man described in our text is a waiting man whose chief delight is now in a world that is to come.

And you observe, lastly, on this point, that he is a man whose hope is in God. "My hope is in You." I have no earthly expectations, but I say, "My Soul, wait you only upon God, for my expectation is from Him." "Hopes of ever finding anything here which can fill me, or content me, I have long ago abandoned. And now, Lord, my hope is in You. It is only You, my God, that I desire, and if I get You, if I am filled with You, if You abide in me, if You transform me into Your image. If You deign to use me for Your Glory. If You will take me Home to dwell with You where Jesus is, this is what I wait for, and I wait for nothing else." We are expectant of good things to come. We are not inhabitants of this country, we are citizens of the New Jerusalem which is above! We are only shipwrecked, here, for a while, and exiled from Home until the boat shall come to ferry us across the stream to the land where our true possessions lie and where our best Beloved is! Life, light, love and everything to us is He who has gone as our Forerunner to the place which He has prepared for them that love Him.

III. Now I close by noticing that DAVID OFFERS AN APPROPRIATE AND NECESSARY PRAYER. "Deliver me from all my transgressions: make me not the reproach of the foolish." After all, we *are* here, Brothers and Sisters. We do not know how long we may have to stay here and there are things which we need while we are here. Well, what are they? Send in your requests! What do you need?

David puts down what he needs. "He needs, first, to be delivered from trouble," says somebody. No, he does not say anything about *that*. He prays, "Deliver me from all my transgressions." "He needs to be delivered from that headache, that heartache, that pain in the limbs, that depression of spirit." Nothing of the sort! The prayer of this godly man is, "Deliver me from all my transgressions."

That is, first, *he prayed for deliverance from sins committed.* "Lord, put all my sin away, so that I may be clean every whit from every sin that I have ever committed." Can that be? Oh, yes, it is so with many of us! We are washed in the blood of the lamb and that washing is *perfect* washing—it leaves no stain behind it! If you believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, He has taken your sin upon Himself—He has put your sin away by the great blood shedding! It is not on you any longer. It has even ceased to *be*, according to that wonderful text, "The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found." What a blessed thing it is to live with no cloud, whatever, between your soul and your God—to know that every sin is blotted out by the Atonement of Christ and that your heavenly Father looks upon you with delight and favor—even as a child of God and does not chide you! O happy, happy, happy man who walks in the Light of God, as God is in the Light, and so has fellowship with God while the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses him from all sin! David's first prayer is for deliverance from sins committed. If you get it answered in your case, you will not walk in any vain show and you will not be worried at all, much less, "disquieted in vain."

Next, *he prays to be delivered from the assaults of sin.* Who is there, here, that is not tempted? If anyone says, "I am above temptation, or beyond temptation," well, that person must have gone far in pride and carnal security—he is eaten up with the leprosy of self-deceit! We are all tempted and every day we need to pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One." "Deliver me from all my transgressions. Lord, do not let me sin; let me not in heart, or thought, or word, or deed, offend You." Oh, if we could but be perfect, so that we could never manifest an ugly temper, never speak a wry word, never have an evil thought! Oh, if we could but be perfect! Ah, Sirs, this is the riches we covet, to be perfectly free from every tendency to sin! If we could but get to *that*, then we should have got to Heaven, for that *is* Heaven—to be perfectly delivered from sin! Well, well, we shall have that perfection! God will give it to us, but let us make this the subject of our daily prayer, "Deliver me from all my transgressions."

David also *prayed for deliverance from peculiarly dangerous sins.* Allow me to put an emphasis on one little word in my text, "Deliver me from *all* my transgressions." I am afraid that we all have some special sin that is our sin more than it is anybody else's—some tendency, hereditary—perhaps some liability to a particular form of sin. I believe that if some Brothers and Sisters were ever tempted to hilarity, they would not transgress in *that* direction, for they were born in November, and they have a fog in their very soul! There are some others, who, if they were tempted to great depression, would not transgress in *that* way, for they have sunlight in their souls and their eyes always twinkle with a natural merriment! Some men are not tempted to be misers—it would be a mercy if they *were*, for they are such dreadful spendthrifts! Some men are never tempted to be lavish—I half wish that the devil or someone better would tempt them, that way, for they are so mean and it is so hard to get even a three penny piece from them to help the best of causes! Satan is pretty well acquainted with us—he sees the joints in our harness, he knows to what sins we are specially inclined—and if it is so in sinners, it is also so in saints! We all have need to pray, "Deliver me from all my transgressions, especially from the sins to which I am most liable. Lord, save me from them." I invite you, dear Friends, to pray this prayer of David.

And then, also pray the other—"Make me not the reproach of the foolish. If I am to be reproached, let me be reproached by wise men. Make me not the reproach of the foolish."

Thus, David *prayed for deliverance from deserved dishonor.* Oh, may God grant that none of you, whom He has called to a higher and better life, and made to long for Glory and eternity, may ever make the enemy to blaspheme, or give them real reason for despising you! God keep us from falling! O Christian men, women, Christ has been more wounded by His friends than by His foes! We do not mind what the infidel has to say. At least we would not mind it if we did not, at times, help him to say sad things by our inconsistency. We feel the point of the arrow and the smart of the wound is acute, but far keener is it to feel that our own wrong-doing feathered the arrow which the enemy shot from his bow! God keep us

from that evil! May we never lend a feather from our wings with which to furnish an arrow against Christ or His cause!

David also *prayed to be preserved from undeserved defamation.* "Make me not the reproach of the foolish." If you live the life of an angel, foolish persons will soon spread an evil story against you. Unless the Lord holds their tongues, *they* will not hold them. Pray, then, that you may be preserved from slander. If it comes, may it be *real* slander, with no truth in it, but may God preserve you even from that, for it is a cruel thing and cuts to the quick!

Again, David *prayed for deliverance from spiritual disappointment.* And may we also be preserved from all disappointments concerning our trust in God! If we trusted in God and He did not deliver us, we would be, indeed, the reproach of the foolish. We come out boldly for the Truth of God and stand alone—and yet that Truth never vindicates us! Why, then, we shall be the reproach of the foolish! We pray that we may not be put to shame and that God's bare arm may defend His own cause and we believe it will be so.

And last of all, in his prayer, "Make me not the reproach of the foolish," *David pleads for deliverance from dreadful taunts at the last.* May I never be lost and then forever have to bear this reproach! You know, the thought has sometimes come to me that if I am not true, and if at the Last Great Day the Master should say, "I never knew you, depart, you cursed" how will those who have to depart with me turn round, and say, "And *you,* and *you?* You talked to us! You preached to us! And yet you, yourself, are here?" This would be to suffer shame as did the king of Babylon when he went down to the Pit and the kings whom he had slain began to say to him, "Have you become like one of us?" How they gloried over their conqueror, himself, shut up in Hell, conquered by the Almighty God! Professors, I beseech you to pray this prayer, tonight, "Make me not the reproach of the foolish." Be sincere, true men, lest on the last day you not only have the wrath of God to bear, but the shame and the *everlasting* contempt which your fellow sinners will heap upon you while you lie there, after all your profession, a castaway!

The Lord grant His blessing to those who are to be baptized tonight! May they be faithful to the end and may others of us, who have confessed Christ years ago, be kept from sin! May we all trust Christ tonight! If we never trusted Jesus before, let us begin at once, each one saying, "Now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in You." May we all come to Jesus and find eternal life in Him! Amen, and amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 39

To the chief Musician, even to Jeduthun, A Psalm of David.

David dedicated some Psalms to Asaph and one or two to Jeduthun. Some of this chief musician's family appear to have remained singers as late as the time of Nehemiah. It is a great honor to be a singer in the House of God. Ungodly men have no right to lead the Psalmody—only redeemed lives can sing aright the song of redemption. I reckon that it is

almost as wrong to have an unconverted person to lead the singing as it would be to have an unconverted man to preach the Gospel. David was in a great heat of spirit, and much tried, when he wrote this Psalm. There is little that is cheerful in it, yet there is much that may cheer us. Sometimes, when we are unusually thoughtful, we are more likely to be blessed than at other times. Specific gravity is better than specific levity—there are some who have a great deal of the latter quality.

Verse 1. *I said.* "I thought it, and at last I said it. I resolved. I determined upon it and I registered the vow."

1. *I will take heed to my ways.* Men never go right by accident—he who is heedless is graceless. A holy life is a life that comes of taking heed.

1. *That I sin not with my tongue.* He who keeps his tongue can keep all the rest of his body. The tongue is the helm of the ship and if that is well managed, the ship will be steered aright. How many sins of the tongue there are—proud words, false words, trifling words, unclean words! I cannot mention the whole list. The tongue is the best thing in the world or the worst thing, according to how it is used.

1. *I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.* "I may feel free when I am with God's people. Then I may wear my heart upon my sleeve, for there are no claws to scratch at it. But when I am with the wicked, I must not cast my pearls before swine. I must be careful what I say, for they will be sure to misunderstand and misrepresent me."

2. *I was dumb with silence.* Ah, me! How often we do wrong even when we try to do right! He tried not to sin with his tongue, so he was silent, but silence, itself, may be a sin of the tongue! God forgive our idle silence and silence our idle words! I do not think we often sin this way, but silence may sometimes be more wicked than speech even though at other times, speech is silver and silence is golden. If silence is sometimes better than speech, it may also be worse. So poor David, like a pendulum, swings first, this way, and then the other way. Yet he went too far in the silent direction.

2. *I held my peace, even from good.* Which he should not have done. A dumb sorrow is a heavy sorrow.

2. *And my sorrow was stirred.* Or "troubled." Water, while it is quiet, may look clear, the sediment lies still at the bottom. But if you stir it, you see all there is in it. So is it with sorrow—when it is stirred, you find its bitterness.

3. *My heart was hot within me.* The fire was kept in his heart—it was not allowed space to break forth—so his heart was hot as an oven.

3. *While I was musing, the fire burned.* He grew so hot with grief that he was *compelled* to speak.

3. *Then spoke I with my tongue.* I am not sure that he did not sin then. We sin if we are silent and we sin if we speak, for we are such sinful creatures. It would have been better, perhaps, if David had said, "Lord, help me to take heed to my ways and rule, You, over my tongue," for as it was, you see, he could not manage his tongue. He was either too fast or too slow. However, this time he spoke well, for he spoke *to God*. More talk to God and less chat to men—and we would be wiser and better!

4. *LORD, make me to know my end.* It is greatly wise for us to be familiar with our last hours. There is much to be discovered in the shroud, the mattock and the spade.

4. *And the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am.* A bubble is more substantial than I am—a little handful of dust, easily blown in the wind—rather an appearance than a reality! Ah, me, little do we know, any of us, how frail we are!

5. *Behold You have made my days as an handbreadth.* How short is our life! It is just a span and no more,

5. *And my age is as nothing before You.* What multitudes of generations of men have come and gone! An angel might have cried, long before, "Man is but a thing of yesterday compared with the eternal God." God created the first star that twinkled out of the primeval darkness. "The everlasting hills," as we call them, are but infants of a day compared to Him. Therefore, man may truly say, "My age is as nothing before You."

5. *Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah.* The best man is only man at the best and when he is at his best, he is nothing but vanity. It is strange that he should get vain of his best state, when his best is only vanity!

6. *Surely every man walks in a vain show.* He is a shadow walking among shadows.

6. *Surely they are disquieted in vain.* They fret and fume about nothing.

6. *He heaps up riches and knows not who shall gather them.* He is busy with a rake, but another will be busy with a fork. What the miser gathers the spendthrift scatters.

7. *And now, Lord, what wait I for.* "Do I wait to gather riches for another to squander? Do I wait to worry myself? Do I wait here to walk as a vanity in the midst of vanities? No, Lord, I am waiting for something better than that!"

7. *My hope is in You.* Here the Psalmist steps off the sand and puts his foot on the Rock. Happy is the man who can say to the Lord, "My hope is in You."

8. *Deliver me from all my transgressions.* When he gets near to God, he sees himself to be a sinner.

8, 9. *Make me not the reproach of the foolish. I was dumb, I opened not my mouth because You did it.* That is fine silence when a man will not complain because his affliction comes from the hand of God! There is something better, even, than that—when a man breaks the silence and begins to praise God under the rod! A mute Christian smarting under the rod is a wonder of Grace, but a *singing* Christian under a cutting stroke is a still greater miracle of mercy! Such ought all Christians to be.

10. *Remove Your stroke away from me: I am consumed by the blow of Your hand.* When God smites, He never plays at chastisement and there are times when His blows are very heavy, and then the smitten one cries out, "Remove Your stroke away from me. I am consumed by the blow of Your hand."

11. *When with rebukes You correct man for iniquity, You make his beauty to consume away like a moth.* Stout, he is reduced to a shadow. Comely and beautiful, he is wrinkled and looks like a skeleton. Joyful and

blithe, he ends his day in mourning. Ah, dear Friends, we who have joy, calm and peace ought to be very grateful! Praise God while you can, for it may be that a dark night will follow the bright day. Oh, for Grace to praise God even then! That is the best of music that comes from God's nightingales! Music by night is music, indeed. But when God corrects men, how soon He takes them down!

11, 12. *Surely every man is vanity. Selah. Hear my prayer, O LORD.* "If I cannot do anything else, I can pray, and I will pray." That is the best relief that mourners have—"Hear my prayer, O Lord."

12. *And give ear unto my cry; hold not Your peace at my tears.* "Do not see me weeping and yet refuse me comfort and relief. Do not, I pray You, hear my cry, and yet turn Your back upon me."

12. *For I am a stranger with You.* Notice, not a stranger *to* You, but, "a stranger *with* You. You are a stranger in Your own world and I, also, am a stranger here." Men will not entertain the King, for they know Him not, therefore—

"'Tis no surprising thing,
That we should be unknown:
The Jewish world knew not their King
God's everlasting Son."

"I am a stranger with You." There is a sweet familiarity about this expression, as if the Psalmist said, "Lord, I am not at home. I am a stranger here and You, too, are a stranger. Men will not acknowledge You. Therefore, Lord, sympathize with me. Hold not Your peace at my tears, for I am a stranger with You."

12. *And a sojourner, as all my fathers were.* "You are my Host. I am Your guest. You entertain me. Lord, look at my tears! When the good man entertains a stranger, he is kind—he pours oil and wine into his wounds. Lord, do so with me! You are the Good Samaritan and I am a stranger with You—a sojourner, a temporary guest with You in this world—as all my fathers were."

13. *O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more.* There is much sweet comfort, here, though the Psalm reads like a dirge, rather than a hymn. God give us, if we are obliged to sing such words as these, to sing them with a full belief that the Lord will hear us, will bless our trials to us and make them work our lasting good!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—39, 657, 823.

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

THE LORD'S FAMOUS TITLES
NO. 2347

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY,
FEBRUARY 11, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 10, 1889.**

***"The LORD looses the prisoners: the LORD opens the eyes of the blind: the LORD raises them that are bowed down: the LORD loves the righteous: the LORD preserves the strangers, He relieves the fatherless and widow: but the way of the wicked He turns upside down."
Psalm 146:7-9.***

This morning as well as I could, looking to God for help, I tried, in Christ's place, to persuade men to be reconciled to God. I showed that there was a great spiritual drought and neither dew nor rain to be had except as God should send it. And I tried to press my hearers to go to God, to wait upon Him, to look to Him and, through the mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ, to seek and find in God all that would be necessary for their eternal blessedness. [Sermon #2115, Volume 35—*The Drought of Nature, the Rain of Grace and the Lesson Thereof*—Read/download entire sermon at http://www.spurgeongems.org .] I pressed hard and some yielded, not to *my* pressure, but to a Divine impulse that went with my pleading! But there were some who did not yield, this morning, so I am going to make another attempt to win them, now, calling in our August Ally, even the Divine Spirit, without whom we can do nothing! May He bring many to God in penitence tonight!

You know that it helps men to come to a person when they know who he is, how good he is and how likely it is that they will find benefit by coming to him. My text tells us something about God, the Lord Jehovah. Five times the word occurs at the head of a sentence, Jehovah, Jehovah, Jehovah, Jehovah, Jehovah. Sometimes, when a great king or prince has a high day, a herald proclaims the titles of His Majesty. He is prince of this, and lord of that, and emperor of the other—too often a lot of empty sounds. But when we come to speak of *God*, every title of His falls short of what is His real Glory and honor! Tonight we have five of His titles put together, five wonderful achievements of God, five things for which the Lord would have Himself noted. I want each one of you here to hear about them and to say, "That encourages me," or, "That cheers me," or, "That helps me." At any rate, out of the five great magnets that I will try to use, tonight, may one or other draw all our reluctant hearts to God, that we may find rest and peace in Him!

I. There are five famous titles of God here. The first one is, THE EMANCIPATOR. Read the latter part of the seventh verse—*"The Lord looses the prisoners."*

It is God's Glory that He is an Emancipator. How often, in the Old Testament, and in the New, too, you find the Lord loosing the prisoners! It was so notably in the case of Joseph, when God brought him out of the prison and set him up as Lord over all Egypt. And it is still more notable in the case of Israel in Egypt when, with a high hand, and a stretched-out arm, the Lord brought forth His people from all the tyranny of Pharaoh, whom He destroyed in the Red Sea. You may keep on reading Scripture and you will continually find that it is true, "The Lord looses the prisoners."

I want some of you who are here to catch at that thought. Are you *mentally a prisoner* under gloom, tonight? Did a cloud come over you a little while ago? Does it still rest upon your mind? Can no physician remove it? Listen to this word—"The Lord looses the prisoners." Are you in the bondage of error? Have you been misled by false teachers? Have you fallen into mistakes about the Word of God? Are you denying the great Truths of God which would comfort you? Are you believing the great errors which becloud your spirit? Come to God for teaching! He can emancipate you from any form of error, even though you have been brought up in it from a child. "The Lord looses the prisoners." Or have you come under some gross delusion? Are you the victim of some false impression which you cannot shake? I pray you, if you are harried and worried by temptations of Satan and he seems to have a firm foothold in your spirit, and cannot be driven out, let this text, like a silver bell, ring out comforting music to you, "The Lord looses the prisoners." Oh, that you who are in mental bonds might be set free tonight!

There are, however, worse bonds than those, the chains of *moral slavery*. This man is a drunk and though he has taken the pledge, he cannot escape from the terrible craving which intemperate habits have brought upon him. Ah, Friend, come to Christ! He can take away the love of strong drink and set you free! "The Lord looses the prisoners" and He can do that for men and women who have given themselves up as lost. God have mercy upon wretched women when they become the prey of strong drink! To my certain knowledge, this evil is becoming much more common than it was a few years ago. More frequently do we have to mourn over fallen sisters than we did some years back. It is sad that it should be so, but the glorious fact remains that "the Lord looses the prisoners." Do not despair, poor women! Have hope of deliverance! God can yet loose you from the bonds of strong drink.

Has anyone here fallen into bondage to a lust? Has some evil passion got a tight hold on you and you cannot break the bonds? There is One who can set you free! Yes, though you have been indulging in the evil for many years and seem to be wedded to an evil habit from which you cannot escape, still is it true, "The Lord looses the prisoners." Do not trust in

yourself to get rid of the evil, but look to Him who died for sin upon the Cross and trust in Him, for it is written, "He shall save His people from their sins." I cannot stay, tonight, to mention all the kinds of moral bondage into which men and women fall, but let this sweet message be like a stray note from the harps of angels to all who are in bondage, "The Lord looses the prisoners."

Perhaps you are held fast in *spiritual bondage*. This is where we are all by nature—we are born slaves. Are you, to-night, my Friend, conscious that you are a slave to sin? Are you fast bound by your trespasses? O spiritual slave, there is an Emancipator who can take your chains from you! "If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free, indeed, "and He is able to do it with a single word! Only trust Him, only yield yourselves up to Him as willing captives, and you shall be free from that moment! God make you free tonight! Yes, and He can loose you from every iniquity in which you may be enslaved!

There is another kind of emancipation which the Lord is constantly giving to the prisoners of hope, even deliverance from this present evil world. You are sick, tonight. You are sad, you are cast down and troubled because of the burden of the flesh. "The Lord looses the prisoners." There is many a prisoner who has been loosed during the last week or two—dear members of this Church who had been confined to sick beds. The Lord has opened the cage door and the bird, set at liberty, has gone caroling up to the skies! The body has been put into the grave and lies imprisoned there in vile durance, but He shall come, who, Himself, rose from the dead, and when His feet shall touch the earth, again, and the angelic trumpet shall sound the summons, their bodies shall come forth—

"From beds of dust and silent clay
To realms of everlasting day,"

for "the Lord looses the prisoners!"

Here is a theme for a whole evening's discourse, but I do not want to take up any more time over this point. I wish rather to drive home this wedge—if you are prisoners, if you are under any form of bondage—come to God in Christ Jesus and put your trust in Him, for, "the Lord looses the prisoners."

II. We must hasten on to notice a second famous title for the Lord, that is, THE ILLUMINATOR—"The Lord opens the eyes of the blind."

If you will kindly look at your copies of the Bible, you will find that the words, "the eyes of," are inserted in italics by the translators, so that the text really is, "The Lord opens the blind." Ah, He opens the very *soul* of the blind and lets the Light of God in where there are no eyes! Have you not noticed that it is so? If anybody were to say to me, "Mr. Spurgeon, pick out a dozen of the happiest people that you know," ten of them would be blind people! We have some dear Friends, members of this Church, who are among the happiest souls that God has ever made! It is long since they saw the light, but God has opened their hearts in such a way that they enjoy a wonderful quietness of spirit, great placidity of mind and an

inward Light and splendor which persons with eyes might well envy! I have noticed that blind people are often among the happiest people and blind Christians certainly might take the chief place among us for their quiet and rest of mind! The Lord Jesus Christ opens the blind—He comes and sheds a Light when the windows of the body are closed—and gives Light within, so that they are full of brightness.

But if you like to take the text as it is in our translation, it will do very well. *When the Lord Jesus Christ was here, He opened the eyes of the blind*. He touched many a sightless eye, and the light streamed in! Read the Evangels through and you will find this miracle constantly recurring. Blindness is a very common ailment in the East and the miracle of recovering the sight of the blind was, therefore, frequent with our Lord.

Next, *the Lord enables blind souls to see*. Here is a great mercy. The Lord has opened the eyes of many a man who could not see himself and so proved how blind he was—and could not see the Lord and so showed, still more, how blind he was. The Lord has given the inner sight to many a man who was without spiritual understanding, to whom the Gospel seemed a great mystery, of which he could make neither heads nor tails. The Lord has made the scales to fall from many blind mental eyes and enabled those who were blind, first, to see themselves, and then to see their Savior. Blessed be His name!

And whenever the blind of the earth fall asleep in Jesus and enter into Heaven, *they shall have no blindness in Glory*. There, their eyes shall see the King in His beauty—they shall behold His face and rejoice in His love. Jehovah is a great Eye-Opener—cannot some of you blind people catch at this Truth of God and say—"Then we will come to Him, for we need to have our eyes opened"?

Perhaps someone says, "Sir, I do not quite comprehend all that you say. I have been a hearer for some time and I want to understand the Gospel. I try to grasp it, but, somehow, I cannot get at the Truth of God." Come, in prayerful faith, to God, Himself, tonight, and *He* will explain it to you! I can hold the Light of God to your eyes, but, if they are blind, I cannot make you see. But the Lord can give the sight as well as the Light and I beseech you to ask it at His hands, tonight. There is nothing really difficult in the Gospel and if you will come to Jesus like a teachable child and ask to be instructed of Him, you will find that it is all plain to him that believes. Of the way of holiness it is written, "The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein."

If you come to God for Grace, dear Friend, He will never limit you. You need not be poor Christians—you may be "rich to all the intents of bliss." You need not have shallow Grace—you may, if you wish, get into "waters to swim in." Giving will not impoverish Him, withholding will not enrich Him, but, rather, giving enriches Him, it enriches His very heart with great joy, for He delights to give! Come, and take freely, and learn the liberality of God! I remember one who called himself, "a gentleman-commoner upon the bounty of God." Some of us can take the same title.

We have had a hand basket portion for many years—not a sack full at a time, but a full hand basket! That is a good way of living. If a girl gets a portion from her father and the old gentleman never gives her anything else, she does not receive so much as her sister who has a hand basket portion many days in the week. A present often comes to her from the old house at home. Father sends it every time with his love and she receives more love and more thought, and he, too, receives more gratitude in return, perhaps, than if he had given his daughter one lump sum, and then his generosity was all over. It is a blessed way of learning the liberality of God, to be receiving freely and receiving *continually* from Him! "He gives more Grace."

Come, then, to God by Jesus Christ, because He is, first, the Emancipator and, secondly, the Illuminator.

III. Now for the third bright title of the Lord. That is, THE COMFORTER. Read the middle sentence of verse eight—"The Lord raises them that are bowed down."

Some are bowed down with *bereavement*. Well may she be bowed down who has just committed to the earth the beloved of her heart. And well may he go mourning whose first-born son has been taken from him by a sudden stroke. Well may some lament who have lost the choicest friend that man ever had, and find that half their life is gone in the death of that beloved one, yet, "The Lord raises them that are bowed down." Come, tell your grief to Him who pitied the widow at the gate of Nain! Come, pour out your sorrow before Him who wept with the beloved sisters at Bethany when Lazarus was dead! He can help you, for He, "raises them that are bowed down."

Some are bowed down sadly by *the burdens of life*. They have more to carry than most men have. They stagger along, from day to day, beneath a load that threatens to crush them into the dust. Oh, come to my Lord who gives new strength to bear burdens, for He raises up those that are bowed down! It is amazing what a man can do when God has laid His hand on him and said to him, "Be strong." You are faint and you will faint without your God, but you will be strong if you come and trust Him, for, "Jehovah raises them that are bowed down."

Maybe you are bowed down *with inward distress*. Ah, there is no cure for some forms of distress but to go straight away to God! The scandal of our ministry is the despondency that we cannot disperse. How often I have come down from talking with some dear friends, here, whose minds have been distracted, and I have had to confess myself, "dead beat." God has helped me to comfort many—it is my lot, almost wherever I may be, to be followed by persons suffering in mind. I sometimes laugh and tell them that "birds of a feather flock together" and that they must think me half-cracked and so they come to me to sympathize with them! Well, so be it—there is a kind of sympathy between me and them. But I have learned this lesson, that to bring comfort to a diseased mind is not within the preacher's power except his Master shall specially qualify him for the task

and, in any case, I say to you, dear troubled Friends, go straight away to Him of whom you read these sweet words, "The Lord raises them that are bowed down."

Have I the extreme joy, tonight, of addressing in this congregation one who is bowed down by *a sense of sin?* Where are you, Magdalene, hiding your face in tears? Where are you, poor erring prodigal, longing to come back to your Father, but too bowed down to start upon the journey? Listen—"The Lord raises them that are bowed down." He loves to find the poor sinner crouching on the dunghill, putting his head into the dust in very despair of heart, and He delights to come and put His hand upon him and say, "Stand upon your feet; fear not." There is a great God of mercies who glories in doing wonders of Grace, forgiving even the blackest sin! I say again, I would like to ring this text like a silver bell in the ears of every penitent sinner here, and say, "The Lord raises them that are bowed down."

IV. We are getting on with our text, for we have come to the fourth great title. God is THE REWARDER—"The Lord loves the righteous." Come, dear Friends, here is a wafer made with honey! Here is a feast of fat things, full of marrow for you who are the people of God, you whom He has accounted righteous because the perfect righteousness of Christ has been imputed to you!

First, "the Lord loves the righteous" with a love of *complacency*. He takes delight in them. He loves them, not merely with a love of benevolence that desires their good, but He looks with pleasure and delight at righteous men, those whom He has made righteous, those who love Him because they are righteous and who are like He in being righteous. The Lord looks at them and rejoices over them. How that ought to cheer any of you who have been made holy by God's Grace! The Lord's delight is in *you*! He calls you His Hephzibahs, saying, "My delight is in them." Wherever there is anything of Christ, anything of righteousness, anything of holiness, there is evidence of the Lord's love! So, in the first place, "the Lord loves the righteous" with a love of complacency.

He does more than that. He loves the righteous with a love of *communion*. Remember how the Lord puts it, by the mouth of Isaiah, "For thus says the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy. I dwell in the high and holy place, with him, also, that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." I doubt not that God often talks with righteous men. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." He lets them speak to Him and He speaks to them in return. Do you know anything about this communion with God? If you do not, never say that others do not, for we are as honest and truthful as you are—and we bear our testimony that there *is* such a thing as walking with God! We declare, from happy, heartfelt experience, that there is such a thing as talking with God, knowing that He loves us and that His love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us.

God also loves His people with a love of *favor*. He loves them so that He will give them anything that they need. Yes, He has said, through the Psalmist, "No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." He loves the righteous so that, when they go into their chamber to pray to Him, He may let them plead a little while because it is for their good to do so, but He will always yield to their desires. He has said, "Delight yourself, also, in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart." He does that with His people. The Lord loves the righteous so as to favor them with extraordinary blessings, things of which I cannot talk, here, for there is many a love-passage between Christ and the righteous soul that must never be told. We do not talk of our love-passages in the streets—that would be half profane. Nor can we even tell of them here. There are favors which the Lord shows to His righteous people, which they know, and He knows, but which no one else can know till that day when all things shall be revealed!

And once more, the Lord loves the righteous so that He will *honor* them. If men are righteous, the world will hate them and, as a proof of its hatred, it will begin to splatter them. There are always some in the world who say, "Throw plenty of mud, some of it will stick," and oh, how they delight to throw it! Their hands seem to take to the dirt naturally. But, Beloved, if you follow God fully, your character will never be long tarnished. Do not try to answer those who slander you. If a donkey kicked you, would you kick the donkey? If a fool brings a charge against you, do not reply to him. Let him rail on—*God* will vindicate you. Remember that Psalm from which I quoted just now, the thirty-seventh—"commit your way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass. And He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the noonday." It may even happen to a man that he may perform an action that will never be understood while he lives. But the true man of God lives for eternity, not for time. He says, "I do not care if it takes 500 years for the righteousness of my action to be seen by my fellow men, it will not make it any more righteous when they do see it, nor will it be any *less* righteous while they do not see it! What have I to do with men? I serve the living God." If you get into that condition of heart, you can trust your reputation, your life, your usefulness entirely with God, for "the Lord loves the righteous." A day shall come when all the world shall know it, when they who are righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father, and God shall say of them, "Well done, good and faithful servants, enter into the joy of your Lord."

Now, then, will you not come to Him, since His favorites are the best people in all the world? Kings and princes have often been known to choose their associates among the worst of their subjects—men who ministered to their baser passions. The favorites of kings have often been the offscouring of the earth, but our King loves the righteous! He will have none to be His courtiers, to come near to Him, to dwell before His face, but those who walk uprightly through His mighty Grace! I think that there

is something very inviting there to you who are of a true heart, something which ought to induce you to come to such a God as this—the Lord who loves the righteous.

V. But now, last of all, and, perhaps, sweetest of all, the fifth name of God is THE PRESERVER—"The Lord preserves the strangers; He relieves the fatherless and widow: but the way of the wicked He turns upside down." My time is so nearly gone that I can only just ask you to apply, by God's help, the few words that I shall say.

Notice, first, that *God preserves strangers*. In all nations, in the olden times, strangers were driven out. They did not want any foreigners settling among them. In this country, in almost every village, it used to be the practice for a stranger to be regarded as a kind of mad dog. And if he happened to wear a different garb from that of the villagers, all the boys hooted him. It seems that our depraved humanity is naturally unkind to strangers! I often hear people say, even now, "Oh, he is a foreigner!" O you proud Englishman! Is he not as good as you? You are a foreigner when you get to the other side of the English Channel! It was God's order to His ancient people that they were to be kind to strangers. Wherever they came, they were to be allowed to dwell and were to be taken care of. God put it thus to Israel—"You shall neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt." And because God loved them when they were strangers in Egypt, they were to take special care of strangers and foreigners who came into their midst.

What a grand trait this is in God's Character, "The Lord preserves the strangers!" If any of you feel to be strangers here, tonight. If you are strangers to religion, strangers to religious observances, strangers to everything that is good. If you feel, when you hear the Gospel, that you are altogether a stranger to it—it sounds so odd in your ears, come along, dear Stranger, "The Lord preserves the strangers!" Come under the shadow of His wings and you shall find shelter there. Father is dead, mother is dead, friends are all gone and even in the very village where you were born you are a stranger—come along, your *God* is not dead, your Savior lives—"The Lord preserves the strangers."

Then notice the next sentence in our text—"*He relieves the fatherless and widow*." If you turn to the first Books of the Bible, you will see, there, God's great care of the fatherless and the widow. Who had the tithes? Well, the Levites, but also the poor, and the stranger, and the fatherless and the widow! If you look at Deuteronomy 14:28, or 26:12, you will find that the tithes were not exclusively for the priests, but they were also for the widow, the fatherless and the strangers. Besides this, the Israelites were never to glean their fields twice, for the gleanings were for the widow and the fatherless. And they were never to shake the olive tree or any fruit tree twice, but to leave what remained upon it for the widow and the fatherless. There was also this Law of God made, that they should never take as a pledge the raiment of a widow. That is pretty often done in London, but it might not be done, then—the garment of the widow might

never be taken in pledge. Wherever the legislation of God for His people touched upon the widow and the fatherless, it was immeasurably kind. Now, then, you who feel like widows. You who have lost your joy and earthly comfort. You who feel like the fatherless and say, "No man cares for my soul," oh, may the sweet Spirit of the Lord entice you to come to Him, for, as I reminded you in the reading, "A father of the fatherless and a judge of the widows is God in His holy habitation."

But the view of God's Character would not be complete if it were not added, "*The way of the wicked He turns upside down.*" You see, the godly and they who trust God are always in danger from the wicked, but He turns the way of the wicked upside down! Take an example. Joseph's brothers sell him into Egypt and make a slave of him. God turns this arrangement upside down and makes a prince of him! Think of Mordecai. Haman will have him hanged—he has the gallows ready, but Haman is hanged on his own gallows! God knows how to make the malice of men promote the benefit of those against whom they turn their cruelty! "The way of the wicked He turns upside down."

Be you just and fear not! Rest in Christ's atoning Sacrifice! Trust Him only! Come to your God and be His servant from this day and forever, and you shall see how He will break your bonds, open your eyes, cheer your spirit, indulge you with His love and preserve you even to the end! "There shall no evil befall you, neither shall any plague come near your dwelling." God bless you, dear Friends, and may you all come to God, tonight, through Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.

EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 146; LUKE 17:11-19

Psalm 146:1. *Praise you the LORD.* Or, "Hallelujah." I am sorry to see that great word, Hallelujah, Hallelu-Jah, praise to Jah, Jehovah, become so hackneyed as it is, by talk about "Hallelujah lasses," and Hallelujah—I know not what. The Jews will not even pronounce the word Jah, or write it. It seems a great pity that it should be thus dragged in the dirt by Gentiles. "Praise you the Lord." Whenever you make use of the word Hallelujah, let it be with the due reverence which should be given to that blessed name, for remember, "the Lord will not hold him guiltless that uses His name in vain."

1. *Praise the LORD, O my Soul.* Whatever we exhort others to do, we should be ready to do ourselves. Yes, our own soul should praise the Lord most of all, since, if we rightly know our obligations, no one in the world is so much indebted to God as each one of us should feel himself to be. "Praise the Lord, O my Soul." Not my lips, only, but my innermost spirit, for soul-music is the soul of music—"Praise the Lord, O my Soul."

2. *While I live will I praise the LORD: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being.* I will lisp His praises when I can do no more.

When my being seems to be dried up, in the weakness of the death-throe, still, "I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being."

3. *Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help.* What is the connection, here, between *praising* God and *not* trusting man? Why, this connection, that we never praise God better than by exercising faith in Him! Quiet trust is among the sweetest music that reaches the heart of God and when we put our trust in man, we rob God of His Glory—we are giving to others the confidence which belongs, alone, to Him.

4. *His breath goes forth, he returns to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.* What is man—with a life dependent upon his breath, such a vapory thing, such a thin, unsubstantial thing is human life—what is he that we should trust in him?

5. *Happy is he that has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God.* He is the happy man who has learned to trust in the invisible God.

6. *Which made Heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein is: which keeps the Truth of God forever.* Never did His promise fail. Perhaps, dear Brothers and Sisters, you have not pleaded the promises enough of late. Then the Mercy Seat is the place where promises must be pleaded, with the certainty that then they shall be fulfilled.

7. *Which executes judgment for the oppressed: which gives food to the hungry. The LORD looses the prisoners.* Souls that are in bondage will never get freedom till the Lord looses them! Oh, that prisoners of hope, who are here, this evening, might have Grace to look to God! You cannot pick the lock of your prison, yourself, nor forge your way through the iron bars of despair, but, "the Lord looses the prisoners." Yes, but when they get loose, they are blind, for man, by nature, is blinded by sin! Therefore the Psalmist adds—

8. *The LORD opens the eyes of the blind.* He will not only give you liberty, but understanding, insight into His Word, a knowledge of Himself! Yes, but when men get their eyes opened, they see much to make them sorry and He that increases knowledge often increases sorrow! Yes, but look at the next words—

8. *The LORD raises them that are bowed down.* He can take away depression of spirit and relieve the heart of its burdens and, as the woman who was bowed down for many years, was made straight by the word of Christ, so can those that suffer from mental infirmity be restored. And best of all—

8. *The LORD loves the righteous.* He loves them and His love is wealth and health. The love of God is all a creature needs.

9. *The Lord preserves the strangers.* When our eyes are opened and we are no more bowed down, but feel we have a sense of God's love, yet we still know that we are exiles, banished ones, strangers and foreigners, as all our fathers were. It is comforting, therefore, to be assured that, "the Lord preserves the strangers."

9. *He relieves the fatherless and widow.* He does so literally—"A Father of the fatherless, and a Judge of the widows is God in His holy habitation." He also relieves such *spiritually*. When any feel themselves to be poverty-stricken and unable to help themselves, let them look to Him who is both able and willing to succor them, for, "He relieves the fatherless and the widow."

9. *But the way of the wicked He turns upside down.* Where they looked for joy, they experienced disappointment. Where they expected success, they met with defeat, and whereas they thought to heap to themselves pleasures according to their lusts, they find that they have only increased their misery.

10. *The LORD shall reign forever, even your God, O Zion, unto all generations. Praise you the LORD.* The Sovereignty of God should be the delight of His people. God anywhere is blessed, but God on His Throne should make His people shout their Hallelujahs with all their heart. Now let us read in the New Testament about one who glorified God and gave thanks to Jesus.

Luke 17: 11, 12. *And it came to pass, as He went to Jerusalem, that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. And as He entered into a certain village, there met Him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off:* Lepers were allowed to enter villages, but not to go into the large walled towns. They were, however, commanded to stand at a certain distance from other people—and these men did so. This must have been a terrible sight! Ten men afflicted with such a horrible disease, all in one group! It shows how prevalent, at that time, was this disease, now happily so rare, at least among us—"Ten men that were lepers." It seemed as if the effect of sin in men became more conspicuous in the day when the Great Healer of men was here in Person. Then Satan's chain was lengthened that he might have greater power over the bodies of men, that his Master might subdue him and that Christ Jesus the Lord might have the greater victory over the Prince of Darkness.

13, 14. *And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us! And when He saw them, He said unto them, go show yourselves unto the priests.* There was a tacit promise in that that they should be healed, for, of course, the showing themselves to the priests was not that they might be pronounced *unclean*, for they were so pronounced already by their own confession, but that they might be pronounced clean! They were to go to the priests and there was an implied promise that if they so went, when the priests looked upon them they would be healed.

14-16. *And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back and, with a loud voice, glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.* He was probably the only one out of the 10 that was a Samaritan. Though Jews and Samaritans did not usually agree, yet, as sorrow brings a man strange bedfellows, so in this case, these partners in a general sorrow forgot their sectarianism and were

blended into one sad company. Now that they were all healed, only *one* felt true gratitude to God, and to his Benefactor—"and he was a Samaritan."

It is very singular to notice that Luke tells us that this man glorified God, "with a loud voice." We have, sometimes, heard complaints that, at certain revival meetings, the singing was very loud and there was even shouting. Let the converts shout, Brothers and Sisters, let them shout! They have good reason to shout, for Christ has made them whole. We have a great deal too much of respectable death about us—let us have a little noisy life. I would sooner by half hear the praises of God shouted with a loud voice than hear the mockery of praise in a tone that is scarcely to be heard, while some machine grinds out music to God's glory—and men forget to sing or are drowned in loud bursts of wind from the instrument! Do not be ashamed to let it be known that you are saved. Praise the Lord with all your might and, if they say that you are excited, tell them that you are and that you wonder if anybody could help being excited if he had been healed of leprosy or had his sins forgiven!

But, at the same time, note the humility as well as the zeal of this man—he "fell down on his face at His feet." I would like to see more of this action. In some revivals, there is plenty of shouting, but very little falling down on the face at Christ's feet. Oh, for deep prostration of spirit, a humble waiting upon God, a gracious, tender confession of thanks to Him for all that He has done for poor leprous sinners!

17, 18. *And Jesus answering, said, Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger?* Often those who are thought to be the worst of people turn out the best. Many of the most precious pearls have been found in the deepest sea and some of the most grateful hearts have been discovered among those who were most immersed in sin and error.

19. *And He said unto him, arise, go your way; your faith has made you whole.* Christ uses the word, "whole," in an emphatic sense—"Not only your body, but also your *soul* is made whole, and you are holy from this day." There is a wonderful connection between these two words, "whole," and, "holy." A holy man is a whole man, but he who is not holy is unsound and not whole in the sight of God. The Lord make us wholly holy for Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—202, 560, 504.

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

THE LORD LEADING—DAVID FOLLOWING
NO. 2348

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY,
FEBRUARY 18, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 14, 1889.**

In anticipation of an Evangelistic Mission to be conducted by Messrs. Fullerton and Smith.

***"And let it be, when you hear the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then you shall bestir yourself: for then shall the LORD go out before you, to smite the host of the Philistines. And David did so, as the LORD had commanded him and smote the Philistines from Geba until you come to Gazer."
2 Samuel 5:24, 25.***

DAVID'S life was a life of war. The Christian life wears other aspects, but still, in very deed and in truth, spiritually, it, also, is a life of war. Our Lord spoke the Truth when He said, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword." The end of all His great work will be universal peace and the lion shall lie down with the lamb, but, for the present, men fight against the principles which Christ brought into the world and all who become the followers of Christ must expect to be soldiers of One whose life was one great conflict and who died upon the battlefield, yes, and was crowned upon the battlefield, too! Expect, then, to war a good warfare as long as you are here.

David had won one great victory over the Philistines, but he was not permitted to sit down and congratulate himself upon his triumph. The Philistines were upon him again. Those Philistines took a great deal of beating, but the powers of evil are not content anywhere with being defeated once or twice. They are up and at us again—they challenge us afresh, they hope to overthrow us sooner or later! And again and again we must be ready to resist them with this as our warcry, "They compassed me about; yes, they compassed me about: but in the name of the Lord I will destroy them." There must be war even *after* victory—and we must stand prepared for it.

Note well, however, that before David went to war, in each case, he waited upon God—"David enquired of the Lord." Whenever we have any enterprise on hand, it is wise to wait upon God for direction and for help. David had received Divine Guidance before, but counsel in one dilemma is not guidance for another. Though David had been led of God the first time to fight the Philistines, he did not consider that the direction then given would apply again, so he went a second time. And it is written, "David en-

quired of the Lord." The answers which David received on these two occasions were different. The first time, the Lord said, "Go up." The second time, he said, "You shall not go up." Had David been content with his former waiting upon God, he would have made a great mistake. What you have to do, today, you may not have to do tomorrow. And what you did yesterday may have been right enough for yesterday, but it may be as wrong as possible for today! Wait more continually upon God, dear Friends. Be not satisfied with what you have received of direction and support, but go to God again and again. If you go to Him daily for manna, you may well go to Him daily for counsel. David did this and he acted wisely.

I am afraid, dear Friends, that many Christians go carelessly blundering on, as we say, "neck or nothing." They do the first thing that comes to hand and do not wait, and pause, and consider as they ought. I know some friends who seem to me to enter into great speculations which they had much better let alone, and who venture into various schemes which they would be much wiser to leave to other people. If they would only wait upon God, they would find themselves restrained from many things which now they attempt and, impelled to other things which now they neglect. The old proverb says that "kneeling does not spoil silk stockings." I am not so sure about that. The silk stockings do not matter, but we may say that kneeling does not hurt a man's knees! Kneeling makes him strong in the feet, brave in the heart and often clear in the brain. If a man will only wait upon God, it will help his own mind to form a correct judgment and, besides that, the Lord will give him guidance of which he never dreamed. He may have a token which shall be to him the very "clue of the maze." He may get a word from God which will make him wiser than the ancients and it shall be as though the Urim and the Thummim still spoke out of the sanctuary to guide the saints of the Most High!

Tonight I shall speak about David's experience, as recorded in this remarkable verse, in the following way. There is, first, *a prime necessity promised.* God promises that He will be with David. No, that He will go before him in this holy war! "Then shall the Lord go out before you, to smite the host of the Philistines." But, secondly, here is *a consequent action commanded.* "Then you shall bestir yourself: for then shall the Lord go out before you." *Thirdly, here is a hopeful sign afforded.* "When you hear the sound of a going (or marching) in the tops of the mulberry trees, then you shall bestir yourself." And, lastly, but very briefly, there is *a sure result following*—"And David did so, as the Lord had commanded him and smote the Philistines from Geba until you come to Gazer."

I. Well now, to begin with, here is A PRIME NECESSITY PROMISED—"Then shall the Lord go out before you."

This was a necessity to David, for he had long ago learned that all his dependence must be upon God. It is also a necessity to *us*, for if we are to have a single soul converted, it must be the work of God. Yes, and if a single holy thought is begotten in this place, or any other, and fires the heart of any saint, and leads to holy service, it must be the work of God's Grace! Without Him we can *do* nothing and we shall *be* nothing. What we espe-

cially need, just now, is for the Lord to go before us in our contemplated mission. In what way?

Well, first, *the Holy Spirit must go before us to prepare the minds of the people*. When our Lord came into the world, the world was prepared for His coming. There had been certain things done, all over the globe, that made the time of His coming the best time at which He could come. But it has also been noticed by our missionaries, especially in the South Sea islands, that before they arrived, certain changes had taken place and certain movements in the minds of the people, that made the missionaries feel that they had come just in the nick of time. God had gone before them in Providence and in Grace, making ready a people prepared for the Word. Now, I want you to pray the Lord to do so with all the congregations that shall be gathered in this place and, indeed, with all congregations. What can a preacher do if his hearers should come and God has left them to themselves? He would have to plow an iron soil that would break his plowshare and break his heart. How different it is where God has been at work with the hearers! A child has been taken to Heaven. The mother's heart is breaking with sorrow and she is tender and ready to hear of Jesus and the Heaven to which her babe has gone. Then a man has been ill. He had been a thoughtless, careless man, but in his sickness he has peered into eternity and he is now thoughtful and prepared for the preacher's message. Often have I said to myself, as I have come along to this place, "I shall have a picked congregation." The Lord has an election of Grace and He has also an election of hearers!

You cannot tell, dear Friends, how much the conversion of sinners is due to antecedent action on the part of God before the saving moment came. There is a fire and you say that the fire was made when the match was struck and applied to the wood. Well, that is true, but long before that moment, he who split the wood and he who made the match had something to do with preparing for the fire, had they not? Where had been your fire if the wood had not been dried and ready for the kindling and deftly laid in its place? And where had been your light if it had not been for the phosphorus and all else that was used to make the match? So does the Lord prepare for the fire of holy service. God is at work, dear Friends, in London as well as elsewhere. Sad is the poverty in this great Babylon, but, oh, if men could all be rich and wicked, how would they ever be saved? Grievous is the disease that follows sin, but if men could sin and never smart for it, what evil we should see! God is at work in Providence and, with tender touches, here and there, He is making men thoughtful, constraining them to feel, in a word, making them ready before the time of the preaching!

And then *the Holy Spirit must go before us to prepare the preacher*. Preachers may think themselves thoroughly prepared for their work, but the smallest thing may put them out—some little disarrangement of their dress, something in the pulpit not quite right, or somebody dropping an umbrella in the aisle—(as is so common, here, on Thursday nights), or some person in the congregation who does not seem in the least bit impressed. Oh, shame upon us that we, who have such a message to deliver, should be affected by such very little things! Yet preachers are so affected

and often they cannot help it. Even before the preacher enters his pulpit, he may get out of order for preaching. Poor man that he is, something may happen to him that may quite put him out of harmony with the Truth of God he has to deliver. Pray God to make our Brothers, Fullerton and Smith, preachers fit for their work—and the best preparation will be the Lord going before them! May the prophet have his vision before he speaks! May the hand of the Lord press heavily upon him before he lifts up his hand to point men to the Lamb of God! May his lips be blistered with the live coal from off God's altar before he opens his mouth to speak words of flame in the name of the Lord!

Pray, Brothers and Sisters, pray! Pray much that the Lord may go before to prepare the hearers, but equally that He may go before to prepare the preachers!

I will suppose that the hearers are present. In doing so, I only anticipate a few days. I hope that this house will be very full. The speakers are also here and ready for their work. They have come forward attended by your prayers. Now is the moment when *we need the Spirit of God to go before us to deal with men.* A single word, spoken in the strength of God, will effect far more than ten thousand words uttered in the power of mere reasoning, or eloquence, or even earnestness. When God goes before us, wonders are accomplished by sentences that seem very simple and trite—you have heard them many times, before, but *now* you hear them in a very different way! They fell, before, like flakes of snow. But now they come like flashes of fire! They burn into your bosom. They set your heart on fire!

What is the secret of this power? God is in it! God is working with it! He is proving His Presence with His people. It is a strange thing, but it is strangely true, that by the foolishness of preaching it pleases God to save them that believe. And, while His power is never promised to go with the most gorgeous ceremonies, or with the most beautifully artistic effect, it *is* pledged to go with the simple declaration of the Gospel of Christ and the preaching of His Holy Word! It is the Gospel of Christ that is "the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes." Though I have said this ten thousand times, before, and you are always hearing it, and do not doubt it, yet for that very reason I say it, again, with all the emphasis with which I can—the prime necessity for every holy work is for God to go before—for the Lord to make bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the people! And if we have not that Divine Leader, we have nothing at all that is of real service in holy work.

II. Secondly, there is, in the text, A CONSEQUENT ACTION COMMANDED—"Then you shall bestir yourself: for then shall the Lord go out before you."

God could do without us if He chose to do so, but *God is pleased not to do without us.* What a mercy it is that God deigns to use us! What a happiness for us! God might have gone forth with thunder and lightning against the Philistines and scattered them in a moment—but that was not His way of winning the victory. It was to be a fight between David and the Philistines and, therefore, God went before him to be the Source of David's strength.

But David must *follow*. When will some of our Brothers and Sisters learn the fact that *God's working is not a reason for our sitting still?* It is not written, "The Lord will go before you and then you shall rest," or, "The Lord shall go before you and then you shall sit still and be grateful." No, no! "Then you shall bestir yourself." Now, David, if you ever did move quickly, bestir yourself, now that God has gone before you! If you ever did use a sword with all your heart, soul and strength, do it now! "Then you shall bestir yourself." "Look sharp." That would be a very good translation, indeed. "Then you shall be all awake, and all alive. Then you shall rush upon the Philistines and destroy them. God has gone before you. Will you not follow?" What a mercy, what a privilege, what a blessing God confers on His people that though He could do very well without them, He does not please to do so. But where He goes as the Leader, He bids them at once heartily and earnestly follow Him!

Now, the doctrine that "Salvation is of the Lord"—that glorious doctrine which I believe with all my heart and which I desire to preach all my days—the doctrine that salvation is of God and God alone, from first to last, in every point of the compass, was never intended to be a soporific and to discourage the action of man. *The fact that God goes before us does not encourage us in sloth.* Yet some talk as if it did. Take the doctrine of Election, for instance. "God has a chosen people, therefore I need not preach to them." No, no, Sir! God has a *chosen people*—therefore I preach to them! It would not be of any use for me to preach if He had not ordained any unto eternal life. But as He has a people who shall assuredly be saved, I will thrust the Gospel magnet in among the mass—and those people whom the Lord has chosen shall be attracted by it! "The Lord Jesus Christ will not die in vain." Precisely so and, therefore, I need not preach Him, I suppose? But the very reason why I *do* preach Him is because He did not die in vain! The death of Christ that does not effect its purpose is not worth preaching. But the death of Christ that is effectual for the end for which it was designed *is* worth preaching—and more and more do we rejoice to preach it! The grand doctrines of the Gospel are not doctrines that lead men to slumber!

There are some who pervert them, as they do the other Scriptures, and it will be so throughout all time, for men will turn the holiest things into reasons for sloth and sin. We cannot help that, but there is nothing in the Truths, themselves, that should produce such effects. Our forefathers of the olden times who went everywhere preaching the Word, the Calvinists of France who, in the desert and wherever they went, hazarded their lives unto the death—the Huguenots, who could bravely do and dare and die for Christ—were, to a man, believers in these principles which are supposed by some to send men to sleep! The most energetic Christianity that ever was upon the face of the earth has been just this form of Christianity and, therefore, it cannot possibly be that the doctrine rightly used will encourage idleness or sloth! How can it? If you, yourself, were told, tonight, "Proceed on such an errand and your God will go with you," would that be a reason why you should *not* go? If you were bid to fight a battle and you were told, "God will be with you in the battle," would the fact that God would be with you and would win the victory, be a reason why you should

not fight? You must be made of strange material if that were to be the result of the promise of victory and the assurance of the Divine Presence! Nothing makes man labor so energetically as the expectation of success! And the certainty of succeeding because God is with them nerves their arms and makes them do what otherwise would be impossible!

No, dear Friends, we are not among these who say, "God will have His own and, therefore, I shall not pray or do anything." Listen, Friend, if that is your language—God *will* have His own, but He will never have *you*, for you are clearly not one of them! God's own never talk in such a style as that. God's own have a very different kind of voice. You are not of His sheep, for you do not follow Him. The Christ—to what did He go? To slumber and idleness? No, but to incessant *service*—

"Cold mountain, and the midnight air
Witnessed the fervor of His prayer."

He knew that the Lord would give Him the heathen for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession and, therefore, He prayed for all who had been given to Him by His Father! His life was a consecrated one spent in burning zeal and constant devotion to His great Father's cause. And if you are one of the Lord's own, it will be your mission to follow the Christ in this and, as He was, so will you be in this world. Come, Brothers, God is going to bless you! Do you draw back because of that fact? If so, surely there are two more lunatics than those in Bethlehem Hospital. No, no! Because God is going to be with you, therefore every man says, "I will follow where God leads. I will take my share in this grand fight, since the Lord, Himself loads the van."

III. Well now, thirdly, in our text there is A HOPEFUL SIGN AFFORDED—"When you hear the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, then you shall bestir yourself."

Whether these were mulberry trees or balsams, I do not know. It is very difficult to discover what trees they were. It does not matter, much, but David was to get round to the back of the Philistines instead of attacking them in front and he was to lie quietly in ambush till he heard a rustling in the tops of the trees when there was no wind, as though they were trodden by the foot of angels and God's host was hurrying to the fray. Perhaps this sign, while it was intended to encourage David and his people, was meant to intimidate the Philistines. They would say, one to another, "What is that noise? What is that rustling? There is a sound of something traveling along the tops of yonder trees! There is not a breath of wind, but you can hear the leaves moving. Listen to the rustling! Something strange is happening." The Philistines were most superstitious and would be ready to take to their hoofs very speedily! However, whatever it was to *them*, to David it was to be the signal for attacking them. "Now, up and at them, with sword and spear, and bow and arrow. Smite the Philistines when you hear the sound of the mysterious marching in the tops of the mulberry trees."

Now, what are our signs that we ought to be up and doing for Christ? Well, we ought to be up and doing for Him *without any signs*. Every minute men are dying—every hour their souls are passing into eternity unsaved—every day Christ is pleading that He may be recompensed for

His passion. Christians should always be smiting the Philistines of sin, but there are certain times that call us to unusual action. And what are they?

To me they are, first, *when we see earnestness among God's people.* When we hear them say, one to another, "Oh, I wish we had a great blessing!" When we hear them talk, as one did to me the other day, "God is with us. We do have souls converted, but we do not see the great work that we long for, the hundreds of thousands brought in, the whole nation struck to the heart by a sight of the power of God. Oh, that we could see better days, brighter days!" I know many here whom I am now looking upon and I remember what they have said to me of their own groaning before God for a greater display of His saving power. That is to me the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees!

Again, it is a hopeful sign, *when God gives us useful preachers.* Oh, what a blessing a true Gospel minister is! A man whom God has made for Himself is one of the Ascension gifts of Christ. And when you see, as you do in our two Brothers, Evangelists Fullerton and Smith, men who seem made by God on purpose for their work, suiting each other exactly and during those many years God has made them to be like a great cloud scattering showers of blessing wherever they go, I think, when I see these good men and others being prepared by the Lord, my heart says, "That is the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees. God is going to bless us."

There was no better proof of the Reformation having begun than when Luther began to speak out against the abominations of Rome, and Zwingli lifted up his voice, and Farel proclaimed the old faith, and Calvin came forth to declare the Truth of God, and Beza and multitudes of others gave their testimony. Those were the birds that sang because the sun was rising! And when God gives us useful preachers, they are among the signs that He is coming near us to bless the people!

Well, when the preachers are there, with a praying people at their back, then, *when you see crowds come together to hear the Word,* do you not think that there is the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees? Oh, what would some preachers do to get the people to hear them at all? Ah, what are they *not* doing, dear Friends? As things now go, I would not wonder at all if we were to have, in some of our places of worship, a part of Mr. Barnum's circus in order to attract a congregation! We have all kinds of fiddling, tinkering and I know not what, going on to get people to come and hear what is called the Gospel. "Oh," said one, "but he brought so many to the place!" Yes, if they had had a clown out of the theater, he would, no doubt have brought still more. If that is all that you need—simply to gather together a crowd—it is not so very difficult if you are not squeamish about the means you employ. But, oh, when God sends the people to hear the Gospel and nothing else—and they come and listen to what a man has to say to them about Heaven and Hell, life and death, the Cross of Christ and the way of salvation—that is the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees!

And, Beloved, we may say the same *as soon as there is interest felt in the Lord's work,* as soon as people begin to talk about it and say, one to

another, "What did you hear, there?" or, "What did the preacher say about the way of salvation?" Better still, when some begin to be impressed, when you find, after the meeting, some in tears who do not know much about the Gospel, yet, but who want to know. And when, here and there, you see signs of deep repentance for sin and a humble trembling, about which, perhaps, you hardly dare say much, but you rejoice that it is there—all these are tokens for good! What a comfort it is to see, in boys and girls, even in little children, some desire towards God! This is the going in the tops, the green shoots of the trees, this is the treading of angel's footsteps where one would think footsteps could never be! This is what we need and as we have seen a good deal of it of late, we are looking for more of it!

And whenever you Christian people begin to see that there is some impression made upon the person sitting with you in the pew, edge up to that individual and begin to speak to him quietly but earnestly about his soul. Do not let anybody go away from the services without having a personal application of the Truth of God made to them. Here I stand in the pulpit and fire my guns, yet the shot may hit nobody. But if each one of you would carry his own private pocket-pistol and just apply it to the ear of every hearer before he goes away, there would be a good deal more execution done! There is many a man who is not startled by the firing of the Woolwich Infant, one of the biggest guns in the world, but he would be very much astonished if he had that kind of private, personal dealing with his own soul, here, from you, man to man, and hand to hand! Try that plan during the special services—ask the Lord to enable you to summon up courage enough to do it.

And you, good Sisters, who are too timid, as, yet to attempt that good work, break the ice, once, and there will not be much difficulty after that. You will find it to be a happy thing to speak about Jesus to souls that come in your way. "When you hear the sound of a going, then you shall bestir yourself." My aged Brother, you have been attending here for many years and you are rather an old saint, but you are also rather an old sinner for never having spoken to other people about their souls! I want to urge even *you* to begin, you who know most and say most, you who actually have had a long experience of the things of God, but have pocketed it and kept it to yourself. Now I earnestly say to you, as God did to David, "When you hear the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, then you shall bestir yourself."

"That is right, Mr. Spurgeon," says one, "stir them up." I did not say "*them*." I said, and my text says, "Then *you shall* bestir *yourself*." Dear Friends, it is all very well to say, "I like to see an earnest Church." So do I, but it is better to have every member zealously seeking the souls of others, for *that* is the way to have an earnest Church, and that is the way the blessing comes. David, you must bestir yourself! Then the soldiers who are with you will catch the fire from their leader and they will bestir *themselves*.

IV. Now I finish by saying just a little, in the fourth place, about A SURE RESULT FOLLOWING—"And David did so, as the Lord had commanded him," and "smote the Philistines from Geba until you come to Gazer."

The result was all that David could have expected and more. *Obedient action secured it.* David simply "did so, as the Lord had commanded him," but he, "smote the Philistines from Geba till you come to Gazer." They could not stand before him—he won an overwhelming victory and you do not hear much more about the Philistines after this. That final stroke had crushed them down. So, Beloved, may the Lord send us a great victory this next week if so it pleases Him! Cry to Him for it, pray for it believingly and it *must* be granted to us!

"David did so, as the Lord had commanded him." I wonder of how many of my dear friends it may be said as of David, "he did so, as the Lord had commanded him." I know that it will be said of many, that you have *thought* about it. But David *did* so, not merely thought about it! He probably thought, but he also "did so." He came to the practical point. "I shall try and do a little something to help the mission," says someone. "I did give away one handbill the other night." Yes, yes, that is all right, but, "David did so," that is, he did bestir himself and he did bestir himself most when he saw the signs and tokens of the Divine Power being put forth. "David did so, as the Lord had commanded him."

If I habitually look after others and speak individually to them about their souls, and if I bring the Gospel before them, either in a printed form or *voice*—if I keep on testifying of Christ to everybody who will give me a hearing—I shall have conversions as surely as I am a living man. It cannot be otherwise. If you continue looking to God to go before you and follow after Him with that part of the work which He has put into your hands, and which is a great privilege to be engaged in, you shall not labor in vain, nor spend your strength for nothing!

"Paul planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase." How many times I have heard that text mangled and destroyed by being misquoted, "Paul may plant, and Apollos may water, but except God give the increase, all the labor is in vain." There is no such text in the Bible, although the statement happens to be true for all that! The other Truth of God, *which is in the Bible*, is Paul's declaration, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase." You, Paul, go on planting. You, Apollos, go on watering. And if God does not give the increase, let us know. What will we do when we hear it? Why, we will seek to learn the reason why and we will go to His Throne with tears and cries and say, "Lord, You have changed the whole business! It used to be, 'Paul planted, Apollos watered; and God gave the increase,' but now Paul plants, and Apollos waters, and there is no increase! Lord, what hinders the blessing?" And we will keep on crying to Him and never let Him go until He blesses us.

My dear Hearers, you who are unconverted, if you feel any spiritual emotions in your hearts, if you feel any desires towards God, if you feel any softening, if you feel any quickening, then bestir yourselves! And if ever, on brighter days than usual, you get just a little hope of salvation, then bestir yourselves! Oh, I pray you, you who are seeking the Lord, when there is any encouragement given to you—and how often encouragement does come—do not miss it! Take the tide at the flood. Come to Jesus just as you are. Trust Him and find in Him eternal life. May his blessing be with you all for His dear name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
Psalm 144; 2 Samuel 5:17-25.

Psalm 144. *A Psalm of David.* No doubt written after some great victory and also before another severe struggle. The Christian man seldom escapes from one difficulty without falling into another. Thanks be unto God, He that is with us in six troubles will not forsake us in the seventh!

Verse 1. *Blessed is the LORD my strength, which teaches my hand to war, and my fingers to fight.* David does not ascribe any honor to himself. Human strength is from within, from the nerves, sinews and muscles, but the Believer's strength is from without—"Blessed is Jehovah my strength." Now, if Jehovah is our strength, then nothing can be too difficult for us, for he whose strength is the Omnipotence of God can do all things. "Which teaches my hands to war." Just as the young soldier was, as it were, bound apprentice to the old warrior, went out to learn the drill and, afterwards, was taken by him into the battle, so does the Lord by Providence and by experience train His people's hands to war and their fingers to fight.

2. *My goodness, and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer; my shield, and He in whom I trust.* Here are six names, or rather, five titles of God and then an inference from them—"He in whom I trust." Oh, I know, you people of God, you can say of Jehovah, "He is the One in whom I trust." Rely upon anyone else and your hopes are doomed to disappointment—as a bowing wall shall he be—and as a tottering fence. Happy is he that has the God of Jacob for his refuge! Mind that you stand to this and never depart from it.

2. *Who subdues my people under me.* Probably this Psalm was written after the crushing out of the great revolt under Absalom, and well might David ascribe to the Divine hand his deliverance from that trial. It seemed as if the kingdom had gone from him—his ungrateful son had stolen the people's hearts and yet God was pleased to give him back his kingdom—and to set him upon his throne yet more firmly than before. "Who subdues my people under me." Christian, say that it is God who subdues your troubles, God who conquers your sins, God who enlightens your darkness, God who does all things for you! Give Him all the praise for every deliverance!

3. *LORD, what is man that You take knowledge of him! Or the son of man, that You make account of him!* Have you not often felt like this? You have said, "Lord, how could You have bestowed such favors upon me, so utterly unworthy, so insignificant, so unknown, so worthless?" "What is man, that You take knowledge of him?"

4. *Man is like to vanity: his days are as a shadow that passes away.* You know that a shadow is nothing. It is rather the absence of something than anything in itself. Shadow is the absence of light and what is man but, as it were, the absence of light, the absence of anything that is substantial? He is but the fleeting shadow of some earthly object which soon passes away. Having thus magnified God for the past and marveled at His loving kindness, the Psalmist now turns to prayer—

5. *Bow Your heavens, O LORD, and come down: touch the mountains, and they shall smoke.* God did but set one foot upon Mount Sinai and it became altogether on a smoke. "The hills melted like wax at the Presence of the Lord." Well, Believer, you have many mountains, but you can ask God to "touch the mountains, and they shall smoke." No matter what the mountains may be—high as the heavens your troubles may ascend, till they even seem to block up your pathway to the skies—yet one touch of the Divine finger shall make them melt away like wax before the fire—and you shall march on triumphantly to your God.

6, 7. *Cast forth lightning and scatter them: shoot out Your arrows, and destroy them. Send Your hand from above; rid me, and deliver me out of great waters, from the hand of strange children.* Moses, you know, was called, "one drawn out of the water," so are all Gods people—they are drawn out of floods of tribulation. They are surrounded by those floods as though deserted and left there to perish, but keen is the eye that watches over them, strong is the hand that preserves them and sure is the arm that delivers them!

8. *Whose mouth speaks vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood.* They swear, but they perjure themselves. They lift up the right hand but they lie all the while. Rid me, O God, from such men, for, of all enemies, those that can lie are the worst, for you never know where you are with such people. Snakes in the grass are the most dangerous reptiles and enemies who will do any evil thing in order to ruin you, and who will tell any lie in the world in order to injure you, are the hardest to overthrow.

9-11. *I will sing a new song unto You, O God: upon a psaltery and an instrument of ten strings will I sing praises unto You. It is He that gives salvation unto kings: who delivers David, His servant, from the hurtful sword. Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children, whose mouth speaks vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood.* You see, good men sometimes repeat their prayers—they present the same petition over, again, and they thus follow the example of Christ, who prayed three times, "saying the same words."

12. *That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth, that our daughters may be as cornerstones, polished after the similitude of a palace.* Or, rather, "of a temple." This should be the prayer of every parent, that his sons may be bringing forth fruit unto God, that his daughters may be fixed as polished stones in the Church of God to form a part of the great spiritual temple.

13. *That our garners may be full, affording all manner of store.* When this is the case, spiritually—when there is milk for babes, meat for strong men and not a little of each, but more than enough for all—then are we very happy.

13. *That our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets.* Spiritual fertility is a blessed thing, when each Christian, each of the Lord's sheep, becomes prolific in increasing Christ's flock.

14. *That our oxen may be strong to labor.* That the ministers of God may be mighty. That Sunday school teachers and all earnest laborers may have strength given to them.

14. *That there is no breaking in, nor going out.* That there are no wolves to destroy by breaking in and that there are no sheep to suffer injury by going astray.

14, 15. *That there is no complaining in our streets. Happy are the people who are in such a case: yes, happy are the people whose God is the LORD.* May this be our case! And if it *is* our case, then the Lord is our God even at this day!

Now let us read about two interesting incidents in David's warrior life.

2 Samuel 5:17. *But when the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines came up to seek David.* To thrust him down and kill him if they could—and so put an end to his prosperous reign!

17-20. *And David heard of it, and went down to the hold. The Philistines also came and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim. And David enquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up to the Philistines? Will You deliver them into my hands? And the LORD said unto David, Go up: for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into your hands. And David came to Baal-Perazim, and David smote them there, and said, The LORD has broken forth upon my enemies before me, as the breach of waters.* As a flood breaks forth and carries all before it!

20, 21. *Therefore he called the name of that place Baal-Perazim. And there they left their images, and David and his men burned them.* The Philistines brought their gods with them, in the hope of being, thereby, defended. But, "David and his men burned them." That was the very best thing to do with them. What a pity they did not save them for aesthetic purposes! Thus do men with fine old works of art, like pictures of the Virgin Mary. No, no, burn them! That is the very best thing to do with anything that ever has been worshipped by mortal man. If they have ever been set up in the place of God, they are cursed from that moment—let them be burned, or dashed in pieces—or in some way destroyed. "There they left their images and David and his men burned them."

22-24. *And the Philistines came up yet again, and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim. And when David enquired of the LORD, He said, You shall not go up; but fetch a compass behind them, and come upon them over against the mulberry trees. And let it be, when you hear the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then you shall bestir yourself.* Or be sharp and go at them!

24, 25. *For then shall the LORD go out before you, to smite the host of the Philistines. And David did so, as the LORD had commanded him.* I hope that may be said of you and me all our lives!

25. *And smote the Philistines from Geba until you come to Gazer.* That is, he utterly overthrew them and drove them away.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—450, 298, 45 (VERSION 1).

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

ALL COMERS TO CHRIST WELCOMED
NO. 2349

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY,
FEBRUARY 25, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 17, 1889.**

***"Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out."
John 6:37.***

EOD CHRIST will not die in vain. His Father gave Him a certain number to be the reward of His soul travail and He will have every one of them, as He said, "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me." Almighty Grace shall sweetly constrain them all to come. My father recently gave me some letters which I wrote to him when I began to preach. They are almost boyish epistles, but, in reading through them, again, I noticed in one of them this expression, "How I long to see thousands of men saved, but my great comfort is that some will be saved, must be saved, shall be saved, for it is written, 'All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me.'"

The question for each of you to ask is, "Do I belong in that number?" I am going to preach with the view of helping you to find out whether you belong to that, "all," whom the Father gave to Christ—the "all" who shall come to Him. We can use the second part of the verse to help us to understand the first. "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out," will explain our Savior's previous Words, "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me."

I shall have no time for any further preface. I must at once get to my subject and try to put everything in a condensed form. Kindly give heed to the word, think about it, pray over it—and may God the Holy Spirit apply it to all your hearts!

I. First, notice in the text THE NECESSITY OF CHARACTER—"Him that comes to Me." If you want to be saved, you must *come to Christ*. There is no other way of salvation under Heaven but coming to Christ. Go wherever else you will, you will be disappointed and lost—it is only by coming to Him that you can by any possibility have eternal life!

What is it to come to Christ? Well, *it implies leaving all other confidences*. To come to anybody is to leave everybody else. To come to Christ is to leave every*thing* else—to leave every other hope, every other trust. Are you trusting to your own works? Are you trusting to a priest? Are you trusting to the merits of the Virgin Mary, or the saints and angels in Heaven? Are you trusting to anything but the Lord Jesus Christ? If so, leave it, and have done with it! Come away from every other reliance and

trust to Christ Crucified, for this is the *only* way of salvation, as Peter said to the rulers and elders of Israel, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."—

"To Jesus bleeding on the tree,
Turn you your eye, your heart,"

and come to Him at once and your soul shall live forever!

To come to Jesus means, in brief, *trusting Him.* He is a Savior—that is His business—come to Him and trust Him to save *you.* If you could save yourself, you would not need a Savior, and now that Christ has set up to be a Savior, let Him do the business. He will. Come and lay all your needs at His feet and trust Him. Resolve that, if lost, you will be lost trusting alone in Jesus, and that can never be! Tie up all your hopes into one bundle and put that bundle upon Christ. Let Him be all your salvation, all your desire and you will be surely saved!

I have sometimes tried to explain to you what the life of faith is like. It is very much like a man walking on a tight rope. The Believer is told that he shall not fall, He trusts in God that he shall not, but every now and then he says, "What a way it is down there if I did fall!" I have often had this experience. I have gone up an invisible staircase—I could not see the next step, but when I put my foot down on it, I found that it was solid granite. I could not see the next step and it seemed as if I should plunge into an abyss. Yet have I gone on upward, steadily, one step at a time, never able to see farther into absolute darkness, as it seemed, and yet always with a light just where the light was needed.

When I used to hold a candle for my father, in the evening, when he was sawing wood out in the yard, he used to say, "Boy, hold the candle where I am sawing, don't look over there." And I have often thought to myself, when I wanted to see something in the middle of next week, or next year, that the Lord seemed to say to me, "Hold your candle on the piece of work which you have to do *today*—and if you can see that, be satisfied, for that is all the light you need just now." Suppose that you could see into next week? It would be a great mercy if you lost your sight a while, for a far-seeing gaze into care and trouble is no gain! "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof"—as sufficient unto the day will be the *good* thereof.

But the Lord does train His people for the skies by testing their faith in the matter of His daily care of them. Often a man's reliance upon God for the supply of his earthly needs proves that he has trusted the Lord for the weightier affairs relating to his soul's salvation. Do not draw a line between the temporal and the spiritual and say, "God will go just so far—and I must not take such and such a thing to Him in prayer." I remember hearing of a certain good man, of whom one said, "Why, he is a very curious man—he prayed about a key the other day!" Why not pray about a key? Why not pray about a pin? Sometimes it may be as important to pray about a pin as to pray about a kingdom! Little things are often the linchpins of great events. Take care that you bring *everything* to God in faith

and prayer. "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."

I have turned aside from my subject for a minute, but let us now think, again, of this matter of coming to Christ. To come to Jesus not only implies leaving all other confidences and trusting Christ, it also means *following Him*. If you trust Him, you must *obey* Him. If you leave your soul in His hands, you must take Him to be your Master, and your Lord, as well as your Savior. Christ has come to save you *from* sin, not *in* sin. He will, therefore, help you to leave your sin, whatever it is. He will give you the victory over it! He will make you holy. He will help you to do whatever you should do in the sight of God. He is able to save unto the uttermost them who come unto God by Him—but you must *come to Him if you would be saved by Him*.

To put together all I have said—you must quit every other hope; you must take Jesus to be your sole confidence—and then you must be obedient to His command and take Him to be your Master and Lord. Will you do that? If not, I have nothing to say to you except this—He that believes *not* in Him will perish without hope! If you will not have God's remedy for your soul malady, the only remedy that there is, there remains for you nothing but blackness and dismal darkness forever and ever for you!

II. But, now, secondly, while there is this necessity of character, notice, also, THE UNIVERSALITY OF PERSONS—"Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out."

Granted that he comes to Christ, that is all that is needed. Does someone say, "Sir, *I am a very obscure person.* Nobody knows me. My name was never in the papers and never will be. I am a nobody"? Well, if Mr. Nobody comes to Christ, He will not cast him out! Come along, you unknown person, you anonymous individual, you that everybody but Christ forgets! If even *you* come to Jesus, He will not cast you out.

Another says, "*I am so very odd.*" Do not say much about that, for I am odd, too. But, dear Friends, however odd we are, though we may be thought very eccentric and some may even consider us a little touched in the head, yet, nevertheless, for all that, Jesus says, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." Come along with you, Mr. Oddman! You shall not be lost for lack of brains, nor even for having too many—though that is not a very common misfortune! If you will but come to Christ, though you have no talent, though you are but poor and will never make much headway in the world, Jesus says, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out."

"Ah," says a third friend, "I do not mind about being obscure, or being eccentric, but it *is the greatness of my sin* that keeps me back from Christ." Let us read the text again—"Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." If he had been guilty of seven murders and all the whoredoms and adulteries that ever defiled mortal man! If impossible sins could be charged against him—yet *if he came to Christ,* mark you, if he came to Christ—the promise of Jesus would be fulfilled even in his case, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out."

"But," says another, "*I am completely worn out. I am good for nothing.* I have spent all my days and years in sin. I have come to the very end of the chapter, I am not worth anybody's having." Come along with you, you derelict of life! Jesus says, "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." You have to walk with two sticks, do you? Never mind, come to Jesus! You are so feeble that you wonder that you are alive at your advanced age? My Lord will receive you if you are a hundred years of age—there have been many cases in which persons have been brought to Christ even *after* that age! There are some very remarkable instances of that fact on record. Christ says, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." If he were as old as Methuselah, if he did but come to Christ, he would not be cast out!

"Alas," says one, "I am in a worse case than even that aged friend, for beside being old, *I have resisted the Spirit of God!* I have been many years troubled in my conscience, but I have tried to cover it all up. I have stifled every godly thought." Yes, yes, and it is a very sad thing, too. But for all that, if you come to Christ, if you can even make a dash for salvation and come to Jesus, He cannot cast you out!

Perhaps One friend says, "*I am afraid that I have committed the unpardonable sin.*" If you come to Christ, you have not, I know—for him that comes to Him, Jesus will in no wise cast out! He cannot, therefore, you have not committed the unpardonable sin. Come along with you, man, and if you are blacker than all the rest of the sinners in the world, so much the more glorious shall be the Grace of God when it shall have proved its power by washing you whiter than snow in the precious blood of Jesus!

"Ah," says one, "you do not know me, Sir." No, dear Friend, I do not. But, perhaps, one of these days I may have that pleasure. "It will not be any pleasure to you, Sir, for *I am an apostate.* I used to be a professor of religion, but I have given it all up, and I have gone back to the world, willfully and wickedly doing all manner of evil things." Ah, well, if you can but come to Christ, though there were seven apostasies piled, one upon another, still His promise stands true, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." Whatever the past, or whatever the present, backslider, return to Christ, for He stands to His solemn promise, and there are no exceptions mentioned in my text—"Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out."

"Well, Sir," cries another, "I should like to come to Christ, but *I do not feel fit to come.*" Then, come all *unfit*, just as you are! Jesus says, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." If I were awakened in the middle of the night by a cry of, "Fire!" and I saw that someone was at the window with a ladder, I do not think that I would stay in bed, and say, "I have not my black necktie on," or, "I have not my best waistcoat on." I would not speak in that way at all! I would be out of the window as quickly as ever I could, and down the ladder! Why do you talk about your fitness, fitness, fitness? I have heard of a cavalier, who lost his life because he stopped to curl his hair when Cromwell's soldiers were after him.

Some of you may laugh at the man's foolishness, but that is all that your talk about fitness is! What is all your fitness but the curling of your hair when you are in imminent danger of losing your soul? Your fitness is *nothing* to Christ. Remember what we sang at the beginning of the service—

"Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream!
All the fitness He requires
Is to feel your need of him!
This He gives you
'Tis the Spirit's rising beam!"

Come to Christ just as you are—foul, vile, careless, godless, Christless! Come now, even now, for Jesus said, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out."

Is there not a glorious width about my text? "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." What, "him," is this? It is, "him that comes!" What, "him that comes"? Any "him that comes" in all the world! If he comes to Christ, he shall not be cast out! A red man, or a black man, or a white man, or a yellow man, or a copper-colored man—whatever he is, if he comes to Jesus, he shall in no wise be cast out!

When you mean to put a thing broadly, it is always best to state it and leave it. Do not go into details! The Savior does not. Some years ago there was a man, a kind, loving husband, who wished to leave to his wife all his property. Whatever he had, he intended her to have it all, as she ought. So he put down in his will, "I leave to my beloved wife, Elizabeth, all that I have." That was all right. Then he went on to describe in detail what he was leaving her, and he wrote, "All my freehold and personal estate." The most of his property happened to be *leasehold*, so the wife did not get it because her husband gave a detailed description! It was in the *detail* that the property slipped away from the good woman.

Now, there is no detail at all here—"Him that comes." That means that every man, woman and child beneath the broad heavens, who will but come and trust in Christ, shall in no wise be cast out! I thank God that there is no allusion to any particular character, in order especially to say, "People of that character shall be received," for then the characters left out might be supposed to be excluded. But the text clearly means that every soul that comes to Christ shall be received by Him!

III. The flight of time hurries me on! I therefore beg you to listen earnestly while I speak to you, in the third place, about THE UNMISTAKEABLENESS OF THE PROMISE—"Him that comes to Me I will in no wise"—that is, for no reason, under no circumstances, at no time, under no conditions whatever—"I will in no wise cast out." And which means, being interpreted, "I will receive him, I will save him, I will bless him."

Then if you, my dear Friend, come to Christ, *how could the Lord cast you out?* How could He do it in consistency with His truthfulness? Imagine my Lord Jesus making this declaration and giving it to us as an inspired Scripture, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out," and yet casting out somebody, even that unknown somebody up in the corner! Why, it would be a lie! It would be a gross lie! I pray you, blaspheme not my Lord,

the truthful Christ, by supposing that He could be guilty of such conduct as that! He could do as He liked about whom He would receive until He made the promise—but after He had pledged His word, He bound Himself by the veracity of His Nature to keep it and, as long as Christ is the truthful Christ, He must receive every soul that comes to Him.

But let me also ask you, suppose that you came to Jesus and He cast you out, *with what hands could He do it?* "With His own hands," you answer. What? Christ coming forward to cast out a sinner who has come to Him? I ask again, with what hands could He do it? Would He do it with those pierced hands that still bear the marks of the nails? The Crucified rejecting a sinner? Ah, no, He has no hand with which to do such a cruel work as that, for He has given both His hands to be nailed to the tree for guilty men! He has neither hand, nor foot, nor heart with which to reject sinners, for all these have been pierced in His death for them! Therefore He *cannot* cast them out if they come to Him.

Let me ask you another question, *What profit would it be to Christ if He did cast you out?* If my dear Lord, with the crown of thorns, the pierced side and the wounded hands, were to cast you away, what glory would it bring to Him? If He cast you into Hell, you who have come to Him, what happiness would that bring to Him? If He were to cast you away, you who have sought His face, you who trust His love and His blood, by what conceivable method could that ever render Him the happier or the greater? It cannot be!

What would such a supposition involve? Imagine for a moment that Jesus did cast away one who came to Him. If it were ascertained that one soul came to Christ and yet He had cast him away, what would happen? Why, there are thousands of us who would never preach again! For one, I would have done with the business. If my Lord can cast away a sinner who comes to Him, I cannot, with a clear conscience, go and preach from His Words, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." Moreover, I should feel that if He failed in one promise, He might fail in others! I could not go and preach a possible but doubtful Gospel! I must have, "shalls," and, "wills," from the eternal Throne of God—but if it is not so, our preaching is in vain—and your faith is also in vain.

See what would follow if one soul came to Christ and Christ cast him out. All the saints would lose their confidence in Him. If a man breaks his promise once, it is of no use for him to say, "Well, I am *generally* truthful." You have caught him false to his word, once, and you will not trust Him again, will you? No! And if our dear Lord, whose every Word is Truth, could break one of His promises only once, He would not be trusted by His people any more—and His Church would lose the faith that is her very life.

Ah, me, and then they would hear of it up in Heaven. And one soul that came to Christ, and was cast away, would stop the music of the harps of Heaven, would dim the luster of the Glory Land, and take away its joy, for it would be whispered among the glorified, "Jesus has broken His promise! He cast away a praying, believing soul! He may break His promise to

us—He may drive us out of Heaven!" When they began to praise Him, this one act of His would make a lump come in their throats and they would be unable to sing. They would be thinking of that poor soul that trusted Him and was cast away—how could they sing, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood," if they had to add—"But He did not wash all that came to Him, though He promised that He would"?

I do not even like to talk of all that the supposition would involve! It is something so dreadful to me, for they would hear of it in Hell—and they would tell it to one another and an awful glee would take possession of the fiendish hearts of the devil and all his companions! And they would say, "The Christ is not true to His Word! The boasted Savior rejected one who came to Him. He used to receive even harlots—He even let one wash His feet with her tears! And publicans and sinners came and gathered about Him and He spoke to them in tones of love. But here is one—well, he was too vile for the Savior to bless! He was too far gone, Jesus could not restore him! Christ could not cleanse him. He could save little sinners, but not great ones! He could save sinners eighteen hundred years ago. Oh, He made a fine show of *them*, but His power is now exhausted! He cannot save a sinner now!" Oh, in the halls of Hell, what jests and ridicule would be poured upon that dear name and, I had almost said, *justly*, if Christ cast out one who came to Him! But, Beloved, that can never be! It is as sure as God's oath, as certain as Jehovah's Being that he who comes to Christ shall in no wise be cast out! I gladly bear my own witness before this assembled throng that—

"I came to Jesus as I was
Weary and worn, and sad.
I found in Him a resting place,
And He has made me glad."

Come, each one of you, and prove the text to be true in your own experience, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
Psalm 89:1-37; John 6:22-40.

Psalm 89. *Maschil of Ethan the Ezrahite.* That is to say, an instructive Psalm, written by or for one Ethan, one of the great singers of David's day. He sings of the Covenant, the Covenant with David, ordered in all things and sure. There is no higher theme for song than the Covenant of God's Grace. One marvels that it has not more often been sung by those who are the gifted children of poesy.

Verse 1. *I will sing of the mercies of the LORD forever.* Another subject might wear out, but this glorious topic will never be exhausted! Here is a theme which we can sing of in eternity as well as in time. Let others choose what subject they may, "I will sing of the mercies of Jehovah forever."

1. *With my mouth will I make known Your faithfulness to all generations.* God's faithfulness is the mercy of His mercy! It is the center point of His

goodness that His goodness endures forever. We are not only to sing, we are to teach. The Psalmist says, "With my mouth will I make known Your faithfulness to all generations." In telling his own experience, narrating what he had observed, as well as what he had proved of God's faithfulness to His promise and His Covenant, he would do this so that following generations should know about it. We are the schoolmasters of the ages to come—I mean, saints who have experienced the mercy and the faithfulness of God. We ought to make known Jehovah's faithfulness to all generations that are yet to come.

2. *For I have said, Mercy shall be built up forever.* What a building—Mercy! God's mercy is to be built up forever.

2. *Your faithfulness shall You establish in the very heavens.* Like the great arch you see in the firmament on high, unbuttressed and unpillared, yet it stands fast. So shall God's faithfulness be built up, settled and established in the very heavens. And now *God* speaks—

3. *I have made a Covenant with My chosen, I have sworn unto David My servant.* Well might the Psalmist say, in the second verse, "I have said," when God in the third verse says, "I have sworn." It is ours to say, but it is God's to say with such tremendous solemnity that doubt cannot be tolerated! "I have made a Covenant with My chosen," King David, who is, however, but the type of his greater Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the heir of the dynasty of David. With Him is this Covenant made forever.

4. *Your seed will I establish forever, and build up your throne to all generations. Selah.* Whatever may happen in the world, David's Seed is always reigning. Whatever kings may lose their crowns, King Jesus will never lose the many crowns that are on His head! God has sworn it—"Your seed will I establish forever, and build up your throne to all generations." Then comes the word, "Selah." Rest. Meditate. And truly, here is enough to rest and meditate upon for many a day, if we went no farther into the Psalm!

5. *And the heavens shall praise Your wonder, O LORD: Your faithfulness, also, in the congregation of the saints.* The Psalmist meant to praise God at such a rate that the sun, moon and stars should hear his song, while angels and the host redeemed by blood should learn to praise God better than ever. "Your faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints"—one saint begins to sing of God's faithfulness and the others take it up—for God is not faithful to one, only, but to all His people. This is a subject which, when once started, will produce an echo in every Believer's heart.

6, 7. *For who in the Heaven can be compared unto the LORD? Who among the lions of the mighty can be likened unto the LORD? God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints.* The holiest are always the most reverent. There is no fear of God in the assembly of the sinners, but, "He is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints."

7. *And to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him.* The nearer they came to Him, the more is their awe of Him! The greater their love, the deeper is their humility. God will not have those about Him who are flip-

pant and irreverent! He is "to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him."

8. *O LORD God of Hosts, who is a strong LORD like unto You? Or to Your faithfulness round about You?* Note how the Psalmist harps upon that one string—"faithfulness." Ah, dear Friends, there are times when this is the sweetest note in the whole scale! "Your faithfulness"—we have a God who never forgets His promises, but keeps them to the moment—a God who never changes! We have a God who never turns away from His Word. "Your faithfulness." Oh, what a blessed virtue is this in God! Let us praise Him for it forever. "Your faithfulness round about You"—as if the Lord never went outside the ring of faithfulness, never did anything that broke His promises, or that made any of His children to doubt. And it is even so!

9. *You rule the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof rise, You still them.* Are you now in a storm, my Brother? My Sister, are you now tempest-tossed? Listen to this Word of God and remember the Lord High Admiral of the fleet on the Lake of Galilee and how, after He had been asleep for awhile, He arose and rebuked the winds and the waves! "You rule the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof rise, You still them."

10. *You have broken Rahab in pieces, as one that is slain; You have scattered Your enemies with Your strong arm.* Rahab was Egypt. The word means, "strong," "mighty," "proud"—all of which were the characteristics of Egypt—which God broke in pieces at the Red Sea. Pharaoh was the greatest of monarchs at the time, but, oh, how soon he had to yield when God's right arm was bared for war!

11. *The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours: as for the world and the fullness thereof, You have founded them.* Sometimes we are tempted to think that the earth cannot be God's—all over the globe *man* is the master. He claims everything. If men could map out the heavens, we would have owners for every single twinkling star and, if they could have their way, we would have to buy our light by measure, and our sunshine by weight. But, "the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof." And the heavens are also His.

12. *The north and the south You have created them: Tabor and Hermon.* East and West, as well as North and South—

12. *Shall rejoice in Your name.* There is not a place where God is not to be found! All the points of the compass are compassed by God. You cannot go where the Lord's love reigns not, nor where Providence will not follow you.

13-15. *You have a mighty arm: strong is Your hand, and high is Your right hand. Justice and judgment are the habitation of Your Throne: mercy and truth shall go before Your face. Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound.* There are some who hear it and yet are not blessed. Blessed are they who "know" it, know its peculiar accent, know its inward power, know its Omnipotence, know its unchangeableness, know it by having tried it and proved it and rested in it! "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound."

15. *They shall walk, O LORD, in the light of Your Countenance.* It is all the light they need. Let God but smile, it makes their day! If every candle were blown out, yet the favor of God would make life bright enough for them.

16. *In Your name shall they rejoice all the day: and in Your righteousness shall they be exalted.* Even in God's righteousness! Until we know the Lord, we are afraid of His righteousness, but when we come to know Him, His righteousness, which once frowned upon us, becomes our Heaven! "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love." God is not unrighteous to cast away a soul that puts its trust in Christ. God is one with His people. When we rejoice all the day in His name, we are exalted in His righteousness.

17-19. *For You are the glory of their strength: and in Your favor our horn shall be exalted. For the LORD is our defense; and the Holy One of Israel is our King. Then You spoke in Vision to Your holy one, and said, I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people.* This is David first, but it is Christ high above David. One of ourselves, the carpenter's Son, yet has God made Him to be the Head over all things for His Church—"I have exalted one chosen out of the people."

20, 21. *I have found David, My servant, with My holy oil have I anointed him: with whom My hand shall be established: My arm, also, shall strengthen him.* The full power of God is with Christ. That same arm that bears up the earth's huge pillars and spreads the heavens abroad, is engaged on behalf of the cause and Kingdom of the Son of David.

22. *The enemy shall not exact upon Him; nor the son of wickedness afflict Him.* He had enough of that when He was upon the earth, but it is all over now. He has gone into His Glory and the enemy cannot touch Him.

23. *And I will beat down His foes before His face and plague them that hate Him.* This is the portion of all haters of Christ. God will, somehow or other, in the order of His Providence, bring the evil home to them. If they will not have God's Son, they shall not have His mercy—they shall, sooner or later, be beaten down before His face.

24, 25. *But My faithfulness and My mercy shall be with Him: and in My name shall His horn be exalted. I will set His hand also in the sea, and His right hand in the rivers.* He shall reign "from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." We may go on to fight for Him, for His triumph is sure!

26, 27. *He shall cry unto Me, You are My Father, My God, and the rock of my salvation. Also I will make Him My first-born, higher than the kings of the earth.* So He is! First-born among men, first-born of kings, His Throne is loftier than the most imperial power on the earth. Blessed be His name! Let us adore Him tonight and here, in the midst of His people, let us crown Him Lord of All!

28-36. *My mercy will I keep for him forevermore, and My Covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed also will I make to endure forever, and his throne as the days of Heaven. If his children forsake My Law, and walk not in My judgments; if they break My statutes, and keep not My Command-*

ments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless My loving kindness will I not utterly take from them, nor suffer My faithfulness to fail. My Covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of My lips. Once have I sworn by My holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before Me. The Son of David is still King in the midst of the true Israel. Still Jesus reigns and on and on, forever and forever, great David's greater Son shall be King of Kings, and Lord of Lords!

37. *It shall be established forever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in Heaven. Selah.* Now let us read a passage from the New Testament showing how the Lord Jesus dealt with the crowds that came to Him.

John 6:22-26. *The day following, when the people which stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other boat there, save that one whereunto His disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with His disciples into the boat, but that His disciples were gone away alone; (howbeit there came other boats from Tiberius near unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks) when the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there neither His disciples, they also took shipping and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus. And when they had found Him on the other side of the sea, they said unto Him, Rabbi, when did You comer here? Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, You seek Me not because you saw the miracles, but because you did eat of the loaves, and were filled.* Mixed motives bring multitudes together. How true our Master was! How outspoken! He never tried to win a disciple by holding back the truth—and often He spoke very plainly, indeed, as on this occasion—"You seek Me not because you saw the miracles, but because you did eat of the loaves, and were filled."

27. *Labor not for the meat which perishes, but for that meat which endures unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you: for Him has God the Father sealed.* He seemed to say to them, "Do not come to Me for bread and fish. I have given you that. Come for something better. Come to Me for spiritual food—food for your souls—food for eternity!" It is with that objective that we should go to the House of God—not to listen to this preacher or that—but to hear the Word of God, that we may live thereby.

28. *Then said they unto Him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?* "What are the best works that we can do? What are the most acceptable?" I wonder what they expected Christ to say? I am sure they did not look for the answer that they received.

29. *Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He has sent.* The greatest, the best, the most acceptable work in all the world is that you come and trust Christ! This saves you—nothing else will do so. "This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He has sent."

30, 31. *They said therefore unto Him, What sign do You show, then, that we may see and believe You? What do You work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from Heaven to*

eat. See how they came round to the old subject, again—bread to eat? The Lord Jesus Christ may point them to something higher and better, but their carnal minds always return to that congenial topic—something to eat. Their stomach was lord of their heart!

32. *Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from Heaven; but My Father gives you the true Bread from Heaven.* "That which will really feed you and feed you for all eternity." Moses could not give the people that bread—only the Father can give "the true Bread from Heaven."

33. *For the Bread of God is He which comes down from Heaven and gives life unto the world.* "The Bread of God is He." What a strange expression, yet what a true one! The Bread of Heaven is Christ, Himself! You must come and take Him to yourself and trust Him for your salvation—and in that way feed upon Him, or you can never have the heavenly Bread which both gives life and sustains life.

34-39. *Then said they unto Him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the Bread of life. He that comes to Me shall never hunger; and He that believes on Me shall never thirst. But I said unto you, That you also have seen Me and believe not. All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from Heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me. And this is the Father's will which has sent Me, that of all which He has given Me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.* See how the salvation of Christ reaches right to the end of all things? You and I may die, but though we lie a while in the grave, the salvation of Christ will preserve us, to raise us up, again, at the Last Day! There shall not be a bone nor a piece of a bone, of a true Believer, left in the enemies' land. All Israel and all that belongs to Israel shall come out of this Egypt, through the blood of the Lamb—not a hoof shall be left behind.

40. *And this is the will of Him that sent Me that everyone which sees the Son, and believes on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the Last Day.* May all of us see the Son and believe on Him, that we may have everlasting life, and that He may raise us up at the Last Day, for His dear name's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—492, 538, 658.

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

"TAKE, EAT"
NO. 2350

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, MARCH 4, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 8, 1888.

"And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is My body."
Matthew 26:26.

WE are all agreed upon this one point, that the Lord's Supper is an emblem of the death of Jesus Christ and of the way by which we receive benefit from Him. The bread sets forth His broken body and the cup His shed blood. These, separated from each other, show forth His death. The way by which we receive this bread and this wine is by eating and drinking—and this sets forth the way by which we receive the merit and the virtue of the Lord Jesus Christ—by a *faith* which is like eating, by a *trust* which is like drinking, by the reception of Christ *spiritually* into our hearts, even as we naturally receive the bread and the fruit of the vine into our bodies.

These two words, then, "Take, eat," are the practical directions concerning the Lord's Supper and, *spiritually* understood, they are the Gospel of the Grace of God. Every disciple of the Lord Jesus may hear a spiritual voice saying to him, concerning Christ, "Take, eat." And you who fear that you are not His disciples, if you wish to be, if there is a craving in your heart to possess Him, if you are beginning to feel after Him, I venture to say to you, also, "Take, eat." This is the way to have Christ—take Him—partake of Him and He is yours.

You probably remember the extraordinary story of the conversion of Augustine, who, after a life of sin, was stricken with compunction of conscience. His sorrow of heart was very great and he could not find peace till he heard a voice, which may possibly have been that of a child on the other side of the wall—I cannot tell—but such a voice he heard, saying over and over again, "Tolle, lege; tolle, lege; tolle, lege," that is, "Take and read; take and read." And he took the Book and read it, studied it believingly, and found peace with God. I have prayed that there may be some young Augustine here tonight. If present, his name may be, "disgusting," for he is living in sin and iniquity. I pray that he may be troubled in his conscience and that he may be led to Christ by these words of the text, "Take, eat." May this command come home to you and may you catch at it, and put it in practice, and may my Master make a great saint out of some great sinner, even an Augustine, who shall valiantly defend the

Gospel of God's Grace though now he sins desperately against Almighty Love! Oh, that it may be so!

With that end in view, I come to my text. We cannot have many divisions to it, can we? There are but two words on which I wish, especially, to speak, so they shall be the divisions of my subject. First, "*take*," and secondly, "*eat*."

I. The first word I want you to notice is, "TAKE."

Just as a doctor might write at the beginning of a prescription, "Take such and such things," so the Lord Jesus said to His disciples, "Take." The word is often translated in our New Testament, "Receive." Jesus holds out the bread in His hand and says, "Receive it; let it come into your hand." "Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and broke it," and then, holding it out to His disciples, He said, "Take, take, take," and they took it, and the bread became theirs. This is the way that saints get blessings—they *take* them. This is the way that sinners also get blessings, by the Grace of God—they take them. They do not *make* them, nor *earn* them, nor *deserve* them, but they take them. Jesus Christ says to them, "Take," and they obey His voice and take.

Nobody at the table said, "Lord, I dare not take." But when Jesus said, "Take," they took. Nobody said, though perhaps everybody felt, "I am not worthy to take," but as Jesus said, "Take," they took. It is always the best plan to accept any good thing that is offered to you. If you are a very poor man and someone offers you a shilling, I venture to give you this piece of advice—take it! Do not stand and say to him, "My dear Sir, I think that indiscriminate charity is wrong. You have never enquired into my character. You do not know whether I really am one of the unemployed." If there is a shilling held out to you, my Friend, you had better take it. If you are very hungry and there is bread about, you had better eat it if it is given to you. If it is freely presented to you, freely take it! If that were my case, I would ask no questions, not only for conscience's sake, but for my necessity's sake, and especially would I do so when, by the Grace of God, the gift is presented to me by the Lord Jesus Christ! If He says, "Take," I will take! There is nothing freer than a gift, surely, except that perhaps I should be freer to take than I might be to give, for our poor natures are contracted and we may not always be free in giving, but, surely, even selfishness might make us free in taking. A holy desire for your own good and your own salvation might prompt you to say, "Yes, Lord, if You freely give, I without question will freely take!"

And I do not suppose that the Master stood holding that piece of bread to Peter for half-an-hour. He said, "Take" and Peter took it. "Take," He said to John, and John took it. "Take," He said to Philip, and Philip took it at once. Blessed are they who accept Christ the first time they hear about Him! Blessed are all they who accept Him at all, but thrice blessed are they who, when He says, "Take," through His Grace, promptly answer, "Yes, Lord, that I will, and thank You, too, most heartily!" Remember those words that we have so often sung—

"Life is found alone in Jesus,
Only there 'tis offered you—
Offered without price or money,
'Tis the gift of God sent free—
Take salvation,
Take it now, and happy be."

I anticipate that someone will say, "Am I, then, to have Jesus Christ by only *taking* Him?" Just so! Do you need a Savior? There He is—take Him! Do you desire to be delivered from the power of sin? He can deliver you—take Him to do it! Do you desire to lead a holy, godly life? Here is One who can wash you and enable you to live thus. Take Him, He is as free as the air—you have no more to pay for Christ than you have to pay for the next breath that goes into your lungs! Take Him in! Take Him in! That is all that you have to do. If I hear you say, "I can hardly think that I, a poor unworthy sinner, such as I am, and just as I am, may take Christ," I answer—That is the Gospel which I have to give you, for Jesus said, "Take, eat."

The Lord Jesus said to His disciples, "Take, eat; this is My body." Well, then, first of all, see how free Christ must be to sinners, because *He had a body*. Once He had no body—the blessed Son of God was pure spirit—but He condescended to be born of Mary. I think I see Him as an infant cradled in the manger. The Lord of All stooped so low that He hung upon a woman's breast and allowed Himself to be swaddled like any other babe! The Lord of Life and Glory has taken human nature! He lives at Nazareth as a Child. He grows up as a laboring Man, the reputed Son of a carpenter. Working man, your God became a Carpenter for you! Take Him! Surely, the very fact that He came among men and took a body like our own should encourage us to feel that we may freely take Him! His name is Emmanuel, God With Us—and if He is God with us, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh—if He has come so far to bless us, let us not doubt that we may freely take what He has come to bring!

Having taken a body, moreover, remember, next, that *in that body He suffered*. If I had to tell you that Jesus Christ *would* die to redeem you, I would, perhaps, try your faith. But when I have to tell you that He *has* died, that the work of your redemption is *accomplished*, that Jesus cried, "It is finished," before He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost. When I tell you that to the utmost farthing He has paid your debt and borne your sins in His own body on the tree, this is good news, indeed, for it leads me to further say that if He has done all this and died, "the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God," we may freely take Him, depend upon that! God has set forth His Son to be the Propitiation for sin, therefore let us hear Him say, "Take, take, take," and let us take what is so freely presented to us!

My dear Friends, remember, also, that, as Jesus Christ had a body, and in that body died, *the objective of that death must be outside of Himself*. He could not have become a Man to gain anything by it. He could not have died for any purpose that had to do with only His own Glory! He was

under no necessity to veil the splendors of His Godhead in a mortal body and, in that body, to die. So He must have died for other people and, therefore, take Him, take Him! Do you not see that these fruits are not on the tree for the tree, itself, but for the passerby who, being hungry, may lift his hand and take and eat? Oh, that you might have the sense to see that Christ, for sins not His own, has died to atone and that, therefore, you may take Him and take Him most freely!

Besides, *Jesus Himself gives what we are told to take*. Note how this verse runs—"Jesus took bread and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat." What Jesus gives, you may truly take. I may not go and take another man's goods, but I may take what He gives me. If I were arrested for stealing something and I could truly say, "This man gave it to me," I would be no thief, would I? And if Jesus Christ gives you Grace and you take it, you are no thief—in fact, no man ever lays hold on Christ without a lawful right to do so. If a dog runs into a butcher shop and steals a joint of meat, the butcher may, perhaps, take it from him and not let him eat what he has stolen, but there was never a dog of a sinner who came and laid hold on Christ's mercy and then Christ took it away from him! Take it, Sinner, and you have secured it! If you dare to seize it, God makes the seizing by faith to be a proper thing, for He bids you do it. You can never have any right to Christ except this right—that He does freely give to those who need, according to the riches of His Grace. Therefore, hear this Word of God which says, "Take, take, take." Receive, accept, grasp, appropriate, take!

Jesus Christ, when He said to His disciples, "Take," was their Master, and *Christ's Word was Law to the disciples*. There was not one of them who could have said, "I will not take," without being guilty of disobedience! Oh, that some poor soul here, tonight, would say, "Is there a Savior? Then I will have Him! I will take Him." May the Spirit of infinite Love move upon your mind to make you say, as by a kind of holy desperation, "I will even *now* take Him. Whether I may or may not, I will take Him! Though my sense of sin says, 'You must not,' and though the devil says, 'You dare not,' yet I will take Him! I do believe, I will believe, I *must* believe that Jesus died for me—and I will take Him to be my Savior. I will rest myself wholly and alone on Him!" If you do this, you shall never perish, for to you and to everyone who is Christ's disciple, or who will *become* His disciple, there comes this word of command, "Take, take, take, take, take." Oh, blessed news and sweet command! May the Divine Spirit lead you to obey it, now, and to take Christ as your Savior!

II. The second head of the sermon is, EAT. "Take, eat." Eating is such a very simple thing that I do not think I shall try to explain it. Go home to your supper and you will understand it. Every hungry man, no, every *living* man, knows what it is to eat. Well, what is eating?

To eat is *the innermost kind of reception*. It is taking into your very self the food set before you. Well, now, take Christ, you who are His disciples—take Christ, Himself, His work, His blood, His righteousness—take

them right into you! Say, "This is for me. I take it for myself." I have no partner in anything I eat. What I have eaten, I have eaten for myself. You cannot eat for your wife or your child. You have to do that for yourself. Now, dear Heart, be brave enough to take Christ all to yourself! Say, "This dying Savior is mine, this risen Savior is mine. I hope that multitudes of others will have Him, but, as for myself, I am going to have Him." When I eat, I am doing an action for myself—it must be so. And now, by faith, I take this blessed Son of God who became Man, living, dying, risen, I take Him for myself unto myself. I beseech you to do that tonight. "It is a selfish action," you say. Ah, but it is a *necessary* action! You have personally sinned and you must *personally* take Christ. You are personally hungry and you must *personally* eat. Who is to condemn you for that? You cannot act unselfishly towards others if you do not, yourself, eat, because you will not long be alive to be either selfish or unselfish! See to this, then. "Take, eat." Receive Christ by the innermost kind of reception.

Eating is also *a very familiar kind of reception*. It is a thing that can be as well performed by a workingman as by a nobleman. Indeed, I think it is often better done by the workingman than by the nobleman. How they can eat, some of them! And how simple-hearted people, when they come to Christ, can eat! If you want to see eating, do not bring "My Lord and My Lady" to the choice dainties of a feast, but invite a lot of poor, hardworking men! I mean men who have not had enough to eat for a month—and there are plenty of that sort about. Set them down to a good joint of meat and see how they will eat! Eating is a very familiar kind of action and, therefore, we say, concerning the great salvation of Jesus Christ, "Take, eat." Take Him right into you! You can do this as you take your meals, as you hungry, famished ones devour your food—so take in the Lord Jesus Christ—trusting Him, receiving Him into yourself and saying, "He is, He shall be altogether mine."

Now, when food is to be eaten, it is not only taken in, but *it has to be masticated*. It is in the mouth and it is turned over and over so that the flavor of it is discerned. Now, in this way, think much of the Lord Jesus Christ and His redeeming work. Read, mark, learn and inwardly digest the Truth of God. If you feel that you cannot believe, think much of what is to be believed and of Him in whom you are to believe. That mastication will be an admirable way of feeding upon the heavenly food! Jesus died for sinners. Jesus died for sinners! Jesus died in the place of sinners! Masticate that great Truth of God and turn it over and over—chew that great doctrine with the teeth of your thought until you get the very marrow and essence of it into your soul!

Then there is *an inward assimilation* that goes on with food. Passing into our innermost parts, it begins to build up our body till the food that was bread a little while ago becomes flesh and blood. Retain Christ in your thought, in your faith, in your heart till, at last, Christ gets to be one with you and nourishes your soul, even as your food builds up your body. "Take, eat." You know, the whole business of eating is, after all, to get the

food into yourself. That is the main point—to get it so into you that it becomes your own and becomes part of yourself. Now, do that with the blessed Lord, Christ, and all His wonderful work for sinners! Take it till it gets right into yourself and becomes part and parcel of yourself—and you live through it. "Take, eat."

I imagine that I hear someone saying, "Oh, but it seems too extraordinary that I, a poor, unworthy one, am to take Christ to be mine, as much as I take a piece of bread to be my food!" Well, listen—*He bids you do it*—that is warrant enough! If I am the most unworthy one yet out of Hell, if Jesus bids me trust Him, I may trust Him! His bidding is sufficient warrant for my doing it! O child of God, O you who desire to be His child—He bids you eat! I beseech you, hesitate not, but let His bidding be your warrant!

Jesus Christ condescends to compare Himself to bread, but *what is the good of bread except for it to be eaten?* Why is it made into bread except that it should be eaten? Why does it stand in rows in the bakers' shops? To be *looked* at? What? Hungry men in the streets and bread, there, as an ornament to be looked at? No, the very making of bread means food for men—and when the Lord Jesus Christ compares Himself to bread, He means that He has put Himself into such a shape and form, in the Covenant of Grace—that He intends us to receive Him. Bread that does not get eaten, what can become of it? The manna in the wilderness that was not eaten, but laid up, bred worms and stank. Our Lord Jesus Christ is of no use unless sinners are saved by Him! A Savior who saves nobody? Why, He is like a man who opens a shop and never sells any goods. Or a doctor who comes to a town and never has any patients! Christ must save sinners! He needs sinners! He longs to save sinners! Come and take Him, then. Come and eat of that bread which misses its purpose, design and end if it is not eaten! Christ as bread, yet not eaten, becomes Christ dishonored.

"Take, *eat*." Well, what does this mean—this *eating*? I will tell you. When two men, in the East, took a piece of bread and broke it, and one ate one piece, and the other another piece, *it meant friendship*. I go into an Arab's tent and I cannot tell what kind of a fellow he may be. He may kill me in the night and rob me—but if he hands me a piece of bread and I eat with him—he will not hurt me. The rights of hospitality have secured my safety. There is friendship between him and me. Now, look—God takes a great delight in Jesus Christ—will you not, also, take delight in Him? Then, you see, you have broken bread, together, for you delight in the same Person! God trusts His honor with Christ—will you trust your soul with Christ? Then you have broken bread with God! "Take, eat," says Jesus, and the moment that you have done it, there is the friendship, no, there is the *Covenant* established between you and the great Father! I know that God loves Jesus Christ better than I do, but I think that I can almost say that He does not more truly love Him than I do. Oh, what a Christ He is to my Soul! And God loves Him, too—He and I are agreed

about one thing—we are agreed about a precious Savior and *there* is a place where we strike hands and are friends forever! Our Covenant is made over the Sacrifice of Christ! The moment that you have eaten Christ by faith, there is an eternal friendship established between you and your God!

Again, when Jesus says, "Take, eat," His words set forth to us that *He is to become the true Nourishment of our soul*. Souls have to be nourished by the Truth of God, that is their spiritual meat, and the Lord Jesus Christ—when we think of Him, meditate upon Him, believe in Him and receive Him—becomes the food of our heart, the sustenance of our spirit. Think much of Him, then! Trust Him much! Meditate upon Him much, for thus shall you grow strong in the Lord and be built up so as to attain unto the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus. This is what is meant by the text, "Take, eat."

This also pictures *the wonderful union that there is between Christ and His people*. That which a man has fed upon becomes indissolubly joined to himself. You cannot get away from him that which he ate yesterday—it has become a part of himself. I have heard of a priest who took away the New Testament from a little Irish boy. The boy said, "There are 10 of the chapters you cannot take away." "Why?" asked the priest. "Because I have learned them by heart." And so, when you receive Christ into your heart, He cannot be taken away from you! Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? There is such a union between Christ and the Believer that there cannot be a separation between them without the destruction of Christ and the man, too. They are so interwoven, intertwisted and intermingled, that there is no possibility of separating them! So, the Savior says to you, who are His disciples, and to you who wish to be, "Take, eat." As you will see us, presently, at the Communion Table, take the bread and eat it, so do you take Christ and feed upon Him, for He commands you so to do! "Take, eat." Dear Hearts, there is nothing said about *earning* it, nothing said about *buying* it, nothing said about *being prepared* for it! Come, then, take the Lord Jesus Christ and He is yours!

"Oh!" says one, "I will trust Christ, I will take Him now!" You young men and young women here, tonight, the first Sabbath of my return after my rest, it would be a very happy night for me if you would dare to take Christ. When I was in distress of soul, it seemed to me as if I must not take Christ. Years ago, when I was a boy of fifteen, that used to be my trouble. I dared not think that Christ died for me and I was afraid to trust Him with my soul. It gradually dawned upon me that if I dared to do it, I might do it—and that if I *did* do it, it would be done and never would be undone! It dawned on me that if I seized the opportunity of Jesus Christ passing by and touched the hem of His garment, though it would be an awful piece of presumption, as it seemed, yet it would be a holy and hallowed presumption and Christ would not be angry with me for it! And I know that, when first I believed, I seemed as if I were a thief and had stolen a cure, but then the Lord Jesus never took it away from me! I ven-

tured, I risked, I dared to say, "I believe that He can save me and that He *has* saved me." I rested myself on Him and then I found peace!

Do so tonight! Jesus said, "He that believes in Me has everlasting life." He has it now and it is everlasting. He shall never lose it. He that believes in Jesus Christ is not condemned, notwithstanding all his past guilt and sin. "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Now I have given you the whole Gospel. That is how the Master put it and I have left out no clause of it. "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." "If you shall confess with your mouth, the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

"Take, eat! Take, eat! Take, eat!" I should like to say those words so that you people up there in the top gallery would hear them in 20 years' time, if you are alive, so that, as you recollect these lamps and these tiers of people, you might still seem to hear a voice crying, *perhaps, from my grave*, "Take, eat!" But do not wait 20 years! "Take, eat!" Do it tonight! God help you all to do it, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
Psalm 107; Matthew 26:6-30.

Psalm 107:1. *Praise you the LORD.* This Psalm begins and ends with Hallelujah. So may this service, and so may our lives commence and conclude with Hallelujah,

1, 2. *For it is good to sing praises unto our God, for it is pleasant; and praise is comely. The LORD does build up Jerusalem.* Oh, that the Lord would do so here tonight!

2. *He gathers together the outcasts of Israel.* We need that blessing, too. Oh, that some outcasts might be gathered together! It shall make our hearts cry, "Hallelujah," indeed, if there is a building up of the Church and an ingathering of the outcasts.

3. *He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds.* As we read that, we may well say again, "Hallelujah,"

4. *He counts the number of the stars: He calls them all by their names.* And the Hallelujah is not louder because of that fact than it is for the other Truth! What a condescending God—"He heals the broken in heart." How infinite is His mind—"He counts the number of the stars."

5, 6. *Great is our Lord and of great power: His understanding is infinite. The LORD lifts up the meek.* How wonderful it is that the Lord should use the greatness of His power and the infinity of His understanding for the lifting up of those whom men often despise—"the meek"!

6-11. *He casts the wicked down to the ground. Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God: who covers the Heaven with clouds, who prepares rain for the earth, who makes grass to grow upon the mountains. He gives to the beast his food, and to the young*

ravens which cry. He delights not in the strength of the horse: He takes not pleasure in the legs of a man. The LORD takes pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy. Other kings tell of their cavalry and infantry, they boast of their regiments of horses and foot soldiers, but our great God finds His delight in them that fear Him and even in the feebler sort of these—"those that hope in His mercy." These are the courtiers of Jehovah. These are the forces of our God, through whom He will win great victories!

12-15. *Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem; praise your God, O Zion. For He has strengthened the bars of your gates; He has blessed your children within you. He makes peace in your borders, and fills you with the finest of the wheat. He sends forth His commandment upon earth: His Word runs very swiftly.* Our King's warrant runs everywhere, all over the world. He has universal power in Nature, in Providence and in Grace—"His Word runs very swiftly."

16. *He gives snow like wool: He scatters the hoarfrost like ashes.* The Hebrews saw God in all the phenomena of Nature—let us do the same. Let us attribute every snowflake to the Divine hand and every breath of frost to the Divine mouth.

17, 18. *He casts forth His ice like morsels: who can stand before His cold? He sends out His Word, and melts them.* It is just as easy for Him to send warm weather as to give us the chill of winter.

18. *He causes His wind to blow, and the waters flow.* His own soft south wind comes and the fetters of frost dissolve, and the waters flow. It is the Lord that does it all! He is not far from any of us. Therefore let us not forget Him.

19. *He shows His Word unto Jacob, His statutes and His judgments unto Israel.* The rest of the world can only see Him in Nature, but His own people see Him in Revelation, in the movements of His Holy Spirit.

20. *He has not dealt so with any nation: and as for His judgments, they have not known them. Praise you the Lord.* Therefore, you who are favored with His special manifestations of love, take up the joyous song even if others do not. Hallelujah, "Praise you the Lord." Now let us read in the Gospel according to Matthew, chapter twenty-six, beginning at the sixth verse.

Matthew 26:6, 7. *Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, there came unto Him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on His head, as He sat at meat.* This is not the woman who anointed Christ's feet with ointment, but another of the holy women who ministered to Him. I believe this was Mary, the sister of Lazarus, who came to Jesus, "having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on His head, as He sat at meat."

8, 9. *But when His disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor.* When you do the best you can from the purest motives, and your Lord accepts your service, do not expect that your

Brothers will approve all your actions. If you do, you will be greatly disappointed. There was never a more beautiful proof of love to Christ than this anointing at Bethany, yet the disciples found fault with it. As they could not object to the action, itself, they objected that there might have been another thing done that would have been better. There is a great deal of that kind of wisdom in the world which can always teach you how you might have done something better! but if you wait until you learn *that* wisdom, you will never do anything for your Lord! If this devoted and enthusiastic woman had waited for the advice of these prudent people, she would neither have sold the ointment, nor poured it out. She did well to take council with her own loving heart and then to pour the precious oil upon that dear head which was so soon to be crowned with thorns! She thus showed that there was at least *one* heart in the world that thought nothing was too good for her Lord, and that the best of the best ought to be given to Him! May she have many imitators in every age until Jesus comes again!

10. *When Jesus understood it, He said unto them, Why trouble you the woman?* She had been very happy in the act. Probably it was the happiest hour in all her life when she gave this costly gift to the Lord she loved so well! But a cloud passed over her bright face as the whispered complaints reached her ears. She was evidently a tender-hearted soul, so the Savior said to the disciples, "Why trouble you the woman?"

10. *For she has worked a good work upon Me.* We cannot do what this woman did, but we can perform good works upon others for Christ's sake—and He will accept them as though they were done unto Himself.

11-13. *For you have the poor always with you; but Me you have not always. For in that she has poured this ointment on My body, she did it for My burial. Verily I say unto you, Wherever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman has done, be told for a memorial of her.* She probably did not know all that her action meant when she anointed her Lord for His burial. We often do much more than we think we do. The consequences of the simplest action done for Christ may be much greater than we suppose. This woman is preparing Christ's body for His approaching burial. Little did she dream that it was so, but so it was. Go, my Sister, and do what God bids you, and it shall be seen that you have done far more than you knew! Obey the holy impulse within your spirit, my Brother, and you may do ten thousand times more than you have ever imagined to be possible! This woman's outburst of affection, this simple-hearted act of love to Christ, Himself, is one of those things which are to live as long as the Gospel lives. The aroma of this loving deed is to abide as long as the world, itself, endures!

14, 15. *Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, and said unto them, What will you give me, and I will deliver Him unto you?* Out of 12 Apostles, one was a Judas Iscariot. Marvel not, therefore, if, among your friends and kinsfolk, you have one who turns against you and betrays you to your enemies!

15. *And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver.* The price of a slave, thus they were fulfilling the ancient prophecy—"So they weighed for My price, thirty pieces of silver."

16. *And from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him.* The traitor sold his Master for 30 pieces of dirty silver—yet many have sold Jesus for a less price than Judas received—a smile or a sneer has been sufficient to induce them to betray their Lord!

17, 18. *Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto Him, Where will You that we prepare for You to eat the Passover? And He said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master says, My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house with My disciples.* How truly royal was Jesus of Nazareth even in His humility! He had only to send two of His disciples "into the city to such a man," and the guest chamber, furnished and prepared, was at once placed at His disposal! He did not take the room by arbitrary force, as an earthly monarch might have done, but He obtained it by the more Divine compulsion of Almighty Love! Jesus knew something about this man that you and I do not know, so He said to His disciples, Just go and say to him, 'The Master says, My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house with My disciples.'"

Was he not, himself, a disciple? I cannot say, but this I do know, that the Lord Jesus has a certain number who are willing to help His cause even though, as yet, they hardly call themselves His disciples. I should think, however, that after this man had once had the Master and His disciples in his house, there must have been a blessing left behind, and he would want to become one of that goodly company! It is well, dear Friend, that you are willing to have the Prayer Meeting in your house. It is well that you will stand up on the side of the Truth of God, even if you have no share in it as yet, for maybe—and I hope the, "maybe," will become a *certainty*—you will yet be one of Christ's disciples.

19. *And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the Passover.* They went to this man, delivered Christ's message, and he showed them a large upper room, furnished and prepared. If Christ's disciples always loyally did as Jesus appointed them, they would always speed well on His errands. There are many more people in the world ready to yield to Christ than some of us think. The person sitting or standing by your side is quite unknown to you, but, if you will speak to him about the Savior, he will probably respond to your words. At any rate, try him, and see if it is not so. Whether standing or sitting, there must be someone here not yet a disciple who only needs for you to speak a kind word, and the deciding work will be done!

20, 21. *Now when the even was come, He sat down with the twelve. And as they did eat, He said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me.* "One of you"—and His eyes would glance round the table as He said it—"one of you shall betray Me."

22. *And they were exceedingly sorrowful and began, every one of them, to say unto Him. Lord, is it I?* No one said, "Lord, is it Judas?" Perhaps no one of the 11 thought that Judas was base enough to betray the Lord who had given Him an honorable place among His Apostles. It is certainly a mark of Grace that "every one" of the Apostles put to their Lord the question, "Is it I?"

23, 24. *And He answered and said, he that dips his hand with Me in the dish, the same shall betray Me. The Son of Man goes as it is written of Him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It had been good for that man if he had not been born.* We learn from our Lord's words that Divine decrees do not deprive a sinful action of its guilt—"The Son of Man goes as it is written of Him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! "The criminality of Judas was just as great as though there had been no "determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" even as it was with those to whom Peter spoke so boldly on the day of Pentecost, when he charged them with the murder of Jesus!

25. *Then Judas, which betrayed Him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, You have said.* What a chill that answer must have cast over the little band around the table, especially when Judas rose and started off, to carry out his dreadful purpose of staining his soul with the blood of his Lord!

26-29. *And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat, this is My body. And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink you all of it; for this is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's Kingdom.* Thus Jesus took the great Nazarite vow never to drink of the fruit of the vine till He should drink it new with His disciples in His Father's Kingdom. O Lord, You have pledged us in this cup, and You will return before long, and then what festivals we will hold with You! What joy we shall have in You forever and ever!

30. *And when they had sung an hymn, they went out unto the Mount of Olives.* Was it not truly brave of our dear Lord to sing under such circumstances? He was going forth to His last dread conflict, to Gethsemane, Gabbatha and Golgotha—yet He went with a song on His lips! The door opens, they go downstairs, they are in the open air—that night of the full moon—and they wend their way to the Mount of Olives. Then came that desperate struggle in which the great Captain of our salvation wrestled even to a bloody sweat and prevailed!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—548, 942, 944.

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

PRAYER, THE CURE FOR CARE
NO. 2351

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, MARCH 11, 1984.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JANUARY 12, 1888.

"Be careful for nothing; but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.
Philippians 4:6, 7.

We have the faculty of forethought, but, like all our faculties, it has been perverted, and it is often abused. It is good for a man to have a holy care and to pay due attention to every item of his life, but, alas, it is very easy to make it into an unholy care and to try to wrest from the hand of God that office of Providence which belongs to Him and not to ourselves. How often Luther liked to talk about the birds and the way God cares for them! When he was full of his anxieties, he used to constantly envy the birds because they led so free and happy a life. He talks of Dr. Sparrow, Dr. Thrush and others that used to come and talk to Dr. Luther and tell him many a good thing! You know, Brothers and Sisters, the birds out in the open, yonder, cared for by God, fare far better than those that are cared for by man. A little London girl, who had gone into the country, once said, "Look, mamma, at that poor little bird. It has not got any cage!" That would not have struck me as being any loss to the bird—and if you and I were without *our* cage, and the box of seed, and glass of water, it would not be much of a loss if we were cast adrift into the glorious liberty of a life of humble dependence upon God!

It is that cage of carnal trust and that box of seed that we are always laboring to fill, that makes the worry of this mortal life. But he who has Grace to spread his wings and soar away—and get into the open field of Divine trustfulness—may sing all the day and always have this for his tune—

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

Here, then, is the teaching of the text—"Be careful for nothing." The word, "careful," does not now mean exactly what it did when the Bible was translated. At least it conveys a different meaning to me from what it did to the translators. I would say that we should be careful. "Be careful," is a good lesson for boys and young people when they are starting in life, but, in the sense in which the word, "care-full," was understood at the time of the translators, we must not be careful, that is, full of care. The text means, be not *anxious*—be not constantly thinking about the needs of this mortal life. I will read it again, stretching the word out a little, and then

you will get the meaning of it—"Be care-full for nothing." Oh, that God might teach us how to avoid the evil which is here forbidden, and to live with that holy carelessness which is the very beauty of the Christian life—when all our care is cast on God, and we can joy and rejoice in His Providential care of us!

"Ah," somebody says, "I cannot help caring." Well, the subject, tonight, is to help you to leave off caring or worrying and, first, consider, here, *the substitute for care*. Be careful for nothing, but be prayerful for everything—that is the substitute for care, "prayer and supplication." Secondly, note *the special character of this prayer* which is to become the substitute for anxiety—"In everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." And then I hope we shall have a few minutes left in which to consider *the sweet effect of this prayer*—"The peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

I. To begin, then, here is, first, THE SUBSTITUTE FOR CARE OR ANXIETY.

I suppose it is true of many of us that *our cares are numerous*. If you once become careful, anxious, fretful, you will never be able to *count* your cares, even though you might count the hairs of your head. And cares are apt to multiply to those who are care-full and when you are as full of care as you think you can be, you will be sure to have another crop of cares growing up all around you. The indulgence of this evil habit of anxiety leads to its getting dominion over life, till life is not worth living by reason of the care we have about it. Cares are numerous and, therefore, let your *prayers* be as numerous. Turn everything that is a care into a prayer. Let your cares be the raw material of your prayers and, as the alchemists hoped to turn dross into gold, so you, by a holy alchemy, actually turn what naturally would have been a care into spiritual treasure in the form of prayer! Baptize every anxiety into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit—and so make it into a blessing!

Have you a care to get? Take heed that it does not get you! Do you wish to make gain? Mind you do not lose more than you gain by your gains. I beseech you, have no more care to gain than you dare turn into a prayer! Do not desire to have what you dare not ask God to give you. Measure your desires by a spiritual standard and you will thus be kept from anything like covetousness. Cares come to many from their losses—they lose what they have gained. Well, this is a world in which there is the tendency to lose. Ebbs follow floods and winters crush out summer flowers. Do not wonder if you lose as other people do, but pray about your losses. Go to God with them—and instead of fretting, make them an occasion for waiting upon the Lord and saying—"The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. Show me why You contend with me, and deliver Your servant, I pray You, from ever complaining of You, whatever You permit me to lose!"

Perhaps you say that your care is neither about your gaining nor your losing, but about your daily bread. Ah, well, you have promises for that, you know! The Lord has said, "So shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed." He gives you sweet encouragement when He says that He clothes the grass of the field—and shall He not much more clothe you,

O you of little faith? And the Lord Jesus bids you consider the fowls of Heaven, how they sow not, neither do they gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Go, then, to your God with all your cares! If you have a large family, a slender income and much ado to make ends meet, and to provide things honest in the sight of all men, you have so many excuses for knocking at God's door—so many more reasons for being often found at the Throne of Grace! I beseech you, turn them to good account. I feel free to call upon a friend when I really have some business to do with him—and you may be bold to call upon God when necessities press upon you. Instead of caring for anything with anxious care, turn it at once into a reason for renewed prayerfulness.

"Ah," one says, "but I am in perplexity. I do not know what to do." Well, then, dear Friend, you should certainly pray when you cannot tell whether it is the right hand road, or the left hand, or straight on, or whether you should go back! Indeed, when you are in such a fog that you cannot see the next lamp, *then* is the time that you must pray. The road will clear before you very suddenly. I have often had to try this plan, myself—and I bear witness that when I have trusted to *myself*, I have been a gigantic fool! But when I have trusted in God, then He has led me straight on in the right way, and there has been no mistake about it! I believe that God's children often make greater blunders over simple things than they do over more difficult matters. You know how it was with Israel, when those Gibeonites came, with their old shoes and clothes, and showed the bread that was moldy, that they said they took fresh out of their ovens. The children of Israel thought, "This is a clear case. These men are strangers, they have come from a far country, so we may make a league with them." They were certain that the evidence of their *eyes* proved that these were no Canaanites, so they did not consult God! The whole matter seemed so plain that they made a league with the Gibeonites, which was a trouble to them ever afterwards! If we would, in everything, go to God in prayer, our perplexities would lead us into no more mistakes than our simplicities—and in simple things and difficult things we should be guided by the Most High.

Perhaps another friend says, "But I am thinking about the future." Are you? Well, first, I beg to ask you what *you* have to do with the future? Do you know what a day will bring forth? You have been thinking about what will become of you when you are old, but are you sure that you will ever *be* old? I knew one Christian woman who used to worry herself about how she would get buried. That question never troubled me and there are many other matters about which we need not worry ourselves. You can always find a stick with which to beat a dog and, if you need a care, you can generally find a care with which to beat your own souls! But that is a poor occupation for any of you. Instead of doing that, turn everything that might be a subject of care into a subject of *prayer*. It will not be long before you have a subject of care, so you will not be long without a subject of prayer. Strike out that word, "care," and just write in the place of it this word, "prayer"—and then, though your cares are numerous, your prayers will also be numerous.

Note, next, dear Friends, that *undue care is an intrusion into God's province.* It is making yourself the father of the household instead of being a child—it is making yourself the master instead of being a servant for

whom the master provides his rations. Now, if, instead of doing that, you will turn care into prayer, there will be no intrusion, for you may come to God in prayer without being charged with presumption. He invites you to pray. No, here, by His servant, He bids you, "in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." Once more, *cares are of no use to us, and they cause us great damage.* If you were to worry as long as you wished, you could not make yourself an inch taller, or grow another hair on your head, or make one hair white or black! So the Savior tells us and He asks, if care fails in such little things, what can care do in the higher matters of Providence? It cannot do anything! A farmer stood in his fields and said, "I do not know what will happen to us all. The wheat will be destroyed if this rain keeps on. We shall not have any harvest at all unless we have some fine weather." He walked up and down, wringing his hands, fretting and making his whole household uncomfortable. And he did not produce one single gleam of sunlight by all his worrying—he could not puff any of the clouds away with all his petulant speech, nor could he stop a drop of rain with all his murmurings.

What is the good of it, then, to keep gnawing at your own heart, when you can get nothing by it? Besides, it weakens our power to help ourselves and especially our power to glorify God. A care-full heart hinders us from judging rightly in many things. I have often used the illustration (I do not know a better) of taking a telescope, breathing on it with the hot breath of our anxiety, putting it to our eye and then saying that we cannot see anything but clouds! Of course we cannot, and we never shall while we breathe upon it. If we were but calm, quiet, self-possessed and God-possessed, we would do the right thing. We would be, as we say, "all there," in the time of difficulty. That man may expect to have presence of mind who has the Presence of God. If we forget to pray, do you wonder that we are all in a fidget and a worry, and we do the first thing that occurs to us—which is generally the worst thing—instead of waiting till we saw what would be done and then trustfully and believingly doing it as in the sight of God? Care, or worry, is injurious, but if you only turn this care into prayer, then every worry will be a benefit to you.

Prayer is wonderful material for building up the spiritual fabric. We are, ourselves, edified by prayer. We grow in Grace by prayer and if we will but come to God every moment with petitions, we shall be fast growing Christians! I said to one this morning, "Pray for me, it is a time of need," and she replied, "I have done nothing else since I awakened." I have made the same request of several others and they have said that they have been praying for me. I felt so glad, not only for my own sake, who had received benefit from their prayers, but for *their* sakes, because they are sure to grow thereby! When little birds keep flapping their wings, they are learning to fly. The sinews will get stronger and the birds will leave the nest before long. That very clapping of their wings is an education—and the attempting to pray—the groaning, the sighing, the crying of a prayerful spirit, is, itself, a blessing! Leave off, then, this damaging habit of worry and take to this enriching habit of prayer! See how you will thus make a double gain—first, by avoiding a loss, and secondly, by getting that which will really benefit you and others, too!

Then, again, *cares are the effect of forgetfulness of Christ's closeness to us.* Did you notice how the context runs? "The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing." The Lord Jesus Christ has promised to come again and He may come tonight. At any moment He may appear! So Paul writes, "The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." Oh, if we could but stand on this earth as upon a mere shadow! If we could but live as those who will soon have done with this poor transient life! If we held every earthly thing with a very loose hand, then we would not be caring, and worrying, and fretting—but we would take to praying, for thus we would grasp the real, and the substantial, and plant our feet upon the invisible, which is, after all, the eternal! Oh, dear Friends, let the text, which I have read to you over and over again, now drop into your hearts as a pebble falls into a mountain lake and, as it enters, let it make rings of comfort upon the very surface of your soul!

II. Now we need to look into the text a little more closely to see, in the second place, THE SPECIAL CHARACTER OF THIS PRAYER. What sort of prayer is that which will ease us of care?

Well, first, it is *a prayer which deals with everything.* "In everything" "let your requests be made known unto God." You may pray about the smallest thing and about the greatest thing—you may not only pray for the Holy Spirit, but you may pray for a new pair of boots. You may go to God about the bread you eat, the water you drink, the garment you wear and pray to Him about *everything.* Draw no line and say, "So far is to be under the care of God." Dear me, then, what are you going to do with the rest of life? Is that to be lived under the withering blight of a sort of atheism? God forbid! Oh, that we might live in God as to the whole of our being, for our being is such that we cannot divide it! Our body, soul and spirit are one, and while God leaves us in this world and we have necessities which arise out of the condition of our bodies, we must bring our bodily necessities before God in prayer. And you will find that the great God will hear you in these matters. Say not that they are too little for Him to notice—*everything* is little in comparison with Him! When I think of what a great God He is, it seems to me that this poor little world of ours is just one insignificant grain of sand on the seashore of the universe—and not worth any notice at all. The whole earth is a mere speck in the great world of Nature and, if God condescends to consider it, He may as well stoop a little lower and consider us! And He does so, for He says, "Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered." Therefore, in *everything* let your requests be made known unto God.

The kind of prayer that saves us from care is prayer that is repeated—"In everything, by prayer and supplication." Pray to God and then pray again—"by prayer *and* supplication." If the Lord does not answer you the first time, be very grateful that you have a good reason for praying again! If He does not grant your request the second time, believe that He loves you so much that He wants to hear your voice again! And if He keeps you waiting till you have gone to Him seven times, say to yourself, "Now I know that I worship the God of Elijah, for Elijah's God let him go, again, seven times before the blessing was given." Count it an *honor* to be permitted to wrestle with the Angel of God! This is the way God makes His

princes! Jacob had never been Israel if he had obtained the blessing from the Angel at the first asking—but when he had to keep on wrestling till he prevailed, then he became a prince with God! The prayer that kills care is prayer that is continued and importunate.

Next, it is *intelligent prayer*—"Let your requests be made known unto God." I heard of a Muslim who spent, I think, six hours in prayer each day and, lest he should go to sleep when on board a ship, he stood upright and only had a rope stretched across, so that he might lean against it. And if he slept, he would fall. His objective was to keep on for six hours with what he called prayer. "Well," I said to one who knew him, and who had seen him on board his boat on the Nile, "What sort of prayer was it?" "Why," my friend replied, "he kept on repeating, 'There is no God but God, and Mohammed is the prophet of God,' the same thing over, and over, and over again." I said, "Did he *ask* for anything?" "Oh, no!" "Was he pleading with God to *give* him anything?" "No, he simply kept on with that perpetual repetition of certain words, just as a witch might repeat a charm."

Do you think there is anything in *that* style of praying? If you go on your knees and simply repeat a certain formula, it will be only a mouthful of words. What does God care about that kind of praying? "Let your requests be made known unto God." That is true prayer! God knows what your requests are, but you are to pray to Him as if He did not know. You are to make known your requests, not because the Lord does not know, but, perhaps, because *you* do not know. And when you have made your requests known to Him, as the text tells you, you will more clearly have made them known to yourself. When you have asked intelligently, knowing *what* you have asked, and knowing *why* you have asked it, you will, perhaps, stop and say to yourself, "No, I must not, after all, make that request." Sometimes, when you have gone on praying for what God does not give you, it may be that there will steal over your mind the conviction that you are not on the right track and *that* result of your prayer will, in itself, do you good, and be a blessing to you.

But you are to pray making your requests known unto God. That is, in plain English, say what you need, for this is true prayer. Get alone and tell the Lord what you need—pour out your heart before Him. Do not imagine that God needs any fine language! No, you need not run upstairs for your prayer book, and turn to a collect—you will be a long time before you find any collect that will fit you if you are really praying! Pray for what you need just as if you were telling your mother or your dearest friend what your need is. Go to God in that fashion, for that is *real prayer*, and that is the kind of prayer that will drive away your cares.

So, dear Friends, again, the kind of prayer that brings freedom from care is *communion with God*. If you have not spoken to God, you have not really prayed. A little child has been known (I daresay your children have done it) to go and put a letter down the grating of a drain and, of course, there was never any reply to a letter posted in that way. If the letter is not put into the postbox, so that it goes to the person to whom it is addressed, what is the use of it? So, prayer is real communication with God. You must realize that He *is* and that He is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, or else you cannot pray. He must be a reality to you, a living reality, and you must believe that He hears prayer, and then you must

speak with Him and believe that you have the petition that you ask of Him—and so you shall have it. He has never yet failed to honor believing prayer. He may keep you waiting for a while, but delays are *not* denials, and He has often answered a prayer that asked for silver by giving gold! He may have denied earthly treasure, but He has given heavenly riches of ten thousand times the worth—and the suppliant has been more than satisfied with the exchange! "Let your requests be made known unto God."

I know what you do when you are in trouble—you go to your neighbor, but your neighbor does not want to see you quite so often about such business. Possibly you go to your brother, but there is a text that warns you not to go into your brother's house in the day of your calamity. You may call on a friend too often when you are hard up—he may be very pleased to see you till he hears what you are after! But if you go to your God, He will never give you the cold shoulder. He will never say that you come too often. On the contrary, He will even chide you because you do *not* come to Him often enough!

There is one word which I passed over, just now, because I wanted to leave it for my last observation on this point—"By prayer and supplication, *with thanksgiving,* let your requests be made known unto God." Now what does that mean? It means that the kind of prayer that kills care is *a prayer that asks cheerfully, joyfully, thankfully.* "Lord, I am poor. Let me bless You for my poverty and then, O Lord, will You not supply all my needs?" That is the way to pray. "Lord, I am ill. I bless You for this affliction, for I am sure that it means some good thing to me. Now be pleased to heal me, I beseech You!" "Lord, I am in a great trouble, but I praise You for the trouble, for I know that it contains a blessing though the envelope is black-edged! Lord, help me through my trouble!" That is the kind of prayer that kills care—"supplication, with thanksgiving." Mix these two things well! One drachma—no, two drachma of prayer—prayer and supplication, then one drachma of thanksgiving! Rub them together and they will make a blessed cure for care. May the Lord teach us to practice this holy art of the apothecary!

III. I finish with this third point, THE SWEET EFFECT OF THIS PRAYER—"And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

If you can pray in this fashion, instead of indulging evil anxiety, the result will be that *an unusual peace* will steal over your heart and mind. Unusual, for it will be "the peace of God." What is God's peace? The unruffled serenity of the infinitely happy God, the eternal composure of the absolutely well-contented God! This shall possess your heart and mind. Notice how Paul describes it—"The peace of God, which passes all understanding." Other people will not understand it. They will not be able to make out how you can be so quiet. What is more, you will not be able to tell them, for if it surpasses all *understanding*, it certainly passes all expression! And what is even more amazing—you will not understand it yourself!

It will be such a peace that it will be to you, *unfathomable and immeasurable*. When one of the martyrs was about to burn for Christ, he said to the judge who was giving orders to light the pile, "Will you come and lay your hand on my heart? "The judge did so. "Does it beat fast?" enquired

the martyr. “Do I show any sign of fear?” “No,” said the judge. “Now lay your hand on your own heart and see whether you are not more excited than I am.” Think of that man of God, who, on the morning he was to be burned, was so soundly asleep that they had to shake him to wake him—he had to get up to be burned! And yet knowing that it was to be so, he had such confidence in God that he slept sweetly. *This* is “the peace of God, which passes all understanding.” In those old Diocletian persecutions, when the martyrs came into the amphitheatre to be torn by wild beasts—when one was set in a red-hot iron chair, another was smeared with honey to be stung to death by wasps and bees—they never flinched!

Think of that brave man who was put on a gridiron to be roasted to death, who said to his persecutors, “You have done me on one side. Now turn me over to the other.” Why this peace under such circumstances? It was “the peace of God, which passes all understanding.” We do not have to suffer like that, nowadays, but if it ever comes to anything like that, it is wonderful what peace a Christian enjoys! After there had been a great storm, the Master stood up in the prow of the vessel and said to the winds, “Be still.” And we read, “there was a great calm.” Have you ever felt this? You feel it tonight if you have learned this sacred art of making your requests known unto God in everything and the peace of God which passes all understanding is keeping your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

This blessed peace keeps our hearts and minds—it is *a guardian peace*. The Greek word implies a garrison. Is it not an odd thing that a military term is used here and that it is *peace* that acts as a guard to the heart and to the mind? It is the peace of God that is to protect the child of God—strange but beautiful figure! I have heard that fear is the housekeeper for a Christian. Well, fear may be a good guardian to keep dogs out, but it has not a full cupboard! But peace, though it seems weakness, is the essence of strength and, while it guards, it also feeds us and supplies all our needs.

It is also *a peace which links us to Jesus*—“The peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds.” That is, your affections and your thoughts, your desires and your intellect—your heart—so that it shall not fear. Your mind, so that it shall not know any kind of perplexity—“the peace of God shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” It is all, “through Christ Jesus” and, therefore, it is doubly sweet and precious to us!

O my dear Hearers, some of you come in here on Thursday nights and you do not know anything about this peace of God and, perhaps, you wonder why we Christian people make such a fuss about our religion! Ah, if you knew, you would, perhaps, make more fuss about it than we do, for if there were no hereafter—and we know that there is—yet the blessed habit of going to God in prayer and casting all our care upon Him helps us to live most joyfully, even in this life! We do not believe in secularism, but if we did, there would be no preparation for the earthly life like this living unto God and living *in* God! If you have a sham god and you merely go to Church or Chapel and carry your prayer book or your hymn book with you and, therefore, think you are Christians, you are deceiving yourselves! But if you have a living God and you have real fellowship with Him and

constantly, as a habit, live beneath the shadow of the wings of the Almighty, then you shall enjoy a peace that shall make others wonder and make you, yourself, marvel, too, even, "the peace of God, which passes all understanding." God grant it to you, my beloved Hearers, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
Philippians 4.

Verse 1. *Therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, do stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.* You know that the Church at Philippi was very dear to the Apostle's heart. He could never forget the time when he and Silas prayed with the women at the riverside and afterwards prayed and sang praises unto God in the prison, when the prisoners heard them. Lydia and her household and the Philippian jailor were among the first fruits of Paul's work at Philippi and there was always a very intimate love between him and the members of the Church in that place. They cared for him and he cared for them. Twice in this one verse he speaks of them as his, "dearly beloved." He says that he longed for them, longed to come and see them face to face, longed that they might be happy in the Lord to the very highest degree. So he says, "my brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy." It was such a joy to him, even, to think of them as his spiritual children and especially to see after what a godly and generous fashion they behaved themselves. Yes, and he calls them his, "crown"—a garland which he had won in spiritual wrestling! The Christian's converts are his joy, here, and they will be his crown forever in Heaven. Paul bade these Philippians, "stand fast in the Lord." It looks like a very simple thing to stand fast, but they who try to do it know how difficult a task it is.

2. *I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.* Only two women who had fallen out with one another, but the Apostle is so anxious for perfect unity that he puts in a, "beseech," for each of them. He does not say which was right and which was wrong, but he would have them, "of the same mind in the Lord." Little differences, even between obscure members of the Church, may hinder the work of the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit is like a dove—and doves love quiet places—they do not come where there is noise and strife. Oh, let us cultivate love towards one another! And if in anything we have disagreed at any time, let us think that we hear Paul saying, tonight, "I beseech Euodias, and I beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord." Make up, my Sisters! Make up, my Brothers! Whatever the quarrel is, end it and, "be of the same mind in the Lord." Bought with the same precious blood, robed in the same perfect righteousness, on the way to the same Heaven, "be of the same mind in the Lord."

3. *And I entreat you also, true yokefellow, help those women which labored with me in the Gospel, with Clement, also, and with other of my fellow laborers, whose names are in the Book of Life.* We do not know who this "true yokefellow" was. Very likely it was Epaphroditus who carried this Epistle to Philippi. Whoever it was, it was someone who had worked with Paul shoulder to shoulder. If two bullocks bear the same yoke and yet do not agree, they make it very uncomfortable for one another. If one

tries to lie down and the other wants to stand up, or if one goes faster than the other, the yoke becomes doubly galling. Paul speaks of somebody here as having been his "true yokefellow"—and he says to him, "Help those women which labored with me in the Gospel."

What an eminent place women have always held in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ and here Paul speaks of them as laboring with him in the Gospel! Surely Lydia must have been one of those. "With Clement, also, and with other of my fellow laborers, whose names are in the Book of Life." According to some learned commentators, a man's name may be in the Book of Life for a time, but it may be removed. If their teaching is true, that book will be very much scratched and blotted. I thank God that I do not believe in any such book as that! If the Lord Jesus Christ has written my name in the Book of Life, in the great family register of the redeemed, I defy all the devils of Hell to ever get it erased!

4. *Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.* If you *ever* rejoice in the Lord, you may *always* rejoice in the Lord, for He is always the same, and always gracious! There is as much reason for rejoicing in God at one time as at another, since He never changes.

5. *Let your moderation be known unto all men.* The word, "moderation," in the Greek, is a very difficult word to translate into English. It does not mean moderation in the sense in which some people use the word, for they make it, as I think, almost an accursed one. "Let your moderation"—your *gentleness*, your *willingness*, your *forbearance*—"be known unto all men." That is what it means. Do not push your own rights too far—stop short of what you might fairly demand and when you feel, at any time, a little vehement in temper, check yourself—hold yourself in, bear and forbear. Go not as far as you may, nor even as far as some think that you ought, in defending your own rights. Let your gentleness, your yieldingness, be known unto all men.

5. *The Lord is at hand.* Christ is coming—why do you put yourself out? The Lord is near you to help you—why are you so excessively anxious? Why are you so carried away with the present temporary trial? "The Lord is at hand."

6. *Be careful for nothing.* Be anxiously careful for nothing! Sing, with Faber—

"I have no cares, O blessed Lord,
For all my cares are Yours."

6-8. *But in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are honest, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report; if there is any virtue, and if there is any praise, think on these things.* Everything of this kind concerns you, therefore help it as far as you can. Be on the side of every cause that may be thus described. If it vindicates truth, uprightness, reverence, religion, chastity, holiness—be on that side. If there is anything the reverse of this, do not have anything to do with it, but if there is any movement in the world that will help forward things that are true, honest, just, pure,

lovely and of good report, "think on these things," and so think upon them as to increase their influence among the sons and daughters of men!

9. *Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do.* It is well when a preacher can speak like that—when he has not to say, "Do as I say and not as I do," but when, like the Apostle, he can say—"those things, which you have both learned, received, heard and seen in me, do."

9. *And the God of Peace shall be with you.* The God of Peace is always with those who receive His dear Son and who help His Gospel. It is one of the privileges of true Believers that the God of Peace shall be constantly with them.

10. *But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now, at the last, your care of me has flourished again; wherein you were also careful, but you lacked opportunity.* Paul was in prison at Rome and these Philippians had made a contribution. And they had sent Epaphroditus with it to relieve the Apostle in his poverty, so he said to them, "You cared for me before; but for a time you had not the opportunity of helping me, and now you have thought of me, again, therefore I rejoice in the Lord greatly."

11. *Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatever state I am, therewith to be content.* Is not that a splendid piece of learning? Paul was a learned man and so are you, if you have learned this lesson! You may not be able to put D.D., or LL.D., after your name, but you are a learned man if you can say, "I have learned, in whatever state I am, therewith to be content."

12. *I know both how to be abased and I know how to abound.* These are two grand things to learn. There are some who know the first, but who do not know the second. I have known several of God's children who seemed quite eminent for piety when they were abased, but they were never worth anything after they grew rich. They did not know how to abound—they became top-heavy and far too great for their britches! It was not so with the Apostle, for he could truthfully say, "I know both how to be abased and I know how to abound."

12. *Everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.* Was he not a true Master of Arts? He had mastered the art of being hungry without murmuring, the art of being full without boasting, the art of suffering need without impatience, the art of abounding without setting his affection on worldly things. He was, indeed, a Master of Arts of the very highest order!

13. *I can do all things*—That looks like bragging, does it not? Finish the sentence.

14. *Through Christ which strengthens me.* There is no improper boasting, here, for Paul could do all things through Christ's mighty power! It has been well said that the angels excel in strength, but the saints excel in their weakness. When we are most weak, and Christ strengthens us, then are the most excellent virtues produced.

14-17. *Notwithstanding, you have done well, that you did communicate with my affliction. Now you Philippians know, also, that in the beginning of the Gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no Church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but you, only. For even in Thessalonica you sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desired*

a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. Their liberality was set down to their account in God's book.

18, 19. *But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God. But my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in Glory by Christ Jesus.* It is Paul's God who took care of the Philippians and it is Paul's God who will take care of you and me! "My God," says Paul, "shall supply all your needs—not as you have supplied mine, out of your poverty, but according to His riches in Glory by Christ Jesus"! Do not imagine that you will ever exhaust God's riches in Glory, or drain the national treasury of all-sufficiency—that cannot be.

20. *Now unto God and our Father be Glory forever and ever. Amen.* He blesses us, let us bless Him! He supplies all our needs according to His riches in Glory—let us extol his Glory forever and ever.

21. *Salute every saint in Christ Jesus.* Give him a shake of the hand. Say, "How are you, my Brother? I wish you well." These hearty salutations ought to be common in every Christian assembly. I always deprecate that wonderful respectability that exists in some places of worship where nobody knows anybody else. They are too respectable to become acquainted with their brethren. If you are in Christ Jesus, get to know one another! "Salute every saint in Christ Jesus."

21, 22. *The brethren which are with me greet you. All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household.* I suppose most of these were only slaves in the imperial household. There may have been one or two, perhaps, of a higher class, but, in all probability, the Gospel first reached the slaves in the Roman palace, that pandemonium of vice, where lust and cruelty abounded. There were saints even there—and God still has some of His jewels lying on dunghills!

23. *The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—686, 692, 691.

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

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

By the Grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in modern English, and more than 451 Spanish translations, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

GREAT JOY IN THE CITY
NO. 2352

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, MARCH 18, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 22, 1888.

"And there was great joy in that city."
Acts 8:8.

"Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them," and the result of his preaching was that "there was great joy in that city." He had a very speedy and very remarkable success. He scarcely opened his mouth without gaining attention and had not long proclaimed his message before people willingly received it and many were converted to Christ, so that, "there was great joy in that city."

What was the explanation of this wonderful blessing? Something had been done, years before, to prepare the way for Philip. There had come to that region a weary Man who sat on the well at Sychar and spoke to Samaria's daughter concerning the Living Water! And she had heard, believed and been saved. And she, fallen woman as she had been, had gone back to the city to tell the men that she had met the Messiah, which is called Christ. In all probability, the work done by our Lord at Sychar had affected the whole district, so that, when Philip went to the city of Samaria, he found there a people prepared of the Lord. Jesus sowed the seed—Philip came and reaped the harvest!

Learn, therefore, that no good work for God is ever lost. If you have labored in a village or town and have seen no great success, someone else may see it. If you have prayed especially for the salvation of any person and labored to win that one for Christ, and yet have not brought that soul to a decision, someone else may do it. We are workers *together*, as well as workers *together with God*—and what one man begins, another may finish! Paul plants. Apollos waters. Someone else may come in to gather the increase—and if God gets the Glory, what matters it to you what part you have had in it? If your Lord and Master was satisfied with sowing the good Seed of the Kingdom, leaving Philip to reap the harvest, can you not be satisfied if you are called to do work that will not yield an immediate return?

Often, during my winter's holiday, year after year, I have seen the carts coming down towards the breakwater at Mentone, bringing huge masses of stone, weighing many tons, which were thrown into the sea. For a long time, I saw no result whatever of this effort. Tremendous blocks of stone were cast into the sea and covered by the waters. Yet I felt persuaded that something was being done out of sight, though nothing was visible to the eyes. After a while, the piles of stone began to show above the surface of

the water and then we saw that the great foundation-work had been done. Now that the structure is nearly finished and they begin to square up, and put everything in order, we say, "how quickly the work goes on!" Yes, but it really went on just as quickly when we could not see anything of it! Those thousands of tons of stone were not lost—they all went to make the underwater foundation—and whatever is built upon it, afterwards, is not to have the credit of usefulness any more than that which lay down deep at the bottom of the sea.

Some of us may have to work on for years and never see any result of our toil. Let us not faint for a moment, nor be disheartened—some other person may come, by-and-by, and all men's mouths may be filled with wonderment at the great work that he does! And yet, after all, He who reads history aright, even the great God who writes it, will know that this man who seems to be so successful owes much of his usefulness to the work of other persons who labored before him. We cannot tell how much the Master's own service prepared the way for Philip's success when he went down to Samaria.

And I believe that, in this great London, we shall see better and brighter days than these, because of all the work that has been done here in years gone by. Do not tell me that the preaching at Paul's Cross by men who became martyrs for the faith were lost efforts! I do not believe that those declarations of the Word of God in Smithfield, by men who were burnt, there, for their fidelity to Christ, will ever be lost! Let us not imagine that the glorious testimony for Christ of the long succession of Puritan preachers, who occupied yonder Churches across the water, will ever be lost! Neither shall it be that the witnessing in later times of John Newton, Romaine, Whitefield and the other faithful preachers of the Gospel shall be in vain, and that all they did shall be lost! No, London may be, at this time, far from what we want it to be, but, as surely as the labors of the Christ were not lost, so the Seed sown by those who came and labored for Him, and have now gone to their reward, shall spring up and bring forth fruit on some happier and sunnier day than this! When, perhaps, some of us shall sleep with our fathers, there shall come a day when there shall be great joy in this city as the direct result of our service for our Lord. In Cromwell's time, if you had walked down Cheapside at a certain hour of the morning, it is said that you would have seen every blind down because in every house there was family prayer. And at that hour, every morning, you might have gone from window to window and have heard the singing of a Psalm at almost every merchant's house in the city. It is not so, now, but it may be so again! Let us have faith in that Seed which lies still in the ground—it only needs someone to turn it up and it shall germinate and grow to the praise and Glory of God!

That is a long preface, you will say, for me to have. Well, put up with it for once and let us now come to the text, "There was great joy in that city."

I. And, first, it was A JOY BORN OF A GREAT SORROW. Usually, that is the best kind of joy. Joys of that sort are like Jabez who was more honorable than his brethren—and his mother called his name Jabez, that is, *sorrowful*, because she bore him with sorrow. The good which comes to us

through that which is apparently an evil is usually the best of all good things.

Now, the great sorrow out of which this joy in Samaria came was this. There had been *persecution* in Jerusalem, terrible persecution. Saul and other enemies of the Truth of God were making havoc in the Church. Good men were taken to prison, excellent Christian Sisters were shut up in jail as evildoers. Some were cruelly treated—numbers were put to death. Thank God, we do not know, in the real sense, what persecution is, for they cannot do much to us, nowadays, except expose us to the trial of cruel mockery, and there is not much in that to hurt us. But in Jerusalem the Church of God had to bear fierce persecution. Yet it was that *persecution* that made the disciples go abroad, everywhere preaching the Word!

The second sorrow that they had was *scattering*, for it is a great grief to people who have lived together in holy fellowship to be divided, for families to be broken up, for good men who used to meet at the same place for prayer, to be able, no more, to see one another's faces. Men naturally cling to their homes, but those good folk had to flee from their homes and go wherever they could, to escape from the edge of the sword. But it was through this scattering that the blessing reached Samaria.

Worse than that, *death* itself came into the Church at Jerusalem. Besides others who were put to death, Stephen, the first martyr, fell a victim to the persecutors' rage. He was a good man and true, a worthy leader of the host of God. He died a dreadful death, but through the scattering that followed his death, Philip was made to go down to Samaria and so, "There was great joy in that city." Sometimes, dear Friends, it is a blessing to a Church to have a great trial. I am persuaded that it is a good thing for some men to have to encounter a great difficulty. I confess that I owe almost everything to the forge, the fire, the file and the hammer. How little good we get out of our sweets—and how much we extract from our bitters! This Church at Jerusalem, by sore travail, became the mother of the saints in Samaria, and it was not without hard trials and dire struggles that she became useful to others.

I want this Church, at this time, to feel that it is called upon by God to awaken itself before any great and overwhelming trial comes. Let us begin to feel for the vast city in which we dwell—and if any of you are under the pressure of the present distress, or if you are tried by the loss of some dear one at home—just as these trials worked on the whole Church at Jerusalem, so let them work, in their measure, upon you, stirring you up to seek the souls of men and to bring others to know and love our Lord Jesus Christ! Oh, that there were such a heart in the thousands of our Church members that everyone desired the conversion of his neighbor! Oh, that we began to feel an inward anguish for those about us who are perishing through sheer indifference—perishing while the glorious Gospel is proclaimed so near to them! Oh, that the great sorrow that some of us have had to bear of late might become the mother of a great joy to many others! It was so in Philip's day—there was much joy in Samaria because there had been much grief in Jerusalem.

II. But now, secondly, IT WAS A JOY OCCASIONED BY ONE MAN'S PREACHING—"there was great joy in that city." It was one man's preach-

ing that caused it. Philip went down to Samaria and preached Christ—and the great joy was the result of his preaching.

Notice who it was that preached—it was *Philip*. Now Philip was a Jew and he might have said—perhaps he *did* say—that he was a very unlikely person to succeed in Samaria, for the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans—and the Samaritans did not care to have any dealings with the Jews. They were nations remarkably like one another and yet strongly antagonistic to one another. They could not stand each other and yet, you see, it was the preaching of a Jew that was blessed to the people of Samaria! Never say again, dear Friend, "I must not go there. I am not a proper person for that place." How do you know? The most unlikely person in the esteem of men may be the very person who is the special choice of God. Jew or no Jew, Philip is sent to preach the Gospel and to preach it to every creature and, therefore, he goes to Samaria! It must have seemed strange to him that this door of utterance was opened to him, that he was welcomed by the Samaritans who were so hostile to the Jews. I say again, dear Friends, never let us keep back from trying to do good anywhere, and everywhere—and never let any one of us say of any people, "I could not speak to them." Why not? Go, and try. "They are too cultured," says one. Cultured people are often impressed by natural, wild bird notes. "Oh, they are too ignorant," says another. It may be *your* ignorance that makes you think so, but do not, because you have been better educated than they, be so proud as to disdain to speak to them, for if so, it will prove that you are not very well educated, yet, and need a great deal more of the right kind of training. "Oh, but I know that my profession and my trade, and so on, are against me!" Never mind what is against you—go and do your duty—and God will bless you.

The next thing about Philip was that he was not a regular minister. He was one of the seven deacons chosen by the Apostles and by the Church at Jerusalem to look after the poor members, that the Apostles might be able to give their whole attention to the ministry of the Word and to prayer. Yes, but then anybody may preach the Gospel, anybody who can preach ought to preach! And instead of its being the business of a few select gentlemen to go and preach the Gospel, is it not written, "Let him that hears, say, Come"? All you who have heard the Gospel should endeavor to tell it to others! And the question of every Christian man should not be, "May I preach the Gospel?"—That you may certainly do—but, "*Can* I preach the Gospel? Have I such power of preaching it that anybody will listen to me? If nobody will listen, it is clear that it is of no use for me to preach. But if I can so speak that others will hear. If I have the gifts, I am bound to use them, and I ought to try to see whether I have the gifts, or not, for, perhaps I have them and do not know it." It was Philip, the deacon, whose preaching brought joy to this city! Therefore, preach away, my Brothers! Speak in the name of God as best you can on behalf of the Lord Jesus, for in these days there are many who are speaking against Him. This is an additional reason why no tongue that can speak a word for Him should remain silent.

But we are also told that this deacon, Philip, was a man of excellent character. When the deacons were to be chosen, the Apostles said to the

members of the Church at Jerusalem, "Look out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business." Philip was one of the seven and, therefore, we know that he was a man of sterling character. That is very essential to the preaching that will make a city glad. He was also a man full of the Holy Spirit and that is the *chief* qualification for a preacher of the Gospel. All the learning in the world is not worth a penny to a man unless he is filled with the Holy Spirit! When the Spirit of God rests upon any man, He enables the preacher to speak with the power that reaches the heart and the conscience. Without that power, nothing can be done—therefore seek it, my Brothers. When you try to labor for God, do it in the power of the Holy Spirit.

But really, I do not care to say much more about who the preacher in Samaria was because that does not signify much. I wish that people did not so often take notice of *who* the *preacher* is—the principal question is, *What is preached*?

What did Philip preach? We are not left in doubt about this matter, for we are told that, "Philip went down to the city of Samaria and *preached Christ* to them." Yes, that is the preaching that brings great joy to a city! "He preached Christ to them." He told them that Jesus of Nazareth, who was born at Bethlehem, and who died on Calvary, is the Son of God, the Messiah, the Sent One! That Jesus is, Himself, both God and Man, and that He has come here as a messenger of peace from God to man.

Philip preached Christ to them as the one Sacrifice for sin, telling them that Jesus died, the Just for the unjust, to bring them to God. He preached to them of the great Substitution of Christ for sinners and of all the grief He bore in the place of guilty men—and he bade them believe in this Christ that they might obtain the pardon of all their sins, full justification in the sight of God and power to become the children of God! He preached Christ, also, as their Sanctifier, telling them that Jesus could change their natures, take the stony heart out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, so that they would love that which once they hated, and hate what once they loved. Philip preached Jesus Christ of Nazareth as the great Heart-Changer, the true Moral Reformer, the Man who turns things upside down and puts evil where it ought to be—under men's feet—and implants His Grace as a reigning power for holiness within their souls. Thus he preached Christ to them. He did not preach up what they could *do*— he preached what *Christ had done*—and he bade them come and accept the work of Christ, all finished and complete! He bade them quit all other confidences and come and confide in the Lord Jesus Christ. He did not so much try to preach them *to* Christ, as to preach Christ *to them*—and there is a distinction between these two things, though the great end in preaching Christ to a sinner is also to preach the sinner to Christ.

Beloved Friends, I delight to preach to you all the doctrines which I find in God's Word, but I desire always to preach the Person of Christ above the doctrine—the doctrine is but the chair in which Christ sits as a Prophet to instruct us. Christ Himself is still alive! He has risen from the dead! He has gone into Heaven, but He is observant of all that is going on

here, below—He is making intercession for sinners and if you trust that living Savior, He will save you. Oh, that you would do so! This is the Gospel we have to preach to you, and this it is which, if it is received, will make you glad. It was this that caused great joy in the city of Samaria!

Thus, you see, it was a joy that was born of a great sorrow, and a joy produced by the preaching of one man. You have heard who he was and what he preached.

III. Now, thirdly, IT WAS A JOY WHICH HAD ABUNDANT CAUSE—"There was great joy in that city."

First, there was joy in Samaria *because the Gospel was preached there.* If men did but know it, the greatest gift a city can have is to have the Gospel preached in it. Remember the old motto of the city of Glasgow, "Let Glasgow flourish by the preaching of the Word." No city flourishes so well as that which has a clear, powerful Gospel bell ringing in the midst of it! It is a famishing city which has not the Bread of Life, but it is a flourishing city which has the Bread of Life freely dispensed from the pulpit every Sabbath by loving hands.

But there was still more joy in Samaria *because there were signs of blessing going with the Gospel.* Unclean spirits were driven out of those who had been possessed by them and lame and paralyzed persons were made to walk! We work no such miracles, now, in the physical world, but we work them in the *spiritual* realm—out of many men have we seen the evil spirits go as the cup of devils has been abandoned! Filthy blasphemy has been given up and their speech has been seasoned with salt! Fornication has been forsaken, uncleanness of life has been hated and left, theft and dishonesty of every kind have become detestable! We have seen these miracles worked again and again. We have some among us at this time to whom we might say, "And such were some of you, but you are washed." The Gospel has washed, cleansed and changed them—and it is going to do the same for others, for Jesus Christ has come to cast unclean spirits out of those who are possessed by them, and to make some receive Divine strength who have, up to now, been palsied so far as any holy action is concerned—that they may, henceforth, run gladly in the ways of God and give up their whole lives to His service and Glory. Oh, that it might be so with many here, tonight! If it is so, there will be great joy in this city!

Once more, there was great joy in Samaria *because so many believed and were saved.* He that believes in Jesus Christ is saved! The *moment* that he believes, his nature is changed, his sins are forgiven and his heart is renewed. This great work is done in a moment, but it is never undone! The new life commences with the miraculous, regenerating work of the Holy Spirit and that miracle is of such a character that it continues to thrill throughout the entire man until, at last, he is brought safely to Heaven, made perfectly like the Lord Jesus Christ.

There was also great joy in Samaria *because of the changed lives of those who believed.* When a man is converted, he does not doubt the power of the Gospel that converted him. And when men see the changed lives of well-known sinners, they are made to believe that the Gospel that works such transformations must be true or, if they doubt it, they do so in the teeth of the most plain evidence. If our preaching does not turn

men from drunkenness to sobriety, from thieving to honesty, from unchastity to purity, then our Gospel is not worth a button! But if it does all this, then this shall be the evidence that it comes from God, seeing that in the world so sorely diseased by sin, it works the wondrous miracle of curing men of these deadly evils!

O my dear Friends, what a happy city Samaria was when it was full of men healed, saved, converted and rejoicing in Christ!

IV. And this is the point I am trying to reach in concluding my discourse. THIS IS THE JOY WHICH WE DESIRE TO SEE REPEATED IN LONDON—"There was great joy in that city."

We long to have this great joy in London! We want to see *desperate souls made happy*. My friend over yonder, who has been indulging dark thoughts about whether he can manage to live any longer—his hand almost feels for the fatal knife—live, poor Soul, live! There is hope, there is joy even for you! Jesus Christ is willing to forgive the chief of sinners! He is ready to renew the most debauched and depraved of men! He is able to make a saint of you! He can, at this moment, take the burden from your heart and commence a work in you which shall make you a totally new man! What do you say to this? If you can believe in Jesus, there will begin to be joy in this city, for there will be joy in your heart! I remember the day when I despaired of finding salvation, when I could not think that my sin would ever be forgiven, but that voice, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth," was a word of life and love to my soul! And I would repeat it, tonight, to those in this audience who are in the depths of despair. Do not give yourself up—God has not given you up! Do not sign your own death warrant—God has not signed it. "Come unto Me," says Christ, "all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Were you, poor sinful woman, almost hiding away for very shame? Come along with you! Remember what Luke wrote concerning Christ, "Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners to hear Him," and He preached to them the blessed Word of Life! Oh, hear it tonight! Believe in Him and live! And there will begin to be joy in this city when despairing souls are made happy by a holy confidence in Christ!

Well, then, dear Friends, suppose, also, that some *sinful men and women should be changed in character*—what joy there will be in this city! The man who used to swear and curse, goes home like a lamb. What a joy for his wife as well as for himself! The man who was known to the police—better known than one might like to be—suppose that he should become known as much for his integrity and uprightness as he has been for his wrong-doing? What a change for him and what a change for all around him! It is amazing what an amount of misery some men cause to others. O you wretched creatures, it is a marvel that God Almighty should let you live at all when you beat your wives and blast your children's lives almost from the day of their birth with your drunkenness and blasphemy! But if the Lord comes and changes you, and you give up the drink, and you become Christians, truly following Christ, what joy there will be in this city!

Why, there are some men whom I have known, whose wives would hardly recognize them if they became kind and spoke tenderly to them! If they were to bring home all their wages on Saturday night, the wife would

say, "Whatever has come over Charlie? I cannot imagine what has caused such a change as this." And if, instead of a word and a blow, or a blow without a word, such a man were to become gentle, kind and amiable—ah, well, it would not matter that you had lived in one room, it would not matter that you had but scanty wages—all that would soon be altered! But even if it were not immediately changed, there would come rays of sunlight through that dirty window and the house, itself, would speedily become clean and bright! And when there is a happy father and a happy mother, there would soon be happy children! Yes, there is joy in a city when such a change as this is worked in men and women who have gone far into sin.

Now you suppose that I am speaking only to the poor, but I am doing nothing of the kind! Why, there are some men who are rolling in riches, yet they are grumpy, stingy and quarrelling with everybody in the house—from the youngest servant right up to the wife! They make everybody unhappy by their wicked ways. The Lord have mercy upon you poor rich people who do not know what you want, but are always wanting something or other! May God give you new hearts and right spirits—and teach you the sacred art of living according to the law of love! When you once get that word, "love," thoroughly worked into your nature, and into your lives, there will be joy in your house and, as houses make up a city, by-and-by, this wondrous work of Grace will make great joy in this city! The practical effect of Christianity is happiness, therefore let it be spread abroad everywhere! Let men begin to think about one another and care for one another and minister to one another's comfort and, before long, the sure result of the Gospel, faithfully preached, and cheerfully accepted, and lovingly manifested, will be great joy in the city!

Oh, but what great joy there is because of *the heavenly hopes which true religion creates within the soul!* The man who is a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ has many joys even now, for—

"'Tis religion that can give
Sweetest pleasures while we live,"

but he has much more bliss in reversion, for it is also true that—

"'Tis religion must supply
Solid comfort when we die.
After death its joys will be
Lasting as eternity.
Be the living God my Friend,
Then my bliss shall never end."

What a number of Christian people there are who are very poor and, what is worse, perhaps, very sick and often suffering great pain. But they say to themselves, "It is not for long. We shall soon see the face of the Well-Beloved." I do not suppose that there is a man in London suffering more than our dear brother and deacon, William Olney. His pain is such that if I were in his place, I would prefer death to life, yet, if there is a happy man anywhere, he is to be found down the New Kent Road! If there is one Brother whom I envy more than another—I do not think I envy anybody—it is that one man. Even in the midst of his pain, he is always peaceful, always joyful, always as merry as a cricket because he is looking for the

coming of his Lord, abiding His will, and expecting to be with Him, soon, where He is!

Oh, dear People, if you do but get a good hope through Grace, that will make you rich, that will make you joyful, that will make you strong! I wish that you all had it—my very soul keeps longing within me that you might all be converted to God! *I* cannot work that great miracle—it is only the Spirit of God who can do it, but He works in answer to prayer. I wish that all God's people would silently breathe this prayer to Him, now, "Lord, save every sinner in this house! Bring every unconverted one to Your feet!" He can do it, you know. Only let us cry to Him, pleading His own promise, "I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them: I will increase them with men like a flock." So let us cry to Him, "Lord, save this people! Lord, save this people, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
ACTS 8.

Stephen had been stoned to death, but with his latest breath he prayed for his murderers. Then this chapter begins—

Verse 1. *And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the Church which was at Jerusalem and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the Apostles.* Saul, having tasted blood in the murder of Stephen, became more and more furious in his persecution of the Church of Christ at Jerusalem—and the Brothers and Sisters had to escape for their lives. They all did so, except the Apostles, who were specially cared for by Divine Providence.

2. *And devout men carried Stephen to his burial and made great lamentations over him.* As well they might, for his death was a serious loss to the Church. He was one of the best workers for Christ of that day and when he was thus put to death by the judicial murder of stoning, the devout men who were spared to mourn his loss "made great lamentation over him."

3. *As for Saul, he made havoc of the Church, entering every house and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.* At first, we can hardly believe that this was the very man who later became the greatest preacher of the Gospel and the most successful builder of the Church of Christ, but it was even so. He was always earnest in whatever he did. When he persecuted, he did it with all his might—and when he became converted he preached with all his might. He was a thorough-going man. I like these thorough-going men—they are worth saving! When they are converted, they bring great Glory to God. The next verse tells us one effect of the havoc worked by Saul—

4. *Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word.* They might have stayed at Jerusalem and made a comfortable and strong Church, there, if they had not been persecuted, but, being scattered abroad, they were like seed in every furrow of the field! "They went everywhere preaching the Word." Now, out of *this* Church, there is a continual drain of Brothers and Sisters who leave their native land to go

to distant colonies. Such are the pressing end of the times, that many have to go abroad. I charge you, wherever you go, carry the Holy Seed with you. Be yourselves a seed for Christ in every land!

5-11. *Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spoke, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclear spirits, crying with loud voices, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city. But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that he, himself, was some great one: to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, this man is the great power of God. And to him they had regard, because for a long time he had bewitched them with sorceries.* And there are those in all ages who set up to be prophets—and who seek to draw men after them—of whom it is well to beware.

12-13. *But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the Kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon, himself, believed, also.* Simon believed after a certain style and fashion. He saw that there was a real power about Philip which he did not, himself, possess, and he was obliged to bow down before the manifest Presence of God.

13-17. *And when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered beholding the miracles and signs which were done. Now when the Apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit: (for as yet He was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus). Then laid they their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.* That is to say, they received a share of those miraculous gifts which attended the introduction of the Gospel of Christ. It has therefore been supposed that certain superior persons should visit the churches and lay their hands upon people. So they should, if they have the power to bestow such a gift as Peter and John gave—but to lay empty hands on the heads of men and women is a vain ceremony! When the Apostles laid their hands on these converts in Samaria, they received the Holy Spirit.

18-26. *And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the Apostles' hands, the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying, Give me, also, this power, that on whomever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Spirit. But Peter said unto him, Your money perish with you because you have thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money! You have neither part nor lot in this matter: for your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent, therefore, of this, your wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. For I perceive that you are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. Then answered Simon, and said, Pray you to the Lord for me, that none of these things which you have spoken come upon me. And they, when they had testified and preached the Word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the*

Gospel in many villages of the Samaritans. And the angel of the Lord spoke unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goes down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. Philip, who had been so useful to the multitude, must now be of service to a solitary individual! My dear Brothers, if you can gather a crowd of people together, preach the Gospel to them! But if you cannot do that, preach the Gospel to one person, if you can only reach one! It was a desert, but the angel of the Lord bade Philip go there.

27. *And he arose and went.* Not hesitating, but at once obeying. If the Lord should send you to the wilderness, depend upon it that He will send somebody else there for you to bless! Go, therefore, without fear.

27, 28. *And, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasury and had come to Jerusalem to worship, was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Isaiah the Prophet.* He was a devout man, a studious man, a Bible-reading man. We do not often find such persons in great authority under queens—but here was one.

29-31. *Then the Spirit said unto Philip, go near, and join yourself to this chariot. And Philip ran there to him and heard him read the Prophet Isaiah, and said, Do you understand what you are reading? And he said, how can I, unless someone should guide me? And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him.* See how God honors the Christian ministry by making even His Word to be, in some respects, insufficient for some men! At any rate, they need that some living voice should come and guide them into the meaning of it. Oh, that He would bless our voice, tonight, that some who have gathered with us in this Tabernacle might be brought to understand the Scriptures through our guidance!

32-35. *The place of the Scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before His shearer, so opened He not His mouth: in His humiliation His judgment was taken away: and who shall declare His generation? For His life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray you, of whom speaks the Prophet? Of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth and began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him, Jesus.* It seems that, wherever Philip went, he had but one subject. When he went down to the city of Samaria, he preached Christ to them, and now that he talks to this Ethiopian eunuch, he preaches Jesus to him.

36, 37. *And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what does hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If you believe with all your heart, you may. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.* That is the great confession of faith that is to be made by all who have believed in Jesus!

38, 39. *And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.* The Holy Spirit will not permit us to depend too much upon men as our teachers. The Spirit of the Lord did not take away the Bible—that

was left for the eunuch. He only caught away Philip after the Evangelist had furnished the enquirer with the key with which he could open the Scriptures—then he could unlock the Word, himself. That he did so, if history is to be believed, is very clear. He went home to Ethiopia, perhaps to Abyssinia, and the people there heard the Gospel from him—and to this day there are some traces of our holy faith in that land!

40. *But Philip was found at Azotes: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.* We know quite well *what* "he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea," although it is not mentioned here. Wherever he went, he had but one theme—"the things concerning the Kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ." So may it be with us wherever we go!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—956, 531, 465, 538.

TEXT UNION MOTTOES—

"Then they that feared the Lord spoke often, one to another."
"Exhort one another daily."

The Text Union has been formed for the purpose of enrolling the names of those who adopt the "Text Bond." Members forming the Union agree to commit to memory a passage of Scripture, daily, and whenever they meet friends, or fellow members, to greet them by repeating the daily portion, or by asking for the, "Text for today, please." Thus, the golden links of memory will bind the Bible to the heart and the Word of God will be a bond of friendship to all who join the Union. In order that all may have the same Texts, it has been agreed to adopt those selected by Mrs. C. H. Spurgeon in *Spurgeon's Illustrated Almanac.* It is also hoped that Members of the Union will endeavor to persuade many of their friends to join, so that the Word of God may be multiplied.

Card of Membership and Almanac for 1894 will be forwarded on the receipt of four halfpenny stamps (or, where the Almanac is already possessed, a Card of Membership, alone, for two half-penny stamps) by

PASTOR C. H. SPURGEON,
"Haddon,"
Dartmouth Row,
Blackheath, London, S.E.

Already 1000 names have been received and we trust that this means of bringing to remembrance the Word of God will be largely adopted in the Church, the home, the school, and the workshop. Much blessing has been already experienced by those who have joined the Text Union.

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

"OUT OF THE DEPTHS"
NO. 2353

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, MARCH 25, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JANUARY 26, 1888.

"For innumerable evils have compassed me about: my iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head: therefore my heart fails me. Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me: O LORD make haste to help me."
Psalm 40:12, 13.

You remember that these were the words of a man of God, a man after God's own heart, a man undoubtedly the possessor of the Grace of God. They were the words, also, of a preacher, one who could say, "I have preached righteousness in the great congregation...I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation: I have not concealed Your loving kindness and your Truth from the great congregation."

This teaches us that however eminent for Grace a man of God may be, it may happen to him, sometimes, that the thought of his sin may be paramount over his faith. There are times when the Lord seems to give His servants a new start. It is not a second conversion, but it is something very like it. They are made to see, once more, the deformity of their character, the defilement of their nature, the inward sinfulness of their hearts—that they may prize more than ever that they have experienced the cleansing Fountain of atoning blood and the wonderful power of the sanctification of the Holy Spirit. I mention this fact so that, if any of you are in trouble like that described in the text, you may be comforted by knowing that there are the footprints of a fellow Believer in this dark part of the way you have to travel. Others have been here before you! Others who were undoubtedly the people of God, others who were saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation!

You have had to write bitter things against yourself—so have other people. Have you ever felt as though you were surrounded by sin so that you could not look up? You are not the first man who has been in such a plight and you are not likely to be the last. This part of the road has been frequented by full many of the pilgrims bound to Zion's city. All the people of God have not taken this route—there are different ways of traveling along the road to Heaven. But some of the true saints of God have gone by this rough path and I mention this fact in order that no troubled heart may fall into despair because of the painful experience through which it is passing at the present time.

I. In trying to describe a soul in the condition mentioned in our text, let me say, first, that we have evidently before us A SOUL BESET—"For

innumerable evils have compassed me about: my iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head."

The text describes a man who is, first, made to see *the countless number of his sins*. He did not know so much about them, before. He said that he was a sinner and he meant it, but then he wrote the words in very small letters. Now, a further enlightenment has been granted to him—the Spirit of judgment and of burning has come to deal with him—and now he writes the sentence, "I AM A SINNER," in capitals so large that he needs the whole sky and all the sea, as well, to make the page on which to emblazon the terrible words. With an emphasis of which he used to know nothing, he now calls himself a sinner, for sins that he had forgotten come up before his memory. Now he sees that there is a great number of sins in any one sin, like so many Chinese boxes shut up, one inside another.

Moreover, things which he formerly did not recognize as sins, he now perceives to be among the deadliest of transgressions. He realizes that the imagination of evil is sin, that sin is any lack of conformity to the perfection of God. Now he seems as if he swarms with sins and yet, a short while ago he thought himself clean and pure in the sight of God! It is amazing what a ray of light will do—the sun suddenly shines into a room and the whole air seems full of innumerable specks of dust dancing up and down in the sunbeam! The *light* does not make the room full of dust—it only shows you what was always there—but which you did not see until the sun shone in. And if a beam of God's true Light were to shine into some of your hearts, you would think very differently of yourselves from what you have ever done. I question whether any one among us could bear to see himself as God sees him.

I think it is highly probable that if any man were to see his own heart as it really is, he would go mad! It would be a sight too dreadful for an awakened conscience and a sensitive reason to endure. And when the Lord comes to any of His servants and reveals sin in its true character, unless there is a corresponding revelation of the cleansing blood, it puts a man into a very dreadful condition of mind. He says that his sins are more than the hairs of his head. He feels that that is a very poor comparison, so he says they are innumerable, they cannot be counted! In the process of trying to count them, we would have sinned, again, I know not how many times—sinned in our judgments about our sins—our thoughts about our sins would only increase the number of them!

Now, this is no morbid feeling of a perverted brain! It is a true and strictly accurate statement of a sad fact. It is not possible for any of us to think too badly of ourselves as we really are in the sight of God. Comfort does not come by trying to lessen our sense of sin—it comes in a much better and more effectual way—as I will presently try to show you.

This man, then, is troubled by the number of his sins. He also seems to be greatly perplexed by *a sort of Omnipresence of sin*, for he says, "Innumerable evils have compassed me about." He looks that way and says, "Surely there is a gap, there, I have not sinned in that direction." But no,

there are sins in that quarter. He turns sharply round and he looks this way and says, "Perhaps I shall find a lane, there, through which I may escape. I hope I have not sinned in that way." But when he steadily looks, he finds that he *has* sinned there, too. These innumerable evils have compassed him about. David said of his enemies, "They compassed me about like bees." They were all around him. When a swarm of bees gets about a man, they are above, beneath, around, everywhere stinging, each one stinging—until he seems to be stung in every part of his body!

So, when conscience wakes up the whole hive of our sins, we find ourselves compassed about with innumerable evils—sins at the board and sins on the bed, sins at the task and sins in the pew, sins in the street and sins in the shop, sins on land and sins at sea, sins of body, soul, spirit, sins of the eyes, of the lips, of the hands, of the feet—sins everywhere, everywhere sins! It is a horrible discovery when it seems to a man as if sin had become well-near as Omnipresent with him as God is! It cannot be actually so, for sin cannot be everywhere as God is, but it is hard to say where sin is *not* when once conscience is awake to see it. Our whole life, from our first responsible moment, even until now, appears defiled. There are sins even in our holy things! Only half the heart is laid upon God's altar and the sacramental bread, itself, is defiled as it passes into our mouth. Oh, it is dreadful when the heart is awakened to see that it is even so! "Innumerable evils have compassed me about."

But that is not all. This man is so beset with sin that *it seems to hold him in a terrible grip*. Read this—"My iniquities have taken hold upon me," as though they were so many griffins, or other monsters of the old fables. They come and fix their claws into him—they have taken hold upon him. Did any of you ever feel the grip of a single sin? I hope that you have, for you have never been rightly delivered from it if you have never felt its grasp. I once knew a young man who had not a true sense of sin. He believed himself to be a sinner, but he never had a real conviction of sin. He was a working-man, steady and upright, and he prided himself upon his sobriety and industry. One day, in some little frolic, he upset an oil can and, when his employer came in, and asked, "Who did that?" he said that he did not. No one ever found out who upset that oil can, but he knew that he did it. Knocking over that can was not, in itself, an act of criminality, but he felt mean and despicable because he had told a lie—and that lie fixed itself upon his heart, clawed at it and tore away at it so that he could not get away from its cruel clutches!

He came to the House of Prayer on the Lord's-Day to try to get rid of this iniquity that had taken hold upon him, but it kept its hold month after month, hissing in his ear, "You have been a liar." Nobody knew of it but himself, yet that one sin was quite enough to take hold upon him and to fix him with an awful grip. It was in this House of God that he was delivered from that sin through the precious blood of Christ and I said within myself, when I heard the whole story, "Well, I am glad that sin took hold of that young man, for there were many sins beside which he afterwards thought of and acknowledged with tears before his God—but

they had all passed by unnoticed, they had never laid hold on him as that one lie had!

Let me tell you, Friend, if you have a number of sins which have once taken hold on you, you will be something like a stag when the whole pack of hounds has seized him and his neck and his flanks and every bone in him seem to feel the hounds' teeth gnawing at them. I speak what I know—I have felt these dogs upon me—and I have had to cry to God for deliverance! And perhaps I am speaking to some soul that is in that condition tonight. It is no child's play when this is the case. Here we have to deal with stern facts and it is only God, by some great act of Grace, who can set free a poor soul that is once beset in this way!

Thus, you see, he realizes the countless number of his sins, he recognizes the almost Omnipresence of his sins and he feels the terrible grip of his sins tearing at his conscience—judging him, condemning him, breathing curses into him! Oh, if you know this experience, you can follow me when I take you a little further along this dark, dreary road!

II. Here is, secondly, A SOUL BEWILDERED—"My iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up." Do you hear that, "not able to look up"? That is the only hope that a man has when he is under a sense of sin—his *one* way of escape is by looking up! But the Psalmist says, "I am not able to look up."

Does it not mean, first, that *he did not dare to look his sins in the face?* He felt so guilty, so self-condemned, that, as the judge, when he pronounces the death sentence, covers his head by putting on the black cap, so this culprit felt that he must hide his own face! He wants to have a handkerchief tied over his eyes, for he is shocked at the sight that meets his gaze. He dares not look up—that is, he cannot face his sin.

It means, also, that *he is unable to excuse himself*. He used to be as big a braggart as anybody. At one time, he could talk as glibly as anyone about there being no God and no Hell. But that kind of speech is all gone out of him now. The Lord can soon knock such folly as that out of a man! Just one prick of the conscience and the boaster is brought to his knees—and he does not try to look up for a single moment to justify or excuse himself. All he can do is to hang his head and murmur, "Guilty, guilty, guilty." He knows, then, the meaning of Dr. Watts' lines—

"Should sudden vengeance seize my breath,
I must confess You just in death.
And, if my Soul were sent to Hell,
Your righteous Law approves it well."

Now, I may talk to you, thus, and you may not feel the force of what I am saying. But if God deals with you, it will be a different matter! You will then be brought into such a state of bewilderment that you will not be able to face your sin, or excuse yourself, or even dare to *think* of it, the mere thought of it will be too horrible for you!

A man in this state of bewilderment *dares not look up to read God's promises*. I come to him and I say, "Friend, do you not know that there is a Bible full of promises for such as you are? 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.'" I put my hand on his shoulder and I say,

"Now, look at that promise." He cannot look up. We read, in the 107th Psalm, of some who were so ill that when the most dainty food was brought to them, they shook their heads, for they could not touch it—"Their soul abhors all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death."

Well, that is the condition of this man. "But," you say, "my dear Fellow, look at *this* passage, 'All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.' 'Whoever confesses and forsakes his sins shall have mercy.'" "Ah," he says, "it is too late for me, it does not apply to me." Now, this is all a mistake, you know—the Lord is willing to receive you, my dear Hearer, however horrible your offenses may have been! If you are up to your neck in blasphemy and iniquity, Christ can make you clean in a moment! He has such sovereign power that, with a word, He can forgive you. Yes, and with a word, He can change your nature and make a saint out of a sinner, an angel out of a very human devil—such power does Christ possess to save the vilest of the vile! So we say to the poor man, "Dear Friend, look up! Look up at God's promises."

Perhaps we try what effect *the testimony of others* will have upon him. We stand in front of him and we say, "Look at us for a moment." There was a dear Brother who prayed at the Prayer Meeting before the service—no doubt he is here somewhere—"Lord, save the big sinners, for," he said, "Lord, since you have saved me, I believe that you can save anybody." Now, that was good pleading, and I can say the same. There are many here who would say to you, "We looked unto Christ and were lightened. We came with all our sin heavy upon us and we did but look to Jesus, and we found peace, rest, new hearts and changed lives! What He has done for us, He can do for you, for He has shown forth in some of us, as he did in Paul, all long-suffering for a pattern to all others who will believe in Him unto life everlasting."

Still, the man cannot look up. His sins have so bewildered him, his sense of guilt has so muddled his poor thoughts that he dares not look up—and yet he ought to! If I were suffering from a certain disease and a number of persons came to me and said, "We were afflicted exactly as you now are, but we went to Dr. So-and-So, and he cured us almost at once," I think that I would go to that doctor and I would try the medicine that had healed others! Oh, I wish that some of you would try my Savior! You young people—would God that you would try Him in your youth! You older ones, I pray that you may be led to Jesus, now, though your sin rises like a mountain, for He is able to forgive and to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him!

But this poor soul cannot yet look up, so we put our hand upon him, again, and we say, "But, dear Heart, if you will not look to the promises in the Bible and you will not look to us who are specimens of what Divine Grace can do, yet do *look to Jesus on the Cross*. Have you ever heard the story of how He lived and how He died? Do you not know the meaning of those blessed wounds of His? He was the Son of God and He suffered all this for sinful men. He was pure, holy and innocent, yet He died, 'the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God.' Must there not be great merit in

the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ? Look up! Look to Him! Look up to Jesus on the Cross."—

"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."

But it is no use for us to talk to him—his sins have taken hold upon him so that he cannot look up.

So we try again and we bid him *look up to Jesus on the Throne*. We say, "Do you not know that Jesus has risen from the dead? He has gone up into Heaven and He is at the right hand of God, making intercession for the transgressors. The business of Christ in Heaven is to plead for sinners. Oh, how I wish that you would look up to Him! Do it!" Thus we plead, but our pleading is not sufficient. Spirit of God, break these poor creatures away from their infatuation and help them, now, to just look up to the living Savior who is seated at the right hand of God, pleading for the guilty, for such as they are! Dear Hearers, look to Jesus! Only trust Him! A look will do it. Look, look now! In God's name, I command you to look! In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, I do not merely *advise*, but, speaking by His authority, I bid you look and live! May He set His seal to that command, as He did when Ezekiel bade the dry bones live and they did! But yet I know that, apart from the Eternal Spirit, the poor soul will not look up, though looking up is the only way to safety.

III. Follow me for just a few minutes more while I notice, in the third place, that here is A SOUL FAINTING—"My iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head: therefore my heart fails me."

Why, that is the man who used to come in here as big as anybody, and now he cries, "My heart fails me." You used to sing above all the rest, did you not? And you despised those poor weeping ones. But now your lament is, "My heart fails me." When a man's heart fails him, it is as when the standard-bearer of an army faints—everything gets in disarray.

"My heart fails me." You have come to a fainting condition and when the heart fails, *death is approaching*. You feel as if you must die, you are so utterly faint. You dare not hope. You have no energy—what can you do? "To will," you say, "is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not." You are the man who used to think that you could believe whenever you liked and jump into Sovereign Grace whenever you pleased! You do not find it so easy, now, do you?

"My heart fails me." This is the language of one in whom *fear is working*. Why, there is poor Mercy! Poor Mercy! You, as a young girl, said, "I will *not* come to Jesus yet. I can come to Him whenever I like." And now you are fainting outside the gate because the big dog barks at you and your heart fails you! Oh, lie not there to die, dear swooning one! Jesus Christ will come to you in all your faintness. Is it not written, "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly"? "When we were yet without strength." Now you see what there is in yourself, do you not? Nothing at all! Your very heart fails you and if Sovereign Grace does not interpose, you are lost, you know you are!

"Yes," you say, "that is quite true, *I am lost.*" I am so glad that you confess this, for your confession *proves* that you are the one whom God has chosen unto eternal life from before the foundation of the world! You are the sort for whom Jesus died when He poured out His heart's blood. You are already called, by His Grace, to come to Him, for He said, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." You are the very character whom He describes as being the objects of His love! Come to Him, just as you are, and cast yourselves upon Him. Fainting Heart, do not wait till you are revived, but faint on the bosom of Jesus! Failing Heart, do not wait till you grow strong again, but come and confess your failure, your spiritual bankruptcy at Christ's feet! Remember, there are none who are declared to be clear of all obligations but those who are bankrupts before the Lord, even as Joseph Hart sings—

"'Tis perfect poverty alone
That sets the soul at large.
While we can call one mite our own,
We have no full discharge."

"But I have no good feelings," says one. I am glad of it! Come to Christ for them. "But I cannot repent as I would, or believe as I would." Then listen to Hart again—

"True belief and true repentance,
Every Grace that brings you nigh,
Without money,
Come to Jesus Christ and buy."

He needs nothing from you but that you will agree to let Him be everything to you! "Free Grace and dying love"—I delight to ring those charming bells! Oh, that every ear would welcome their blessed music! Poor fainting Heart, hear the gladsome tidings of Free Grace and dying love, and catch at the message and rejoice in Christ tonight! The Lord grant that it may be so!

IV. I finish, as the time has nearly gone, by introducing this man to you once more. We have had a soul beset, a soul bewildered and a soul fainting. But here is A SOUL PLEADING—"My iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up…My heart fails me. Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me: O Lord, make haste to help me."

"Oh!" says one, "I would plead with God, but I do not know how to go to Him." Do you not? Did you ever teach your girl how to come to you when she needed anything? She comes and she says, "Father, I need so-and-so." You do not send her to school, do you, and pay so much a week to teach her that art? No, she knows it *naturally*. If there is anything to be got out of a father, trust a boy or a girl for knowing how to do it! You smile. Let that smile go a little deeper. Smile again, if you like, that it may go right down deep. It is in this way that *you* should deal with *God*—just as your children, being evil, know how to ask good gifts of their father, so you should know how to ask good gifts of *your Father* who is in Heaven! And the more childlike you can be in your praying, the better.

If your boy were to come in, tomorrow morning, and take out a prayer book and proceed to read the collect for the day in the same kind of tone that you can hear it read in certain churches, and then say in the same

tone, "Father, I know that you are generous and noble-hearted—be pleased to give me the valuable present of five shillings," you would cry out, "Boy, hold your tongue, I cannot stand such nonsense!" But if he says, respectfully but earnestly, "Father, I shall be very grateful if you will give me five shillings, for there is such and such a thing that I want to buy," you say at once, "Yes, my boy, certainly. Here is the money." That is to say, if you have it and consider it wise. I do not think that God is to be approached in a dignified, stupid way, with intoned prayers and what Africans call, "palaver."

Come to God in the simplest way possible and tell Him all that is in your heart. Pour out your desires before Him, expecting that He will hear you and answer you—and go your way rejoicing that you have such a God to go to! The easiest thing in the world to a child of God should be to talk to his Father. He should not feel as if he had to put his best coat on in order to approach the Lord. Let him stand out in the yard, in his shirtsleeves, and pray! Why not? Wherever you are, if you should wake up in the middle of the night, begin to pray! You would not think of going to see a person in your shirtsleeves, but your boy may come to you like that whenever he pleases.

A person said to me, some time ago, "Would you mind telling me what to say when I pray? "I answered, Say what you feel. Ask God for what you desire." "But," she said, "I am such a poor ignorant woman that I would like you to tell me the words to say." Then I thought of the passage in Hosea, "Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously." Thus, the very words were put into the suppliants' mouths and, in our text, David does, as it were, make a prayer that is suitable for many of you. May the Lord put it into your mouths and hearts!

I will only briefly call attention to the drift of the prayer and, first, it is *a prayer distinctly to God*. This poor bewildered heart does not look to itself, or to a priest, or to a sacrament—it turns to God and to God, alone, and says, "Be pleased, O Jehovah, to deliver me! O Jehovah, make haste to help me." Your only hope is in your God! Salvation must come from God alone. You know how I pictured this matter some little time ago, about the baby picked up in the street. There is somebody who is going to tell us what that baby needs. He needs some milk and he needs to be washed. And he needs some clothes. He also needs nursing and he needs soothing to sleep. He needs—well, we can go on for a week and hardly tell all that he needs. But I will put in one word what the baby needs, and that is, his *mother*. And you, poor Soul, you need—you need—you need—you need so many, many things that I will not stay to mention them! I will put them into one word—you need your God! Nobody but He who made you can ever new-make you! Therefore, as you need remaking, re-creating, you need your God! Oh, poor Prodigal, I know you need a new pair of boots and a new pair of trousers, and a good dinner and a great many other things—but most of all, you need to go home to your Father! And if you go home to your Father, then you will get all the other things

that you need! Cry unto God, then, you who have never prayed before! May the Lord, the Holy Spirit, make you cry to your God in Christ Jesus!

And then, do you notice the style of the prayer in our text? "Be pleased, O Jehovah, to deliver me." It is *an appeal to the good pleasure of God*. There is no arguing of *merit*, there is no plea but that of God's good pleasure! He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy—and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion! Divine Sovereignty is not to be denied! No man has any right to God's Grace—if it is given to anyone, it is by the free favor of God—as He pleases and to *whom* He pleases! Shall He not do as He wills with His own? But you, as a suppliant, must take this lowly ground—"Be pleased, O Jehovah, to deliver me, for Your mercy's sake, for Your goodness' sake! Universal Ruler as You are and able to save whom You will, for the rights of life and death are in the hands of the King of Kings, be pleased, O Lord, to deliver *me*!" That is the way to plead with God.

And then you may, if you like, use that last sentence—"Make haste, O Jehovah, to deliver me!" You may *plead urgency*—you may say, "Lord, if You do not help me, soon, I shall die. I am driven to such distress by my sin that if You do not hear me, soon, it will be too late! Innumerable evils have compassed me about, so that I am not able to look up. I am driven to such dire distress that my case is urgent; O Lord, help me now!" Oh, how I wish that such a prayer as that might go up from many and many a heart in this audience! You are not truly awakened to a sense of your lost condition if you want to be saved tomorrow. If you are really convicted of sin, your prayer will be, "Make haste, O Lord, to deliver me." I pray that you may be brought to that point, tonight, so that you may not dare to go to bed till you have found your God, or, if you must go to bed, may not be able to sleep till you have found your Savior and put your trust in Him!

Dear Friends, may God save every one of you! Oh, how I would pour out my very soul in pleading with you if I thought that longer talk would lead you to Christ! But words are only air and wind. Eternal Spirit, Master of all hearts, come and deal with men and lead them to Jesus, now! And unto the Triune Jehovah shall be the glory forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 40.

To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

If I were to read this Psalm all through as referring to Christ and to Christ, only, I would be correct in so doing, but still, there is such a unity between Christ and those who compose His mystical body that what is true of the Head is true of the members. What is true of the Vine is true of the branches. What is true of Christ is true of those who are in Him. Therefore, this Psalm relates to David as well as to "great David's greater Son," and it also concerns everyone who is of the royal seed, every true Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus the Psalm begins—

1. *I waited patiently for the LORD; and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry.* "I waited." "Do not beggars wait long at a fellow creature's door for some pitiful alms, and should not I be content to linger at Mercy's gate for such great gifts as I am craving? "I waited patiently." Well may we tarry in patience till Jehovah's time to help since we know that, "Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him." And if He is full of pity, we can well afford to be patient. "I waited patiently for Jehovah." Those who have been most mighty in prayer have sometimes had to wait for the answers to their supplications. Do not expect the Lord to hear you today or tomorrow. He may hear you before you speak, according to His promise, "Before they call, I will answer," but He may, for the trial of your faith, make you wait. Are you able to wait? Then you are certain to receive a great blessing! "I waited patiently for the Lord, and He inclined unto me," bowed down out of Heaven, inclined unto me, stooped to me, thought well of me and also of my prayer, "and heard my cry."

2. *He brought me up, also, out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.* This is a wonderful song, full of rapturous joy. You know how Orientals were accustomed to cast their prisoners into pits—and these pits were often horribly deep, dark and damp—and the mud at the bottom would be such that a man would sink in it. David sings of the Lord, "He brought me up, also, out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay." What a wonderful bringing up was this and, as God never does anything by halves, He did not let His servant slip back, again, for David added, "and set my feet upon a rock." "He set my feet." When God sets a man's feet, those feet are well set! There is no sliding, no slipping! The Lord set David's feet upon a rock and, more than that, established his goings—made them firm, so that when he stirred he did not stumble.

3. *And He has put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God.* Sing, then, Believer! You groaned often enough in the pit! Sing, now that you are on the rock! You were desolate enough in the dungeon. Sound aloud your grateful thanksgivings, now that your goings are established!

3. *Many shall see it and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.* There you have a picture of a sinner's conversion and its effects. The man sees the Lord's goodness to the child of God in distress. He fears—that is, he stands in awe of the great God—and then he, also, believes! He trusts in the Lord. One saint makes many! One child of God brought up out of the horrible pit leads to the bringing up of a great many others in the same way.

4. *Blessed is that man that makes the LORD his trust and respects not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies.* If you trust in God, you will have no reverence for the proud, nor for those who turn aside from God's Word and teach falsehood. If you really fear God, you will have no fear of men.

5. *Many, O LORD my God, are Your wonderful works which You have done, and Your thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto You: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more*

than can be numbered. The child of God, reviewing the Lord's great goodness, feels that he can never count the mercies of God to Him and, as to telling them out, that can never be! It will be, perhaps, a part of our eternal employment to tell angels, principalities and powers in the heavenly places, the story of the loving kindness of the Lord which we have experienced here below. If we had no troubles, we would have nothing to tell, but now that we are led in a strange way, and into very difficult places, we can write another page in our diary which will be worth reading in those days when fictions shall all have been consumed in the fire, but the great facts in the lives of the Lord's people shall make God to be admired in His saints forever and ever!

6-8. *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 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.* Spoke I not truly when I said that the Christ of God is here? To whom is this passage one hundredth part so applicable as to the Lord Jesus, Himself? Does not Paul dwell upon this passage as teaching the putting aside of the old Covenant Law and the bringing in of something better, even the *obedience of Christ*, our Savior? However, this evening, I wish to read the Scripture in reference to the saints—the Lord's own people. I trust that many of us, seeing that God does not delight in ritualistic performances, or in the externals of religion as much as He does in the obedience of the heart, can come to Him and declare with David, "I delight to do Your will, O my God." Beloved Friends, you are not what you ought to be! You are not what you need to be. You are not what you shall be, but, tell me, are you ever happier than when you are consciously doing the will of God? Do you not find misery in sin and delight in holiness? If you can say that it is so with you, then you are bound for the Kingdom—you are on the way to complete victory over sin! Be of good cheer, He who has worked in you this same thing, to delight to do the will of God, will grant you Grace to do it! He will shortly bruise Satan under your feet and your inbred corruptions shall yet be uprooted by the Spirit of His Grace.

9. *I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, You know.* This is what Jesus can say. He was the Prince of open-air preachers—the Great Itinerant, the President of the College of all preachers of the Gospel—and I trust that many of us here can also say that, according to our ability and opportunity, we have tried to tell of Christ to those round about us.

10. *I have not hid Your righteousness within my heart; I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation: I have not concealed Your loving kindness and Your truth from the great congregation.* If any of you have done so. If there has been a sinful reticence about the things of God. If, called to preach, you have not preached the full Gospel of God's Grace, the Lord forgive you and bring you out into a clear manifestation of what He has written within your hearts! We cannot tell what we do not know and we ought not to try to do so—but what was engraved in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, we are bound to tell to others. This gas was lighted

that it might shine and you received the Divine Fire that you might shine to the Glory of God. It may be that, in some dark hour, it shall afford you at least a little comfort to be able to say, "I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, You know. I have not hid Your righteousness within my heart, I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation." You may be able to use it as an argument in prayer, as the Psalmist does—"I have not concealed Your loving kindness and Your truth from the great congregation, therefore,"—

11. *Withhold not You Your tender mercies from me, O LORD: let Your loving kindness and Your truth continually preserve me.* Depend upon it, God will take care of us if we take care of His Truth. If we, from cowardly reasons, keep back any part of the Gospel, God may leave us to defend ourselves. But if we conceal nothing that He has revealed to us. If we are faithful to the Truth committed to our charge—that Truth will, itself, preserve us—and we shall know more and more of the loving kindness of the Lord. But what a sad verse is the next one if it describes the experience of any of you who have known the Lord!

12. *For innumerable evils have compassed me about: my iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head: therefore my heart fails me.* If that is the condition of any whom I am addressing, be comforted by the remembrance that another has been along that dark road where you are now found! Follow his example in praying to the Lord to deliver You—

13. *Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me: O LORD, make haste to help me.* Thus did David cry unto the Lord "out of the depths." Imitate his example if you are in similar circumstances. Say with good John Ryland—

"Out of the depths of doubt and fear,
Depths of despair and grief,
I cry; my voice, O Jesus, hear,
And come to my relief!"

14-16. *Let them be ashamed and confounded together that seek after my soul to destroy it. Let them be driven backward and put to shame that wish me evil. Let them be desolate for a reward of their shame that say unto me, Aha, aha. Let all those that seek You rejoice and be glad in You.* Here is comfort for all poor trembling seekers—they are only seekers, but let us thank God that they are seekers, and let us say with the Psalmist, "Let all those that seek You rejoice and be glad in You." All true Christians, those who have found Christ, are still seekers, for, after finding Christ, they inflame their souls to seek Him more and more! So that our prayer, also, is, "Let all those that seek You rejoice and be glad in You"

16, 17. *Let such as love Your salvation say continually, The LORD be magnified. But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinks upon me: You are my Help and my Deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God.* The Lord bless to us the reading of this precious portion of His Word, for His name's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—733, 587, 607.

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

SCARLET SINNERS PARDONED AND PURIFIED
NO. 2354

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, APRIL 1, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JANUARY 29, 1888,

"Come, now, and let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool."
Isaiah 1:18.

THERE is a quarrel between man and his Maker. It is a sad thing that the creature should have fallen out with his Creator. It is a pitiful business that those who are dependent upon the bounty of God should have rebelled against the hand that has fed them, yet it is so. Man has turned aside from the way of God's Commandments—he will not submit to Jehovah's sway.

Under such circumstances, it is an amazing instance of Divine Compassion that God should be willing to hold a conference with man. Of course the first person to ask for such a conference ought to have been the offending party. It is *man* who has offended, it is man who will have to suffer the consequence of his offenses. But, instead of man seeking God, and pleading with bitter tears, "Lord, pitifully hear me; graciously listen to me and forgive me!" It is God who comes seeking man—the offended One is first in the effort to make up the quarrel! It is He who says, "Come, now, and let us reason together." He proposes to confer with man about the question in dispute. Admire much the freeness of God's mercy, that, after you have transgressed against Him and provoked Him again and again, He still hesitates to hurl the thunderbolts of His Justice at you! Instead, thereof, He invites you to talk with Him as to the cause of your quarrel, to reason with Him about your war against your Maker.

Surely, dear Friends, it would be a great joy to a man to hear that God invites him to a conference! He would take heart of hope from that fact. He would say, "If God had meant to destroy me, He would not have said, 'Come, now, and let us reason together.'" When the One who possesses all power and who could, in a single moment, crush those who have sinned against Him, yet says, "Come, let us talk this matter over," it must mean that He is moved by love and mercy. It must mean that there is yet hope for the guilty—an opportunity of man, the enemy—being reconciled to his offended God!

I think it will be wisdom on our part, sinful creatures that we are, to accept the conference that God proposes. Anyhow, we cannot lose anything by it. If the Lord says, "Come, now, and let us reason together," He

must have some design of love in it. Therefore, let us come and return to our God, and reason with Him. I would invite any man here who is at all desirous to be right with God, to begin to think about his God and about his own ways. Surely, it is high time with some of you that you should turn to Him whom you have so long provoked! There is His Book, for instance—do you read it? Does not the dust upon it witness against you? You do not think it worth while to know what God has revealed in His Word! You treat your Maker and your Friend as if His letters were not worth even an hour's reading! You leave them utterly neglected. Is this as it should be? If you want to get right with God, should not the first step be to obey that command, "Thus says the Lord of Hosts, consider your ways"? And should not the next step be obedience to that other word, "Acquaint, now, yourself with Him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto you"? I cannot see how it can be wise for a man to neglect his God and to despise what his Maker has to say to him. It must be wise for us to confer with the Lord about this matter. If, after the conference, we should come to a decision contrary to what is to be desired, yet we shall at least have given a fair consideration to the subject. Let us listen, then, to the gentle yet powerful voice of God, which says to us, "Come, now, and let us reason together, says the Lord."

You all know what the quarrel is about, for you heard the chapter read. You love sin—and God *cannot* and will not bless you until you have parted with it. The greatest blessing that God can give you is to part you and your sins. The salvation which we so freely proclaim is not, as some suppose, salvation at the last for those who continue in sin—it is *deliverance from sin*. The salvation which we continually preach, as the work of the Free Grace of God, is salvation from the reigning power, the raging lust of sin. Free pardon for all past offenses is presented to everyone who believes in Jesus, but the grand aim is to set you free from the love of evil and from taking any delight in sin.

Now, evil *is* evil—that which is evil towards God is also evil towards yourself. It cannot work your happiness to do what is wrong. You may think it will, but God's judgment is clearer than yours, and His Laws may be viewed as plain directions as to how you can be happy. When He forbids you anything, it is simply a warning against that which is dangerous to your soul. He has denied us no pleasure which can be called a real pleasure. He has given to us everything that is truly good for our immortal spirits and, if we follow in the way that He maps out, it shall be not only for our eternal profit, but also for our present enjoyment.

In effect, God says to us, "If you would meet with Me, you must be rid of sin, and I am prepared to help you, no, I am prepared to rid you of sin. If you desire to be free from it, My Holy Spirit has put that desire within your heart. And if you yield yourself up to Him, He will rid you of sin altogether, root and branch." So here begins the conference. The man enters into debate with God. I will suppose that he does so, tonight, and that his first declaration to God is, "*My sins are as glaring as scarlet.*" "Well," replies the Lord, "I will take you on your own ground—I will admit that your sins are as scarlet; but I will so remove them that you shall be

as white as snow." The man, next, says, "But if all my old sins were forgiven, yet *my tendency to sin is deeply ingrained*. I would sin again as I have sinned before. If I start anew with a clean book, I shall run into debt again as I did at the first." The Lord meets that statement, also, and He says, "Though the evil tendencies of your nature are red like crimson, they shall be as wool. I will get the stain out, I will restore the fabric to its original cleanliness, I will make the long-dyed crimson wool to be as pure as when it first grew upon the sheep's back."

So God meets man in two ways—He meets him, first, by the perfect pardon of sin and next, by a clean deliverance from the power of sin. Of those two things I am going to talk, tonight, pretty plainly.

I. And, first, I will suppose that I have before me someone who says, "MY SINS ARE AS GLARING AS SCARLET. How can I ever be the friend of God as my sins are so prominent? Some people's sins are of a drab color—you might not notice them. Other people's sins are a sort of whitey-brown—you would scarcely perceive them. But *my* sins are scarlet—that is a color that is at once observed. There is a strikingness about my sin. Nobody could miss it, the eyes are attracted and detained by it. My sins are as glaring as scarlet." Now, what sort of sins are those that may be called scarlet?

I say, first, that they are *the filthier vices*. You do not expect me to go into a description of them. At times, the ear of the public has been astounded by revelations of the vice in this great city. It was done once till we were all sick and we are glad that it has not been done again. I pray God that it may not be. But the sin, itself, is a thousand times filthier than the exposure of it, and yet there are some hypocrites in the world who say, "What a disgusting paper!" while they, themselves, are guilty of the very vice which is laid bare there! It is the *sin* that is disgusting, not the account of it, although I admit that the recital of it is harrowing and painful. If you have been guilty of those sins of the body which destroy, not only yourself, but another, also—if, in the days of your youth, or in the riper years of your manhood or womanhood, you have polluted yourself by such vices—these are scarlet sins, such as will dog a man in his dying moments, and howl at him as he passes into the mystery of another world.

I pray God that everyone here who has been guilty of such sins, may listen to this text—and we need not deceive ourselves about this matter—there are plenty in our streets, there are plenty in our places of worship who are thought to be very good and respectable people, who, nevertheless indulge in gross vice! The Lord have mercy upon them! It is even to such that the text says, tonight, "Come, now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." The fornicator, the adulterer, the whoremonger and such like—these have committed sins that are of a scarlet hue. I say no more about this point, but I mean that such sinners as these are invited to come to God and seek His mercy, for He will make them white as snow!

There is another set of sins which are scarlet and these are the *universally condemned sins*—those sins which are offenses against the State

and against the well-being and social order of the community, such as dishonesty, theft, embezzlement in all its forms, knavery, cheating, lying. Oh, dear Sirs, there are some who talk of white lies, but there are no lies that are white—they are scarlet—and they will sink a man to Hell if they are not confessed and forgiven! Every right-minded man is ready to condemn such sins as pride and over-bearing, such sins as ingratitude to parents and treachery to friends, such sins as breaking solemn covenants and sacred engagements where one ought to have been firmly held by them—all these are scarlet sins. Some of the forms of transgression, which I shall not describe in detail, are condemned by all civilized society and, therefore, they may certainly be called scarlet sins. If I speak to any here present who have been guilty of such sins, let each man wear the cap that fits him, but let him also hear this gracious Word of God, "Come, now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet," and that point is admitted, "they shall be as white as snow."

There is another set of sins that I would put down as scarlet because they are *the louder defiances of God*. Some men dare to contradict Scripture, to express their disbelief in it, no, to contradict God, Himself, even to express their disbelief in His existence and, disbelieving in God, they dare to laugh at His Providence, to judge His Words and to utter criticisms and sarcasms about the acts of the Host High! Now, these are scarlet sins. Let me once know that anything is of God, and I bow my head in deepest reverence. "No but, O man, who are you that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why have you made me thus?" But there are plenty, nowadays, who seem to enter into the lists against Jehovah and begin to ask Him why He acts as He does, as if *they* were the very God of God and the Judge of the Most High! Now, these are committing scarlet sins, yet the Lord says, even to such sinners, that He will make them as white as snow and, in many cases, He has already done so.

I felt great joy, yesterday, when I received a letter from one who is now an earnest servant of God, but who recalled the time, (over 30 years ago, I think it was), when he was a secularist and a very bold denouncer of all religion. At that period, I was but a very young man in preaching and he showed special spite against me. He put my portrait in his window, with certain exceedingly biting and cutting remarks appended to it. But it happened that he came to London and he must needs go to hear the man who was the object of his ridicule—and that day, in the Surrey Music Hall, God met with him! I have scarcely heard of him since then, till yesterday, when I found that he was still walking in the faith, earnestly endeavoring to serve God with all his might so as to make amends, as far as lies in his power, for the evil he had done in years gone by! Glory be to God—He can bring in those who have gone furthest in rebellion against Him—and make them to be the very noblest defenders of the faith!

I remember that John Bunyan said, in his day, that he had great hope for the next generation, and he gave a very curious reason for that hope. He said that there was no age in which there were so many blasphemers

and blackguards as were then living and he reckoned that if God saved them, they would make the finest saints in the world and he, therefore, hoped that the next generation would be far ahead of any that ever had been before because that generation was so far behind in morality than any that had preceded it! God often takes the raw material of a great sinner and transforms him, by His Grace, into a great saint! Such a man loves much because he has had much forgiven. Scarlet sinners, then, are those God-defiers who will not have Him to reign over them—and who tell Him so to His face! These are they who, when they come to Christ, shall find that He will make them as white as snow.

Scarlet sins, again, may consist in *long-continued dissipations*. I do not like drawing these terrible pictures, but I cannot help it if I am to be faithful. There are some men who, having the means, will go into sins from which the poor are happily preserved—drink and debauchery—followed up month after month and year after year. Sin is persevered in as though the men were resolved to be ruined, going over hedge and ditch to Hell, stopped, perhaps, for a moment, by an earnest address, but shaking off all good impressions with an awful determination to go on to their eternal destruction! We know some such who do not *occasionally* fall into sin, but who *continue* in it, whose life becomes, as far as they can make it, a series of rebellions against everything that is pure, true and right! Do I address any such young man or any such woman tonight? If so, you are a scarlet sinner and I commend to you this gracious text, "Come, now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow."

This scarlet glaringness is also seen in *repeated transgressions*. When a man sins once and then abandons the sin, one does not think so much of it as of those who, having sinned once, sin again, and again, and again, and again, and again. Oh, that poor moth, it comes into my study and flies at my lamp! It has burnt its wings and it falls down. I endeavor to catch it, to put it away, but before I can reach it, up it flies again at the lamp! It has burnt itself worse, this time, it is in anguish with those scorched wings, but the moment that it can summon enough strength, it flies up again! And there are some people just like that, singed and burnt by their own iniquity, yet returning to it as the dog returns to his vomit, and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mud. Now, a sinner cannot act like that without coloring his sin to a very high degree of scarlet and making it most offensive to God. Yet, if it is so with any of you, the Lord still bids you come to Him and He will make you white as snow!

Once more, I think that the scarlet hue will be discovered in *any act of sin which is distinctly deliberate*. There are sins into which men are hurried by strong passions in a moment and these are grievous enough, but when a man will take a week, a month, or even longer to concoct some evil scheme, arranging all the details, laying traps, setting snares, spinning webs to effect an evil purpose, this is a scarlet sin! When the element of *deliberation* enters into sin, it becomes a crime of malice aforethought for which it is hard to find mercy. Yet I venture to say that if

anyone here has been guilty of such a sin and it comes to his mind, just now, I would urge him to confess it and come to the Lord for forgiveness, for He says, "Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." This is the top and bottom of the whole matter. O you scarlet Sinners, the greatness of your guilt need not keep you back from God! O you who have transgressed beyond all bearing and past all bounds, you may yet be forgiven! God is able to blot all your sin out in a moment, so that there shall be nothing in His Book against you and the scarlet shall become as white as snow!

Do you want to know how this can be done? It is through the great atoning Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, His Son, who, on Calvary's mountain, bore the wrath of God in our place that God might be able, with justice, to forgive the sins of all men who trust in Christ's Atonement. Understand, then, that is the method of making scarlet sinners as white as snow! The bleeding Savior and He, alone, performs this miracle of mercy! This is true—and if you will come and seek your God, confessing your sin and accepting the great Sacrifice of Christ—your scarlet sin shall cease to be and you shall become as white as snow!

Oh, this is the best news that ever tongue had to tell! But when I get home, tonight, I shall lie abusing myself to think that I did not tell it better! I never tell out the story of Free Grace and dying love to my heart's content—the thought comes to me, afterwards, "Why did you not put it better? Why did you let those people come and go, and not speak more to their hearts?" Ah, dear Friends, I would do so if I knew how! But I have scarcely begun to learn to preach, yet, as I want to! Still, I do tell this old, old story to you great sinners, you crimson sinners—if you trust Jesus, your sins shall not damn you! If you come to Christ, your sins shall be all put away forever! It is your unbelief, your staying away from God, your continuance in sin that will destroy you—but not the greatness of your guilt—for the Lord is willing to blot out your sins like a cloud, and to do it *now*, if you will only trust His dear Son!

II. But I must not forget that there is a second difficulty. The man of whom I first spoke, also says, "ANY TENDENCY TO SIN IS DEEPLY INGRAINED."

He says, "If all my scarlet sins were forgiven, yet I am afraid I would not be all right, even then." Why not? "Because," he says, "I feel impulses within me towards evil which, I think, are stronger than in anybody else." Well, Friend, I will take you on your own ground. I believe that there are some persons who have a greater *hereditary tendency to some sins* than others have. It is unquestionably true that the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children to the third and fourth generation. Anybody who studies human nature cannot help discovering that the child of the drunk has a greater tendency to drink than the child of the sober man. And children born as the result of lust are more inclined to that vice than others who are the offspring of virtuous, godly people. It is no doubt so, but what I have to say to you is that if you have sprung from an ancestry of drunks, if right straight up you cannot find a good man in all your

pedigree, still, though your sins are red like crimson, they shall be as wool!

God knows how to effect this transformation by the working of the Holy Spirit. Is that a new word to you? Well, then, let me remind you that the Holy Spirit is the third glorious Person of the blessed Trinity in Unity. And the Holy Spirit can come and remove from you the taint of heredity so that you shall be able to overcome this special tendency of yours—and you shall be preserved from those sins which run in your blood, which are in your constitution through your birth. God can help you! He that made the watch can mend it. He that made *you*, can set you right, again! You are still within the reach of Divine Omnipotence, whoever your father or your mother may have been! I take you on your own ground, not discussing the question with you for a moment.

"Oh!" says another, "I would not mind about hereditary tendencies, but my difficulty is that I have been *habitually committing sin*." And oh, I admit, my dear Brothers and Sisters, that it is an awful thing to get caught in the meshes of an evil habit! When you first sin, or after you have sinned a few times, it is like a cobweb all around you and you cannot easily get clear of it. That cobweb soon comes to be a net and it is not easy to cut your way out of it and, after a time, the cords become bands of iron and steel—and what are you to do, then? How can you break loose from such chains? The habitual drunk—how shall he tear himself away from the cup that is ruining him? The man who has fallen into vicious habits, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" If so, then he that is accustomed to do evil may learn to do well. But the Holy Spirit will help you to break off every sinful habit at once. I have known Him do it with many. I have especially noticed this—that swearers, and it is somewhat curious to note this fact, men who had for years never spoken without an oath—when they have been converted, from that moment they have never been tempted to utter an oath during the rest of life, such clean riddance can the Holy Spirit make of that habit! Some other sins cleave to a man and make their presence felt, at times, but when the Holy Spirit comes in, He drives out these old habits and forms new ones. "The expulsive power of a new affection" is very great—and when the Spirit of God puts the love of Christ into the soul in the place of the love of sin—that new affection drives out the old habits and the man is set free, even, from sins in which he has long indulged!

You know that scarlet and crimson are colors very hard to get out of any fabric. Neither the dew, nor the rain, nor any ordinary processes of bleaching will get out the scarlet. I have heard that certain old rags cannot be used for anything except making red blotting paper because you cannot get out the color which the material takes in—and as to anything crimson, you might destroy the fabric before you could possibly extract the dye. But God knows how, without destroying the fabric, to take out 50 years of crimson habits and not leave a stain behind! He can make you perfectly pure and clean! He can make you a new man—your flesh shall be as the flesh of a little child—I mean that your whole conduct will prove that you have been born again!

I heard a third person say, "But, my dear Sir, the trouble with me is that I have such *feeble mental resistance to evil.* I am so weak, such a poor fool." Well, you are not much of a fool if you know you are! The biggest fools are those who never know that they *are* fools. Still, there are people of this kind. I will try to describe you. You really are not altogether a bad sort of fellow and when you are convinced that a thing is wrong, you feel very sorry, and you say to yourself, "I will give that up." But there is a certain individual who has a kind of key that fits you and whenever he comes this way, he winds you up just as he likes. I do not know who the individual is. Perhaps it is a, "she," not a, "he," but, whoever it is, he or she can turn you any way. You are such a silly sort of person that if two or three people come round you and try to get you to do what is wrong, you cannot say, "No," to them. You have not learned that little word yet! Your mother did not teach it to you and your schoolmaster did not teach it to you and, I am afraid that I cannot teach you to say, "No," either.

It is a very difficult word for some people to utter. They say, "N-n-n," and it ends in—"Yes." The power to say, "No," is a mighty power, and it is an awful thing when a man has fallen into ways of sin, when he is weak and irresolute, and somebody twists him whichever way he pleases. Now, dear Friend, if you will come and reason with God, and yield yourself to the power of the Holy Spirit, as I pray you may, He will put a backbone into you. He will make you resolute and firm. I have known some young men who at first quite pained me with their lack of resolution, but who, by the Grace of God, have become almost doggedly obstinate. Oh, what grand old Puritans some men have made who once had no will of their own! We want the Lord, nowadays, to make a lot of people with backbones—very few of that kind have appeared, lately, but He can make them, by His Grace. Oh, you molluscous young fellow, you who have no more strength in you than a snail out of its shell, God's Grace can make a real man of you and you shall know the Truth of God—and the Truth shall make you free, and you shall be able to stand up and say, "No," and you will even—

"Dare to be a Daniel!
Dare to stand alone!
Dare to have a purpose firm!
Dare to make it known!"

God will help you to do even *that* if you yield yourself to Him.

Still, perhaps I have not quite hit the nail on the head with all of you. Some are *entangled by their circumstances*. A man says, "You do not know me, Sir, or else you would not think that the Grace of God could save *me*. In my trade, my business, my position in life, I am dreadfully entangled. I do not know how I am to get out of it. I am in such a position that I must earn my bread. You know, Sir, we must live." I never was very clear about that statement, but this person says, "We must live and I am in such a predicament that I do not know what to do. I know I ought not to be in such a position, but I cannot get free from it." No, my Friend, but God's Grace *can* deliver you. Oh, I have seen, in this House of Prayer, some glorious instances that I hardly dare to tell! I know one

whom the Lord saved who was engaged in a business which I could not but regard as altogether destructive to the souls of men and women! He said that he could not see how to get out of it, yet he *did* get out of it! He suffered bravely and, at this moment I can say that he is in a much better position than he was in, then. And if he had kept on with the other business, I believe he would have been ruined body and soul and that he would also have ruined thousands of others. There is nothing like making up your mind that you are coming right straight out from everything that is wrong, let it cost whatever it may! "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? "The ship is going down, and if your little boat is tied to it, you will go down, too." Up with the axe and cut the rope! When God, by His Grace, helps you to act thus, as He can and will, the entanglement of your circumstances will be over! I do not know the particular case to which I am alluding just now. I often speak of things which God knows more about than I do, and somebody is here to whom this is a message from Him. Come out, come out, at all costs! Flee from Sodom, leave everything, look not behind you, stay not in all the plain, escape to the mountain, lest you are consumed!

I think that I hear another say, "But I am a man of such *strong passions*." Yes, there are wild beasts about in the form of men and, every now and then, we come across a man with a terrible temper. He means well, dear Soul. He is always very sorry after he has had an outburst. Sometimes he says, "Well, I boil over, you know, Sir, but it is all over in a minute." Yes, but if you scald somebody, the effect of that scalding will not be all over in a minute. "Ah," said a certain Scotch lord to his servant, "You see, Sandy, I am never in a bad temper but what I am soon right again." "Yes!" said the servant, "and you are never right, again, but you are soon in another bad temper!" Well, that is an evil thing which has to be conquered. You cannot carry such a temper as that into Heaven. What would they do with you, *there*, with such fiery passions? They must be gotten rid of and I do not know of any surgical operation that can do it—you will have to be *born again*—that is the only real cure!

Then there are some other individuals who appear to be going on all right for months when an awful wind seems to blow through their souls and off they go into drinking, or into some other dreadful sin—and they say that it is all owing to their strong passions. Well, you cannot take those passions to Heaven, can you? You will have to get rid of them if you are ever to enter there! And I know of no remedy for this evil but being born again. Remember this text, "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."

"Do you believe in the doctrine of *original sin?*" asks one. Yes, I do! It is about the only original thing some people have and they have a large quantity of that. Yes, yes, it is so, alas! There is in us all the tendency to sin, the bias towards evil, and though I have been drawing distinctions, I must come back to this point—

"Like sheep we went astray,
And broke the fold of God,

Each wandering in a different way,
But all the downward road."

Now, there is no help against original sin but Almighty Grace, and there is no way of having Almighty Grace except through the free gift of God! This He may give as He pleases, for He has a right to bestow it or to withhold it, but He promises to give it to all who come humbly confessing their sin and casting themselves, by faith, upon Jesus Christ, His Son.

Thus, you see, I have shown you that the guilt of sin can be put away by the blood of Jesus, and the power of sin can be subdued by the Holy Spirit. Every provision is made for the salvation of the man who desires to be saved. Come then, and hear how God has met your difficulties—"Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." God bless you all, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
Isaiah 1:1-20.

May we be instructed of the Holy Spirit while we read this Inspired Scripture!

Verse 1. *The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw*—Prophets were called *seers*—they *saw* what they were called to say and every true preacher of Christ must first be a seer of Christ. He must see, that is, realize for himself, and then he must tell others what he has seen. This Book is about "the vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw"

1, 2. *Concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the LORD has spoken, I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against Me.* It is an appeal of *God* to inanimate creation to bear witness to the ingratitude that He had received, as if it were of no longer any use to speak to men. The appeal is stated very solemnly and impressively, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord has spoken. I have nourished and brought up children," cared for them, loved them, fed them, "and they have rebelled against Me." The ingratitude of a child is something shocking—and the ingratitude of man to God is of that character.

3. *The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel does not know, My people do not consider.* Men are more brutish than the beasts that perish! The *lower animals*, as men contemptuously call them, acknowledge the hand that feeds them, but men receive the bounty of God through long years and yet live as if there were no God at all—they feel no gratitude to Him whatever. Israel was God's peculiar people, highly favored and greatly indulged—and this made it all the worse for the Lord to be able to contrast them and the brute creation. "The ox knows his owner and the ass his master's crib, but Israel does not know, My people do not consider."

4. *Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward.*

Thus the Prophet spoke to the people of his day and we may say much the same to the people of our own time. The professing Church of God has gone away backward, forsaken the Doctrines of the Truth of God and turned aside from the purity of its life. God have mercy upon the world when the Church, itself, becomes thus defiled!

5. *Why should you be stricken any more?* What is the use of chastisement to such people? It is supposed that punishment is always healthy and that we grow the better for it, but God says, "Why should you be stricken any more?"

5, 6. *You will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot, even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.* The nation had been so beaten that it was covered all over with bruises and sores. It seemed to be of no use to afflict Israel any more—and there are some persons in the world who have been chastened in every conceivable way and yet they are none the better. There are graves in the cemetery where those they love lie asleep. The house that was their joy has long ago been sold and they have not a roof to call their own. They have seen themselves at death's door by fever and by other diseases and yet all that God's rod has done for them has come to nothing. The old Roman lictors carried an axe bound up in a bundle of rods and, when the rods had been tried, and had failed, then came the axe. And if the milder forms of chastisement do not bring men to repentance, sooner or later will come the axe of destruction! Thus the Prophet says it was with sinful Israel—

7, 8. *Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city.* The land had been so harried and worried by invaders that it was little better than a poor shanty—the nation was comparable to a poor hut which the Arabs put up in the vineyard to sleep in—"As a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city."

9. *Except the LORD of Hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.* And this is true of London as well as of Jerusalem! If there had not been a remnant of godly ones still left, "we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah."

10, 11. *Hear the Word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the Law of our God, you people of Gomorrah. 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.* These people were a very religious people, although a very wicked people. It is a strange thing when nations have become demoralized and injustice reigns supreme at the same time—ritualism and outward pomp and external religion come to the front. This is a wretched business, to give God the husks when the kernel has long ago gone. What cares the Lord for "burnt offerings of rams,

and the fat of fed beasts…the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats," when men have left off doing that which is right in His sight? The Lord may well say to those who bring offerings to Him under such circumstances, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me?"

12. *When you come to appear before Me, who has required this at your hands, to tread My courts?* "Who invited you to come to My courts?" asks God. "Who asked you to pretend to worship Me, when you are living in sin and your hearts are not reconciled to Me?"

13. *Bring no more vain oblations, incense is an abomination unto Me. The new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn meeting.* If you are hypocrites. If your hearts are not right with God you may multiply your Church attendance and your Chapel attendance and your sacraments, but all these are only a provoking of God to anger! There is nothing in it all that He could possibly accept—He cannot endure it! He says, "I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn meeting."

14, 15. *Your new moons and your appointed feasts My Soul hates: they are a trouble unto Me, I am weary to bear them. And when you spread forth your hands, I will hide My eyes from you: yes, when you make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.* This is plain speaking, but God never sends velvet-tongued men as His messengers. They who are called to testify for God speak out boldly—and faithfully denounce the sins of the day in which they live. Blessed be God for Isaiah and for men like he! When men are committing crimes, when they are oppressing the poor, when they are living in the daily practice of injustice, when they indulge in secret drunkenness, when their whole life is a lie, they may do what they will, but God will not hear their prayers! While we keep sin in our hearts, it is in vain for us to stretch out our hands unto God. He is a holy God and He seeks holy hearts and holy lives—nothing short of these can be acceptable to Him.

16, 17. *Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.* This is what God asks for—"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this—To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world"

18-20. *Come now, and let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land: but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD has spoken it.* May the Holy Spirit make us willing and obedient that we may "eat the good of the land." And may none of us be found refusing God's gracious invitation and rebelling against His authority—lest we perish in our sins!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—555, 567, 591.

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

CHRIST'S NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE PRAYER
NO. 2355

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, APRIL 8, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 5, 1888.

"I pray not that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from evil."
John 17:15.

NOTICE, in the prayer of our Divine Lord, what honor He always puts upon God the Father. He ascribes to God everything—the taking the disciples out of the world, or the keeping them from the evil in the world. Let us never neglect to look for God's hand in all that happens to the saints and let us not fall into the error of those who deny the Great First Cause and are always dealing with appearances, forgetting the Mighty God who shapes our ends and rules our destinies. If we die, it is not by chance, but because God takes us out of the world. Believers fall asleep in Jesus, neither before nor after the predestined time. No disease or accident can cut short their lives and it would not be possible to prolong their existence beyond the time appointed by the Lord. I like to believe—whatever it may be to some of you, to me it is very sweet to believe that—

"All must come, and last, and end,
As shall please my heavenly Friend.
Plagues and deaths around me fly,
Till He bids, I cannot die!
Not a single shaft can hit
Till the God of Love thinks fit."

Our lives are entirely in the keeping of our loving Father. You can see that Truth of God in the text. Jesus speaks of God as taking the beloved ones out of the world and it is even so. This fact should make us cease to be anxious about when or how we shall die and it should, at the same time, reconcile us to the time and the manner of the going Home of any whom we love most dearly. They were not snatched away by the robber, Death—they were taken out of the world by our dear Father's gracious hand! Let us say concerning them what Job said of his loved ones, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

See, also, how our Lord Jesus honors the Father by ascribing to Him the keeping of the saints from evil, for He says, "I pray not that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from evil." Beloved, our escape from evil, at the first, was by the Father's Grace. Our persevering in righteousness until now has been worked in

us by the Father's hand, through the Divine Spirit and, this day, if we have not apostatized—if we have not denied the faith and proved traitors to Christ—we must ascribe it entirely to the Grace of God! As the Psalmist says, "It is He that has made us, and not we, ourselves," and it is He who keeps us, and not we, ourselves, for, again quoting the 100th Psalm, "We are His people, and the sheep of His pasture."

I want you, as far as you possibly can, to be constantly recognizing God's overruling hand—God, in our death, taking us out of the world, and God, in our life, keeping us from evil, and upholding us in our integrity. When you get thus near to God and realize that God is always present with you, you are in the right frame of mind for prayer. You are also in the state and condition of heart which will give you courage in time of danger—you are, indeed, ready for anything and for everything, whatever may come to you, when God is thus consciously overshadowing your spirit. This much, I think, the prayer of our Lord plainly suggests.

Observe, again, that God has us absolutely at His disposal. Let us always remember that great Truth. The prayer of Jesus recognizes His Father's Sovereignty, but, we, ourselves, must also recognize that we are entirely in God's hands. He can take us out of the world, or He can keep us in the world and preserve us from evil. We are glad to be at the disposal of our God! As His people, we would have no voice or choice in fixing our own position, but with the Psalmist we would say, "He shall choose our inheritance for us." Whether we stay, or whether we go, depends entirely upon the Lord's will and Christ, in His prayer, recognizes that it is so. He would not pray for a matter which was not in the hands of Him to whom He prayed. He felt that His people were absolutely at His Father's disposal and, therefore, He presented the prayer which is to be the subject of our meditation tonight.

Now, in this petition, there are two things. There is, first, *the negative prayer*— "I pray not that You should take them out of the world." And then, secondly, there is *the positive prayer*— "But that You should keep them from evil."

I. There is here, first, THE NEGATIVE PRAYER—"I pray not that you should take them out of the world."

At first sight, that seems almost unkind on our Savior's part. What could happen better than for those whom the world hated to be taken out of the world? Jesus, Himself, was going out of the world—what could He do that should have greater love in it than to pray that they might go with Him? I have often felt as Thomas did when he said, "Let us, also, go, that we may die with Him." Has Jesus gone? Why should we tarry here? Has Jesus entered Glory? Let us be with Him where He is, that we may behold His Glory. There is nothing left to detain us below since He has ascended to His Father's right hand—but there is *everything* to attract us upward since He is there who is our heart's Lord, our All in All! Have you not often felt inclined to pray for yourself that the Lord would take you out of the world? I mean, not merely in times of depression, when, like Elijah, *who never died*, you are ready to pray, "Now, O Lord, take away

my life," but in times of exultation, when you have been near to the gates of Heaven in ecstatic joy and holy gladness—have you not wished to slip in? "Lord, it is good for us to be here: if You will, let us make here three tabernacles." Have you not said so in your heart, if not with your voice? No, have you not wished, not to stay on the Mount of Transfiguration, but from that point to take your heavenward flight and land yourself in the New Jerusalem, to go no more out forever? I know that, sometimes, on a Sabbath, when we have been singing, to the tune Prospect—

"On Jordan's stormy banks I stand,
And cast a wishful eye
To Canaan's fair and happy land,
Where my possessions lie,"

I have felt that I could, from my heart, sing the last verse of the hymn—

"Filled with delight, my raptured soul
Can here no longer stay.
Though Jordan's waves around me roll,
Fearless I'd launch away."

Yet the Savior says, "I pray not that You should take them out of the world." I am sure, therefore, that it is a better thing for us to stay here till our appointed time than it is for us to be taken out of the world. It may not be better in all respects, but there are some points in which it is an advantage for Believers to remain here. Our Savior loves us so much that He would be certain to ask the very best thing for us. Therefore, for us to be taken out of the world at once, would not be, all things considered, the best disposition of us that the Lord could make.

How is that? Well, first, if we, who are Christ's people, were taken out of the world, then *the world, itself, could perish*. Do we contemplate, with any pleasure, such a catastrophe as that? "You are the light of the world." Take all the lights away and the murky atmosphere, which is dark enough, even now, would become dense as Egyptian midnight—and life would be intolerable. "You are the salt of the earth." Should the salt be taken away, putrefaction would revel without limit—corruption would then have nothing to contend with it and the world would reek in the nostrils of God, Himself, till He would be obliged to destroy it!

I look along the ages and I see mankind given up to debauchery and eaten up with worldliness, yet the sinners are permitted to live on year after year. But I also see a strange-looking ship that has been built on dry land and I watch the only family on the earth that fears God, going up into that strange-shaped vessel, and the door is shut by God, Himself! I hear it as it closes and the moment that door is shut, what happens? The world is doomed! God pulls up the sluices of the great deep that lies under and He throws open the floodgates of Heaven—the fountains gush up from below and the rains pour down from above till the whole world is drowned! This awful judgment did not begin till Noah, the one righteous man, was taken away from the rest of mankind and shut in the ark—"*The same day* were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of Heaven were opened. And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights. *In the same day* entered Noah, and Shem,

and Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of His sons with them, into the ark."

I look again, and away yonder, I behold, in the vale of Siddim, the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. If I go within their gates, I hear and see that which disgusts my soul. Things that it were a shame even to speak of, are done in those cities! There is one good man who lives there, and only one. And I see him, early one morning, fleeing with his wife and daughters out of the city. The moment he has passed beyond the bounds of the condemned cities and escaped to little Zoar, what happens? Destruction is poured out of Heaven upon the guilty people—"The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar. *Then* the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of Heaven and He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities and that which grew upon the ground."

Because we do not wish such awful destruction as that, either by water or by fire, to fall upon this guilty world, we ask God to permit the salt to remain in the earth, the light to still burn in it, the Noah to still linger, the Lot to still dwell here yet a little while. When the Lord shall begin rapidly to gather His saints Home, as He may do, by-and-by, and when the wail is heard, "The faithful fail from among the children of men," then shall come dark days, indeed, and the earth shall know the terrible vengeance of Almighty God!

This, then, is one reason why Christ does not pray that we should be taken out of the world—because it would be the ruin of guilty men if the saints were removed from the earth which is only preserved for their sake.

Does not the Lord also wish the righteous to stay in the world a while that *they may be the means of the salvation of others?* How came Jesus here, Himself? He came to seek and to save that which was lost and when He went away, He did not take His disciples out of the world because their ministry was to be blessed to many of their fellow creatures. In this very prayer to His Father, He said, "As You have sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." They who might be safely housed in Heaven stay here that they may be the means of saving others. Mother is still here, though her son has well-near broken her heart. She is left on the earth that she may yet win that boy for Christ. And our old gray-headed friend, whose infirmities are multiplying, is still among us though he would be far happier among the harps of angels—but he is detained here that his grandson, or his still unconverted daughter may hear from his lips, once more, a loving, living testimony for the Lord Jesus and may, thereby be turned to God.

I think that there are many of you who do not, yourselves, love the Lord, who, nevertheless, ought to be very grateful to Him for saying, "I pray not that You should take them out of the world." Oh, dear man, you do not want to lose that loving wife of yours! She has brought you here, tonight, after a good deal of coaxing and tender persuasion. You do not think of her God, or care about the Lord Jesus, but your wife is still liv-

ing to seek the salvation of your soul! I believe she will win you, yet, by God's Grace! There are many who might, long ago, have received their reward and would have been thrice happy to do so, but they have yet to preach the everlasting Gospel and yet to win more souls to Christ! It is more necessary for sinners that Paul should abide in the flesh a little longer, though he, himself, has a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better!

Beloved Christian Brothers and Sisters, if the Lord is keeping any of us here with the objective of using us in the salvation of others, let us take care that we answer the purpose of our continued existence on the earth—let us be up and doing! Let us be earnestly seeking the souls of our relatives! Let us be zealously endeavoring to bring others to Christ! I am sometimes saddened when I hear of households conducted by professedly Christian people—places where one would think that God's name would be upon every tongue—and yet servants may live for years in such families and their masters and mistresses never speak to them about their souls! And many men, employing hundreds of people, will give them their wages as if they had no souls to care about, for they take no interest in the eternal welfare of those who work for them in temporal things! Do not let it be so with you, dear Friends! Masters and mistresses, there are occasions in which you can go to your servants and those employed by you and, without being at all intrusive, can seek to interest them in the things of God! You can call at their homes, perhaps, and the offering of a prayer and speaking to them about the Gospel of Christ may reach them, and bring them to the Savior, where our sermons have failed to do so. I charge you, by Him who bought you by His blood, either go to Heaven and glorify Christ, there, or else, if you remain in the world, glorify Him here! But whether you live, or whether you die, see to this matter, that you answer the Divine purpose, which is that being saved, yourself, you may become the means of saving others.

There is a second reason, then, for our Lord wishing His disciples to stay here, that they may be the means of the salvation of others.

Next, I think the Lord lets His people stay in the world *that they may serve Him in the place where they sinned against Him.* If I had been converted just now, and the Lord were to open the gates of Heaven and say, "Come in," I think that I would step back and say, "Dear Master, may I stay here just a little while to undo some of the mischief that I did in my ungodly state?" I can fancy that someone here would pray, "Lord, there is my friend who used to go to the theater and the music-hall with me, and I taught him much that was mischievous. Will it please You to let me tarry here and tell him about Your great salvation?" I think that another would say, "Lord, I spent so many years in the service of Satan. Now, before I go Home to see Your face, let me have a few years in *Your* service! I would like to undo, by Your Grace, at least a portion of the evil that I have done before I stand in Your Presence amid the eternal splendors of Heaven." It seems to me that it is most gracious of the Lord to let us remain here to serve Him where we sinned against Him, and not to take us

Home as soon as we are converted. I think that we shall congratulate ourselves, even in Heaven, that we had some opportunity of contending for the faith, or of bearing reproach for Christ's sake, or of seeking to win souls for Him before we entered upon our everlasting rest.

Is not that a good reason why the Savior did not pray that His disciples might be taken out of the world?

And is not this another good reason why saints are left in the world? *The Lord keeps His people here that He may exhibit in them the power of Divine Grace*. Just as He permitted Job to be tempted by the devil, that all the world might see how God can enable a man, by patience, to triumph, so He keeps us here to let the devil and all men know what His Grace can do for His people and, also, to let angels and principalities and powers in the heavenly places behold what saints God can make out of guilty sinners! He takes those who had gone far away in sin and brings them near by the blood of Jesus! He fashions the rough, knotty timber that did not seem as if it could ever be shaped, and uses it in the building of His Temple. He makes wonders of Grace out of sinful men and women—such marvels of mercy that the angels will stand and gaze at them throughout eternity, as they say, "How could God make such perfect beings as these out of such sinful material?"

All this will be "to the praise of the Glory of His Grace, wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved." You see, we cannot exhibit patience in Heaven. So far as we now know anything about Heaven, it does not seem possible that there will be any need of patience there. We cannot manifest strength of faith in Heaven, for faith will be lost in *sight*. We can take our love into Glory—there are some flowers that will sweetly open in the land where they have no need of the sun, for Christ is better than the sun! There are certain flowers of less sweet perfume and those can only be developed in the earth and the Lord, therefore, bids us tarry here a while, that He may show what Grace can do in sustaining us in suffering, upholding us under trials and protecting us against temptation. O soldiers of the Cross, do You want crowns without having contended for them?—

"Must You be carried to the skies
On flowery beds of ease,
While others fought to win the prize
And sailed through bloody seas?"

Ask no such thing! Be satisfied to take your share in the conflict, or else I do not see how you can so sweetly relish the triumph which God will give to His people in due time.

Thus, the Lord exhibits the power of His Grace in us and that is another reason why we have to tarry here a while.

Next, I shall have to say many things very briefly where I could have wished to have had time for enlargement. Do you not think that we are kept here *to prepare us for Heaven?* Are we not as yet like children who need education for that truer, higher life? When a boy first goes to school, you do not put into his hands the higher classics. He must plod through his grammar. He must learn many elementary lessons and then

he must work hard on dry and dreary roots. And afterwards you will give him some classic poet that he may read intelligently. So must you and I, here below, go plodding throughout primers. We must work hard at our grammars. We must still have a slate and pencil and when we have become proficient in all, we have to learn, here, so that we shall the better enjoy the holy rest and perfect service which make up the Heaven of the blessed.

Let me give you an illustration of what I mean. A boy is sent to school and his parents pinch themselves to pay for him to have a good education. It is not every boy who will say this to himself, but if he does, he is a first-rate lad—"My poor father and mother are doing all they can to give me a first-class education here. They want to make something of me and I am going to learn with all my heart, so that I may be worthy of all that my parents design for me, and not waste one single shilling of the money they are spending upon me." Such a boy is diligent at his books. He labors where others loiter and treasures up in his mind everything that he learns while others forget it. Now the Lord Jesus Christ is thus putting some of us to school, training us for high employment hereafter! He means to make something of us, by-and-by, and our desire, now, is to be prepared, as far as possible, for what Christ intends for us, that we may be the more to His praise and glory—and our own completeness forever and ever.

I have often been puzzled by those words of the Lord Jesus, "I go to prepare a place for you." What there was about Heaven that was not ready, I do not know, except it was that Jesus, Himself, was not there. But I can easily understand this truth, that *we are not ready for Heaven* yet, for Heaven consists more in character than in place. We have to be more completely sanctified, more truly developed in all good things than we are at present. We are not yet fit for Glory, so Jesus does not pray that we should be taken out of the world, but we are to wait, here, a little longer till His Grace has more fully fitted us for Glory.

Does not the Lord, also, by keeping us here, mean us *to see more of the wisdom, the power, the Grace, and the Truth of God?* Within this last month—a month of remarkable pain and travail for me—I have had certain experiences which I shall never forget! But I would pass through seas ten times as deep and boisterous, merely for the sake of having those experiences repeated! There are some of them which I could not tell, here. There are facts connected with them that would be discreditable to some who had to do with them, though greatly honorable to other. But as to my God, they have shown me His faithfulness, His power, His tenderness, His wisdom—and I believe that, had I been in Heaven, I would not have seen as much of some of the attributes of God as I have seen here below! If you had been an angel, forever praising God in Glory, could you tell how faithful He is to a tried saint? Could you say, if you had not experienced it here on earth, how surely He comforts His people in their deepest sorrows? There are some pearls in these troubled waters that the sea of glass, itself, can never contain! There are some bright

eternal lessons that we would never have known if it had not been for our earthly trials, even if we might have had an archangel for a schoolmaster! Therefore we must stay here, a while, and suffer affliction, temptation, depression of spirit, slander and abuse that we may learn, thereby, the deeper Truths of God's Revelation.

I shall have to abandon the second part of my subject, I see, for my time has already nearly gone. I must, however, make just one more remark upon our first head.

I think that our Lord Jesus does not pray that we may be called out of the world because *He knows that we shall be taken to Heaven in due time*. He scarcely thinks of that as a matter of prayer—it is so entirely in the Father's hands that He leaves it there. I would not encourage anybody here to pray that he might die and, on the other hand, I do not know that I would incite anybody here to pray very earnestly that he might *live*. Hezekiah prayed that his life might be lengthened and his prayer was granted. Manasseh would not have been born if Hezekiah had not lived those extra 15 years, but it would have been a good thing if Manasseh had never been born! Those sins and iniquities with which he made Judah to sin with his idols, though they were forgiven, yet filled up the cup of the nation's perversion from God and fixed the doom of that apostate people! I do not know if the lifting of our finger could make us live for another 20 years, whether we had not better hesitate to lift that finger! At any rate, I feel quite clear about the other side of the question—we have no business to pray that we may die.

As I have already reminded you, the man who prayed that he might die, never died at all! How foolish he was to pray that he might die, when God had intended that he should go to Heaven by a whirlwind, with a chariot and horses of fire! We shall all die in good time, unless the Lord shall come in the splendor of His Second Advent. If You and I had the choice of the time of our death, there would be just a tinge of the element of suicide about it and that is the very worst form of murder. This is clearly our duty, to leave ourselves wholly and unreservedly in the hands of Him to whom belong the issues of life—it is certainly our best course.

This, then, is our Lord's negative prayer—"I pray not that You should take them out of the world."

II. Secondly, if time had permitted, I was also to have spoken to you about THE POSITIVE PRAYER. I will only hint at this.

What did Jesus pray for His disciples? That God would keep them from evil. This is the right prayer for you to offer for yourself. Do not pray to get out of the battle—ask God that you may never be a coward, but that you may bravely play the man in the day of danger. Do not seek to be screened from affliction, but plead that you may never be driven to sin *by* your affliction. You need not even pray that you may not have prosperity, but you may entreat the Lord that prosperity may not make you proud, or worldly. Let your condition be as God wills it, but let your great anxiety be that you may be kept from all sin in every condition.

"I pray not that you should take them out of the world, but that you should keep them from evil." We need to be kept from the evil of *apostasy*, the evil of *worldliness*, from the evil of *unholiness*, from the evil of getting to be as men of the world are—that is the main point. I do not think that it matters much what the condition of a man is so long as his heart is above his condition. I remember that St. Bernard, as he is usually called—Bernard, of Clairvaux—one of the holiest and humblest of men, was, one day, riding on a mule to a certain monastery. One who saw him said, "I think Bernard is getting proud because he is riding on a mule, and sitting upon a cloth which has a fringe of gold lace on it." Now Bernard was a man who cared nothing for that sort of thing and when the other charged him with pride, he said, "Perhaps it may be so, but I never noticed that I had any cloth at all." Someone else had put that fine cloth upon the mule without his knowing anything about it. He really thought that he was riding on the animal's bare back, for his mind was taken up with something far more important.

If you are rich and you have a cloth with a gold fringe on it, do not be conscious of its existence—let your soul rise above it! If you are poor and you have no saddle at all, do not notice your lack, but let your soul soar above such matters. Pray not that you may be taken out of this or that, be it poverty or be it wealth, be it sickness or be it health—but pray that you may be kept from the evil of it, for there *is* an evil in every case! If you are making money, we ought to have a special Prayer Meeting for you, to pray that you may be kept from evil. I said to a Brother who was going to a banquet, the other day, "Well, we will pray for you, dear Friend, for you are going into a place of peril." I do not think there was any great risk to such a man in going—perhaps some of those who stayed at home and complained of him were in more danger! The great point is not where you *are*, not what you are as to circumstances, but that you may be kept by almighty power from the evil which might come out of any circumstances unless you were Divinely preserved from evil! Oh, that the Lord Jesus may say this concerning us, tonight—"I pray not that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from evil"! If so, we can leave everything else in His dear hands.

But, Brothers and Sisters, do not let us be anxious to get to Heaven just yet. Let us seek to fight our way there in valiant fashion. Do not let us be so earnest about the end as about the way—laying hold on Christ and lifting up His dear Cross as our banner! Oh, that all of you would do this and follow the Lamb wherever He goes! We will just bend our thoughts to this one point and not think so much of going to Heaven as of avoiding sin! Lord, keep me out of evil! Then let me live or let me die, hold me up or press me down, let me dance with joy of heart, or let me lie and pine in an agony of pain with anguish racking every bone in my body, it shall be all the same to me—so long as nothing of the evil of surrounding circumstances enters into me—do with me as you will, O my God!

God bless you, dear Friends, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
JOHN 17.

Verse 1. *These words spoke Jesus, lifted up His eyes to Heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come.* The hour to which He had so long looked forward to. The hour which He had anticipated with ardent desire—"The hour is come." On the very night that Jesus prayed this prayer, Luke's record tells us, "When the hour was come, He sat down, and the twelve Apostles with Him. And He said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer." So He began His great intercessory prayer, "Father, the hour is come"—

1, 2. *Glorify Your Son that Your Son also may glorify You: as You have given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.* In these words we have both the general and the special aspects of redemption. Christ has received power over all flesh, but with this peculiar design, that He should give eternal life to as many as His Father has given Him. Who are they who have been given to Him by His Father? All who come to Him by faith, even as He said, "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me." To all of these Jesus gives eternal life.

3. *And this is life eternal, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.* Do you know God? Do you know Jesus Christ? Are you on speaking terms, on loving terms with them? Are They your Friends? Then you have eternal life, for, "this is life eternal, that they might know You the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent."

4-6. *I have glorified You on the earth: I have finished the work which You gave Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify You Me with Your own Self with the glory which I had with You before the world was. I have manifested Your name unto the men which You gave Me out of the world: Yours they were, and You gave them to Me; and they have kept Your Word.* What a sweet thing for the Lord Jesus to say of that poor, much-erring company of disciples, "They have kept Your Word"! "They have not been all they might have been, nor all they ought to have been, but, O My Father, they have kept Your Word!" I trust that we may be found faithful to the Truths of God that the Holy Spirit has taught us, and obedient to its precepts, that our Lord may be able to say to His Father concerning us, also, "They have kept Your Word."

7, 8. *Now they have known that all things to whatever You have given Me are of You. For I have given unto them the Words which You gave Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from You, and they have believed that You did send Me.* See how the Lord Jesus, Himself, takes all His teaching from the Father. You never hear from Him any boast about being the originator of profound thoughts. No, He just repeated to His disciples the Words He had received from the Father—"I have given unto them the Words which You gave Me." If Jesus

acted thus, how much more must the messengers of God receive the Word from the Lord's mouth and speak it as they receive it!

9, 10. *I pray for them: I pray not for the world but for them which You have given Me, for they are Yours. And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine: and I am glorified in them.* Is not this a wonderful prayer? If anybody possessing the greatest possible inventive faculty were asked to produce a prayer which could be fitly prayed by a Person who was both God and Man, it would be an impossible task! This chapter has about it all the air of truthfulness. It ought to be sufficient to convince any man that Christ was God and Man. There is such a wonderful mixing of the two Natures without any confusion of ideas, so manifestly does He plead as Man, and yet so clearly does He also pray as none but the Son of God could pray, that He must be the God-Man, the one Mediator between God and man!

11, 12. *And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your own name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one, as We are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name: those that You gave Me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.* It was known and foretold that Judas would be lost. Therefore, the Savior, the great Keeper of the sheep, is not to be held responsible for the loss of, "the son of perdition," who was never committed to His charge.

13-17. *And now come I to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them Your Word and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through Your Truth: Your Word is Truth.* Our Divine Lord seems to think nothing about His own sufferings! All His thoughts are occupied with that which concerns His people. All His prayers are for *them*, that they may be made holy, and that so God may be glorified in them.

18, 19. *As You have sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself.* Or, "I set myself apart."

19, 20. *That they, also, might be sanctified through the Truth. Neither pray I for these, alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word.* They were only a handful of disciples, but you cannot tell what a multitude will believe on Christ through their word! There were but 12 Apostles yet John beheld a hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel and, after that, he beheld a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, standing before the Throne of God, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and with palms in their hands! The Savior doubtless linked His little band of disciples with the ancient promise, "There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the moun-

tains, the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon." What great events from little causes, spring! Whenever You are doing good, remember not only those who are immediately saved, but the others who will be blessed through them, even as our Savior said, "Neither pray I for these, alone, but for them, also, which shall believe on Me through their word." We who have believed on Jesus, through the Word preached or written by the Apostles, are also included in this prayer of their Lord and ours. Notice what our Savior asked of His Father for them and for us—

21. *That they all may be one; as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they, also, may be one in Us: that the world may believe that You have sent Me.* And when Christians, being one in Christ, and one in the Truth of God, shall become more manifestly one in heart, and life, and faith—what glad days we may hope to see!

22, 23. *And the glory which You gave Me I have given them: that they may be one, even as We are one: I in them, and them in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them, as You have loved Me.* This is a wonderful expression! Where will you find anything like it? It is, indeed, marvelous that God should have loved His people even as He loved Christ, His Son, yet that is what the Lord Jesus here says—"You have sent Me, and have loved them, as You have loved Me."

24-26. *Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My Glory, which You have given Me: for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world has not known You: but I have known You, and these have known that You have sent Me. And I have declared unto them Your name—*

"Your Character, Your work"

26. *And will declare it: that the love wherewith You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them.* This prayer is for You and for Me, as much as for the 12 Apostles. May the Lord fulfill it in all of us as well as in them, for His dear name's sake! Amen.

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

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

By the Grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in modern English, and more than 400 Spanish translations, visit:
www.spurgeongems.org

THE TRUTH OF GOD'S SALVATION
NO. 2356

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, APRIL 15, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 16, 1888.

"O God, in the multitude of Your mercy hear me,
in the Truth of your salvation."
Psalm 69:13.

I WOULD have you admire the educational power of prayer, for prayer is, in itself, an education for a saint. God might have given us every blessing at once without our asking Him for anything, but He says, even of that which He has promised to His people, "I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them," the reason being that, sometimes, the *prayer* for the blessing is as beneficial to us as the blessing, itself, and thus we are twice blessed—first in asking—and then in receiving! Prayer brings the mercy, but in fetching it for us, prayer, itself, gives us an additional blessing. We are, ourselves, graciously helped of God as we pray, and we grow thereby.

Will you also observe that, usually, when saints plead mightily with God, they draw their arguments from the Lord Himself? In this case, David speaks to God of, "Your mercy," and, "the Truth of your salvation." We do not bring pleas to God from abroad—we find them in Him with whom we plead. We say to Him, "You are such a One, therefore, will You not do this for me?" Or, "You have said it, therefore, do as You have said." Our best pleas lie within the compass of God's Character and God's promises.

Now, because of this fact, you will at once see why prayer is so beneficial, for thus it helps us to communion. If we come to God and plead with Him on account of what He, Himself, *is*, we have, in that very pleading, fellowship and communion with Him. We have to think of Him, to consider Him, to endeavor to understand His attributes, and so we come into His Presence intelligently and profitably. This is no small gift, to have our fellowship with the Father fostered by our prayer to Him.

Out of this communion comes edification. Coming near to God, we learn more and more of Him, and we get that kind of knowledge which does not puff us up because it first breeds love, and then builds us up, and we, knowing more of God, are established in Him. "They that know Your name will put their trust in You." Thus we grow in faith, love and every Grace, while prayer leads us to search out the Character of God in order to find these pleas that we use in our supplication. So that, praying is communion and praying is edification! I think that you will grow more in half an hour's prayer than you will in an hour's sermon-hearing! I am not sure that it will be so in every case, for God may bless a variety of

means to different men and women, but I think that the most of us make our great advances in the Divine Life when we are pleading with God—pleading God's own Character with our God, we are then getting near Him and being built up into Him.

And thus, you see, prayer even becomes a confession of faith. Public prayer may thus furnish a very useful means of instruction. That is not its main purpose, but it incidentally happens that, when we are seeking God, first, then other things are added to us in our public prayer. David, in this Psalm, instructs us concerning the multitude of God's mercy and the Truth of His salvation. It does one good to hear a godly man pray. When he pours out his heart before God, his language may be very simple—as simple as it is fervent—but there is a kind of insensible teaching and a force of latent instruction which gets into our soul, almost unawares, when we are joining in the prayers of devout persons. Prayer may thus be speaking to the souls of others as well as unto God and, may be, for some men, the best testimony and witness to the Gospel which they are able to hear. It was certainly so with David.

But it is not my objective, tonight, to enlarge upon the manifold uses of prayer. I could not leave this point without notice, so I have given it to you by way of preface. Let it suggest to you to think still more how large a blessing has come to you through prayer, especially when prayer has taken the form of arguing with God because of the characteristics of His own Nature, finding pleas with Him in Himself.

In the words before us, David pleads with God the Truth of His salvation—"Hear me in the Truth of your salvation," upon which I shall only make these two remarks—first, *God's salvation is a great reality* and, secondly, *We have proved it to be so.*

I. First, GOD'S SALVATION IS A GREAT REALITY, a great Truth of God—"The Truth of your salvation." There is a substance in it. It is not a shadow, it is not a myth, it is not a mere type or figure of speech. It is a substantial thing, there is the Truth of God in it—"The Truth of your salvation."

And, first, let us view it in reference to the Lord, Himself. *To God, His salvation is, in the highest sense, full of Grace and His Truth.*

If I may venture to speak concerning Him of whom we can know nothing except as He reveals Himself, I may say that the truest and deepest thought of God is for the salvation of His people. This lies in the very center of His heart and the drift of His other thoughts and acts is all towards this point. He has ordained His Son to be the Head of a great family, of which He is to be the First-Born among many brethren, and the planning of the whole of creation was arranged in reference to the saved ones—those who are to be redeemed from among men. At the present time, the whole scheme of God's Providential working has a bearing upon the salvation of those whom He gave to His Son to be the reward of the travail of His soul. God's thoughts are high and not as our thoughts, but they are directed toward this central idea. They rest on this foundation principle—the underlying thought of all His works is the display of the Glory of His Grace in the salvation of the sons of men. This is the white of the target

at which He shoots all His arrows and He fails not to hit it. In the grand gathering of all the redeemed, this shall be the loudest note in their song, "Unto Him that loved us, and that washed us from our sins in His own blood, to Him be Glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." The display of all the characteristics of God in the salvation of His people is the subject of His truest, deepest thought.

This is, also, to Himself, the most solid and lasting of all His works. I speak with bated breath when I talk of the things of God, but let me show you, Brothers and Sisters, what I mean. God creates worlds as He pleases. We speak of them as though they had existed and were to exist forever, but, Brethren, even among the starry worlds that are visible to us, many changes have taken place. New stars appear—they are admired awhile for their brilliance, but soon they are gone from our sight. As for this round world in which we dwell, we talk of its "everlasting hills" and so forth, but it shall be burned up and shall pass away. Yon firmament, which seems like a new piece of azure-tinted cloth, is wearing out and, by-and-by, it shall be folded up like an old garment and put away as a worn-out thing. The things that are seen are, after all, but temporal. Do not suppose that you see anything solid—you only see shadows! Faith, alone, sees substance, but everything that the eye is capable of beholding is, of necessity, a temporal and temporary thing.

Look over the history of the whole world. Empires have arisen, all the thoughts of great men have been concentrated upon forming armies, building up enormous establishments and by State-craft consolidating the power of their realm. A dynasty has been formed, king after king has sat upon the throne and they thought, as they built their palaces, and walked in them, that Assyria and Babylon would never pass away! God's Providence lent itself to the building up of these great monarchies, but they were not substantial—they were only fading things, mere leaves upon the bay tree of existence. They came out and they, in due time, faded and dropped into the soil, again. But there is permanence in God's salvation—it will *never* fade—it is not a temporary work! The salvation of His people shall enlist the wondering gaze of angels throughout eternity and the songs of cherubim, seraphim and the hosts of the redeemed by blood shall go up before the Throne of God forever and forever because of the Truth of His salvation! This great work, which He has accomplished, He has made to last forever. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, what a wonderful work is that of the salvation of the sons of men in its abiding results!

And, further, I ask you to think, still from the God-ward aspect, of what Truth there is in salvation in this respect—it is that into which God has thrown His whole Self. When He makes a world, He speaks, and it is done! He commands and it stands forever fast. The morning light and all that is seen by it, are produced by His word and, in His Providence, He just nods and dictates the policies of empires. But in the work of salvation, He, Himself, comes! Behold the Cross! God, in the Person of His Son, bleeds and dies to save a soul! He has given Himself to this stupendous work. The Holy Spirit enters into human bodies and reigns and rules over human minds, abiding in them, continuing His gracious, com-

forting, enlightening and sanctifying work—He, Himself, personally dwelling in the saints! God throws His whole Self into the work of salvation!

His little finger can create the stars and light them up or quench them at His will! But even His right arm is not sufficient for the redemption of His people! Both hands must bear the cruel nails! Both feet must be fastened to the accursed tree! The heart of the Son of God must be pierced by the soldier's lance! He, even He, Himself, must come forth from the bosom of the Father and must descend, and still descend, and yet further descend till He goes down to the lowest parts of the earth—there to work out the salvation of His people! Oh, my dear Friends, when we come to the Truth of God's salvation, we have reached the rocks! Now we have left the ever-rolling sea and landed on the Divine *terra firma.* Here shall you see God, indeed! In other things, you see only His reflection in a mirror, but, in salvation, you see the express Image of the Father's Glory! In the work of the redemption of His chosen, you see God unveiling Himself as far as man is ever capable of seeing Him.

I should need all night if I were to dwell upon these points. So let me observe, in the next place, that *God's salvation is a great reality to ourselves as well as to Him.* Do you remember when you first grasped the true idea of God's salvation, when you understood that God had of old thought out the plan of salvation and, in the fullness of time, had worked it out? Do you remember when you first saw that Truth of God and when you felt that it was just the salvation that you needed and that you must have it—that you must have it *then*, or else perish everlastingly? You did not lay hold upon it, in the hour of your distress, as upon a fiction. You did not grasp it as a thing that might be or might not be. Souls that have ever been drowning in the sea of wrath want to clutch at a *real* salvation and you clutched at it as real. That day when I saw Christ as my soul's salvation, the great Sacrifice for sin was, to my soul, the most real thing I had ever seen! Otherwise it had not staunched the gaping wounds of my poor bleeding heart! Otherwise it had never brought balm and peace to my tortured spirit! I was a *real* sinner—I do not know whether you are—but I was. I had *real* pangs of conviction and I saw a *real* Hell before me—and I needed a *real salvation*—and I grasped it as such!

Since then, dear Friends, God's salvation has been wonderfully real to us. Have we not daily found it more and more so? You have had many things that you doted on and trusted in, but, after a while, these poor cobwebs have been unable to bear the weight that you have hung upon them, and they have all disappeared. But have you not found Christ's salvation to be very real to you from that first day, even until now? If you have not, (excuse my putting it very plainly to you), you have missed your way. If you have not found a real Christ, you certainly *need* one! And if you have not found a real salvation and, by personal experience, known its reality, you are under a delusion and that comfort which you enjoy, tonight, is a false comfort! I wish that I could disturb you out of it, that you might find a real comfort. Remember that life is real, sin is real, death is real, judgment *will* be real and the final sentence will carry with it a *real punishment*! You need, therefore, to find in Christ Jesus the

Truth of His salvation, a real salvation which, though you cannot touch it, is yet tangible to your soul, and which, if you cannot see it, is yet to be surely seen by the eyes of your spirit. But I shall be getting to my second head too fast if I dwell upon this point, so I will leave it.

I think that we can say, dear Friends, that it is a real salvation to us in another sense. There is a Truth in God's salvation in the way that it has operated on us. The way it worked in the change of your character, at first—was not that very real? And sometimes, now, when temptation suddenly comes upon you, does not God's salvation pull you up with a very real check? Yes, and when you get somewhat indifferent in duty, does it not urge you on with a very real spur? Have not some of us said, "I will speak no more in the name of the Lord," and have we not found His salvation to be in us, in the truth of it, like fire in our bones, so that we could not hold our peace? The most potent force upon a real Christian's mind is the Truth of God's salvation—it touches him in a way that nothing else can. We are like music boxes and the Savior holds the key—and when He winds us up, then every part of us begins to play, but not till then! The spiritual nature of man is like a mystic harp upon which only One can play so as to bring out the fullness of its music! And the hand that can play upon our hearts is the hand that was nailed to the Cross. The Truth of God's salvation operates most powerfully upon our minds and so proves to us that it is real.

Now, beloved Friends, to speak a little in detail of the Truth of this salvation, if we have really laid hold of the Truth of God's salvation, we believe in a real Fall. We do not believe that Adam's Fall is a mere fiction or parable, but we believe it to be a sad and terrible fact, for if there was not a real Fall, then there is no Truth of God in salvation! If we have not fallen from our first estate, we do not *need* picking up! But, alas, we have grievously fallen!

Next, if you have the Truth of God's salvation, you will believe in real sin. There are hosts of sham sinners about. They come into our Chapels and we preach the Gospel to them, but they never get any good out of it. You may relieve sham beggars, but God never does. He relieves those who are really in need. Truly needy persons never come to Him in vain, but your pretended, dressed-up, hypocritical sinners, who say, "Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners," when they are neither miserable nor yet consciously sinful, God never relieves them! If you know the Truth of God's salvation, you must believe in real sin. "Oh!" says one, "I have more than enough of that." Then come and have real salvation! You who have really transgressed—you are the men and women for whom there is Truth in God's salvation—but, if there is no truth in your sinnership, there is, to you, no Truth in Christ's salvation.

Once more, if we get to know the Truth of God's salvation, we believe in a real Atonement. You know the description that is given of the Atonement as it is preached by some gentlemen of supposed "culture." It is this—that Jesus Christ did something or other which, in some way or other, is probably more or less remotely connected with the pardon of sin. Such a salvation as that would not save a mouse! No, no, we must

have a real Atonement—the Substitution of our Lord Jesus Christ for guilty sinners—the bearing of our sin in His own body on the tree! They say that it is unjust that Christ should suffer for us. On the contrary, I venture to affirm that it was in the highest degree *just* that He should die for His people, for He was one with us! His death was not merely substitution for us, but He had *identified* Himself with us. He came here on purpose that He might be one with His people and, being one with them, as the Second Adam, it behooved Him that He should suffer. It was right that, having married His Church, He should go with her for better and for worse, and bear her sins in His own body on the tree. And He did so, blessed be His name! And I believe that He really expunged His people's sins, that He truly took away the hand-writing of ordinances that was against us and nailed it to His Cross that, by His precious death, He might put away all the transgressions of His people once and for all. You have not learned the Truth of God's salvation if you do not believe in a real Atonement.

Next, true faith brings to us a real pardon. If you have received the Truth of God's salvation, you are really forgiven. It was no fictitious document that was presented to you in that day when your Savior said to you, "Go, and sin no more. Your sins, which are many, are all forgiven." It was a real pardon, signed by the King's own hand, and your sins are gone—they shall not be mentioned against you any more, forever. "Do you believe this?"

Now the Holy Spirit is working in you a real sanctification. Have you that sign and token of Grace? Have you given up evil habits? Have you quit your vices? Do you hate the very thought of sin? Are you watchful over all things within you and all things around you? Is "holiness unto the Lord" inscribed upon your whole life? If not, you have *not* a real salvation, and you do not know the Truth of that salvation! But if God has made you truly holy, by the sanctifying power of His Spirit, then listen once more.

One part of the truth of this salvation is that there is a real Heaven for you. The Lord Jesus, Himself, says to you—

"You shall see My glory soon!
When the work of Grace is done
Partner of My throne you shall be."

And you shall dwell forever in a true Heaven, with a true Christ, in true Glory and only *then* shall you know to the fullest, the Truth of His Salvation!

Thus have I shown you that God's salvation is a great reality to God, Himself, and also to ourselves.

Further, if you would know the Truth of God's salvation, remember that the term used, here, signifies that *God's salvation is real in its constancy*. It will bear every strain and, therefore, it is that David uses it as a plea in prayer. He comes to God and he says, "Lord, I am in great distress. I beseech You, help me in my extremity by the Truth of Your salvation! Your salvation never fails, but endures every strain. Therefore, I beseech You, deliver me at this moment!" There are some times, when you are on your knees, and you need a master plea, that you can say, "Lord,

if it is thus, then I beseech You, deliver Your servant. If this is a promise of Yours and You have spoken it, now do as You have said." It is no impertinence to plead with God in this way—"If this salvation of Yours is a fiction. If you have never spoken peace to my heart, nor brought me into the new and spiritual life, then, Lord, You may leave me. But if this is, indeed, as I believe it is, Your love to me, Your Grace in me, Your work for me—if I have, indeed, received Your salvation, then I beseech You, help Your servant and deliver me!"

You will find the value of such pleading if you have but faith to know that there is Truth in God's salvation, in the fact of its perpetuity, its constancy, its unfailing power to bear you right through to the end as surely as it has borne you thus far. Oh, may God grant us Grace to feel that the truest and most real thing in earth or Heaven is the salvation of the blessed God! There is no doubt that it is so and that there is substance and endurance in it—and we do well to use this fact as a plea when we need a substantial argument in prayer.

That is my first point, God's salvation is a great reality.

II. Now I shall ask your kind attention while, for a few more minutes, I speak upon the second head. WE HAVE PROVED IT TO BE SO—"The Truth of your salvation."

We have proved it, first, *by our experience of a new life*. Now reach for your diaries. "They are at home," you say. Take out your pocketbooks, then. You have not brought them with you tonight? Use your memories, then. Think what has been the experience of the new life in your soul. If there is Truth in God's salvation, you are not, now, what you once were, and you are now what you once never dreamed of being! There is within you, now, a life as much superior to the ordinary life of man as the life of an angel would be to that of the swine at the trough! Are you aware of that? Has such a life as that come into you? If so, that is one of the proofs of the Truth of God's salvation to you. An ungodly man sitting here may say, "That is no proof to *me*." No, of course it is not! You have not experienced it, so it cannot be evidence to you. Swine that were turned into angels would have, within themselves, a proof of some Divine operation upon them, would they not? Have you ever known what it was to be like the beast that perishes? Perhaps you have, for your thoughts never rose towards God—you were worldly, sensual, animal, perhaps devilish.

I do not know whether you ever sank so low as that, but if the Grace of God has come into your heart and made you feel sorrows and joys that you never knew before, you have a proof of the Truth of God's salvation! When Luther was talking with the pretended prophets who claimed to be Inspired, he said to one of them, "Did you ever have births and deaths within your soul?" The man looked at him in amazement. "You knew nothing of it," said Luther—"You knew nothing of it, for he that knows the Lord has had births and deaths, creations and destructions within his own spirit." It is even so.

My Hearer, do you know anything about this? Ordinary men do not know it—they are soulish, they have the life of a soul, they are far above

the brutes—but Christian men are as far above *them* as *they* are above the brutes, for they have received a third and higher principle of life! The Spirit of God dwells in them! The Spirit of God has become dominant in them and this has elevated them into quite another region. This world that you see is not the world in which Believers live. You see mountains and hills—so do they—but you do not hear them break forth into singing before you, as Believers do. You see the trees of the field, but you never heard them clap their hands, as saints have done. There are many things, I guarantee you, which have not entered into your philosophy unless you have been born again. He who has been regenerated and has burst the shell that held him, like the unhatched bird within it, has emerged into new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness—and that fact is to him the proof of the truth of his salvation.

How else do we prove this? There is one sweet proof which we sometimes have of the Truth of God's salvation and that is, *our sense of sonship*. It is a great thing to be able to say, "Abba, Father," to know that God is our Father, not taking it as an abstract Truth that God is our Father, but feeling the Spirit of adoption witnessing within us, regarding Him not as Father in name only, but in *reality*, so that the thought of Him draws out emotions of love, delight, trust and nearest relationship. Oh, if you have that, you have proved the Truth of God's salvation! By nature you are of your father, the devil, and his works you do. But if you are now of your Father who is in Heaven, and you love Him and you grow like He, that is a grand proof to you of the Truth of His salvation!

Let me tell you one or two other things. Time flies, so I will only mention them. Sometimes, God gives us proofs of the Truth of His salvation by *our ecstatic joy*. This is not a theme that I like to speak of except in very select company, but, believe me, we do have "high days and holidays." We have our hard days, sometimes, and you know about them, but you do not see our joys. Oh, if you did but know them, you would be willing to live a life of sorrow to have one day with us on the holy Mount with the transfigured Christ! I have thought, sometimes, that I never could doubt, again, after an experimental acquaintance with the banqueting house, and a sight of the banner of love waving over my head!

Oh, the joy, the overwhelming joy, of the torrents of Divine Love when they come pouring into the soul! They bear everything away. If a man or a devil were then to come up and say to us, "There is no Truth of God in all this," we would feel as if we could not do him the honor to pour contempt upon him! We are blessedly sure of the Truth of God's salvation when we get a grip of Christ, when, with Mary, we sit at His feet! When, with John, we lie in His bosom! When, like the spouse, we even touch His dear lips and receive the kisses of His mouth! You who have enjoyed this delightful experience know the Truth of God's salvation.

Now let me turn to another leaf of the diary of which I spoke. You know something of the Truth of God's salvation if you have done business in great waters and have had *Divine support in trouble*. Were you ever in this condition, that they said of you, "There is not a second person who justifies his course of action"? "It was proposed to pass a vote of

approval of his conduct, but there was no one to second it." Did you ever open letter after letter and find that this friend will never help you again? That the next is ashamed of you and that the next one blasphemes God and you, also? You go on being stripped of one thing after another till you seem to have come to your last rag and then you say, "Still, I do not falter, I do not mean to budge an inch. I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that if all men forsake me, He will help me!" And you find, just then, a flush of joy come over you such as you never felt before, because now you are leaning on God's bare arm and there is nothing between you and the Almighty!

I admire that saying of Luther, when he looked out of the window and exclaimed, "There stands the arch of Heaven, without a single pillar and yet it never falls." That is the way to stand—when all the pillars are knocked away. So many of us are like ships on the stocks—there we lie, in the dock, and we shall never do any good as we are! But if the dog-shores are all knocked away and there is nothing left to support us, we go slipping into the water and so begin our true lifework. God help you, dear Brothers and Sisters, by His own Presence! And if you have once known the Presence of God in the utter absence of every form of comfort or help from mortal man, you will have had a most convincing proof of His salvation! The Lord can help you when you are in a fever—He can help you when you have gone, time after time, to the grave, and now that your last friend is buried. He can help you when that little income is suddenly taken away. He can bear you up when the vilest slander is cast upon your spotless reputation. And you can still, for all that, say, "The Lord is my portion, says my soul and, therefore, will I hope in Him." These are testing times, but it is *then* that you know the Truth of God's salvation!

And then, to turn over another leaf—a bright leaf this time—when all those troubles are ended and you get out of your difficulties—when *God has worked great deliverances for you*—then you know the Truth of His salvation! Then Miriam takes her timbrel! I do not remember hearing of her having a timbrel before. Miriam, where was your timbrel when you came out of Egypt? Why, then, poor Miriam was busy carrying some of her household goods like the rest who had their kneading-troughs upon their shoulders! But she found her timbrel when the Lord had triumphed gloriously and the horse and his rider had been thrown into the sea. Some of us have our timbrels at home. We are beginning to get our fingers ready for playing on them, for the Lord will work for His people, and He will bring forth His chosen, as He has said, "I will bring again from Bashan, I will bring My people, again, from the depths of the sea." Then it is that we know the Truth of His salvation.

But if you do not have these ups and downs, beloved Friends, you may know the Truth of God's salvation, and you ought to know it by *the sweet realizations of faith*. Where faith is strong, it has the faculty of anticipation, and that is a blessed faculty of the Divine Life, the power of stretching out your hands across the ages and bringing the far-off distance near. Perhaps you and I may not be in Heaven for another 20 years—we

cannot tell, but Faith sits still and sees Heaven all round about her—and sometimes she puts on her crown and takes it off and casts it at her dear Lord's feet. Now and then she gets her heavenly harp and lays her fingers among the strings. I have known her put on all her holy array and walk in her white robes down the golden streets of Paradise—and she has seen and heard things which it were not lawful for her to utter!

Do you ever have these good times? If you do not and you are a child of God, you are losing a great deal He is both able and willing to give to you! There lies, a little to the right of the road to Heaven, a hill called Mount Clear. Pass it not by in a hurry, but climb to the top of it and stand there. With a clear faith, believe in all that your God has told you—stay there till you can see! They say, "Seeing is believing." That is not true—*believing* is seeing when you "believe" fast enough and steadily enough. I say not that every Believer can see all this at once. If you have good milk—of course you do not all have it pure—but if you have good milk, there is no cream on it at first. But if you stand it for a little while and let it be still, there will come some cream to the top.

So it is with faith. It is good milk, but you must let it stand a while and then you will find the cream of enjoyment, assurance and realization which will make you feel, "I know that God's salvation is true. I am sure of it, for I have as clearly perceived it by faith as if I had seen it with my natural eyes." If the senses, faulty as they are, can convey any sort of conviction to the mind, much more can that higher and truer God-given sense of faith convey to us a conviction that it is even as God has revealed unto us!

I wish any dear friend, here, who is not yet saved, might be led to test the Truth of God's salvation. God, through Jesus Christ, can ease you of your burden at once! It is a cold wintry night. You came in here and you have had a little shelter, and you are going out, again, into the cold, but go not away with your burden—leave it in the pew! Better still, cast your burden upon the Lord! Jesus can give you ease and rest. Go not away with your foulness—Jesus can wash you! Go not outside till you, yourself, are whiter than the snow! The Lord grant you Grace to do so! Your faith will give you God. The longest arm of the greatest giant can never reach to Heaven, but the *finger* of faith can touch the Savior! Believe! Trust, and the work is done and you shall know the Truth of His salvation!

Let us go our way with just this word of prayer. Lord, let us all know the Truth of Your salvation! May we all trust You! May we trust You more, and more, and more, and more, and more! May we trust You implicitly! May we trust You up to the hilt and glorify You thus by our childlike faith, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
Psalm 37:1-18.

Let us read, tonight, part of the 37th Psalm. David, here, first of all, dissuades himself and us from falling into a very common evil—that of

envying the wicked because of their prosperity and murmuring against God because we, perhaps, are not so highly favored in our earthly affairs.

Verses 1, 2. *Fret not yourself because of evildoers, neither be you envious against the workers of inequity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.* No one envies the grass, let it be ever so green. No one envies flowers, let them be ever so fragrant, for we know that grass must be cut and that flowers must wither. Let us look upon the wicked in the same light—their time of perishing shall soon come, their end hastens on—therefore, let all envying be out of the question since they are such short-lived beings.

3. *Trust in the LORD, and do good.* There you have the secret of the active life of the Christian! The root of his activity lies in his faith—"Trust in the Lord." The outward manifestation of his inner life is in the good that he does and where there is this faith, proven to be living faith by good works, there follows the promise—

3. *So shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed.* It does not say, "Young man, verily you shall prosper in business." It does not say, "O ambitious man, you shall dwell in a palace, or revel in luxuries," but it *does* say to you, O humble-minded Christian, trusting in God, "Verily, you shall be fed." You know, when the word, "verily," is used, there is something upon which God sets His seal as being true—"Verily, you shall be fed." God's, "Verilys," are better than men's oaths. Believe, then, Christians, and let there be no more fretting about your temporal trials. I know you have come in here, tonight, very anxious and vexed with care and grief—take this, "Verily," and lay it, like Isaiah's lump of figs, upon the boil and, "Verily," you shall soon be healed!

4. *Delight yourself, also, in the LORD; and He shall give you the desires of your heart.* Delight is a Christian's duty. To sorrow, to mourn, to despair—these belong not to the Believer. "Delight yourself in the Lord." Christians, here is a river to swim in—plunge into it! Here is a bottomless abyss of delights—the Person, the Grace, the works, the attributes of our Covenant God! And here is a promise given to each one of those who carry on this excellent duty, "He shall give you the desires of your heart."

5. *Commit your way unto the Lord; trust, also, in Him; and He shall bring it to pass.* Put the helm of your ship into the hand of the Almighty Pilot. Leave the guidance of your pilgrimage to Him who has led many caravans across the desert and who has never suffered any to perish! What an easy way this is and yet how difficult do we find it to carry it out! It is to unload ourselves and put our burden on our God. Oh, that we had the sanctified commonsense to make us fulfill this duty!

6. *And He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the noonday.* Leave your character with God—it is safe, there. Men may throw mud at it, but it will never stick long on a true Believer—it shall soon come off and you shall be the more glorious for men's slander.

7-11. *Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him: fret not yourself because of him who prospers in his way because of the man who brings wicked devices to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not*

yourself in any wise to do evil. For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yes, you shall diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. This is now a Gospel blessing, for Christ pronounced it upon the mount among His other benedictions—"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Somehow or other, the only persons who truly enjoy life and get happiness out of this present vale of tears, are the meek spirits, the men who can say—"Mine are the valleys, and the mountains mine; my Father made them all." Even the possessions of other men make these people glad! They are like the man we have heard of in China who met a mandarin covered with jewels and, bowing to him, said, "Thank you for those jewels." Doing this many times, at last the mandarin asked the cause of his gratitude. "Well," said the poor but wise man, "I thank you that you have those jewels, for I have as good a sight of them as you have; but I have not the trouble of wearing them, putting them on in the morning, taking them off at night, and having a watchman keeping guard over them when I am asleep. I thank you for them—they are as much use to me as they are to you." This meek man can walk along the broad acres of a rich man's farm! He can see his noble oaks and other forest trees and he can say, "Thank God for them all! I have as much enjoyment from these as the rich man, himself, has, for they are mine to enjoy as truly as they are his." "The meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace," not in the abundance of wealth, but in the abundance of *peace*! To a meek man, peace *is* his wealth, and holy quietness and calm his true riches!

12-18. *The wicked plots against the just, and gnashes upon him with his teeth. The Lord shall laugh at him: for He sees that his day is coming. The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as are of upright conversation. Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken. A little that a righteous man has is better than the riches of many wicked. For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the LORD upholds the righteous. The LORD knows the day of the upright: and their inheritance shall be forever.* He knows their dark days and *He* will be their light—He knows their sunny days and *He* will be their shelter. He knows their last day and *He* will be their confidence. He knows their resurrection-day and *He* will be their glory—"Their inheritance shall be forever."—

"Go, you that boast in all your stores,
And tell how bright they shine.
***Your heaps of glittering dust are* yours,**
***But my Redeemer's* mine."**

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—196, 210,191.

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

THE TWO PILLARS OF SALVATION
NO. 2357

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, APRIL 22, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 19, 1888.

"We believe on Him that raised up Jesus, our Lord, from the dead; who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised, again, for our justification." Romans 4:24, 25.

FAITH—true, saving faith—is in all ages the same. It may exercise itself upon different things, but the faith of Abraham is the same faith as that which was in the heart of Paul—and the faith of Paul was precisely the same faith as that which is in the heart of every Believer at the present moment! We have "like precious faith" with the godly of all the ages. It is always the same faith as it is always the same God and the same Savior.

Paul shows us, in this chapter, that there is a remarkable likeness between the faith of the Believer, now, and the faith of Abraham. Abraham's faith went this length—he believed in God as able, even, to quicken the dead, and that is precisely what we believe! He believed that he, himself, when he was more than a hundred years old, with his wife equally advanced in age, could be so quickened by the power of God that they should be the parents of a seed which God had promised and, although Sarah once laughed, and I should imagine that Abraham, sometimes, had his fainting fits, yet they persevered in the solemn conviction that it should be even as the Lord had promised. And the day came when Sarah laughed in another sense, for a child was born to her, whose name was called, "Isaac," that is, "Laughter," because of the joy with which he filled his parents' hearts and home! Thus, you see, Abraham believed that God could quicken the dead—he, himself, and his wife, being as though they were dead as to all possibility, in the ordinary course of nature—an heir should be born to them.

Further on in the Patriarch's history, God tried his faith again. He bade him go and take his son, his only son, whom he loved, and offer him up as a sacrifice on Mount Moriah. Abraham only wished to know what God commanded and he was prompt in obeying. It was not for him to reason why, or make reply—it was for him to *obey*—so he went his three days' journey, his much-loved son bearing the wood for the sacrifice. They went to the top of the mountain and Abraham drew his knife to slay his son. His hand was divinely stopped in due time and a ram was offered in the place of Isaac. One reason why Abraham was able to give this crowning proof of obedience was that he was sure that God would keep His promise and that, even if his son must die, God would raise him from the dead! This seems to have been the point to which his faith al-

ways came—that God could raise the dead, that He could work what men call impossibilities—that what was not within the range of human nature was quite easy to that eternal arm to whose power there is no limit!

Now, Beloved, this is one of the articles of our Christian faith—to believe that God can raise the dead. You and I believe, if we are true Believers, that God brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that Great Shepherd of the sheep. We believe that Jesus assuredly died and that He was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, but that on the third day He rose, again, and left the tomb, no more to die. This we most firmly believe to be a matter of *fact*—not a fiction, or a piece of poetry—but a matter of *fact*, like any other reliable history, and we accept it without question. We also believe that we, too, though we may die, shall live again and that, although worms may devour this body, yet in our flesh we shall see God! At the sound of the archangel's trumpet, the dead in Christ shall rise and all the dead from land or sea shall gather before the Great White Throne. However scattered the particles of their bodies may have been, in ten thousand devious ways, it matters not—the body that was sown in weakness shall be raised in power—that which was sown a corruptible body shall be raised in incorruption!

This we unfeignedly believe and our faith also believes that, even now, as to spiritual things, though by nature we are dead to the things of God, yet He can raise the dead. When we feel heavy and dull, and the music of our worship drags wearily, we believe that God can quicken us and, though we know many who are, this day, without spiritual life, and far from God by wicked works, we go and speak to them the everlasting Gospel with the full persuasion that God can raise the dead, even those who are dead in trespasses and sins! Though they were dead, yet shall they live! We believe this and rejoice in it!

Thus I think I have shown you that the faith of Abraham is a fair specimen of the faith of all Believers and in this way he is the father of all Believers—and all the children bear a family likeness. In each case, they have faith in Him who can quicken the dead.

Now let us come to our text, and I will handle it briefly with the intense desire that if anybody wants to find the way of salvation, he may find it *tonight*. True faith is of this character—"We believe on Him that raised up Jesus, our Lord, from the dead; who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised, again, for our justification."

I. First, OUR FAITH LOOKS TO GOD THE FATHER IN THE MATTER OF SALVATION. We do not, alone, look to Jesus Christ, as some say that we do, but, "we believe on Him that raised up Jesus, our Lord, from the dead." Not on, "Jesus, our Lord," alone. We do believe on Him, but we also equally believe on God that raised up Jesus, our Lord, from the dead.

On this point there is an erroneous faith in two ways and one is sorry to see either form of this error, since it mars the beauty of Divine Truth. *Some overlook the Father*. They speak of Jesus as though we were indebted to Him and to Him, only, for our salvation. We are immeasurably indebted to Him, blessed be His name! But Jesus does not save without the Father, or apart from the Father, or against the Father's will! I like

the expression that is used in the Book of Genesis concerning Abraham and his son when they were going to the Mount of Sacrifice—it is written, "They went, both of them, together." And in the great Sacrifice that was made for human sin, I may say of the Divine Father and His equally Divine Son, "They went, both of Them, together." There was a secret agreement and concurrence between the Father and the Son concerning our redemption, and the Father has our love and gratitude, even as the Son has. Jesus gave Himself for us, but the Father gave Jesus, His other Self!

Jesus says, "I and My Father are One." I might say, in a certain sense, that it was God the Father who suffered for us, for He gave His Son, whom He loved, to suffer on our behalf. He gave up the darling of His heart and, in the Person of His Son, He became our Savior. It is, "God, our Savior," as well as, "Jesus Christ, our Savior." Never dissociate the Father from the Son in the work of redemption! Jesus did not come into this world to die to make His Father gracious. No, the Covenant of Grace was made from eternity and Jesus came to fulfill a stipulation of the Covenant through which it behooved Him to suffer. The Father's love is from everlasting and the death of Jesus is one of the streams that flow from that eternal Fountain. The Father is to be praised, for He delivered up His Son and raised His Son, again, from the dead. And we must never forget the Grace which He has, in this way, manifested for our salvation! Therefore, let us never fall into the error of those who overlook the Father's part in our redemption.

It is an equally pernicious error if we overlook the Son. Oh, how many talk about God, pray to God and speak of God's mercy—but what have they to do with God if they ignore or despise His Son? *God* will not hear you. He will not answer your prayers if you do not come to Him by Jesus Christ! There is but one way of coming to the Father and that is through His Son, Jesus Christ! And you cannot approach God without the one Mediator between God and men. Why did He ordain a Mediator and why did that Mediator shed His blood, if you and I can come to God without His propitiatory Sacrifice? No, Beloved, we believe on Jesus Christ as well as the Father. We believe on the Father, but we believe on Him as the God that raised up Jesus, our Lord, from the dead! It is not the Father without the Son who saves, nor the Son without the Father—nor these two without the Divine and ever-to-be-blessed Holy Spirit! It needs the whole Trinity to make a Christian! And the whole Trinity, co-operating in a Divine Unity, must be praised and adored for our salvation!

But, now, what does the text say in bidding us trust to God the Father in our salvation? Well, it says, first, that *He delivered up His Son.* Of Jesus, we here read, "who was delivered for our offenses." We know who it was that delivered Him, for we have in this same Epistle the text, "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?" It was the Father who delivered His Son to be arrayed in human flesh. It was the Father who delivered His Son to be despised and rejected of men. It was the Father who delivered up His Son to the traitor's kiss and to the cruel handling of the Roman soldiers. It was the Father who delivered up His Son to the scourge and then to the Cross—and to the bitterness of death, itself! The

Father gave up His Son to die for sinners! This was the supreme proof of the Father's love to us.

And then, next, we are told that, in due season, it was the Father who *raised up Jesus from the dead*—"We believe on Him that raised up Jesus, our Lord, from the dead." The Resurrection of Christ is spoken of in different ways in Scripture, but among other declarations it is expressly said to have been worked by the power of the Father. Well, then, we have to thank Him for a living Christ, a risen Christ! It was the Father who breathed the life, again, into that dead body and brought our Redeemer back to life. It was the Father who bade the angels roll away the stone from the mouth of the sepulcher when the resurrection morning dawned.

And remember that, as these two things—the delivering up of Christ and the raising of Christ from the dead—are ascribed to the Father, so the two fruits that come of them are also of the Father. The first fruit is *the pardon of sin*—"Who was delivered for our offenses." The second fruit is *justification*—"And was raised, again, for our justification." These are both the work of the Father! It is the Father who forgives and it is the Father who justifies. "It is God that justifies," said Paul, when he was carried away with a sort of Divine ecstasy. "It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns?" So, then, we cannot truly trust to Jesus apart from the Father. To come back to the point on which I have already spoken to you—to try to drive that nail home and even to clinch it—*we do not look to Jesus apart from the Father*, any more than we look to the Father apart from Jesus! This is the true Scriptural faith, "We believe on Him that raised up Jesus, our Lord, from the dead; who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised, again, for our justification."

Now, Soul, if you would be saved, before anything else it is necessary that you should trust your soul in the hands of God, the faithful Creator, beholding always associated with those hands, the Lord Jesus Christ, God and Man, who has died and risen, again, to put away your sin! Such a faith now exercised will save you at once and will save you forever and ever!

II. Now I advance a step farther and come to the second head, THE FAITH WHICH SAVES THE SOUL CONCERNS ITSELF WITH JESUS CHRIST AS OURS. Listen to this—*true faith looks to nothing else that is ours*. When it looks within, this faith sees nothing there worth having and nothing worth trusting to for salvation. Therefore it cries out against its own righteousness, which is of the Law, and desires to count it only as filthy rags! It views Jesus Christ, however, as its real treasure.

Do you notice, in my text, the word, "our," three times over? Just mark with a pencil under that little pronoun each time it is mentioned. *True faith receives Jesus Christ as "our" Lord Jesus.* "Jesus *our* Lord," our Jesus, our Savior—not only *a* Savior, but *our* Savior—and being Lord as well as Savior, we acknowledge Him as our Lord, Jesus, we take Him to be our Lord. This is how He, Himself, puts it, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me," and this we desire to do. This, then, is the true, unfeigned faith which saves the soul—the faith which appropriates Jesus as our Savior and as our Lord!

And the next appropriation is that *true faith sees Christ as delivered for "our" sins.* "Who was delivered for our offenses." That means your offenses and mine—"*our* offenses." Oh, my dear Hearers, it is of little use to believe in Jesus Christ as delivered for the offenses of those who lived in the ages past—we must believe that He was delivered for *our* offenses! It will not save us to believe that Jesus Christ was delivered for the sins of nations far remote from us. No, but we must believe that He was delivered for *our* offenses. This is the faith that says, "Jesus Christ bore my sins in His own body on the tree." Grasp the Savior as *your* Sin-Bearer. "Look unto Me," He says, "and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." Look unto Him, look unto Him at this moment—you are saved the moment that you look! Trust Him as your Savior! Touch Him, as did the woman of old—it shall suffice you if you can but touch Him by faith and straightway you shall be saved from all your transgressions—for true faith believes "He was delivered for our offenses."

And then next, *true saving faith appropriates Christ as raised for "our" justification.* It is a Scriptural doctrine that we are justified through the death of Christ, but you must not leave it merely as a doctrine—you must take it to yourself by faith and make it an *experience*, as the text says—"Who was raised, again, for our justification." For whose justification? For *yours*, dear Friends, and mine—"for *our* justification." I like the word, "our," sometimes better than the word, "my." When I get quite alone, I sometimes pray, "*My* Father in Heaven." Still, I am thankful that the Lord did not so word the model prayer that He gave to His disciples, but that He put it, "*Our* Father"—that is, the Father of you, me and all of us who love His dear name and trust His dear Son.

Yes, Jesus was raised for *my* justification—I praise Him for that glorious fact! I see in front of me every morning, when I am washing, that passage, "Who loved me and gave Himself for me," and I thank the Lord that it is true. But, still, I like this word, "our," in our text—"Who was raised, again, for our justification." Does "our justification" mean your justification, dear Friends, as well as mine? Who will ride with me in the double-seated chariot of this precious pronoun, "our," saying, "He was raised, again, for *our* justification"?

Thus have I taught you two lessons. The first, that our faith looks to God the Father in salvation. And secondly, that our faith concerns itself with Christ as *ours*.

III. Now, thirdly, OUR FAITH FOR SALVATION RELIES ON CHRIST'S DEATH AND RESURRECTION—"Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised, again, for our justification."

Observe, then, that *a faith which only deals with the historical narrative of Christ's life will not save you.* If you believe that there was such a Person as Jesus Christ, even if you truly believe that He was both God and Man. If you believe all that Matthew, Mark, Luke and John wrote, and all the Epistles, as well, yet, if you believe this only in the sense that they are *historically* true, you have not yet attained to saving faith! You must go beyond that if you are to possess the faith mentioned in our text.

Note, next, that *faith in the beauty of Christ's life will not save you.* Of late there has risen up a set of infidels of a very superior character to the old-fashioned ones, in some respects. Instead of abusing the Christian religion, they have written lives of Christ and they have poured out all kinds of laudation upon the wonderful and lovely Character of the Man, Christ Jesus. Now, mark you, I think that Christ does not like their praise any better than He did the blasphemies of those who came before them, because, if Jesus of Nazareth was not the Son of God, if He was not really God, the Son, He could not have been a good Man! His moral Character, though admirable in many respects, would have been spoiled by the fact that He allowed Himself to be *worshipped* and that He spoke of Himself in such a way that millions of us believe Him to be truly God! And knowing and foreseeing, as such a Man must have done, that this would be the result of His teaching, He was a gross impostor if He was not very God of very God! Therefore, if you believe Christ's Character to be beautiful, if you do not also believe Him to be the Son of God, you are not yet on the right track—you have not the faith of God's elect—you have to go on another road than that if you would come, at last, to the Heaven where He is.

There are some who do not truly believe, although they have *faith in the accuracy of Christ's teaching.* "Yes," they say, "He is a wonderful Teacher and whatever He taught is true"—but they do not practically believe that. It is merely the doctrine that they take, and not the God, the Christ, who gave the doctrine! They simply exercise their brain intellectually, but they do not trust Him, *spiritually,* with their heart. They do not trust God who raised Christ from the dead. In fact, after all, they do not build upon the two main foundation stones of saving faith, namely, the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ!

I venture also to say that you may have the most orthodox *faith in Christ's Godhead* and *believe in Jesus as being Lord,* but if that is all you believe, you have not yet obtained salvation. The faith that saves centers in Him, "Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised, again, for our justification." If you would be saved, fix your eyes upon the sufferings of the Son of God—

"See, my Soul, your Savior see,
Prostrate in Gethsemane."

I know that a sight of His life will do you good. It will be an example to you, but you are not bid to look to that for your salvation. Your eyes are to be fixed upon Him as delivered for your offenses. You are to see Him as accused of sin, though in Him was no sin. You are to see Him as made sin for you, as your Substitute, standing in your place, and suffering in your place, delivered for your offenses. If you can see this, then you have your eyes fixed upon that which will save you—the Father laying your sin upon the Son, making it to lay upon Him. The Father smiting the Son as if He were not only a sinner, but all the sinners in the world rolled into one till His Son cries, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" "Who was delivered for our offenses"—there lies your only hope! If you will not have Jesus Christ as your Substitute, dying in your place, I know of no door of salvation for you! But if you will take Him as God de-

livers Him, not for your righteousness, but *for your sins*, to bear for you what you ought to bear, and pay for you what you could never have paid—if you will have Him so, then you have taken Christ in the right way!

But you must also believe in Him as risen from the dead. He did rise from the dead and He always lives to make intercession for us—and it is under that aspect that you are to be justified, cleansed by a dying Savior, clothed by a risen Savior, washed from your iniquity by His precious blood, raised into acceptance with the Father by His everlasting life when He rose from the dead and led captivity captive, and received gifts for men, yes, for the rebellious, also!

Behold, then, the Jachin and Boaz, the two massive columns that support the temple of our salvation! Between these two great Truths of God—Christ's death for us and Christ's Resurrection for us—lies the King's highway to eternal life. And there is no other road to salvation!

IV. So I close with the fourth point, OUR FAITH SHOULD LEARN TO SEE THE DISTINCT RELATION OF EACH WORK OF CHRIST TO ITS END—"Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised, again, for our justification." At first, for a poor sinner, it is enough that he trusts Christ and does no more. But it is for our comfort and edification to learn to distinguish the blessings that flow from certain Divine Fountains—to look along the various roads of the great King to see what comes this way and what comes that.

First, then, dear Friends, *our forgiveness comes from the death of Christ*—"Who was delivered for our offenses." There is no pardon of sin apart from Christ being delivered for our offenses. Of late I have heard things that I never dreamed of, before—alleged, even, by professedly Christian *ministers*, against the fundamental Doctrines of God's Word! And some have even dared to say that the Substitution of Christ—His suffering in our place—was not just! Then they have added that God forgives sin without any Atonement whatever, but, if the first is not just, what shall I say of the second? If God continually forgives sin without taking any care of His moral government. If there is nothing done for the vindication of His justice, how shall the Judge of all the earth do right? Then, the very foundations of the universe would be removed and what would the righteous do? Depend upon this, whatever modern philosophy may say, "Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins," that is to say, without an Atonement, and an Atonement consisting of the giving up of a Life of infinite value, there is no passing by of human transgression!

But how is it that the death of the Lord Jesus Christ is available for the pardon of sin? I answer, first, in part from the majesty of His Person. Being God, when He took upon Himself our nature, and became God and Man, He had about His complete and adorable Person a Divinity and majesty utterly indescribable! And for Him to die was a greater honor to the stern justice of God than for the whole mass of rebellious men to be cast into Hell! There was such a vindication of Divine justice in Christ being nailed to the tree, that it is not conceivable that anything else could ever have so established the foundations of morality and right-

eousness. Oh, Sirs, Christ is infinitely better than all of us put together! As the Son of God and God, the Son, He is greater than all the rest of men throughout all ages—and greater than all the holy angels, too—and if He must suffer, if He must die when sin is but *imputed* to Him, and is not really His own, then God is truly just in taking vengeance even on His Only-Begotten Son when He stands in the sinner's place!

The next reason why Christ's death for us was so efficacious is found in the freeness of His own condition. As God, He was not bound to come under the Law. Indeed, it must have seemed inconceivable that He ever could do so! I could not make an Atonement for you because whatever I could do for God is already due from me *to* God. If I give all that I have, I cannot pay my own debt, so I certainly cannot pay yours! But our Lord Jesus Christ owed nothing to the Law of God! It was not possible that He could be personally indebted to it and, therefore, all that He did was, as it were, a surplus which He set to the account of the guilty men whose Substitute He became.

The excellence of His Atonement also lay in the absolute perfection of His Character. He was the Lamb of God, without blemish and without spot. There is no excess in Him and there is nothing lacking—and such a character as this entitled Him, when He came to suffer, to say that He did not suffer for Himself. The Messiah laid down His life and was cut off, "but not for Himself," since He was without sin and was under no obligation to the Law.

And then, again, His Headship towards His people put Him in a position in which He could fitly become a Sufferer in our place. Look, Sirs, the first cause of your fall did not lie in yourselves. Your father Adam sinned long ago, and you fell in *him*. Do you blame God for that arrangement and begin to complain? Behold the door of hope there is for you in this fact! Because you fell through *one* representative, you can be restored by Another! When the angels fell, I suppose that they sinned separately, and that they had no federal head as we had. They transgressed, each individual spirit for himself and, therefore, they fell hopelessly and eternally—and none of them can ever be lifted up again. But our fall, happily for us, was in our Covenant head, Adam. There is a solidarity of the race—Adam was the head of it and when he sinned, we fell in him. Our fall being in that way—it is retrievable by the Divine device of another Head coming in and keeping the Law of God for us, and suffering the penalty of it in our place that, thereby, we might be restored. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, I wish you felt as much joy and delight as I do in this wonderful Doctrine of Christ being delivered for our offenses! I go to sleep at night upon it. "Yes," you say, "it makes you sleep." It does and I wake in the morning with it, and it keeps me awake all day with a stern resolve to serve my Lord and Master while I can, come what may of it! Restful as this Truth of God is to the heart, it is also stimulating to the highest degree. Believe it and you will find rest unto your soul and you, also, will be stirred up to serve your God while yet 'tis called today!

But I find, next, we are told that being thus saved from sin by Christ's death, *we are justified by His Resurrection*—"Who was raised, again, for our justification." What does this mean?

I sometimes tell you that Jesus Christ was put in the prison of the grave as a Hostage for us. He had paid our debt, but He must wait in the grave till the certificate that the debt was paid was registered in the court of Heaven. That being done for three days and nights—roughly so styled, but very short, all of them—down flew the bright messenger from Heaven, bearing the writ and warrant that the Hostage must go free, for the debt was paid and the whole liability was discharged. Then the stone was rolled away and when the angel had rolled it away, what did he do? He went and sat down upon it. It always seems to me that when the angel sat down, there, he seemed to say, "Now, Death and Hell, roll the stone back if you can"—but they could not! The keepers fled far away and Jesus Christ, Himself, came out to newness of life. And now both the sinner and his Substitute are cleared, the captive and the Hostage are both set free! He that owed the debt is cleared by his Substitute and the Substitute, Himself, is cleared, for He has paid all that Infinite Justice could demand and He has received a clean bill of deliverance! Thus He comes forth out of durance vile, raised from the dead by His Father's hand. That resurrection is your justification!

Now just look at this matter for a minute in another way. Suppose that Jesus Christ had never risen and I were to tell you that He had made a complete Atonement and died for our sins, but that He was still dead and in that grave? Why, if you believed the message, you would always be troubled! You could not feel any confidence in a *dead Christ*—you would say, "He sees corruption, yet the true Christ was never to see corruption. He is dead and what can a dead Christ do for us?" Beloved, the dying Christ has purchased for us our justification, but the *risen* Christ will see that we get it! The risen Christ has come to bring it to us and herein we rest!

Oh, that you would all rest in the finished work of Jesus on the Cross which is set forth to you in all its brightness by His rising again from the dead! Put the two parts of our text together, "Who was delivered for our offenses," "and was raised, again, for our justification." You need them both! Trust in them both! Trust in the Savior who died upon the Cross, and trust in the Christ who rose, again, and is now the living Christ! Trust, in fact, in Christ as He revealed Himself to John in Patmos—"I am He that lives, and was dead; and behold, I am alive forevermore, Amen; and have the keys of Hell and of death." Lord Jesus, as such we trust You, as such we trust You now, and we are saved!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
Romans 3; 4:16-25.

Romans 3:1, 2. *What advantage, then, has the Jew? Or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the Oracles of God.* It was a great thing to be a Jew in those old times. When all the rest of the world was in the dark, the Jews had the Light of God—"Unto them were committed the Oracles of God."

3. *For what if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?* That is to say, if they did not believe God, did that make Him untrue?

4. *God forbid: yes, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That You might be justified in Your sayings, and might overcome when You are judged.* Whatever men did under the old Law, however faithless they might be, God was still true and faithful.

5, 6. *But if our unrighteousness commends the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who takes vengeance? (I speak as a man). God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?* Whenever anybody insinuates that God is not just, Paul protests against such an idea. "No," he says, "He must of necessity be just because He is God; for how could He judge the world if He were unrighteous?"

7, 8. *For if the Truth of God has more abounded through my lie unto His Glory, why yet am I also judged as a sinner? And not rather, (as we are slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say), Let us do evil, that good may come? Whose damnation is just.* No Christian man ever said, "Let us do evil that good may come." If anybody else ever does say it, his condemnation is most just. Albeit that God, in Infinite Wisdom, does cause even the sin of man to illustrate the greatness of His Grace, yet that, by no means, excuses his sin, but leaves it an abominable evil, most hateful in the sight of the thrice-holy Jehovah!

9. *What then? Are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin.* Read the earlier chapters of this Epistle—chapters that are enough to make the heart sick to read them—and to make the head ache with the memory of them, and when you have read them, you will say that Paul has proved that both Jews and Gentiles are under sin.

10. *As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one.* Note in the passage we are going to read how Paul rings the changes upon those two words, "all," and, "none." He begins with the word, "none."

11, 12. *There is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that does good, no, not one.* Yet men come and talk to us about the righteous heathen whose virtues they extol—the *imaginary* good people—for there are none such actually in existence! Here the Lord, Himself, is speaking, and the Spirit of God is quoting from passages of the Old Testament which He puts together to describe the character of humanity. How sweeping are all the terms! "There is none righteous, no, not one. There is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that does good, no, not one."

13-16. *Their throat is an open sepulcher, with their tongues they have wed deceit, the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways.* How true that last verse is of many today! Their sins are destroying them! The lusts of the flesh destroy the body! Drunkenness and such like sins are destructive habits and they make those who practice them to be miserable—"Destruction and misery are in their

ways." What miserable persons, what miserable families, what miserable countries are made by indulgence in sin! There is no true happiness without holiness!

17. *And the way of peace have they not known.* Quietness, happiness, and rest are not known by sinful men. They are not in the way of finding peace.

18. *There is no fear of God before their eyes.* How true is this terrible accusation, especially of this present age! Men seem to be casting off all fear of God. Anyone who reads human history will, I think, detect that the present condition of society in our country, religiously, is wonderfully like the condition of France before the great Revolution which brought so much bloodshed with it. Everything seems loosening, broadening, tending downwards and, especially, "there is no fear of God before their eyes."

19. *Now we know that what things soever the Law says, it says to them who are under the Law: that every mouth may be stopped and all the world may become guilty before God.* Every man by nature tries to open his mouth and say the best he can for himself, but it is the objective of God's Law to shut every man's mouth—and when we come to that condition, there is hope for us! When we have nothing to say for ourselves, then the Lord Jesus will open His mouth for the dumb and plead for the guilty in the courts of God.

20. *Therefore by the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the Law is the knowledge of sin.* All the Law can do is to *show us our sin*. The Law is a mirror and, looking in it you can see your spots, but you cannot wash in a mirror. If you want to be cleansed from your stains, you must go somewhere else. The objective of the law of God is not to cleanse us, but to show us how much cleansing we need—to reveal our disease—not to find a remedy for it.

21, 22. *But now the righteousness of God without the Law is manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe.* You see, we cannot become righteous by the Law. Paul says that there is no one who has ever obtained righteousness in that way. We, on the contrary, have so sinned that we can never become righteous through the Law. But there is a new way of righteousness—the way of the righteousness of God—and God's righteousness is much better than the best human righteousness can ever be conceived to be! There is a righteousness which comes to us by faith in Jesus Christ, not by doing, but by *believing*—a righteousness which is freely bestowed upon all them that believe.

22-24. *For there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the Glory of God; being justified freely by His Grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.* I have heard persons ask, "Why do you say, 'Free Grace'? If it is Grace, it must be free." Well, we say, "Free Grace," because the Scripture says, "freely by His Grace," and as the Lord never uses superfluous words, we conceive that we are not guilty of tautology when we say, "Free Grace."

25, 26. *Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past,*

through the forbearance of God, to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believes in Jesus. Not of him who *works* for salvation, but of him who *believes*! Not of him who *merits*, but of him who *trusts*! This is God's way of righteousness and we are sent to declare it. Oh, that the Spirit of God may be given to make the declaration acceptable to your hearts!

27. *Where is boasting then? It is excluded.* Shut out, done with.

27. *By what Law? Of works?* No, no, the Law of works would have allowed us to boast! We would have merited whatever we earned by our own excellence and we might have gloried in it.

27-31. *No, but by the Law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the Law. Is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the Law through faith? God forbid: yes, we establish the Law.*

Chapter 4:16. *Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by Grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed, not to that only which is of the Law, but to that, also, which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all.* Abraham is the father of all who believe, whether they are circumcised or not, and the promises made to him belong to them also.

17, 18. *(As it is written, I have made you a father of many nations), before Him whom he believed, even God, who quickens the dead, and calls those things which are not as though they were. Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall your seed be.* He was an old man, with a very aged wife, yet the Lord promised that he would be "the father of many nations." He firmly believed that which was spoken and, in due time, it came to pass.

19-21. *And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what He had promised, He was able, also, to perform.* That is the kind of faith we need—the faith that does not enquire how God can perform His promise, but believes that He will do it!

22, 23. *And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake, alone, that it was imputed to him.* The imputation would be enough for Abraham without any writing, but as it *is* written—it is for *our* instruction and for *our* comfort.

24, 25. *But for us, also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus, our Lord, from the dead; who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised, again, for our justification.* May the Lord bless to us our meditation upon this precious portion of His Word!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—302, 271, 404.

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

THE UNCHANGEABLE CHRIST
NO. 2358

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, APRIL 29, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 23, 1888.

"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today and forever."
Hebrews 13:8.

LET me read to you the verse that comes before our text. It is always a good habit to look at texts in their connection. It is wrong, I think, to lay hold of small portions of God's Word and take them out of their connection as you might pluck feathers from a bird. It is an injury to the Word of God and, sometimes, a passage of Scripture loses much of its beauty, its true teaching and its real meaning, by being taken from the context. Nobody would think of mutilating Milton's poems by taking a few lines out of *Paradise Lost*, and then imagining that he could really get at the heart of the poet's power. So, always look at texts in the connection in which they stand. The verse before our text is this, "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation: Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever."

Observe, then, that God's people are a thoughtful people. If they are what they ought to be, they do a great deal of remembering and considering—that is the gist of this verse. If they are to remember and to consider their earthly leaders, much more are they to remember that Great Leader, the Lord Jesus, and all those matchless Truths which fell from His blessed lips. I wish, in these days, that professing Christians remembered and considered a great deal more, but we live in such a flurry, hurry and worry, that we do not give time for thought. Our noble forefathers of the Puritan sort were men with backbone, men of solid tread, independent and self-contained men who could hold their own in the day of conflict. And the reason was because they took time to meditate, time to keep a diary of their daily experiences, time to commune with God in secret. Take the hint and try and do a little more *thinking*—in this busy London and in these trying days—remember and consider.

My next remark is that God's people are an imitative people, for we are told, here, that they are to remember them who are their leaders, those who have spoken to them the Word of God, "whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation." There is an itching, nowadays, after originality, striking out a path for yourself! When sheep do that, they are bad sheep. Sheep follow the shepherd and, in a measure, they follow one another when they are all together following the shepherd. Our Great Master never aimed at originality—He said that He did not even speak His own Words, but the Words that He had heard of His Father. He was

docile and teachable. As the Son of God and the Servant of God, His ears were open to hear the instructions of the Father and He could say, "I do always those things that please Him."

Now, that is the true path for a Christian to take, to follow Jesus and, in consequence, to follow all such true saints as may be worthy of being followed, imitating the godly so far as they imitate Christ! The Apostle puts it, "whose faith follow." Many young Christians, if they were to pretend to strike out a path for themselves, must infallibly fall into many sorrows. Whereas, by taking some note of the way in which more experienced and more instructed Christians have gone, they will keep by the way of the footsteps of the flock and they will also follow the footprints of the Shepherd. God's people are a thoughtful people and they are an imitative and humble people, willing to be instructed and willing to follow holy and godly examples.

One good reason, however, for imitating saints is given in our text—it is because our Lord and His faith are always the same—"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever." You see, if the old foundation shifted, if our faith was always changing, then we could not follow any of the saints who have gone before us. If we have a religion especially for the 19th Century, it is ridiculous for us to imitate the men of the 1st Century—and Paul and the Apostles are just old fogies who are left behind in the far distant ages. If we are to go on improving from century to century, I cannot point you to any of the Reformers, or the confessors, or the saints in the brave days of old, and say to you, "Learn from their example," because, if religion has altogether changed and improved, it is a curious thing to say, but we ought to set an example to our ancestors! Of course, they cannot follow it because they have gone from the earth, but as we know so much better than our fathers, we cannot think of learning anything from them! As we have left the Apostles all behind, and gone in for something quite new, it is a pity that we should not forget what they did, what they suffered and think that they were just a set of simpletons who acted up to their own light, but then they had not the light we have in this wonderful 19th Century!

O Beloved, it almost makes my lips blister to talk after the present evil fashion, for grosser falsehood never could be uttered than the insinuation that we have shifted the everlasting foundations of our faith! Verily, if these foundations were removed, we might ask in many senses, "What shall the righteous do? Whom shall they copy? Whom shall they follow? The landmarks having gone, what remains to us of the holy treasury of example with which the Lord enriches those who follow Christ?"

I. Coming to our text, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever," my first observation is that JESUS CHRIST, HIMSELF, IS ALWAYS THE SAME. He is, was, and will always be the same!

Changes of position and of circumstances there have been in our Lord, but He is always the same *in His great love to His people*, whom He loved before the earth was. Before the first star was kindled, before the first living creature began to sing the praise of its Creator, He loved His Church with an everlasting love! He spied her in the glass of predestination, pictured her by His Divine foreknowledge and loved her with all His heart.

And it was for this cause that He left His Father and became one with her, that He might redeem her. It was for this cause that He went with her through all this vale of tears, discharged her debts and bore her sins in His own body on the Cross. For her sake He slept in the tomb and with the same love that brought Him down, He has gone up, again, and with the same heart beating true to the same blessed betrothal, He has gone into Glory, waiting for the marriage day when He shall come, again, to receive His perfected spouse who shall have made herself ready by His Grace! Never for a moment, whether as God over all, blessed forever, or as God and Man in one Divine Person, or as dead and buried, or as risen and ascended—never has He changed in the love He bears to His chosen! He is "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever."

Therefore, Beloved Brothers and Sisters, He has never changed *in His Divine purpose towards His beloved Church*. He resolved in eternity to become One with her, that she might become one with Him and, having determined upon this, when the fullness of time had come, He was born of a woman and made under the Law. He took upon Him the likeness of sinful flesh, "and being found in fashion as a Man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross." Yet He never abandoned His purpose—He set His face like a flint to go up to Jerusalem—even when the bitter cup was put to His lips and He seemed to stagger for a moment. He returned to it with a strong resolve, saying to His Father, "If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as You will." That purpose is strong upon Him, now, for Zion's sake He will not hold His peace and for Jerusalem's sake He will not rest until her righteousness goes forth as brightness and her salvation as a lamp that burns!

Jesus is still pressing on with His great work and He will not fail nor be discouraged in it. He will never be content till all whom He has bought with His blood shall become glorified by His power. He will gather all His sheep in the heavenly fold and they shall pass, again, under the hands of Him that counts them—every one of them being brought there by the Great Shepherd who laid down His life for them! Beloved, He cannot turn from His purpose—it is not according to His Nature that He should, for He is, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever."

He is also "the same yesterday, and today, and forever," *in the holding of His offices* for the carrying out of His purpose and giving effect to His love. He is still a Prophet. Men try to set Him on one side. Science, falsely so-called, comes forward and bids Him hold His tongue, but, "the sheep follow Him, for they know His voice; and a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers." The teachings of the New Testament are as sound and true today as they were 1800 years ago—they have lost none of their value, none of their absolute certainty—they stand fast like the everlasting hills! Jesus Christ was a Prophet and He is "the same yesterday, and today, and forever."

He is the same, too, as a Priest. Some now sneer at His precious blood—alas, that it should be so! But, to His elect, His blood is still their purchase price—by this they overcome, through the blood of the Lamb they win the victory—and they know that they shall praise it in Heaven

when they have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb! They never turn away from this great Priest of theirs and His wondrous Sacrifice, once offered for the sins of men and perpetually efficacious for all the blood-bought race! They glory in His everlasting Priesthood before the Father's Throne. In this we rejoice, yes, and will rejoice, that Jesus Christ is our Priest, "the same yesterday, and today, and forever."

And as King He is always the same. He is supreme in the Church. Before You, O Jesus, all Your loyal subjects bow! All the sheaves make obeisance to Your sheaf—the sun and moon and all the stars obey and serve You, King of Kings and Lord of Lords! You are Head over all things to Your Church, which is Your body. Beloved, if there is any other office which our Lord has assumed for the accomplishment of His Divine purposes, we may say of Him, concerning every position, that He is "the same yesterday, and today, and forever."

So also, once more, He is the same *in His relationship to all His people*. I like to think that, as Jesus was the Husband of His Church ages ago, He is still her Husband, for He hates divorce. As He was the Brother born for adversity to His first disciples, He is still *our* faithful Brother. As He was a Friend that sticks closer than a brother to those who were sorely tried in the medieval times, He is equally a Friend to us upon whom the ends of the earth have come. There is no difference, whatever, in the relationship of the Lord Jesus Christ to His people at any time! He is just as ready to comfort us tonight as He was to comfort those with whom He dwelt when here below! Sister Mary, He is as willing to come down to your Bethany and help you in your sorrow about Lazarus, as He was when He came to Martha and Mary whom He loved! Jesus Christ is just as ready to wash your feet, my Brother, after another day's weary travel through the foul ways of this world. He is as willing to take the basin and the towel, and to give us a loving cleansing, as He was when He washed His disciples' feet! Just what He was to them, He is to us! Happy is it if you and I can truly say, "What He was to Peter, what He was to John, what He was to the Magdalene, that is Jesus Christ to *me*—the same yesterday, and today, and forever."

Beloved, I have seen men change—oh, how they change! A little frost turns the green forest to bronze and every leaf forsakes its hold and yields to it's winter's blast. So fade our friends and the most attached adherents drop away from us in the time of trial. But Jesus is to us what He always was. When we get old and gray-headed and others shut the door on men who have lost their former strength, and can serve their turn no longer, then will He say, "Even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you," for He is "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever." Thus much, Beloved, with regard to Jesus, Himself—He is always the same!

II. Now let us go a step farther. JESUS CHRIST IS ALWAYS THE SAME IN HIS DOCTRINE.

This text must refer to the Doctrine of Christ, since it is connected with imitating the saints' faith—"Whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation: Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and

forever. Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart is established with Grace." From the connection it is evident that our text refers to the teaching of Christ, who is "the same yesterday, and today, and forever." This is not according to the "development" folly. Theology, like every other science, is to grow, watered by the splendid wisdom of this enlightened age, fostered by the superlative ability of the gentlemen of light and leading of the present time, so much superior to all who came before them!

We think not so, Brothers and Sisters, for *the Lord Jesus Christ was the perfect Revelation of God*. He was the express image of the Father's Person and the brightness of His Glory. In previous ages, God had spoken to us by His Prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son. Now as to that which was a complete Revelation, it is blasphemous to suppose that there can be any more revealed than has been made known in the Person and work of Jesus Christ, the Son of God! He is God's *ultimatum*—last of all, He sends His Son. If you can conceive a brighter display of God than is to be seen in the Only-Begotten, I thank God that I am unable to follow you in any such imagination! To me, He is the last, the highest, the grandest Revelation of God! And as He shuts up the Book that contains the written Revelation, He bids you never dare to take from it, lest He should take your name out of the Book of Life! And never dare to add to it, lest He should add unto you the plagues that are written in this Book!

At this time, *the salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ is the same as it was in all ages*. Jesus Christ still saves sinners from the guilt, the power, the punishment and the defilement of sin. Still, "there is none other name under Heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." Jesus Christ still makes all things new. He creates new hearts and right spirits in the sons of men and engraves His Law upon the tablets which once were stone, but which He has turned into flesh. There is no new salvation! Some may talk as if there were, but there is not! Salvation means to you, today, just what it meant to Saul of Tarsus on the way to Damascus. If you think it has another meaning, you have missed it altogether!

And, again, *salvation by Jesus Christ comes to men in the same way as it always did*. They have to receive it, now, by *faith*. In Paul's day, men were saved by faith, and they are not now saved by works. They began in the Spirit in the Apostolic age, and we are not now to begin in the flesh. There is no indication in the Book and there is no indication in the experience of God's children, that there is ever to be any alteration as to the way in which we receive Christ! All live by Him. "By Grace are you saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God"—the gift of God, today, as much as it ever was, for Jesus Christ—"is the same yesterday, and today, and forever."

Once more, *this salvation is just the same as to the persons to whom it is sent*. It is to be preached, now, as always, to every creature under Heaven. But it appeals with a peculiar power to those who are guilty and who, by God's Grace, confess their guilt. It appeals to hearts that are broken, to men who are weary and heavy laden. It is to these that the

Gospel comes with great sweetness. I have quoted to you, before, those strange words of Joseph Hart—

"A sinner is a sacred thing
The Holy Spirit has made him so."

He is—the Savior is only for sinners! He did not come to save the righteous. He came to seek and to save the lost and still, "to you is the word of this salvation sent," and this declaration still stands true, "This Man receives sinners, and eats with them." There is no change in this statement, "the poor have the Gospel preached to them," and it comes to those who are farthest off from God and hope—and inspires them with Divine power and energy!

Beloved, I can bear witness that *the Gospel is the same in its effects upon the hearts of men.* Still it breaks and still it makes whole! Still it wounds and still it heals! Still it kills and still it quickens! Still it seems to hurl man down to Hell in their terrible experience of the evil of sin, but still it lifts them up into an ecstatic joy till they are exalted almost to Heaven when they lay hold upon it and feel its power in their souls! The Gospel that was a Gospel of births and deaths, of killing and making alive, in the days of John Bunyan, has the same effect upon our hearts to this day when it comes with the power that God has put into it by His Spirit! It produces the same results and has the same sanctifying influence as it ever had.

Looking beyond the narrow stream of death, we can say that *the eternal results produced by the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ are the same as they always were.* The promise is this day fulfilled to those who receive Him as much as to any who went before. Life eternal is their inheritance. They shall sit with Him upon His throne and, on the other hand, the threat is equally sure of fulfillment—"These shall go away into everlasting punishment." "He that *believes not* shall be damned." Christ has made no change in His words of promise or of threat, nor will His followers dare to do so, for His doctrine is "the same yesterday, and today, and forever."

If you were to try to think over this matter and imagine for a minute that the Gospel really did shift and change with the times, it would be very extraordinary. Look, here is the Gospel for the 1st Century—make a mark and note how far it goes. Then there is a Gospel for the 2nd Century—make another mark, but then remember that you must change the color to another shade! Either these people must have altered, or else a very different effect must have been produced in the same kind of minds. In eternity, when they all get to Heaven by these 19 gospels in the 19 centuries, there will be 19 sets of people and they will sing 19 different songs, depend upon it, and their music will not blend! Some will sing of "Free Grace and dying love," while others will sing of "evolution." What a discord it would be and what a Heaven it would be, too! I should decline to be a candidate for such a place!

No, let me go where they praise Jesus Christ and Him, alone, singing, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." That is what the 1st Century saints sing—yes, and it is what the saints of *every* century

will sing, without any exception! And there will be no change in this song forever. The same results will flow from the same Gospel till Heaven and earth shall pass away, for Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever."

III. We may sound the same note, again, for a moment, because JESUS CHRIST IS THE SAME AS TO HIS MODES OF WORKING—"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever."

How did Jesus Christ save souls in olden times? "It pleased God by *the foolishness of preaching*, to save them that believe." And if you will look down through Church history, you will find that, wherever there has been a great revival of religion, it has been linked with the preaching of the Gospel! When the Methodists began to do so much good, what did they call the men who made such a stir? "Methodist preachers," did they not say? That was always the name, "Here comes a Methodist preacher." Ah, my dear Friends, the world will never be saved by Methodist doctors, or by Baptist doctors, or anything of the sort! But multitudes will be saved, by God's Grace, through preachers! It is the preacher to whom God has entrusted this great work! Jesus said, "Preach the Gospel to every creature."

But men are getting tired of the Divine Plan—they are going to be saved by the priest, going to be saved by the music, going to be saved by theatricals and who knows what! Well, they may try these things as long as they like, but nothing can ever come of the whole thing but utter disappointment and confusion—God dishonored, the Gospel travestied, hypocrites manufactured by thousands and the Church dragged down to the level of the world! Stand to your guns, Brothers, and go on preaching and teaching nothing but the Word of God, for it still pleases God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe! And this test still stands true, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever."

But remember that there must always be *the prayers of the saints* with the preaching of the Gospel. You must have often noticed that passage in the Acts concerning the new converts on the day of Pentecost, "They continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine"—they thought a great deal about doctrine in those days. "And fellowship"—they thought a good deal of being in Church fellowship in those days. "And in breaking of bread"—they did not neglect the blessed ordinance of the Lord's Supper in those days. "In breaking of bread." And then what follows? "And in prayers." Some say, nowadays, that Prayer Meetings are religious expedients pretty well worn out. Ah, dear me! What a religious expedient that was that brought about Pentecost, when they were all assembled with one accord in one place, and when the whole Church prayed and suddenly the place was shaken, and they heard the sound as of a rushing mighty wind, that betokened the Presence of the Holy Spirit!

Well, you may try to do without Prayer Meetings if you like, but my solemn conviction is that, as these decline, the Spirit of God will depart from you and the preaching of the Gospel will be of small account. The Lord will have the prayers of His people to go with the proclamation of His Gospel if it is to be the power of God unto salvation—and there is no change in this matter since Paul's day! Jesus Christ is "the same yester-

day, and today, and forever." God is still to be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them—and He still grants blessings in answer to believing prayer.

Remember, too, that the Lord Jesus Christ has always been inclined to work by *the spiritual power of His servants.* Nothing comes out of a man that is not first in him. You will not find God's servants doing great things for Him unless God works mightily in them, as well as by them. You must first be endued with power from on high, or else the power will not manifest itself in what you do. Beloved, we need our Church members to be better men and better women. We need baby-Christians to become grownup-Christians and we need the grownup-Christians among us to be "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." God will work by His servants when they are adapted to His service—and He will make His instruments fit for His work. It is not in themselves that they have any strength—their weakness becomes the reason why His strength is seen in them! Still, there is an adaptation, there is a fitness for His service, there is a cleanness that God puts upon His instruments before He works mighty things by them and Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, and today, and forever," in this matter, too.

All the good that is ever done in the world is worked by *the Holy Spirit* and, as the Holy Spirit honors Jesus Christ, so He puts great honor upon the Holy Spirit. If you and I try, either as a Church or as individuals, to do without the Holy Spirit, God will soon do without us. Unless we reverently worship Him and believingly trust in Him, we shall find that we shall be like Samson when his locks were shorn. He shook himself as he had done before, but when the Philistines were upon him, he could do nothing against them. Our prayer must always be, "Holy Spirit, dwell with me! Holy Spirit, dwell with Your servants!" We know that we are utterly dependent upon Him. Such is the teaching of our Master and Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, and today, and forever."

IV. I do not want to weary you, my dear Brothers and Sisters, but may I be helped, just for a few moments, to speak on a fourth point! JESUS CHRIST HAS ALWAYS THE SAME RESOURCES, for He is "the same yesterday, and today, and forever."

I will repeat what I said—Jesus Christ has always the same resources. We sit down, sometimes, very sorrowful, and we say, "The times are very dark." I do not think that we can very well exaggerate their darkness and they are full of threatening omens. And I do not think that any of us can really exaggerate those omens, they are so terrible. But still is it true, "The Lord lives, and blessed be my Rock."

Does the Church feel her need of *faithful men?* The Lord can send us as many as ever! When the Pope ruled everywhere, nobody thought, I should imagine, that the first man to speak out for the old faith would be a *monk*—they thought they had taken stock of all the men that God had at His command and they certainly did not think that He had one of the leaders of the Reformation in a monastery! But there was Martin Luther, "the monk that shook the world," and though men dreamed not what he would do, God knew all about him. There was Calvin, also, writing that famous book of his Institutes. He was a man full of disease—I think he

had 60 diseases at once in his body, and he suffered greatly. Look at his portrait—pale and wan. And as a young man he was very timid. He went to Geneva and he thought he was called to write books, but Farel said to him, "You are called to lead us in preaching the Gospel here in Geneva." "No," said Calvin, for he shrank from the task. But Farel said, "The blast of the Almighty God will rest upon you unless you come out and take your proper place."

Beneath the threat of that brave old man, John Calvin took his place, prompt and sincere in the work of God, in life and in death never faltering! Then there was Zwingli over there at Zurich. He had come out, too, and Oecolampadius, and Melancthon and their fellows—who ever expected *them* to do what they did? Nobody! "The Lord gave the Word, great was the company of them that published it." And so, today, He has only to give the Word and you shall see starting up all over the world earnest preachers of the everlasting Gospel, for He has the same resources as always! He is "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever."

He has also the same resources of *Grace*. The Holy Spirit is quite as able to convert men, to quicken, enlighten, sanctify and instruct. There is nothing which He has done which He cannot do again! The treasuries of God are as full and as running over, now, as they were in the beginning of the Christian age! If we do not see such great things, where lies the restraining force? It is in our *unbelief*. "If you believe, all things are possible to him that believes." Before this year has gone, God can make a wave of revival break over England, Scotland and Ireland—from one end to the other! Yes, and He can deluge the whole world with the Gospel if we will but cry to Him for it! And He wills to do it, for He is "the same yesterday, and today, and forever," in the resources of His Grace.

V. So I close my sermon with this fifth head, on which I will be very short, indeed. JESUS CHRIST IS ALWAYS THE SAME TO ME—"yesterday, and today, and forever." I will not talk about myself except to help you to think about yourselves. How long have you known the Lord Jesus Christ? Perhaps only a short time. Possibly many years. Do you remember when you first knew Him? Can you point out the spot of ground where Jesus met you? Now, what was He to you at first? I will tell you what He was to me.

Jesus was to me, at first, *my only trust*. I leaned on Him very hard, then, for I had such a load to carry. I laid myself and my load down at His feet. He was All in All to me. I had not a shred of hope outside of Him, nor any trust beyond Himself, crucified and risen for me. Now, dear Brothers and Sisters, have you got any further than that? I hope not! I know that I have not. I have not a shadow of a shade of confidence anywhere but in Christ's blood and righteousness! I leaned on Him very hard at the first, but I lean harder now! Sometimes, I faint away into His arms. I have died into His life. I am lost in His fullness! He is all my salvation and all my desire. I am speaking for myself, but I think that I am speaking for many of you, too, when I say that Jesus Christ is to me, "the same yesterday, and today, and forever." His Cross, before my failing eyes, shall be my dying comfort as it is my living strength.

What was Jesus Christ to me at the first? He was the object of my warmest love. Was it not so with you? Was He not chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely? What charms, what beauties were there in that dear face of His! And what a freshness, what a novelty, what a delight which set all our passions on fire! It was so in those early days when we went after Him into the wilderness. Though all the world around was barren, He was All in All to us. Very well, what is He today? He is fairer to us, now, than He ever was! He is the one gem that we possess—our other jewels have all turned out to be but glass and we have flung them from the chest—but He is the Kohinoor that our soul delights in! He is all perfections joined together to make one absolute perfection! He is all the Graces adorning Him and overflowing to us! Is not that what we say of Him? "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever."

What was Jesus Christ to me at the first? Well, He was *my highest joy*. In my young days, how my heart did dance at the sound of His name! Was it not so with many of you? We may be huskier in voice, heavier in body and slower in moving our limbs, but His name has as much charm for us as it ever had! There was a trumpet that nobody could blow but one who was the true heir—and there is nobody who can ever fetch the true music out of us but our Lord to whom we belong! When He sets me to His lips, you would think that I was one of the trumpets of the seven angels! And there is no one else who can make me sound like that! I cannot produce such music as that by myself and there is no theme that can ravish my heart, there is no subject that can stir my soul until I get to Him! I think it is with me as it was with Rutherford when the Duke of Argyle called out, as he began to preach about Christ, "Now, Man, you are on the right string, keep to that!" The Lord Jesus Christ knows every key in our souls and He can wake up our whole being to harmonies of music which shall set the world ringing with His praises! Yes, He is our joy, our everything, "the same yesterday, and today, and forever."

Let us go forward, then, to the unchanging Savior, through the changing things of time and sense, and we shall meet Him soon in Glory, and He will be unchanged even there, as compassionate and loving to us when we shall get Home to Him and see Him in His splendor, as He was to His poor disciples when He had not where to lay His head and was a Sufferer among them.

Oh, do you know Him? Do you know Him? Do you know Him? If not, may He, this night, reveal Himself to you, for His sweet mercy's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
HEBREWS 13.

Verse 1. *Let brotherly love continue.* It is supposed to already be there—let it continue, not only love of a common kind, such as we are to have to all men, but that special "brotherly love" which Christians bear to one another as members of one family. "Let brotherly love continue."

2. *Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.* Abraham did and Lot did. They thought they were entertaining ordinary strangers and they washed their feet and prepared their food but it turned out that they had entertained angels! Some people will never entertain angels unawares, for they never entertain *anybody*. May we be given to hospitality, for that should be part of the character of saints.

3. *Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them.* Christian people who have got into trouble through being Christians and persons who have been shut up in prison for righteousness' sake—there were many such in Paul's day. Sympathize with them, says the Apostle, "as bound with them."

3. *And them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves, also, in the body.* So that, if you are not, now, in adversity, you may be before long. Therefore, have a fellow feeling for those who are in trouble. If you are not, yourself, distressed, you are not out of the reach of such a thing—therefore be tender towards your afflicted Brothers and Sisters.

4, 5. *Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge. Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as you have: for He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you.* There is a fortune for you. There is a pension to fall back upon. You may very well be content to leave your temporal concerns in the hands of God, for He has said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." Why, if you believe that one promise of God, He will be better to you than ten thousand friends who promise to provide for you! The Provider in Heaven is better than any provider on earth! A beautiful motto is that of the old house of Chester, "God's Providence is my inheritance."

6, 7. *So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me. Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.* It seems that there were special persons who were leaders in the Church of God, who were to be remembered and thought upon, and considered. They were set apart for this world—"them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God." They were leaders among the saints and Paul would have the rank and file imitate them in their confident trust in the Lord Jesus Christ—"whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation."

8, 9. *Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever. Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines.* Do not believe one thing, today, and another thing, tomorrow. Be not carried about like the thistledown in the wind. Have a faith of your own—know what you believe and stand firmly to it.

9, 10. *For it is a good thing that the heart is established with Grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein. We have an altar.* Yes, true religion cannot exist without an altar, but what kind of altar is it? Is it a material altar? Far from it! But "we have an altar"—

10. *Whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.* They have nothing to do with it, for they are still under the old ceremonial Law and those whose religion consists in outward rites and ceremonies can never eat of the *spiritual* altar whereat spiritual men eat, for they do not understand the Scripture and they still serve the Mosaic tabernacle.

11-13. *For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus, also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate. Let us go forth, therefore, unto Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach.* Outside the gate was the place of Christ's atoning death. "Outside the camp," is the place where His servants will find themselves most at home.

14. *For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.* We cannot stop in the condemned city—we must be outside its walls. Our Lord went out of the city to die and we must go outside the camp to live!

15, 16. *By Him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name. But to do good and to communicate, forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.* Christian people should be always doing good. As God is always doing good, so we can never say we have done all we ought to do and will do no more—"To do good and to communicate," that is, to communicate of your substance and of your charitable help, "forget not."

17-19. *Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you. Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly. But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.* The movements of God's servants may be controlled by prayer. You cannot tell how much of blessing will come to your own souls through the ministry if you are in the habit of praying about it! The man who comes up to God's House, having prayed for God to bless the preacher, is not likely to go away unprofited.

20-25. *Now the God of peace, that brought, again, from the dead, our Lord Jesus, that Great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the Everlasting Covenant make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation: for I have written a letter unto you in few words. Know you that our brother, Timothy, is set at liberty; with whom, if he comes shortly, I will see you. Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you. Grace be with you all. Amen.* Does not that blessing seem to come across the centuries as fresh as if we heard the Apostle speak it with his living lips? Oh, to feel it true tonight! "Grace be with you all. Amen."

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—380, 336, 181.

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

PERSONAL AND EFFECTUAL CALLING
NO. 2359

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, MAY 6, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 26, 1888.

"He calls His own sheep by name, and leads them out."
John 10:3.

IF YOU were near an Eastern village, you would probably see a large square, walled about with stones rolled roughly one upon another. You would also see a gate and, perhaps, more than one entrance into this enclosure. The square is empty through the day, for the flocks have gone into the neighboring pastures. But, towards evening, at certain seasons of the year, all the shepherds bring their flocks to these enclosures and there they are shut in for the night all together. One man has but a few sheep and another man has only a few sheep, while the more wealthy owner has larger flocks, but all are enclosed in what I will call the parish fold.

Now the morning comes. The sun is up early and so is the shepherd. The porter is at the door and he recognizes the various sheepherders as they come down to the sheepfold to fetch their flocks. One shepherd comes and he takes away his little company. Another shepherd arrives and he leads away a larger number. In each case, the shepherd has no trouble in separating his own sheep from the rest in the fold. You and I would think it well near impossible—and we certainly would never be able to divide those differing flocks—but the shepherd does it easily as soon as ever he comes to the door of the fold. There are certain of his sheep that love him much. They are accustomed to keep very near his hand and often get the sweetest bits of grass, and they leap up at the very sound of his footsteps! They recognize his person and they come straightway to the gate and are ready, at once, to go out to the pastures with him.

Some others, I am afraid the larger part of the flocks, are not quite so eager, but the shepherd speaks and they recognize his voice—and when he proceeds to *name* the sheep, one by one, for this the Eastern shepherd literally does, and when he begins to call them out by name, you can see the fleecy creatures recognizing the tones of his voice and responding to his call as readily as dogs with us know their master's voice and their own names! The sheep, thus called, push their way from among the different flocks and they come out and follow their shepherd, who leads them to the pastures that he has provided or discovered for them.

Now, that is exactly what the Good Shepherd does with His sheep. He comes to the door of the fold. Here we are, to-night, like so many sheep in the enclosure. I cannot tell who among you may be Christ's sheep, or who may not be His. My voice has no power to separate you from your companions unless Christ shall use my voice and make it the echo of His own. I may speak as long as I will, apart from that Great Shepherd of the sheep, but I can make no distinction between His chosen ones and the rest of mankind. But if the Lord, Himself, shall come and call, His chosen shall detect the gracious voice. And when, one by one, He calls them to Himself by what theologians term "effectual calling"—(and it is a good expression, for it *is* effectual calling), then the sheep hear His voice and they rise up at once and follow Him, for they know His voice, and He leads them out.

I am going to speak upon this text, viewing it from three points.

I. The first point is that JESUS, THE GOOD SHEPHERD, OFTEN COMES INTO CONTACT WITH HIS SHEEP.

He has bought them, He has paid the full price of their redemption. He has laid down His life for His sheep, so that they are effectually ransomed. He has gone up to Heaven to plead for them and to present before His Father the memorials of His death. Yet He is still with them, according to His Word, "Lo, I am with you always." He has not left His sheep here, below, simply to the care of undershepherds, much less are they in charge of hirelings. He has His under-shepherds, but He is with them and He still comes to His flock. He still calls His sheep by name. He still leads them out. Let us think of the various ways in which the Good Shepherd still comes into contact with His sheep.

He came into contact with us, first, *in our conversion.* He had come to us, before, by the many pleadings of His Spirit and the many entreaties of His love in the days of our youth, and in years gone by, but we did not, then, know His voice. Our ears were not open, then, and we did not hear His call. He went after us into the wilderness, He sought us on the mountain steeps, but it was, for a time, a weary seeking and little came of it. Then, on a day never to be forgotten, He came with His effectual Grace! I say He came. Mother had come, teacher had come, pastor had come, books had come, sermons had come, but, last of all, He, Himself, came! Do you remember His coming? I can never forget the spot where He first met with me! The tones of His voice when, at last, He won my heart, are ringing as clearly in my ears, tonight, as though they were the marriage bells of yesterday! I can never forget how that call sounded, "Look! Look! Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth!" Then I knew His voice and responded to it, through His own rich Grace, and I was His and He was mine! It needed that He should do the wooing for Himself and should unveil His own dear face—and then my heart was won and my spirit yielded itself entirely to Him! You remember how it happened to you, also, do you not? Think of it with joy and gratitude.

Since then, the Lord Jesus has often come to us *in guidance.* Many of us can say that He has guided us through all the pathway of life and, at

certain times, and at difficult turns of the road, He has come to us with such consoling counsel, and with such abounding compassion that we have blessed Him, and said, "He is truly near to me. How hallowed is this place! It is none other than the House of God and the very gate of Heaven." There are some few saints who could not tell you when Christ is *not* with them because He is *always* with them—they never lose His company. I wish that I could be one of their number, yet, I might almost claim that position, for it is a joy to me to be able to say that, habitually, I do realize the Presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. I have said more to Him than to any other man. I have spent more time with Him than with any other that I have ever heard of—and my heart more joyously goes out to Him than to anyone beneath the sun!

You have, perhaps, seen the rooks on the plowed land—all day going from field to field—following the man with the plow. Where do they live? Where are their nests? Wait till near the going down of the sun and you shall see. Now they all mount with many a caw and with hoarse converse with each other, and after they have hurried to and fro a while, away they go where those old trees that stand around the ancient baronial hall supply them with their house and home! Now, such is Christ to some of us. We are necessarily abroad through the day, looking after this or that work which needs attention, but the moment we are at liberty, we know where our nest is! It is with the hearts of many of us as it is with the needle in the mariner's compass. Do you see it? It is pointing to the pole. If you will, you may put your finger on that needle and turn it round. It points East now—yes, you turn it round till it points South. But take your finger off, it is back at once to its true pole! So is it with our hearts. Our hearts are with Him on His Throne, always magnetized and polarized for Christ, and we shall never rest until we get back to Him! He is in our first thoughts in the morning and our last meditations at night! We can truly say—

"I think of You, my God, by night,
And talk of You by day.
Your love my treasure and delight
Your Truth my strength sustain.
The day is dark, the night is long,
Humblest with thoughts of Thee,
And dull to me the sweetest song,
Unless its theme You be."

And, Beloved, you know how near the Lord is in the way of *sympathy*. It is no exaggeration where we read, "In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His Presence saved them." You have sometimes been in sharp sickness and have had "cruel pains," as men call them. Or you have, perhaps, known the sharper pangs of poverty, or possibly, though I hope it is not so, some of you know what it is to be deserted by your friends in the hour of your greatest need, and have to stand alone amid the pitiless blasts when none seem willing to afford you shelter. Oh, but we never fully know Christ till such a time as that! We never realize the sweetness of His sympathetic companionship till He stands by us

and we can say with Paul, "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me and strengthened me." Yes, He may be a long way from the healthy and the strong sheep, but the Good Shepherd is always near the sickly and the weak! And when the heart is breaking, Christ always comes. He knew what heart-break meant, and desertion, and agony, and bloody sweat, so He can sympathize with us in our sorrows—and there is no hand so soft as that which was nailed to the Cross! Jesus is quick as a mother to feel all the sufferings of His people.

I may also add that our Lord is always with us *in intercession.* This Divine foresight takes the practical shape of pleading for us about troubles that are *yet to come*. You see Peter. Satan had desired to have him, that he might sift him as wheat. And Satan had not, then, gone any farther than *desire*. His malice is very quick, but still, at that time, he had only *desired* to have Peter. Yet, when the devil had that desire, Christ had gone a long way beyond him—"But I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not." So quickly does the careful love of Christ outstrip all our necessities, that even the dark wings of the arch-enemy cannot fly so fast as the interceding love of our Arch-Friend, our chief Helper, our Best-Beloved! He is always with you, watching to see not only what you need, but what you *will* need—not only noting what are your dangers, but what are *to be* your dangers in the future! Before Satan has plucked the arrow from his quiver, and long before he has fitted it to the bow, Christ has already prepared that shield of interceding love that shall guard you from his attacks! O sheep of Christ, can there be happier news for you than that the Good Shepherd is always with you? He has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Vineyard of the Lord, hear this, and make a song of it—"I, the Lord, do keep it. I will water it every moment lest any hurt it. I will keep it night and day." Here is a song for the vineyard of red wine—let all the saints sing it in their hearts tonight!

So much, then, upon that first point, that Jesus often comes into contact with His sheep.

II. Secondly, this also is clear from the text, that Jesus CALLS HIS SHEEP BY NAME—"He calls His own sheep by name." You Thomas, you Mary, and Martha, and Lazarus, and you Matthew, the publican, yes, and you, Mary of Magdala—He calls you all by name! What does this imply?

The first thing that it means is, *intimate knowledge.* Beloved Friends, I used to have such a trustworthy memory that I not only knew the nearly 6,000 members of this Church by face, which I am still able to do, but I knew them all by *name*—and it was a rare thing for me to ever forget or make a mistake, save when certain ladies changed their names and I had not been made aware of it, but even then I soon rectified the error. But now, sometimes, I find myself unable to remember all your names—perhaps it is because I do not see you often. Our Lord knows all the myriads of His redeemed by name. There is no failure of memory with Him and He *always* sees them! His eye and His heart are towards each one of

His people both night and day—"He calls His own sheep by name." I do not wish so much to preach upon this passage as I want you to put it into your mouth, or rather, to *taste* it with your spiritual palate, so as to get the flavor and sweetness of it. "I know My sheep," says the Good Shepherd! He knows not only who they are, but *what* they are, and *where* they are! "He calls His own sheep by name." This implies His intimate knowledge of them.

Does it not signify, next, that if He calls us by our name, He is in the habit of speaking to us with *exceeding plainness?* He can so speak to us that we shall know what He means. His Word is dark and mysterious to outsiders, but when He makes us to be His sheep, He speaks very plainly, calling us by name. It is only when persons are on very familiar terms with one another that they address each other by their Christian name. We are, all of us, Mr. Somebody, or the Reverend Mr. Somebody, or Dr. Somebody, or Squire Somebody—but when we are at home, we are, none of us, esquires! We are Richard, or Mary. Mother never thinks of calling us, "Mr." and Father does not say, "Miss," but they call us by our name! So the Lord Jesus Christ calls us by name to show how plainly He speaks with us and also to let us see what gracious familiarity there is between the Head and the members of His mystical body, between the Bridegroom and His spouse, between the Well-beloved and His Church which is so dear to His heart!

"He calls His own sheep by name." I think this also means *intense personality.* When anything is directed to you by name, it comes to you as your own with great definiteness. There is a story recorded of Mr. Rowland Hill which I have not seen printed in a book until just lately. It bears on its very face the tokens of truth, for it is just what he would be likely to do. He was accustomed, at family prayer, to pray for his servants by name, asking for such a blessing for Sarah, and such for Jane, and such for John, if his man-servant was present. There was a new cook engaged—her name was one which, in those days, was more common than it is now—it was, "Biddy." So, at prayer time, Mr. Hill prayed that God would bless Sarah, and the others, one by one, and would the Lord be pleased to save Biddy and give her a new heart and a right spirit!

After prayer was over and the servants had gone away, there was a gentle knock at the study door and the good minister said, "Come in, what is it?" "Please, Mr. Hill, I am very glad to be in your service and I hope I shall find it a comfortable place, but would you kindly not mention my name in prayer? I have not been accustomed to it and I do not think I could bear it." "All right, Biddy," he said. "I try never to do anything that is displeasing. I am sorry you should be annoyed and I must not mention your name in prayer again." She went to her work and the next time of family prayer Mr. Hill prayed in the following manner. After having pleaded for blessings in general, He said, "Now, Lord, be pleased to bless Sarah, and convert her, and lead her in Your way." And so he mentioned the rest of them and then he added, "Lord, I may not ask You to bless Biddy because she earnestly requests that she may not be men-

tioned to You in prayer." The prayer was over and there was, again, a knock at the door. "Come in," said Mr. Hill. It was that cook, again. "Please, Mr. Hill," she said, "I didn't want you to pray like that. I didn't want to be left out in prayer, Sir. Please, you may mention my name if you like." "Just so, Biddy," he said, "I will do it and God will bless you, I do not doubt."

Well now, there is a good deal in that way of personally mentioning people in prayer, because they then feel that you are praying for them—and when the Lord Jesus Christ calls His own sheep by name, they distinctly recognize that He speaks to them! Have not some of you known what it is to be spoken to, from this pulpit, by the Lord Jesus Christ, quite as distinctly as if I had mentioned your name and address? You know you have! This is the way in which some of you were first brought to Christ. It was not merely to sinners, but to *you* as a sinner! It was not merely to all men, but to *you* as distinctly singled out, that the Gospel of Jesus Christ came with power! To show the personality of His Gospel, He calls men by name.

This call also teaches us the *wonderful suitability* of Christ's Words to our needs. There will often be, in a text of Scripture, the very message that is needed by a poor wearied spirit. How often, too, will the Lord prepare the mind of a hearer till the preacher's words shall be as suitable as if he had been told all about the unknown person! Friends sometimes write to me and say, "We are going to bring a friend of such and such a sort to the Tabernacle." They let me know in the hope that I may make my message suitable. Do not let me know whom you bring! I do not want to know because I cannot suit my sermon to your friend. Bring your friend, with your own hearty and earnest prayer, but without my knowing anything about it! God will speak through His servant what He wishes to have said—and it will come with greater force and power than any thoughtful love can suggest. Oh, may God speak to some of you tonight! May you be called out by your name and feel in your heart, "Jesus calls me, and I will go to Him at once, and put my trust in Him"!

III. Now I am going to close with this third remark, THAT THIS CALL BY NAME COMES AT SPECIAL TIMES. I will mention four special seasons when the Lord's personal call is heard.

First, it comes at *conversion.* I have, perhaps, already said enough about that. There is a call to sinners by name—the Gospel preached in general is all very well, but it is the Gospel preached in *particular* that saves men. If you have come in here, tonight, just to hear as one of a crowd, you will probably get nothing by coming. But when you sit here, saying, "Lord, speak to me! Lord help me to apply every word to my own case! Help me to lay hold of every promise that is quoted!"—that is the way to gain the blessing! They say that the times are improving and that business is looking up, but when I meet with a friend who is in a certain trade, he says, "Business is not looking up *my* way. I do not find that I have any more customers than I used to have, or that I can get the slightest increase of profit on my goods." Just so, Friends, you do not

profit by the general blessing, do you? You need a *particular* blessing to come to your own soul, for, in this respect, as it is with temporal things, so it is with eternal things—*we need the blessing for ourselves*.

Now, in business we have to check this kind of selfishness, but in spiritual things we may excite it, for we need men to "covet earnestly the best gifts." One good old man said, "The Lord's people are a covetous people." "Oh!" said one, "they ought to get rid of all covetousness." "Yes," he answered, "except that *spiritual covetousness* to which we are exhorted by Paul, when he says, 'Covet earnestly the best gifts."' That is quite true! We should covet earnestly the best things, even heavenly things. Seek these things for yourselves and rest not satisfied until you have them! May the Lord by conversion call you by name, that you may have the first of these best gifts!

I have known Him, in the second place, call some by name to *fresh service*. Did He not say, "Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them"? Sometimes there is a Sunday School teacher needed. There sits a young man in this place, tonight, who ought to be in the Sunday school. I shall not call him by name. Perhaps he would be offended if I did so, but I hope that the Lord will call him. There sits a Christian woman, here, who should be engaged in the school, or who ought to take a tract district. Possibly there is a Christian woman here, of years and knowledge, who ought to be teaching a Bible class, or conducting a mothers' meeting. Perhaps I speak to some large-hearted man, with considerable ability, who spends all his time on his business and does no work for Christ. He ought to have a Mission Hall and support it, himself—he has money enough and he has talent enough. Some of you have never had an idea of what you yet can do for the Lord—and the only way to find it out is to try to do something for the Savior! There are too many "retiring" people among us who are so retiring as to get to be lazy! Come out of your hiding place, my dear Friend! No, I will not mention your name, though I know some of this sort—and I have their names almost on my tongue, but I will not mention them. But I do pray the Master to mention your names so that you may consecrate your substance, your time, your ability, to the work of the Lord somewhere in this great perishing London, or somewhere in this great nation where so many perish for lack of knowledge! "He calls His own sheep by name, and leads them out" into wider spheres, into larger enterprises, into fuller consecration to His service! May He now do that with many of you, my Brothers and Sisters!

Sometimes the Lord calls His saints by name and leads them out into *higher attainments* in the Divine Life. Come, you who have been always halting, doubting, fearing—it need not be so with you! The Lord invites your *faith* to full assurance, your *love* to enthusiasm, your *prayer* to wrestling, your *desire* to expectation and your present *imperfect service* for Him to the complete dedication of yourself—body, soul and spirit—to His cause! We have not yet attained all we may reach, dear Friends. There is a something yet beyond and to this the Master calls us. "But I

cannot rise to it," says one. "With man, it is impossible, but with God all things are possible." You may be strong, useful, joyful—you need not always be weak, careless and sorrowful! Oh, that there might come into your soul, by the breath of the Divine Spirit, an increase of spiritual life till you shall have it more abundantly and shall bless and praise the name of the Lord!

But, lastly, there will soon come another call to some of us—and we would be very, very slow to shrink from it. I mean the call *Home to Heaven.* I know not to whom it may come this week, or next, but stand you all ready for it. It will come by the messenger appointed by Him who loves you and who longs to have you where He is, that you may behold His Glory! Perhaps the summons may come to you as it came to Christiana, with this token—"an arrow sharpened with love, let easily into her heart." She knew what the token meant and she welcomed her Lord's call! It will come in different ways. One aged Christian, who was dying of cancer, met another who was greatly suffering from another painful disease. "Well, well, my Brother," she said, "we must all have something to die of, you know, or we should live here forever. Do not let us quarrel with the messenger the Lord sends." He will send the proper messenger in His own good time and in the right way.

Rowland Hill, whom I have already quoted, was sometimes very odd in his expressions. He went, when he was very old, to see a godly woman at Everton who was nearly ninety, and he told her that when she got Home, he hoped she would mention him up there, for he had almost begun to think that they had forgotten him—he had grown so old that he would be glad to be going Home to his dear Lord and to see those blessed Johns—John, the beloved disciple and John Bunyan, and some other Johns that he mentioned. It was not long before he went home, too, and he almost overtook her before she could deliver his message! Well, whether we live to be as old as he, or die in middle life, or in the early days of our conversion, it does not matter. The Lord will send the messenger and the messenger will know us—and we shall hear the voice that says, "Arise and come away." I would have you standing with your wings outstretched, as the cherubim abode over the Mercy Seat, with their wings outspread, as if ready to die at the Divine bidding!

Are you afraid? Afraid of going Home, dear child? Are you so fond of boarding school that you have no desire for the holidays? Are you afraid, dear Heart, afraid of the wedding day, and of the Bridegroom, and of the everlasting joy? Soldier, are you afraid of the victory and the crown? No, no! Instead of fearing, let us begin to anticipate the bliss of being "forever with the Lord." God help us to joy and rejoice, wearing, today, by faith, the chaplet which we shall soon wear in reality, striking even now the harp strings with the joyous fingers which, before long, shall sweep the chords throughout eternity, as we sing, "Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah, unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, to Him be Glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

We will close our service by singing this verse—

"Forever with the Lord! Amen!
So let it be!
Life from the dead is in that word,
'Tis immortality!"

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
John 10:1-31.

Verse 1. *Verily, verily, I say unto you.* When our Divine Lord and Master was about to speak with deep solemnity, He usually commenced His discourse by repeating the word, "verily"—"Verily verily, I say unto you." The authority of Christ is the basis of our religion. He does not quote from others, but He says, "Verily, verily, *I say* unto you." Jesus is Incarnate Wisdom, He is God, Himself, and what He says is Infallibly true and is to be accepted without question.

1. *He that enters not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.* Those who professed to be the shepherds of the sheep, but did not come according to previous Revelation by the way of the Old Testament types and prophecies, were nothing better than thieves and robbers. They could have no design in palming themselves off upon the people except to steal from them and to do them harm.

2, 3. *But he that enters in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter opens.* John the Baptist was, so to speak, the porter who recognized the Christ and opened the door to Him. John said, concerning Jesus, when the Spirit abode upon Him, "I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God."

3. *And the sheep hear his voice.* His chosen ones, those whom the Father had given Him, the peculiar people—"the sheep"—at once recognized the Presence of the Shepherd when they heard His voice.

3, 4. *And he calls his own sheep by name, and leads them out. And when he puts forth his own sheep, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him.* "He goes before them." There is never an act prescribed by Christ for His followers but He first performs it, Himself—"He goes before them." Other professed leaders drove the flock before them. The Jewish teachers laid heavy burdens upon men and grievous to be borne, which they, themselves, did not touch with one of their fingers. It is the distinguishing mark of the Good Shepherd that, "when He puts forth His own sheep, He goes before them." You are not bidden to do, as a servant, what the Master would not do. Even if it is the menial occupation of washing the saints' feet, He, Himself has done it—you are to lay down your life for the Brethren, for Jesus, Himself, has done that—"He goes before them, and the sheep follow him."

4. *For they know His voice.* There is an instinct, a God-given instinct, in the elect of God, by which they know Christ's voice. When once the Spirit of God has changed their natures, they have an open ear for the Words of Jesus—"the sheep follow Him: for they know His voice."

5. *And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.* Others will follow the stranger, but the sheep will not do so. We read of some, that they were full of such deceivableness that they would, if it were possible, deceive the very elect, but there is an, "if it were possible." The Lord's true sheep cannot, will not long be deceived—"they know not the voice of strangers…"

6. *This parable spoke Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which He spoke unto them.* We need not only to listen to Christ's Words, but we need an interpreter to explain them to us. Jesus is needed to make His people understand His own teaching. He—

"Is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain."

7. *Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you.* Still, you see, Jesus speaks with the same authority! He is an intense dogmatist. He leans not upon the arguments of human reason, nor upon the precedents of former teachers. Again He said just this, "Verily, verily, I say unto you"—

7. *I am the Door of the sheep.* Is He both Shepherd and Door? Yes, and many other figures meet in Him—all creation cannot set Him forth completely. We may multiply all the types and symbols and analogies of Nature, and yet not fully picture our Lord Jesus Christ. Dr. Watts truly wrote—

"Nature, to make His beauties known,
Must mingle colors not her own."

We must know the Creator as well as the created if we would set forth Christ to the fullest.

8. *All that ever came before Me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.* Some people did hear them—one pretended messiah and another led different companies of deluded followers after them, "but the sheep did not hear them." The Prophetess Anna, the holy waiting Simeon, the guileless Nathanael—these did not hear them—their ears had not yet caught the mystic tone which belongs only to the true Shepherd's voice—"The sheep did not hear them."

9. *I am the Door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.* Is Christ the Door of salvation to you? Some teach that Baptism is the door. Others talk of a thousand things as being doors of salvation, but it is Christ, alone, who is the Door, and you must enter into salvation by simple trustful faith in Him. What does a sheep do in order to enter the fold? Does it perform any tricks? No, it simply goes in by the doorway. Poor wandering sheep, do the same, for Jesus says, "By Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture."

10. *The thief comes not but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly*. You who have eternal life may have more of it! You may be spiritually stronger, more vigorous, more clear of eye, more happy of heart, more active in service. Life is a blessing, but *abundant life* is a greater

blessing! We need not merely to breathe, to live, as I saw one about an hour ago. He had life, but too little life even to speak—we need to have much life, that we may enjoy it, and may use it for the glory of God! Christ has come that we might have life more abundantly—may we all make use of His coming to that end!

11-13. *I am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the Shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep, and flees: and the wolf catches them, and scatters the sheep. The hireling flees because he is an hireling, and cares not for the sheep.* How many there are of whom we have reason to fear that they must be hirelings because, when they see false doctrine and error abroad, they do not oppose it! They are willing to put up with *anything* for the sake of peace and quiet. They flee as soon as they see the wolf, but he most copies his Master who will not flee on any terms. Certainly he will not flee when wolves are about, for is he not set for the defense of the sheep, that he may chase the wolf away, even though he gets to himself many a scratch and many a wound? Our Master never fled from the wolves. He might have done so—our Good Shepherd might have gone back to Heaven and escaped Gethsemane, the gruel scourges and the wounds upon the tree—but that was not His course of action. The sheep were His own and, therefore, it was a joy to Him to interpose Himself between them and the destroyer, and He did so.

14-16. *I am the Good Shepherd and know My sheep, and am known of Mine. As the Father knows Me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down My life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold.* Not yet brought in, still wandering away on the barren hills. *Them also I must bring.* "I must," says Jesus, and, as men say, "must is for the king." There is a Divine necessity laid upon Christ our Savior! He must save the people, the sheep whom His Father gave Him—"them also I must bring." Oh, wondrous love that holds even the Omnipotent Savior in bonds and puts Him under the sacred constraint of this mighty, "must"—"them also I must bring."

16. *And they shall hear My voice.* How like a king, Jesus talks! It is the Royal Shepherd who says, "They shall hear My voice." But suppose they will not hear it? "They shall hear My voice." But suppose they stop their ears against the Gospel. "They shall hear My voice," and Christ's, "shall," is always backed by Omnipotence!

16-18. *And there shall be one fold, and one Shepherd. Therefore does My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This Commandment have I received of My Father.* Herein lay much of the effect of the death of Christ, that it was voluntary, that He had power to lay down His life, the right to lay it down and the right to take it again. When any ordinary man dies, he only pays "the debt of nature." If he were even to die for his friend, he would simply pay a little earlier that debt which he must ultimately pay!

But the Christ was Immortal and He needed not to die except that He had put Himself under Covenant bonds to suffer for His sheep.

19-26. *There was a division, therefore, again among the Jews for these sayings. And many of them said, He has a devil, and is mad, why do you listen to Him? Others said, These are not the words of Him that has a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind? And it was at Jerusalem, the feast of the dedication, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the Temple in Solomon's porch. Then came the Jews round about Him and said unto Him, How long will You make us to doubt? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and you believed not: the works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me. But you believe not because you are not of My sheep, as I said unto you.* This was a brave utterance of our Lord. Those who are Christ's chosen and redeemed people, in due time come to believe in Him, but He does not say to the Jews, "You are not My sheep because you do not believe." He tells them the same Truth of God in another way, "Your not believing is a proof that you are not My sheep."

27-31. *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. My Father, which gave them to Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are One. Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him.* These are the ultimate arguments of unbelief—stones! There is no sense in stones, no reason in violence, yet ungodly men, when they have nothing else to use, throw stones at the Teacher of the Truth of God! Is this generous? Is this wise? If you do not believe the testimony, at least leave the Testifier alone! Yet it is not in the nature of men to do so. Their stones are always ready when they are unable to answer the Christ. "Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him." They had done it previously when He said unto them, "Before Abraham was, I Am." But as He escaped their malice, then, so did He at this time.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—400, 496, 440.

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

COME, MY BELOVED!
NO. 2360

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, MAY 13, 1984.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 4, 1888.

"Make haste, my Beloved, and be like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of spices."
Song of Solomon 8:14.

THE Song of Songs describes the love of Jesus Christ to His people and it ends with an intense desire on the part of the Church that the Lord Jesus should come back to her. The last word of the lover to the Beloved One is, "Speed Your return; make haste and come back." Is it not somewhat singular that, as the last verse of the Book of Love has this note in it, so the last verses of the whole Book of God, which I may also call the Book of Love, have that same thought in them? At the 20th verse of the last chapter of the Revelation, we read, "He which testifies these things says, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." The Song of Love and the Book of Love end in almost the same way—with a strong desire for Christ's speedy return.

Are your hearts, dear Friends, in tune with that desire? They ought to be, yet have not some of you almost forgotten that Jesus is to come a second time? Refresh your memories. Others of you, who know that He will come—have you not thought of it as a doctrine that might be laid on the shelf? Have you not been without any desire for His glorious appearing? Is this right? That Song of Solomon is the central Book of the Bible. It is the innermost shrine of Divine Revelation, the Holy of Holies of Scripture. And if you are living in communion with God, you will love that Book, you will catch its spirit and you will be inclined to cry with the spouse, "Make haste, my Beloved." If you have no longings for Christ's appearance, no desires for His speedy return, surely your heart is sick and your love is faint! I fear that you are getting into a lukewarm state. I believe that our relationship to the Second Advent of Christ may be used as a thermometer with which to tell the degree of our spiritual heat. If we have strong desires, longing desires, burning desires for the coming of the Lord, we may hope that it is well with us! But if we have no such desires, I think, at best, we must be somewhat careless, perhaps, to take the worst view of our case—we are sadly declining in Divine Grace.

I. Well now, to come to our text, I want you to notice, first, WHAT THE CHURCH, HERE, CALLS HER LORD—"Make haste, *my Beloved.*"

I will have only a few words upon this point. I am hardly going to preach, tonight, but just to talk familiarly to you, and I want you to let

your hearts talk. Observe, the spouse first calls her Lord, "Beloved," and secondly, "*my* Beloved."

Christ is our "*Beloved.*" This is a word of affection and our Lord Jesus Christ is the object of affection to us. If you read the Bible, especially if you read the New Testament and study the life of Christ and yet you only admire it, and say to yourself, "Jesus Christ was a wonderful Being," you do not yet know Him! You have but a very indistinct idea of Him. If, after reading that life, you sit down and dissect it, and say to yourself, coolly, calmly, deliberately, "So far as is practicable, I will try and imitate Christ," you do not yet know Him—you have not come near to the real Christ as of yet. If any man should say, "I am near the fire," and yet he is not warm, I would question the truth of his words, and though he might say, "I can see the fire. I can tell you the appearance of the coals. I can describe the bright flames that play about the stove," yet if he were not warmed at all, I would still think that he was mistaken, or that there was some medium that interposed between him and the fire at which he said he was looking.

But when you really come to see Jesus and to say, "I love Him! My heart yearns toward Him. My delight is in Him. He has won my love and holds it in His own heart," then you begin to know Him! Brothers and Sisters, true religion has many sides to it. True religion is practical. It is also contemplative, but it is not true religion at all if it is not full of love and affection. Jesus must reign in your heart or else, though you may give Him what place you like in your *head*, you have not truly received Him. To Jesus, beyond all others, is applicable this title of the *Beloved*, for they who know Him love Him. Yes, if ever love had emphasis in it, it is the love which true Believers give to Christ! We do well when we sing—

"I love You because You have first loved me,
And purchased my pardon on Calvary's tree.
I love You for wearing the thorns on Your brow—
If ever I loved You, my Jesus, 'tis now.
I will love You in life, I will love You in death
And praise You as long as You lend me breath!
And say when the death-dew lies cold on my brow,
If ever I loved You, my Jesus, 'tis now."

We may also go beyond that point, as the hymn does, and say—

"In mansions of glory and endless delight,
I'll ever adore You in Heaven so bright;
I'll sing with the glittering crown on my brow;
If ever I loved You, my Jesus, 'tis now."

Our love to Jesus begins with *trust*. We experience His goodness and then we love Him in return. "We love Him because He first loved us." They say that love is blind. I should think it is, from what I have seen of it in some people, but love to Christ might have ten thousand eyes and yet be justified in loving Him. The more you see Him, the more you know Him! The more you live with Him, the more reason will you have for loving Him. There will never come a time in which you will have to question whether you were right to surrender your heart to Him, but even throughout the eternal ages you shall, in the happinesses of His blessed

company, feel that you were, in fact, more than justified in calling Him your Beloved!

That is the first part of the name the spouse gives to her Lord—no, not the *first*—the first part of the name is, "*my*." She calls Him, "*my Beloved*."

Brothers and Sisters, this signifies appropriation, so that the two words together mean affection and appropriation—"My Beloved." If nobody else loves Him, I do. This is a distinguishing affection and I love Him because He belongs to me! He is mine, He has given Himself to me and I have chosen Him because He first chose me. He is "my Beloved." I am not ashamed to put Him in front of all others and when men say, "What is your Beloved more than another beloved?" I can tell them that "My Beloved" is more than all the earthly beloveds put together! It is a delightful thing to get hold of Christ with both hands, as Thomas did when he said, "My Lord and my God." There he held Him with a double-handed grip and would not let Him go. It is sweet and saving even to come into contact with Him, as the woman did who touched the fringe of His garment, but, oh, to take Him up in your arms! To hold Him with both hands and say, "This Christ is mine. By a daring faith, warranted by the Word of God, I take this Christ to be mine, to have and to hold, for better or worse, and neither life nor death shall ever part me from Him who is 'my Beloved!'"

Now, there is a sweet name for the Lord Jesus Christ. My dear Hearers, can you speak of Jesus in that way, "my Beloved"? One who can, by the Spirit of God, say this, has uttered two words that have more eloquence in them than there is in all the orations of Demosthenes! He who cannot truly say this, though he may speak with the tongues of men and of angels, yet, since he has not this charity, this Divine Love in his heart, it profits him nothing! Oh, that every one of you could say, "My Beloved! My Beloved!"

Do you all really know what saving faith is? It is the appropriation to one's own self of Christ in His true and proper Character as God has revealed Him. Can you make this appropriation? "Oh," says one, "I am afraid I would be stealing salvation if I did!" Listen! So long as you can get Christ anyway, you may have Him. There is never any stealing of that which is freely given! The difficulty is not about any *rights* that you have, for you have no rights whatever in this matter, but come and take what God *gives* to you, though you have no claim to it. Soul, take Christ, tonight, and if you take Him, you shall never lose Him! I was going to say, if you do even *steal* Him, so long as you do but take Him to yourself, He will never withdraw Himself from your grasp. It is written, "Him that comes to Me , I will in no wise cast out." Some come properly and Christ does not cast them out. But there are some who come improperly—they come, as it were, limping on a wooden leg, or perhaps only creeping or crawling. It does not matter how you come to Christ, as long as you really come to Him—He will never cast you out! Get to Him anyway you can and, if you once come to Him, you may plead that blessed promise of His, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out."

I have told you, before, that some years ago I felt a great depression of spirit. I knew whom I had believed, but somehow, I could not get the comfort out of the Truths of God I preached. I even began to wonder whether I was really saved and, having a holiday, and being away from home, I went to a Wesleyan Chapel. A local preacher occupied the pulpit that morning. While he preached a sermon full of the Gospel, the tears flowed from my eyes and I was in such a perfect delirium of joy on hearing the Gospel, which I so seldom have an opportunity of doing, that I said, "Oh, yes, there is spiritual life within me, for the Gospel can touch my heart and stir my soul." When I went to thank the good man for his sermon, he looked at me and he could hardly believe his eyes. He said, "Are you not Mr. Spurgeon? "I replied, "Yes." "Dear, dear," said he, "why, that is *your sermon* that I preached this morning!" Yes, I knew it was, and that was one reason why I was so comforted by it, because I felt that I could take my own medicine, and I said to myself, "There now, that which I have seen to have a certain effect upon others has had the same effect upon me." I asked the preacher to my inn to dinner and we rejoiced together to think that he should have been led to give the people one of my sermons so that *I should be fed out of my own cupboard*. I know this, that whatever I may be, there is *nothing* that moves me like the Gospel of Christ! Do not many of you feel just as I do?

II. Now I will lead you on to the second division of my subject. I have shown you what the Church calls her Lord. Now, in the second place, I will tell you WHENCE SHE CALLS HIM—"Make haste, my Beloved, and be like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of spices." What does that mean? She cries to Him to come from the place where He now is, which she calls, "the mountains of spices."

Readers of Solomon's Song know that there are four mountains spoken of in the Song. The first set of mountains is mentioned in the 17th verse of the second chapter of the Song where we read of the *mountains of division*—"Until the day breaks, and the shadows flee away, turn, my Beloved, and be like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether," or, the mountains of division, the divided crags, or the mountains that divide. Well now, Beloved, this was Christ's first coming! There were mountains of division—our sins and God's justice—like great mountains, divided us. How could God's love ever come to us, or how could we get to it? There were mountains of division and, as we looked at them, we said, "They are impassable! Nobody can ever climb those lofty crags, or scale those awful precipices, or cross those dread abysses! These mountains effectually separate a guilty soul from a holy God and, my Brothers and Sisters, there was no way over those hills till Jesus came like a roe or a young hart! Roes and harts can stand on crags where men's heads turn giddy and they fall—and our Divine Master was able to stand where we could not. He came leaping over the mountains of our sins and over the hills of Divine Justice, and He came even to us and opened up a way over the mountains of Bether, the mountains of division, by which God comes

to us and we come to God. And now, instead of division, there is a sacred union!

That was Christ's first coming, over the mountains of division.

But there were other mountains beside those—which you read of a little further on in the Song—these were *the mountains of the leopards*, the dens of the lions. Turn to the fourth chapter, at the eighth verse—"Come with Me from Lebanon, My spouse, with Me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards." When Christ came the first time, He met with fierce opposition from sin, and death, and Hell. These were the lions—these were the leopards—and our great Champion had to go hunting them and they hunted Him. You know how these grim lions met Him and how they tore Him—they rent His hands and His feet, and His side. Do you not remember how that great lion of the Pit came leaping upon Him—how He received him upon His breast, like a greater Samson—and though He fell in the death-struggle, He tore that lion asunder, as though he had been a kid and cast him down? As for His other enemies, He could truly say, "O Death, where is your sting? O Grave, where is your victory? "Our Well-Beloved came to us over the mountains of the leopards and the dens of the lions, more than conqueror through the greatness of His love! Do you not see Him as He comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, traveling in the greatness of His strength, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save? In spite of all opposition, He finished the work of our redemption!

So Jesus came to us over the mountains of separation, and over the mountains of the leopards.

But there is a third mountain mentioned in this wonderful poetical Book, and that is, *the mountain of myrrh.* In the sixth chapter at the second verse, it says, "My Beloved is gone down into His garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies." It is called a *garden*, but in the sixth verse of the fourth chapter it is called a mountain—"Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away, I will get Me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense." You know the story well. After Jesus had come over the mountains of our sins. After He had killed the lions and the leopards that stood in our way, He gave up His soul into His Father's hands and loving friends took His body, and wrapped it in white linen, and Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus brought myrrh and aloes to preserve His blessed body, that matchless case of a perfect Soul and, having wrapped Him, they laid Him in a new tomb, which thus became the garden or mountain of myrrh. A bitter thing was that grave wherein He buried all our sin, that grave out of which He came victorious over death, that grave out of which He rose that He might justify His people!

That was the mountain of myrrh to which Jesus went for a very brief season. Scarcely three days was He there, but I think I can hear His Church standing at the tomb and saying, "Make haste, my Beloved! Be like a roe, or a young hart, and come quickly from Your sleep with the

dead in the mountains of myrrh." It was but a short time that He was there, even as He said to His disciples, "A little while and you shall not see Me; and again a little while, and you shall see Me." Soon was that slumber over and when He woke, as Samson carried away the gate of Gaza, so Christ arose and took up the gates of Death—posts and bar and all—and carried them away and neither death nor Hell can ever bring them back again! By the Resurrection of Christ, the tomb is opened, never to be closed again!

The "mountain of myrrh" is the third that is mentioned in the Song, but our text refers to "*the mountains of spices.*" I am not stretching this passage, or drawing a lesson where there is none—the mountains of spices are those places where Jesus dwells at this very moment at the right hand of God. It is from there that we now call Him with the spouse when she said, "Make haste, my Beloved, and be like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of spices.

What are these spices? Are they not Christ's infinite merits which perfume Heaven and earth? The foul corruption of our sins is not perceptible because of the mountains of spices! One single sin would be vile enough to pollute a universe— what, then, were all our sins put together? Behold this wondrous sanitary power of Divine Grace! These mountains of spices more than nullify the foulness of our sins! Christ's merit is perpetually before the eyes of His Father so that no longer does He perceive our sins!

What shall I say next of these mountains of spices? Are they not our Lord's perpetual and prevailing prayers? He intercedes for the people before the Throne of God. He is that great Angel from whose swinging censer there goes up, continually, the incense of intercession. The prayers of saints are presented by Him to His Father with all His own merit added to them. These are the mountains of spices—Christ's infinite merits and His ceaseless prayers, His undying supplications to the great Father on behalf of all His people!

In consequence of this, I think I may say that the praises of His glorified people, the sweet music of the harps of the redeemed, the everlasting symphonies of the spirits of just men made perfect and cleansed by His atoning blood—are not these as sweet spices before God? Yes, all Heaven is perfumed with everything that is precious and acceptable, full of a sweet savor unto God and a delightful fragrance to all His people! Now, this is where Jesus is now—not here in this foul, polluted world, but up yonder He rests in the mountains of spices! And the prayer of His Church is continually, "Come, my Beloved! Make haste, my Beloved! Be like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of spices."

III. That brings me to what is really the gist, the main point, the arrowhead of the text. We have noticed *what* the Church calls her Lord, and *whence* she calls Him. Now, thirdly, note HOW SHE CALLS HIM. She says, "Make haste, my Beloved, make haste."

Why is it that all the Church of God and each individual Christian in particular, should be found anxious for the speedy coming of our Lord

Jesus Christ? I think, surely, that *this is the result of true love.* Does not love always wish to see the object on which its heart is fixed? When your dearest one parts from you for a while, do you not always wish for a speedy return? The parting is painful—it were bitter, indeed, if you did not expect to meet again. So you say, "Be no longer absent than you are forced to be. Come home as speedily as you can." Where there is great love, there gets to be great longing, and that longing sometimes becomes so vehement as to be well-near impatient. May not the Church that mourns her absent Lord sigh and cry till He returns? Is not this the very language of intense love, "Make haste, my Beloved, and return to me"? If we love our Lord, we shall long for His appearing, you can be sure of that—it is the natural result of ardent affection.

But, notwithstanding this, Beloved, we sometimes need certain incentives to stir up our souls to cry for our Lord's return. One reason that ought to make the Believer long for Christ's coming is that *it will end this conflict.* Our lot is cast in a wretched time, when many things are said and done that grieve and vex God's Holy Spirit and all who are in sympathy with Him. Sometimes it is false doctrine that is proclaimed—and if you preach the Truth of God, they smite you on the mouth and then you say to yourself, "Would God the Lord would come!" At other times, it is sheer blasphemy that is uttered, when men say, "The Lord delays His coming," or when they talk as if He were not Lord, as if His Gospel were no Gospel and His salvation were worn out. Then we say, "Make no tarrying, O our God! Come, Lord, and tarry not!" We grow almost impatient, then, for His coming.

And, dear Friend, when you see the oppression of the poor, when you hear the cry of the needy, when you know that many of them are ground down to bitter poverty and yet are struggling hard to earn a bare pittance, you say, "Lord, will this state of things always exist? Shall not these wrongs be righted? Oh, that He would come who will judge the people righteously, and vindicate the cause of the poor and the oppressed!"

Then we look on the professing Church and we see how lukewarm it is, how honeycombed it is with heresy and worldliness, and how often the Church that ought to honor Christ insults Him and He is wounded in the house of His friends. We say, "Will not this evil soon be at an end? Will not the conflict speedily be over?" Oh, how have I stood in the midst of the battle, when the deadly shafts have flown about me on the right hand and on the left and, wounded full sore, I have cried, "Will not the King, Himself, soon come, and shall I not, before long, hear the sound of those blessed feet whose every step means victory, and whose Presence is eternal life?" "Come, Lord! Make haste, my Beloved! Come to the rescue of Your weak and feeble servants! Come, come, come, we beseech You!" Put yourself into this great fight for the faith and if you have to bear the brunt of the battle, you will soon be as eager as I am that Jesus should make haste and come to your relief. You, also, will cry, "Make haste, my Beloved," when you think what wonders He will work at His coming!

What will Christ do at His coming? *He will raise the dead.* My eyes shall see Him in that day. "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth, and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." When Christ shall come the second time and that blast, of which we sang just now, "the loudest and the last," shall ring through earth and Heaven, *then* shall the dead men arise! There are newly made graves. The mourners' tears are not yet wiped away. There are the graves of many who have gone Home long ago and we remember them, and we say, "Would God that Christ would come and spoil death of those precious relics! Oh, that He would reanimate those bodies and call together the dry bones and bid them live!" Come, Lord! Come, Lord! Make no tarrying, we beseech You!

And when He comes, Beloved, remember that *then shall be the time of the glory of His people*—"Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father." Slander will be rolled away in the day when Christ comes. The wicked shall awake to everlasting contempt, but the righteous to an everlasting justification. They shall be clear of every accusation in that day and then shall they sit on the Throne of God with their Lord. They were with Him in His humiliation—they shall be with Him in His Glory! They, too, were despised and rejected of men as He was, but in that day, none shall dare to despise them, for every saint shall be seen to be a king and a son of the King! Oh, the glory that awaits His people in the day of His coming! "It does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like He; for we shall see Him as He is." Well may the child of God say, "Make haste, my Beloved!" Oh, for the sheathing of the sword and the waving of the palm! Oh, for the drying of the tear and the handling of the harp of gold! Oh, for the ending of the doubt and the trouble and the beginning of the everlasting enjoyment and the eternal serenity at the right hand of the Ever-Blessed One!

Still, there is another reason why we say, "Make haste, my Beloved." It is this. We desire to share in Christ's Glory, but *our chief desire is that our Lord may be glorified.* I believe I shall have the support of every Christian heart when I say that we would a thousand times rather that Christ were glorified than that *we* should be honored. Many years ago, after the Surrey Music Hall accident, I well-near lost my reason through distress of heart. I was broken down in spirit and thought that, perhaps, I might never preach again. I was but a young man and it was a great burden that crushed me into the dust through that terrible accident. But one passage of Scripture brought me recovery in a moment. I was alone and as I was thinking, this text came to my mind, "Him has God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior," and I said to myself, "Is that so? Is Jesus Christ exalted? Then I do not care if I die in a ditch! If Christ is exalted to be a Prince and a Savior, that is enough for me."

I distinctly recollect remembering what is recorded of some of Napoleon's soldiers who were well-near cut to pieces—lying dying, bleeding, suffering, agonizing on the battlefield—but when the Emperor rode by,

every man lifted himself up as best he could, some resting on the only arm that was left, just to look at him once more and shout, "*Vive l'Empereur!*" The Emperor had come along. He was all right and that was enough for his faithful followers! I think that I felt just like that—whatever happened to me, it was true of Christ, "Him has God exalted." Never mind what becomes of the man—the King lives and reigns! Jesus Christ is glorified and so long as that is the case, what matters it what becomes of us? I think I can say for you, as well as for myself, that if there is *anything* in this world that will glorify Christ, you will make no hesitation about the bargain. If it will glorify Christ, you say, let it come. Though your name should be cast out as evil and your body should be left unburied, to be gnawed of dogs, what matters it, so long as He who loved us and gave Himself for us, should ride on conquering and to conquer in the midst of the sons of men?

To every loyal soldier of King Jesus, this is the best thought in connection with His Second Advent, that when He comes, it will be to be admired in His saints and to be glorified in all them that believe! Then shall there be universal acclamations to Him and His enemies shall hide their heads in shame and dismay. Oh, what will they do, then? What will they do in that day of His appearing? They, also, will live again and what will they do in that day? Judas, where are you? Come here, man! Sell your Lord, again, for 30 pieces of silver! What does he say? Why, he flees and wishes that he could again go out and destroy himself, but that is impossible. Now Pilate, vacillating Pilate, wash your hands in water and say, "I am innocent of the blood of this just Person." There is no water for him to wash his hands, and he dares not, again, perform that wicked farce! And now, you who cried, "Crucify Him, crucify Him," lift up your voices, again, if you dare!

Not a dog moves his tongue, but listen, they have found their tongues and what do they say? They are imploring the hills to fall upon them! They are calling on the rocks to hide them! The King has not put His hand upon His sword, He has not sent forth His lightning to scatter you—why do you flee, you cowards? Hear their bitter wail! "Oh, rocks and hills, hide us from the face, from the face, from the face of Him that sits upon the Throne!" It is the face of Jesus which they were bid to look upon, that they might live, but now, in another state, they dare not look upon that face of placid love which, in that day, shall be more stern than the frowning brow of vengeance, itself! Yes, they flee, they flee!

But you who have trusted Christ, you whom He has saved—you will draw near to Him, you will shout His praises, you will delight in Him! It shall be your Heaven to bless Him forever and ever! Oh, yes, great Master, "Make haste, my Beloved, and be like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of spices" and all His saints, with one voice and heart, will say, "Amen."

Oh, that you who have never trusted Him, would trust Him, now! And if you trust Him, you shall live with Him forever and ever. God grant it! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
REVELATION 22.

Verse 1. *And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the Throne of God and of the Lamb.* There is no other "water of life" except that which springs from a Sovereign God and a substitutionary Sacrifice—"a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the Throne of God and of the Lamb." This sets forth the blessings of salvation that come to us through the Sovereign Grace of God by the precious blood of Jesus.

2. *In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bore twelve manner of fruit, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.* When Adam ate of the forbidden fruit, he was cast out of Eden, lest he should also eat of the tree of life, but our new "tree of life" yields us both medicine and food. Blessed are they that eat of it—they shall find a Divine variety of mercies—"twelve manner of fruits." They shall find a constant succession of blessings—"and yielded her fruit every month." And there shall be an ever-present power of healing—"the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."

3. *And there shall be no more curse: but the Throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him.* Happy servants, to be permitted so to do! Here, dear Friends, we are hindered in our service, but I think that it will be Heaven enough for some of us to be permitted to serve the Lord forever in Glory—"His servants shall serve Him."

4. *And they shall see His face.* Oh, to keep up communion with the Lord while you are at work for Him! To serve Him and to see His face! This is a double joy! This is to be like Martha and Mary in one person—"His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His face."

4. *And His name shall be on their foreheads.* They will acknowledge Him and He will acknowledge them. They are glad to wear His name on their foreheads, but who wrote it there? He, Himself, engraved it, as the seal and token that they were His! Happy, happy people, thus to be acknowledged of God as His peculiar people while they acknowledge Him as their only Lord!

5. *And there shall be no night there.* Here, there are nights of ignorance, of sorrow, of sin and of fear, but, "there shall be no night there."

6. *And they need no candles, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God gives them light.* He puts aside the use of means. While we are here, we need candles and suns. It seems curious, does it not, to put candles and suns in the same sentence? "They need no candle, neither light of the sun." But, after all, compared with God, candles and suns are very much the same thing! Great lights and little lights are all limited, all less than nothing in comparison with the boundless, infinite God, who *is* Light, and the Source of all light that exists in Heaven above, or on the earth beneath.

6. *And they shall reign forever and ever.* It must be a wonderful city in which every inhabitant is a king—and not a dethroned king, either, for, "they shall reign." Every redeemed one in Heaven has also an everlasting kingdom—"They shall reign forever and ever." I hope our friends who are always cutting down the meaning of the word, "everlasting," will be good enough, at least, to let us have an everlasting Heaven! Whether they do so, or not, we believe that the saints shall reign "forever and ever."

6, 7. *And He said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy Prophets sent His angel to show unto His servants the things which must shortly be done. Behold, I come quickly.* Or, "I am coming quickly."

7. *Blessed is he that keeps the sayings of the prophecy of this Book.* Our Lord is on the road! He may arrive, tonight, while we are sitting here. Happy would be our communion service if, for the last time, we should be doing as He commanded us in expectation of His coming—and that He should come even while we were commemorating His death!

8, 9. *And I, John, saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed me these things. Then said he unto me, See you do it not: for I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the Prophet, and of them which keep the sayings of this Book: worship God.* John made a mistake—he mistook the messenger for the Master and I am not surprised that he did so, for the heavenly beings are like their Lord when they see Him as He is! John was quickly set right and his error was soon corrected. He was bidden to pay no kind of homage to one who, however bright and holy, was only his fellow servant. No worship of angels, no worship of angelic men must be tolerated among us. "Worship God," is the command to us as it was to John.

10. *And he said unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this Book: for the time is at hand.* There was no need to seal the prophecy, as though it only related to those who would live in distant ages—"The time is at hand."

11. *He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.* This is what will be said when Christ comes to judgment, when we get into that future state. Today the voice of Jesus says, "Repent, Repent, Repent," but once cross the narrow stream of death and pass out of the dispensation of mercy—and then character is *fixed*—and fixed *forever*.

12. *And, behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according to his work shall be.* What reward will some of you get? Christ will "give every man according as his work shall be."

13-15. *I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last. Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For outside are dogs.* Men of a quarrelsome and filthy spirit.

15. *And sorcerers.* Such as pretend to have dealings with spirits and who intermeddle with the mysterious things of the unknown world.

15. *And whoremongers.* All such as indulge their evil passions.

15. *And murderers, and idolaters, and whoever loves and makes a lie.* Whether it is a lie about things on earth or things in Heaven, a falsehood spoken or a false doctrine taught.

16-18. *I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the Rock and the Offering of David, and the bright and morning afar. And 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 the water of life freely. For I testify unto every man that hears the Words of the prophecy of this Book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this Book.* The Book is finished. Not another line of Inspiration may *any man* dare to put to it on peril that God shall add to him every plague of which the Book speaks!

19. *And if any man shall take away from the Words of the Book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the Book of Life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this Book.* The Book is perfect. You cannot take a line from it without spoiling it if you were to cut from it a solitary text. It would be misused and the Book should be marred. You would do this at your peril, for God threatens to take away, out of the Book of Life, the name of anyone who takes anything from "the words of the Book of this prophecy."

20. *He which testifies these thing says, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.* Thus we sang just now—

"Come, You, the soul of all our joys
You, the desire of nations, come!"

21. *The Grace of our lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.* The whole Inspired Volume thus closes with a benediction—"The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—346, 350, 349.

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

HOPEFUL, YET DOUBTFUL
NO. 2361

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, MAY 20, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 8, 1888.

"And a certain scribe came and said unto Him, Master I will follow You wherever You go. And Jesus said to him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head."
Matthew 8:19, 20.

"A CERTAIN scribe"—"One scribe"—it is said in the original. Perhaps to mark the noteworthy fact that he should be a scribe, and yet should wish to be a disciple of Christ. The Lord has some of His own in every class of men. You may go as low as you will, but Grace can go lower! You may look as high as you please, but Grace can rise higher! In Heaven we shall find a multitude of those who were considered to be the base people of this world and, here and there, we shall find a king. So there was one scribe, a certain scribe, who desired to be a follower of Christ. Let us not despair of anybody. If God has not shut them out of our commission and He certainly has not, for He has bid us preach the Gospel to every creature, then let us not shut them out from our hopefulness, but let us expect to see even "a certain scribe" coming forward and declaring, "Master, I will follow You wherever You go."

I. We have no time for any preface, tonight, so we shall go at once to our first point which is that here is SOMETHING VERY HOPEFUL. A certain scribe said unto Jesus, "Master, I will follow You wherever You go."

Note, first, that this was a *very respectful* speech. The scribe addressed the Lord as, "Master." "Master, I will follow You wherever You go." It was not a flippant speech. There was no absence of reverence. He evidently looked up to the great Miracle-Worker who had been healing the sick in the streets on that long evening, and he called Him, "Master." Jesus said, on another occasion, "You call Me, Master and Lord, and you say well; for so I am," and this scribe began his religious confession well, whatever that confession may have turned out to be, by addressing Christ as Lord. I do not like those professed converts who are irreverent and I think that they condemn themselves out of their own mouth when they begin to talk about the Lord Jesus Christ as if He were some common Person of their acquaintance—and as if faith and repentance and all that appertains to godliness were a thing to be joked about. That will not do. There is something hopeful about this scribe in that he speaks in respectful and reverent tones to the Lord Jesus.

There is still more hopefulness in the fact that his words are *very enthusiastic.* They go upon wheels and the axles of the wheels are hot with

speed—"Master, I will follow You wherever You go." His utterance is earnest, it is hearty, it is enthusiastic! And from a scribe, too, a man of pens and ink, a calm, quiet letter-man. To see him on fire is something really remarkable! I do not like those converts who have no enthusiasm. If they do not burn at first, what will they do afterwards? If in their first love there is no zeal, no holy flaming fire, what shall we make of them, by-and-by? It is well to see, in those who have newly come to Christ, even if it is possible, a little too much enthusiasm! We can very well put up with *that*. There is a novelty to the soul that begins to see the Light of God—a novelty in the Light, itself, which suggests to it something sparkling and brilliant—and we do not wonder if the words of confession that the newly converted utter should burn and glow. There is something very hopeful, then, in the reverent tone and in the enthusiastic spirit of this man's utterance.

We are also greatly pleased and expectant of the best results when we notice that he was *very ready*. I do not know that he had been pressed by anybody to become a follower of Christ. There had been, so far as we know, no distinct call given to him, but he had readily responded to that call which is really in Christ, Himself, and in the miracles He worked. When any man is blessed, there is a voice in that blessing to others who need the same favor. All the sick are called when some sick ones are healed and this man had a quick ear and, apparently, a very obedient spirit, so he delayed not, but made haste to avow his allegiance to Christ. The Savior was going down to the boat and about to leave the multitude. The scribe might not, perhaps, see Him, again, so, at all risk of intrusion, he comes to Jesus and says, "Master, I will follow You wherever You go." We like to see this readiness in those who have newly come to Christ!

And one also likes what this man said because it was so *very resolute*—"Master, I will follow You." Hear how he says it—"I will follow You." There is no, "if," no, "but," no merely, "I hope and trust so," but, "Master, I am decided that whoever else may hesitate, I will follow You. I am determined, whatever others may do, that I will be Your follower. I will follow You." And surely, he who is not resolute when he enters upon the heavenly war, courts defeat! You must draw your sword from the sheath! You must say, "Set down my name, Sir," to the man with the writer's inkhorn, and you must begin straightway to cut a lane through your foes, for only he who is resolute and determined will take the Kingdom of Heaven, of which our Lord said, "the violent take it by force." We are glad to see the strong determination, the firm decision of a clear-cut man who comes right straight out from his old associates and says with all his heart and soul, "Master, I will follow You."

Then observe, with congratulation and hopefulness, that this man's declaration was *very unreserved*—"I will follow You wherever You go." "If You go to sea, I will go with You! If You land on the other side, where You will be confronted by men possessed of devils, I will follow You wherever You go." There is something of the unreserved loyalty of Peter when he said, "Lord, I am ready to go with You, both into prison and to death." So this scribe makes no exception of any kind, but says, "I will follow You wherever You go." Oh, if he had only meant it in its highest spiritual

sense, what a blessing this man would have had resting upon him! Of the glorified spirits above it is written, "These are they who follow the Lamb wherever He goes"—

"Foremost of the sons of Light,
Nearest the eternal Throne."

May we be among those who always follow Christ, keeping at His heels through floods or flames, to whom it is imperative that they should do what He does, and be what He is in His humiliation, that they may be like He in the day of His appearing in Glory! I like a convert—do not you, my Brothers and Sisters, also delight in a convert—who can use such language as this, "Master, I will follow You wherever You go"?

The best thing that I can say about this man's utterance is that it was *very right.* I am about to show you that *he* was not right, but the *words* he used were right! He said, "Master, I will follow You wherever You go." Is not this what Jesus has a right to expect of us? Will He ever be satisfied with less than this? Unless our heart takes Him for better and for worse, in life and in death, do we really take Him at all? Is not this what the Holy Spirit would work in us, that we should follow the great Master wherever He goes? Is not this the one need of the present age, the lack of fidelity to Christ in everything? Are not many aiming at originality? Are they not too much striking out paths for themselves? Have we not been told, over and over, again, that we are to be "independent thinkers"? Is not the position of sitting at Jesus' feet looked upon with contempt by many? Jesus, Himself, said that the Words that He spoke were not His, but He spoke what His Father told Him. *He was no original thinker*, but He was the great translator of the thoughts of God to men!

But men disdain this in the pride of their scientific knowledge. Professing themselves to be wise, they thus become fools! Still, this is the point to which we come back and may God bring His Church there, and bring you and me there, to say with heart and soul, without reserve, "Master, I will follow You wherever You go." The voice of the Virgin, at the first miracle at Cana of Galilee, spoke a word which it is well for us to always obey, "Whatever He says unto you, do it." That was at Christ's first miracle and we would see many miracles if we would give heed to that Word of God! But because we do not act as He bids us, the water is not turned into wine and we lack that special brightness, glory, fullness and sweetness in life which would come of complete obedience to Him. What Jesus commands, let us, by His Grace, delight to do! Where Jesus leads, let us rejoice, by His Grace, to follow!

So far I have shown you that in the utterance of this scribe, there is something very hopeful. But our blessed Master is not deceived by glitter. He looks for gold. He does not seem to answer this man's words—it is a way that Christ has, you will notice, all through the Gospels—that often He does not reply to men's words. You and I have to do that, but Jesus read their thoughts and He answered their thoughts rather than their words. So He read this man's thoughts and we, too, may read them, reflected in the reply which Jesus gave him—"The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head."

II. By this answer, Jesus showed us, I think, that there was SOMETHING WHICH NEEDED TESTING. That will be the second part of my subject.

Note, first, that this man's resolve to go with Christ was very sudden. Perhaps, therefore, it was the fruit of excitement. It was a very exciting evening—a hospital in the street—a great Physician instantly healing all kinds of disease! There were shouts of joy on all sides—lame men leaping like harts—and the tongues of the dumb singing! Well, I do not wonder if some people did not quite keep their heads and, though this man, now, with intense enthusiasm cries, "Master, I will follow You wherever You go," perhaps, after all, it is only the result of excitement. You know, Beloved, that nature can do nothing in the *spiritual* realm, yet nature can make a wonderful imitation of Grace. But the child of nature, however finely dressed, is a dead child and not a living one. "You must be born again," is the Word of Christ to all who would enter His Kingdom. It is not at all a difficult thing to take nature, especially some natures that are kindly and well-disposed and have much that is amiable about them, and to so work upon them that Nature cries, "I will follow Christ." And, indeed, there is so much about Christ that is naturally beautiful, so much that is sweetly attractive, that we have known plenty of instances of individuals, quite destitute of spirituality, who have been in love with Jesus Christ with a natural love for the natural excellences of His Character!

And there have been some who have been prepared to go a long way and, as they thought, prepared to go *all the way* with Christ, but who, nevertheless, did not really and savingly know Christ at all! They only saw the outer Christ, but the true Christ, the *spiritual* Christ, they had not perceived. They could not have spoken to them what Jesus said to Peter, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood have not revealed it unto you, but My Father which is in Heaven." They had had no such Revelation and this man had no Divine call. At least there is no mention of any—he had no *effectual calling*, no inward drawing, no work of the Spirit of God that we can perceive at all. And so he suddenly breaks out with an enthusiasm that is, after all, but the effort of nature. It is well known to everybody that water will, of itself, rise as high as its source, but it will not rise any higher. Human nature will rise as high as human nature—no higher. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." You watch and you fancy that there will be some wondrous birth and that human nature, in her throes, will bring forth something very superior to herself, but she cannot—"That which is born of the flesh is flesh"—and nothing more! The offspring of the flesh cannot rise beyond its parentage. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." So, Brothers and Sisters, sudden conversions may be genuine conversions, but, on the other hand, a supposed conversion may be only an apparent change—the fruit of excitement, the working of an excitable nature—but not the work of the Spirit of God at all.

Next, there was reason for testing the scribe's utterance because it was *very unconsidered.* He had probably not thought about the matter at all and, without consideration, cried out, "Master, I will follow You wher-

ever You go." He had jumped to this decision and, perhaps, being unconsidered, it may have been based upon ignorance. The man did not appear to know the *poverty* of the Christ. He professed that he would follow Jesus anywhere, but he was not aware that the Great Physician, who had worked such mighty wonders that evening, had not a place where He could lay His head. When the scribe was once enlightened upon *that* point, apparently he dropped the matter, altogether, and gave up all thought of being a follower of the meek and lowly Jesus.

My dear Friends, I want you to be so converted to Christ that when you come to read your Bible through, you will not find anything there that you will kick at! I want you to be so converted to Christ that when you are further instructed in the Gospel, you will take it all in and say, "Just so. I am Christ's disciple and I am prepared to accept whatever He teaches me." Why, there were some who were, for a time, with Christ, but who went back and walked no more with Him when they heard certain Truths which He uttered! Such people as those are poor converts. They cheat our hopes! They bring discredit upon the Church to which they join and, therefore, it is necessary for us to say to all who are thinking of following Christ, "Search the Scriptures, read the Word and realize what you are doing. Do not put on the uniform of our great Captain without knowing what His service will involve. We do not want to entrap you as sergeants enlist half-drunken clowns! We wish you to take the oath of allegiance to the great King, knowing something of what it means. Otherwise we shall be disappointed in you and you will be disappointed in yourselves when you come to know more of our great Master and of His service."

Note further, the reason for testing this utterance lay here—this man was evidently *very self-reliant*—"Master, *I will follow You wherever You go*." What a great, "I WILL," there is there! There is no prayer for Grace or guidance. There is no dependence upon a greater than himself! It is simply, "I will." You know, "I will," is for God to say—but when *we* say, "I will," it must always be, "*cum grano salis,*" with a grain of salt, and that salt must be, "If You will help me to do so." But nothing of that dependence upon Divine support appears here and, consequently, the scribe's declaration is unsatisfactory.

That which is said by one who is self-reliant may prove to be untrue. In Simon Peter's case, there was truth at the bottom of what he boastfully said, but there was not enough truth to keep him steadfast when a silly maid put a plain question to him and he denied his Master. But in the case of some boasters, there is not even sincerity in what they say! They think that they are sincere, but their utterance is very shallow. There is not depth enough in it for it to be honestly called a heart-word. It is but a lip-word and of little or no real value. Oh, my dear Friend, I told you how glad I was, just now, to hear you say that you would follow the Lamb wherever He goes, but I am very sorry if I have to feel that in what you have said, there is more of dependence upon *self* than of reliance upon God, for you will break down, as this man did, as soon as ever the Lord tested him by saying, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head."

Notice, again, this man was *very obtrusive and bold* in his declaration of loyalty to Christ—"I will follow You wherever You go." I am loath to judge him for being so outspoken, but, at the same time, it is possible, when persons are so very loud in their profession, that there may be much of self-interest in what they say. I wonder if this man thought, "Well, now, I am a scribe. If I join that company, I shall be a leader! I perceive that they are only fishermen, the bulk of them, and if I come in among them, I shall be a great acquisition to that little band. I shall no doubt be the secretary." Perhaps he may have thought that there was something to be made out of such a position—there *was* one who thought so. Remember him who had the bag and who kept that which was put therein? Did this scribe think so? Or had he an idea that Jesus really was the Messiah and that following Him, he would be joining One who would be a great King, who would have a splendid retinue and so, if he cast in his lot with Him, no doubt he would sit on one of the 12 thrones judging the 12 tribes of Israel? He who could heal the sick at that rate was evidently a great Man and some shadow of His greatness would rest upon His followers. Oh, if you try to join the Church of Christ from any such motives as these, may the Lord, by His good Spirit, readily detect you and touch your conscience—and let you know that you are not such as He invites to follow Him!

This man's confession of faith was also *very daring* and, as I have shown you, this would have made it very commendable if it had been genuine. But it was very temporary. It did not last long. Some have said that there was in it too much attachment to the Person of Christ rather than to the *teaching* of Christ. I like not the distinction, but still, I have no doubt that many converts do what is worse than that—they have an attachment merely for the *preacher*. Oh, how many come to join Churches because such and such a preacher speaks well, and he has charmed them with that interesting story, or with that excellent metaphor, yes, and they like him for his work's sake and for his godliness and so, when the good man dies, or is removed, do we not often see that flocks are scattered and many go back to the world? It must be because their faith stood in the wisdom of *man* and not in the power of God! Surely, it must be so, that they based even their confidence in Christ upon confidence in His minister! Oh, I pray you, keep clear of that fatal mistake! In no respect, I trust, would you rely upon *me*—if you did, you would be foolish to the last degree! Let not your reliance be upon the preacher—what is he at the best but as a trumpet set to his Master's mouth? The music lies not in the *instrument*, but in Him who uses it and produces a certain sound through it. Let your trust be only in Jesus and in that glorious Gospel which He came to preach! Yes, which He worked out upon the Cross when, as the Lamb of God, He took away the sin of the world.

Thus I have shown you that there was something in this man's declaration that needed testing. I am sorry that I have not time to work out the subject from other points, for they are well worthy of notice, especially by ministers and those who have to see many enquirers after salvation.

III. But now, thirdly, and very briefly, here is SOMETHING TO REMEMBER. Jesus said to this enthusiastic person, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head."

Remember this, then, *you must expect to fare like your Lord.* He said to His disciples, "If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you." "If they have called the master of the house, Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?" If you follow Christ, you must go at night where He goes, to Olivet, where the dew shall saturate your garments. You must go with Him to Vanity Fair, to be hunted unto the death! You must expect to be called mad! You must reckon upon being even charged with being a drunk and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners! Are you ready for this? There is no going to Heaven without wearing, for Christ's sake, a fool's cap and a fool's coat. You will find, if you seek honor, here, that you may possibly get it, but it will do you no good, for when you die, the honor which you obtain by unfaithfulness to Christ will clothe you with shame and everlasting contempt! See, then, what Jesus expects His followers to be—they must be willing to share and share alike with Him, for the disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord.

Notice next, and remember it well, that *the Lord Jesus does not want any but real disciples.* You know how it is with some. They want to make up a good number and to report that so many have been converted and so many have joined the Church. Oh, that desire after big figures! What mistakes and misery it leads some people into! But Jesus does not want to count this man unless he is one who can be rightly counted as really made His follower—so He speaks to him discouragingly and testingly. He tries and tests him—and the man goes his way. The Lord Jesus Christ does not ask you to become His follower unless you mean to be wholly His! Body, soul and spirit—through and through, out and out! You must be His, or else you cannot be a follower of Christ at all. Hear that and remember it well.

Then, notice, that *a little more instruction may sometimes drive some disciples back.* The Savior hardly said more than a sentence to the man and he was gone! Let us take care to instruct our converts. It will act as a sieve and prevent much deception. Tell them all about the trials they will have to endure. Bid them count the cost. Set before them the difficulties of the way and the need of a Higher Power than their own to help them through.

There is one other thing that I would like you to remember—*that which drove this man away was the real reason why he ought to have stayed with Christ.* O Brothers and Sisters, why do we love Christ, if we do love Him? Why, because, though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor! What? Shall we leave Him because He gave up everything for our sakes? Shall we leave Him because He had not even a hole like a fox, or a nest like a bird? Shall we leave Him because He was despised and rejected of men? Shall we leave Him because He was scourged and spit upon? Shall we leave Him because they crucified Him? No, these are the bonds that bind us fast to Him and will not let us go—

"His visage marred with sorrows great!
The vinegar and gall—
These are His golden chains of love,
His captive to enthrall."

And if men leave the Savior because of those very things that ought to bind them to Him, then it is not Christ who is at fault—they must have all the blame laid upon themselves—and they must bear it to their everlasting confusion! Yet no doubt there are many who *do* forsake the Cross because it is the Cross—and leave Christ because of the shame He endured for the sake of sinners. What is that but to quit Jesus because He is Jesus? Do not do it, I beseech you! But if you do, then will you be discovered and unmasked—and your fine professions of allegiance and all your pretty resolutions will be blown away like chaff before the wind!

IV. Bear with me a minute or two more while I finish by saying that here is SOMETHING FOR PERSONAL CONSIDERATION. I will only throw out hints and will not enlarge upon them.

There are a few questions that I am going to ask. The first is, *Would it not be better to always do than to promise?* The scribe said, "Master, I will follow You wherever You go." That sounded well, but suppose he *had* followed Christ wherever He went—that would have been much better! Next time you are going to make a vow, pause a while. Vows are entangling things. Next time you think of giving a promise, stop a little. You had better perform the promise rather than make it and then break it—is it not so?

The next question is, *Would it not be better to always pray than to promise?* Instead of saying, "Master, I will follow You wherever You go," suppose the scribe had knelt down and said, "Master, lead me. Take me for a disciple. Draw me with bands of love and hold me fast even to the end"? That would have been better! A resolve is well enough in its way, but it may prove to be lame, weak and broken-backed. But a prayer—ah, God hearing it, you have girded yourself with Omnipotence and you are, indeed, strong!

Now for another question. *Is Jesus worth the price?* Is not Jesus worth following to poverty, to shame, to death? Oh, some of us have had to ask this question! For the Truth of God's sake, we must lose friendships, we must bear contempt, we must expect to be misunderstood. But is not Jesus worth it all? Say, is Jesus worth our going to prison, or worth our suffering the rack, or worth our being burnt at the stake? I truly believe that some modern Christians do not hold any doctrine for which they would think it worth while to suffer even a toothache! I fancy that they almost think so themselves by the ready way in which they go on to something else! Would they not be fools if they did die for *their gospel*? It is not worth the killing of a fly, for there is nothing in it! But is Christ worthy of anything we have to bear for His sake? Is He, or is He not? If you can honestly say, after calculating and reckoning it all up, "Yes! Yes! Those things that were gain to me, I count loss for Christ! Yes, I count, I reckon, I estimate all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." If it is really so, then go on following your Lord, for you have counted the cost. If not, do not begin to build what you cannot finish and what is not worth your while to finish.

And, next, what do you say? *Are the spiritual and heavenly rewards of following Christ a sufficient recompense?* What if you should never make a penny by following Christ, but should lose everything that you have? What if you should never get any comfort out of it for the present, but often be in the dark and have a world of soul-conflict as the result of it? Say, do you believe that to be a Christian, to have a spiritual life, to have communion with God in prayer will be enough for you without anything else? Do you think that Heaven, the sight of the King, the sitting on the Throne of God with Him and the everlasting Glory will make amends for all this? Would you fling the world away, as though it were a child's ball? Yes, would you throw *ten thousand worlds* away, as so many rotten apples, glad to get rid of them, if you might but have your God, your Heaven, your All? You are the stuff of which Christ's soldiers are made if you can say all that from your heart! But, if you cannot, may God renew you, for you know not, yet, what Moses knew when he counted even the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt! It was not reigning with Christ, but even His *reproach* that Moses esteemed to be greater riches than the treasures in Egypt!

The last question is, *Does Grace enable us to take Christ with all the consequences?* Does the Holy Spirit at this moment sweetly constrain your heart to say, "Yes, yes, after every consideration has had due weight with me, if Jesus will have me, I will follow Him wherever He goes"? Do you feel that this is not the voice of nature, but the cry of Grace within you? Is it because He has loved you with an everlasting love and washed you from your sins in His own blood? Is it because His Spirit has reached you, changed your likes and dislikes and made you love the things which you did once despise? If so, then, my Brother, my Sister, Christ gives you His hand, tonight, and you may take it, never to let it go, again, for who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?

Will *you* also believe in Him, dear Friend? Will you trust Him? Will you take Him to be your Leader and your Lord forever? God make it to be so this very night! God make this your birth-night, for His dear Son's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—639, 646, 659.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 8:16-34; 9:1.

Verse 16. *When the even was come, they brought unto Him many that were possessed with devils: and He cast out the spirits with His Word, and healed all that were sick.* It was the evening after the Sabbath. They did not venture even to bring out their sick till the day of rest was ended. And the Savior, saying nothing about their lingering superstition, began to work mightily among them. "He cast out the spirits with His Word." What a power there is in the Word of Jesus! There is nothing like it for the casting out of devils. All our philosophies will not do what it does! The enemy will say, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you?" He cast out the evil spirits with His Word, and healed all that were sick."

17. *That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the Prophet, saying, He, Himself, took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses.* It does not look like a fulfillment, except upon the wondrous principle of the power of Substitution. Jesus takes the sickness and, therefore, He removes it from us. He heals our infirmities because He took them upon Himself. Is it so, do you think, that every miracle of healing that Christ worked took something out of Him? We remember that when the woman with the issue of blood was cured by touching His garment, Jesus said, "I perceive that virtue is gone out of Me." Was it so that He suffered while He was thus relieving the suffering? It was the joy of His heart to bless mankind, but every blessing that He gave was very costly to Him. I think that Truth lies embedded in the Evangelist's declaration.

18. *Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave commandment to depart unto the other side.* This, again, looks like a *non sequitur*. You and I would have said, "If there are great multitudes about us, let us speak to them while we are here." But then, again, you see, we may not always judge by the apparent usefulness of the present moment. We have to consider the rest of our career. Our Savior knew that the governors of the country were very jealous and that if people came together in large numbers, they might suspect insurrections and revolutions—and they would be there with their troops—and many innocent folk might be slain, and, speaking after the manner of men, His work of usefulness might be quickly brought to an end. Therefore, when He saw the great multitudes, He judged it wise to go elsewhere. Besides, He was no lover of popularity—He looked upon it as a shadow which necessarily followed Him rather than as a thing to be sought after. This He showed in the intense humility of His spirit and in that love of solitude which was so natural to One who walked in continual fellowship with God. Sometimes we shall really do more by apparently, for the moment, doing less.

19, 20. *And a certain scribe came and said unto Him, Master, I will follow You wherever You go. And Jesus said to him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head.* We hear no more of this man. Our Savior's faithfulness probably dismissed Him.

21. *And another of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, suffer me, first, to go and bury my father.* Now this man was a disciple, mark you, and, according to Luke, the Lord had said to him, "Follow Me," yet he urged this plea, "Suffer me, first, to go and bury my father."

22. *But Jesus said unto him, Follow Me and let the dead bury their dead.* Nothing, not even the duties of filial love, must be allowed to come in conflict with the command of Christ, "Follow Me." I take it that this is not so much a word to the common disciple as to a disciple called out to a special ministry—"Your ministry is to be your first, your main, your *only* occupation—'follow Me: and let the dead bury their dead.' Let the politicians attend to the politics; let the reformers see to the reforms. But, as for you, keep to your own work and follow Me." When God's ministers come to this point, that they have to win souls, and that this is their *only* business, then souls will be won! There are plenty of dead people to bury the dead! There are plenty of moral people to see after the or-

dinary affairs of morality. As for us, let us follow Christ and keep to our one business!

23. *And when He was entered into a boat, His disciples followed Him.* He went first and they followed afterwards. If the boat is the type of the *Church*, then Christ is the first on board. He is the Captain and the disciples make up the crew—"His disciples followed Him."

24. *And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the boat was covered with the waves: but He was asleep.* What? A tempest where Christ is? Yes, it is generally so. If all seems very calm, you may question whether Christ is there, but when He goes into the boat and His disciples follow Him, it is not remarkable that the devil comes after Him. "The boat was covered with the waves." That sea of Galilee lies very deep, indeed, and it is surrounded by lofty crags and yawning chasms that act like funnels to the wind, so that to this day it is very dangerous for those who are on it in a boat. "The boat was covered with the waves: but He was asleep." Here is the weakness of humanity and here is, also, the strength of faith. Jesus went to sleep because that boat was in His Father's hands and He would take care of it. "He was asleep."

Sometimes the best thing that we can do is to go to bed. You are worrying and troubling yourself and you can do nothing—go to sleep, Brother. It is the climax of faith to be able to shake off all care and to feel, "If the Lord cares for me, why should I not sleep?" Remember what Alexander the Great said of his friend, Parmenio? "Alexander may sleep, for Parmenio watches," and surely we, who have a far greater Friend than Parmenio, can say at any time, "We may sleep, for God watches." "He was asleep." To sleep was the best thing that Jesus could do to renew His bodily energies and to prepare Himself for the time when His efforts would be needed for the deliverance of His disciples from danger.

25, 26. *And His disciples came to Him, and awoke Him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. And He said unto them: Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?* The disciples might have answered, "Lord, how can you ask us why we are fearful? The boat is covered with waves, the sea threatens to swallow it and all of us up." Still, they might have thought, "If Christ is on board the boat, will He allow it to sink? Can *He* be drowned? We carry Christ and all His fortunes—is not our vessel thus insured beyond all risk? He may well say to us, 'Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?'"

26. *Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.* "A great calm." No ordinary stillness of the sea, but it was a great calm, as the tempest had been great which had preceded it! What? And all of a sudden, too? Storms sob themselves to sleep through lengthened intervals of fretfulness, but when Jesus gives the word of command, the storm is gone at once. "There was a great calm."

27. *But the men marveled, saying, What manner of Man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?* They did not yet know their Lord—nor do we. Perhaps we have to go to sea to learn more of Him—I mean that troubles and trials of a greater sort than we have known, before, may yet have to come to be our schoolmasters to teach us who Jesus is. "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters, these see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep." You

landsmen are thankful for your quiet, but you do not see so much of Jesus as others of His disciples do—you must go to sea to be able to cry, "What manner of Man is this?"

28, 29. *And when He was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met Him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?* They knew that there is a time when He will judge them and when their torment will begin. Say what you please, sin in men or devils will be followed with *torment*—with sorrow indescribable, unutterable—and these devils knew it and they were obliged to confess the Truth of God! They were afraid lest Jesus had come to inflict upon them the penalty of their evil deeds before that Last Great Day.

30. *And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding.* The owners of these animals had no business to have any swine there—swine were forbidden in that holy country—and they should not have been kept there.

31. *So the devils besought Him, saying, If You cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine.* What a wonderful creature a man is as compared with an animal! A *legion* of devils could be packed away into these *two* men, but they needed a whole *herd* of swine to contain them all! How much greater is a man than a beast, that is to say, how much more capable of spiritual influence for evil as well as for good!

32. *And He said unto them, Go.* Jesus never wastes words on devils! He is always short and sharp with them—"Go."

32. *And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters.* The proverb has it, "They run fast whom the devil drives," they run to destruction, even as these swine perished in the waters!

33, 34. *And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told everything, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils. And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus.* You feel that they are going to worship Him, or at least to ask Him to come and teach them the way of salvation! Nothing of the sort.

34. *And when they saw Him, they besought Him that He would depart out of their coasts.* And there are many, still, who try all they can to get Christ to go away from them. Woe be to them if He grants their desire!

Matthew 9:1. *And He entered into a boat, and passed over, and came into His own city.* I think I see the departing sail—love, hope and peace melting away upon the distant horizon—and the Gergesenes left to perish! O God, do not so with any of us! Say not, "Ephraim is joined to idols. Let him alone."

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

THE KING AND HIS COURT
NO. 2362

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, MAY 27, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 11, 1888.

"My eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walks in a perfect way, he shall serve me."
Psalm 101:6.

DAVID is going to be king and these are the resolutions that he makes before he ascends the throne. He meant that he would look for the best men in the nation and that he would take care of them. He would give them offices about his court so that he might have his work done well — that his people might be judged by wise and righteous men—and all the affairs of state should be managed by those who were faithful to God. This was a very proper thing for him to do. I wish that those who are *not* kings, but who are placed in any position of influence, would have their eyes upon the faithful of the land. Good men should patronize good men. Those who have it in their power, should, to the utmost of their ability, advance those whom they know to be upright and true and gracious men. But, my dear Friends, we are not going to talk about David, now, but about the Son of David, "great David's greater Son," the King of Kings and Lord of Lords! There is no doubt that in His Kingdom His eyes are upon the faithful. He looks upon the faithful among His people. He takes them into communion with Himself and He uses them as His servants in conspicuous and remarkable ways—"My eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with Me: he that walks in a perfect way, he shall serve Me."

My business, tonight, is to speak especially to God's people about this faithfulness. And I shall handle the subject thus. First, *Who are these faithful men*—"the faithful of the land"? Secondly, *What will the King do with them?* And, thirdly, *How may we get among them,* that we, also, may have this favor from the King of Kings?

I. First, then, WHO ARE THESE FAITHFUL MEN to whom Jesus, our King, will have respect at all times?

I answer, they may be known in part by this mark—they are *true in their dealings with God.* A man who is not honest to God is honest to nobody. He who will rob his God will soon rob his fellow men. Now, I mean by being truthful and upright to God, just this, that we walk before Him in deep sincerity of heart. To make a profession of being what we are *not*, is not being among the faithful of the land! And to come before God with prayers which are *not* prayers, but only the skins and shells of prayers, is not being faithful before God. To profess to sing His praises, when we are only uttering words without heart, is to make ourselves as sounding

brass and a tinkling cymbal in the ears of God. We are not accepted by Him if our heart is not true. A man who is faithful before God will not go in his religious expressions beyond his religious experience—he will always be afraid of stretching his arm farther than his sleeve will reach. If he has not felt certain changes, he will not profess to have felt them. He would rather err on the side of doubting and distrusting himself than on the side of boasting and claiming for himself what he really does not possess. I think that it is a most important thing to be very true and thorough in our private walk with God. If you are backsliding, it is well to know it. If you are making but small progress, it is well to confess it. If you are an idler, it is well to admit it. If you have become lukewarm, it is well to know it. Nothing is more dangerous than to be saying to yourself, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing," when all the while you are "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

God has His eyes upon the faithful of the land, those who are faithful to Him, who do not attempt to deceive themselves with religious professions which they cannot support. How many a man has become a bankrupt by a lavish expenditure which exceeded his income! He said that he "must keep up appearances," and he *did* keep up appearances till they became his ruin! God grant that you and I may never try to keep up appearances before Him! Be what you would seem to be and, in the Presence of God never seem to be or *dream* of seeming to be what you are not! Thus I think we, first of all, know the faithful by their upright dealing with God.

This will lead them to be *true in their dealings with men*. I hope that I need not say much about this, but yet I do not know. I have heard, at times, of professing Christians who are no more straight in business than worldlings are. It is a shame to you of whom this can be said and it is a disgrace to the Church to which you belong! It brings dishonor upon the Lord Jesus Christ if any of you profess to be His servants and yet you lie and cheat, or, what is much the same thing, puff your goods beyond what can honestly and fairly be said of them, or sell them under false names, deceiving the people who purchase from you. I am not going into all the tricks of trade. I remember how good old Latimer, preaching, once, at Paul's Cross, said that he knew a man who had some wheat, poor stuff it was, and he poured out a bushel of good wheat, first, and then he put the bad wheat next. And then he put some good wheat on the top and so mixed it all together, or, rather, he concealed the bad wheat in the middle. Latimer went on telling another tale, and another, until all of a sudden he said, "Now, I am not doing you any good, for, I daresay, some of you will go and do these things, yourselves, tomorrow."

So the good old man checked himself and dealt with the evil rather by way of generality than by specialty. That man is not faithful in God's esteem who is not upright, honest, true to a hair's breadth, in his dealings with his fellow men! We must stand to our bond even though we lose by it. We must be true to the word we speak though it be to our own hurt. God grant that His Spirit may work in us, not only the ordinary integrity which may be found in many a natural man, but something deeper and

more thorough than that in all our dealings in business, in the family and everywhere else, for the eyes of the King are upon the faithful of the land!

Now, dear Friends, such people will, in the next place, always *be true in their dealings with men on God's behalf*. I think this passage bears very pertinently upon the minister, the Sunday school teacher and the Christian worker. The eyes of Christ are upon the faithful of the land. If I come here and teach you what I do not believe, or if I conceal what I do believe, or if I tell you something which has in it a suppression of the Truth of God, or if I preach to you orthodox doctrine while in my own heart I believe something different, remember that I cannot be said to be one of the faithful of the land! And if I, as a minister, sit still and watch the Gospel of Christ trampled in the mire and hold my tongue for fear of shame and contempt, I cannot be called one of the faithful of the land! If you, dear Sunday school teachers, in your instruction of the children, keep back from them anything they ought to know, or if, in telling them what they ought to know, you do not press it home upon their consciences. If you do not pray with them. If you do not long for their conversion, you are not faithful to their souls on God's behalf and the eyes of Christ will not be fixed upon you with approval!

It is a very hard thing, to always be faithful with men on God's behalf. I know that it is so even in visiting the sick. One is tempted to begin to comfort some of them when they ought not to be comforted—to say very soft and gentle words to them because they are ill, when, perhaps, they have never felt their need of a Savior—and never been awakened to any sense of spiritual need. I remember one who was greatly condemned for the action that he thought it right to take. Two or three of us had been to see a sick and dying man who always welcomed visitors. We prayed with him and told him the Gospel, but we were all under the impression that we had produced no effect whatever upon his mind—that he was passing into another world without any knowledge of his lost estate—without any repentance or faith in Christ. The good man to whom I refer—he is now in Heaven, but I well remember the reproach that he suffered for what he did—he stood at the foot of the bed and he said, "Friend, you are a deceived man. You are dying and you have no well-grounded hope. You always say, 'Yes, yes, yes,' to all we say, but my inmost thought of you is that you are without God and without hope. And if you die as you are, you will be lost forever."

The man's wife was thunderstruck and so was he! But when we went to visit him the next day, you should have seen the change that God had worked in him! There was a broken-hearted man crying for mercy! A man in sore trouble and distress of soul. The faithful messenger of God had told him the naked truth—it pained him to do it, but he had been more faithful to the sick man than others who had spoken very kindly to him! Oh, I believe if we are faithful, so that we are clear of the blood of all men, faithful to the Truth of God, faithful to our own consciences, faithful to the consciences of those with whom we have to deal, then we are among the number of whom the text says, "My eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with Me."

Have you and I been faithful to our own children and faithful to our own parents? Wives, have you been faithful to your own husbands about their souls? Do you not think that some of us might go home, tonight, and pour out floods of tears before God as we confess, "No, we have not been as faithful as we should have been to what we know of the Gospel, and to those to whom we were bound to teach it"? Christ has a special eye of love for those who are faithful in their dealings with God, faithful in their dealings with man and faithful in their dealings with the souls of men on God's behalf. Oh, that we may be among that happy company!

Then, observe that these faithful men are *thorough in all that they do.* If you read the second part of our text, you will see that the Psalmist also says, "He that walks in a perfect way, he shall serve me." May I be permitted to say, especially to you who are commencing the Christian life, that if you wish to live near to God and to be greatly used of Him, it is important that you should begin as you mean to go on—by endeavoring to walk in a perfect way? There are some who tried, at first, with their own convictions. I cannot help quoting myself, at the risk of being called egotistical. When I was converted to the Lord Jesus Christ and made to rejoice in Him, I read the New Testament for myself. I had no friend and no relative who was a baptized Believer. I come of a stock in which infant Baptism has long been religiously observed. I read the Scriptures and I saw, there, that only the *Believer* was to be baptized. That Truth of God came to my conscience, but the suggestion which came to me from friends was, "Well, it really is a pity to introduce this matter, for all those around you think differently."

I have never ceased to thank God that I was thoroughly honest to my convictions about the ordinance. Do any of you think it a trifle? Very well, waive that point for the moment, but when a man is not honest to his convictions about a trifle, the next thing is that he is not honest to his convictions about something else—and so he gets off the lines—and if you begin to go a little aside, for the sake of peace, or to prevent disturbances, or to please your friends, you have taken a way of life which will lead you, I cannot tell, where! Be determined that if others do as they please, you are not accountable for their action—but still do what you believe to be right! If you are a Christian, go through with it! Be a follower of Christ in every respect as far as the Word of God and your own conscience lead you. I found that the habit of beginning to think for myself and to follow my convictions was useful to me, and it has been useful to me to this day. And at this moment, before the living God, I am able to stand on my own feet, to lean neither on this man nor on that, but only on that eternal arm which will support any man and woman—every man and woman who, in the sight of God, determines to follow the Truth of God wherever it may lead them!

Now, I earnestly pray every Christian person here, especially in the beginning of life, to look well to this matter, for the joy of your life, the peace of your life, the inward rest of your life will much depend, under God, upon your being faithful to your convictions in every point as God shall help you! The great King, Himself, seems to say, tonight, "My eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with Me: he

that walks in a perfect way, he shall serve Me. He is the man whom I will pick for My servant. I will put him here, or I will place him there, where I am unable to station some others because they are not clear and straight in their conduct and because they are not to be depended upon for loyal obedience to their Lord and Master."

Thus have I tried to describe who the faithful men of the land are. May we all be numbered among them!

II. But now, secondly, I want very briefly to answer this question, WHAT WILL THE KING DO WITH THEM? David says, "My eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land," and David's son, the Lord Jesus Christ, says the same. What does He mean?

Well, first, *His eyes of search will seek them out.* That dear Brother who is faithful to God is only a young apprentice, but he has been faithful in not breaking the Sabbath. Nobody knows about him, dear young man, but the eyes of the Lord are upon him! There is a working man who, the other day, in the midst of a swearing company, rebuked the blasphemer and spoke up for Christ. That noble action is not recorded in the newspaper and never will be—but God's eyes are upon the faithful of the land. There is a poor woman who, the other day, lost a good deal by being straight and honest. No one will report it. Nobody will put her down in the Legion of Honor. No, but God's eyes are upon the faithful of the land! And when you, through the Grace of God, are led to follow Christ faithfully, quite alone, not wishing to be seen, doing in secret what only God, Himself, knows—it is reward enough for you that the Lord Jesus Christ sees what you do and He, Himself, will one day reward you openly.

But there is more than that. When King David says, "My eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land," it means that *his eyes of favor will cheer them.* The King would first search them out and then he would bring them forward. He would promote their interests, he would see that the faithful men were not thrust into a corner and neglected, he would have an eye to cheering them as they had an eye to pleasing him. I believe that God greatly favors and blesses those whom, by His Grace, He makes to be faithful. If you are unfaithful, your unfaithfulness will come home to you, sometime or another. I mean, if you are a child of God, for there is *discipline* in the House of the Lord. I am not talking, now, about the punishments of the Law of God—the children of God are not under the Law—I am speaking about the discipline of the Gospel. You are saved by free, rich, Sovereign Grace and you are made a child of God. From the moment of your new birth you come under the discipline of the great Father's House and if you are unfaithful, your unfaithfulness will deprive you of many a comfort and many a joy! It will dog your footsteps and track you when you least expect it. Look at David. After his great sin, he was never the man that he had been before—and many were the griefs and pangs of heart which he brought upon himself by that one terrible fall. The Lord grant that we may be kept faithful, so that God's eyes of approval may rest upon us and that we may joy and rejoice in Him from day to day!

But then the text, after saying, "My eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land," adds, "that they may dwell with Me." *The faithful shall dwell*

with God. Oh, this is a choice privilege! When Grace makes a man faithful, God rewards his faithfulness by permitting him to dwell in close communion with his Lord! It is a wonderful thing to me that if we have any good works, God always works them in us, and then he rewards us for them as if they were our own! He gives us Grace and then smiles on us because of the Grace that He, Himself, gives! So, if He makes a man faithful, He then rewards him for it according to His Grace, and says, "He shall dwell with Me."

I think I see David carrying out this resolution. There is a poor but honest man away down there in Bethlehem and David hears of his strict integrity and sends him a letter. "Come to Jerusalem," says the king, "I will make a courtier of you. I will make a friend of you. You are the sort of man I need. Come and dwell with me." He hears of another poor man, over yonder, who has been ridiculed because he stood up for Jehovah, the God of Israel, when others were inclined to worship some false god. "Come up to Jerusalem," he says, "come live with me. You are my sort of company, for you are one of the faithful ones." Now, *that* is what the Lord Jesus Christ says to us! He calls us as sinners, but He communes with us as saints! He washes us when we are guilty, but after we are washed and He has made us upright in His sight, then He takes us to dwell with Him! He delights in opening His heart to us and in permitting us to open our heart to Him!

Now, if any of you are not faithful to Christ, I can tell you that you will not be able to commune with Him. If you have done a wrong thing in business, or if you have held your tongue and not been faithful in testifying for Christ. When you go on your knees at night you will not be able to find yourself so led out in prayer as you were, before, when you were true to Him. And when you turn to the Scriptures, instead of finding them speaking to you, they will seem as if they were dumb—no voice of comfort will come from them. But if you have been faithful and true, and out and out for Christ, then you shall dwell with Him—you shall abide in Him and His Word will abide in you!

Then it is added, "He shall serve Me." *The faithful shall be Christ's servants.* I do not know which is the greater privilege, "He shall dwell with Me," or, "He shall serve Me." Perhaps the second is the higher. Have you ever thought, Beloved Friend, what an honor it is to be permitted to do anything for God? For God to bless us is great condescension on His part, but for Him to permit us to be of any use to Him—this is a wonderful honor from His right hand! I believe that there is more honor in being allowed, for the Glory of God, to teach a little Sunday school child the way of salvation than there would be in ruling the whole German Empire if it were done for the glorification of self! The honor does not lie in the *act* so much as in the *motive*—and if the motive is, "I did it unto the Lord," then I stand in the same rank with angels, yes, in a line with those wonderful living creatures that John saw in the Revelation who reveal the Glory of God and continually do Him service!

The Lord will not have you as His servant if you are not faithful, if you do not give yourself up to His Truth and to be true, through and through! It is not God's way to send forth His Truth by untruthful men. If there is

a lie in your left hand, the Truth of God in your right hand will seem to have lost at least half its power. Like the hoard of Achan hidden away in the tent which robbed all Israel of the victory at the gates of Ai, so will you find that anything which is untrue, hidden away in your life or your conduct, will deprive you of victory when you go out in the service of God. "He shall serve Me," says Christ. And He will not accept the service of those who are not true to Him.

III. Thus I have spoken of a very necessary practical Truth of God, and I am going to close by trying to answer one more question—HOW MAY WE GET AMONG THESE FAITHFUL ONES?

Perhaps we can truly say, God helping us, we hope that we are among them. If so, as we read a little while ago, "it is He that has made us, and not we, ourselves." If there is any faithfulness, if there is any uprightness, unto God be the glory of it all! Pray, dear Brothers and Sisters, that you may never lose your faithfulness, but that you may be kept even unto the end! Remember that passage in Jude's Epistle, "Now unto Him that is able to guard you from stumbling"? So it is in the Revised Version and it is an improvement and nearer to the original than our old text, for while it is a great mercy to be kept from falling, it is a still greater favor to be guarded from *stumbling*, so as to walk with careful, steady progress in uprightness before God all your life! Let it be your constant prayer that you may be thus kept faithful even unto death.

But now I speak to others who are not as yet faithful. You say, "How are we to get among the faithful?" Well, I should say, first, so far as you may be, and so far as your light goes, be faithful *tonight—be honest in confessing sin.* Before you sleep, put yourself before God just as you are. Have you neglected religion? Confess it. Or have you pretended to possess religion when there was no truth in your profession? Confess it. What has been your sin? Confess it. Kneel by your bedside and there, God, alone, seeing you, unveil your heart before Him. You say that He knows all about you. That is true and *that is a reason* why you should be the more explicit in your confession to Him. Speak freely to God and make Him, as you ought to make Him, your only "Father Confessor." Tell Him that you are lost. Tell Him that you are hard-hearted. Tell Him that you are unfeeling. Tell Him that you desire to be converted, but that it is only a faint desire as yet. Tell him all about yourself. In a word, begin to deal with God on the straight. If you have not done so, already, I pray God that you may do so, tonight, and I beseech you to go as far as you can in this matter. Reveal your poverty, your filthiness, your sin, your nakedness, your deserving of Hell—only do all honestly as in the sight of God. What an amazing thing it is that men do not like to act thus, yet, when the Grace of God enables them to do it, they are already on the road to salvation! When the man comes before God with a rope round his neck, confessing that he deserves to die, then there is this blessed text to comfort him—"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." God grant that you may find it to be so tonight!

Well, then, dear Friend, next, *be anxious to have a new heart and a right spirit.* May God make you thus anxious to-night! Remember that

there is evil in us by nature. "All have sinned and come short of the Glory of God." "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." And before we can be faithful, we must be born again. No man will ever be true until the God of Truth has truly renewed him. Our tendency is to lean either this way or that—to stand upright is a gift of Divine Grace and none but the Holy Spirit can bestow it upon us! Oh, that we might have a deep anxiety to undergo that wondrous change, that radical and total change of heart which the Savior described when He said to Nicodemus, "You must be born again"! Go to the Lord with David's prayer, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." Plead that Old Testament promise, "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."

Then, supposing that you have come thus far, I earnestly entreat you, if you would be found among the faithful of the land, *be sincere in all your dealings with the living God.* If you mean to pray, pray! If you believe in Jesus, do not simply *say* that you believe, but believe! If you repent, do not merely *talk* of repentance, but repent! Let everything be thorough and downright. May the Spirit of God save you from getting the *imitation* of spirituality which will damn you! And may He give you the reality of spiritual life which will effectually save you! I believe that there are many who are very much injured by being led to profess religion when they do not possess it. There is a revival meeting. There is a room for converts—they get in there—they are pressed, they are exhorted, they are entreated! They think that they are sincere—in a certain measure they are—but there is no sense of guilt, no loathing of sin, no true repentance, no wounding and, therefore, no healing, no stripping and, therefore, no clothing! The whole thing is but a mere sham! And they go away and are, themselves, deceived and afterwards return to their old sins and are worse than they were before! If you have not eternal life, do not *pretend* that you have it. I charge you before God, who shall judge the quick and the dead, in the day of His appearing, *never* cheat yourself in this matter, for you are the only person that you can really cheat for long! God, Himself, you will never deceive. Make clear, clean, sharp, distinct, decided work of this matter, or rather, may God the Holy Spirit work this miracle of mercy in you, for Christ's name's sake!

Lastly, dear Friend, if you would be among the faithful of the land, *depend continually upon the Lord Jesus and His Word to make and keep you faithful.* Every day wait upon Him for fresh anointing and renewed power. And daily live unto Him and for Him, laying yourself out to honor Him who has redeemed you. Your only hope is in His precious blood! Then let the objective of your existence be to glorify Him, alone. If this is so, you shall be among the faithful of the land and you shall dwell with the King, even with the King of Kings, and you shall serve Him forever and ever!

Are you not glad to hear this, you great sinners? Jesus is as able to pardon you, now, as He was to save the dying thief! And you who have hard hearts, He is able to give you new ones, today, as He gave them to those of old. And oh, you children of God, I pray you, do not act as if *David* had a great God, and *you* have a little God! Do not act as if, in the

trials of the olden times, God made bare His arm, but that now He will hardly put out His little finger! Do not treat Him as if it could be so. God still hears prayer! If He does not work miracles, He does the same thing in some other way which is even better! He still delivers us! He still feeds us! He still leads us! He still guards us! He is the same as He always was! Oh if you would but trust Him! Abraham's God is your God and He can help you in the day of battle. Joshua's God is your God and He says to you as He did to Joshua, "I will not fail you, nor forsake you." Oh, believe it! Jesus Christ—my grandfather's Jesus Christ, my father's Jesus Christ—is *my* Jesus Christ! Look back on all the godly people you have ever known and think of what the Lord did for them—and then remember that His arm is not shortened, His ear is not heavy, His love is not diminished, His wisdom is not turned to foolishness! He is still able and willing to bless you, as in all the ages that have gone by. Trust Him, you saints! Trust Him, you sinners—and the Lord bless you all, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 100; 101.

May the Spirit of God, by whose Inspiration David penned these Psalms, bless them to us as we read them!

Psalm 100. This is entitled "a Psalm of Praise." Note, here, that this is the only Psalm which bears that title. There are others which have titles very much like it, but this one is singled out from all the rest to be, in a very special sense, "a Psalm of Praise." Martin Luther was very fond of it and it has even been said that he composed the tune which we have just sung, and which is commonly called, "the Old Hundredth"—though other attribute it to a German named Franc.

Verse 1. *Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all you lands.* Do you notice the missionary spirit here? The Jews looked upon God as the God of Israel and they had but very faint desires for the conversion of other nations. But the Holy Spirit speaks more by David than David, himself, may have known—"Make a joyful noise unto Jehovah, all you lands." We ought to express the praise of God, not merely to feel it, and to express it by what is called, here, "a joyful noise." All our songs to God should have in them a measure of joyfulness. The gods of the heathen were worshipped with dolorous noises, with sorrowful sounds and cries of misery—but the God of Heaven is to be worshipped with a joyful noise! "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all you lands." Oh, that the day were come when China, India and all Asia, Africa, America and Europe would take up the gladsome note of praise to Jehovah!

2. *Serve the LORD with gladness.* What a text that is! "Serve the Lord." Obey Him, yield to Him your homage, but serve Him, "with gladness." He wants not slaves to Grace His Throne! He loves willing worship, happy worship, for He is "the happy God." "Serve the Lord with gladness."

2. *Come before His Presence with singing.* Singing is delightful, but singing in God's Presence is heavenly! Do not the spirits that are made pure and holy come before His Presence and come before it with singing?

I wish that whenever we sing, we would sing as in the Presence of God. I am afraid that we sometimes go through the tune mechanically and the words languish on our lips. "Come before His Presence with singing."

3. *Know you that the LORD, He is God.* One says, "Man, know yourself," and another says, "The proper study of mankind is man." Not so! Man, know *your God*! The proper study of mankind is *God*! He who knows God knows himself, that is, he knows himself to be *nothing*. "Know you that Jehovah, He is God." There is but one God—it is the same God in the Old Testament as in the New—Jehovah, the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob—the God and Father of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

3. *It is He that has made us, and not we, ourselves.* Note the negative, as if to deny that we had any hand in our own making, and this is also worthy of notice *spiritually*. It is the Lord who has made us Christians, not we, ourselves. He has created us in Christ Jesus. There are some who lay such stress upon the human will and I know not what, besides, in man, that it is necessary to put in the negative as well as the positive. "It is He that has made us, and not we, ourselves."

3. *We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.* Praise Him, then! Praise Him because He is your Maker! Praise Him more sweetly because He is your Shepherd. If we are His people, here is His electing love, here is His effectual calling, here is the Grace of His Spirit that made us so. "We are His people and the sheep of His pasture." He leads us, He feeds us, He protects us, He has bought us with His precious blood. Truly, this is good reason why we should make a joyful noise unto God and serve Him with gladness! "We are His people and the sheep of His pasture." Are you His people? O my dear Hearer, ask yourself—are you one of the sheep of His pasture?

4. *Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise: be thankful unto Him, and bless His name.* Gratitude is that oil which makes the wheels of life easily revolve. And if anybody ought to be grateful, surely *we* are the men and women for whom the Lord has done so much! "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise."

5. *For the LORD is good.* Should we not praise so good a God?

5. *His mercy is everlasting; and His Truth endures to all generations.* "His Truth"—that is to say, His truthfulness, His faithfulness to His people. This is a blessed Psalm and it seems to me to reach the highest point of praise when it tells us, "The Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting; and His Truth endures to all generations."

Psalm 101. The last Psalm was a Hymn of Thanksgiving, this one is a Psalm of Thanksgiving. I suppose it to have been written by David just when he assumed the throne, when he was about to become king over all Israel and Judah. Its title is, "A Psalm of David." This is what he said to himself—

Verse 1. *I will sing*—That is right, David. In the 100th Psalm, he had exhorted other people to sing. Now, in the 101st he declares what he, himself, will do. "I will sing"—

1. *Of mercy and judgement.* It is a mingled theme. There are the treble and the bass notes—"mercy and judgment." There are some dear friends who, if they sing at all, will have to sing this way, for they have a heavy sorrow on their heart and yet great mercy is mixed with it. Oh, you who are troubled and bow your head in grief, say, "I will sing of mercy and judgment." Mix the two together!

1. *Unto You, O LORD, will I sing.* A second time the Psalmist says, "I will sing." It is well to make this firm resolve. "Unto You, O Lord, will I sing." Winter or summer, "I will sing." Poverty or riches, "I will sing." Sickness or health, "I will sing." Life or death, "I will sing"—

"I will love You in life, I will love You in death
And praise You as long as You lend me breath."

"I will sing of mercy and judgment: unto you, O Lord, will I sing."

2. *I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way.* This was a good resolve, but David did not carry it out to the fullest. There were evil times when he was *not* wise and there were sad times when he was far from perfect. Still, it is well to make such a resolve as this declaration of David when he came to the throne, especially when you are newly married, or just opening a business. Oh, that every young man and young woman would commence life with such a holy resolution as this—"I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way." But notice the prayer that follows the resolve—

2. *O when will You come unto me?* For I shall be neither wise nor holy without You. "O when will You come unto me?"

2. *I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.* There is a great deal in the way in which a man walks in his house. It will not do to be a saint abroad and a devil at home! There are some of that kind. They are wonderfully sweet at a Prayer Meeting, but they are dreadfully sour to their wives and children. This will never do! Every genuine Believer should say, and mean it, "I will walk within my house with a perfect heart." It is in the *home* that we get the truest proof of godliness. "What sort of a man is he?" said one to George Whitefield, and Whitefield answered, "I cannot say, for I never lived with him." That is the way to test a man—to live with him.

3. *I will set no wicked thing before my eyes.* "I will not look at it, for if I do, I may long for it." It is the tendency of things that are gazed at to get through the eyes into the mind and the *heart.* Therefore is it wise to say with the Psalmist, "I will set no wicked thing before my eyes."

3. *I hate the work of them that turn aside.* He means all those who practice dodges—the "policy" people—those who never go straight. Kings usually like such people as these. Do not men say that an ambassador is a gentleman who is paid to live abroad and to lie for the benefit of his country? I suppose that is what diplomats in David's day generally did, but David resolved that he would have none of that sort of folk about him. "I hate the work of them that turn aside."

3. *It shall not cleave to me.* "If I touch it, by His Grace, I will not let it stick to me. Pitch defiles, so I will keep clear of it and if any man tries to practice a trick for my advantage, I will have nothing to do with him."

4. *A forward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked person.* "For, if I come to know him, one of these days I may be known, myself, to be a wicked person." "Evil communications corrupt good manners." No man or woman can afford to be the friend of a man who is not a friend of God! If he does not love God, quit his company, for he will do you no good. Say with David, "I will not know a wicked person."

5. *Whoever privately slanders his neighbor, him will I cut off.* David was a king and he meant to study the peace of his people by putting down slander. Oh, what mischief is worked by backbiting tittle tattle! If we could have a race of men—and for the matter of that, of women, too—with no tongues, it might be an advantage, for there are some who use their tongues for very sorry purposes. David says, "Whoever privately slanders his neighbor, him will I cut off."

5. *Him that has an high look and a proud heart will not I suffer.* High looks and proud hearts are generally the characteristics of cruel, tyrannical, domineering persons—and King David would not have any such near him.

6. *My eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me.* Oh, that masters had more of an eye to the piety of their servants than they often have! They want "clever fellows." Whether they are honest or not is generally a secondary question. So long as they are profitable to their masters, they will not mind what they are to their customers. But David would not have servants of that sort.

6, 7. *He that walks in a perfect way, he shall serve me. He that works deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that tells lies shall not tarry in my sight.* He was a king and he could choose his company—and he meant to select the truthful and upright. Now mark this! If David would not let a man who lies tarry in his sight, you must not expect that God will let such tarry in His sight. "All liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone," says the Scripture. God grant us to have clean, truthful tongues!

8. *I will early destroy all the wicked of the land; that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the LORD.* What a practical Psalm this is! I have heard of a prince of Saxe-Gotha, years ago, who, whenever he thought that one of his ministers or judges was not what he ought to be, used always to send him the 101st Psalm to read. It was commonly said of such a man, "He will get the 101st Psalm before long." And, after reading it, if he did not mend his manners, the prince sent him his dismission and he had to go about his business. Oh, that all who profess and call themselves Christians would act according to the tenor of this straight Psalm which is like a line drawn by the hand of God, without a crook or a turn in it!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—100 (VERSION II), 15, 123.

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

COMFORT AND CONSTANCY
NO. 2363

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY JUNE 3, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 15, 1888.

"Now our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father, which has loved us, and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good Word and work."
2 Thessalonians 2:16, 17.

THE Thessalonians had been a good deal confused by certain persons who had said that the coming of the Lord was immediately at hand. Paul, therefore, bade them to be steadfast and not be worried and perplexed by any such teaching. And then he presented this prayer to God for them, that they might have these two things, comfort and constancy—that God would comfort their hearts and establish them—"in every good Word and work." It is a very blessed and comprehensive prayer and, while we are thinking of it, let us be praying it for ourselves and for one another, that the Lord may comfort our hearts and establish us "in every good Word and work."

I. The first enquiry to be answered is this, WHY IS THERE THE CONJUNCTION OF THESE TWO THINGS IN THIS REMARKABLE PRAYER? Why is it put thus, "Our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father... comfort your hearts and establish you in every good Word and work"?

I answer, first, the two things, comfort and constancy, are put together *because comfort by itself is not enough.* We do not desire, first and above all things, that Christians should have comfort. It is a very great privilege to be comforted, especially by the Comforter, for such comfort is sound, safe and holy, but, at the same time, they err who think that the first and chief reason for knowing God is that you may feel comforted and happy! I fear that there are many who are under that notion. They expect every sermon to comfort them—otherwise they think it is a wasted opportunity. Even when they are alone in prayer, their chief thought is that they need to be comforted by their own devotion. But, sometimes, *rebuke* is better than comfort, and spiritual quickening and especially true sanctification, are more greatly to be valued than any measure of comfort whatever! If we were to confine ourselves to prayer for the Lord only to comfort His people, we would have a very imperfect form of intercession. No, it needs that we should not only be comforted by our religion, but that we should be led by it into holy activity so as to abound in every good Word and work, and be established therein.

I give another answer to the question, Why is there this conjunction between comfort and constancy? *Because establishment in every good Word and work is not enough if it is alone.* We need to be comforted as well as to *serve the Lord*. Our God is not like Pharaoh who would not give to the children of Israel even a day in which they might have rest and worship God. Pharaoh said, "Why do you, Moses and Aaron, let (or hinder) the people from their works? Get you unto your burdens." But God does not speak so to us. The service which His children render to Him is quite compatible with rest. We are like certain birds that are said to rest on the wing—we never have a better rest than when every faculty is occupied in the service of our Lord!

But work by itself, establishment in every good Word and work, alone, might tend to weariness. We might be jaded if God did not minister Divine consolation to us while we served Him. Moreover, I am sure that we would never do the work well if God did not comfort us, for unhappy workers, those who do not love their work and are not at home in it, those who feel no comfort of religion, themselves, are generally very poor and unsuccessful workers. The second blessing mentioned in our text is certainly a very necessary one, this establishing in every good Word and work, but you also need the first one, that God may, "comfort your hearts." When you get the two together—when you are up to your necks in holy service and up to your hearts in Divine comfort—then these two things cause you not to be barren or unfruitful and, at the same time, they help you not to be weary in well-doing. You are made to be "steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord," because you are comforted with the belief that, "your labor is not in vain in the Lord." I see those two reasons for the conjunction of comfort and constancy in the text. First, because comfort, alone, is not sufficient and, secondly, because constancy without comfort will not suffice us.

And next, dear Friends, it is *because the comfort of the heart aids in the establishment of the soul in service.* They are put together because the one helps the other. May the Lord "comfort your hearts and establish you in every good Word and work!" He that is happy in the Lord will persevere in the service of the Lord. He that derives real support and comfort from his religion is the man who will not backslide from it. I notice that it is usually thus with those who decline—they first of all lose the comfort and joy of religion—they have not the brightness and delight that they once had in the things of God. And then, of course, they drop, first, this particular service, and then the other—they begin to absent themselves from the means of Grace, Prayer Meetings and so forth, because they miss what is so material a stay to the establishment of their minds, that is, the comfort, joy and peace that true religion used to bring them.

Whenever you are not happy in the Lord, I urge you not to rest until you become so. It is no small evil to get out of the sunlight of God's Countenance. A dear child will not say, "If my father is angry with me, it does not matter; he will not kill me; I shall always be his child." No, just in proportion as he enjoys his father's love, it will be painful to him to come in the least degree under his father's displeasure and he will cry

out to be fully restored and to have, again, from those dear lips the kiss of forgiveness that will put away all his offenses. So, dear Friends, believe that your lack of comfort is an evil thing which may lead to your loss of industry and perseverance in the cause of your Lord. If your heart is not comforted by God, you are not likely to be "established in every good Word and work."

Now let me turn the text around the other way. I think that these two things are put together *because establishment in Word and work is so necessary for our comfort.* I said we must be comforted that we might be constant in the service of God. Now I put it that we must be *constant in the service of God* that we may be comforted! God does not give His dainties to idlers. He has choice secrets into which He does not admit everybody, nor even all of His own family. When we are diligent in His service and all our powers are fully consecrated to Him, *then* He gives us gracious rewards—not of debt, but according to the discipline of His own house, wherein He honors the faithful and chastises those who are negligent.

Now, Beloved, you will miss your comfort when you begin to neglect your work. I know how it used to be with the boys at home. In cold weather they huddled round the fire—almost *sat* on the fire! It was so cold that they could not tell how they would live through the bitter winter. But when Father came in, he said, "Now, you boys, set to work and clear away that snow. Don't sit here idle, go and do something!" And they came in with ruddy cheeks and, somehow or other, the temperature seemed to have altered considerably, for they were quite warm from their exercise. I think the best thing that could happen to some men would be that they might have something to do. I do not find much about depression of spirit in the journals of Mr. Wesley or Mr. Whitefield and men of that sort who spent themselves in the Lord's service.

The fact is, the Lord seemed to carry them on from one work to another and from strength to strength in their service—and they were comforted as to their hearts because they were established in every good Word and work. These things act and react, one upon another—the comfort makes us work—the work brings to us a fresh measure of comfort! See how even the Savior puts it. He says, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." That is the first rest, *pardon of sin.* What next? "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." That is another rest over and above what Jesus gives. "Through bearing My yoke, you shall find in My service *rest unto your souls*." God grant us Grace to seek that rest which we are to find, now that we have received the rest which Jesus gives to those who come to Him!

I have not yet fully answered this question—Why is there the conjunction of these two things, comfort and constancy? I think it is *because the two blended together serve a very useful purpose.* We are in this world to bear witness and by our bearing witness we are to bring others to faith in Christ through the operation of the Holy Spirit. Now, there are some people who are only to be won for Christ by the holy confidence and comfort

of Believers. I am sure that if a Christian woman, in the time of affliction at home, is calm, patient, resigned and happy, she is more likely to see her husband converted by the comfort that religion brings to her own heart than by taking him to hear a sermon. By her Christian character she will preach to him and supply him with evidence of the power of Grace which he will not be able to deny.

I have known persons, in a storm at sea, exercise great influence over all in the vessel by the way in which they have been able to live above the storm, resting patiently in God. And in times of personal sickness, what a wonderful influence there is about holy patience! Some members of the family, who never have been moved by the external services of religion, have been deeply impressed by the patience of great sufferers—and especially by the serenity of dying saints. They have said to themselves, "There is something in this religion, after all. There is no mistake about it—the Grace which could support and calm the heart at such a time as this *must* be the gift of God." Now, if this were accompanied by idleness, it would lose much or all of its force, but when this holy calm comes over one who, in days of health, was full of active service for the Master, then the two things, together, become powerful arguments which gainsayers are not able to resist! Seek to have this blessed blending, this comfort, like a light that burns within the lamp, and then this establishment in Word and work, like the rays of light that stream from the lantern at the head of the lighthouse, that all may see, both far and near.

And I should like to give one other answer to this query, which is this. Paul in his prayer puts the two things together, *because there is great need for both.* There is great need to pray that our Father would comfort the hearts of His people, for there is trouble enough in the land! There is trouble enough in every *house*—there is trouble enough for each one of us—we need you to often pray for us, that God would comfort our hearts. It may be that we have to play the man in public and yet, when we get away by ourselves, our heart is very heavy and we have to cry mightily to God for supporting Grace. Some of the strongest of God's servants, those who carry a smiling countenance, who, if they fast, anoint their head and wash their face, that they appear not unto men to fast, yet have need to pray very earnestly to the Comforter that He would come and sustain their spirit.

And there is equal need that we should have Grace given us to be constant and instant in every good Word and work, for there is a tendency in us to think that we have done enough. The feeling creeps over men of a certain age that it is time for the young people to do the Lord's work. One says, "I am now at such an age that as much cannot be expected of me as used to be." Oh, yes, if you have much serving, Martha is not the only woman that gets cumbered with it, and being cumbered is not confined to women! Oh, how many there are who are not women, who are cumbered as much as Martha was! We need to have the Mary-spirit to keep the heart bright and cheerful, or else we shall quarrel with our work, or with our sister, or possibly with our Master, as we say to Him, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone?" We need both

comfort and constancy and, therefore, I commend to you this piece of heavenly plaiting—let the two things be twisted together in your life! May the Lord "comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good Word and work"!

II. As I look at my text, a second question comes to my mind. WHY DOES THE APOSTLE SO SPECIALLY ADDRESS THIS PRAYER? Notice to whom he addresses it—"Now our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father... comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good Word and work." Why is this?

It seems to me that in the first place, in this prayer *the whole Trinity is supplicated.* When the Apostle is desiring comfort to be given, he does not mention the Comforter, for that is needless. It would occur to every Christian mind that the Holy Spirit was necessary, since in comforting and quickening He is only exercising His special office. But the Apostle does mention, "Our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father," so that, to the mind of the thoughtful reader, the prayer for comfort and establishment is directed to the ever-blessed Three-in-One. Oh, that we more often remembered the distinction of the Divine Persons without dividing the Divine Substance! It becomes instructed Believers to remember that one blessing comes from the Father, another blessing from the Son and a third blessing through the Holy Spirit. There are times when it would seem as if the one blessing must come through the three Divine Persons, that there must be a manifestation of the whole Trinity to produce the result. I cannot help noticing that Truth of God and reminding you how the Savior is especially placed, here, side by side with, "God, even our Father," that we may see that equal reverence is to be paid to Him *with* the Father, and equal prayer to be offered to Him with that presented to the great Father of spirits.

But then, I think next, that mention is here made of, "Our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself" because, as the prayer is for consolation, He is "the Consolation of Israel." The Holy Spirit is the Comforter, but *Christ, Himself, is the Comfort*—the Holy Spirit gives the consolation, but Jesus Christ *is* the Consolation. Beloved, we are never so comforted as when we turn to our blessed Lord, Himself! His Humanity, His sympathy with us, His griefs, His bearing our infirmities, His putting away of our sins, His pleading for us at the right hand of God, His everlasting union with His people—all this makes us turn our eyes to Him! He is the Sun that makes our day. From Him flows that "river of the Water of Life" which quenches our thirst. So you see why the "Lord Jesus Christ, Himself," is mentioned in this prayer for comfort, since He is the every *essence* of the Believer's consolation!

But then we are reminded of "God, even our Father," and is not this expression brought to our mind that we may derive comfort from *the relation which God bears to His people?* O you children of God, does not the recollection that He is your Father comfort you? Children of the heavenly King, is not the fact of your relationship to Him a well of unceasing consolation? What more do you require to lift your spirits out of the dust than to know that this manner of love has been bestowed upon you, that

you should be called the children of God! "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ"? I believe that if the Holy Spirit only lays home to the heart the fact of our new birth and our adoption into the family of God, we have enough comfort to make us swim through seas of trouble without fear! And also enough motive for the most constant, diligent *service*, when we know that it is for our Father who is in Heaven that we are spending the strength that He, Himself, gives us! Do you not see, therefore, why the Apostle thus addresses His prayer to "God, even our Father," and to "our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself"?

And is not this another reason why Paul thus prayed, because he would remind us that *it requires the direct action of the Godhead upon our hearts to produce comfort and constancy?* This is especially evident at certain times. Very frequently, when I have to comfort mourners—cases where, perhaps, a young husband has been taken away, leaving a large family of little children unprovided for—or, perhaps, where two persons who have been together for many years, till their lives have grown into one and, all of a sudden, the wife or the husband has been taken away, I have said and I cannot help saying it often, "My dear Friend, I cannot comfort you as I should like to. I have never been exactly in your circumstances and, therefore, I cannot enter into your peculiar grief. But I would remind you that one Person of the Divine Trinity has undertaken the office of Comforter and He can do what nobody else can."

You must, sometimes, have felt the power of a single text of Scripture laid upon a wound in your heart—it will staunch the bleeding and heal by a sort of heavenly magic! Have you not, at times, felt in a flutter of distress so that you could not rest? Christian friends have spoken kindly to you, but they only seemed to mock you. Then, in a moment, a soft, calming influence has stolen over your spirit and you have felt that you could bear 10 times the weight which had almost crushed you an hour before! God can comfort to purpose—therefore the Apostle did not say—"I hope you will enjoy the comfort I have given you, or that, perhaps, your minister, next Lord's-Day may give you." No, this was his prayer at this particular juncture—"Now our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father, which has loved us, and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace, comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good Word and work." It is grand in your prayers to fall back upon your God and upon a God whom you know as your Lord Jesus Christ, and your Father, and to feel, "The case is beyond me, but it is not beyond my God! The trial overwhelms me even in my sympathy with the tried one, how much more does it overwhelm the actual bearer of it? But I put you and your sorrow into hands quite equal to the emergency and leave you there."

There is much more to be learned than I can tell you, because time fails me, as to how it was that the Apostle presented this remarkable prayer in this remarkable manner.

III. The third point, with which I close, is this. WHAT DOES PAUL MENTION IN HIS PRAYER AS PLEAS? He mentioned several facts for the strengthening of the faith of those for whom he prayed and gave argu-

ments which they should use while pleading with God for others. Let us speak of these arguments very briefly. There are six of them.

First, Paul says that *Jesus is ours.* He is asking for comfort and establishment and he begins his prayer, "Now, our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself." Do, if you can, get the sweetness of this expression, "Our Lord Jesus Christ." Why did not Paul say, "*The* Lord Jesus Christ"? Why did he not say, "*My* Lord Jesus Christ"? No, here is a plural possessive pronoun—"*Our* Lord Jesus Christ." Is it so, then, that God has given us the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, to be *ours*? Can we not only call His blood ours, and His Resurrection ours, and His Kingdom ours, but is He, Himself, *ours*? Oh, can we get a grip of Him as, "My Beloved"? Is He my Husband, my Covenant Head, my Jesus and my All? Come, then, Beloved—I was going to say that you hardly need pray for comfort because you have it, already—you have it in Jesus!

Here is a solid mass of the pure gold of comfort in the fact that Jesus Christ, Himself, is yours. You are Christ's, but Christ is also yours! As the husband belongs to the wife, and the wife belongs to the husband, so there is a mutual possession between Christ and you who are believers in Him. Are you poor? What? And yet Christ is yours? Do you say that you are helpless and friendless? How is that when you can say, "Our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself"? No, here is a well opened in the desert for you—come and say to it—"Spring up, O well!" Sing unto it, drink of its Living Water and fill your earthen vessels to the fullest! There is comfort enough for all saints in "Our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself."

The second plea in Paul's prayer is that *God is our Father*—"Now our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father." I have already shown you what a mine and mountain of delightful consolation lies in the fact that the God who made the heavens and the earth, the Omnipotent and Unchangeable Jehovah is "*our* Father." Do not think that this is a mere metaphor—that God is only set forth to us under the *image* of a father. There is no doubt that He *is* our Father—it is a matter of fact if we are trusting His Son. "Doubtless You are our Father, though Abraham is ignorant of us and Israel acknowledge us not: You, O Lord, are our Father, our Redeemer; Your name is from everlasting." We have been begotten again by God—our new birth is from His power and His Divine energy! We belong to His family and shall never be cast out of it. Dear Friends, what a plea this is in prayer! "My Father, will You not comfort my heart? My Father, will You let Your child despond? My Father, will You not relieve me in the hour of my distress? Jesus Christ, my Lord Jesus Christ, do this for me, and great God, my Father, fail not to cheer my heart!"

Then the Apostle goes on to remind us that *God has loved us.* Kindly look at the text and remember it—"God, even our Father, which has loved us." You do not expect me to preach from those words, do you? "Which has loved us." I cannot comprehend this Truth! I can very well understand God *pitying* us, as we pity a beggar in the streets—but God's *loving* us always deprives me of the power to explain it! There was nothing in us to love! There was everything in us loathsome and nothing lov-

able, yet the Lord loved us before the world began! He has loved us without bound, so as to give His only-begotten Son to die for us! Is not that a powerful plea in prayer? "Lord, comfort my heart, establish me in every good Word and work, for You have loved me, therefore continue to love me. If You have given me Your love, surely You will not deny me the comforts of Your face and the consolations of Your Word."

Then Paul adds, "Who has loved us, and has given us." *God has given us much* and all His past gifts are pleas for more gifts. Men do not plead so. The beggar in the street cannot say, "Give me a penny, today, because you gave me one yesterday," else we might reply, "That is the reason why I will *not* give you anymore!" But when dealing with God, this is a good plea. "O flowing Fountain, You have long been flowing, Flow on still! O blessed Sun, You did shine yesterday, shine today!" God loves us to make His past mercies arguments for obtaining future blessings, so the Apostle says, "God, even our Father, which has loved us, and has given us."

But what has God given us? *God has given us "everlasting consolation."* Catch at that expression, for it reminds us of everlasting love, the Everlasting Covenant, the everlasting promises, everlasting redemption and the everlasting Heaven. Men, nowadays, clip this word, "everlasting," round the edges. We do not—we take it as we find it. That which is everlasting lasts forever—you can be assured of that! And God has given us consolation which will last us in life and last us in death—and last us throughout eternity! Well, if He has given us "everlasting consolation," we may well plead that He would graciously enable us to lay hold upon it, that our hearts may be comforted and cheered and that we may be established in every good Word and work!

There is only one more expression upon which I will say a sentence or so. *God has given us "good hope through Grace."* It is of Grace and, therefore, it is a gift! And He has given it to us through the operation of His Grace upon our hearts. It is a hope, a good hope, a "good hope through Grace." We have a good hope that God's love will never fail us and that, when life dies out on earth, we shall enter into His rest forever and behold His face with joy. We have a good hope that when days and years are past, we shall meet in Heaven! We have a good hope of dwelling throughout eternity with our God—"forever with the Lord." O Father, after You have done so much for us and given so much to us, it is but little we ask of You, now, when we pray You to comfort our hearts and to establish us in every good Word and work!

I cannot understand what those do who have no God. I cannot comprehend the condition of those who have no "good hope through Grace." What can they do? They have to work very hard from Monday morning to Saturday night. On Sunday they have no day of rest, no thought of a world to come, no rising to a purer atmosphere. They lie in bed, perhaps, in the morning, and then get up and lounge about in their shirtsleeves. There is nothing for them to get but what is found beneath the moon and very little of that. It is better to be a dog than a man if there is no hope of

a hereafter! It is better not to live at all than to live such a dead, good-for-nothing life as that man lives who lives without God and without hope!

Surely, you who are without God and without Christ, have your sinking, your mourning, your dull times, have you not? What do you do, then? Perhaps you try to drug yourself with strong drink. Alas, some do that and this is mischievous, indeed—to try to poison conscience and silence the best friend you have within you! Do not so, but think about God, and about "our Lord Jesus Christ." This way lies hope, where stands that Cross, and He pleads, who received, there, those five wounds for sinners! This way lies your only hope! Oh, that you would think of it and consider it! If God Himself comes down from Heaven to save men, it must be worthwhile for man to look and understand what God did for him in that wondrous Sacrifice. Look, for—

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One"—

look now, for—

"There is life at this moment for you."

Especially is there life for you who came in here troubled, downcast, almost wishing you were not alive at all, but fearing that when life came to an end, it might be worse for you than ever, for you have "the dread of something after death." Oh, that you were reconciled to God through the death of Jesus Christ! That being done, He would comfort your hearts and you would be led into every good Word and work through gratitude to the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior, and His Grace would save you and preserve you to the end! May this be the very moment when you shall seek and find the Lord!" "If you seek Him, He will be found of you." God grant it, for His dear son's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 Thessalonians 2; 3:1-5.

2 Thessalonians 2:1, 2. *Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him, that you be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the Day of Christ is at hand.* Paul believed in the Second Coming of Christ, for he beseeches the Brothers and Sisters, "by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." He felt the power of this great Truth. He often exhorts us to be watchful because of the uncertainty of the time of that coming as far as we are concerned. But there were some who sprang up in his day, as in ours, who professed that they knew a great deal about the Second Advent—when it was to happen, and so on—and they began to foretell and to prophesy beyond what was really revealed of God. By this means, some persons were terrified and others driven to a very foolish course of action. It would seem, from this Epistle, that some people forsook their daily calling and, on pretence of the near return of Christ, endeavored to live upon the alms of Christian people instead of themselves working. Many, however, were shaken in mind, so Paul wrote to reassure and strengthen them—"That you be not

soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the Day of Christ is at hand."

3, 4. *Let no man deceive you, by any means: for that Day shall not come, except there comes a falling away, first, and that man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition; who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he, as God, sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.* It has been usually thought that this passage alludes to the great apostasy of the Church of Rome and, certainly, if there were a hue and cry raised for the culprit here described, one might well arrest that apostasy upon suspicion! It may not, however, be the man of sin, or the son of perdition—it may be that general spirit which springs up again and again, one of the many anti-Christs that were already in the world even in John's day. There are many such spirits that are constantly rising up, not outside the Church—there, we could deal with them—but *inside* the Church, using the Words of Truth, and the signs of Truth to signify something far other than the Truth of God! This is the great rook that threatens destruction! Oh, that God's Church might always be kept from striking upon it! But there is this rook which would, if it were possible, wreck the very elect ship of Christ, itself!

5-7. *Remember you not, that when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now you know what withholds that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity does already work: only He who now lets will let, until He is taken out of the way.* There was something that hindered the full development of anti-Christ in Paul's day. When that is taken out of the way, then will there be a fuller revelation of this sinful system.

8-12. *And then shall that wicked one be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming. Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness, in them that perish, because they received not the love of the Truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the Truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.* We will not attempt to explain all this in detail. It would be too much of a task for a mere exposition, but the Church has always to be on her guard against that which comes as an angel of light, but is really a spirit of darkness.

13. *But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God has, from the beginning, chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the Truth.* How the saints praise one another! How sweet is Christian fellowship! How we rejoice in the blessed love of God to His people when we are assailed by those who battle against His Truth! Then is the love of the Brethren stronger than ever and our faithfulness to God is largely increased. The Apostle falls back upon the doctrine of electing love—"God has, from the beginning, chosen you to salvation." And he admires the methods by

which that love effects its purpose—"Salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the Truth." Men are made holy by the Spirit of God—the holiness is that of life and of the understanding. They attain to a belief of the Truth of God, as well as to a practice of the Divine Commands. Oh, happy people who are ordained, from the beginning, unto salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the Truth!

14. *To which He called you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.* How the Apostle loved the Gospel! It was Christ's Gospel, but Paul calls it, "*Our* Gospel." He and his Brethren had made it so completely their own and it had become so much their own in contradistinction to "another gospel, which is not another," that he speaks of it with unction and joy! "He called you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

15. *Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you have been taught, whether by word, or our Epistle.* "The things which we have handed out to you, which you have been taught, whether by word, or our Epistle." They had heard Paul preach. He had not only written to them, but he had also spoken to them. And he bade them treasure up what he had said and what he had written, and hold it fast as for dear life. The Apostle did not preach that which he, afterwards, left, as the ostrich leaves its eggs, but he watched over it and he watched over the people who had heard it, anxious that the Truth of God to which they had listened should prove in them to be the message of everlasting life! Oh, my dear Hearers, are there not still some of you who have heard our Gospel, to whom we have often and long spoken and yet, notwithstanding, it has not yet been the message of eternal life to you though it has been to many others? God have mercy upon you and yet bring you to the feet of Jesus! As for others who come to listen to the Word for the first time—may it be the power of God unto salvation on the very first occasion of their hearing it, to the praise of God and the Glory of His Son!

16, 17. *Now our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father, which has loved us, and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good Word and work.* I believe in an established Church—not established by acts of Parliament—but established by the purpose and by the Presence of God in the midst of it. Oh, to be a member of a Church established in every good Word and work! Do you know God's Word? Seek to know it better, still! Try to strike your roots down deeply into this fruitful soil! Suck out the Divine nutriment of it, that you may grow so strong that none shall be able to tear you away from it!

Have you begun to work for Jesus? May you be established in that good work! Go on working more and more, with both your hands and all your heart, that somehow you may glorify His blessed name! Let me read these sweet verses again—"Now our Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and God, even our Father, which has loved us, and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace, comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good Word and work."

2 Thessalonians 3:1. *Finally, brethren, pray for us.* "Pray for us," says the Apostle. "Pray for myself and the Brothers who are with me. Pray for all the Apostles and preachers of the Word." "Finally, Brethren." If this were the last word we had to say to you, we would make just this request, "Finally, Brothers and Sisters, pray for us." You cannot tell how much God's servants are helped by the prayers of His people! The strongest man in Israel will be the better for the prayers of the weakest saint in Zion! If you can do nothing else, you can pray for us—therefore, day and night, be at the Mercy Seat on our behalf. "Finally, Brethren, pray for us."

1. *That the Word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you.* "You Thessalonians enjoy the power of the Word. Pray that it may be so everywhere else." Paul is said to have written this Epistle from Corinth or Athens, and he longed that, there, the Word of God might prevail as it had done at Thessalonica. Pray just now that in every part of the world, God's Word may have free course! There are many who stand in the way of it. Pray God that they may be swept out of the way, that the Word of the Lord may have free course. We need the Gospel to run and spread till the whole earth shall know its blessed message!

2. *And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith.* All men are not candid, or true. "All men have not faith."

3. *But the Lord is faithful.* What a wonderful contrast this is and how suggestive of comfort! "All men have not faith. But the Lord is full of faith, faith-ful." True, He keeps all His promises. "The Lord is faithful."

3-5. *Who shall establish you, and keep you from evil. And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that you both do and will do the things which we command you. And the Lord direct your hearts.* You see, Paul does not command the Thessalonians to do anything but what he can pray God to work in them. The command of a man, by itself, is nothing, but when he only asks that to be done which he can pray God to do, then there is power about his message! "We have confidence in the Lord touching you, that you both do and will do the things which we command you. And the Lord direct your hearts."

5. *Into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.* May the Lord hear that prayer for all of us, for Christ Jesus' sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—708, 691, 692.

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

POVERTY AND RICHES
NO. 2364

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JUNE 10 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 22, 1888.

"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,"
2 Corinthians 8:9.

I AM very weary, tonight, having had day after day, almost without cessation, to make a supreme effort to address large assemblies. I felt, therefore, that the only subject that I could handle would be some theme that was restful and did not require any great thought on the part of the preacher or his hearers. I want to have a bath and rest myself while I am speaking to you, and, perhaps, it may not hurt you, either, for I doubt not that you often grow weary with daily cares. So we shall have no difficult problem, no mysterious doctrine to consider at this time, but shall only talk about things that we know.

The text begins, "For *you know* the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." You know this, for you believe it. You have no doubt, whatever, that there was a wondrous graciousness in the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace is an attribute of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit—and you know that there was infinite Grace, favor, compassion, in the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ—and it was *that* and *not* your merits, which constrained Him to lay aside the royalties of Heaven and endure the sufferings and the griefs of our mortality. "You know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ."

You know this Grace, too, because you have learned to perceive the outcome of it. You not only know it as a seed, but you know the blessed flowers that have grown out of it because, in His Grace, He became poor that you might be rich. And, in taking of those riches which He has procured for you, you have not only drunk of His bitter soup, but you have drunk of the spiced wine of His pomegranate, so that you now know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ by that which is the fruit and the outcome of it.

I think that the Apostle here meant that we also know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ through what He has done for us. We might have known, as a matter of fact, that Jesus was gracious, but we could not have seen it so as practically to know it if He, having been rich, had *not become poor*, that we, through His poverty, might be rich. The way the Apostle shows that Truth of God is just this. He was urging the Corinthian Christians to liberality. They were a far richer community than the Church at Philippi, but He tells them that the Churches of Macedonia,

out of their poverty, had often been generous to the poor and he persuades these Corinthians, who were better off, not to be behind the Philippians.

After Paul had quoted this example to them, he felt that he had a far stronger argument to fall back upon. He seemed to say, "How am I to know your Grace except by your works? How am I to know that you have Christ in your hearts except by what you give out of your gifts to help your poorer friends?" He then gives this as the proof that we must see Grace by the results it produces—"You know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ by this fact, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you, through His poverty, might be rich." The same Law of God, that the Grace within must be manifest by the action without, applies to Christ as well as to us. If He had not become poor to make us rich, how would we have fully known His Grace? And if you and I do not give of our substance, and of our talents, to the poor, and to the cause of Christ, how shall we know and how shall others know that there is any Grace at all within our hearts?

Beloved, as I have said before, I may say to you, again—you know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ because you have not only *heard* it, but you have *seen* it—you have *tasted* and *handled* the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Your hope of Heaven lies in that Grace! Your daily comfort lies there. If Christ were not gracious, you would be graceless. If you did not know His Grace, you would have no Grace of your own, for certain—for it is from Him, as from an ever-flowing fountain—that all the streams of Grace come to you. Happy men and happy women if, as I read this text, "You know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," you can each one say, "Yes, I do know it, glory be to God!"

There are two things for me to talk about tonight. They are both very simple and lie on the surface of the text. The first is, *the poverty of our Lord Jesus Christ. A*nd the second is, *the riches of His saints.*

I. First, let us think of THE POVERTY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST—"Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor."

This poverty was voluntarily undertaken for our sakes. There was no need that Christ should be poor except for our sakes. Some persons are born poor and it seems as if, with all their struggles, they could never rise out of poverty. But of our Lord Jesus Christ it can truly be said, "He was rich." Shall I take you back in thought to the glories of the eternity when, as very God of very God, He dwelt in the bosom of the Father? He was so rich that all He possessed was as nothing to Him. He was not dependent upon any of the angels He had created, nor did He rely for Glory upon any of the works of His hands. Truly, Heaven was His abode, but He could have made ten thousand heavens if He had willed to do so! All the greatest wonders He had ever made were but specimens of what He *could* make. He had all possibility of inconceivable and immeasurable wealth within His power, yet He laid aside all that, denied Himself the power to enrich Himself, and came down to earth that He might help us! His poverty was all voluntary—there was a necessity laid upon Him, but the sole necessity was *His own love*. There was no need, as far as He was concerned, that He should ever be poor—the only need was because *we*

were in need and He loved us so that He would rescue us from poverty and make us eternally rich!

Our Lord's was also very emphatic poverty. I believe that it is quite true that no one knows the pinch of poverty like a person who has once been rich. It is your fallen emperor who has to beg his bread, who knows what beggary is! It is the man who once possessed broad acres who, at last, has to rent his lodging in a miserable attic, who knows what poverty is! So was it with the Savior—He was emphatically rich. You cannot press into the word, "rich," all that Jesus was—you have to feel that it is a very poor word, even though it is rich, with which to describe His heavenly condition. He was emphatically rich and so, when He descended into poverty, it was poverty with an emphasis laid upon it, the contrast was so great. The difference between the richest and the poorest man is just nothing compared with the difference between Christ in the Glory of His Godhead and Christ in His humiliation—the stoop was altogether immeasurable! You cannot describe His riches and you cannot describe His poverty. You have never had any idea of how high He was as God and you can never imagine how low He stooped when He cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

His poverty, then, was voluntarily undertaken and it was emphasized by its contrast to the riches He had before. Now let us try to examine some of the details of this poverty.

First, this poverty of Christ was seen *in His condition*. It was great poverty to Him to be a Man. Humanity is a poor thing when you set it in comparison with the Deity. What a narrow space does man fill—but God is Infinite. What little can man do—but God is Omnipotent. How little does man know—but God is Omniscient. How confined is man to a single spot—yet God is Omnipresent. I say not that Jesus ever ceased to be God, but we must remember that He became Man and, in becoming Man, He became poor in comparison with His condition as God. But then, as Man, He was also a poor Man. He might have been born in marble halls, swaying the scepter of an universal empire and, from His *birth*, receiving the homage of all mankind. But instead of that, you know, He was reputed to be the carpenter's Son, His mother was but a humble Jewish maid and His birthplace was a stable—poor accommodation for the Prince of the kings of the earth!

His early life was spent in a carpentry shop and afterwards His companions were mostly poor fishermen. You do not find Him consorting with the senators and philosophers, or great ones of the earth—He goes from one lowly home to another. And for His maintenance He is dependent upon the alms of His followers. Certain women ministered unto Him of their substance. He was, all His life, familiar with poverty, so that He could say, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head." You remember that passage which is broken up by our translators so as to make a chapter begin where there should be no division? "Every man went unto His own house. Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives," for He had not a house—His only home was among the olive trees where He pleaded with His God!

Then remember that Christ, while He was here, was a Servant. He was the Servant of the Father. Though He counted it not robbery to be equal with God, yet He took upon Himself the form of a Servant. He has been well called, by the Latins, "*Servus servorum*," the Servant of servants. And you see Him in that character when He rises from supper, lays aside His garments, takes a towel and girds Himself—and pouring water into a basin, begins to wash His disciples' feet. Well did He say, "I am among you as He that serves." He, before whom the brightest seraph veils His face and lies low in humble adoration, yet washes His disciples' feet! You can understand, then, how in His condition He is numbered among the poor.

Perhaps the poverty of Christ is seen more clearly as to His condition, in His association, not only with poor disciples, but with the despised of mankind. The Pharisees truly said, "This Man receives sinners and eats with them." This was the occasion when Luke wrote, "Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him." He made Himself their companion for their good, for He had come to seek and to save that which was lost. He condescended to be among the very lowest, no, He did not *sometimes* stoop to them, but He seemed to be always in their midst, always raking in the mire to find the jewels that had been lost there! So, Beloved, you will see that as a Man, a *poor* Man, a Servant, and associating with the very lowest of men for their good, Christ had become, indeed, poor in His condition.

The second point of His poverty was *in His reputation.* All Glory belonged to Christ, the praises of all the heavenly host were gladly given to Him, but He made Himself of no reputation. Often, while He was here, men treated Him with all the scorn and contempt that they could possibly display. Let me quote these words slowly, "Then did they spit in His face." They blindfolded Him. They buffeted Him. They struck Him with the palms of their hands, saying, "Prophesy unto us, Christ! Who is he that struck You?" They called Him, "a gluttonous Man and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." They took His reputation from Him—some even went so far as to say that He worked His miracles through Beelzebub, the prince of the devils! It was not possible that they could degrade Him lower than they did! Their scorn went to the very uttermost against this blessed and adorable Son of God! Even those who were reputed to be good men, at times, thought little of Him. His mother and His brothers and sisters tried to entrap Him because they, evidently, judged that He was insane! And in the time of His direst need, all His disciples fled from Him and left Him alone. In His greatest extremity no man did Him homage, but everyone had an ill word for Him. In this respect He was poor—He made Himself of no reputation.

I do not know whether any of you ever had to do what has fallen to the lot of some few—after standing in good repute among your brethren—deliberately knowing what you were doing, to do that which subjects you to misrepresentation and scorn, but to do it for the Lord's sake and to suffer all the consequences without wincing. I can tell you that it is a poverty, indeed, to a tender spirit to be bereft of the respect which one has long enjoyed. Yet the Savior, out of love of us, stripped Himself of

every single vestment of honor that He had a right to wear—and He became despised and rejected of men, a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief! This was a part of His poverty—poverty of *reputation*.

Then, thirdly, there was a poverty *in operation*, for the Lord Jesus Christ, in His own natural estate, was able to do anything that He pleased. There was nothing which He wished to do which He could not do. Did He but judge it right to create or to destroy, all was in His power. But when He came to this earth, for our sakes He became poor. It was necessary, then, for Him to put a restraint upon His own Omnipotence. He is hungry, but it is a temptation of the Evil One which suggests to Him that He should turn stones into bread. He is thirsty and at a word from Him, the water would have leaped from the well! But He has to beg from a woman of Samaria and say to her, "Give Me to drink." He never works a miracle on His own behalf. He makes Himself as poor as to His operations, as unable to help Himself, as the most incapable among us! And this, mark you, by a continued determination of His will that He would remain poor, for had He so determined, He could, with but a wish, have summoned legions of angels to come from Heaven to His assistance! How can I sufficiently admire this voluntary poverty of operation? Our Lord Jesus Christ will restrict Himself to loss, suffering and even death, when, naturally, He possesses the power to deliver Himself from all these trials.

The next kind of poverty that I see in Christ is poverty *in communion.* If a man were ever so poor, yet if he could always associate with persons of education and refinement, supposing him to be a man of that kind, poverty would be a small matter. "We cultivate," said the Edinburgh students, "we cultivate literature upon a little oatmeal porridge," and nobody seems to pity them! Nobody *needs* to pity them—they are quite willing to take the porridge if they can get the literature! If they can associate with men of thought and men of standing, they have a feast of reason and have a flow of soul—and they are content with a little oatmeal if that is their only fare. But our Savior never consorted with anybody who could, for a moment, be called His equal! He learned from no man. There was one disciple whom Jesus loved—we can all tell why He loved John—because John was the nearest to his Master. But what a long way down it was from Jesus to John! It makes a man feel himself in an awful solitude when he outgrows his fellows. You may pine for such a position, young man, and long to reach the very highest peak of the mountain, but it is cold up there and bleak, and lonely! I believe far greater enjoyment is to be had when you are the equal of your fellow men and can associate with them as such. But as for our Lord and Master, He seems always on the pinnacle of the Temple or the summit of the mountain. I know that in His *condescension* He is never there! He stoops to the people, but still it is a stoop and, stooping, you know, is back-aching work. I mean, it is heart-aching work to be always having to stoop and to have nobody who is your comrade and associate.

Jesus shut Himself off from the grandest company that He might have had, from the senate of the skies, from the assemblies of the perfect, from the multitude of angels! The heavenly beings may come and go

casually with errands from on high, but, for the most part, Jesus is here to associate with the sinful—His perfect mind to be in constant contact with the ignorant—His trained and cultured and holy spirit to be vexed by the frivolous and the fickle who cannot be depended upon. What a poverty must the faithful, the just, the true, the wise Savior have felt when even His disciples could not understand Him and when, as He unveiled some of the deeper Truths of God, He had come to reveal, "many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him." It was a greater poverty, still, when, in the Garden, rising from the agony and bloody sweat, He found the three that were nearest to Him, sleeping, and He said to them, "What, could you not watch with Me one hour?" Ah, then was He in the depths of poverty, indeed, as to the communion of His spirit!

Still, I think that we have not reached the lowest deeps of the Savior's poverty till we come to the fact of His *bearing sin*. A man may be very poor as to worldly goods and he may be able to bear it. He may have taken another's debts upon himself and they may press heavily upon him, yet the load may not crush Him. But when he loses his character because of no wrong of his own, but because he wishes to deliver another, and when he has to come into contact with the sin of another and cannot help coming into contact with it—if his mind is pure and innocent—it is an awful poverty to him! Brothers and Sisters, it is the greatest miracle I ever heard of that the Lamb of God should bear the sin of men at all—and should so bear sin as to take it away, because, remember, there was in Christ no taint of sin of any kind!

There was no inclination to sin in Him and yet, (hear these Inspired Words), "He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin." Of course, the Savior never could be sinful and we will use no words that might even *suggest* such a thought! We would, with indignation, repudiate such an idea, but yet He did occupy the sinner's place. He did endure the sinner's curse—"As it is written, cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree." No, I will even dare to say that before the Lord God, He stood as the *one* Sinner, though He was no sinner! But the Lord made to meet on Him the iniquity of us all. Jesus stood to answer the summons of the Law of God and to appear there as the Substitute for His people, "the Just for the unjust." But still, to appear there for the unjust—"who His own Self bore our sins in His own body on the tree." Let me give you those words, again—"who His own Self bore our sins in His own body on the tree."

He who was "God over all, blessed forever." He without whom was not anything made that was made—for Him to whom the cherubim and seraphim continually cry, "Holy, holy, holy"—this must be abject poverty, indeed, that though He was rich in holiness, for our sakes He became poor in bearing our sin!

The end of His poverty and the climax of it, was when *at last He died.* We have, perhaps, never realized the wonder that He "who only has immortality" did actually die! His spirit departed. He gave up the ghost, the ghost who had been a guest within His body. He gave up that guest and His body was tenantless—an empty house. What a sight is that, (I wonder not that great painters have tried to depict it), the taking of Christ

down from the Cross, the wrapping of His mangled body in the fair white linen and the precious spices! Can this really be the Son of God, the Redeemer of men? Do they wrap Him up in a winding sheet and do the holy men and women actually bear Him to a tomb? Yes, and to a *borrowed tomb,* for as He had lain in a borrowed cradle, He now sleeps in a borrowed sepulcher! They put Him there, for He is dead. His eyes are as firmly closed as those of any other dead man and His hands are as cold and motionless, for Christ's was no fancied death. The Lord of Life and Glory did actually die and there, in Joseph's tomb, was He buried. And from there He rose the third day. As the earth quakes and the angel rolls away the stone from the sepulcher, say to yourselves, "You know, now, the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor," so poor that He actually lay, awhile, dead in Joseph's tomb!

There I leave this first point. May God the Holy Spirit help us to understand the poverty of our Lord Jesus Christ!

II. But now, dear Friends, very rapidly, but yet I trust, deliberately, I want to show you THE RICHES OF BELIEVERS. They are exactly parallel with the poverty of Christ. Our Lord Jesus Christ did not come into the world to become poor with regard to money, or that you and I might become rich in worldly wealth, for many of the best of His people are still as poor as poverty, so far as this paltry pelf is concerned! He came to give us *true* riches as He came to endure *true* poverty. I have brought before your notice a poverty that did not lie so much in the scantiness of His apparel, or in the hardness of His fare, as in other matters. So the riches which Christ gives do not lie in our being clothed in scarlet and fine linen, or faring sumptuously every day—they are similar in character to the marks of our Lord's poverty!

First, then, He made His people rich *in condition.* Brothers and Sisters, we are servants, as Christ was. But that which was a lowering to Him is a lifting up for us! To us there is no greater honor than to be called the servants of the Lord Jesus Christ—and to wait upon the servants of God. To be *servus servorum* is a privilege that any one of us might covet. To wash the disciples' feet is now an honor to us and we feel it to be so. If the servant is permitted to be as his Master, it is a great exaltation for him. By Christ's poverty, we are made rich in our condition, so that, today, we are the sons of God! Today we have access to the Mercy Seat! Today God listens to the voice of a man! Today Jesus has made us kings and priests unto God and we shall reign forever and ever! The condition of the believing man is a highly exalted one in proportion as the condition of Christ was one of humiliation and poverty!

So is it with regard to the Believer *in his reputation.* Oh, Brothers and Sisters, what a reputation Christ has given us! He has given us the reputation which He threw away, for now we are righteous in His righteousness! We are comely in the comeliness which He puts upon us! We have a name and a place, now, better than that of sons and daughters! We are not now reckoned among the guilty, but among the godly! We are not numbered among the rebellious strangers, but among the obedient chil-

dren! Oh, blessed be the name of Jesus! He has clothed us with honor because He clothed Himself with shame!

The same is true as to *our operation*. I showed you how Christ voluntarily narrowed and limited His power, but behold how He has *widened* our power! There is a text I often look at and admire. Jesus said, "He that believes on Me, the works that I do shall He do, also, and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto My Father." He makes us to have an almost boundless power! We are nothing but poor feeble men and yet how wonderfully does God use men! Have you ever noticed, in Paul's Epistles, how he represents the minister of Christ as being both father and mother to a new-born soul? Writing to Philemon, he says, "I beseech you for my son, Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds." And to the Galatians he writes, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth, again, until Christ is formed in you." Is it not a very wonderful thing that we should be called, "workers, together with God"—our weakness working side by side with Omnipotence, itself?

My Brothers and Sisters, perhaps you do not know how greatly Christ has enriched you. Have you ever proven how rich He has made you in the power of prayer? "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it." "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you." We do not make enough use of the great name of Christ! If we did, we would work miracles—I mean not in the material world, but *spiritual miracles* would be at our beck and call! Our great Lord Jesus, by His poverty of operation, has made us rich in a wondrous power of Grace!

I also said that He had become poor *in communion* and I showed you how narrow was the circle of men with whom He could associate. But He has wonderfully enriched us in communion, so that we have come, "to the general assembly and Church of the first-born, who are written in Heaven." Behold, He has given us such fellowship with Himself that He says of us who believe, "These are My mother, and My sister, and My brothers." We also have fellowship with God—"Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ." What riches He has given us here!

Next, you remember, I spoke about Christ's bearing sin as being an awful instance of His poverty, but by His Substitution, we have *acceptance with God*. See how rich He has made us, for we are, "accepted in the Beloved." "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." That is a wonderful passage in Jeremiah's prophecy, "This is the name wherewith she shall be called, the Lord Our Righteousness." What? The Church, itself, called, "The Lord Our Righteousness"? Yes, she takes her husband's name! The Church has Christ's own title bestowed upon her! Christ became poor, indeed, as He stood in our place, but He has fixed us in a large and wealthy place by giving us complete acceptance with the Father through His righteousness.

Then, as I completed the story, I pictured our Lord Jesus as lying in the death sleep of the tomb. But think, O Beloved, that He has now, in consequence of that death, given us *eternal life*. His own words are, "He that believes on Me has everlasting life." "Whoever lives and believes in

Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" Because Christ died, we live. Because He died, we shall never die! The capital sentence has been executed upon our Substitute and can never be executed again. Punishment cannot be inflicted, first on the bleeding Surety, and then on those for whom that Surety stood! Therefore we live by His death and over us, the Second Death can have no power! Death is not annihilation. No thoughtful person ever fancies that it is. Death is the separation of the soul from the body. Death, in its highest sense, is the separation of the soul from God. We may know the first death, the rending of the soul from the body, but the Second Death, the separation of the soul from God—*that* we shall never know—for Jesus knew it on our behalf when He said, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" But now, "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." Oh, how rich He has made us in the indestructible everlasting life which He has bestowed upon us through His atoning death and His glorious Resurrection!

I close with just these two or three remarks which the subject suggests.

First, if such is the result of Christ's poverty, "that you, through His poverty, might be rich," what will the result of His riches be? If by His death we live, what must be the outcome of His life? If by His humiliation we are so enriched, what will come of His Glory? If by His first coming, when He came as a Sin-Offering, all this is accomplished, what may *not* be expected when He shall come a second time without a Sin-Offering unto salvation? Try and work out that problem if you can!

Here is another. If Christ's poverty is such as I have tried to describe it, what must the riches of His people be? If our riches are proportionate to His poverty, what rich people we are! He was poor as poor can be and we, if we are believing in Him, are as rich as rich can be! So low as He went, so high do we rise! That is how the scales of the sanctuary act—as He sinks, we go up! Will you try to see how high you must be according to this standard? What riches must belong to you when you judge of them by Christ's poverty!

The next question is, if such are our riches, why do we complain of poverty? There stands a child of God who does not know whether he has any Grace. He is putting his hand into his soul's pocket to see whether he can find a pennyworth of Grace. My Brother, all things are yours if you are Christ's, for it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell! There is many a child of the King who is entitled to reign like a prince, who continues to live like a miser. He weighs every ounce he eats. He starves himself, spiritually, near unto death. What are you doing? Why shouldn't you, to whom God has given Christ, that is to say, *everything*—be glad in the Lord and rejoice with unspeakable joy—and full of glory?

I close with one more question. If such was His power, why shouldn't we, also, for His Glory, be willing to be poor? If He would throw aside His honor, why shouldn't we throw ours aside? If He gave up His ease, why shouldn't we give up ours? If He was willing to be a Servant, why

shouldn't we be servants? If He made Himself of no reputation, why shouldn't we do the same? That is very different from the action of my friend over there who said, "Well, you know, I shall not stand it. I do not think that I should be treated like that. I really feel that I ought to be more respected." Ah, poor Soul, if you knew yourself, you would not talk so! Who among us deserves *any* respect? They call us, "Reverend." It makes me sick to think that any mortal man should be considered a "reverend" person! What reverence can be due to us except that every wife is to "see that she reverences her husband"? That is Scriptural—but it is never said that every hearer is to reverence the preacher! Oh, what poor creatures we are at our best!

If God were to permit us to be doormats to the Church, it would be too high an honor for us! I have seen a broom, sometimes, outside a door where farming men come to brush their boots. It is a grand thing for a man to be just like that. I think that I am getting very near to that honor and glory, so many are scraping their boots against me just now, and I am well content that it should be so if they get some of the mud off and do not go and spoil God's floor inside. Let all of us feel that what becomes of us matters nothing at all! Let us be willing to die in a ditch so long as Jesus Christ sits on the Throne of God and His great Truth is established in the world.

"You know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor." Go and imitate Him and be willing to be *nothing* at all, if only He may be All in All. God bless you! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
Psalm 22:1-21.

This marvelous Psalm is a wonderful prophecy which might seem as if it had been composed *after* the suffering of our Lord. But it was written *many hundreds of years before* His Incarnation and death. It is "a Psalm of David," and is dedicated, "To the chief Musician upon Aijeleth Shahar," or, as the margin renders it, "the hind of the morning." We know who that hunted Hind of the morning is. We seem to see Him panting, his flanks white with foam, pressed by the dogs, almost torn to pieces by the cruel enemy. The Psalm begins with words that, in all their fullness, belong to nobody else but our Well-Beloved.

Verse 1. *My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?* Every word is emphatic. You may put the stress where you please, upon every single word. "*My* God, My *God*." With two hands He takes hold on God, crying, "My God, My God," "Eloi, Eloi, My Strong One, why have *You* forsaken Me?" Or read it, "*Why* have You forsaken Me?" "Why have You *forsaken* Me?" "Why have You forsaken *Me*?" You get a different shade of meaning each time, but each meaning is true.

1. *Why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My roaring?* The Savior's prayers had ceased to be articulate. They had become, in His own judgement, like the pained crying of a wounded beast. He calls them, "My roaring." Oh, what prayers were those of our Lord on the Cross! Sometimes we, too, feel as if we could not pray—we can only sigh,

and sob, and groan. Well, if it even came to *roaring*, we would have a fuller sympathy with Christ, for He could say, "Why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My roaring?"

2, 3. *O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You hear not; and in the night season, and am not silent. But You are holy, O You that inhabit the praises of Israel.* Jesus will find no fault with God. Even if in His dire extremity, God forsakes Him, yet He will not utter even a whisper against Him—"You are holy, O You that inhabit the praises of Israel."

4-6. *Our fathers trusted in You: they trusted, and You did deliver them. They cried unto You, and were delivered: they trusted in You, and were not confounded. But I am a worm, and no man.* The allusion here is to a little red worm which, when it is crushed, seems to be all blood and nothing else—the Savior compares Himself to that little red worm, "and no man."

6. *A reproach of men, and despised of the people.* They would not let Him be numbered with them. They accounted Him as an off cast and an outcast.

7, 8. *All they that see Me laugh Me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the LORD that He would deliver Him: let Him deliver Him, seeing He delighted in Him.* Will you try to picture the Savior saying all these words as He hangs upon the Cross? That is the best commentary upon the Psalm. Hanging there, nailed to the cruel wood, in terrible bodily and mental anguish and deserted of God, He soliloquizes after this sad fashion. You will understand it all so well if you have Him in your mind's eye as we are reading.

9-10. *But You are He that took Me out of the womb: You did make Me hope when I was upon My mother's breasts. I was cast upon You from the womb: You are My God from My mother's belly.* We could not help ourselves then. At the moment of our birth, everything depended upon God and so it does in the moment of our death. It is well to remember those years of helpless infancy when we could not feed ourselves. We were taken care of, then, when we hung in absolute impotence upon our mother's breast—then surely, if a second childhood should come, if all our powers should fail us, and we should be once more as weak as we were at our birth—He that helped us in the beginning will help us in the end! Thus the Savior comforted Himself as He went on praying—

11. *Be not far from Me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help.* Oh, the bitterness of that cry, "None to help!" "They have all gone. The disciples have all fled. Judas has betrayed Me. Peter has denied Me. There is none to help. Be not far from Me." There stand the Roman soldiers, the High Priest and the Scribes and Pharisees—and Jesus says—

12-14. *Many bulls have compassed Me; strong bulls of Bashan have beset Me round. They gaped upon Me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint.* They were, no doubt, dislocated by the dreadful shaking and jarring that our Savior must have suffered when they dashed the Cross into the hole dug for it.

14. *My heart is like wax; it Has melted in the midst of Me.* When the heart goes, everything goes. When the heart fails, and begins to melt,

then it seems as if everything is loosening and the man is in the anguish of death.

15. *My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and My tongue cleaves to My jaws.* Our Lord was parched with the fever brought on by the terrible anguish and strain upon the hands and feet, which are full of nerves and very tender. A slight wound of the thumb has brought on lockjaw, but what the wounds of the Savior's delicate and sensitive body must have been, we cannot possibly tell—"My tongue cleaves to My jaws."

16. *And You have brought Me into the dust of death.* He felt as if His very frame was all turning to the dust of which the body is made. So complete is the breaking up of the whole manhood when a strong fever is upon one.

16. *For dogs have compassed Me.* There was the ribald crowd—not, this time, the bulls of Bashan, the great ones, but the mob—the masses of the common people hooting at Him. "Dogs have compassed Me."

16. *The assembly of the wicked have enclosed Me: they forced My hands and My feet.* Can anybody else be speaking here but Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of David, the King of the Jews? Now is this Hind of the morning hunted till the dogs and the hunters have made a circle round Him. "The assembly of the wicked have enclosed Me." Here is Christ's Crucifixion beyond all doubt—"They pierced My hands and My feet."

17. *I can count all My bones.* He is so emaciated that, as He looks down upon His body, He says, "I can count all My bones."

17. *They look and stare upon Me.* The delicate modesty of the Savior is shocked. They have stripped Him and hung Him up—and there they stand and gloat—their cruel eyes upon His matchless body. "They look and stare upon Me."

18. *They part My garment among them, and cast lots for My clothing.* How accurate is this description, even to the least detail! How wondrously was this Poet-Prophet inspired when he thus drew the portrait of the Crucified Christ! "They part My garments among them, and cast lots for My clothing."

19-21. *But be not You far from Me, O LORD: O My strength, hasten You to help Me. Deliver My Soul from the sword: My darling life from the power of the dog. Save Me from the lion's mouth: for You have heard Me.* So far, You see, the Psalm describes the sufferings of our Divine Redeemer and then it changes. The light of the sun has broken out from the midday darkness! God has smiled on Him, once more, and the Psalm changes its tone altogether as the Savior congratulates Himself upon the result of His passion. The Psalm ends with these memorable words, "It is finished." Our version puts it, "He has done this." It might just as well be rendered, "It is finished," for the sense is precisely the same. And when Jesus had said this, He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—282, 942, 278.

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

"GOODNESS, AS A MORNING CLOUD"
NO. 2365

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JUNE 17, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 25, 1888.

"And Joash did that which was right in the sight of the LORD all the days of Jehoiada the priest."
2 Chronicles 24:2.

"Now after the death of Jehoiada came the princes of Judah, and made obeisance to the king. Then the king listened to them. And they left the house of the LORD God of their fathers, and served groves and idols: and wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this, their trespass."
2 Chronicles 24:17, 18.

THERE is a book called *The Museum of Natural History* and the most amazing animal in that museum is man. It would be far more easy to understand any other creature than to understand a human being. He is worthy of very great study and the more he is studied, the more will he surprise you. There are certain characters that are great curiosities. Alas, there are, also, other characters that are great monstrosities! You can never tell, from what a man is, what he will be. The case before us is a very extraordinary one because here is a man with every possible advantage who, through a number of years, exhibited the brightest form of character. And, yet, in the end, he was not thought worthy to be laid in the sepulchers of his fathers with others of the kings of Judah. Neither was he worthy of any royal interment, for the latter part of his life blackened and defiled the whole of his career and he who began his reign like the dawning of the day, ended it like the middle of the night.

I wonder whether there are any persons here who will turn out to be very sinful and wicked before life is over? I mean, those who have *begun* well, who are *now* the hope and joy of those who know them, but who will end badly, in dishonor to themselves and grief to their households? If there are such here, probably you can find them out by this one test. Those who say, "It is impossible that it should be so with us," are probably the persons. While those who are afraid lest it *should* be so and ask for Grace that it may not be so, are probably those who will be preserved and whose path will shine brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.

Dear Friends, what need there is to go below the surface in the examination of moral and spiritual character! I shall have to prove this to you, tonight, for in appearance, Joash was all that we could wish. Yet, had he really been what he seemed to be, he would have continued so! If there had been that work of Grace within his soul which there appeared to be in his life, he would not have turned aside as he did, for where a work of Grace is real and true, it is known by its abiding influence throughout

the whole of life. Where godly principles have been imparted and a Divine Life has been infused, these things are not taken from a man. "They went out from us, but they were not of us," said the Apostle John, "for if they had been of us, they would, no doubt, have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." So was it with Joash. He turned aside from God because he had never truly known the Lord at all! And his last end was worse than the first because his beginning was really not such as it had seemed to be.

I trust that every person here desires to have genuine religion and not to have the sham. There is a prayer that I recommend to everyone as I desire to use it myself, "Lord, let me know the very worst of my case! Do not suffer me either to deceive myself, or to be deceived by others. If I am not Yours, let me know that I am not Yours. If my repentance is but a seeming repentance and my faith but the mere shadow of faith, and not the substance of it, Lord, by Your good Spirit convince me of my dangerous delusion and let me know where I am and what I am!" I am sure many of you desire to pray like that and, perhaps while I am speaking, that petition may be answered, especially in the case of some of our young friends.

I was very happy, last Sunday night, in preaching as I believe so as to suit the case of one young man of whom I knew but very little. Yet it seems that I described him so accurately that he felt that I was speaking especially to him. At the same time there was another young man, sitting in quite another part of the Tabernacle, who came in on Thursday to tell me how pointedly and distinctly I had described him. On Saturday I received a letter from the center of England, from a father who sent me his son's letter saying that he was here and that I had looked at him, and distinctly and accurately described him. It is not always that we can hit three birds with one shot, but I have been praying that I may have still better success, tonight, and that many may feel, "The preacher is speaking of me. He is describing my character." God grant that it may be so!

My first head will be taken from the first verse of our text—"Joash did that which was right in the sight of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada the priest." This is my first division—*It is a great blessing when young people yield to godly influences*. The second division will be—*But this is not all that is needed.* And the third will be—*This yielding spirit may prove a source of mischief*. Instead of being a blessing, it will be a curse if it has not something more added to it.

I. First, then, IT IS A GREAT BLESSING WHEN YOUNG PEOPLE YIELD TO GODLY INFLUENCES.

Although Joash came of a bad family, yet he had a good aunt who was married to the High Priest, and the aunt and the uncle took care of young Joash. When he was but an infant, they stole him away so that Athaliah might not kill him with the rest of the royal seed. And thus Joash had this remarkable privilege that *for six years he lived in the Temple*—"He was, with them, hidden in the house of God six years." That is a splendid beginning for any life, to be hidden in the house of God six years! I do not think we ever value enough those first six years of a child's life. Impressions then made have a remarkable influence over the rest of life. Joash was where God's praise was sung from day to day and

where holy prayer was perpetually offered. He was seldom beyond the fragrance of the perfumed incense, or away from the sight of the white-robed priests. He heard nothing that could defile him, but everything that could instruct and purify him. He was hidden in the house of the Lord so as not even to go out of it—concealed with godly people for the first six years of his life.

Perhaps, no, I am sure, some of you present had similar happiness. The first thing that you can remember is your mother taking you to a place of worship. You can never forget the time when Father, also, led you there, and did not seem to be happy unless his boy was trotting by his side when he went to hear the Gospel. Among our earliest recollections are the memories of holy hymns and the sayings of gracious people, in whom, as children, we took an interest when they came to our father's house. It is a grand thing that the first days of one's life should bear the impress of the Divine finger. It is well when the vessel begins to revolve upon the wheel and the clay is soft and plastic, that the first fingers that should touch and shape it should be the fingers of God's servants. God grant that they may be as the very finger of God upon our souls! Thus Joash began his career by being hidden in the house of the Lord six years.

After he was seven years of age, *he was started on his life's business in a very admirable way.* He was to be the king, but there had to be great care taken to sweep away the usurper from the throne and to put the little king upon it. Jehoiada managed the whole affair with great skill. He also drew up a Covenant for the king to sign, a Covenant with God that he would be obedient to Jehovah as the supreme King, and a Covenant with the people that he would rule according to equity and right, and not tyrannize over them. It was all done so well that no objection was ever taken to it and Joash reigned with great prosperity and happiness over a people who were blessed by his rule. Jehoiada, all the while, being his faithful prime minister and guide.

It is a grand thing to be started in life aright. It is half the battle, you know, to begin well. Some young men and some young women, too, are launched in life wrongly. It seems almost a matter of course that they should be too strongly tempted and, in all probability, yield to the temptation. But many of you were not started so—you began with a father's blessing and with a mother's prayers. You recollect your first going out into life. Some of us remember the ride on the coach when, early in the morning, we had to leave our father's house for the first time. Perhaps it was a cold and bitter frosty morning when we started in those old days to go across the country. We remember it well and how God cared for us and blessed us—and we desire to praise Him that He has preserved us even unto this day! I am showing you the bright side of Joash's career, first. After the six years in the house of God, he had a grand start in life with everything to his advantage. Alas, alas, alas, that, with such a bright beginning, he should come to such a sad end!

Notice, also, that being thus well started, "*Joash did that which was right in the sight of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada the priest.*" While that good man lived, the king was under his influence. He consulted him in every matter of importance. He even seems to have been guided by

him, to some extent, in the matter of his marriage. He was plastic under his uncle's hands and he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord. Mark you, not only that which was right in the sight of good people, but that which was right in the sight of the Lord! His life seems to have been at least outwardly obedient to the Law of Jehovah and he yielded himself up, apparently, at any rate, to be a loyal servant of the great King. And that he did, not for a short time, only, but all the days in which Jehoiada lived. Well, now, have we not known men and women whose lives have been under the benign influence of some kind elderly person—uncle or aunt, father or mother—and they have done what was right, year after year, as long as their godly relatives lived? They have been diligent in going up to God's house, apparently devout in Bible reading and prayer, willing to assist in holy work in the Sunday school and all sorts of service for the Lord and, leading *outwardly* most useful, admirable lives all the time that these higher influences were over them, even as "Joash did that which was right in the sight of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada the priest"?

Yes, and more than this, *he was zealous for the externals of religion*—"It came to pass after this, that Joash was minded to repair the house of the Lord." He actually chided Jehoiada, his uncle, because of the slowness of the Levites! "The king called for Jehoiada, the chief, and said to him, Why have you not required of the Levites to bring in out of Judah and out of Jerusalem the collection?" Yes, and there are some whose hearts are not right towards God who, nevertheless, are very zealous about the externals of Divine worship. It is a much easier thing to build a temple for God than it is to *be* a temple for God. And it is a much more common thing for persons to show zeal in *repairing* temples than in reforming their own manners!

So this young man, you see, went even beyond his uncle in intense zeal for the cause of God, just as there are many, now, who, trained up in the ways of the Lord, are indefatigable in rendering some external service to the cause of the Lord Jesus Christ. They would give to the building of a Church. They would work hard to promote the paying for it and so forth, but, alas, you may give and you may work and you may attend to all the externals of religion, and yet have no part nor lot in the matter! Mr. Bunyan says that when he was an ungodly man, he yet had such a reverence for the outwards of religion that he would gladly have kissed the ground that the clergyman walked on—and every nail in the door of the Church seemed holy to him! That is all very fine, but unless there is a great deal more than that in us, we shall fall far short of the requirements of God!

All this while, *Joash influenced other people for good.* As king, he kept back the nation from the worship of idols. As king, he threw the cloak of his patronage over those who worshipped Jehovah—and things seemed to go well for years—"all the days of Jehoiada the priest." As long as Jehoiada lived, Joash seemed to be all that he should be.

II. Now I am going to turn, for a few minutes, to the second point to show you that, good as all this is, IT IS NOT ALL THAT IS NEEDED.

For, mark you, *this is not yielding the heart to God.* "My son, give Me your heart," says God. All that Joash had done was to give his heart to

Jehoiada, not to Jehovah! It is very easy to be outwardly religious by giving your heart to your mother, or your father, or your aunt, or your uncle, or some good person who helps you to do what is right. You are doing all this out of love to them, which is, at best, but a very secondary motive. God says, "My son, give *Me* your heart." If your religion is taken up to please any creature, it is *not* the religion which pleases the Creator. Your homage is due, not to anyone here below, but to Him who sits in the heavens, whose Kingdom rules over all. Dear Christian friends, as you think yourselves to be because of the Christianity of your parents, I do beg you to remember that *true religion* must be a matter of your own heart and of your own soul. If you merely attend to it out of respect to the dearest and most precious person under Heaven, you do not reach the standard that the Lord has set up!

Note next, that *this yielding to godly influence may exist without any personal, vital godliness whatever.* You may meet with God's people and yet not be one of God's people! You may give attention to God's servant and yet not be, yourself, God's servant. A young man may yield to his mother's advice and yet never be really repentant on account of sin. He may listen to his father's words and pay respect to the externals of his father's religion, but never have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. You must, yourselves, repent, and yourselves believe in Christ, or else all the rest will aggravate your sin by increasing your responsibility—and it will not go even a hair's breadth towards your salvation! I would have every person here, whether young or old, examine himself to see whether his religion is vital to his own soul. Have you been born again? I enquire not now about your mother, or father, or friends! Have *you* been born again? Are you now condemned under sin, or are you justified by faith in Jesus Christ? There can be no proxies and no sponsors, here—every man must give account for himself to God—and each man, each woman, must come to the Savior, personally, and accept Him and be saved by Him, or else eternal ruin is certain!

I believe, also, dear Friends, that a character like that of Joash, a yielding character, *an externally pious character may even prevent men from being saved at all.* I mean you may take it for granted that you are saved, but you must not take anything for granted between God and your soul! I charge you to make sure work, here—take your wealth for granted if you like; take the title deeds of your estate for granted if you please—but between God and your soul, let everything be settled, straight, clear, sure and have no mistakes about this matter! It is so easy to have been under religious influence from our youth up and then to go on, year after year, never having raised the question whether we are Christians or not, saying to ourselves, "Of course it is all right." You will be much nearer the Truth of God if you say, "Of course it is all *wrong*." You will be much more likely to come to an honest conclusion if you rather suspect yourself too much than believe in yourself too much! I am sure that, in speaking thus, I am giving you sound teaching.

After all, to be under godly influences year after year, without any great trial or temptation, may leave *the personal character altogether undeveloped.* Some continually put children under restraint, never suffering them to have any sort of temptation. It is so with children, sometimes, in

large institutions—they have not any money and they cannot steal any because there is nobody else who has any—they are kept out of the world altogether! They live only among their own company and there is very much of prayer and everything that is good and often, when they go out into the world, those who have trained them are altogether disappointed with them, yet they need not very much wonder! If a person on dry land thinks he can swim, it is not certain that he will swim when he gets into the sea. We must have some kind of test, or else we cannot be sure of the character! We cannot know whether a child is honest or not if it never has any chance to take that which is not its own. You cannot be sure about principle being in any young man if he has been kept under a glass case—and if his principles have never been tried.

That was the condition of Joash—the real character of the man had never come out at all because Jehoiada, as it were, covered him. He was guided and influenced by the High Priest, but his own disposition only needed an opportunity of developing itself. I have heard of an officer in India who had brought up a young leopard. It was completely tamed. Apparently it was as tame as a cat and the officer had no fear of his leopard. It went up and down the stairs and entered into every room of his house. He never suspected, for a single moment, that it would be guilty of blood-shedding. Well, while he was asleep one afternoon, in his chair, the leopard licked his hand in all tenderness as a cat might have done. But after licking for a while, it licked too hard and a little blood began to flow. It no sooner tasted blood than the old leopard's spirit was up and his master was his master no more! So does it happen to many that, by being shut in and tamed, as it were, but not *changed*—subdued but not *renewed*, kept in check but not *converted*—there has come a time when the taste of blood has called out the old nature and away the man has gone! You would never have thought that he could act as he did, but he did so because he had not a new nature! It was human nature held in check for a while, not the Spirit of God creating a new life and infusing a new character into the soul!

Do you see where I am coming to, dear Friends? I am speaking to those of you who have not passed from death unto life—to you who have never been renewed in the spirit of your mind. I pray you, do not imagine that *natural* religion is *spiritual* religion. Do not mistake the lessons learned at your mother's knee for the teachings of the Holy Spirit! Do not confuse *a* change with *the* change—and do not think that *anything* that can come to you by your first birth can serve your turn without a second birth! "*You must be born again,*" or else, though you spent the first six years of your life in the house of God and though you were taught under the most hallowed influences, you only need an opportunity, a temptation, a peculiar stress laid upon you and you will go off where the old nature carries you—and you will find out for yourself and to the horror of others that all your early training had effected nothing because it stopped short of the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.

III. Now, in the third place, I wish to show you that THIS YIELDING CHARACTER MAY EVEN PROVE A SOURCE OF MISCHIEF.

We like young people to be obedient. We are very glad to have to do with those plastic characters that are readily shaped, but, at the same

time, we ought never to be too sure about them. A person with grit in his character, if really affected by the Grace of God, may turn out a far better man than your too plastic, pliable character. Oh, dear, how many we know who are very good, but there is nothing in them at all! We have known some others who were dreadfully difficult to manage and to get at, but when, at last, a change has been worked by Divine Grace, that very obstinacy and willfulness of theirs, when *sanctified*, has given a strength to their character and, instead of being a drawback, it has been a help!

This young Joash was exceedingly supple in the hand of Jehoiada, but alas, Jehoiada died. *Other counselors came and flattered Joash.* "Now after the death of Jehoiada came the princes of Judah and made obeisance to the king." Do you not see those gentlemen coming, bowing and scraping a hundred times before they get up to him? They "made obeisance to the king." Jehoiada had not often made much obeisance to him. He had treated him with due respect as his king, but he had also spoken to him honestly and faithfully. Joash had somebody to look up to while Jehoiada lived, but now he found himself a great man with everybody looking up to *him*! And the princes of Judah, the fashionable part of the realm, the respectable people who never had been worshippers of Jehovah, but who had always preferred the more recondite, ritualistic and sensuous service of Baal, the philosophical god, came and bowed, and made obeisance to the king.

I think I can hear what they said—"Royal Sir, we congratulate you upon being released from leading strings. Now you can think for yourself! It is a fine thing for a young man to be delivered from the power of his old uncle—he was, no doubt, a very excellent person. We were present at his funeral and we paid him all due respect, still, he was a regular old fossil, one who never had made any progress at all. He clung to the worship of Jehovah and served the God of his fathers. Royal Sir, we congratulate you upon the liberty to which you have attained. Besides that, we fear that you have been considerably priest ridden. This Jehoiada was a priest and, of course, you respected and venerated his character, but you could not indulge yourself as long as he lived. We have always had high thoughts of you, Royal Sir. We always believed that you would break out, one of these days, and now that the good man is laid asleep, we are sure that you will not let his dead hands rest upon you, but you will wake up and be abreast of the age, and keep up with the spirit of the times!"

You know how they do it! It is always being done, this pouring of drops of poison into the ears—these soft, subtle flatteries. Even when a man has reached Joash's age, he is not beyond the power of flattery. I wonder how old a man would be when he would be too old to love flattery. Of course, he always likes to be told, "Ah, dear Sir, I know that you could not bear flattery," being, *at that moment*, more highly flattered than at any other time in his life! So these princes of Judah did and poor Joash, good Joash, Joash who repaired the Temple, Joash who was even more intensely earnest than Jehoiada, himself, was led astray by the soft words of the deceivers and we find him burying his religion with his uncle! In Jehoiada's grave he buried all his piety. Some whom I have known, and over whom I have wept, have acted in the same way.

After that, *he went off to sin.* The images which he had broken down were set up, again. The groves which he had cut down were planted, again, and he who seemed so zealous a servant of Jehovah had now become a worshipper of the foul Ashtaroth and bowed before the accursed Baalim! Oh, sad, sad, sad mischief this! There was a lack of principle in Joash, and it is of that I want to warn all our friends. Do not, I pray you, be satisfied with the *practice* of piety without the *principles* of piety! It is not enough to have a correct creed—you must have a renewed heart! It is not sufficient to have an ornate ritual—you must have a holy life—and to be holy you must be renewed by the Holy Spirit! If this change is not worked in you by the Holy Spirit, you who yield so readily to good, will yield just as quickly to evil.

What happened next? *Joash refused reproof.* God sent Prophets to the people and they came and warned them, testifying against the idolaters—"But they would not give ear." This Joash, who had spent his first six years in the Temple, now would not give ear to the Lord's Prophets! He was always ready to listen to Jehoiada, but now he would not give ear. He was a tremendous zealot for repairing the Temple with most costly architecture and gold and silver without limit—but now he will not give heed to God's servants at all! They may speak with all their heart and soul, but he is as the deaf adder that will not hear the voice of the charmer, charm he ever so wisely. Yet he was once your good young man, your pious young man! Oh, what a sifter London has been to many like Joash! Many do I remember whose story was like this. They had been to the house of God always—they were brought up where there was a family altar in the house! Everybody reckoned them to be Christians when they came to London.

At first, they went where their father exhorted them to go, to some humble place where the Gospel was preached, but after a time they thought it was not wrong to go on Sunday to see one of the more showy religious places. That done, they went to some showy place that was *not* religious. They worked so hard all the week that they must go out a little into the fresh air on the Sunday and, by degrees, they found companions who led them, little by little, from the path of integrity and chastity till, "the good young man," was as vile as any on the streets of London! And he who seemed to be a saint became not only a sinner, but the maker of sinners!

What did Joash do next? *He slew his friend's son.* Old Jehoiada's son, Zechariah, one of those who had helped to put the crown upon young Joash's head, was, at last, moved to come out and speak in the midst of the Temple service to the people, as he had a right to do. And he began to upbraid them for turning aside from Jehovah to the worship of the foul idol gods. Now, look—the tiger's blood is up! Joash bids them kill him! How dare he testify against his king? True, he is the son of his best friend—he is his own cousin, he is one who helped him to ascend the throne—but what matters all that to this once good young man? The milk of human kindness is now soured. The oil that was so soft burns fiercely when it once takes fire. "Let Zechariah die. Kill him in the Temple. Splatter the sacred altar with his blood! Stone him! He has dared to speak against me."

See your soft clay—how hard and coarse, and rough it has become! I have seen this change come over men. I believe that the worst persecutors in the world are generally made of those who once were tender and soft-hearted. Nero would, at first, scarcely sign the death warrant of a criminal, and yet he lived to delight in wholesale murder! When the son of perdition was needed to betray his Lord, the raw material of the traitor was found in an Apostle! You cannot make an out-and-out bad man except from one who seems to be good. You must take the man who has been six years in the Temple, the man who has done that which is right in the sight of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada, to make such a devil as Joash turned out to be when he killed the son of his benefactor in the court of the house of the Lord! Oh, I could look steadily in the face of some here, tonight, and in the spirit of prophecy I could burst out into tears to think of what they will yet *be*, what they will yet *do* and what they will yet *say*! Perhaps you look at me and ask, "Is your servant a dog that he should do this thing?" Oh, Sir, you are worse than a dog! There lurks within you a heart, "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?" Oh, that you did know it and would turn to God and say, "O Lord, renew me! Lord, make a new creature of me! Lord, save me, that I may never do such things as now, today, I think it impossible that I should ever do!"

This Joash, perishing, miserable, *having no faith in God, robbed the Temple* and gave all the gold and treasures to Hazael the Syrian. Personally, he was full of disease and, by-and-by, his own servants, disgusted with him for his conduct towards Jehoiada's son, slew him on his bed. What a death for the young man who was six years hidden away in the house of the Lord! Oh, if I could tell some of you what will become of you, you would never come to this place, again, you would be so angry with me! If I could prophesy to some good young fellow here—I mean, *outwardly* good as Joash was at first, but without a new heart, without the Grace of God in his soul—if I could prophesy to him what he will be, he would spit in my face in indignation that I would dare to foretell such a thing! There is not a man or woman here who is safe from the most abominable sin until they yield themselves to Christ! There is not one of you who is sure that the deepest damnation of Hell will not be your portion unless you come and commit your soul into the hands of Jesus, who is a faithful Keeper of them that put their trust in Him!

Can there be a Character Insurance Society? There can be no such Society formed by men that can insure our character, yet God has formed one! "The righteous, also, shall hold on his way; and he that has clean hands shall be stronger and stronger." The Lord will keep him and preserve him from evil, for, "the path of the just is as the shining light, that shines more and more unto the perfect day." I earnestly entreat you, by the living God, my hopeful young Friend—yield yourself to Jesus Christ and seek His guardian care lest the fair blossom of today should never bring forth fruit, but end in disappointment.

The Lord grant that we may, all of us, meet in Heaven, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

2 Chronicles 24:1-25.

This chapter gives us the story of the reign of Joash. He was the only one of the royal seed who was preserved alive when Athaliah sought to destroy all the family of Ahaziah. He was hidden away for some six years in the Temple by his aunt Jehoshabeath, the wife of Jehoiada the High Priest, who arranged matters so well that when the child was seven years old, Jehoiada caused him to be crowned king and he put to death the cruel she-wolf Athaliah who had destroyed the royal family. You see, therefore, how much this young king owed to his uncle, the High Priest. Now let us read the story of his reign.

Verse 1. *Joash was seven years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem.* He might have reigned much longer had he not erred and turned aside from the right way, and so brought judgment upon himself.

1, 2. *His mother's name was Bibiah of Beer-Sheba. And Joash did that which was right in the sight of the LORD all the days of Jehoiada the priest.* As long as his uncle lived, that truly devout statesman, as well as priest of the Lord, "Joash did that which was right in the sight of the Lord."

3, 4. *And Jehoiada took for him two wives; and he begat sons and daughters. And it came to pass after this.* Probably, some 23 years after—

4. *That Joash was minded to repair the house of the LORD.* Jehoiada had, with him, broken in pieces the images of Baal, and battered down the temples of the idols. And now the young king is "minded to repair the house of Jehovah."

5. *And he gathered together the priests and the Levites, and said to them, go out into the cities of Judah, and gather of all Israel money to repair the house of your God from year to year, and see that you hasten the matter. Howbeit the Levites hastened it not.* It is a great pity when those who live in the house of God have not enough interest in it to see to its repair. The fact was, the offerings presented at the Temple, like the tithes in modern times, were intended not only for the ministers, but for the maintaining of the fabric, too. But these priests and Levites would not allow anything to be deducted from their own income even for the repair of the house in which they served! So Joash ordained that special collections should be made for the purpose.

6-9. *And the king called for Jehoiada the chief, and said unto him, Why have you not required of the Levites to bring in out of Judah and out of Jerusalem the collection, according to the commandment of Moses the servant of the Lord, and of the congregation of Israel, for the tabernacle of witnesses? For the sons of Athaliah, that wicked woman, had broken up the honor of God; and also all the dedicated things of the house of the LORD did they bestow upon Daalim. And at the king's commandment they made a chest, and set it outside at the gate of the house of the LORD. And they made a proclamation through Judah and Jerusalem, to bring in to the LORD the collection that Moses, the servant of God, laid upon Israel in the wilderness.* Everyone must give his half shekel by way of redemption money—and this had not been brought in.

10-14. *And all the princes and all the people rejoiced, and brought in, and cast into the chest, until they had made an end. Now it came to pass,*

that at what time the chest was brought unto the king's office by the hand of the Levites, and when they saw that there was much money, the king's scribe and the High Priest's officer came and emptied the chest, and took it, and carried it to his place again. This they did day by day, and gathered money in abundance. And the king and Jehoiada gave it to such as did the work of the service of the house of the LORD, and hired masons and carpenters to repair the house of the LORD, and, also such as worked iron and brass to mend the house of the LORD. So the workmen worked, and the work was perfected by them, and they set the house of God in his state, and strengthened it. And when they had finished it, they brought the rest of the money before the king and Jehoiada, of which were made vessels for the house of the LORD, even vessels to minister, and to offer withal, and spoons, and vessels of gold and silver. And they offered burnt offerings in the house of the LORD continually all the day of Jehoiada. See the influence of one man! One man can sway a state. One man can check sin. One man can be the head of a host who shall serve God and honor His name.

15. *But Jehoiada waxed old.* It happened to him as it must happen to us all, for the best of men must grow old and pass away. Let us value them while we have them. Too often we give them stones while they are alive, in anticipation of giving them bigger stones to keep them in memory when they die. "Jehoiada waxed old"—

15. *And was full of days when he died; an hundred and thirty years old was he when he died.* An unusual age for that time. Short enough as compared with the years of the antediluvian Patriarchs, but still a great age for those days.

16. *And they buried him in the city of David among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, both toward God and toward His house.* That is the best kind of good which begins with doing good toward God and then goes on to doing good towards God's house. The Church is to be served, but even it must be second to God's Glory. God, first, and then the very best must come next.

17. *Now after the death of Jehoiada came the princes of Judah, and made obeisance to the king. Then the king listened to them.* These flatterers came with all their daintiest manners and made obeisance to the king—and "the king listened to them." All the days of Jehoiada, these princes had been afraid to set up the fashionable worship—the worship of Baalim that had been introduced by the Sidonian queen, Jezebel—that wicked woman of strong and masterful spirit. This worldly and false religion had been put down by the strong hand of Jehoiada, but when its adherents thought they had a chance to get to the front, again, they came and flattered the king. And "the king listened to them."

18. *And they left the house of the LORD God of their fathers and served groves and idols.* Or, "Asherah and idols." The word is mistakenly translated, "groves." These were certain horrible and disgusting emblems of the heathen goddess Ashtaroth, or Astarte—"They served Asherah and idols."

18, 19. *And wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this, their trespass. Yet He sent Prophets to them, to bring them, again, unto the LORD; and they testified against them: but they would not give ear.* "These old

Puritans have come back again," they said. "We will not listen to them." The common people were still mostly worshippers of Jehovah, but the great ones of the earth had gone over to the idols. And they could not endure that one and another of the Prophets, often very humble and unlearned men, should come and bear testimony for Jehovah.

20. *And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada the priest, which stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus says God, "Why transgress you the Commandments of the Lord, that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the Lord, He has also forsaken you.* He spoke very temperately and affectionately. The warning was faithful, but it was delivered in the very best and kindest spirit. But now see what the wicked men did.

21. *And they conspired against him and stoned him with stones at the command of the king in the court of the house of the Lord.* This is probably the Prophet to whom Christ alludes when He speaks of Zachariah, "whom you slew between the Temple and the altar." It was a crime most foul to murder the son of Jehoiada, one of those who had helped to put the crown upon the head of the king! To do this evil deed in the court of God's house, when the Prophet was engaged in his Master's business and delivering a Divine message, was to heap sin upon sin!

22, 23. *Then Joash the king remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada, his father had done to him, but slew his son. And when he died, he said, The LORD look upon it, and require it. And it came to pass at the end of the year, that the host of Syria came up against him: and they came to Judah and Jerusalem, and destroyed all the princes of the people from among the people, and sent all the spoil of them unto the king of Damascus.* God delayed not long the punishment of the evil-doers! When His servants are persecuted, He will speedily avenge His own elect. "They destroyed all the princes of the people from among the people." Was not that remarkable? These were the authors of the sin and they had chiefly to endure the penalty. It is not always that invaders lay hold upon the princes, alone, and slay them—but these Syrians did so.

24, 25. *For the army of the Syrians came with a small company of men, and the LORD delivered a very great host into their hands because they had forsaken the LORD God of their fathers. So they executed judgment against Joash. And when they were departed from him, (for they left him in great diseases), his own servants conspired against him for the blood of the sons of Jehoiada, the priest, and slew him on his bed and he died: and they buried him in the city of David, but they buried him not in the sepulchers of the kings.* When one set of executioners had gone, his own servants conspired against him and slew him! Here ends our reading. May it be profitable to us!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—23 (VERSION III), 652, 645.

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

"THE SURE MERCIES OF DAVID"
NO. 2366

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JUNE 24, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, APRIL 6, 1888.

"And as concerning that He raised Him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, He said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David."
Acts 13:34.

WE know from this quotation made by the Apostle Paul in his address at Antioch, that he was alluding not only to David, but to the Lord Jesus, also. "For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: but He, whom God raised again, saw no corruption." There was a Covenant made with David which was intended to be typical of another Covenant—and David, himself, is the special type of that great King with whom God has made a Covenant on behalf of His people. We will leave David somewhat in the background in our meditations tonight. We will only use him as the symbol of the great Christ in whom we rejoice, for God gives to us "the sure mercies of David" in Jesus Christ, His well-beloved Son.

The course of our thought upon this passage, if we are helped to follow it, will be this. First, let us consider, *Where our salvation lies*—it lies in this, that the mercies we receive are "the sure mercies of David." When we have turned that thought over, we will try to answer this question, *What are the sure mercies of David?* Our next enquiry will be, *In what day are they so sure?* And then, lastly, we will enquire, *What is the connection between the sure mercies of David and the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ?* This text is evidently quoted to prove that the Resurrection of Christ was spoken of in the Old Testament—"As concerning that He raised Him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, He said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David."

I. First, dear Friends, let us consider, WHERE OUR SALVATION LIES.

It does not lie in ourselves. You may sift yourself over and over, as with a sieve, and you will not discover one atom of saving matter in yourself! You may throw on the dunghill all that you find there. There is not a grain of Grace in a hundred tons of human nature. You may go on sifting, sifting, sifting, to all eternity and you shall find only that which is worthy of the damning sentence. Ask any man who is saved and if he speaks intelligently, he will tell you that the Lord Jesus Christ is his salvation. If he begins to explain the grounds, reasons and foundation of his salvation, he will look away from himself and will point to Jesus Christ, alone!

The text speaks about David and David is a good type of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom our salvation lies. Jesus was *One who was despised and rejected,* just as David was in his own family. When Samuel came to anoint as king one of the sons of Jesse, David was away watching the sheep—he was not thought worthy of being called in till Samuel specially sent for him. His brothers evidently despised him and condemned him as being forward when really he was more courageous than they were. So, too, our Lord was despised and rejected of men—they did not think that the Nazarene could be the Messiah. It was enough, merely, to mention His name and to speak of Him as Jesus of Nazareth, for them at once to ridicule His claims. They judged that it was not possible that He, who was so poor, so meek, so lowly—that He who had so little of anything which they looked for in the promised Deliverer, should be the Savior—yet He was and still is the *only* Savior.

You know the story or tradition that when they were building Solomon's Temple, all the stones were marked to indicate the places where they should go, for no hammer or chisel was to be used upon them in the sacred courts. There was one stone of a very awkward shape and the builders could not find a place for it. They turned it over and tried to fit it in here and there, but it would not go in anywhere, so they threw it aside and the nettles and the thistles grew over it. It became a proverb and a by-word. One would say to another, "Will you not try to build in that stone?" but they all in turn gave it up—it was the stone which the builders refused. At last, the Temple was all but finished—it only lacked one cornerstone and they looked about for it, but they could not find it. Someone at last suggested, "Perhaps that queerly-shaped stone is the very one intended to complete the Temple." So they brought it out and found that it was even so. Our blessed Lord and Master applied to Himself the words of the Psalmist, "The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes." Like David, Jesus was the Rejected One, but He is the Anointed of the Lord, blessed be His holy name!

Our salvation lies in Another, *even in One who has fought our greatest enemy, and overthrown him.* This was the mark of David that, in due time, he came to the front when all Israel fled from the gigantic Philistine. The two champions meet for the deadly duel, the stone flies from the shepherd's sling, the giant falls! His head is cut off with his own sword and David brings the gory trophy to King Saul. Our salvation lies in One who has destroyed death, and him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. I see Him coming back with the tokens of His triumph in His hand! Like David, He has slain His ten thousands in slaying the one great enemy of His people! In this Jesus, who died on Calvary and in dying, destroyed death and burst the bonds of the grave, lies our salvation!

Yet it lies in *One who, despite His glorious triumphs, was sorely persecuted*. David did not go straightway from his victory over the Philistine to sit upon his throne—he was hunted by Saul like a partridge on the mountains and long had to carry his life in his hands. He had to pass through sore persecution before he became king. And, Beloved, in a certain sense, that is the condition of our Lord Jesus Christ even now! He is

still rejected. I know that His name is used and men like to call themselves His followers, but if you set forth a real Christ, crucified among them, and preach His great substitutionary sacrifice, you shall see that He is no more a favorite among men than He used to be! Still will they spit in His face! Still will they scourge Him! Still will they crucify Him. There has been a long, long battle, through these nearly two thousand years, while men have cried, concerning the Lord and His Anointed, "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us."

But the King will yet come to His Throne. God says, concerning Him, "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion." "I will set His hand, also, in the sea, and His right hand in the rivers. Also I will make Him My First-Born, higher than the kings of the earth." But, for a while, the Prince of this world prevails, the Saul, the enemy that walks in darkness, is allowed to "worry whom he can't devour." And though it shall not always be so, yet at present it is a time of conflict and trial. Our salvation still rests in a despised Gospel, in a hunted Christ—but as Israel looked to David in Engedi, by the tracks of the wild goats, and not to Saul upon the throne—so we look to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Though He is still cast out and persecuted, He is the one hope of our spirits!

Bear with me while I also say that our salvation lies in *One who was thrice anointed*, even as David was, first, at his father's house, then at Hebron, where he was anointed king of Judah, and afterwards when he came fully to his throne and was acknowledged as king of all Israel. Our Jesus was trebly anointed as our Prophet, Priest and King. God has anointed Him with the oil of gladness and we, today, rejoice in Him as fully fitted, prepared and equipped for completing the great work of our salvation.

Once more, Beloved, as David ultimately came to his throne and when, on his throne was seen as the king with whom God had entered into a solemn Covenant that the throne should be his forever, even so our salvation lies in *One with whom God has made a Covenant,* "*ordered in all things and sure,*" a Covenant which shall stand fast when earth's old pillars bow and when all things that are created shall melt into their natural nothingness! You know that we fell in one federal head, even the first Adam. Behold the glory of the fact that we rise in another Representative, even the Second Adam, the Lord from Heaven! We see our ruin, yonder, in the Garden of Eden. We see our salvation, yonder, in another garden, Gethsemane, and on the Cross of Calvary. Still we look beyond all our willing, doing, praying and everything that comes of ourselves, to the Son of God and Son of Man, given by God to accomplish that redemption by which sinners are saved! The Lord says, concerning Jesus, "I have laid help upon One that is mighty; I have exalted One chosen out of the people." This Almighty Savior is the only hope of guilty men!

May I ask my dear Hearers at once—lest I should suddenly have to stop short in my sermon—do you know and trust this Savior? Have you come to lean on Christ, alone? Do you love the Lord Jesus Christ? Can you say, "He is all my salvation and all my desire"? Can you take Him up in your arms, as old Simeon did, and bless God that your eyes have seen His salvation? All that can save you lies there, in the Person and work of

this glorious David, of whom I desire to speak to you, tonight. May God the Holy Spirit introduce you to Him if you know Him not, and may you accept Him at once, as God would have you accept Him—as your Savior and your All!

I have thus spoken upon the first point, where our salvation lies.

II. Now, secondly, WHAT ARE THE SURE MERCIES OF DAVID? What is meant by that expression?

I have already told you, but I may tell you yet again. God dealt with Israel by way of mercy and, to make that mercy sure, He took a man whom He had chosen—a man whom He loved, a man whom He intended to use—and He made with him a Covenant that He would set him upon the throne, that by his personal influence he might bring down blessings upon all the people. These are "the sure mercies of David."

In the matter of our salvation, "the sure mercies of David" mean that *God has laid hold upon His Son, Jesus Christ.* You cannot help yourself, but Christ can help you. You cannot cleanse yourself, but Christ can cleanse you. You cannot save yourself, but Christ can save you. Dear Heart, whatever it is you lack, there is no lack in Christ! Whatever is your need, Christ has exactly that which can meet your case. Young man, you say, "I have nothing." And I answer you with this—Christ has everything! You say, old man, "What can *I* do? "And I answer you with this—What *cannot* Christ do? If you are nothing, Christ is everything! If you are everything that is *evil*, Christ is everything that is *good*. If you have weakness, mourn it, but trust Christ and He shall be your strength! If you have sorrow, you can not shake it off, but go to Jesus and He shall be your song! All that you need is in Christ. This, then, is the first sure mercy of David—that help is laid on Christ.

And, next, as David was anointed to be the Leader and Commander to his people, even so, *Christ is anointed on our behalf.* He comes not to as a *self*-sent Savior, but as one anointed of God! It was a great comfort to me, when I put myself in Christ's hands, that I had not to pick out a Savior for myself, but God had appointed Him. I did not put myself into the hands of One who was not authorized to act, for Jesus comes to us fully commissioned by God. A person who has no diploma may very possibly be a wise surgeon, but there are few sufferers who would trust themselves, in difficult operations, with a man who was not properly authorized to act in such a case. My Lord has a full diploma given Him by the infinite wisdom of God! He knows how to save. He has been long in practice and there are multitudes in Heaven whom He has saved. He is the great specialist in soul saving and He can meet your special case! He has dealt with diseases that no one else can understand—if you are an odd man, or the oddest of the odd, yet this Christ, all comprehensive in His wondrous wisdom, knows all about your condition!

This is another of the sure mercies of David. First, help is laid on Christ and, next, He is anointed to act on our behalf.

We are told, in the 89th Psalm, that God promised David that He would overthrow all his enemies—"I will beat down his foes before his face." Here, then, is another sure mercy for us, *Christ will rout all our enemies.* Who are they? How many are there of them? Which way do they come to

assault us? Christ can meet them all! Your sins, your many fierce and cruel sins, are your enemies. But Christ has made full Atonement for them all. Believe, and these Egyptians shall sink like lead in the Red Sea of your Savior's blood! Your present lusts, your evil passions, the instincts of your nature which you cannot curb are foes too strong for you to overcome, but Christ is able to destroy them and to put all your temptations to the rout! It may be that Satan, himself, assails you and I pity you if that is the case. Any man who has had a real encounter with the devil will never forget it! All the tempters in Hell, together, cannot make up so dreadful an adversary as Apollyon, himself—but even Satan knows who is his Master! Christ can bid him lie down and be still as a man silences a dog! Only look to Christ, for this is part of the Covenant, ordered in all things and sure, that He shall rout your adversaries! Hand your enemies over to Him and He will rid you of them. Cry, "Son of David, have mercy upon me," and you shall have a gracious answer and quick deliverance!

God also made this to be a part of His Covenant with His servant, David, that he was to be a storehouse of good things to the nation over which he reigned, and *Jesus is the storehouse of mercy to all His people.* I am so glad that I have to speak to those who need large supplies of Grace, for there is, in Christ, all that any sinner can ever need! As truly can it be said, now, as it might have been said nearly nineteen hundred years ago—

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

He that opened eyes long ago can open your eyes! He that healed lepers in Judea can heal you! He that raised the dead can raise you! He is as much a Savior, now, as He was at the first—if there is any difference, He has an *increase of power*, for now has God committed into the hands of Jesus all power in Heaven and in earth. Only come and trust Him—for all your salvation lies in Him—and in Him will be found for you in abundance all "the sure mercies of David."

There is this point, also, about the Covenant made with David, that he was always to have a seed—and *Jesus will always have a seed.* I never come to preach at haphazard, saying to myself, "Perhaps my Lord will have some souls bow before Him." I know that I have a large congregation and I feel sure that, when God's Truth is proclaimed, some will yield to Christ. When He speaks, some of His sheep will hear His voice and follow Him—and He will give unto them eternal life! When the good Seed of the Kingdom is sown, there are some furrows in which it will surely take root and bring forth a harvest to His praise.

Well, then, since Christ must have a seed, why should not I be among them? Since, as a Savior, He must save some, why should He not save me? If He is a Physician and must heal some, why should He not heal me? If He spreads a banquet of mercy and the wedding must be furnished with guests, why should not I have a seat among them? How I pray that I may be putting a hopeful thought into some troubled heart tonight! I would get alongside some trembler and whisper this into his

ear, "Jesus must save sinners—will you not be one of those whom He must save?" It is written, "Him that comes to Me , I will in no wise cast out." If you trust Him and He does not save you, let us know of it, for we shall have to alter our preaching! Christ will have run back from His Word. He will be another Savior and not the one in whom we trusted. Come, then, and learn what "the sure mercies of David" are. They are the sure mercies of Jesus, that in Him there is salvation! He is anointed on purpose to give salvation! He is able to rout your adversaries—yes—"He is able, also, to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them."

III. That leads me to say a few words, as best I may, upon the third point—IN WHAT WAY MAY THESE MERCIES BE SAID TO BE SURE?

Well, they may be said to be sure *because they are found in Jesus.* He is the same, yesterday, today and forever. Then, whatever is in Him, is most surely sure! What a storehouse for God to lay up His mercy—the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ! Remember how the Israelites built treasure cities for Pharaoh? Well, Beloved, the Lord God has made His treasure city to be His own dear Son! "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell." "Go unto Joseph," said Pharaoh. "Go unto Jesus," says Jehovah, for all the blessings of the Covenant are treasured up in Him and are, therefore, safe and sure! If salvation had been in your own keeping, you would have lost it long ago. If your hope had lain in yourself, it would soon have been withered! But since it lies in Jesus and in Jesus, only, it is always living and blessed! You and I, poor, helpless, hopeless souls, can flee to this City of Refuge whose gates are never closed, and find ourselves secure from the adversary. They are "the sure mercies of David" because the mercies are all in Christ Jesus our Lord!

The expression is also a good one because *the mercies that come to us by Christ are real mercies.* It seems a very commonplace question to ask, but it is necessary to ask it—did you ever feel yourself to be a real sinner? It is wonderfully easy to go on crying, "Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners," and yet to know nothing at all about genuine conviction of sin. You know that beggars make sham wounds. I do not know the process, but I have been told that they have certain acids which they can put on their flesh to make you believe they have terrible wounds. But real wounds are very different from sham ones—and when a man is a real sinner and knows it, and his sin cuts into his heart—then he needs real pardoning, real cleansing and a real Savior! So I tell you of "the sure mercies of David"—real forgiveness for real guilt, real pardon for real rebellion—nothing sham or superficial. Yes, you truly guilty ones, you who might be ashamed to be sitting in the House of God, tonight, you who might well cover your faces at being found where godly people come together—you are the sort of people for whom Jesus died! You who need to be disinfected and set apart—you are the sort that our great Lord came into the world to seek and to save! Blessed be His name, He brings us "the sure mercies of David!"

I think the expression is used, again, *because the blessings needed are surely provided.* I have said that you need pardon and cleansing—

"There is a Fountain filled with blood,

Drawn from Emmanuel's veins.
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains."

There is cleansing in that Fountain for you. The blessings which your souls need will not have to be created—they are ready, they are waiting. The medicine for your sickness is already compounded! The clothing for your nakedness is already made! All that you need between here and Heaven is stored up in the provision of God's mercy that is made in Christ Jesus! You will never surprise the Lord by the greatness of your necessities, nor have to hear Him say, "I cannot meet your special case." No, there is a sure provision already made for every soul that will come to God by Jesus Christ!

The blessings of the Covenant of Grace are sure mercies *because they are surely bestowed*. You shall not merely hear of them, but you shall receive them. If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, your sins, which are many, shall be all forgiven. If you will look only to Christ, you shall be saved with an everlasting salvation! Do you hear this, you despairing one? In the name of God I say it to you, if I never have an opportunity of uttering it in your hearing again! Will you come and cast your soul on the great David, Jesus Christ, the Well-Beloved of the Father? If you do, you shall have power to become a child of God and then all the heritage which belongs to the heirs of Heaven shall fall to your lot! It will surely be so! You *will* have those "sure mercies of David."

And once you have them, you shall never lose them *because they shall surely be continued.* If God shall bestow on you eternal life, it shall be eternal life! If God shall once forgive you, He will not afterwards condemn you! If the Judge of all shall justify you, who shall lay anything to your charge? If the Good Shepherd shall bring you into His fold, who shall pluck you from His hand? He says of His sheep, "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." I have not to preach to you a Gospel of, "ifs," and "buts," and "perhapses," but a Gospel of, "shalls" and "wills!" "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Jesus said, "He that believes on Me has everlasting life." God does not speak to sinful men in the way of mere hopefulness, but He speaks with an absolute certainty of Grace! If you believe, you shall be as surely saved as God is God! Though you are the most guilty soul out of Hell, if you will flee to Christ Jesus, you shall as surely be in Heaven as God is in Heaven! Only trust in Jesus. "Trust in the Lord forever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." Riches of mercy, floods of Grace, ceaseless outflowing of love shall be yours if you will but put yourself under Christ's leadership—if you will take Him as your Leader and Commander and as the one Mediator between God and men!

IV. Now, lastly, IN WHAT WAY ARE "THE SURE MERCIES OF DAVID" CONNECTED WITH THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST?

God promised to David that his seed should always sit upon his throne, but if Jesus dies, then is that Covenant broken? *That Jesus' reign may endure forever, He must live.* Though He bows His head in death, yet must He live. He must rise again, otherwise the King is gone, the throne is vacant, the Covenant has failed. Jesus must rise from the

dead, else how can He save His people? Can a dead Christ save us? The Church of Rome continually sets before us Christ either as a Baby in His mother's arms, or else as a Man dead on the Cross. Neither of these is a true portrait of Christ! He is no more a Babe, and He is no more dead! He sits on the Throne of God, reigning and ruling, and He will come, the second time, without sin, unto salvation! The living Christ is our hope! It is witnessed of Him that He lives at the right hand of God and, as I quoted to you just now, it is for this reason that "He is able, also, to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for them."

Finally, *the resurrection of Christ guarantees to all His people,* "*the sure mercies of David.*" Our Lord Jesus Christ has passed through great changes, yet He has always remained the same. He was once God in the full Glory of illimitable splendor, then a Baby upon a woman's lap, then a carpenter's Son working and toiling in a quiet village, then a Teacher and Preacher and miracle-worker, then a Sufferer with His visage more marred than any of the sons of men, then bound, accused, scourged, condemned, crucified, dead and buried! A wonderful change this, is it not—from pure Godhead to the grave? Then He rose again and, rising, He revealed Himself in His Glory to His disciples, meeting with them by the sea, and in different places until, at last, He ascended and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And now He sits, in supernal majesty, at the right hand of the Father, waiting till He shall come to judge the earth with righteousness and the people with His Truth.

I do not know how to finish up my sermon better than by telling you the old story of Robbie Flockhart, which I have told in this house, before, but not to this present congregation. The story shows the blessedness of Christ's death and Resurrection. Robbie Flockhart used to, constantly, preach in the streets of Edinburgh, and he told this story. He said, "I had a friend in the army and he committed some offense in war-time for which he was condemned to be shot. So he said, 'Robbie, I have to die tomorrow, and as I have a little money, I have made my will and left it to you.' 'Thank you,' I said. The next morning, instead of being taken out to be shot, the soldier received a free pardon, so," said Robbie, "He got his life and I lost my legacy, for a testament is not in force while the testator lives. He must die to give effect to his will. And," said Robbie, "our great Testator is dead. We know that He died, they nailed Him to the Cross. Therefore His will stands good—let us go and take the legacy He has bequeathed to us. But," added Robbie, "that story is not enough to set forth Christ's work for us. Some time after, another friend left me a legacy and he *did* die."

There were some lawyers who got hold of the money and Robbie never received a penny of the legacy. He said, "if my friend had been alive, I would have got it—that is to say, if he would have died and then, *afterwards*, have been alive, again, he would have seen that I received the legacy. So, the first time I lost my legacy because the friend who left it to me did *not* die and, the second time, I lost it because the friend who left it to me *did* die, but did not rise again. But," he said, "see the glorious safety of the Believer's legacy from His Lord! He who died and so made

the will to be effective, has risen, again, and He will see that no lawyer, honest or dishonest, shall ever interfere with the legacies that He left to His people! Not even the devil, himself, shall prevent the heirs of everlasting life from obtaining the heritage which Christ has left them in the New Covenant which He has sealed with His blood!"

Beloved, the mercies of David are sure because your David lives! He died to purchase these mercies for you—He lives to claim them on your behalf! He died to cleanse you—He lives to apply that cleansing to you and to see that the work is fully done! Come to God in the name of Him that is living and was dead! I entreat you to come to Him! How happy would I be if all in this congregation came to Christ! You who have come and I suppose that is the majority here, tonight, come again, looking unto Jesus! And you who have never come before, oh, that this Thursday night might be made memorable by your coming to Him who always lives to save the sons of men! Dreams of happiness and thoughts of joy hit across my mind as I stand here and think that perhaps—no, great Lord, I drop the, "perhaps," for it will be so—you will yield yourselves to Jesus, tonight! He will give you "the sure mercies of David," He will enter into Covenant with you and then each one of you will say—

"Now will I tell to sinners round,
What a dear Savior I have found!
I'll point to Your redeeming blood
And say, 'Behold the way to God.'"

As I remember the day when I first saw Christ on the Cross and, trusting in Him, soon began to tell the story to others and, by His Grace, many thousands have come to Jesus by the simple telling of the old, old story, so I feel, tonight, as if some young man here will come and trust in Jesus and will go and say to others, "Look and live." It may be that some mother, here, finding Christ, herself, will be a blessing to her children. And that some father, believing unto life eternal, will bring his sons and daughters to the Savior's feet. And if so, I will be forever happy and the Lord's name shall be praised and magnified forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
Acts 13:13-49.

Verses 13, 14. *Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem. But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath and sat down.* They would be noticed as strangers who had come there. The synagogue did not generally contain a very large assembly, and the Jews of the place would be well known to one another, and they would notice that two or three men had come in whom they had not been accustomed to see in their company.

15-17. *And after the reading of the Law and the Prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, You men and brothers, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on. Then Paul stood up and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and you that fear God, give audience. The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted*

the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an high arm brought He them out of it. They always liked to hear the story of their race, it was sure to win their attention. Notice how expressly Paul puts it, that though they were a favored people, it was by the election of Divine Grace that they were such—"The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers." The Lord chooses whom He will and He chose the fathers of the house of Israel—"and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt." God took care of them when they were aliens and foreigners under a cruel power in the land of Egypt—"and with an high arm brought He them out of it." This was the glory of Israel! The Jews always delighted to hear of Egypt, of the Exodus and of the great things that God did for them in the day of their redemption when, by the sprinkling of the blood of the paschal lamb, they were protected from the sword of the destroying angel.

18. *And about the time of forty years suffered He their manners in the wilderness.* It is a continuous history that Paul gives to these people at Antioch and it brings to their minds the sins of their fathers as well as the Grace of their God. These are two things that you and I always need to keep in mind—God's Grace and our own sin. Truly, I fear that God has had much provocation from us during our 40 years, even as He had with His ancient people. There is much meaning packed away in that sentence, "Forty years suffered He their manners in the wilderness."

19. *And when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He divided their land to them by lot.* The Lord did not run back from His Covenant. He promised them a land flowing with milk and honey and He gave it to them, even though seven nations had to be destroyed to make room for them. This verse reminds us of that passage in Isaiah—"since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable, and I have loved you: therefore will I give men for you, and people for your life." He gave seven nations of Canaan for this one nation of Israel!

20, 21. *And after that He gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the Prophet. And afterward they desired a king.* This was another piece of wantonness on the Israelites' part. God was their King, yet they must have a *visible* king like the other nations by which they were surrounded. They were faithfully warned by the Prophet Samuel of the evil consequences that would follow their choice, but they would not be content with their God as their only Ruler—"afterward they desired a king."

21-23. *And God gave unto them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years. And when He had removed him, He raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also He gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse a man after My own heart, which shall fulfill all My will. Of this man's seed has God according to His promise raised unto Israel a Savior, Jesus.* No matter where the Apostle begins, he comes to Jesus Christ before long! No matter what the preacher's text may be, he must never close a sermon without having set forth the claims of Jesus! This should be the invariable rule of our ministry—that Christ is the top and bottom, the sum and substance of all our preaching. Paul could truly say, "We preach Christ crucified."

24-26. *Whom John had first preached before His coming, the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Whom think you that I am? I am not He. But, behold, there comes One after me, whose shoes of His feet I am not worthy to loose. Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whoever among you fears God, to you is the word of this salvation sent.* This is plain preaching, pointed preaching, bold preaching! Paul did not conceal the Truth of God, though he well knew how objectionable it would be to his hearers, yet he put it before them in the plainest possible terms—"To you is the word of this salvation sent."

27. *For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew Him not, nor yet the voices of the Prophets which are read every Sabbath, they have fulfilled them in condemning Him.* It was strange that they should fulfill the prophecies which they had often read, no doubt, with fear and trembling! They became the guilty agents by which the prophecies were fulfilled. Paul's preaching agrees with what Peter said on the Day of Pentecost—"Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."

28-30. *And though they found no cause of death in Him, yet desired they Pilate that He should be slain. And when they had fulfilled all that was written of Him, they took Him down from the tree, and laid Him in a sepulcher. But God raised Him from the dead.* Now the Apostle has reached the very heart of his judgment! Now he has come to the great cornerstone of the Christian faith! Notice that there are no embellishments here—there is not even an anecdote, or a story by which he may illustrate the Truth he sets forth—but just a plain declaration of the great facts of the life and death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. These are the backbone of the Gospel and the more we dwell upon these facts, the better. Let us preach the doctrines that grow out of these facts, for the facts are stubborn things and if they are backed by the Spirit of God, they will carry all before them.

31-33. *And He was seen many days of them which came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are His witnesses unto the people. And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God has fulfilled the same unto us, their children, in that He has raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second Psalm, You are My Son, this day have I begotten You.* Writing to the Hebrews, Paul quotes this passage from the Psalms to prove Christ's Godhead and everlasting filiation, so that he evidently saw more than one meaning in this portion of Divine teaching, and we do not err when we believe that no Scripture is exhausted by a single explanation. The flowers of God's garden, bloom not only double, but sevenfold—they are continually pouring forth fresh fragrance.

34, 35. *And as concerning that He raised Him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, He said on this wise, I will give You the sure mercies of David. Therefore He says also in another Psalm, You shall not suffer your Holy One to see corruption.* Christ did die but His precious body was not allowed to see corruption.

36-41. *For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: but He whom God raised, again, saw no corruption. Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the Law of Moses. Beware therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the Prophets, Behold, you despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your day, a work which you shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.* This is a noble sermon, but again I remark, how simple it is! Like the sermon of Peter, on the day of Pentecost, it is free from that continual calling out of, "Believe, believe, believe," which is the habit of some preachers who never tell the people what they have to believe! Exhortation is well enough in its place, but you must not have only powder in your gun—there must be some shot, also. The Apostle has solid facts here which he drives home to the heart and conscience of his hearers. He does not forget that the weight and forge of a sermon must lie in the distinct Truth of God which is taught in it.

42. *And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath.* They would like to hear the same message, so they said to Paul, "This sermon was to the Jews. Will you not preach to us Gentiles? We have come in here and heard what you have said, but you did not speak specially to us—will you do so next Sabbath?"

43, 44. *Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the Grace of God. And the next Sabbath came almost the whole city together to hear the Word of God.* There is something attractive about the Gospel. I do not think they sent out a trumpeter—the preaching of the Gospel is all the trumpet that is needed to gather the people together! If we will but preach it in the power and plenitude of the Spirit of God, it will soon attract a congregation, as it did in this instance.

45-49. *But when the Jews saw the multitude, they were filled with envy and spoke against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold and said, 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. For so has the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set you to be a light of the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the Word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. And the Word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.* God send us days like that, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—231, 227, 244.

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

GOD'S HIDDEN ONES
NO. 2367

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JULY 1, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 8, 1888.

"Your hidden ones."
Psalm 83:3.

IT was the desire of Asaph to obtain for his nation help from God. Israel was exposed to great danger—ten confederate nations had conspired, with desperate hate, to assail the chosen people. They were determined to root out the very name of Israel from among the nations! They joined together in a wicked league for this purpose and they came from all quarters—north, south, east and west—in order to utterly devour the little insignificant people whom God had called His own. It was the Psalmist's desire to bring God into this quarrel, to stir Him up to take the part of Israel and he, therefore cried, "Keep not Your silence, O God: hold not Your peace, and be not still, O God. For, lo, Your enemies make a tumult: and they that hate You have lifted up the head. They have taken crafty counsel against Your people, and consulted against Your hidden ones."

Nothing stirs a man more than when his children are assailed. The most quiet and inoffensive individual grows angry if his little one is touched. The blood flies to his cheeks and all his manhood is awakened to defend his child. So the Psalmist pleads with God that this nation was His own and that, therefore, He must protect it. And he describes the people by this singular but instructive title, "Your hidden ones." I am going to enquire what may be meant by this term, "Your hidden ones," in the desire that some of God's hidden ones may be discovered, and that the Lord's blessing may rest upon them. First, I shall ask, *Why are they called God's hidden ones?* Secondly, *What is their special honor?* They are God's hidden ones, they belong to Him and, thirdly, *What then?*

I. First, then, *Why are they called God's hidden ones?*

I think, in the connection in which these words occur, the phrase means that they were hidden by God with a view to safety. The 10 heathen nations conspired against Israel, but they could not really harm the chosen people, for God, Himself had hidden them as a hen hides her chickens under her wings when a hawk hovers overhead, or as one who has found a treasure hides it away from the hands of the thief. As the most precious things are put into cases and kept concealed for safety, so does God hide away His people and preserve them. God puts His saints where the enemy cannot find them, or, if he finds them so as to see where they are, God places them where the enemy cannot *reach* them. Sometimes He puts them in the secret places of His pavilion—yes, in the

secret places of His tabernacle does He hide them. As well might the devil think to destroy an angel as to destroy a child of God! That same power that protects the perfect ones before the Throne of God protects believing ones who are on the way there. "Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations," and such a dwelling place that we have been hidden away in You so that no evil has been able to reach us!

You remember when Athaliah sought to kill all the seed royal that Jehoiada, the High Priest, took Joash, who was then a child, and hid him for six years in the house of the Lord, and there He was safe? Thus does God take each one of His children and make a Joash of him, and preserves him from the assault of the enemy so that he cannot be destroyed. God said to Noah, "Come, you and all your house, into the ark," and he and his household went into the ark and the Lord shut them in. They were hidden in that ark of safety from the floods which rose from beneath and the rain which fell from above—and thus they outlived the Deluge. So, if you believe in Jesus, God will hide you away from all the rage of earth and Hell. He will preserve you, you shall be one of His hidden ones, of whom Christ said, "They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me; is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand." They are God's hidden ones. As the king takes care of his royal diadem and crown jewels, so does God watch over those who have made a covenant with Him by sacrifice. "They shall be Mine, says the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels." What a privilege is yours and mine, dear Hearers, if, indeed, we have so believed in Christ that we are hidden away in Him! "You are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Rightly do we sing—

"How blest are they who still abide
Close sheltered in Your bleeding side!
Who life and strength from there derive,
And by You move, and in You live."

I think this is the first reason why the Israelites were called God's hidden ones, because He had put them out of the reach of their adversaries and concealed them in a place of safety.

But, next, I think there is another meaning which some of us have, at times, realized. They are God's hidden ones *because He gives them quiet and peace*, even in the midst of turmoil and sorrow. The Psalmist seems to say, "Your enemies make a tumult, but Your hidden ones are quiet." Do you not know what this experience means? Have you ever felt it? That trouble you dreaded so much, of which you said, "I am sure it will crush me," *would* have crushed you if you had been left to yourself! But when it came, you were strangely upheld and kept so calm and placid that you did not know yourself! When you saw your husband die and those little children were all around you, and you knew that you were a widow, how was it that *then* you were still so trustful? Or, dear Husband, when you saw your wife, at last, expire, and the light of your home was quenched, how was it that you still said and meant it, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord"? Why, it was because the Lord had made you one of His hidden ones! He said, "Come home,

dear child, come and rest with Me"—and He shut you away from all the trial and enabled you to find peace in Him.

Do you remember that wonderful poem by Miss Havergal, in which she speaks of the peculiar calm which prevails at the very center of a cyclone? The gifted poetess writes—

"They say there is a hollow, safe and still,
A point of coolness and repose
Within the center of a flame where life might dwell
Unharmed and unconsumed, as in a luminous shell
Which the bright walls of fire enclose
In breathless splendor, barrier that no foes
Could pass at will.
There is a point of rest
At the great center of the cyclone's force,
A silence at its secret source.
A little child might slumber undistracted,
Without the ruffle of one fairy curl,
In that strange central calm amid the mighty whirl."

Well now, some of us have, at times, known the experience which is typified in those lines. Troubles of every sort and size come upon us. We are vexed with every form of calamity and yet during all that time we are serenely quiet and perfectly happy. I should think that an eagle, high aloft, when he sees the sportsman coming with his gun, however far the bullet may carry, if he knows himself to be quite out of range, would poise himself upon the wing and look down upon the sportsman with a merry heart! Let him send his bullet up into the air as far as it can rise, but the eagle is high above it all—and God gives His children, at times, such mounting faith that they rise up as upon the wings of eagles—and the bullets of trouble cannot reach halfway to them! There, in the clear blue Heaven of fellowship with God, they look down on the tops of the clouds, and defy all the assaults of man! Happy are they who have thus become God's hidden ones!

There are green meadows and there are still waters, but I believe they are mostly to be found in the places where trials most abound! There, consolations are most plentiful. I hardly think that a man knows the deeps of the serenity of God unless he has been greatly tried. There are wonderful sights that none shall see but those who are hidden away by the Lord in the time of storm and trouble. Oh, the strife of tongues, the endless babbling of slander! What a blessing not to hear it, or to hear it as a deaf man that hears not. Oh, the noise of misrepresentation! Oh, the wave upon wave of actual trouble that may come to you in business or in the domestic circle! What joy it is to be kept out of it all, as I said before, like Noah in the ark—all the world drowned, but you shut up in safety! And remember that the deeper the floods became, the higher Noah rose toward Heaven! And so shall it be with you. The more of trial you have to endure, the more of communion you shall have to enjoy! This is the happy, happy case of a tried child of God.

There are two meanings, then, of this expression—hidden away for safety and hidden away for quiet.

But, next, God's people may be hidden away *because they are not understood.* The true Christian is a marvel to other men. He is a stranger

and a foreigner among them. He is a plant that never would have grown on earthly mold unless God had planted it there. The Christian is a man wondered at! If you are understood, you are in the wrong. If you are a genuine Christian and are right, you will be misunderstood by the world—it has not the faculty of understanding the saints. He who has been made to live unto God lives a life that is quite incomprehensible to ordinary men. No, let me put it very plainly—the spiritual life which God gives to those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ is altogether beyond the discernment of the carnal mind! "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" and cannot rise to an understanding of that which is born of the Spirit, which, alone, is spirit! Your life is a secret between God and yourself.

So, too, the motive of your life will not be understood by other men. They feel sure that there is something at the back of it. If you were to tell them that you lived only for God's Glory, they would laugh at you! God's Glory—what is that to them? They think, no doubt, that you make a good thing out of your religion, and herein they prove themselves to have learned their lesson in the school of the devil, for he said, "Does Job fear God for naught? Have not You made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he has, on every side?" The desire to live so as to please God belongs to every man who walks with God, but it will not be understood by other men. God's people are, in this sense, His hidden ones.

Therefore, the comfort that reigns in a Christian's heart is a thing which he cannot impart to others. If others were to hear the reason of the Believer's happiness, they would say, "Well, that would not make *me* happy! There is nothing in it that would sustain *me*." And there isn't. The food on which angels live is not such as common flesh and blood could feed upon. And the inward comforts of the child of God are such as the world cannot give because it cannot even understand them.

So your hopes and the lamps that light up your life, the world knows nothing about! Perhaps some of your own brothers and sisters do not understand your hopes. And when you talk about death with pleasure, and about the eternal state with delight, they think that you are half insane! It is because they are altogether insane that they think so. But if you are one of God's hidden ones, in all these points you will be a stranger to your own mother's children—you will be one who cannot be understood! Do not expect to be understood—settle this in your mind and it will save you a great deal of heartache and disappointment.

There is a third sense, then, in which God's children may be called hidden ones, because they are not understood.

But there are some of them who are hidden in another sense—*they are very obscure.* Some of God's best children have not anything that can bring them to the light here on earth. Perhaps they may be living among rich people and, as they are very poor, nobody notices them. There is a directory containing the names and addresses of the great people who live in the town, but they have not put poor Mary's name in that book—and as to John, well, the highest degree he ever had was that he was a cobbler—and his name, of course, is not in the book, either. The Lord

has many of those hidden ones who are not known among the great because they are so little in Israel.

Some of God's hidden ones are not known because they are ill. It is now several months that poor Mary has been lying on a bed. It is years since William has gone out of the house, at all, and very few ever come to see these hidden ones. But I bear my witness that some of the best things I have ever learned from mortal lips, I have learned from bedridden saints! There are some who wickedly teach that bodily afflictions are caused by sin. It is a cruel—I was going to say, an infernal supposition—for some of the holiest people I have known have been bedridden for ten, twelve, or 15 years, and if I were to say that I thought they were sinners above others, I should belie my convictions, for in sitting down to talk with some of them I have found them to be saints above others!

I shall never forget going some miles, years ago, to see a woman who had been bedridden for, I think, 20 or 25 years. I went up a ladder to the room where she was. She was rendered comfortable by the kindness of those who came to see her. She sat up in bed as best she could and, oh, I wish that I could preach such sermons as she preached to me when she spoke about the goodness of the Lord to her, and told me how that poor chamber was made to glow in the middle of the night with the delightful Presence of her Lord! She was one of God's hidden ones—and He has many such! Now, just think of that a minute, and pray God to bless His dear hidden sick ones at this moment, and ask Him to cheer and comfort their hearts.

Perhaps there are some hidden ones who come into our places of worship and have no one to speak to them. I do not think that many such persons come to the Tabernacle—I hope there never will be. There is a Brother who was a member, here, and who will be a member, again. He has gone to live in the suburbs and he attends a very respectable place of worship. They are very good people but, you know, our friends in the suburbs are so much more respectable than we are and they know it, too! And there, in the outer ring of London, it is perfectly amazing what great people they are—you would not believe it. When they come into the City to business, they are nothing very particular, but as soon as they get out to the suburbs, they are wonderful people! This Brother says, "I have been in and out of the chapel for months and nobody ever speaks to me." The fact is, I expect, that he keeps a grocer's shop and some of these people deal with him, so they do not know him on Sunday, of course, because he is only a grocer!

I hope that you will never get such abominable notions into *your* heads! This wretched caste that divides us up into little sets, reminds me of the Hindus. Keep it up in the world if you are foolish enough to do so, but do not bring the evil into the Church of Christ! Here, at any rate, we are Brothers and Sisters. Let us feel that we are one in Christ and put away from us all that stiffness which would make us keep our petty nobodies to ourselves! If there is a man who is a really great man, I always notice that he is the most condescending and gentle man that there is. But it is your *nobody* who always makes himself appear *somebody*! Now, dear Friend, if you have come in and out of this place and you have not

been noticed by anybody, I pray you to begin to notice somebody, yourself! And if you have come in and out of any place of worship and nobody has spoken to you, remember that the Lord has His hidden ones and you may be one of them. It may be that quite from inadvertence, not from unkindness, you have not been spoken to, so begin to break the ice, yourself, by speaking to someone else and may God bless you so that you may, in that sense, be no more a hidden one!

Now I ask you to think, for a minute, of another way in which some of God's people are hidden ones. I mean this—do you suppose that God has *none* of His people *in churches and communities that are steeled in error?* If *you* think so, I do not! It is always a comfort to my heart to believe that in the great Romish Church there are hundreds of thousands who have found the Savior and are resting in His atoning Sacrifice—they are God's hidden ones. I have, here and there, stumbled upon some of these, myself. And when we have come to speak about the Cross and the wounds of Christ and His precious blood—all that rubbish about the Virgin and the saints has been forgotten—and I have found myself much nearer akin to those hidden ones than I had thought I might have been!

And there are many books that have been written by persons who are members of that church which, nevertheless, are full of such a savor of Grace and holy fellowship with God that we cannot but believe that the authors of them are God's hidden ones. Yes, and it is a very curious thing that you will find that just the very persons you would have least thought would possess the Light of God have, nevertheless, received it. Have I not been, sometimes, in a place where I thought the Gospel of Christ had never come and yet I have found clear proofs that it was there? Not long ago it was so with me. As I passed a certain spot, I noticed a kind of glitter in the eye of a person who looked at me. It was a servant in a place where I could not have thought I should find a friend. And when I came back that way, his greeting to me, was, "God bless you, Sir! You don't know me, but I take in the sermons every week and I have found the Savior." Where least I expected it, I stumbled on a friend and a disciple who was fed on the Word of God that I have preached! Does it not do your heart good, sometimes, after you have thought, "Well, I shall never find anybody *here* with whom I can sympathize," to meet with just one of the very persons with whom you have had the best of fellowship for many a day and many a year to come?

God has His hidden ones, also, *in the midst of ungodly families*. Do not you, who have to visit those who are joining the Church, sometimes find yourselves in houses where everything betokens drunkenness and all that is bad—and yet there is a dear child who has been converted, or perhaps it is the wife whom God, in Sovereign Grace, has looked upon and saved? There are many such hidden ones in London. There are some of them who cannot get out to worship—they are not permitted to come—and yet they are God's own dear ones, hidden away in ungodly homes. Breathe a prayer for them, now! Say, "Lord, help Your hidden ones in such cases as these!" God has a people—I was going to say, up to the very gates of Hell—He has an elect people, chosen by His Grace, who

know Him, trust Him and love Him although they are not known to the rest of their Brothers and Sisters in Christ!

Once more, however, all God's people are His hidden ones because *all the saints are, at present, unrevealed.* "It does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when He shall appear," that is, the hidden and veiled Christ, when He shall be manifested, "we shall be like He," we shall be manifested, too! There is a great future for you, my Brother! There is a grand future for you, my Sister. Hardly can you hold your own, today, against the contentions of the adversary, but be firm, be true, cry to God for help and you shall not always be hidden as you now are, in the midst of the dust, strife and conflict—you shall come out as when the sun shines in his strength! Therefore, be of good cheer, you who are hidden ones, today—you shall, in due time, shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of your Father.

II. I must not say more upon the first point, but must turn to the second question. WHAT IS THEIR SPECIAL HONOR? They are God's hidden ones. Their peculiar honor is that they are the Lord's.

Will each one of you do himself the favor to put to himself the question, "Am I the Lord's?" Never mind about the friend sitting next to you, but let each of you say, "Am I the Lord's?" If so, the Lord knows you, for, "the Lord knows them that are His." *He knows whom He chose and redeemed.* He knows whom He has called. He knows whom He has justified. He has not done any of those things in the dark. He has a familiar acquaintance with all that His Grace has done for you.

Remember, also, that though you are hidden, *you are not hidden from the Lord.* You are hidden *by* Him, but you are not hidden *from* Him. He can read your thoughts. He sees that hot tear that is beginning to lift the eyelid. He knows the troubles that are yet to come as well as those that have come—He reads you as I read the pages of this Bible.

Then, again, *some of God's hidden ones are among the very choicest of His children.* I think there are some who are so very dear to God that He keeps them to Himself. I have known some saints whom God has loved so much that He has taken away from them all that they loved, that *He* might have all their hearts. He loved their love so much that He would have it all Himself. "Oh!" you say, "perhaps that is the reason why I have been so tried and why I have so many graves in the cemetery." Well, it may be—and that you are one of the Lord's hidden ones whom He has hidden away in His own bosom from every other love—that you may be altogether His own.

Remember, too, that *hidden as you are, He has engaged to keep you.* His very hiding of you shows that He means to keep you in safety. You shall never perish for, "He keeps the feet of His saints." You shall not be overcome by the enemy, for you are the Lord's. If you belonged to somebody else, you might be deserted. But as you are the Lord's, you never shall be forsaken. Human masters sometimes leave their old servants to perish, but God never deserts His old servants! Even to hoar hairs and to the end of life He will be with you, and He will bear you until He brings you Home to Glory, above, to be with Him forever and ever!

III. I have spoken very briefly on the second point, but our time is nearly gone, so I must close with this third question. If the Lord has the hidden ones of whom we have spoken, WHAT THEN?

Well, the first thought that comes to my mind is this—*let us rejoice that the Lord has more people than we know.* He has His hidden ones. I know the tendency to say, as Elijah did, "I, even I, only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away." It is not so—the Lord still has many thousands of knees that have not bowed to Baal. One of the wonders of Heaven will be to find so many people, there, that we never thought would get there. We shall say to ourselves, "We did not think that those people knew the Lord, yet they did!" The Grace of God can live where you and I could not. I know some people that I would not like to live with on earth, for they are very strange, yet I hope that they are God's people. Well, we shall live with them very well in Heaven—they will be changed before they get there. They will have had their hearts washed, their whole natures renewed and they will be right enough, then! The Lord has some very strange people among His chosen ones. If you had to deal with some of God's people that I know, you would give me credit for a little patience, at any rate, in dealing with them! You have need of patience with your own children and God's children are, in some respects, very much like our children. If you draw a parallel between them, you will find childish faults and infirmities in the children of God which have to be borne with, even as we have to bear with the faults and infirmities of our own children at home.

My next remark is—*let us be on the look out for these hidden ones wherever we are.* If you and I have to go and live where we do not wish to go—away from our dear acquaintances, here—let us believe, when we get to that distant place, wherever it is, that God has some hidden ones there. You are going to Canada, are you? Or you are about to start for Australia? Or, in the Providence of God, you are to live in some village far away from the means of Grace. You say to yourself, "Whatever shall I do?" Do? Why, find the Lord's hidden ones and you shall have company! Though you may say, "Surely, there is no child of God there," you shall find that there is someone living there whom you are sent to help—while he is placed there that he may help you! Wherever you go, do not say to yourself, "This place is wholly abandoned," but believe that there is a child of God living there.

I remember reading of a godly man who went into a village, some fifty years ago, and asked, "Is there a Christian person living in this place?" He enquired if there was anyone in the village who made a profession of religion. They shook their heads and said that they did not know of anybody. "Is there anyone here who fears God?" Then they laughed. However, after making a good many enquiries, one man said that there was a hypocritical canting Methodist woman who lived down a certain lane. He said, "That is the person I want to meet, depend upon it." He knew at once what they meant—there was one who was *different* from the rest and, therefore, she had undeservedly earned those titles! He went and found that she was a Christian woman walking in meekness and sorrow because she had no one at all to speak to.

When our missionary, Mr. Thomas, went to Calcutta at the end of the last century, it is said that he advertised for a Christian and could not find one. Advertise for a Christian? Well, thank God, we shall not have to do *that*! Even if you live in a place where there are very few Christians, still believe that there are some and look out for God's hidden ones!

In the next place, since God has hidden ones, *let us take care never to act or speak so as to grieve them*. Sometimes, when Christian men get conceited and proud—and think themselves very great—they speak in a hard, domineering way that grieves God's people. "No," you say, "*I* would not use such language if I knew that one of them was about." Well then, do not use it at all—because you do not know when they may not be about, for God has His hidden ones in places where it is least suspected! Speak as you would wish the very least of God's people to hear you and do not use vain and haughty language. If you get to be like the Prophet's bullocks that pushed with horn and shoulder and drove away the weak ones, God may deal roughly with you and make you to be as hateful in His sight as they were! Let the remembrance that God has His hidden ones be a check upon your tongue and upon your whole conduct.

And, lastly, although God has His hidden ones, *let not one of us hide himself more than is necessary.* I speak to some of you who love the Lord, but who have never come out on His side. God has His hidden ones, but they ought to come forward and confess Christ. Remember that the Gospel message is, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." "If you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." To the secret faith of the heart there ought to be joined the public profession of the lips! Why should you be ashamed of Jesus? Why should you be afraid to acknowledge that you belong to Him? Some whom I know, who love their Lord but have never confessed Him, are like the mice behind the wainscot. They come out of a night, when the cat is not there, to get some of the crumbs—and then they run back and hide in their holes. I shall not set a trap for you, but, at the same time I would like to stop up all the holes where you hide, so that you who are Christians would be obliged to come out and admit it! I leave the matter to your conscience, but I pray the Lord, Himself, to fetch you out if you are His hidden ones, for His dear name's sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
Psalm 83.

This is a Psalm that is not often read and very seldom expounded, I should think. According to the title, it is, "A Song or Psalm of Asaph." Asaph is one of a little group of poets who flourished side by side with David. This is a patriotic hymn. The nation was about to be attacked by many adversaries, so, like a true patriot, the poet desired that God would give the victory to His people, and deliver them. You may regard this Psalm as a prophecy—it reads like a prayer or wish of the writer and, no

doubt it is, but it may also be read as a prophecy of what will happen to the enemies of God's people.

Verses 1, 2. *Keep not Your silence, O God: hold not Your peace, and be not still, O God. For, lo, Your enemies make a tumult: and they that hate You have lifted up the head.* God's enemies are making a noise and the Psalmist's prayer is that the Lord, Himself, will speak and answer them. God's voice made the heavens and the earth—"He spoke and it was done; He commanded and it stood fast." A single word from Him will win the day! The poet's prayer is not, "Grant a leader bold and brave," but, "Lord, speak, speak!" "For, lo, Your enemies make a tumult." The enemies of Israel were the enemies of God. If they were *our* enemies, only, we might keep silent, but as they are also the enemies of God, our loyalty to the Lord compels us to cry unto Him to speak against them!

3. *They have taken crafty counsel against Your people, and consulted against Your hidden ones.* Craft goes with power in plotting against God's people. The seed of the serpent are like he from whom they came, and of him it is said, "Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made." And the seed of the serpent are full of crafty counsel and subtlety. This, the Psalmist mentions in his prayer, and then he looks to God to frustrate their minds, to baffle their craft and, by His wisdom, to save His people.

4. *They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance.* So terrible was the anger of these nations against God's people that nothing would content them but the destruction of Israel—the blotting out of its very name from the memory of men! And I am sure that if the world could have its way, it would extinguish the Church of Christ. You notice, in these days of boasted liberality and pretended charity, that the charity is only for error—for the old Gospel there is no charity! The cry concerning it is, "Let it be cut to pieces! Let it be destroyed! It is an old nuisance, put it out of the way." This is how the enemies of God would have it, "that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance."

5**.** *For they have consulted together with one consent: they are confederate against You.* There were many nations of heathens and they were agreed in nothing except in their hatred of Israel. There they were agreed, as Herod was the friend of Pilate while Christ was under examination, but not at any other time. The Psalmist mentions ten different nations which had banded themselves together against God's chosen people Israel. Ten against one is heavy odds, but then God was on the side of Israel! One man with God is in the majority, however many there may be on the other side, for God counts for more than all who can be against Him!

6. *The tabernacles of Edom.* These descendants of Esau, Jacob's twin brother, ought to have been the best friends of Israel, but they were the worst of their enemies. How often does it happen that kinship in blood makes no kinship in Grace! "A man's foes shall be they of his own household."

6. *And the Ishmaelites.* These, again, were near akin to the seed of Abraham and Isaac, but the Ishmaelites were always among the most bitter enemies of Israel.

6. *Of Moab.* Moab was descended from a daughter of Lot.

7. *And the Hagarenes.* Perhaps descended from Hagar by some other husband.

7. *Gehal, and Ammon, and Amalek.* All these were hereditary enemies of Israel—Amalek especially so, for God had determined that there should be war with Amalek throughout all generations.

7. *The Philistines*—These were the old enemies of Israel. Remember how Samson fought with them and what tugs of war David had with them?

7. *With the inhabitants of Tyre.* What were they doing in warring against God's people? They were merchants, shippers. Yes, but it sometimes happens that when worldly craft is in danger, men of trade and commerce can be as bitter against true religion as anybody else!

8. *Assur also is joined with them: they have helped the children of Lot. Selah.* Here is a mention of the growing power of Assyria. What a host there was! What a band of enemies against God's people! Oh, dear Friends, I trust that none of us will have our names written in this black list! Be not enemies of God and of His Truth, for, if so, you will wage a losing battle! Let the gunnysack fight with the flame, or the dust with the wind—they will speedily be overcome—and woe be unto the man who contends with his Maker! What can he do? Let us, Brothers and Sisters, be on God's side. God grant, by His Grace, that we may never lift a hand against His cause! Now comes the prayer or prophecy of the poet.

9, 10. *Do unto them as unto the Midianites; as to Sisera, as to Jabin, at the brook of Kishon: which perished at Endor: they became as dung for the earth.* In those great battles, the enemies of the Lord and His people were utterly cut in pieces. Mighty men as they were, they left their corpses to manure the soil.

11. *Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb: yes, all their princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunna.* These were four princes who were slain by Gideon and his allies—two of them bore the names of wolf and raven—cruel names, but war is always a cruel thing. But what had they done, these men of arms, these mighty warriors? The Psalmist tells us—

12. *Who said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession.* They were not content with their own houses—they wanted God's houses. And there are some men who can never rest unless when they are doing mischief to the cause and Cross of Christ! Woe unto them, for the fate of Oreb and Zeeb shall be theirs in due time!

13. *O my God, make them like a wheel; as the stubble before the wind.* Or rather, "You shall make them a wheel," never still. The real translation, I think, would be, "Make them like those light dry flowers which are blown by the wind across the plains." Mr. Thomson, in his *Land and the Book*, speaks of the branches of the wild artichoke which form a sphere or globe a foot or more in diameter, and he says that he has seen thousands of them come wheeling along. Isaiah calls them, "a rolling thing before the whirlwind." A puff of wind would come and take them in one

direction and then a contrary wind would drive them in quite another direction! They are so light, downy, gossamer-like, that they never can rest.

Now this is just what happens to many men who set themselves against God and His Grace. They are like rolling things never at rest—*believing* nothing, *knowing* nothing, *hoping* nothing, *comforted* by nothing—they are like a wheel. Oh, that we may never know, by personal experience, what this means! "Make them like a wheel, as the stubble before the wind"! You know how that is—the stubble is blown up, down, to the right, to the left, whichever way the wind blows. Are any of you like that, tonight? Have you no stability? Have you no good hope for the future? When you think about death and eternity, are you like the stubble before the wind? If so, God have mercy upon you, and bring you to the only place where you can obtain salvation and stability!

14. *As the fire burns a forest and as the flame sets the mountains on fire.* Travelers tell us that they have, sometimes, seen the sides of mountains all ablaze where the timber, growing old, and everything being dry in the heat of summer, a chance spark has set the whole on fire. This is what God will do with His enemies. He will as certainly and as readily destroy them as the forest is burnt with fire, or the mountain's side is consumed by the raging flames! Who will stand against God? Who will dare attempt it? Consider His great might and flee from His wrath!

15. *So persecute them with Your tempest.* Or, "You will so follow them up with Your tempest."

15, 16. *And make them afraid with Your storms. Fill their faces with shame, that they may seek Your name, O LORD.* That is the prayer which we might pray, tonight, for all those who are denying the Godhead of Christ and His great Sacrifice of the Cross—and for all who reject the Inspiration of Scripture and the blessed Doctrines of Grace. "O Lord, fill their faces with shame, that they may seek Your name!" Oh, that men did but know their own character! If they did but feel ashamed of their own sin, they might be led to seek the name of God.

17. *Let them be confused and troubled forever.* Or rather, "They shall be confused and troubled forever." That is an awful passage, "Confused and troubled forever."

17, 18. *Yes, let them be put to shame and perish: that men may know that You, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, are the Most High over all the earth.* You notice that when I read the Scriptures, wherever I find the word, LORD, in capital letters, I read it as *Jehovah*, for so it should be. I wish that the translators of the Revised Version had had the courage of their convictions and had so translated it, for we need that grand name back—Jah, Jehovah. Let me entreat You never to trifle, as some do, with that sacred word, Hallelujah, or, Hallelu-Jah—praise to Jehovah!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—881, 53, 728.

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

THE LIVING CARE OF THE DYING CHRIST
NO. 2368

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JULY 8, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, APRIL 15, 1888.

"Jesus answered, I have told you that I am He: if, therefore, you seek Me, let these go their way: that the saying might be fulfilled which He spoke, Of those which You gave Me have I lost none."
John 18:8, 9.

THE two remarkable miracles which our Lord worked in the Garden of Gethsemane ought not to be lightly passed over. The first was the falling to the ground of the soldiers and the servants of the priests. Jesus did but speak to them and there was such power and majesty about His Presence and His voice that, "they went backward, and fell to the ground." They were quite unable to seize Him. Here was a display, in some measure, of Christ's Divine Power. These men would have fallen into the grave and into Hell, itself, if Jesus had put forth the full force of His strength! He only spoke a word and down they fell—they had no power whatever against Him. Beloved, take comfort from this miracle! When the enemies and foes of Christ come against Him, He can easily overthrow them. Many times have there been crises in the Church's history when it seemed as if the Truth of God would be destroyed. Then has come the opportunity for Divine interposition. A word from Christ has vanquished His enemies! They that were waiting, like lions, ready to leap upon their prey, have been disappointed. Jesus has but spoken and they have fallen backward to the ground. Therefore, take heart and be not dismayed even in the darkest hour. Let Christ only utter a word and the victory is certain to be with Him!

The other miracle was this, that seeing the company that came together to take Him, He should be able, at pleasure, to screen His disciples so that not one of them was injured. The ear of the High Priest's servant was cut off—it was the opposite party that received the wound—but no ear of Peter or finger of John was struck. The Apostles escaped altogether unharmed. The were not able to protect themselves, being a very small number compared with the posse that had come forth from the High Priest, yet their Master preserved them! From this we learn that the Lord Jesus Christ is able to take care of His own. When they seem to be like so many lambs in the midst of wolves, He can keep them so that no wolf can devour them. He has done it and He will continue to do so! "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the

Kingdom." He will preserve you by His own miraculous power and you need not be dismayed at any force that is arrayed against you.

Think, then, of those two miracles. You may need to remember them—there may come a time when it shall be a great joy for you to think of Christ, all ruddy from the bloody sweat, yet driving back His adversaries with only a *word*, and rescuing the little handful of His disciples from anything like harm.

But in my text I notice something which seems to me very remarkable—"If, therefore," said Jesus, "you seek Me, let these go their way: that the saying might be fulfilled." After such an expression, you naturally expect some Old Testament text—something said by David in the Psalms or by one of the Prophets—but it is not so! It is, "that the saying might be fulfilled, which *He* spoke, "*Of them which You gave Me have I lost none*." It is but an hour or two since Jesus uttered this sentence, but it is already among the Inspired Scriptures and it begins to take effect and to be fulfilled at once! It is not the *age* of God's Word, but the *Truth* of it that constitutes its power! What Christ had said that very night in prayer was as true and as much the Word of the King as that which God had spoken by His Spirit through holy men ages before!

Beloved, learn this lesson—the Word of Christ is to be depended upon! You may hang your whole destiny upon it! What Christ has said is full of the Truth of God. He is, Yes and Amen, and so are all His Words—they stand fast forever and ever, like His own eternal Godhead. Therefore, since this Word of Christ, which had only just been spoken, must be fulfilled, believe that every Word of His will be carried out to the utmost! Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one Word which was spoken by our Savior shall ever fail—it shall not fail even the least of us in our worst hour of peril! I read this Truth of God in the text with very great delight. We might have expected to find an Old Testament Scripture quoted here, but the New Testament Scripture is put upon the same level as the Old and, coming from the lips of Christ, we are pleased to see it so soon fulfilled.

The soldiers and officers from the chief priests had come forth that night especially to arrest Christ. Peter, James, John, Bartholomew, Thomas and the rest of the Apostles are all there, but Judas has come to betray, not the servants, but their Master. And they who are with the traitor have come to take not the disciples, but their Lord. To me, there is something encouraging about this fact, although it is a dismal one. The fight of the great adversary is not so much against *us* as against our Master. Satan's emissaries are very furious, sometimes, with the faithful defenders of the Truth, but their fury is not so much against *them* as against the Truth and against the Christ who is the center of that Truth. In olden times, they hated Luther, Calvin and Zwingli, and the rest of the Reformers, but the main point of attack was the Doctrine of Justification by Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And at this day the great fight is around the Cross. Did Jesus die as His people's Substitute? That is the question and there are some, I grieve

to say it, to whom that text is applicable, "He that despised Moses' Law died without mercy, under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose you, shall he be thought worthy, who has trodden under foot the Son of God, and has counted the blood of the Covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and has done despite unto the Spirit of Grace?" This is the chief aim of the enemy's assaults—to get rid of Christ, to get rid of the Atonement, to get rid of His suffering in the place of men! They say they can embrace the rest of the Gospel, but what, "rest," is there? What is there left? A bloodless, Christless Gospel is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill—it neither honors God nor converts the sons of men!

This is our consolation, that the attack is, after all, against the Master, Himself. Our Lord Jesus Christ is still the great target for the archer's arrows. Though His enemies do not always let His disciples go their way, yet they do seek Him—it is against Him that they rave most of all. As it is the quarrel of God's Covenant, He will fight it out to the end! And so far as *your* part in the battle is concerned, as it is for His Truth, His eternal power and Godhead and His great Sacrifice, you may safely go through with it, for he who fights for this cause shall surely have God with him.

Now let us come to our text and try to learn some lessons from it. I notice here, first, *Christ's dying care for His disciples*. Then, next, I see that *His care extends to their bodies.* And, thirdly, I observe that *His care offers Himself instead of them*. He thrusts Himself upon the edge of the adversaries' sword and says, "If, therefore, you seek Me, let these go their way."

I. First, then, I call upon you to notice in our text CHRIST'S DYING CARE FOR HIS DISCIPLES. Let me correct what I have said and put it, THE LIVING CARE OF THE DYING CHRIST, for you see He is occupied, first of all, with His disciples' safety. The soldiers have come to seize Him, but He does not seek to escape. They bind Him, but He does not burst His bonds. They will take Him to prison and to death, but He has not a word to say in His own defense. He utters no curse against His persecutors. His one thought is for His disciples! His ruling passion is strong in death—His love still masters Him.

This was the more wonderful because He was *in the first brunt of the danger.* He had been betrayed by Judas and the High Priest's servants were gathering about Him to capture Him, yet He was calm and quiet, and His one thought was concerning the 11 who were with Him. Usually, we become quieter when we get used to a trouble—it is in the first fluster of it that we are disconcerted and thrown off balance. I suppose it is so with you. I know it is so with me. We learn, after a little while, to look calmly around us. We gird up the loins of our mind and we begin to think as we *should* think—but at first we are like birds driven out to sea by a rough wind—that have not learned, yet, to manage their wings in the gale. It was not so with our Savior. In that first moment of attack He still thought of His disciples. Oh, the splendor of that love which could not be disturbed! Many waters could not quench it even at their first

breaking out, nor could the floods drown it when they were swollen to their highest! Beloved, Jesus never forgets you who are His own. Never does anything happen in this world or in Heaven that leads Him to forget you. He has engraved your names upon the palms of His hands—they are written upon His heart! So be it, the first brunt of *your* battle or of His own, He still thinks of you and cares for you.

But it is more remarkable, still, that Jesus thought of His disciples *in the faintness of His agony.* All crimson from the bloody sweat, He rose from under the olive trees, came forward and stood there in the torch-light before His persecutors. But the light that fell upon His brow revealed no care for anything but the safety of His followers. His whole soul had gone out to them. That crimson sweat meant a heart flowing out at every pore with love for those whom His Father had given Him, and whom He had so long preserved. I doubt not that He was faint with the dreadful agony. He must have been brought to the very lowest point of endurance by it, yet He still thought of His disciples! Beloved, when you and I are sick and faint, other people do not expect us to think of *them.* We grow a little selfish when we are weak and ill—we want someone to moisten our lips, we expect our friends to watch over us and wipe the sweat from our brow. It was not so with our Master! He came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister! And He does so by saying to the rabble throng, "If, therefore, you seek Me, let these go their way."

And mark, dear Friends, that our Lord Jesus was not only in the brunt of danger, and in the faintness of His agony, but He was *in full prospect of a cruel death.* He knew all that was to be done to Him. When you and I have to suffer, we do not know what is before us—it is a happy circumstance that we do not. But Jesus knew that they would buffet Him, that they would blindfold Him, that they would spit in His face, that they would scourge Him. He knew that the crown of thorns would tear His temples. He knew that He would be led forth like a malefactor, bearing the gallows on His shoulder. He knew that they would nail His feet and hands to the cruel Cross. He knew that He would cry, "I thirst." He knew that His Father must forsake Him on account of the sin of man that would be laid upon Him. He knew all that! These huge Atlantic billows of grief already cast their spray in His face. His lips were salt with the brine of His coming grief, but He did not think of that—His one thought was for His Beloved, those whom His Father had given Him. Till He dies, He will keep His eye on His sheep and He will grasp His Shepherd's crook with which to drive the foe from them. Oh, the all-absorbing, self-consuming love of Christ! Verily, it was like coals of juniper which have a most vehement flame! Do you know that love, Beloved? If so, let your hearts reciprocate it—loving Him in return with all the strength of your life and all the wealth of your being! Even *then* you can never love Him as He has loved you.

I must add that it was all the more remarkable that Jesus should continue to think of His disciples at such a time when *He knew what they were.* They had been asleep, even while He was in the bloody sweat! Even

the three whom He had chosen as His bodyguard and stationed within a stone's throw of His terrible agony, had slept! Jesus also knew that the 11 would all forsake Him and flee, and that one of them would even deny Him. Yet He thought of them. O Lord, how can You think of such sinful creatures as we are? I feel glad that these Apostles were not perfect. We must not rejoice in anything that is evil, but still, it is some comfort to me that though they were such poor creatures as they were, Jesus cared for them, for now I can believe that He loves me!

Though I sleep when I ought to wake and watch with Him, yet He loves me. Although, under the brunt of a strong temptation, I may flee—He still loves me! Yes, and even if I should deny Him, yet I can understand that, as He loved Peter, He may still love me. O faulty saints, you who love Him and yet often fail Him! You who trust Him and yet are oftentimes dismayed! Gather strength, I pray you, from this wonderful love of Jesus! Is not the love of Christ a mass of miracles, all wonders packed together? It is not a subject for surprise that He should love, but that He should love s*uch worms as we are*—that He should love us when we were dead in trespasses and sins, that He should love us into life, should love us despite our faults, should love us to perfection—and should love us till He brings us to share His Glory! Rejoice, then, in this wondrous care of Christ—the dying Christ with a living care for His disciples!

II. But now, secondly, HIS CARE EXTENDS TO THEIR BODIES.

I will not be long upon this point, but I want you to note some of the sweetness there is in it. When I was reading to you, just now, you must have noticed that our Lord said, "Those that You gave Me, I have kept, and none of them is lost." Surely He meant that He kept them from wandering into sin, did He not? Did He not mean that He kept them unto eternal salvation? Undoubtedly He did, but the greater includes the less. He who keeps a man, keeps the *whole* man— spirit, soul and body. So our Lord Jesus, here, interprets His own prayer, which dealt with the souls of His people. He mainly interprets it as to their *bodies*, for He bade those who came to seize Him to let His disciples go, saying, "If, therefore, you seek Me, let these go their way."

You say to me, "That is a small interpretation of a great utterance." I know it is and that is the comfort of it, that if there are small meanings to the promises, you may quote them and pray for them, as well as believe in and pray for the greater and immeasurable meaning of the promises! I like to believe that He who loves me as an immortal spirit, loves me as a mortal man. He who loves me as I shall be before His Throne in Glory, loved me as I was when I hung upon my mother's breast—and loves me as I now am—with many a weakness and infirmity clinging to me! He who takes care of the soul, takes care of the body, too.

Notice that *this care of our Lord was effectual.* Is it not amazing that none of those soldiers and servants of the High Priest touched one of the eleven? Is it not remarkable that Malchus, having lost his right ear, did not feel it his duty to thrust at Peter? But the Savior interposes and just *touches* the wounded ear, and it is healed! And Peter is allowed to go.

That act of Peter was enough to bring on a battle royal all round and we know that the whole eleven had only two swords between them. They could have made only a very feeble stand against a band of armed men, yet not *one* of them was injured. How well does Jesus protect His own!

What is more remarkable, the Apostles were not harmed at the time of Christ's death. It would not at all have surprised me if the mob that cried, "Crucify Him, crucify Him," had also said, "Here are some of His disciples, let us also put them to death! Let us increase the agonies of the dying Nazarene by the slaughter of His disciples before His eyes." Yet not a dog moved his tongue against them! And when it was reported that Christ had risen from the dead, why did not His enemies pounce upon Mary Magdalene and the rest of the women? Forty days was Jesus on the earth and I do not find that in all that time there was any hindrance to the coming or going *anywhere* of any of His disciples! After the Holy Spirit had been poured out, there came a time of persecution, but until then it was not in the Savior's mind that the Jews should touch one of His disciples—and they *could not*. The devil cannot go any farther than his chain permits—and the worst enemies of Christ can do no more than Christ allows. What an effectual care was this of the Master which held the broad shield of His Divine protection not only over the eleven, but also over all the rest of the faithful! He was at His lowest when they took Him, bound Him and led Him away, but even then, with His Sovereign Word, He protected His people from all harm—as to their bodies as well as their souls.

Notice, also, that *it was necessary that they should have special protection.* Jesus meant them all to remain alive to see Him after His death, that they might be witnesses of His Resurrection. They were a little handful of seed corn and He would not have one grain wasted, because it was by that precious wheat that His Church was to be fed and the world was to be sown with spiritual life!

Besides, they were not ready, yet, to bear persecution. Afterwards they bore it manfully, joyfully—but just now they were poor feeble children until the Spirit of God was poured out. Brothers and Sisters, the Lord Jesus Christ can shelter us from sickness and from every kind of bodily affliction until we are fit to bear it. And He can also preserve us from death till our work is done. It is a good saying, though it is not a Scriptural one, "We are immortal till our work is done." If God has given you anything to do, get to the doing of it! The time is short, but dream not that you shall be cut off too soon! You have a work for your time and you shall have time for your work. Believe it and you may go between the jaws of behemoth without a fear, while God has work for you to accomplish for Him! Therefore, be not afraid, for Jesus says, "Let these go their way."

Once more, *the care which the Lord took of His people was much better than their own care.* See, Peter is going to take care of his Master, but he makes a poor mess of it. But when his Master took care of him, that was a very different affair. Peter is going to fight for his Brothers—out comes

the sword—off goes the ear of Malchus! And Peter probably regretted that he had not cut off his head. But what good did Peter do? He only increased the danger they were in and made the men feel the more furious against them. But Christ's Word was ample—here was sufficient defense for all the Apostles, "Let these go their way," and go their way they did! Brothers and Sisters, we would do a deal better in many things if we did not do anything at all! There is many a man who is drowning and makes his drowning sure by his struggling. I am told that if he could but lie still on his back, he would float! And I believe that in many a trouble we make the trouble 10 times worse by our kicking and plunging.

"O rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him." Especially do so if it is a matter of scandal. If anybody speaks evil of you, do not answer him. I have had a great deal of experience of this kind—perhaps as much as anybody—and I have always found that if I get a spot of mud anywhere on my coat, and I proceeded to brush it off, it is much worse than before. Leave it alone till it is dry—then it will come off easily. Perhaps even then you had better leave somebody else to do your clothes-brushing and your boot-cleaning—you cannot do it nearly so well, yourself, as somebody else can do it for you. I say again, we should do better, often, if we did nothing. These 11 Apostles did best when Peter had put up that ugly old sword of his and left off fighting and, at His Master's Word, went away safe and sound from the armed men who had arrested His Lord.

Beloved, you are all right if you are in Jesus Christ's hands—right for your body, right for your estate, right for your character, right for little things as well as for great—if you just leave all in those dear hands that never fail, because they act for the dear heart that never ceases to beat with infinite affection towards all those whom the Father has given to Him.

III. I have continued longer than I intended, so I am coming, now, to the third and last point, which is this—CHRIST'S CARE LED HIM TO OFFER HIMSELF INSTEAD OF HIS PEOPLE.

Jesus said, "If, therefore, you seek Me, let these go their way." This was as much as to say, "You cannot hurt both Myself and My people." This is a great Truth of God, though I put it very simply to you. When the judgments of God are abroad, it is not possible that they should fall on both Christ and His people. Was Jesus Christ the Substitute for His people? Grant that, then, if the punishment of sin fell on Christ, it cannot fall on those for whom Christ died! It is not according to natural justice, much less Divine Justice, that the Substitute should suffer first, and then the person for whom He stood as Substitute should also suffer. That cannot be! Why have a Substitute at all unless that Substitute, by His suffering, clears those for whom He was substituted?

I will give you a very simple illustration. You will find it in the Book of Deuteronomy. There is the old Divine ordinance that when a man found a bird's nest and there were young birds in the nest, if he took the young, he must let the mother bird go free, he must not take both—that was contrary to the Divine Law. So, Christ may die, or His people may die—

but not *both* of them. Justice will not have it that they shall both suffer. And the Lord Jesus Christ gives a tongue to that great Law when He says, "If you seek Me, here I am, but let these go their way, for you cannot take us both." That were contrary to the sacred Law and to the Divine equity which lies at the bottom of everything that is true. Did Christ, my Ransom, die for me? Then I shall not die. Did He pay my debt? Then it is paid and I shall not be called upon to pay it—

"If You have my discharge procured,
And freely in my place endured
The whole of wrath Divine.
Payment God cannot twice demand—
First at my bleeding Surety's hand,
And then, again, at mine."

Did Jesus suffer in my place outside the city gate? Then, turn you, my Soul, unto your rest, since He died for you! Justice could not claim both the Surety and those for whom He stood as Substitute! And, Beloved, *it was the Master who died.* They did seek Him, they did take Him, they did crucify Him—He did bear it all as His people's Substitute. "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Do not be deceived about this matter, but grip it as a fact most sure that the Lord Jesus Christ did bear His people's sins in His own body on the tree. "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." Brothers and Sisters, I am not making this up and telling you words of my own. These are the precious Truths of Holy Writ, Divinely Inspired. Oh, that all would believe them!

Christ has suffered in the place of His people. What then? As I have said to you, before, both cannot suffer, therefore, as Jesus suffered, *you who are His people are clear.* Perhaps you will go down to the grave. Unless the Lord should speedily come, we shall die, but, since Jesus died, death cannot hold us! The resurrection trumpet will ring out its silver note and this will be the message to the dull cold ear of death, "Since I died, let these go their way," and every sepulcher shall open wide, the caverns of death shall no longer enclose the bodies of the saints, but from beds of dust and silent clay the whole of Christ's redeemed shall rise! Because He lives, they shall also live! Death sought Him and, therefore, death must let these who belong to Him go their way!

And as for Justice, there comes the dread tremendous day, the day for which all other days were made—the Day of Judgment and of condemnation of ungodly men! Shall I stand shivering before that eternal Judgement Seat? No, not so! Shall I feel the earth quake beneath me and see Heaven splitting above me, and the stars falling like withered leaves in autumn? Doubtless it will be so. Will the avenging angel come with his dread sword of fire and sweep us poor sinful ones away? He will, unless we are in Christ! But if we are among the blood-redeemed ones, he must stay his fiery vengeance, for there shall come a voice from the risen and reigning Savior, "You have smitten Me, therefore let these go their way." And because He died for us, we shall go our way! Which way? Up yonder shining staircase made of light! Up where the angels come and go, we

shall make our way, like children who run upstairs at home, up into the world of the Light of God and to the home of Glory where our Savior's face is the sun and His Presence makes Heaven! Yes, and this shall be our permit for ascending there—Jesus has loved us and has died to redeem us from our sins.

With this I close, dear Hearers. When I come into this pulpit and especially during the last two or three Sunday nights when I have felt my head swim at the sight of you, I seem like one standing on a high cliff, half afraid to remain there—and I think to myself, "Shall I long preach to these people?" Well, well, whether I do or do not, I would press home this question upon your consciences as I shall meet you in that Great Day—have you a share in Jesus Christ's love and care? Did He bear your sins in His own body on the tree? Do you believe in Him? That is, do you *trust* Him? Have you put your soul into His hands that He may save it? If so, you are justified by Him, you are saved in Him!

Say, dear Friend, next—do you obey Him? Is He your Master and Lord? Is His will the supreme law of your life? Or do you wish it to be so and pray to make it so? Then again you may go your way, for Christ has stood in your place. Do you suffer *with* Him? Are you willing to suffer *for* Him? There are some who will go with Christ if He will put on His silver slippers, His purple mantle and His jeweled crown. How good they are! How bravely will they say, "I am a Christian," when everybody will throw primroses in their path! Yes, but when people sneer and call you an old Puritan, a Methodist, a Presbyterian, or some other pretty name—and when those who preach to you are much abused and evil things are said of them—can you take the side of a despised Christ? Can you stand at His Cross? Can you acknowledge Him when the blood is dripping from His wounds, when everybody thrusts out their tongue at Him and have ill words for the Crucified One? Can you say, "I still love Him"?

Remember the good Scotch woman, when Claverhouse had murdered her godly husband. "Ah," he said, "what do you think of your bonny husband, now?" She answered, "I always thought my man was very beautiful, but I never saw him look as lovely as he does now, that he has died for his Master." Can you say the same of Christ? He was always precious to me. I love Him in every shape and form, but when I see Him put on His crimson robe and bleed at every pore for me. When the rubies are in His hands and on His feet, and I see Him still despised and rejected of men, I love Him more than ever! And I love His Cross and take it up. I love His shame and His reproach, and count it "greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." If it is so with you. If you are with Him in His shame, I will guarantee that you shall be with Him in His Glory!

I count it to be a mean position to be only with a reigning Christ on earth and to go with Him only in fair weather. Oh, but this is the pledge and proof of love—if you are with Him when the snowflakes blow into your face and the storm comes hurtling against you—and you can follow bravely where He leads the way! God make you such followers of the Crucified! May your feet know what it is to be pricked with thorns, or

your head will never know what it is to feel the weight of the Glory diadem! May you be willing to be despised and rejected, for if not, you have thrown away your crown! God bless you, dear Friends, and blessed be His name for helping me, again, to speak to you tonight! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
John 17:1-12; 18:1-14.

1. *These words spoke Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to Heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come.* This is, in a very special sense, our Lord's prayer. What a word that is from the lips of Jesus, "Father"! This was the night of His deepest sorrow and His heaviest woe, but He begins His prayer with this tender expression, "Father, the hour is come." The hour of darkness, the hour of His passion and death had now arrived.

1. *Glorify Your Son, that Your Son, also, may glorify You.* Did Jesus look upon His suffering as His Glory? He does not merely pray, "Sustain Your Son," but, "Glorify Your Son." In truth, our Lord's lowest stoop was His highest Glory! He was never more resplendent than when He hung upon the Cross—that was His true spiritual throne, so He prayed, "Glorify Your Son"—Enable Him to bear the agony and to pass through it to Glory. "That Your Son, also, may glorify You." The death of Christ was a great glorifying of God. We see His love and His justice rendered more glorious in the death of Christ than they would have been by any other method!

2. *As You have given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.* In this verse you get the doctrines of General and Particular Redemption blended. By His death, Christ obtained power over all flesh. His death had some relation to every man, but the special objective of it was the salvation of the elect. The purpose of the shower is to water one particular field, but the rain falls everywhere, so plenteous is the bounty of God. The objective of Christ's Atonement is to purchase eternal life for those who were given to Him by His Father, but He has also obtained power over all flesh.

3. *And this is life eternal, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.* To know God is eternal life. If you know God, if you know Jesus Christ whom He has sent, you are spiritually quickened. That knowledge has brought to you, no, it is, in *itself*, *the new life*—"This is life eternal"—not life for a few years but life *eternal*. Mark the final perseverance of the saints, how they shall hold on and hold out forever.

4. *I have glorified You on the earth: I have finished the work which You gave Me to do.* Jesus regards His work as already done, although He had yet to die, to pay the ransom price for His people. Yet, by a leap of holy *faith*, He says, "I have finished the work which You gave Me to do."

5. *And now, O Father, glorify You, Me, with Your own Self with the Glory which I had with You before the world was.* Jesus had laid aside

His Glory for our sakes. Now He asks that His work, being regarded as done, His Glory may be given back to Him.

6. *I have manifested Your name unto the men which You gave Me out of the world: Yours they were, and You gave them Me: and they have kept Your Word.* God's people belong to Him. He gives them to His Son—Christ gives them His Word and they keep it. "They have kept Your Word." Do we keep God's Word? Do we hold to it? Do we make it the guide of our whole life? Do we seek to obey it? This is the token of God's chosen people.

7-12. *Now they have known that all things whatever You have given Me are of You. For I have given unto them the Words which You gave Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from You, and they have believed that You did send Me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which You have given Me; for they are Yours. And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You, Holy Father. Keep through Your own name those whom You have given Me, that they way be one, as We are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name: those that You gave Me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled.* Christ always has kept His people! He still keeps His people and He will keep His people forever! The sheep shall be delivered into the hands of the Father in full number—there shall not be one of them missing in that day when they shall pass under the rod of the Great Shepherd. We cannot read all this prayer of our Lord, tonight. We must now go, in the language of the next chapter, with the Master into the garden of His grief.

John 18:1. *When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples over the brook Kidron.* A dark, foul brook through which flowed the blood and refuse from the Temple. King David crossed that brook one night in bitter sorrow—and now the Savior crossed it when it was near to midnight—"He went forth with His disciples over the brook Kidron."

1-2. *Where was a garden, into the which He entered, and His disciples. And Judas, also, which betrayed Him, knew the place: for Jesus ofttimes resorted there with His disciples.* Our Lord went there to pray and Judas knew that this was His custom. Are we such men of prayer that others know where we pray? Have you some familiar place where you go to meet your Lord? I am afraid that many know where we *trade* and many know where we *preach* but, perhaps, few know where we *pray*. God grant that we may be often at the Mercy Seat! We would be better men and women if we were more frequently at the Throne of Grace.

3. *Judas, then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, came there with lanterns and torches and weapons.* "Lanterns" to give light to the Sun! "Torches" to discern the Light of the World! "Weapons" with which to fight with the Lamb of God,

the unarmed Sufferer! Strange treatment, this, for Him who came to save and bless!

4, 5. *Jesus, therefore, knowing all things that should came upon Him, went forth and said unto them, Whom do you seek? They answered Him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus said to them, I am He.* Or, "I Am." It is remarkable that Jesus should, in His betrayal, twice use this expression, thus uttering the very name of Jehovah!

5. *And Judas, also, which betrayed Him, stood with them.* What a hardened wretch he must have been, to be able to stand with them! One would have thought that, having betrayed his Master, he would have hidden himself away for shame, but no, "Judas, also, which betrayed Him, stood with them." His heart must have been steeled.

6. *As soon, then, as He had said unto them, I am He, they went backward and fell to the ground.* Christ's Almighty Power cast them down at once! He needed not to lift His hand or even His finger—He only said, "I am" and, "they went backward and fell to the ground."

7. *Then asked He them, again, Whom do you seek? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth.* Do they return to the fray? Having once felt Christ's Divine Power, do they summon courage enough to attack Him again? Yes, for there is no limit to the malice and impudence of the human heart!

8-10. *Jesus answered, I have told you that I am He: if, therefore, you seek Me, let these go their way: that the saying might be fulfilled, which He spoke, Of them which You gave Me have I lost none. Then Simon Peter*—Always ready to boil over. Always full of zeal and rash impetuosity, Peter—

10. *Having a sword, drew it and struck the High Priest's servant and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.* Peter struck at his head—he was not content with trying to wound—he meant to kill Malchus. But he, "cut off his right ear."

11-14. *Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up your sword into the sheath: the cup which My Father has given Me, shall I not drink it? Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus and bound Him, and led Him away to Annas first; for he was father-in-law to Caiaphas, which was the High Priest that same year. Now Caiaphas was he which gave counsel to the Jews that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.* Saying a great deal more than he thought he was saying, for he uttered a great Gospel Truth when he said, "It was expedient that one man should die for the people."

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—382, 401, 293.

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

BLOOD EVEN ON THE GOLDEN ALTAR
NO. 2369

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JULY 15, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 6, 1888.

"And the priest shall put some of the blood upon the horns of the altar of sweet incense before the LORD, which is in the Tabernacle of the Congregation."
Leviticus 4:7.

ALL through Holy Scripture you constantly meet with the mention of "blood." "Without shedding of blood is no remission." "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin." "You were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ." The word, "blood," is recorded over and over again, and if any complain of the preacher that he frequently uses this expression, he makes no kind of apology for it—he would be ashamed of himself if he did not often speak of the blood! The Word of God is as full of references to blood as the body of a man is full of life and blood.

But what does, "the blood," mean in Scripture? It means not merely suffering, which might very well be typified by blood, but it means suffering *unto death*. It means the taking of a life. To put it very briefly, a sin against God deserves death as its punishment, and what God said by the mouth of the Prophet Ezekiel still stands true, "The soul that sins, it shall die." The only way by which God could fulfill His threatening sentence and yet forgive guilty men was that Jesus Christ, His Son, came into the world and offered His life instead of ours. His life, because of the dignity of His Person, and the majesty of His Nature, was so vast in its value that He could give it not only for one man, but for the whole multitude of men who should believe in Him! Now, that by which men are saved is the suffering of Jesus Christ even unto death, as Peter writes, "Christ, also, has once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." Paul puts it, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree." And again, "He has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

All the sacrifices under the Law of God, when their blood was poured out, were typical of the life of Christ given for men as a Sacrifice in the place of those who had offended unto death against the Law of God and, therefore, were doomed to die. You who hear me constantly know very well what I mean. Have I ever given any uncertain sound about this great central Truth of God? There is no way of salvation under Heaven but by faith in the Substitutionary Sacrifice of Jesus Christ! And the way by

which we are redeemed from eternal wrath is by Christ having stood as Substitute for us and having died in our place, as it is written, "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed."

It is worthy of note that in the death of Christ, the shedding of blood was made very conspicuous, as if to refresh our memories about the teaching of the types of the Mosaic Law. Jesus was scourged unto bleeding. His temples were pierced and lacerated with a crown of thorns. His hands and feet were nailed with iron to the Cross. His side was opened by the soldier's spear and forthwith there flowed blood and water. There are many ways by which men may die without the shedding of blood—the capital punishment of our own country is free from this accompaniment—but our Savior was ordained to die by a death in which the shedding of blood was conspicuous, as if to link Him forever with those sacrifices which were made as types and symbols of His great atoning work! My dear Brother, Mr. Pearce, in his prayer, seemed to set forth Christ evidently crucified among you. I wish that even though you have to use your imaginations a little, you would think that you see Jesus on the Cross. Picture Him here, tonight, and lovingly watch Him. You will need few words from me if you do but catch sight of Him. Behold your Savior pouring out His life's blood that He might bear your guilt away, *dying* for you that you might live forever!

In the verse before our text we read that the priest was to take of the blood of the bullock of the sin offering and sprinkle it seven times "before the Lord, before the veil of the sanctuary." The veil concealed the inner dwelling place of God and this veil was to be sprinkled seven times, that is, perfectly. There was to be a perfect presentation of the precious blood before the place where God was concealed. After that was done, the priest was to take some of the blood of the bullock and smear with it the four horns of the golden altar which stood just in front of the veil, and near the golden candlesticks. This altar was intended for the burning of sweet incense upon it and the priest was to smear with blood the four horns of it. What was meant by that act? Let me read the text again and then at once seek to explain it. "The priest shall put some of the blood upon the horns of the altar of sweet incense before the Lord."

I. My first observation is this—THE ATONEMENT WAS PRESENTED WITH A VIEW TO THE LORD.

Have you not often heard it said that all the Atonement accomplished was something in relation to *us*? We think upon the death of Christ and it stirs our affections, but some teachers say that is the only result—it brings us to God, but it does not bring God to us! That is what they say, but when we turn to Holy Scripture we find that the blood shedding was with reference to *God*, Himself, as well as with reference to us, because in the text it is distinctly said, "The priest shall put some of the blood upon the horns of the altar of sweet incense *before the Lord*."

Its place was where the Lord would especially see it. I would like the young people, when they get home, to take a pencil and mark in the first chapters of the Book of Leviticus how often the expression is used, "before the Lord." The bringing of the bullock, the killing of the sacrifice, the sprinkling of the blood—all was to be done, "before the Lord." Whether

any *man* saw it or not, was of small account, for it was, "before the Lord." True, it was done in the presence of the congregation, but it is specified over and over, again, that it was, "before the Lord." I would remind you that in the memorable type of the paschal lamb, the Lord gave special instructions as to where the blood was to be sprinkled. Was it to be within the house? Remember that all the people were inside the house—on the Passover night there was not a man outside! Where, then, was the blood put? Upon the interior walls of the house where they could see it? Might it not tend to comfort them if they could look upon it? That was *not* the Lord's plan—the blood was *not* put where the *people* could see it—it was sprinkled outside the house! And the Inspired account tells us that the Lord, Himself, said to Moses and Aaron, "And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses...and when I see the blood, I will pass over you." It was put where *God* could see it, and, as if to show that that was the main point, it was put where the people could *not* see it—that it might be distinctly said to them, "It is, after all, *God's sight* of the great sacrifice which saves you."

Next, *the place of the blood is where the Lord sees it in reference to us.* Understand where the Lord sees it with reference to us. They charge us with teaching that the Atonement in some way changes the Nature of God. We have *never* said so and we never *dreamed* anything of the kind! Above all things, we have always taught that God is Immutable and cannot be changed either in His Nature or in His purpose. They tell us that we teach and, they tell others that we teach, that the Sacrifice of Christ was offered to make God love His people. We have, over and over and over again, denied this, and declared that—

"'Twas not to make Jehovah's love
Towards the sinner flame,
That Jesus, from His Throne above,
A suffering Man became!
'Twas not the death which He endured,
Nor all the pangs He bore,
That God's eternal love procured,
For God was love before."

Christ in His Sacrifice is the *result* of God's love, not the cause of it! Yet, dear Friends, we do confess, without any hesitation, to this fact, that the death of Christ has a reference to God's dealing with us in this way—the claims of Divine Justice must be met. The Judge of all the earth must do right and He cannot suffer sin to go unpunished! Our own conscience confirms that Truth of God—there is no sinner, even when he is most hardened, who deep down in his soul does not know that to be true! And when he lies dying, it causes him great trouble to think that he is going where God must visit his sin upon him!

Now, what Christ has done is this—the Father has given us, in Christ, that which satisfies the claims of Infinite Justice. God can be just and yet the Justifier of him that believes. Executing the death penalty upon our Surety, He declares that whoever believes on Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life! Oh, dear Friends, it is God's looking on and seeing in His Son the vindication of His law, the honoring of His holiness—it

is *this* which is the very essence of Christ's Sacrifice as to its result upon us!

I believe that the great Lord, the just Judge of all, looks on Jesus Christ with extreme delight as having suffered for His people. *He sees in the sufferings of Christ the honoring of His own holiness.* Jesus loved holiness so much that He would sooner die than that holiness should be impugned. He was so true, so upright, so just, that He would rather suffer to the death on the tree than that God should, in the least degree, violate His Word, or infringe His Justice. The Father looks on Christ's great Sacrifice and He takes great delight in it because He sees in it His own holiness honored and glorified!

And what a delight He must take in *the love of Christ* when He sees that Jesus loved us with a love which many waters could not quench, and which death, itself, could not drown! The great Father looks to the death of Christ and sees Christ's love triumphant on the tree, and He is charmed with it. I do not think that you and I can ever tell what pleasure the Father has in the finished work and Sacrifice of His dear Son. We read that He "smelled a savor of rest" in what was only a *typical* sacrifice—but what a savor of rest must the great heart of the Infinite Jehovah find in the Infinite Sacrifice of His Well-Beloved! You look upon it with bleared and bedimmed eyes, yet you see enough to make you wonder and adore. But what does God see in the Atonement of Jesus? Ah, Beloved, we cannot fully answer you, but we know that He sees there that which He eternally looks upon with infinite complacency and, for the sake of it, He looks upon us, poor guilty ones as we are, with complacency, too! He loves us because of what Christ has done in reference to us!

That is my first remark and though I have but feebly set it forth, yet, Beloved, it is a great and glorious Truth of God! The Atonement has a bearing towards the Lord, Himself, and, therefore, in this ancient type, the blood was smeared upon the altar of sweet incense *before the Lord.*

II. But now, secondly, coming to the very heart of the text—THE ATONEMENT GIVES POWER TO THE ITERCESSION OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

That altar of sweet incense was the type of *Christ pleading for men*, making intercession for the transgressors. The horns of the altar signify the power of His intercession and the power of Christ's intercession lies in His Sacrifice—lies in the blood. If I might be allowed to picture such a scene, I seem to see the Divine Son pleading with His Father and He pleads the merit of His own blood.

The Father sees it, first, as a reason why the Son should plead with Him, for the blood shows *His nearness of kin to man.* Has Jesus blood? "Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He, also, Himself, likewise took part of the same." Here is the token to His Father that He is truly Man! Here is the sure testimony of His identification with His people for whom He makes intercession! The mark is made by His own blood upon the horns of the altar and its presence there proves that He is qualified to plead for men, seeing that, while He is God, His blood shows that He is evidently also Man!

I hear Him begin to plead and if Justice would stay Him and say, "How can You plead for the guilty? Before this Great White Throne, unsullied by a stain, how can You ask that God should bless the impure and foul?" Jesus points to His own blood as the token of *His removal of impeding sin.* "The Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world," has taken it away by the shedding of His own blood! "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin." "Hear Me, My Father," He cries, "hear My plea on behalf of the penitent sinner! I have put away his sin. Answer My prayer and bless him, for I have taken away the sin that cursed him. I have borne its penalty and made expiation for it by My death."

Do you not think, also, that this blood, which is the very power of Christ's intercession, signifies His *fulfillment of Covenant engagements?* We read of "the blood of the Everlasting Covenant." Jesus had engaged with His Father "to finish the transgression and to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity and to bring in everlasting righteousness," and He has done so! By His death, He could say, of His work as the Messiah, "It is finished!" By that death He had fulfilled His Suretyship engagement to His Father in connection with the Covenant of Grace and this, Beloved, is the very sinew of His strength in interceding for His people—this is the very essence of His pleading! He has done all that He agreed to do, therefore He asks the Father to fulfill His part of the Everlasting Covenant and to save the people redeemed by the blood shed on Calvary.

And, it seems to me, that Christ also uses His blood as the great power of His pleading in *His claim of reward.* "Have I not died for My people? Then will You not let them live, O My Father? Behold, O Justice, with uplifted sword, if you seek Me, let these go their way." Jesus seems to say, "My Lord, My God, I have become Your Servant. I took upon Myself the form of a Servant and was made in the likeness of sinful flesh. And I have performed all the service You did lay upon Me. Reward Me, then, for all My toil. Let Me see of the travail of My Soul. Let Me be satisfied according to the promise which You did make to Me when I undertook this work."

Do you not see, then, my Brothers and Sisters, that the blood on the horns of the altar means this—that Christ's blood is the very strength of His pleading with God? Because He died for guilty men, therefore, today, when He asks for the sinner's salvation, He will have it granted to Him, for the blood prevails with God, speaking better things than that of Abel!

III. And now, in the last place, I want to say to you that THIS BLOOD GIVES ACCEPTANCE TO OUR WORSHIP.

We bring to God sweet incense through Jesus Christ our Savior. Our prayers, our praises, our services are like the mixture of sweet perfumes which were burnt of old upon the altar before God. But it is the blood-mark on the altar that makes the incense acceptable. It is the atoning Sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ that gives *prayer*, *praise* and *service* acceptance in the sight of God.

In beginning to speak upon this point, I want you to notice that *the blood is on the altar before we begin to pray.* It was the blood that gave acceptance to the incense burnt upon the altar—it was not the stacte, onycha and galbanum—those, "sweet spices with pure frankincense,"

that, by themselves, ascended with fragrance unto the Lord. There *must* be the blood of the sacrifice sprinkled on the horns of the altar! What does this mean? Why, Beloved, that God accepts us in Christ because of Christ, Himself, and Christ, alone! It is true that we are to bring forth good works, for faith without works is dead. Still, the reason of our acceptance with God is *not* our good works, but Christ and His atoning Sacrifice, alone! As we come to Him, we sing—

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

Before you have performed a single work of holiness, before you have felt any of those sweet emotions which come out of the possession of Divine Love shed abroad in your heart, if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are accepted with God—*Christ* has saved you! Therefore is it that a man is justified by faith without works, for it is the *faith* that justifies him as it lays hold on Christ. There shall be an abundance of sweet spices on the altar, by-and-by, but apart from them, and before there has been a living coal smoking there, the altar has been consecrated unto God by the sprinkling of the blood of the Sacrifice! I like to think of that glorious fact! Let your good works be multiplied, but keep all of them at a distance from the Sacrifice of Christ! Never *dream* of adding them to Christ's Sacrifice to make it complete, for it is perfect without anything of yours. When you repent of sin, if you begin to trust in your repentance, away with your repentance! When you serve God, if you begin to trust in your service, away with it! Away with it! It becomes an antichrist if it takes the place that should be occupied by Jesus, only, for His precious blood, alone, can put away sin!

But now I want you to note, dear Friends, that whenever you come to God with your worship, you must take care that you notice the blood on the altar, because *it removes the sin of our worship.* The best worship that we ever render to God is far from perfect. Our praises, ah, how faint and feeble they are! Our prayers, how wandering, how wavering they are! When we get nearest to God, how far off we are! When we are most like He, how greatly unlike He we are! This I know, that my tears need be wept over, and my faith is so mingled with unbelief that I have to repent of that sad admixture! Brothers and Sisters, keep your eyes fixed on the blood of Jesus! There is no prayer, no praise that can come before God, of itself, for it is so imperfect. Therefore, keep your eyes on the blood of Jesus, that even the sin of your holy things may be put away by the Sacrifice once offered on Calvary.

Do you not think, also, that we would pray a great deal better if we thought more of the blood on the altar as *our plea in prayer?* I remember a Primitive Methodist Prayer Meeting at which a Brother could not get on with his supplication. He was very earnest and fervent, but he could not make any progress. He did not seem as if he had power to pray. He shouted, as Methodists do, but there is not much in *that*—yet he could not get on with real praying till a friend at the back end of the room cried out, "Plead the blood, Brother! Plead the blood!" He did so and then he began to pray with mighty power! Here lies the force of all your pleas in prayer—if you can plead for Jesus' sake and in His name, by His agony and bloody sweat, by His Cross and passion—then you have discovered

the great secret of prevailing with God! Your hand is on the lever and you can move the world if you will!

Should we not, also, make the precious blood of Jesus *the highest note of our praises?* When we are praising God, we think a great deal of the music. I do not blame anybody for doing that, especially if he is the leader of the Psalmody, but, Brothers and Sisters, we may come to think more of the melody and the harmony than we do of the heart and soul of praise! Keep your eyes on the crucified Christ and then sing as loudly as you like. Fix your gaze on those five precious wounds—they shall help you to praise Christ better than all the notes of the scales, for what higher note can we ever reach than this, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood"? Now you have sounded out the very highest note in the scale! Oh, the precious blood, the atoning Sacrifice, the great Substitution of our Lord Jesus Christ! The Hallelujah Chorus of all the redeemed shall have no nobler note than this, "He loved us and saved us. He loved us and died for us and we are washed in His blood."

Let me here say that every sort of worship, not only prayer and praise, but every kind of worship that we can render to the Lord, will be acceptable with God in proportion as we exhibit, with it, the blood upon the altar. I find it a very sweet way of worshipping God to sit down and meditate. I hope you feel the same. You do not need any words at such seasons. You have been reading a chapter of the Bible and God has spoken to you and you, perhaps, have knelt in prayer and have spoken with Him. Now you sit down and meditate. I like to sit quite still and look up, or sit quite still with closed eyes, and just think. Now, the thinking, the meditating, the contemplation which will be best for you and most acceptable with God is that which keeps close to the Cross and near the precious sacrifice. Do you notice what holy men and women say when they come to die? You stand at their bedside and talk to them. If they are in any trouble and distress of conscience, what do they begin to talk about? Why, about the precious Sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross! It does not matter to what sect they belong, or to what denomination they have been joined in life—they always come back to this point at the last. There is no passing out of this life with comfort—there is no hope of entering into Heaven with delight—except as we are resting upon the precious blood of Christ!

Ah, dear Friends, there may be some here who do not think much of this theme. There always were such. It is nothing to you that Jesus should die. But if there is anything that sanctifies, any Truth of God that digs deep into the heart and puts the Seeds of Life into the very center of our being—if there is *anything* that makes the Christian devout, humble, holy—it is the Doctrine of the Cross! I can almost gauge your piety to a certainty by what you think of the bleeding Savior. If He is nothing to you, you are not in the blessed secret. But if Jesus Christ is first and last with you. If you preach Christ crucified—if you *love* Christ crucified—in that proportion God dwells in you and you dwell in Him! This is not theory that I am talking—this is no Truth of God that lies upon the borders of the Christian religion and may, or may not be accepted! This is the very *heart* of the Gospel and if you take this away, you have killed it!

You are no Christian if you disbelieve this Truth of God! If you are not saved by the precious blood of Christ, you are damned! There is but one gate of life and that is sprinkled with the blood of Christ. If you turn away from that door, you have chosen the broad road that leads to destruction. O you who feel your guilt, come to my Lord for pardon! O you who confess your sin, come to His blood for cleansing! It is still true that—

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One!
There is life at this moment for you."

How many years have I come to this pulpit, telling this old, old story, telling it very poorly and very imperfectly, and yet you are not tired of hearing it! Look how the crowds still throng this house! I might have given you some pretty novelties every now and then, but had I done so, I believe I would have lost you! But this old Truth of God, even if you do not accept it, commands your attention. You cannot help coming to hear it—oh, that you would also believe it! It has made *me* supremely happy. I was about to say that it has given me an angel's happiness and, sometimes, I could even say without exaggeration it gives me solid peace with which I can live, and with which, by-and-by, I hope to die!

It enables me to stand alone against unnumbered foes and feel as happy as if everybody were with me, for, in this great Truth that Jesus died for *me*, that Jesus bore *my* sins in His own body on the tree, there is a rock beneath my feet! He who is on that rock may stand there and defy even death and Hell! Oh, that you would come and trust my Lord, you restless ones, you who do not know what peace means! Trust Him! Believe that He died for you! Trust Him and you shall have peace like a river—and righteousness like the waves of the sea!

May we now come to the Communion Table thinking much of the precious blood once shed for many for the remission of sins!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
Leviticus 16:1-31; Hebrews 9:1-22.

Verse 1, 2. *And the LORD spoke unto Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they offered before the LORD, and died, and the LORD said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron, your brother, that he come not at all times into the Holy Place within the veil before the Mercy Seat, which is upon the Ark, that he die not: for I will appear in the cloud upon the Mercy Seat.* The way into the heavenly places was not yet made manifest. The inner shrine called the Holy of Holies, was specially guarded from human access. No one could have said, in those days, "Let us come boldly unto the Throne of Grace," for only the High Priest could approach the Mercy Seat at all—and he must go within the veil strictly in accordance with the instructions given to Moses by the Lord. Nadab and Abihu appear to have entered into the Presence of God wrongfully. They had probably been drinking, for there was a command, afterwards, given that no priest should drink wine or strong drink when he went into the House of the Lord. God, in His righteous anger, slew these young men at once and now, lest any others should intrude into the secret place of

communion, a Law was given to tell *when* and *how* man might approach his God.

3. *Thus shall Aaron come into the Holy Place: with a young bullock for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering.* There is no access to God except by sacrifice—there never was, and there never can be any way to God for sinful man except by sacrifice!

4. *He shall put on the holy linen coat, and he shall have the linen breeches upon his flesh, and shall be girded with a linen belt, and with the linen miter shall he be attired: these are holy garments; therefore shall he wash his flesh in water, and so put them on.* Our great High Priest offered Himself without spot to God and He is, Himself, without sin. But the Jewish High Priest must make himself *typically* pure by putting on the snow-white garments of holy service and, before doing so, he must wash himself with water, that he might come before God acceptably. None might approach the Holy God with impurities upon them.

5, 6. *And he shall take of the congregation of the children of Israel two kids of the goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering. And Aaron shall offer his bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and make an Atonement for himself, and for his house.* These priests were sinful and, therefore, they must first, themselves, be purged from guilt before they could come near to God; but the true High Priest of God, our Lord Jesus, needed to offer no sacrifice for Himself, for He was pure and without blemish or stain or sin.

7. *And he shall take the two goats, and present them before the LORD at the door of the Tabernacle of the Congregation.* These two goats were not for himself, but for the people. You must regard them as if they were but one offering, for it needed both of them to set forth the Divine Plan by which sin is put away—one was to die and the other was, typically, to bear away the sin of the people.

8. *And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the LORD, and the other lot for the scapegoat.* One goat was to show how sin is put away in reference to God by sacrifice, and the other goat was to show how it is put away in reference to us, God's people, by being carried into oblivion.

9-14. *And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the LORD'S lot fell and offer him for a sin offering. But the goat on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make an Atonement with Him, and to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness. And Aaron shall bring the bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and shall make an Atonement for himself, and for his house, and shall kill the bullock of the sin offering which is for himself: and he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the LORD, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the veil: and he shall put the incense upon the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of the incense may cover the Mercy Seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not: and he shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it with his finger upon the Mercy Seat eastward; and before the Mercy Seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times.* This was his first entrance within the veil, with holy incense to denote the acceptance which Christ has with God, though He is *always* well-beloved, dear and pre-

cious to His Father. This incense sent up a cloud that veiled the Glory of the Shekinah which shone between the two wings of the cherubim and so the High Priest was better able to bear the wondrous brilliance by which God revealed His Presence. When Aaron had thus filled the place with the sweetly-perfumed smoke, he took the blood of the bullock of the sin offering and carefully sprinkled it seven times on the Mercy Seat, and on the ground around the Mercy Seat. What a mercy it is for you and me that the spot where we meet with God is a place where the blood of the Great Sacrifice has been sprinkled, yes, and that the ground of our meeting with God, the place on which the Mercy Seat rests, also has the blood mark upon it!

15. *Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within the veil, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the Mercy Seat, and before the Mercy Seat.* Twice, you see, is the Holy Place thus sprinkled, first with the blood of the bullock and then with that of the goat.

16. *And he shall make an Atonement for the Holy Place because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins: and so shall he do for the Tabernacle of the Congregation that remains among them in the midst of their uncleanness.* If God is to dwell in the midst of sinful men, it can only be through the blood of the Atonement. Twice, seven times, were the Holy Place and the tabernacle to be sprinkled with blood, as though to indicate a double perfectness of efficacy of the preparation for God's dwelling among sinful men.

17-19 *And there shall be no man in the Tabernacle of the Congregation when he goes in to make an Atonement in the Holy Place, until he come out, and has made an Atonement for himself, and for his household, and for all the congregation of Israel. And he shall go out unto the altar that is before the LORD, and make an Atonement for it; and shall take of the blood of the bullock, and of the blood of the goat, and put it upon the horns of the altar round about. And he shall sprinkle of the blood upon it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it, and hallow it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel.* Even this altar to which we bring our prayers and our thank offerings has sin upon it. There is some defilement, even, in the saltwater of our penitent tears! There is some unbelief, even, in our most acceptable faith! There is some lack of holiness about our holiest things! We are unclean by nature and by practice, too—what could we do without the sprinkling of the blood? See how the Lord insisted upon it in the case of His ancient people, yet there are some in these modern times who deride it. God forgive their blasphemy!

20, 21. *And when he has made an end of reconciling the Holy Place, and the Tabernacle of the Congregation, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat: and Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness.* Notice the, "all," in this 21st verse—"Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat and confess over him *all* the iniquities of the children of Israel, and *all* their transgressions in *all* their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the

hand of a fit man into the wilderness." This was the second part of the Atonement showing not sacrifice, but the *effect* of sacrifice, and explaining what becomes of sin *after* the sacrifice has been accepted and the blood has been presented within the veil.

22-25. *And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness. And Aaron shall come into the Tabernacle of the Congregation and shall put off the linen garments which he put on when he went into the Holy Place, and shall leave them there: and he shall wash his flesh with water in the Holy Place, and put on his garments, and come forth, and offer his burnt offering, and the burnt offering of the people, and make an Atonement for himself, and for the people. And the fat of the sin offering shall he burn upon the altar.* Only the fat of it, the best of it, was burnt upon the altar, for sin offerings were not acceptable to God. They were regarded as being filled with impurity by reason of the sin which they brought to mind. For this reason the bullock and the goat of the sin offering had to be burnt outside the camp—"Therefore Jesus, also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate," as our Sin Offering. Yet, inasmuch as the fat was accepted upon the altar, so is Christ, even as our Sin Offering, acceptable before God.

26, 27. *And he that let go the goat for the scapegoat shall wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward come into the camp. And the bullock for the sin offering and the goat for the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make Atonement in the Holy Place, shall one carry forth outside the camp; and they shall burn in the fire their skins, and their flesh, and their dung.* All must be burnt—and the last is mentioned because it more strikingly sets forth the impurity of the sin connected with the sin offering! All must be burnt right up. There must not be a particle of the sin offering left unconsumed.

28. *And he that burns them shall wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp.* Everything that has to do with God's service must be clean and purified by fire, and purified by water. An Atonement cannot be made by that which is, itself, defiled—it must be without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing before it can put sin away. This is the virtue of Christ's Atonement, for He was altogether without sin of any kind.

29-31. *And this shall be a statute forever unto you: that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether it is one of your own country, or a stranger that sojourns among you: for on that day shall the priest make an Atonement for you, to cleanse you, that you may be clean from all your sins before the LORD. It shall be a Sabbath of rest unto you, and you shall afflict your souls, by a statute forever.* This shows what sacredness the Lord attached to the great Day of Atonement and gives us more than a hint of the preciousness of our Lord's atoning work for us. Now let us turn to the Epistle to the Hebrews and see how the Apostle spiritualizes the services of the Mosaic dispensation.

Hebrews 9:1 *Then verily the first Covenant had also ordinances of Divine service and a worldly sanctuary.* An external sanctuary, a material structure and, therefore, belonging to this world.

2. *For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the showbread: which is called the sanctuary.* Or, "the Holy Place."

3-8. *And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All; which had the golden censer, and the Ark of the Covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the Tables of the Covenant; and over it the Cherubims of glory shadowing the Mercy Seat; of which we cannot now speak particularly. Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the Second went the High Priest, alone, once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people: the Holy Spirit thus signifying that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing.* Notice especially those words, "Not without blood." There could be no approach to God under the old dispensation without the shedding of blood and there is no access to the Lord, now, without the precious blood of Christ.

9-22. *Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation. But Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building, neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood, He entered in once into the Holy Place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause He is the Mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testators. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator lives. Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the Law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the Book, and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the testament which God has enjoined unto you. Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are by the Law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.* That is the great Gospel Truth that was set forth by all the sacrifices under the Law of God—"without shedding of blood is no remission."

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—279, 281, 289.

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

"CHRIST FIRST, ME LAST—NOTHING BETWEEN BUT LOVE"
NO. 2370

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, JULY 22, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 10, 1888.

"The faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me," Galatians 2:20.

Paul looks at the matter of salvation from the point of view suggested by Grace. If any man might have said, "The Son of God, whom I have loved, and to whom I have given myself," it would have been the Apostle. On another occasion, speaking of the Lord, he said, "Whose I am, and whom I serve." But here he thinks not of himself, or of what he had been led to do for the Lord, but only of what the Lord had done for him! He dug down to the foundation of salvation—he traced the stream of Grace back to the Fountainhead and, therefore, he spoke of "the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

You will not do wrong, my Beloved Friends, if you meditate on what the Grace of God has enabled you to do—if you do it humbly and if you praise God for it. I think that we sometimes forget to give Glory to the Lord for the sanctification we have already received. I have heard persons thank God for their health and for their wealth, but I have not so often heard them express gratitude for Divine Grace. I do not know that I wish to hear them praise God for their virtue, but still, if they have any, and they know that they have, let them praise God for it—for what virtue have they which they have not received? If you have any faith, if you have any hope, if you have any love—if there is any difference between you and your fellow men, if you possess anything by which God is glorified—you ought to thank Him for it and to praise and bless His holy name. Still, there would always be a tendency, in dwelling even on what we have done by the Grace of God, to begin to get unduly exalted and, on the whole, it is far wiser to think of what Christ has done for you than of what you have done for Him!

I say, again, you may think of what you have done for Christ and give God the Glory for it, but it will not be well to dwell upon that thought to any great extent. I am sure it will not do to think upon it in the hour of deep distress of mind, or especially in the prospect of death. Then we gather up all our good works and throw them overboard! We look upon the best things that we have ever worked, even by the power of the Spirit of God, as quite secondary to what Christ has worked out for us and brought in and laid before His Father as the ground of our acceptance with Him.

I like to think of our text and I invite you to think of it in the light of Free Grace. "Who loved me and gave Himself for me." I cannot preach much at this time, but I can talk to you a little of what I have tasted, handled and felt—and I pray the Holy Spirit to help you—not so much to hear the text explained, as to feel its gracious influence moving over your spirit and awakening in your heart happy memories of gratitude for blessings received.

I. Our first division shall be THE FACT REMEMBERED—"Who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

Paul speaks of it as a fact ascertainable and one which he had, himself, ascertained—that Jesus Christ loved him and gave Himself for him. He is not speaking, now, of the love of benevolence which the Lord Jesus Christ has towards all men, or even of that aspect of His work which bears upon every creature under Heaven. He is thinking of that special love, that discriminating Grace which had lighted upon *him*. That is the point around which our thoughts are to gather as we meditate upon Paul's words, "Who loved *me*, and gave Himself for *me*." The Apostle knew that Christ had loved him and had given Himself for him. And we, also, may know it. It is not necessary for us to go through life merely hoping and fearing, questioning and enquiring—we may come to the certain knowledge of the fact, if it is a fact, that we have an interest in the special love of Jesus Christ, that we are redeemed from among men, that we are called and separated to be the Lord's peculiar people, that each of us may be able to say of the Lord Jesus Christ—"Who loved me, and gave Himself for me." I would not distress the mind of anyone who is feeble in faith and who is clinging to Christ, but has never, yet, received full assurance of salvation. But I would encourage such a person never to rest until he gets rid of all questions and is able to say without the slightest trepidation, "Who loved *me*, and gave Himself for *me*."

Christ died to save sinners—the sinners who are saved by Him are those who trust Him. I trust Him, therefore He has saved me. This is a good, sound argument. "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." I believe on Him, therefore I have everlasting life. This is solid ground to rest upon. "He loved me, and gave Himself for me," of which the *evidence* is that I *trust* Him. I rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh. To this will be added the evidences of a work of Grace in the heart. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." "One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see." We know this, also, by the witness of the Holy Spirit, for, "the Spirit, Himself, bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." And so, at last, we come to say with as much confidence as Paul, himself, could say it, "Who loved me, and gave Himself for me." Away, then, with all doubts and questions! Be gone, you evil birds that pollute the Sacrifice! By a simple childlike faith we come to Jesus and we take Him to be our Savior. We know that we cannot come to Jesus unless the Father, who sent Him, draws us. Therefore we know that we are drawn by Divine Grace and that He has loved us with an everlasting love, because with loving kindness He has evidently drawn us to Himself. So, you see, Paul is speaking of a fact that is ascertainable, and a fact that, in his own case,

was ascertained. If we do not get to know it for ourselves, we cannot rejoice in it.

Now just think for a few minutes of some well-known but very blessed Truths of God which gather about this fact—"Who loved me, and gave Himself for me." And first, it is *a Divine Love*. Paul speaks of "the Son of God, who loved me." There are some persons who would be greatly delighted if they heard that some nobleman loved them! And if we were informed that some prince or princess loved us, we might feel ourselves elevated—yet there would be very little in it to make us proud. If we were informed that an angel loved us with all the great heart of an unfallen spirit, we might take comfort from the fact—but the text reminds us that it is the *Son of God* who has loved us! I cannot talk about this Divine Love as it deserves, but I want you to try and feel in your soul, "Jesus Christ *loves* me; not merely feeds me, thinks upon me, is favorably inclined to me, but He *loves* me."

Love is a grand word, even in its silver use among men and women, but love in its golden use with God in Heaven, what does it *not* mean? Oh, marvelous, indeed, is the love of God towards His people! I say again that I cannot worthily speak of it—words seem such poor things to express the love of God. They break their backs in trying to convey the wondrous weight of meaning. If this love is shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit, your heart's love will best read and understand this wondrous fact that the Divine Being, the Everlasting Father, and His ever-blessed Son, and the sacred Spirit, the great Trinity in Unity, loves you. Oh, delight yourselves in this glorious Truth! It is a sea of sweetness—dive into it and be filled with it!

The language of the text also suggests to me that I should remind you that the love of Jesus was *an ancient love*. It is true that He loves us now, but Paul also truly wrote, "Who *loved* me." The verb is in the past tense. Jesus loved me upon the Cross. He loved me in the manger of Bethlehem. He loved me before the earth was. There never was a time when Jesus did not love His people! "Before the earth was," I said just now, and I repeat it—He saw us in the glass of His eternal purposes, He foreknew us, He looked ahead and saw *what* we would be, *who* we would be and His love went forth to us before the day-star ever began to shine! Think of it—"The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love." That He should love us at all is a wonder. That He should have loved us *always* is a wonder of wonders! And this love is a part of His eternal purposes and is as old as His arrangements for the history of the universe. "Who loved me, and gave Himself for me." Truly, this was an ancient love!

Note further that as this love was Divine and ancient, so it was *a pre-eminently practical love*—"Who loved me, and gave Himself for me." Jesus could not give any more than Himself. He not only gave His crown, His Throne, His Manhood, His life, His sufferings, His death, His offices, His excellences, His merits—He gave *Himself*, His Godhead, His Humanity! "Who loved me, and gave Himself for me." It is not possible for you to measure the unknown depths of Christ's sufferings, but if you could, you would not have arrived at, "Himself." It is not merely that which He did

and said that Jesus gave for us—He gave Himself. It was not simply that which belonged to Him which Jesus handed over for us, but He gave Himself—"Who loved me, and gave *Himself* for me."

O Beloved, I wish I had the strength and the ability to think and to speak to you upon this practical display of our Lord's love as it deserves, but I have not. Meditate upon it, I pray you. He gave Himself for you in the Everlasting Covenant when He stood as your Surety and Representative. He gave Himself for you through the long ages in which He waited to come to earth to redeem you. He gave Himself for you when He assumed your nature and became bone of your bone, and flesh of your flesh. He gave Himself for you through a life of toil and righteousness. He gave Himself for you as your Substitute when He, "His own self, bore our sins in His own body on the tree." In the scourging, the shame, the spitting, the bloody sweat, the Crucifixion, He gave Himself for you! Take these blessed words of the Apostle and put them in your mouth—and let them lie there as wafers made with honey till they melt into your very soul—"Who loved me, and gave Himself for me." In all these wondrous senses, keeping back nothing, reserving for Himself nothing, no, not even the name of Himself, He loved me, and gave Himself for me! Truly, this was practical love.

And I may say of it, in the next place, that it was *a love altogether immeasurable.* If you measure a love by its gifts, you have certainly an immeasurable love, here, because it was proven by an immeasurable gift! The Nature of the Lord Jesus Christ is not to be comprehended. The wondrous union of Godhead and Manhood made Him, I was about to say, something more than God, for He had added to all the Infinity of His Godhead, the capacity to suffer as a Man. But He gave Himself at His utmost—the boundless, the inconceivable, the indescribable—He gave Himself for me! There is a limit to everything else, but not to the love of God. You say to the sea, "To here shall you come, but no farther," but you cannot say that to this boundless sea of Divine Love! You do not know by experience how much God loves you—you have only drunk a little of the sweetness of this wondrous well of Living Water—but you cannot tell the depth of it. There is no bottom to it! You cannot exhaust its supply—you may drink, and drink, and drink again, through a long life, yes, and *throughout eternity* you may go on receiving of this love, but you will never measure its heights, depths, lengths and breadths. That is quite beyond your power. You can only love, dear Mother, to a certain degree, though you love your child to the death. You can only love, dear Husband, up to a certain point, though you are willing to lay down your life to raise your spouse from a sick bed. But God stops nowhere in His love—it is as boundless and infinite as He is, Himself!

Our Lord Jesus Christ cannot possibly or conceivably be limited in His love. I want you to try to get hold of this thought. Notice it. HE loved me! Such a one as He is, He loved *me*—

"Christ first, me last—nothing between but love."

Those words are very sweet to me. I read them somewhere and they cling to my memory. "Who loved me," the first word is, "who." The last word is, "me," and there is "nothing between but love." Oh, that is a blessed posi-

tion for anyone to be in! Christ shall be first—I will be glad to be anywhere, to be *nothing*, to be *last*—so long as there shall be this sweet link of love between my soul and my Savior—"Who loved me and gave Himself for me."

[As the sermon is shorter than usual, we insert the verses referred to by Mr. Spurgeon, from which the title of the discourse has been selected. The lines can be obtained from Messrs. Penman and Co., 33 Furnival Street, London, 6d. per dozen, or 3s. per 100, post free.

"WHO LOVED ME"
GALATIANS 2:20

Three blessed sunbeams, guiding all I see.
Three tender chords, each full of melody.
Three healing leaves, balm for my agony.
HE loved me—the Father's only Son,
He gave Himself—the precious, Spotless One—
He shed His blood and thus the work was done!
HE LOVED, not merely pitied. Here I rest.
Sorrow may come, I to His heart am pressed—
What should I fear while sheltered on His breast?
Wonder of wonders! Jesus loved me!
A wretch! Lost, ruined, sunk in misery!
He sought me, bound me, raised me, set me free!
My soul the order of the words approve
Christ first, me last—nothing between but love.
Lord, keep me always down—Yourself above!
Trusting to You—not struggling restlessly
So shall I daily gain the victory.
"I"—"yet not I, but Christ,"—WHO LOVED ME!]

Let us reflect yet a moment further that this love is *an abiding love*—"Who loved me." But He is unchanging, so that He still loves me! He cannot love me more, He will not love me less. He has loved me at no period more than He loves me, now, and if just now I may be groaning because of my imperfections, and mourning because of my tribulations, yet He loved me so as to give Himself for me—and He has never abated from that love and He never will! It is a very fine thing, no doubt, to have worldly substance, but it melts like the hoar frost in the sun. It is a very great mercy to have bodily health, but how small a thing soon takes it away and turns the joy of life into the shadow of death! But if you get this love of Christ, you have a treasure which can never be lost, a blessing that will never be exhausted. "Who loved me, and gave Himself for me!" Sit down, dear child of God, and say to yourself, "Here I have something which I shall never lose. It cannot be taken from me. Oh, that by Grace I may be enabled to rejoice in it and to return the love of my poor heart to Him who ceases not to love me!"

There is a great deal that might be said of such a Savior as this, but I feel a consolation in my heart in being unable to say any new and fresh thing, tonight, for the subject, in itself, ought to be to you full of joy. And if your heart is right, it will be. If your heart is not right with God, you will be craving for fine expressions and pretty phrases. Judge your own spiritual condition, then, by this test—does this theme, in itself, touch

you? "Who loved me, and gave Himself for me!" I will use it as a thermometer and drop it into your heart to see the warmth of your affection to Christ. If you are as you should be, full of a devout attachment to Him, you will say, "Yes, that is all I need to feel and know—He loved me, and gave Himself for me!"

So much, then, upon the fact remembered.

II. Now, secondly, Beloved Friends, let me speak to you for just a few minutes on THE FAITH CONFESSED. Paul says, "I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

Observe, first, that the faith which made Paul live was *faith in a Person*—"the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." Possibly, some of you are trying to get faith and yet you do not know what *saving faith* is. You have heard a great deal about it, but it is an astonishing thing that the best definition of faith in the world does not make men see what faith is! The gas may be very bright, but a man who is blind does not see any better because of the brilliance of the light. The eyes of our soul must be opened if we are to see what faith is.

Now, saving faith is faith in a Person, faith in the living, loving Lord who gave Himself for us. Do you believe in Jesus Christ? I do not merely mean, do you believe in His *teachings*? You *must* believe in them. But to be saved you must believe in *Him*, "who loved me, and gave Himself for me." There He stands—my faith seems to see Him, even now, at the right hand of God, risen from the dead and gone into Glory—and I come and trust Him and take Him to be my Savior. If He is my Savior, it is His business to save me. I am not to save myself. I put myself into His hands that He may keep me. I bring my foul self to Him, that He may cleanse me—my dead self to Him, that He may quicken me—my naked self to Him, that He may clothe me. I bring my good-for-nothing self to Him that He may be precious to me and that I may be *made* precious in Him! He is to be everything to me! It is not merely what I read about Him that I am to believe, but I am to *trust* Him. Now, Beloved, let those of us who have believed in Jesus long ago exercise that faith afresh in this gracious loving way by now living by faith upon the Son of God, who loved us, and gave Himself for us.

This faith, you perceive, is *a faith in a clear and distinct fact*—"the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." To go, again, over the sacred ground on which we trod just now, the Apostle does not say, "I have faith in the Son of God, of whom I hope that He loved me." He knows it! He is sure of it and there is no comfort to come out of faith until it learns to speak without stammering—and to say of the Lord Jesus, "who loved me, and gave Himself for me." This either is a fact, or it is not, and if it is a fact, full of every consolation, why should I not know it? Ought you to give sleep to your eyes until you know that He loves you and that you are His? This can be proven, as I have already shown you. He that believes in Jesus has the sure token of Divine Love. If you trust Him, trust Him wholly and alone, then He loved you and gave Himself for you—for you the manger at Bethlehem, for you the Cross at Calvary, for you the empty sepulcher, for you His pleading before the eternal

Throne—He loved you, and gave Himself for you, and it is for your faith to learn to speak this great Truth of God plainly!

This faith was, next, *an appropriating faith*—"Who loved me, and gave Himself for me." No faith except a personal faith will save the soul. Another man's faith will not save me. I must have a Christ of my own. The love that Christ has to others is pleasant to reflect upon, but it cannot give me peace. It must be love which He has to *me* if it is to save *me*—"Who loved me, and gave Himself for me." Somebody says that such a desire as that is selfish. I answer that it is nonsense to talk so! A wife is not thought to be selfish because she rejoices in her husband's love. A child is not selfish because he is happy in his father's love. How, dear Friends, can I take any joy in the love of Christ to men in general, if I have no sense, whatever, of His love to me? Of what use could it be to me? In order that I may love my fellow men, I must first come to know that Christ loves me. How can I have a blessing in the saving of the souls of others if my own soul is not, first, saved? Let your religion begin at home—and when you make sure of its presence there, then you may sing—

"Now will I tell to sinners round
What a dear Savior I have found."

It would be a poor occupation to go out and tell them of a dear Savior that you had *not* found, to tell them of manna that you had never gathered and of waters of which you had never drunk! No, in order to be truly useful in the Lord's service, you must, first of all, know in your own experience the truth of Paul's words, "Who loved me, and gave Himself for me." Our text is the language of faith. Unbelief says, "Yes, Christ is very loving," but if you have true faith, you will say, "He loved me." Unbelief says, "I know that Christ loves His people, but I am afraid that He would never love me." Such talk as this is mistrustful and ruinous to the soul! But Faith, as soon as it opens its mouth, begins to make a personal appropriation of the blessings of the Grace of God. What do you do when you come to the Communion Table? Do you come there to see other people eat bread and drink wine? No, but in Communion, you, each of you, eat, and each of you drink—that is the very essence of Communion. So must each of you take Christ to be yours, personally, and say, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." This is the faith which is mentioned by the Apostle—an appropriating faith.

And as I read the text, it looks to me as if it was *a faith full of wonderment.* Though the Apostle speaks of it as a matter of fact, yet he seems to be much astonished, as he says, "Who loved me, and gave Himself for me." I am sure that if the Lord will put into your soul a sense of the love of Christ, it will ravish your heart and it will carry you away with astonishment. You will go home and say to yourself, "The greatest wonder in the two worlds of Heaven and earth is this, that He loved me, and gave Himself for me!" And in consequence you will be filled with holy joy and rejoicing. "He loved me, and gave Himself for me," will ring like marriage bells in your heart! Not all the harps of Heaven can sound out sweeter music than this text when the Holy Spirit speaks it to our soul, "the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

III. I must not tarry longer on this sweet theme, but must finish with this point—THIS FAVOR ENJOYED. There is a certain power that lies in this fact, remembered, and that grows out of this faith, confessed. Paul says that he lived by the faith of the Son of God who loved Him, and gave Himself for him.

Beloved Friends, a sense of the love of Christ to you, personally, *will affect your whole life.* It will change it, at first, but it will *keep* it changed ever afterwards, and it will go on increasing in its power over you till, when you fully know it, every thought, every word and every action will seem to be set in the key of love—"who loved me, and gave Himself for me." That religion which does not affect the whole life is a dead and worthless religion, but this essence of our holy faith, "who loved me, and gave Himself for me," is Divinely operative upon the entire man. Alone, or with others in the family, or in the business, whatever his calling is, this will tincture it all with a heavenly sweetness, "who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

And this will be particularly seen in *the relieving of your griefs.* Full of pain, you will say to yourself, "Yet He loved me. He has not sent this pain for nothing. He does not afflict willingly, for He loved me and gave Himself for me." If you are very poor, you will say to yourself, "He gave the riches to Dives, but Lazarus lay in His bosom. He loved me, and gave Himself for me, and that is better than wealth." And if ever you come to be despised for His sake, and men cast out your name as evil, you will say, "I do not mind it at all. I can even rejoice in it, for He loved me, and gave Himself for me! And I may well give up myself, my reputation and everything else for Him." Sorrow ceases to be sorrow when once there is in the heart a sweet sense of the infinite love of Christ!

This thought will also help *you in your labor*. When you have something to do for Jesus that rather tries you. When you feel disappointed and baffled and the devil tempts you to give it all up and run away, you will say to yourself, "How can I? He loved me, and gave Himself for me." By Gethsemane and Calvary you will bind yourself to the sternest labor for His dear sake. Nothing is too hot or too heavy for a man whose heart is on fire with Divine Love! When the torrents of love sweep through the soul, then every obstacle is overcome. I can go as a missionary to the Congo and joyfully die in that malarious climate when I know that He loved me, and gave Himself for me! I can try to preach in the streets of London amid the jeers and the noise of the passers-by when I know that He loved me, and gave Himself for me! You will go cheerfully to the slums, you will visit the lodging houses, you will teach the ignorant, you will look after the foul and the depraved when you get this Truth of God impressed on your heart—"He loved me, and gave Himself for me."

And, Beloved Friends, *this will help you in prayer*. When you are at the Mercy Seat, tremblingly asking for some great favor, tempted to fear that you will not receive it—your faith will become very strong when you hear the whisper, "who loved me, and gave Himself for me." He that spared not Himself, how shall He not give me all things? We ask with great confidence and assurance when we feel the force of this blessed Truth of God.

By-and-by we shall come to die. I am constantly reminded of this fact. During the last two or three weeks we have lost more friends than I remember being taken away in a similar period at almost any other time. We are getting old, together, and so there are more dying than there used to be when the young people first joined the Church. Well, I shall soon be going and so will you, but we shall not dread the grave, for Jesus loved us, and gave Himself for us! Will He not be with me even in my last moments? Certainly He will! I shall not dread the terrors of the Great Judgment Day, for, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." Who is He that condemns, now that Christ has died, and risen again, and sits at the right hand of God to plead for us? The terrors of the world to come, the quivering earth, the burning sky, the falling stars—all these will cause no perturbation of mind when we are fully assured that He loved us, and gave Himself for us.

Thinking of this sublime passage, one seems to feel his wings growing and is ready to take flight to the upper sky, for what, even in Heaven, is there brighter or more blessed than this Jesus, "who loved me, and gave Himself for me"? Is not this Heaven's own song, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood"?

O my dear Hearers, I stand here and try to talk to you in my feeble way about these great Truths of God, but do you know them yourselves? If you do, you know more than Solomon ever knew! If you know this love of Christ, you know more than all the Greek philosophers put together! You need not be ashamed in any company—the knowledge of the love of Christ is the most excellent of all the sciences—there is none that can be compared with it. But if you do not know it, I pray my Lord, in His infinite mercy, to disturb and disquiet you until you do know it! What right have you to rest without faith in Jesus? You have no safety—indeed, you have no hope! Without God, without Christ, you will die without forgiveness or hope of Heaven! God bring you to seek His face tonight, before another sun has risen! Seek Him. Seek Him! Trust in the Savior's finished work and I hope we shall yet see you, again, as you come forward and say, "Yes, He loved me, and gave Himself for me, and here am I to confess it to the glory of His Grace." God grant it, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"——116 (SONG II), 248, 731.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
Galatians 2:16-21; 3.

Galatians 2:16. *Knowing that a man is not justified by the work of the Law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the Law: for by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified.* This is the primary Truth of God to be proclaimed by the Christian ministry. It is the foundation stone of all Gospel preaching and yet, somehow or other, such is the hardness of the human heart, that it is the most difficult thing to induce our hearers to build on this foundation. Many of them are always trying to lean upon their own works and so struggling to

get back under the old legal dispensation, instead of rejoicing in the liberty of the dispensation of Grace. One objection to the Doctrines of Grace rather than the Doctrine of Law is this, that some think it will lead to sin. The Apostle puts it thus—

17. *But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves are also found sinners, is, therefore, Christ the minister of sin? God forbid!* For the tendency of the Gospel of Grace is to excite *gratitude* in those who receive it. If I am freely pardoned, then I must love Him who has thus generously forgiven me. Gratitude is the root of true virtue and the mainspring of all holiness. If there are base-minded men who can suck poison out of this honeycomb, is Christ to be blamed for their evil doing? God forbid! But if, on the other hand, you and I go back to trusting in works, then we are, indeed, guilty in the sight of God.

18. *For if I build, again, the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.* If I once said I would not trust in my good works and now go back to trust in them, I have already, whatever may be my outward conduct, perpetrated a great sin!

19, 20. *For I, through the Law, am dead to the Law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.* I do not know a better epitome of Christian experience than this. This is the daily walk of a true child of God. If he lives after any other sort, then he lives not a Christian's life at all! Christ living in us, ourselves living upon Christ and our union to Christ being visibly maintained by an act of simple faith in Him—this is the true Christian's life.

21. *I do not frustrate the Grace of God: for if righteousness comes by the Law, then Christ is dead in vain.* If a man can be saved by his own works, and willings, and doings, then Christ's death was an unnecessary piece of torture and, instead of being the most glorious manifestation of Divine Love, it was a shameful waste, putting upon Christ a terrible burden of suffering which was totally unnecessary.

Galatians 3:1. *O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, that you should not obey the Truth of God, before whose eyes Jesus Christ has been evidently set forth, crucified among you?* These Galatians thought that they were very philosophical and very intellectual, but the Apostle says, "O foolish Galatians!" They thought that they had been led by reason and guided by the learning of their teachers—but Paul calls it witchery—"Who has bewitched you?" he asks, as if anything which led a man to trust in his own works should be as much abhorred as the incantations of a witch! "Who has bewitched you?" It is a dangerous state, it is a devilish snare to be brought into—to be led to trust to frames, feelings, experiences, works, prayers, or to anything else but Christ! It is a strange thing that those who have seen Christ should ever go back to these things! Lord, keep us every day, among our other sins, from our own self-righteous nature! Now the Apostle is going to reason with the Galatians against their self-righteousness.

2. *This, only, would I learn of you, Received you the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by the hearing of faith?* "You know that the Spirit of God is

necessary to salvation. You have received that. Did you get the Spirit through the works of the Law, or by simply hearing the Gospel and believing it?" The answer comes at once if we have received the Spirit! It was by the hearing of faith and not by the works of the Law.

3. *Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now made perfect by the flesh?* Surely, the way in which the Christian life begins is the method in which it is to be sustained. "As you have received Christ Jesus, the Lord," the Apostle says in another place, "so walk in Him." If you have begun in the flesh, go on in the flesh, but if you really know that your beginning was in the Spirit, then do not go back to the flesh.

4. *Have you suffered so many things in vain? If it is yet in vain.* This is another pertinent question.

5. *He, therefore, that ministers to you the Spirit, and works miracles among you, does he do it by the works of the Law, or by the hearing of faith?* They had miraculous gifts among them as a Church and the Apostle asks them whether these were works of the Law, or whether they were not exercised as the result of faith. The answer is clear. It was the believing man who worked the miracle, not the self-righteous man! Paul is now going to take the Galatians far back in Jewish history.

6. *Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.* He was not saved by his works, but by his faith. His faith was the means of the imputation to him of the righteousness of the Savior who was yet to come.

7. *Know you, therefore, that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.* He was called the father of the faithful, therefore the faithful, those who believe as he did, and are full of his faith, are his children.

8-10. *And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, In you shall all nations be blessed. So, then, they which are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. For as many as are of the works of the Law are under the curse: 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.* Now, if everyone who has once violated God's Law is cursed forever, how mad are those who hope to enter Heaven by that very Law which is the gate to shut them out! How dare they confide in that which is their worst enemy—which is sworn to curse them in time and in eternity!

11. *But that no man is justified by the Law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.* Scripture lays it down as a rule that justified men live by faith! If this is the rule, then certainly *they* should not live by works.

12. *And the Law is not of faith: but, The man that does them shall live in them.* So that the justified man is not justified by the Law, but by faith. He stands before God, not in what he does, not even in what the Spirit enables him to do! His own prayers, tears, communings with Christ. His own labors, his earnest and indefatigable attempts to extend the Kingdom of Christ—all count for nothing in the matter of his justification! He hangs them all upon the Cross of Christ and relies only upon the Cross, looking in no manner, whatever, to anything which comes of himself.

13, 14. *Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree: that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.* We were all under the curse of the Law, but Christ voluntarily took our place and was made a curse for us, so that the blessing might be ours.

15, 16. *Brethren, I speak after the manner of men. Though it is but a man's covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no man disannuls, or adds thereto. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He says not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to your seed, which is Christ.* Notice how important a single letter of the Scriptures may be! If vital Doctrine may depend upon the use of a singular or plural noun, therefore let us jealously guard the smallest jot or tittle of the Inspired Word of God.

17-19. *And this I say, that the Law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot disannul the Covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, the Law, that it should make the promise of no effect. Or if the inheritance is of the Law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise. What purpose, then, does the Law serve?* Some might argue that as the Law cannot justify, it is useless, but, on the contrary, it serves a very definite purpose, as Paul goes on to show.

19-22. *It was added because of transgressions till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one. Is the Law, then, against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a Law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the Law. But the Scripture has concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.* Paul constantly comes back to this point, that salvation is all of Grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

23-25. *But before faith came, we were kept under the Law, shut up under the faith which should afterward be revealed. Therefore the Law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.* The Apostle is not speaking of a schoolmaster as we understand that word, but of the slave or servant who took the boys to school, watched over them in school and out, and even used the rod if occasion demanded.

26. *For you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.* The Fatherhood of God is common to all Believers—but there is no *universal fatherhood*, as many teach it in these days.

27-29. *For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise.* May this be true of all of us, for Christ's sake! Amen.

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

FREEDOM AT ONCE AND FOREVER
NO. 2371

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 29, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 13, 1888

"To proclaim liberty to the captives."
Isaiah 61:1.

I DO not know whether you generally read the daily newspaper. I think we might get up a "Society for the Suppression of Useless Knowledge." A great deal that appears in the newspapers amounts only to that—and much time is wasted reading the paper. But sometimes we get a gem among the news and, to my mind, there was a gem contained in a Reuter's telegram, from Rio Janeiro, May 10th—"The Brazilian Chamber of Deputies has voted the immediate and unconditional abolition of slavery in Brazil." My heart rejoiced as I read that paragraph! I hope it does not mean that this vote can be defeated in some other Chamber, or the abolition can be prevented by some other power. But if it means that slavery is to be immediately and unconditionally abolished in Brazil, I call upon you all to thank God and rejoice in His name! Wherever slavery exists, it is an awful curse, and the abolition of it is an unspeakable blessing. All free men should praise God and especially those whom Christ has made free, for they are, "free indeed."

I am not going to preach about the slavery in Brazil and yet the message about its abolition will be a great part of my theme. There is another slavery, a slavery into which *we* were born, a slavery in which we have lived and, alas, a slavery under which some of us still smart. And Jesus Christ has come, as the Great Liberator, "to proclaim liberty to the captives." There is no question about *that* emancipation! It is not a Chamber of Deputies which has voted it and it is not a thing which may be thrown out by another parliamentary body. Jesus Christ, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, has, Himself, come with Divine authority—authority never to be questioned or disputed—to proclaim liberty from the slavery of sin!

When there was a royal proclamation to be made in the olden times, they used to employ men to go with trumpets through the streets of the city and to the villages and towns in the country, to summon the people to the market cross, to hear the king's message. That is what I am here for tonight—to sound the Gospel trumpet as best I can, and to make this proclamation—"O yes, O yes, in the name of the great King of Kings, there is liberty for the bond slaves of Satan, deliverance for those who are under captivity to sin." I am going to proclaim that good news with all my might and with joyful earnestness to tell the slaves of sin and Satan that there is liberty for them through the Great Emancipator, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

I. I shall begin by describing THE NATURE OF THIS LIBERTY. Let me turn to my newspaper paragraph again—"The Brazilian Chamber of Deputies has voted the immediate and unconditional abolition of slavery in Brazil."

So the proclamation which I have to make, tonight, concerns *immediate liberation*. You have been the slave of sin long enough! You need not be sin's slave any longer. Christ has not come to work out for you a deliverance which will take hours, days, weeks, or months to complete—He has come to knock your fetters off with a single stroke and to set you free at once! If His gracious power is manifested in this assembly, the former slave of sin will go out of the Tabernacle door *free*—not half-free, with one or two of his fetters broken—there shall be for him immediate liberty! It does not take any time to work in the human heart the great change which is called regeneration. There may be a great many things going *before* it and coming *after* it which take up much time, but to pass from death to life is the work of an instant! It must be so. If a man is dead and he is made alive, there can be no interval between the state of death and the state of life. There must be a second in which the transition takes place. When a blind man's eyes are opened, it may be that he does not see for some time very clearly, but there is an *instant* in which the first beam of light enters the eyes and falls upon the retina, and in which the eyes become conscious of the power of light. So, in a moment, while I am speaking, the Lord can save you! In an instant, you slaves of sin and Satan, He can make you free! It is the immediate abolition of slavery that I have to proclaim to you!

I believe that, in Brazil, they have been trying a system of apprenticeship. It was the Emperor's intention—and God bless that Emperor—he thought that all slaves should be free, but he thought that a little time ought to be taken to prepare them for liberty, to educate them up to the state in which they could act as free men. So they were apprenticed and liberation came gradually to certain of them after a period of servitude. But this act of the Deputies, if it is really carried, is for immediate abolition and no apprenticeship. Now, I do not want any of you to be apprenticed, as it were, and to wait awhile before you get free! I know that, with regard to the slavery of drunkenness, men think that they will drink a little less, and a little less, and gradually give it up. Do not drink any at all! Have done with it right now—you ought not to need to have any apprenticeship to the evil thing! So is it with the lusts of the flesh—men suppose that they can gradually subjugate their passions and lift themselves out of that slavery. No, dear Sirs, it must be done at a stroke! And it *will be* if it is really done! You shall be immediately and on the spot set free!

That poor creature who had left his father's house and went into a far country and reduced himself to such poverty that he was feeding swine—degrading work for a Jew to perform—how did he get back to his father? He said, "I will arise and go to my father. And he arose and went to his father." If he had stopped. If he had reasoned with his master. If he had said, "You must set me to feed sheep and not pigs." If he had asked for an increase of wages, he would have remained in the far country. He never gave his old master ten minutes' notice, but he ran to his father

straight away. That is the only way to be saved—to run for it—just as Lot fled out of Sodom! There must be no hesitation, no staying, but an immediate, determined resolve to quit the dominions of sin and to fly to the shelter of God's Grace! O great King of Kings, may it be immediate liberation to many here, tonight, without any sort of apprenticeship! May they come to Christ and at once find liberty!

There is a notion abroad that you cannot be sure that you are saved till you come to die. Is that the Gospel? Am I to proclaim liberty only to men who are about to die? I will preach no such Gospel! I come to proclaim, in my Master's name, *immediate abolition*, *instantaneous pardon*, a present change of heart, the breaking of the chain and setting the captive free at once! Do not believe that you are to go through all your life only hoping and fearing, doubting and hesitating. That is like the old Popish doctrine! But good, true, Protestant, Bible doctrine is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." The moment you believe, you have it! You have passed from death unto life, and shall never come into condemnation! I am glad that I have to proclaim the immediate abolition of slavery to all who trust Christ. However badly I may tell it, it is such good news that any here who feel their slavery—and long to be set free—will leap to hear the glad tidings.

But, in the next place, if I look at my paper, again, I find that it says, "The Brazilian Chamber of Deputies has voted the immediate and *unconditional abolition* of slavery in Brazil." I like that word, "unconditional." It demands no payment! It does not say, "You must bring so much and then you shall be set free." No, if the slave has not a penny. If he is utterly bankrupt, he is set free by the decree of the Chamber. And likewise, there is no payment for Gospel liberty! You are bid to come and take the Free Grace of God, "without money and without price." You could not bring sufficient *anything* to pay for salvation, even if God were willing to sell it! It cost the Savior His *life*—you cannot have anything to match with that wondrous redemption money! That which only Christ could buy, and buy with His blood, you certainly cannot purchase with any merits of your own, even if God allowed you to do so! Come then, and take this liberty—it is unconditional, that is, without payment!

Unconditional also means that it is given without any promises on the slave's part. It might have been made a condition that he should be set free provided that he did so much at certain times, or if he promised this, and promised that. But no, this liberation in Brazil is unconditional. The man is free in the largest sense of the word—there is no mortgage upon him to be paid off, by and by—he is wholly, absolutely and unconditionally free. What a Gospel this is that we preach! It sets poor sinners free without an, "if," or a, "but," asking nothing of them, giving everything to them! Even the requirements of Grace are the gifts of Grace. If you are bid to repent, your repentance is *given to you* by Him who is exalted on high to give it! Faith is asked of you, but even faith is *a gift of God* and the work of the Spirit of God! Salvation is unconditionally given to those whom God has chosen, who have proven their choice by hearing the Word with faith and accepting it unconditionally.

It took me a long time to get hold of this Truth of God. I kept thinking that I must *do* something, or that I would have to *suffer* something. I thought that I would be driven to despair, or be made to agonize and so forth. God knows that I had enough of that experience, but I always kept thinking that my hope lay there. Oh, what a mercy it is to catch the meaning of this word, "unconditional!" Whatever you may be or may not be, Jesus Christ comes to set poor sinners free! And when they believe on Him, they are set free without any condition. You see a horse in a meadow, sometimes, with a halter on. It is easy work to catch him. Ah, but God does not turn us out into a meadow with a halter on! He takes the halter off when He sets us at liberty and the devil, himself, cannot catch us again! The Lord takes the fetters off the one whom He makes to be His child. He does not leave him with a long chain on one of his legs, and say, "You are free, all but that." Oh no, it is *unconditional* emancipation! Who is there who will refuse to accept deliverance from slavery which is immediate and unconditional?

But I notice, next, in my newspaper, here, that, "the Chamber of Deputies voted the immediate and unconditional abolition of slavery"—that is to say, that there is not to be any more slavery in Brazil. Slavery actually ceases to exist there! You cannot find a slave. Not only are slaves free, but *slavery,* itself, is abolished! Oh, is not this a wonderful fact? Sin is one great slavery, but Christ comes and pardons it and He so pardons it that sin, itself, ceases to be! "In those days, and in that time, says the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none." Part of the work of the Messiah, as revealed to Daniel, was, "To make an end of sins." Well, if He makes an end of sins, there's an end of them, is there not? Jesus comes to drown our sins in the depths of the sea, to blot them out as a cloud is blotted out, so that they actually and absolutely cease to exist! He has come to remove from us the penalty and the guilt of sin so entirely that there is an abolition of the slavery of sin which is immediate and unconditional.

Then the Lord Jesus Christ also comes to abolish the *power* of sin. He takes away from us our slavery to our passions, our lusts, our infirmities, our constitutional temperaments. "Oh," says one, "I am glad to hear *that*! Do you mean to say that the Lord Jesus Christ can set me free from the *power* of sin?" Yes, I do mean to say that, and He can do it immediately! He can do it now, while you are sitting in that seat. If you have come in here fond of strong drink, the Grace of God can make you go out hating the very sight of it! If you have come in here proud, the Grace of God can make you go away broken-hearted and humble! If you have come in here lascivious, the Grace of God can take out of your soul the impurity and make you love that which is sweet, and pure, and holy!

"Well," says one, "I do not believe in such amazing changes." I did not say that you did, but if you had ever felt them, you would believe in them! Some of us have experienced these changes and there are many, now, in Heaven, who were once among the foulest of the foul! But the Lord Jesus came and set them free from the power of their corrupt natures—and they became holy people, a people who were examples to oth-

ers—and that same Lord Jesus Christ can give *you* immediate, unconditional deliverance from the power of sin!

I will tell you another thing. There is one power that sin has over us, and that is a feeling full of dread. Conscience co-operates with it and, sometimes, very properly so. But these slaves in Brazil, when they are set free, will not have to come up once a month to have their backs made bare and to receive 20 lashes apiece. Oh, dear, no! It is unconditional abolition of slavery they are to have. And when the Lord sets His people free from the guilt and power of sin, He delivers them from the lash of sin, takes away the spirit of bondage and gives them the spirit of liberty! They were afraid of God, before, but now they come to Him, crying, "Abba, Father," entering into His presence with joy and delight! It is wonderful how soon this unholy dread, this slavish fear, is cast out of the heart. Immediate and unconditional abolition of slavery means the removal, not only of sin, but also of the guilt, the penalty, the dread and the bondage which come of sin! We have to proclaim that emancipation tonight!

These slaves in Brazil, if they are, indeed, set free, will not be slaves again. The decree of the Deputies is not that they are to be set free for six years, but forever! I hope that Brazil will be like our own country in this respect. You know how Cowper sang—

"Slaves cannot breathe in England. If their lungs
Receive our air, that moment they are free!
They touch our country and their shackles fall!"

Well, so it is in the Kingdom of Grace—there will be no going back to slavery if Christ once sets you free. "If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free, indeed"—and free forever!

The slaves in Brazil, if they are set free, will be emancipated lawfully—they will not have stolen their liberty. No, if anybody were to speak to one of these emancipated slaves, and say, "You have no right to be free," he would answer, "I have! I am authorized to be free by the highest authority—the rulers of the land have made me a free man." Oh, Beloved, if we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are set free from the law of sin and death by the highest possible authority! The Law of God, Himself, has set us free! Justice demands our freedom, and mercy secures it. So, you see that it is immediate and unconditional abolition of slavery that we have to proclaim by the preaching of the Gospel!

And listen once more. This proclamation is universal throughout all Brazil. Some slaves are very black, but nowadays some slaves are nearly white. I have heard of a good many who were in slavery and who had not a discernible tint of black about them—and yet they were slaves. Well, there is liberty for the whitest and for the blackest, too! I do not know whether you are whites or blacks—it may be that you are very black, that you have gone very far into sin—but there is liberty even for you! It may be that you are not so very black—you are a brown sort of sinner, neither very good nor very bad. Or it may be that you are nearly white. Well, well, the same Christ gives liberty to all who put their trust in Him!

Some of these slaves in Brazil are probably very young. Perhaps some of them were only born a day or two ago, but they are now free. O you

young children, boys and girls, young men, young women—you cannot be free too soon! You cannot obtain the liberty with which Christ makes His people free too early in your lives! A young slave is a dreadful sight. It is sad to think that while he is yet so young, he should have lost his liberty. God set you young slaves free! But if there is a man in Brazil who is a hundred years old and he is a slave, this proclamation makes him free. Even so, if you have lived a long while in sin, Jesus is able to set you free from it! He can take away your old habits! The Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots, but Christ can wash Ethiopian sinners white and He can change leopard sinners so as to make them gentle as fawns! Do not doubt Christ's power because of your age! You are neither too young nor too old to have the liberty that He gives to all who trust Him!

Slaves in Brazil were generally born slaves and you, also, were born slaves. But the Lord Jesus Christ can deliver you from the mischief worked by Adam and set the home-born slaves at liberty from original sin! Some become slaves willingly. I do not suppose that many do so, literally, but we have, all of us, *willingly* bowed our necks to the yoke of sin. This is the worst part of the slavery, that it is the slavery of our wills. We have willed to sin and we have taken pleasure in it, but, Beloved, even if it is so, Christ is able to set us free! Perhaps some men swore to their masters that they would never leave them, that they always would be with them as their slaves. But this decree of the Deputies has set them free. There may be somebody here—I hope there is not—but there may be a man, here, who has sold himself to the devil. There may be some woman, here, who has given herself up, body and soul, to work iniquity. But even if it is so, the Lord can say, "Your Covenant with death shall be disannulled and your agreement with Hell shall not stand." You never were your own, so you could not give yourself to Satan! You are released from all your rash promises and your wicked oaths! You cannot be bound by any covenant that you have made with the devil and with sin! Come and be free, for thus says the Lord, there is immediate, unconditional emancipation for all such as desire to be delivered from sin and to have the liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free!

II. Now, secondly, and very briefly, I am going to speak upon THE METHOD OF LIBERATION. I have described the *nature* of the liberty, now let me tell you the *method* of liberation.

It is not thus in Brazil, but what I am going to speak about has to do with the Kingdom of God's Grace. Listen and learn! This is the method of liberation. First, *Heaven provided a Ransom.* When our slaves in Jamaica were set free, it was a glorious act, and you remember that the English nation paid many millions of pounds to the owners of the slaves. There has been a Ransom paid for the sons of men—Jesus Christ bore on the tree the Ransom for me, and for you, also, if you believe in Him. This is the basis of our liberty, that Christ has bought us with a price and set us free!

The next thing is that *Sovereign Grace proclaims the blood-bought sinner free.* God, from His Throne, declares that those for whom Christ has died shall live, that those whom He has bought shall be His in that day

when He makes up His jewels. God, the all-glorious Jehovah, proclaims the blood-bought sinner free, and free he is!

But, next, *Almighty Grace secures the believing one's emancipation.* Grace comes to the soul and finds it a captive. But Grace resolves that it shall be free. At first the sinner does not care for freedom—he hugs his chains like the Israelites did in Egypt, when they cried, "Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians." God will not have it so! He turns the heart of the Egyptians against Israel and they oppress the Israelites—and make them hate their bondage. Oh, it is a blessed thing when God begins to make you feel uneasy in your slavery! Some of you have got on very well under the dominion of the devil up till now, but you are beginning to fret a little—you do not enjoy sin as you used to do. You have been gathering in part of the wages of sin, which is death. Some receive these wages in their bodies, others receive them in their minds when they begin to feel despondency and despair creeping over them. The prospect of death is unpleasant to you. Sin begins to be a burden hard to bear. I am glad of it! The greatest, hardest work of Grace is to make the slave of sin willing to be set free. Grace is doing that and, having gone so far that it has made you hate your chains and long for liberty, it will bring you out of captivity!

You may be a long time before you see the outer gate of the prison and escape from the house of bondage, but you shall see it. If you see it, tonight, I pray the living God to help you run through that open gate and to be free *tonight—tonight*—for I cannot help desiring that my subject, the immediate abolition of slavery, may come home with saving power to some heart! Oh, you young men, and lads of fifteen, I remember when I came into a House of Prayer—a very small one it was—and sat under the gallery with all my fetters on. But then I wanted to be free! I longed to be set at liberty and when I heard that blessed message, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth," I looked—and I tell you it was my surprise, and it is *still* my surprise—that my fetters were all gone in a moment! They seemed to be of iron, and of iron they were, but they melted as the morning frost melts in the sun when the beams of the Grace of God, in the glorified and exalted Savior, came streaming in upon my soul! I was free in a moment! It was immediate, unconditional abolition of slavery! Grace had done it! Grace had done it! O Lord, let Your Grace do the same for others now!

Often, when I come in at the door and my eyes fall on this vast congregation, I feel a tremor go through me to think that I should have to speak to you all and be, in some measure, accountable for your future state. Unless I preach the Gospel faithfully and with all my heart, your blood will be required at my hands. Do not wonder, therefore, that when I am weak and sick, I feel my head swim when I stand up to speak to you, and my heart is often faint within me. But I do have this joy at the back of it all—God does set many sinners free in this place! Some people reported that I was mourning that there were no conversions. Brothers and Sisters, if you were all to be converted tonight, I should mourn for the myriads outside! That is true, but I praise the Lord for the many who are converted here. When I came last Tuesday to see converts, I had 21

whom I was able to propose to the Church—and it will be the same next Tuesday, I do not doubt. God is saving souls! I am not preaching in vain. I am not despondent about that matter—liberty is given to the captives and there will be liberty for some of them tonight! I wonder who it will be? Some of you young women over yonder, I trust. Some who have dropped in here, tonight, for the first time. Oh, may this first opportunity of your hearing the Word in this place be the time of beginning a new life which shall never end—a life of holiness, a life of peace with God!

This, then, is how sinners are liberated. Christ pays the ransom price, the Father declares them free, the Grace of God secures their liberty and, further, if they are once made free, then *a righteous Law protects them.* The masters in Brazil cannot get back their slaves. There is an old villain who used to flog his slave. He said that he had the right to beat his own as much as he liked. But when once the Negro is free, he dare not touch him. He would like to get him back, again, but what would the black man do if his master tried to make him a slave again? Why, he would appeal to the law! And so will we! If Christ has made us free, we will appeal to the Law of God! We will go to the High Court of Justice and say to the Judge of All, "Lord, You have made me free. Will You not preserve to me my liberty?" It is God that justifies! Who is he that condemns? Who can make him a slave whom God declares to be free? Oh, that you might all know this liberty and enjoy it! God grant it to you, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake!

III. I finish with the third point, which is this—THE PERSONS WHO OBTAIN THIS LIBERTY. I will say only a very little upon this head, but I am hoping that many here will be able to say, "I belong to that lot, the persons who obtain this liberty."

First, *they were once slaves*. These Brazilian Deputies cannot set a man free if he is not a slave. The Grace of God cannot heal a man who is not sick. God Almighty cannot make a man alive who is not dead. It is essential to us that we be in slavery, or else we cannot be liberated! Come now, what do you say about this? Does anyone answer, "I was born free, and was never in bondage to any man. I am as good as my neighbors, yes, and better than most of them"? I have nothing to say to you. "They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick." There is no Christ for you who have no sin! There is no salvation for you who never dreaded condemnation! How could there be? Does Christ come to give clothes to those who are already well clad? Does He come to feed those who are already feasted, or to enrich those who are increased in goods and have need of nothing? Not He! He comes to preach *repentance* to the sinner and *pardon* to the guilty. You must be a slave, or there is no freedom for you!

And, as far as my piece of paper is concerned, the slaves who are set free must be slaves in Brazil, that is, for the time being, *slaves under the reign of Grace.* If they are not in Brazil, the Brazilian Deputies cannot set them free. And you must come into the Kingdom of Christ if you would be emancipated! O you slaves, you must come under the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ! You must be willing, from this time on, to call Him King, to obey Him and to abide by His laws. You must come to Him just

as you are, quit your life of sin and love Him! And love His holiness and seek to serve Him! If you come under the dominion of the Lord Jesus Christ, then there is absolutely proclaimed to you, tonight, immediate, unconditional abolition of slavery! God grant that you may obtain this priceless Gift!

And, once more, *this emancipation is for all who will accept it unconditionally.* Now, one would think that when the freedom is to be given unconditionally, everybody would say, "That suits me. If there are no conditions, I am sure that I do not want any, for if there were conditions, I might not be able to comply with them." But I find that every man will have conditions. One says, "Yes, yes, I would like to be saved, but then I do not want to give up my sins." Do you not? Then you must remain a slave! "Well," says another, "I would like to give up *most* of my sins, but there is *one* which I could not give up. The fact is, I have to make my living through it—I cannot give *that* up." You must either remain a slave, or you must come to be unconditionally set free!

"But I do not wish to be set free by Grace," says a third, "I would like to *do something* towards my salvation." I know you would. You would like to have some of the honor of it, but it will never be written up, "Christ and Company, Saviors, Limited." It would be very "limited," I am sure, if it were so! You must have all Christ, or no Christ! Christ must save you from the A to the Z of the alphabet, or else you will never be sacred at all! Will you surrender unconditionally, since God gives His Grace unconditionally? Away with all terms and conditions! Come as you are. Come now. Come immediately! Come unconditionally and you shall be saved! The Lord grant you Grace to yield to His mercy and to yield at once!

"What shall I do?" asks one. "I think I will go home and pray." Well, you may do so, if you like, but the Gospel message is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." Still, do pray, for God does hear prayer. That is a wonderful story that came to us lately. You may have seen it, perhaps, in the paper. There was picked up, on the shore of Western Australia, (I forget the town for the moment), an albatross. It was dead on the beach and on the bird's neck was a card tied with a string. The man who picked up the card took it to someone in authority, for on it was written, "Thirteen of us sailors cast away on the Crozets." These are a number of rocky islands in the far south of the Indian Ocean. The ship in which these men had sailed had been wrecked and they were left with a certain quantity of biscuits on the Crozet Islands. I do not know how they caught the albatross, but it shows the genius of man and the love of life, for they managed to catch this great strong-winged bird and fastened the card about his neck. And he must have taken a flight of nearly 2,000 miles, and have fallen down on the shore with the shipwrecked mariners' message!

The French Government dispatched a man-of-war to the Crozets—and so did the English Government. These poor fellows had not only sent tidings by the albatross, but they had also gathered a great pile of stones, and put a flag on the top, to attract the attention of any who might pass that way. Nothing has been seen of them, for they did not wait long enough—they put out to sea in the two boats in which they reached the

islands and they have never been heard of since, so far as I know—but see what efforts they made! They piled the stones to attract the attention of passing sailors and they hung the card about the neck of the albatross. Why, there did not seem one chance in a thousand that the bird would ever go to a shore where that message would be *read*, yet the men did what they could!

Now, I exhort you, if you are dying and perishing, do *anything* that you can that may bring you relief! Send a petition up to Heaven. Though it may seem as if you hung your prayer upon a poor bird's neck, send it flying! Pile up the stones with the flag on the top—your groans, cries and tears—that you may attract attention to your desperate state! Yet you are not, after all, driven to such bare chances as these! You may pray as much as you like, but the Gospel message is, "Believe, and live." Bear the royal proclamation and ask for nothing more! There is redemption—the ransom price is paid—the slave is free! Believe it. Accept it. Act upon it—go forth and prove it to be true! Oh, that some soul would do that tonight! Believe that God has provided for your emancipation and accept the liberty Christ has purchased! Why should you quarrel with it?

I know that sinners try to find reasons why they should not be saved. If there is a person in prison, tonight, condemned to be hanged, and if I were to go to him, and say, "I have every reason to know that your life will be spared," I do not believe that he would sit down and try to prove to me that it could not be! I do not think that he would attempt to argue that he *should be hanged*! At any rate, I would not talk that way, myself, if it were my case. As far as ever my logic would carry me, I would try to argue my neck out of the hangman's noose, *not into it*! O poor Soul, do not argue yourself into Hell! Do not argue against Divine Mercy! As we sang just now—

"Take salvation
Take it now, and happy be."

Say to yourself and say to your God, "I believe it! I accept it! I will go my way made free by Sovereign Grace and I will act as a free man should, to the praise of my great Master and to the glory of His Grace." The Lord bless you, dear Friends, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
Luke 4:14-32.

Verse 14. *And Jesus returned, in the power of the Spirit, into Galilee.* Ah, dear Brothers and Sisters, if our Lord Jesus needed "the power of the Spirit," how much more do you and I need it! We have no power of our own, but He was the Son of God. He was a Divine Teacher and yet, when He went to His work, it was, "in the power of the Spirit." Tarry, Brothers and Sisters, till you have that power—it is of no use for you to go without it.

14, 15. *And there went out a fame of Him through all the region round about. And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.* There was a wondrous power about His teaching—"Never man spoke like this man."

Perhaps His hearers did not understand what the power was, but they glorified the new Teacher who had come into their midst!

16. *And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up.* It is always a difficult thing for a young man to begin preaching in his own native town. A Prophet is not without honor except in his own country, yet Jesus, "came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up."

16. *And, as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath Day, and stood up to read.* It was the custom to read parts of Holy Writ in the synagogue and then to say a few words by way of exposition—and this the Savior did.

17. *And there was delivered unto Him the book of the Prophet Isaiah.* And when He had opened the book, that is, unrolled the parchment containing Isaiah's prophecy—

17. *He found the place where it was written.* You will find the passage in the 61st Chapter of Isaiah.

18, 19. *The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.* There He stopped—it was all of the passage that, then, seemed suitable.

20. *And He closed the book, and He gave it again to the minister, and sat down.* In those days, the preacher sat down, and those who listened stood up, I daresay that practice tended to keep the hearers awake and it was all the easier for the speaker! Well might the Savior sit down, weighted as He was with a burden of holy instruction that He was about to impart to the people, or, perhaps, sitting down as if Himself at rest, He appeared the more ready to give rest to them.

20. *And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on Him.* The young Nazarene, who had left them for a while, and had come home, again, was the center of His fellow-townsmen's attention.

21. *And He began to say unto them, This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.* He thus declared that *He was the anointed Messiah.*

22. *And all bore Him witness and wondered at the gracious word which proceeded out of His mouth.* They did not, at first, ridicule or deny what Jesus said—His doctrine was pleasing and comforting—and they were ready to accept it.

22. *And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?* Now they began to question—"Is not this the son of the carpenter?"

23. *And He said unto them, You will surely say unto Me the proverb, Physician, heal yourself: whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Your country.* "You have been doing great things over yonder at Capernaum, do the same at Nazareth. You should not leave Your own native town without working miracles here." Now there was an opportunity for Jesus to ingratiate Himself with the people and win their good word. If He would only perform miracles among them, He would be highly exalted in their esteem.

24, 25. *And He said, Verily I say unto you, No Prophet is accepted in His own country. But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in*

the day, of Elijah, when the Heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land. Many husbands died, and many widows in Israel were left desolate in those terrible days of trial.

26. *But unto none of them was Elijah sent, save unto Zarephath, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.* This was as much as to say, "It is not because I lived here that I shall work miracles in this place. There were many widows round about Elijah, but he was not sent to one of them. He was sent to a widow in Zarephath, a city of Sidon, a heathen woman in another country." Mark the Sovereignty of God! He bestows His mercy where He wills, according to His declaration to Moses, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." We dare not ask God why He does this, "for He gives not account of any of His matters." He acts wisely, but He acts according to the good pleasure of His own will.

27. *And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the Prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman; the Syrian.* He, too, was a heathen from a distant country. Healing came to him, but to none of the lepers of *Israel*. God will do as He pleases with His own mercy and Grace. The question that He asks is, "Is it not lawful for Me to do what I will with My own? "This doctrine of Divine Sovereignty was not according to the taste of these people—they did not like it—and some of *you*, I fear, do not like it. They grew very angry. They began to gnash their teeth and to say, "This young Man must be silenced! We will not listen to such doctrine as this from Him."

28. *And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath.* They did not mind hearing the first part of His teaching, but now that He exalts the Sovereignty of God, and lays the sinner low, He speaks too plainly for them—"They were filled with wrath."

29, 30. *And rose up, and thrust Him out of the city, and led Him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast Him down headlong. But He, passing through the midst of them, went His way.* They could not destroy Him at that time. His work was not done and He was immortal till it was fully accomplished.

31, 32. *And came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the Sabbath Day. And they were astonished at His doctrine: for His word was with power.* God grant that His Word may be with power tonight! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—357, 497, 552.

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

A PAGE FROM A ROYAL DIARY
NO. 2372

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 5, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 17, 1888.

"Look You upon me and be merciful to me, as You used to do to those who love Your name."
Psalm 119:132.

["We believe that David wrote this Psalm. It is Davidic in tone and expression and it tallies with David's experience in many interesting points. In our youth, our teachers called it, 'David's pocketbook,' and we incline to the opinion often expressed that here we have the royal diary written at various times throughout a long life."—*C. H. SPURGEON'S Note in* The Treasury of David *as to the author of Psalm 119.*]

PERHAPS YOU noticed, while I was reading, that during the writing of several of the verses, David occupied himself with the praises of God's Word. He kept to that point, extolling with all his might those Scriptures in which God had spoken to his heart, but he could not go on long without prayer. If these meditations were written in his pocket-book, day by day, it is noteworthy that although he fervently praises the Word of God, yet he also frequently breaks out into prayer. However the child of God may occupy his mind—and he very properly employs it in many holy occupations—yet he often turns to *prayer*, for he cannot live without it. Well does Montgomery say—

"Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
The Christian's native air."

We *must* pray. Brothers and Sisters, we are bound to praise God for all His goodness. We cannot help bearing testimony to His faithfulness and His Truth. We are delighted to engage in all acts of holy service, but, in addition to all that, we *must* pray. Prayer is a *sine qua non* with us—we continually come back to that sacred exercise, for, without it, we *are* nothing and can *do* nothing. Therefore, again I say, we *must* pray.

Notice, also, how brief David's prayer is, and yet how full of matter! I believe that very often, the longer the prayer is, the less there is in it, and that the best prayers that were ever prayed have usually been the shortest. An arrow may easily be too long and prayers should be like arrows shot from the bow of faith. If they are short, it does not matter, as long as they are sharp and went on their way with a good pull of the bowstring. The first petition, here, is very short, but very full—"Look You upon me." The words are few, but the sense is deep, as I shall have to show you. Oh, that we all spoke with greater freshness and naturalness in prayer—

that we had no thought about keeping on with fine language, but great anxiety as to holding on with a firm grip of wrestling, pleading prayer!

The whole of our text is but short, yet it contains much more meaning than I can bring out to you in this one discourse. I want to call your attention to four things in it. First, *David's brief petition*—"Look You upon me." Secondly, *his humble confession* (it is not given in so many words, but it lies hidden away like the perfumed violet beneath the green leaves)—"Be merciful unto me," which is a virtual confession of sin. Thirdly, *his tacit profession,* for he says, "as You used to do unto those that love Your name," which is tacitly saying that he loves God's name, or else he could not pray the Lord to deal with him as He used to do with such people. And, fourthly—and here I shall enlarge somewhat—*his gracious aspiration.* The highest, loftiest wish that David had was that God would deal with him as He was accustomed to do unto those that love His name. He did not want to fare either better or worse than the rest of the Lord's family, so he boldly prayed, "Look You upon me, and be merciful unto me, as You used to do unto those that love Your name."

I. To begin with, here is, in our text, DAVID'S BRIEF PETITION—"Look You upon me."

I think that these words came to David's mouth from his heart and that he prayed, "Look You upon me," *because his own eyes had failed him.* Turn to the 123rd verse. If you look at it, you will see that one thing in a saint may suggest another. In that verse he wrote, "My eyes fail," and in our text he says, "Look *You* upon me. Lord, when I feel as if I could not look at You, do You look at me! My eyes fail me. I have washed them out with rivers of water, I have flooded them with fountains of grief. Unbelief has come in. I cannot see as I would—the dust of the world and the smoke of care have dimmed my eyes—I seem to grow blind, my Lord, and though I would always look at You and never take my eyes off You, yet my eyes fail me!" In such a case as that, it is so sweet to pray to God, "Look You upon me."

Brothers and Sisters, there is great virtue in our looking to Christ—it is the way of salvation! What virtue, then, must there be in Christ's love-gaze upon us! A faith-look at the blood of Jesus gives us peace, but, as I always remind you, it is *God's* sight of the blood that brings us salvation. Did He not say to Moses and Aaron, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you"?—

"When your eyes of faith are dim
Still trust in Jesus, sink or swim."

When you cannot see your God, still say with poor Hagar, "You God see me." Jehovah is the all-seeing One—remember that and be comforted. If your eyes are put out, His eyes can never be blinded—still does He look upon you with compassion and see you with His eyes of Grace. Again I say, Lord, if ever I should forget to look to You, or if ever I should be in such a state of despondency that I cannot look up to You, look You upon me!

Next, notice that *man's eyes had misjudged David.* I think the Psalmist's prayer is to be read in this light, that he had been condemned and persecuted by the ungodly and he was evidently under the oppression of

man as we noticed in reading the 134th verse—"Deliver me from the oppression of man." Men had misconstrued his words and misrepresented him, so now he says, "Lord, look *You* upon me! Whenever evil men look at me, they look with disapproval—they do not see what should be seen, but they see a great deal that is not really there. Lord, I know what they say of me, but You look upon me!" It has fallen to the lot of many of us to pass under the censure of men and the cure for that censure is to cry, "Lord, look You upon me." Mr. Blind-Man, the foreman of the Vanity Fair jury that condemned Christian's brother, Faithful, said, "I see clearly that this man is a heretic." And the blinder bad men are, the more fault they can see in God's people, even when there is nothing of evil to be seen! They will make it up if they cannot find it and they will swear to it even if they know that it is not so. It is not for a child of God to battle with them about the matter, but to turn his eyes to the Lord who is our only Judge and, with David, to pray, "Look *You* upon me."

Again, do you not think it was this that made the Psalmist pray in this way? He knew that *God's eyes perceive what His servant needs.* David opened his mouth and panted—he knew he needed *something*, but he hardly knew what it was! At times we do not know how to word our prayers because our sense of need is so very great. It seems idle to ask for one thing when we need everything! When we are quite emptied out, we scarcely know where to begin, and when our case is very puzzling and perplexing, we cannot tell what to ask for when we come to the Throne of Grace. That is a sweet thought, "You, my heavenly Father, know what things I have need of before I ask for them!" Prayer is not for God's *information*, but for *our instruction*! We need to be made to learn what our needs are, but God always knows them. It is a very blessed thing, when we cannot tell what our needs are, to utter such a prayer as this, "Look You upon me, O Lord! You will see what I need. You will see wherein I fail. You will see how I struggle. You will see what I suffer. Lord, look You upon me!"

This is also, to my mind, such a lovely and God-honoring prayer because it leaves all with God. David does not say what he thinks the Lord should do. When prayer dictates to God, it has gone beyond its lawful bounds and it is not, then, proper prayer. But the Psalmist prays, "Lord, look You upon me." When he was very sick, he did not say, "Lord, heal me," but he prayed, "Lord, look You upon me." An ordinary physician's look, alone, is not worth much, but one glance of the Great Physician's eyes is sufficient to cure all the maladies of the heart! We need the earthly physician's hand and his medicine and, possibly, the surgeon's knife. Ah, but we get *everything* in a look from our Lord!

When Jesus turned and looked upon Peter, did He preach a sermon? He did a great deal more than that! Did He rebuke the liar? He did a great deal more than that! Did He draw the wanderer back to Himself? He did a great deal more than that! Oh, nobody knows how much lies in one look of the eyes of God! Let us, each one, present this prayer tonight—"Lord, here is my case. I do not understand it—I know what I would like—but I am not sure whether it would be right for me to ask for it. I put myself before You—look You upon me. I sit, like the blind man

by the wayside, and all I ask is that You will but turn Your face this way and see me where I am, and see what I am. And if You will but do that, do what else You please. I will not dictate to You as to what You should do. I will leave myself and my affairs entirely in Your hands—only look You upon me."

I think David also meant this petition, "Look You upon me," in the sense in which we sang just now—

"Look upon me, Lord, I pray You,
Let Your Spirit dwell in mine!"

In this sense, *God's look will be a sign of Divine favor.* Frequently, in Scripture, God is represented as turning His face away in anger. But when He looks towards His chosen ones, it is in love. Brothers and Sisters, is there anything under Heaven more delightful than to be loved by God and to *know* it? The love of God, in itself, is inexpressibly sweet, but if you do not apprehend it, it is a sea of sweetness of which you do not taste, or like a mountain of honey to which you cannot gain access! But oh, to be loved of God and to *know* it would make a man dance if he were in chains! It would turn a dungeon into a palace if the poor prisoner were sure that God loved him! And that is precisely what David means when He prays, "Look You upon me.." "...Make Your face shine upon Your servant." Do you see men scowling, and do you hear them howling? What does it all matter? God is smiling and that is an end to all the oppression of man! One sun soon puts an end to all the darkness. One glimpse of God's smiling, reconciled, eternally-loving face, drives away all sorrow from the Believer's heart! The Psalmist's prayer, "Look You upon me," means just that.

I think, too, that David meant one thing more, that is, that *God's look could prepare him for future obedience.* When David said to the Lord, "Look You upon me," he meant, "Look at me and see that I am armed for the fight against evil. O Lord, look me up and down, search me all over and see that I do not lack any necessary thing! Look at me inside and outside. Look at my brain, look at my heart, look You upon me to see that there is nothing omitted that will be necessary for my future conduct in the world, in the Church, in the household, or alone with You!"

Does not the Psalmist mean all that I have said? And did I not speak truly when I told you that this little prayer, "Look You upon me," has much more in it than I can draw out of it in a single discourse? I advise you to pray it as it is, with all the meanings packed away in it—"Look You upon me." God help you to do so!

II. Our next division is DAVID'S HUMBLE CONFESSION. It is not actually expressed in words, but it is hidden away in his next utterance—"Be merciful unto me."

The Psalmist's confession is the link between his first prayer and this second supplication. *His prayer grew out of this confession.* He prayed to the Lord, "Look You upon me," because he could not, himself, look to God. And then he added this petition because he realized his need of Divine mercy. "Be merciful unto me." Do you remember the Savior's parable, or the fact the Savior described when He said, "Two men went up into the Temple to pray. One of them, the publican, standing afar off,

would not lift up so much as his eyes unto Heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, 'God be merciful to me a sinner'"? Surely David, long before that story was told, was acting it out! He dared not look up to God. He could not look up, or he would not have prayed, "Look You upon me."

Then he cried, "Be merciful unto me." *By this petition he evidently sought forgiveness.* Mercy is only for guilty people. Favor may be for the miserable, but mercy is for the guilty. One said, the other day, "Oh, I am such a great sinner!" And a wise person, who stood by, said, "I am glad to hear you admit it." "Oh," answered the other, "but I am lost." "It is so," responded the friend, "and I am pleased to hear you confess it." "And why are you so pleased? It sounds rather cruel to be glad because I am a sinner, and pleased because I am lost." "Ah," said the wise Christian instructor, "but Jesus Christ came into the world to save *sinners*. He, Himself, said, 'the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.'" There would be nobody to receive mercy if nobody were guilty! Oh, that you might all feel, whether you are saints or sinners, that the language of the text suits you! "Be merciful unto me." "Oh," said one, "I do not think I have been as guilty as some." Nevertheless, there is no way to Heaven but one—and that way is open for the vilest as well as the most moral. "Be merciful unto me," is the prayer you *must* learn to pray if you hope to enter the Kingdom of God!

It is evident, also, that *upon this ground, alone, the Psalmist sought for the blessing he desired*—"Look You upon me, and be merciful unto me." Do you see what he means? "Lord, I do not expect a look from You except as a proof of Your mercy. If You only give me a glance of Your eyes, it will be a token of mercy." If we get a crumb from God's table, it is a mercy. If we get a promise out of His Word, it is a mercy—if we get *anything* from the Lord it is a mercy—but if we receive forgiveness of sin, what a mercy that is! Did you ever try to fathom the depth of mercy that lies in the forgiveness of a single sin? There are some sins in our lives which will always be remembered by us. That night when you gave way to that one particular fit of temper which led to that one dreadful act of sin, has God forgiven that? Ah, yes, for "all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." When you cannot forgive yourself, yet you may know that God has, for Christ's sake, forgiven you. You may have all the more pleasure in knowing that He has forgiven you because you cannot forgive yourself. That sin which overwhelms you and lays you in the very abyss as you remember it—that is the sin God delights to pardon! What a blessing it is that it is so, that we are able to assure you that, "He delights in mercy," and especially in this particular form of mercy, the blotting out of sin! After David had sinned with Uriah's wife, or after other great transgressions, this prayer was especially suitable, "Be merciful unto me."

There I will leave this part of my subject, but I pray God the Holy Spirit not to leave it, but to lay it home to some hearts here. People are getting ready for Whitsuntide—some will be going into the country, and others are obliged to keep their shops open late before the holidays—therefore we are fewer in number, here, than usual, but I have been wondering whether God does not intend to save somebody who has come in

here, tonight, because it is the holiday season? The Lord grant that it may be so! What can be more appropriate to you who are conscious of guilt and groaning under the heavy burden of sin, than that you should pray these two petitions of David's supplication—"Look You upon me, and be merciful unto me"?

III. The third point, upon which I will not detain you long, is DAVID'S TACIT PROFESSION. There is, again, hidden away, here, not uttered in words, but secretly implied, a profession of love for the Lord—"Look You upon me, and be merciful unto me, as You used to do unto those that love Your name"

If the Psalmist does not actually declare that he loves God's name, he does at least say, "Lord, put me down among them that love Your name. Count me with them. I want to love Your name, O Lord; therefore, treat me as You treat them!"—

"With them numbered may I be,
Now, and through eternity!"

David hardly dares to say that He loves God's name, but he does practically say it by praying that God will treat him as He treats those who do love His name. Some of those who love God best are not the loudest in proclaiming their love. I believe there are some, here, who would die for Christ if it were necessary, yet they have not had the courage to come out and confess Him. I heard of a good woman who was afraid to testify before the Church, of her faith in Christ. As she was going away, she turned round and said to the minister, "I cannot speak about my faith, Sir, but I would die for Christ." "Come back," he said, "come back! That confession is better than any other sort of speaking."

There have been some, in the time of the martyrs, who have been very loud in their professions, but they have recanted at the last—while others, who have been very timid have been the bravest of all when the burning day came. I remember that one martyr, when chained to the stake with two others, slipped down from under the chain and was hidden by the firewood some two or three minutes. All thought he had recanted, but he came back and placed himself in the chains, again, and stood up boldly to be burned to death. He said to a Brother at his side, "I lost sight of my Lord's face, and I could not stand there to burn until I had found Him, again. He has come to me so sweetly and now, by His Grace, I shall die like a man."

If we have Christ with us, how strong we are! But if He is not with us, we are weakness itself! I cannot, therefore, condemn those who are afraid to say very boldly that they love the Lord's name. I hope, however, that they will have the courage, at any rate, to slip in edgeways and sandwich themselves between some other Believers, and say in the words of the text, "Be merciful unto me, as You used to do unto those that love Your name."

But the true child of God does love his Lord's name. What does that mean? He loves God's name, that is, *he loves the Person of God.* He loves God! His heart goes out towards the infinitely glorious Jehovah. *He loves the Character of God.* There are a great many, nowadays, who want Jehovah to be improved upon. When they read of the God of Holy Scripture,

they do not like *Him*—they say they want a kinder and more tender God. These are the men who worship the gods of modern thought—gods newly come up which are more like the devil than the true God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! But the true child of God loves God as he finds Him and as he finds Him in Holy Scripture—the one living and true God who made all things, and by whom all things consist. This is the God we love, adore and worship!

The genuine child of God also *loves God's Revelation.* That is often what is meant by the expression, "His name." He who is right with God loves every Doctrine of the Scriptures and every part of that Doctrine. He does not try to alter and improve the Scriptures, nor to prepare an addendum to the Word of God—he loves the Revelation given to us in the name of God and loves every point of it. By the, "name," is sometimes meant *the Glory of God.* I trust that the very feeblest of us can say that we love the Glory of God. When we hear Him praised, our hearts are all aglow. When we hear anything that is said against Him, our indignation burns vehemently, for we love His name. Oh, that God would grant us Grace to love Him far more than we do!

I must not say more on this point, for I have only a little time left, and I need that for the last division of my discourse.

IV. Fourthly, we are to consider DAVID'S GRACIOUS ASPIRATION. What he asks is that God would be merciful to him as He is accustomed to be to those who love His name. That is our aspiration, too—I trust we want God to deal with us as He deals with the rest of His people.

Notice, here, that *David would be dealt with as saints have always been dealt with.* If God treats us as He treats His children, I think we may be perfectly satisfied. There was a time when, if anybody had said to me, "The Lord will put you among His children and treat you as one of them," I would have been ready to dance for joy! And I do not run back, today, from the solemn conviction that if He will only treat me as He treats the rest of His family, I shall be perfectly satisfied. How is that? How does the Lord deal with His children?

Well, you know what He used to do to those who loved His name. He used to come and visit them. For instance, there were Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. These all had visits from the Lord, as did Moses, when God was in the burning bush. In olden days, God could be found in the desert or in a bush. He came to His people by the brook side, by the river, in the fiery furnace and in the lions' den. And it is still the use and habit of God to visit His people! Did He ever visit you? Pray that He may visit you as He used to do to those who loved His name. Lord, come and visit me under a tree, as You met Abraham! Come and meet me beneath the city wall as You met Joshua of old! Come to the river's brink, as You came to Ezekiel by the river of Chebar! Come to the lonely island, as you did to John in Patmos!

God not only used to visit those who loved His name, but He used to instruct them. What teachings they had from Him! What revelations and manifestations of Himself! Lord, teach me as You used to teach those who loved Your name!

How patient, also, He was with them! They had many faults and failings—and they grieved His Holy Spirit—but He forgave them and went on teaching them! And when they fell and wandered from Him, He restored them and brought them back.

Then you know, dear Brothers and Sisters, the Lord was always faithful to those who loved His name. When He made them a promise, He always kept it. He said He would meet them, and He did. He said that He would help them, and He did. He said that He would strengthen them, and He did. He said that He would give them victory, and He did. He never was a liar to them—He never left them in need. By the mouth of His servant, Jeremiah, He asked, "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel?" He never broke a single condition of His Covenant, so I think we can, each one, pray, "Lord, look You upon me, and be merciful unto me, as You used to do unto those that love Your name!"

But notice this, also, the Lord used to whip them when they needed it! Those who loved His name were chastened. Asaph said, "All the day long have I been plagued and chastened every morning." Well, suppose you should have the same treatment? You can thank God that He is doing to you as He used to do to those who loved His name! If He had a child of His who was strong, He used to try and test him. If he was brave, He made him fight. If he was vigorous, He made him bear burdens. You will always find that, in proportion to the strength the Lord gives, so He sets the trial. That is how He used to do to those who loved His name.

You cannot tell how it has comforted me, sometimes, when it has been said to me, "You are reproached." "Very well," I say to myself, "that is how the Lord used to allow it to be done to those who loved His name." "But you have lost your reputation through standing up for the Truth of God." "Yes," I answer, "that is how it used to be done to those who loved God's name. That is the way His servants have always gone to Glory." You can go to Hell with a whole skin if you wish to do so, but you must go to Heaven with many a bruise and gash. If you would be faithful to the Lord, you must *expect* to be despised—but take it all as part of the lot that belongs to you and do not quarrel with it. Do you expect to be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease? I should be sorry to see you trying such a plan of going to Heaven, for that is *not* how the Lord used to do to those who loved His name! Do you expect to go all the way to Heaven, clapped and applauded by an eager throng, crying, "Well done"? Is that how He used to do unto those who loved His name? Far from it! Therefore, be satisfied if God deals with you as He used to do with those who loved His name.

I think, also, that when using these words, David meant that *He was quite willing that God should deal with him in His usual way,* in His regular order. He did not want to have some special railway thrown up for him in which he could ride first-class to Heaven, but he was willing to go the old way, the way the holy Prophets went, and the saints, and martyrs, and confessors of God! That is to say, *he did not want salvation without holiness*. He did not want justification without sanctification. He did not want pardon without regeneration. He asked God to do with him as He used to do with those who loved His name and, with them, you

know, the water and the blood always went together—they had the new heart as well as the new robe. Acceptance in the Beloved did not come without there also being an acceptableness of holy character given by the Spirit of God.

Next, David did not want profit without exertion. He was not one of those who said, "I want to be happy, but never to do anything. I want to take the promises, but to have no part in Christian service. I want to understand without reading the Scriptures. I want to be taught and comforted without coming to hear sermons—I want to lie down and sleep myself into Glory." No, He was willing that God should do with him as He used to do unto those who loved Him.

David did not expect to have answers without prayer. The Lord Jesus said, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." We should be willing to have it as it was done to those who loved the Lord's name. David said, "Look You upon me and be merciful unto me, as You used to do unto those that love Your name." Some of our Churches expect prosperity without Prayer Meetings and hope to get many converts without unitedly asking for them. Perhaps half-a-dozen Christians meet for prayer on Monday evenings, or perhaps a few gather on Wednesdays when there is half a lecture and half a Prayer Meeting, so that they can say that they do have a Prayer Meeting when, in reality, they do not have one at all! But David said, "Make me pray, Lord. Do not give me anything unless I pray for it! Compel me to plead with You and then give me Your blessing!"

Then, again, David did not expect to pass through life without experiencing difficulties. He had to fight Goliath and he had to go into the cave of Adullam. He expected to have troubles and he certainly was not disappointed. Nor will you be. Do not reckon that God will give you a life without difficulty! Tell me, if you can, of any child of His who ever had such a portion? He had one Son without sin, but no son without sorrow. No, that Son who had no sin was the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief—so you must expect the Lord to deal with you as He does with the rest of His household.

Lastly, you cannot expect that you shall have continual enjoyments of the light of Christ's Countenance and a blessed experience of the sweets of His love, without having struggle of soul and conflict of spirit which come from the fact that the devil is not dead, that the world is not changed, that sin still dwells within you and still causes you grief. "Deal with me, O Lord, as You used to do with Your children! I do not want to be picked out from the rest and treated as a favorite." David once had a favorite child, Absalom, and a dreadful fellow he turned out to be! God does not fill us with sweetmeats—it is not His custom to take away all trouble and give us nothing but joy. Sweetmeats at night mean medicine in the morning! God grant us Grace to be willing to take the bitter with the sweet, to be baptized with Christ's Baptism and to drink of Christ's cup—and to always be satisfied as long as we may follow where the bleeding Savior leads the way!

Now, dear Friends, I have done. I hope there has been a word for everybody. And if there has been a word from me to you, let there be a word

from you to God—and let this be the prayer that you utter before leaving this house, "Look You upon me and be merciful unto me, as You used to do unto those that love Your name."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *PSALM 119:129-144*

Verse 129. *Your testimonies are wonderful: therefore does my soul keep them.* Every true Believer admires God's Word and, more than that, it amazes him—"Your testimonies are wonderful." View them from any point you may select, they are wonderful—wonderful in themselves, wonderful in their operation, wonderful in the way in which they endure all kinds of testing and yet remain the same—"Your testimonies are wonderful." This wonder, however, in the true Believer, leads to godly practice, to holy living—"Therefore does my soul keep them." Our soul must be like a golden case in which we store the priceless jewels of the Word of the Lord. You cannot rightly keep God's Word anywhere but in your soul. To keep it merely in the memory, or in the intellect, is of no avail.

130. *The entrance of Your Words give light.* The very first principles—the elements of God's Word—are full of light and no sooner does it come into the heart than there is light, directly. How much more light does it give when it penetrates into the secret chambers of our being and we begin to understand its deeper mysteries!

130. *It gives understanding unto the simple.* God's Word gives understanding to those who feel that they have very little mental ability—"the simple." They are only plain people who must have the Truth of God put very simply before them or else they cannot comprehend it, but as soon as ever God's Word enters their heart, even such people get understanding. It is not the Word *outside* the heart that gives the blessing—it is the *entrance* of the Word that gives true life to the soul!

131. *I opened my mouth and panted.* That was an admirable way of praying—no words were used by the Psalmist, but his soul expressed itself by panting, "As the hart pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after You, O God."

131. *For I longed for Your commandments.* The very best kind of prayer is that inarticulate panting in which there is a longing, a sighing, that cannot be expressed in words.

132, 133. *Look You upon me and be merciful unto me, as You used to do unto those that love Your name. Order my step in Your Word.* "Lord, I have found the way into Your Word. That is the road I intend to travel. Now I pray You to guide my every step." They say that, "Order is Heaven's first law," and certainly a Christian should lead an orderly life. He should be a "Methodist"—he should have a *method* in all that he does—and he should pray for God to order his steps according to His Word.

133. *And let not any iniquity have dominion over me.* A hypocrite says to himself, "I do not swear, I do not steal and I do not lie, yet I allow other sins to have dominion over me." But a true man of God will not have any master but the Lord Jesus Christ. He will not put his neck under the foot

of even the most attractive sin. "Let not any iniquity have dominion over me." That is the Psalmist's prayer. Here is the Apostle's answer to it—"Sin shall not have dominion over you."

134. *Deliver me from the oppression of man: so will I keep Your precepts.* He does not mean that he will not keep God's precepts if he is *not* delivered from man's oppression, but there are persons in such circumstances—Christian wives with wicked husbands, godly servants with ungodly masters, Believers who are greatly oppressed by evil men—and they desire to be delivered from the oppression of man that they may be the better able to keep God's commandments.

135. *Make Your face to shine upon Your servant.* What a blessed prayer that is! Let each one, here, pray it tonight—"Make Your face to shine upon Your servant." The Lord is our Sun! He is the very Sun of Heaven—they need no sun, there, because they see His face!

135. *And teach me Your statutes.* The Lord's servant ought to know the Law of his Lord's house. How can he be an obedient servant if he does not know his Master's will? So the Psalmist prays, "Lord, I will take it as a favor if You will teach me Your statutes, that I may not only *know*, but also *do* them!"

136. *Rivers of waters run down my eyes because they keep not Your Law.* Some think that the Psalmist meant that his eyes wept because they, that is, his *eyes* did not keep God's Law. You know how easily sin comes in through the eyes and goes out through the eyes, too. Well may those eyes weep in sorrow that have lusted towards sin. But I think the Psalmist alludes, here, to *the ungodly*. The sins of sinners are the sorrows of saints. "Rivers of waters run down my eyes because they keep not Your Law." Perhaps David referred to his own children, or he may have meant his soldiers—those rough, rugged warriors who were led by Joab. He met with many in his own country who turned aside from God and he wept over them. It is a blessed sign of Grace when you can weep over other men's sins. Do not say, "So-and-So has gone wrong," and treat the matter with indifference. If you can do so, you may question whether you have Grace in your own heart, for a true Christian ought to be tender and compassionate at the thought of the sinful things around him. There are some who can look upon the error and false doctrine which abound everywhere and say, "Oh, let it alone! Do not trouble yourself about that." But he who walks with God is not of their mind—it is a constant grief and agony of spirit to him that men keep not God's Law.

137. *Righteous are You, O LORD, and upright are Your judgements.* It is always well to set God in contrast with wicked men. If others are unjust, He is not. If they forsake the Truth of God, He does not.

138. *Your testimonies that You have commanded are righteous and very faithful.* True to the letter, true always, true to the core.

139. *Your zeal has consumed me, because my enemies have forgotten Your Words.* Yes, God's faithful servants become the more zealous when others grow cold. When they see that God's Words are forgotten by others, they remember them all the more and they grow exceedingly zealous for the Law of the Lord.

140. *Your Word is very pure: therefore Your servant loves it.* It is pure in the sense of being unadulterated and it is pure in the sense of being holy. There is nothing in the Scripture that would lead us to sin, nor excuse it—it is a wonderful condemner of sin. "Your Word is very pure." Notice the Psalmist's use of the word, "very." In the 138th verse, he says, "Your testimonies are very faithful." And now, in the 140th, "Your Word is very pure." "Therefore Your servant loves it." When purity draws out our love, it proves that our heart, itself, loves that which is pure—and the heart that loves purity is a pure heart.

141. *I am small and despised: yet I do not forget Your precepts.* He was poor but pious, little but loving, despised but devoted. It was the man who had but one talent who went and dug in the earth and hid his Lord's money. David was not of that kind. He was small, but he knew he was not too small to sin. He was despised, but he did not, on that account, think that he might turn aside from the right path.

142. *Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness.* God's Word does not change, it is everlasting, and the righteousness which it reveals and which it proclaims to us is everlasting.

142. *And Your Law is the Truth.* God's Word is not only true, but it is "the Truth." The Truth is God's Law and God's Law is the Truth.

143. *Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me.* Just now he said that he was despised and now he says he is unhappy. Trouble without and anguish within seemed to grip him as in a vice.

143. *Yet Your commandments are my delights.* A man of the world cannot understand how a Christian can be in trouble and yet be full of delight, but it is true. We can be cast down, but not destroyed. We can be sorrowful, yet always rejoicing. We can be poor, yet make many rich. Here you have another holy paradox—"Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me, yet Your commandments are my delights"—not only his *delight*, but his *delights*! As if he had a whole host of them—a great company of joys, and a chorus of holy mirth!

144. *The righteousness of Your testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding.* That is a great prayer, not only, "give me to understand," but, "give me understanding." It is one thing to tell a man the Truth of God, but quite another thing to make him understand it. And if you make him understand a particular Truth, he may not understand another, but David asks for understanding with which he might be able to comprehend *all* the Truths of God—"Give me understanding"—

144. *And I shall live.* God grant that this prayer may be offered by each one of us and heard by the Lord, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—779, 773, 791.

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

THE WEARY DOVE'S RETURN
NO. 2373

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 12, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MAY 20, 1888.

"But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot and she returned into the ark to him, for the waters were on the face of the whole earth. So he put out his hand and took her, and drew her into the ark to himself."
Genesis 8:9.

NOAH knew that God would, in due time, let him out of the ark. He was quite sure that the Lord had not put him into the ark to make a great coffin of it—that he and all those living creatures that went in with him should perish there. And, because he believed in God, he, therefore, removed the covering of the ark and looked abroad, expecting, by-and-by, to see not only the tops of the mountains, but also a dry and green earth once more. True faith often goes to the window. If your faith turns her face to the wall and expects nothing, I do not think it is genuine faith. Faith has eyes and, therefore, she looks afar off, and she often watches as the watchman of the night looks for the gray dawn of the morning. You remember the story of the child who went to a Prayer Meeting which was called together to pray for rain? She expected that God would send the rain, so she took her umbrella with her because she needed to get home dry. I wish that you and I had learned the same simple art of faith. Having prayed, and having believed, let us *expect*! Let us open the window and look out! God never failed an expectant people, yet, but a great many of His people fail to expect. And if you do not expect, you are not likely to receive! David said, "My soul, wait only upon God, for my expectation is from Him." And when your expectation is from Him, it will not be disappointed. It is a great pity when we keep the shutters up so that we cannot look out of the window to see the dry land.

Next, because Noah expected the earth to be dry, he sent out the raven. And when the raven did not answer his purpose, he sent out the dove. After the dove came back with no tidings, he waited seven days and then sent her out again. And when she returned with only an olive leaf in her mouth, he waited seven more days and then sent her out again. Oh, dear Friends, often send out your doves! Be looking for blessings! You have asked for them—God has promised to give them—send out your doves to see whether the blessings are not there! And if you do so constantly and perseveringly, verily, I say unto you, you shall have your reward!

Still, notice that Noah, when he had the best evidence that he could get that the earth was dry, did not dare to go out of the ark till God

opened the door. So, gather all the information you possibly can about your position and act according to the rules of commonsense. But, after you have done that, still wait upon God! When you know from your ravens and your doves that the earth is getting dry, do not come out till He that shut the door opens it for you. Dear people of God, I wish that we had more of that old habit of looking to Providence! We have become so wise, nowadays, that we do not require the fiery-cloudy pillar! We run without Divine guidance, but, mark you, we often have to run back, again. We are guests at the table of Providence and if we will let God carve for us, our plate will always have plenty of food on it—but if we get to carving for ourselves, we shall cut our fingers—and not cut much else! And we shall have great cause to be ashamed that, instead of trusting God, we took to trusting ourselves! Do not trust your raven or your dove, trust your God! And if you go where He guides you, you will go the right way, even if it should be a rough way. And you will have to say, "Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

Now, to come a little closer to the text and to what we are about to say upon it. I do not know where the raven rested, whether he did, as some suppose, alight on the corpses floating on the flood, which I hardly think is likely, for God was preparing the earth for Noah to come back to it, and He would not leave it strewn with carcasses, as some have imagined. Whether the raven returned to the ark, but refused to come in, or whether it found a resting place on the slimy boughs of trees, or on the tops of the mountains, which we are told began to be visible, I cannot tell. This, I do know, that, wherever the raven rested, the dove could not do so—there was no clean place fit for the dove's clean nature. So it had to return to the ark and when, weak and weary, it could hardly reach the ark, being heavy with the damp, perhaps mired with the filthy water into which it may have fallen in its weariness—while just able to get as far as the ark—it might have perished in the waters had not Noah perceived his little bird coming to the window. I suppose he was already there looking out for her and he stretched forth his hand, and caught her, and pulled her in, and she was safe in the ark again.

There are three lessons which I am going to try to teach you from this simple little incident.

I. The first is, that THUS GOD RECEIVES HIS SERVANTS. He receives them unto Himself, just as Noah received this dove into the ark.

Upon this I remark, first, that *sometimes God's servants wander.* How I wish that they never did! Oh, that we so loved our Noah that we never left Him and never went away from Him who is our Rest! We are tempted and the flesh is frail. Oh, how sadly have some good men wandered! We speak this to our shame. We make no excuse for ourselves. We have wandered like silly doves—we have left the place of peace and safety and joy—and we have gone abroad, flying, we know not where! Perhaps I speak to some such at this time.

Now, *if you are one of Christ's doves, you will never rest till you go back to Him.* Time was when you could have found pleasure in the ways of sin,

but you cannot do so now. You may try to find it, but you cannot. When you were a raven, you might have done so, but now that the Holy Spirit has made a dove of you, you are spoilt for the raven's ways. When a true child of God wanders into sin at any time, and goes back to the old haunts, he thinks to himself, "I used to enjoy myself in this place of amusement. I used to make merry with such and such company. The pipe and the bowl were once like Heaven on earth to me. But now," he says, "I do not know how it is, but these things seem so vapid, so empty. There is not the life, there is not the vivacity about them that I knew in my younger days. It seems to be all a more hollow sham, now." Ah, my Friend, it is not these things that have altered—it is *you* that the Grace of God has changed! If God means you to live in Heaven, you shall never find your Heaven in this world! If He has chosen you to be His, and means you to be His, and has put His Spirit within you, you must be always restless till you come back and find rest in Him.

"May I come back?" says one. May you come back? Your Noah is at the window waiting for you! Speed towards Him with both your wings! Rest not till He puts forth His hand to you and grasps you, and draws you into Himself. "But will He have me? Will He have me again?" O bird of the weary wing, He is not weary of you! O bird of the wet wing that has been soiled in the filthy flood, He will not reject you! He washed you once—He will wash you again! He waits to be gracious! Jesus loves to receive backsliders. It is the joy of His heart, not only to make a sheep out of a goat, but to find one of His sheep that has gone astray! Not only to adopt a stranger into His family, but to restore the prodigal son! That is the meaning of that parable—it is the *backslider's* parable. Oh, that you would understand it and know that the infinite mercy of God is as ready to receive a returning backslider as Noah was to receive his wandering dove!

Now I will turn to another point. The dove in this narrative was not to blame, for it had not gone astray, but Noah sent it out and, every now and then, the Lord Jesus sends a dove of His to go and spy out the world. It is a business upon which we must go if He sends us. Now, what is our report of the world? Our report is that *there is nothing in the world upon which we can rest the sole of our foot.* The world is said to be progressing, advancing, improving, but we cannot discover it. The same sin, the same filthiness, the same universally abounding unbelief that our fathers complained of, we are obliged to complain of still! And we are weary with the world, weary with the 19th Century and all its boasted civilization. There is nothing upon which the sole of our foot can rest.

"What of the Church?" asks one. Well, look at the Church, too. There is nothing to rest on. There is much for which to be thankful, but there is nothing that can content a spirit that seeks after the Truth of God and holiness. I speak what I know, for with weary wings have I fled across the waters, and with anxious eyes have I scanned the horizon, but there is no place of rest for the sole of my foot! What then? What then? Is the servant of God weary with his flight? See what Noah did to the dove, for this is what the Lord will do to His servant—"he put forth his hand, and took

her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark." O dear child of God, if you cannot rest in the Church, you *can* rest in Christ! If you cannot rest in the world, you *can* rest in the Lord! "He pulled her in unto him." It is a delicious sensation to get away from all men and all things to Christ, Himself. He never seems so sweet as when all else is bitter! He never appears so substantial as when all else melts before you. "He pulled her in unto him." She had done her work; she had taken her flight; she had made her investigation. Now she has come back and she is in his bosom. "He pulled her in unto him." May that be the portion of all my dear friends in Christ who at this time feel heavy about the signs of the times! May the Lord draw you into nearer, dearer, sweeter fellowship with Himself than you have ever enjoyed before, and this will be your best reward!

Again, to give another case, *the Lord's servants are sometimes sent forth that they may bring something back with them.* You Sunday school teachers go out on the Sabbath hoping to bring some child back with you. You street-preachers (and may your number be multiplied!) are trying to bring something or somebody to Jesus! Workers of different sorts who are here, tonight, you go flying abroad to try to find someone for Jesus. It may be that you have not picked up even an olive leaf, yet—not one "son of peace" has, at present, received your benediction. Well, this dove was welcome though she brought nothing back. She came back with nothing in her mouth the first time, but then we read, "Noah put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark."

What, though no child is saved as yet? What, though no hearer in the street has responded to the invitation of love? What, though you have labored in vain and spent your strength for nothing? You are accepted of your God if you have done your best, trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit and, tonight He pulls you in unto Himself. If you are weary, O Martha, come and sit with Mary! If you are encumbered with the serving, come and be refreshed with the communing! After all, you can, perhaps, glorify your Lord more by receiving than by giving. You shall find it more blessed to yourself to receive Christ than if you could bring a soul to Him—He can make it to be so if He pleases. At any rate, your hope of going out, again, and bringing in an olive leaf, by-and-by, will lie in your coming in, *now*, and getting in unto your Noah and resting on Him until He sends you out again!

Only one more observation will I make on this first point and it shall be a very brief one. As far as I can see, *this dove was sent out in the morning and she came back in the evening*—and Noah pulled her in unto him. Brothers, let that be a picture of every day in your lives. When you wake in the morning, perhaps the factory bell is ringing. At any rate, it is time for you to be off to business. You must think about your business. Perhaps yours is a work that is mental. You must give your mind to it, so all day long you feel like the dove flying abroad. Well, take good heed that when the sun goes down, you make your way back home to your Lord! Lock up your heart every morning before you go out and give Christ the key to keep till you come home. And then, when He opens it at night, the sweet perfume that you had in the morning will be there in the evening!

It is best if we can keep up our thoughts of Christ all day long, but perhaps we cannot—then let the dove, that flew away in the morning, be sure to fly back at night! It is where you go when the day's toil is done that tells what sort of a man you are!

I think I have, before now, used the simile of the crows. You cannot tell where the crows live early in the morning—they are out on the land following the plow. Farther on in the day they are inspecting a field of turnips, perhaps, watching to see if they can find a fly or a worm. Where do they live? Wait until the evening, when they get together, and then you will see that they make a straight line for those tall trees where their nests are! Where do your thoughts go at night? Where do they go when your day's toil is done? When you have done with the business of the day, which is like the crows picking up the worms, which way do you go? That shows where your soul lives, so take care that in the evening you make your way back to your Noah. Oh, how sweetly does Christ come to us in our evening prayer and put out His hand and pull us in unto Himself—and we rest once more—

"As in the embraces of our God,
Or on our Savior's breast."

Thus have I spoken to you upon my first division, showing that God receives His servants as Noah received the dove.

II. I will now go on to the second part of my subject which is equally practical and will be useful to another class of people. THIS IS WHAT THE LORD JESUS CHRIST DOES TO SINNERS. I have spoken, first, of His servants. Now I want to speak of sinners who are seeking His face.

Note, then, that *the Lord Jesus Christ does not despise the condition of the sinner who comes to Him.* I have imagined that this dove might have fouled its wings. Certainly it was not the beauty that it was when Noah sent it out in the morning—but he did not, therefore, refuse to take it into the ark. It was very weary and ready to drop into the waters, yet Noah did not refuse it, but there he stood, at the open window, to meet it when it came! And you feel very foul, very unworthy, very unfit, and very unsafe—nevertheless, Jesus Christ will not refuse you! Whatever your condition may be, He casts out none who come to Him. Come as you are! Come even though you feel that you cannot come! Come anyway, for He will not reject you.

The first thing that Noah did with this dove was to display his power—"He put forth his hand." I have known *the Lord display His power very remarkably* when poor souls have been coming to Him, putting forth His hand, sometimes in Providence, doing some extraordinary thing to bring them to decision. Sometimes He has used a sermon, or a stray word from some gracious soul, or He has put forth the power of His hand in the preaching of His Word. Sometimes He has used a religious book, or a little tract as His agent. It has not mattered what the instrumentality has been, it is the power which *God* has put forth which has been the means of laying hold upon the coming sinner! Sometimes there has been no book and no sermon, but the Holy Spirit, without any apparent means, has made an impression upon the conscience and upon the heart. There has come over the sinner, when he has begun to seek the Lord, a singu-

lar melting power, a feeling of solemnity such as he never had before. He cannot understand it. He seems to be on the borders of a new world. He hears the chimes of bells which he never heard before, ringing out of invisible places, and summoning him to his God! I know what this experience means and I pray that some of you may know it—that just now, at this very moment—our blessed Noah may put forth His hand to you poor fluttering doves! You cannot do anything, but Jesus can! You cannot save yourselves, but He can save you, even as Noah put forth his hand and saved the dove from perishing.

Then we read, next, that Noah took the dove, seized her, captured her, held her. That is what my Lord does. *Jesus takes hold of sinners.* Oh, that He might get a blessed hold of some of you, tonight! I have sometimes thought that Noah stood something like this [leaning forward, with hands outstretched,] looking out of the window, and when the dove came back and was ready to drop, he caught her between his hands, as one would tenderly hold a dove, encompassing her, and then he pulled her in unto him. What a blessing it is when the Gospel of Christ seems to surround you and you get a hand beneath you, and a hand above you, and you feel as if Christ had laid hold of you and was leading you joyfully captive! Some of you remember when that happened to you—when the hand of Jesus was first held out, and then was put round about you—and you were taken prisoner and held in gracious bondage to the love and power of Christ!

Then we read that, "He pulled her in," and thus *Jesus draws in sinners.* There is something of a pull needed. Oh, what blessed pulls the Lord sometimes gives to bring sinners to decision and put an end to their hesitancy! They want to wait a little longer, but the Lord Jesus will not have it! Providence and Grace end their delays. They are very fearful, fluttering like this dove, afraid of her best friend, but the Lord Jesus Christ gives a pull that ends their fears and kills their despair. They are His and His powerful love wins the day! Sometimes, it is ignorance that keeps sinners back from Christ, for God's doves are often very silly creatures. They do not know the way into the ark. They miss the window. But Jesus does with them as Noah did with the dove—"He pulled her in." I hope I am not talking beyond the experience of many of you, or, if I am, I pray my Master to make this to be your experience even now. May these poor simple words of mine induce some of you to come to Christ at once! Why will you perish? Why will you delay? Why not be pulled in tonight, even as the dove was pulled in by Noah? *I* cannot pull you in. I would if I could, but *Jesus* can! And He cannot be less willing to bless you than I am!

Notice where Christ draws sinners. Noah pulled the dove in unto himself and that is what Christ does with His poor fluttering doves! *He draws them to Himself.* You say that you need a lot of things. No you do not—you only need Jesus. If you have Him, you have everything! You need to be pulled into peace, to joy, to holiness, to rest. Yes, but what you really need is to be pulled into Jesus and you will get all the other blessings! Drawn to His wounds, poor doves, you shall find your hiding

place! Drawn to His wounds, poor doves, you shall find the truest cleansing! This is what your Master must do for you, even as Noah pulled the dove in unto himself.

And when he had pulled her into himself, then she was in the ark and she soon found other doves. Thus, *Jesus draws sinners in unto salvation.* When He draws a man to Himself, then He draws Him to the Church and he comes where he shall meet with fit society that shall console him and help him during the rest of his days. I cannot preach as I would, but I know that I am telling you that which, if my Lord will but bless it, will save and comfort your souls! I pray Him to put me on one side, altogether, and to come—and with His own pierced hands pull you in unto Himself!

III. So I finish with this third point. THAT WHICH JESUS DOES TO HIS SERVANTS AND TO SINNERS, HE WOULD HAVE US DO. Now, you people of God, listen to me, and do what I now entreat of you in my Master's name.

In the first place, *look out for souls.* Now, Noah, go to the window! There is that dove, you know, fluttering somewhere—go and look out for it, go to the window, Noah! He does not need to be told to go, for there he is. Noah loves his dove, so he is watching for her at the window. Dear people of God, often go to the window! In your families look for the salvation of your children. In your workshops look for the salvation of your employees and those with whom you work! Perhaps that is a new thought to some of you. If you can get them to work for a little less money, you look out for that, but oh, that you would look out for their salvation! To see your employees saved is the best profit that you can, any of you, have! Watch for their souls and do so, not only at home, but when you come to your place of worship. We have friends in this Tabernacle who are looking all over the place while I am speaking. I do not say that they are not attending to my message, but I do not think they are attending so much to my words as to those to whom I am speaking! I have frequently seen a Brother making his way very quietly down to a certain spot where he has noticed some of you sitting very attentively, some newcomers, perhaps, who have never been here before, and it is more than likely that he will speak to some of you before this service is over.

I hope somebody will ask you whether you are saved and, if so, you will begin to find that there are some who desire to bring you into close quarters! I think that it ought to be so. I cannot bear the thought of your coming here without getting a blessing. I have to fire the Gospel cannon from this platform—it is loaded with grape shot and it often does great execution—yet many of you may not be hit that way, but, happily, my friends can come to you with their little pocket pistols and so reach many whom I miss! Get to close quarters with them, Brothers and Sisters! Find out whether they are saved or not! We need a great deal of this kind of work. Now then, Noah, go to the window and look out—be you an old Christian or a young Christian—be on the look out for sinners!

Noah goes to the window and, sure enough, there is his dove. Then Noah stretches out his hands, as I want *you* to do. *Stretch out a hand to*

sinners. Do it very gently, for doves are not bears, you know—the souls of men are not like the skins of tigers. Stretch out your hands to sinners, but do it in a very loving and gentle way. Try, if you can, to let them see that there is a friend near who will be happy to help them to Christ. Stretch out your hands and if you can, lay hold of them. I do not know how Noah caught his dove, whether by the wings, or the legs, or the neck, but he did catch her, and pulled her into the ark. Now try if you can to lay hold of a soul for Christ—get a firm grip on it! This is not child's play! He that can catch doves with his hands is a wise man and he that would win souls must be wise. Try to catch souls, if you can, but do it gently. Remember that they are doves and, therefore, be very tender and very gentle with them. But, being doves, they are apt to fly away—therefore hold them fast—and *do not let them go.*

Perhaps they will not like you to touch them. Never mind that—go on as mildly and lovingly as you can, yet do seek to give them a pull and *do not rest until they are with you in the ark,* that is to say, till they are in Christ! Till they are trusting Him, till they are resting in Him, till His precious blood has washed them and they are saved, as you trust you are!

I do not think that we are half earnest enough in dealing with our fellow men. I remember a young man who, when dying, said to his brother, "I am afraid I am lost, my brother, and I cannot help saying to you, 'Why were you not more earnest about my salvation?'" His elder brother answered, "John, I have spoken to you once or twice about your soul." "Once or twice!" replied the other, "You ought to have been always at me." "Well, but I did frequently speak to you about Divine things." "But," said he, "if you knew that I was perishing, why did you not shake me? Why did you not do something unusual with me? Why did you not weep over me? Why did you not force me to think? My soul is lost and you have shown but very little care about it."

Perhaps that was a very hard thing to say, and an unkind thing, and a self-excusing thing, but do you not think that some people might say that of you and of me? We have never been earnest enough in seeking the salvation of their souls. Mr. Rowland Hill's story about this matter is a good one. He said, "I hear them say that poor old Mr. Hill makes a great noise and often shouts when he is preaching, the poor old gentleman gets quite excited." "Yes," added Mr. Hill, "and I was one day walking out at Wotton-under-Edge, and I was going by a gravel pit, or a chalk pit, and it fell in and buried a man. And I went running down into the village as fast as ever my old legs would carry me, crying out that there was a man likely to be buried alive—and the people rushed out to try to save him! And they did not say, then, as they do, now, 'Poor old Mr. Hill is making a deal of noise.'"

Oh, that we were as earnest about the souls of men as we can sometimes be about their bodies! Do try, then, you who love the Lord, to pull them in, even as Noah pulled the dove in unto himself into the ark.

I leave the text with you. When I cannot preach, I always wish that all of you may be preaching. If the preacher seems to speak feebly, take up what he has said and work at it, and go and do better with it. And if you

will do so, it will be better than if I, alone, had done better. The Lord bless you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
Genesis 8.

1. *And God remembered Noah.* Noah had been shut up in the ark for many a day and, at the right time, God thought of him, *practically* thought of him and came to visit him. Dear Heart, you have been shut out from the world, now, for many days, but God has not forgotten you. God remembered Noah and He remembers you.

1. *And every living thing and all the cattle that was with him in the ark.* Does God remember *cattle*? Then He will certainly remember men made in His own image! He will remember you, though you think yourself the most worthless one on the face of the earth! "God remembered Noah and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark."

1. *And God made a wind to pass over the earth and the waters subsided.* Winds and waves are wholly under God's control. I suppose that this was a very drying wind, so the waters began to turn to vapor and gradually to disappear. It is God who sends the winds. They seem most volatile and irregular, but God sends them to do His bidding. Blow it east, or blow it west, the wind comes from God! And whether the waters increase or are subsided, it is God's doing. Are the waters very deep with you, dear Friend? God can dry them up and, amazingly enough, he can stop one trouble with another—he can dry up the water with the wind. I have known Him act very strangely with His people and when they thought they were quite forgotten, He has proved that He remembered them, and both the winds of Heaven and the waters of the sea have had to work their good! There is not an angel in Heaven but God will make him to be a servant to you if you need him—there is not a wind in any quarter of the globe but God will guide it to you if it is necessary—and there are no waves of the sea but shall obey the Lord's will concerning you.

2. *The fountains, also, of the deep and the windows of Heaven were stopped, and the rain from Heaven was restrained.* God works upwards and stops the windows of Heaven. He works downwards and stops the breaking up of the fountains of the deep—

"He everywhere has sway,
And all things serve His might."

Be not afraid! He can open the windows of Heaven and pour down abundant blessings for you, and He can let down the cellar-flaps of the great deep and stop its flowing fountains—

"When He makes bare His arm,
What shall His work withstand?"

3-5. *And the waters returned from of the earth continually: and after the end of the hundred and fifty days, the waters were abated. And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat. And the waters decreased continually until the tenth month: in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, were the*

tops of the mountains seen. God told Noah when to go into the ark, but He did not tell him when he should come out again. The Lord told Noah when to go in, for it was necessary for him to know that, but He did not tell him when he should come out, for it was not necessary that he should know that. God always lets His people know what is practically for their good. There are many curious points on which we should like to have information, but God has not revealed them, and when He has not revealed anything, we had better not try to unravel the mystery! No good comes of prying into unrevealed Truths of God. Noah knew that he would come out of the ark one day, for was he not preserved there to be a seed—to keep the race alive? Noah was not told when he would be released and the Lord does not tell you when your trouble will come to an end. It *will* come to an end, therefore wait and be patient, but do not want to know the time of your deliverance. We would know too much if we knew all that will happen in the future. It is quite enough for us if we do our duty in the present—and trust God for the rest.

Still, I think that Noah must have been very pleased when he felt the ark grating, at last, on the mountains of Ararat. He could not build a dock for his big ship, but God had prepared a berth for it on the mountain side. Now, as he looked out, he could see, here and there, a mountaintop rising like an island out of the great expanse of water.

6, 7. *And it came to pass at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made: and he sent forth a raven, which went forth, to and fro.* Sometimes alighting on the ark, then flying away again.

7-10. *Until the waters were dried up from of the earth. Also he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground; but the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark, for the waters were on the face of the whole earth: then he put forth his hand and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark. And he stayed yet another seven days.* I wonder whether Noah sent out these creatures on the Sabbath mornings. The mention of seven days and the resting in between seems to look like it. Oh, dear Friends, sometimes people send out a raven on the Lord's-Day morning and it never brings them anything. Send out a dove, rather than a raven! Come to the House of God with quiet, gentle, holy expectation and your dove will come back to you! It may be that it will bring you something worth bringing one of these days, as Noah's dove brought to him.

10, 11. *And again he sent forth the dove out of the ark; and the dove came unto him in the evening; and, lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf pluck off: so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth.* The waters were abated as far as the fruit trees—not only the tallest forest trees, but some of the fruit trees were uncovered from the water. The dove had plucked off "an olive leaf." Perhaps you have seen a picture of the dove carrying an olive *branch* in its mouth, which, in the first place, a dove could not pluck out of the tree and, in the second place, a dove could not carry an olive branch even if she *could* pluck it off. It was an olive *leaf*, that is all. Why cannot people keep to the Words of Scripture? If the Bi-

ble mentions a leaf, they make it a branch, and if the Bible says it is a branch, they make it a leaf.

12. *And he stayed yet another seven days; and sent forth the dove; which returned not again unto him any more.* Noah could read something from that leaf that the dove brought to him, but he learned more when she did not return to him. He knew that she had found a proper resting place and that the earth was clear of the flood!

13. *And it came to pass in the six hundredth and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from off the earth.* That was a happy New Year's day for Noah! He was glad to find himself at rest once more, though not yet at liberty.

13. *And Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and, behold, the face of the ground was dry.* Why did not Noah come out? Well, you see, he had gone in by the door and he meant to come out by the door. And He that opened the door for him, and shut him in, must now open the door for him and let him out. He waits God's time and we are always wise in doing that. You lose a great deal of time by being in a hurry. Many people think they have done a great deal when they have really done nothing. Better take time in order to save time. Slow is sometimes faster than fast. So Noah removed the covering of the ark and *looked* out, but he did not *go* out till God commanded him to do so.

14. *And in the second month.* Nearly two months Noah waited for the complete drying of the earth.

14. *On the seven and twentieth day of the month, was the earth dried.* "The face of the ground was dry" in the first month. "The *earth* was dried," the second month. Noah might have thought it was dry enough, before, but God did not think so—there was enough mud to breed a pestilence—so Noah must wait until God had made the earth ready for him.

15-16. *And God spoke unto Noah, saying, Go forth of the ark.* Noah must wait till God speaks to him. Oh, that some people would wait for God's command, but they will not! He shall bless your going out and your coming in if you will go forth and come in when He bids you. "Go forth," says the Lord, "Go forth of the ark."

16-19. *You, and your wife, and your sons, and your sons' wives with you. Bring forth with you every living thing that is with you, of all flesh, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth; that they may breed abundantly in the earth, and be fruitful, and multiply upon the earth. And Noah went forth, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him: every beast, every creeping thing, and every fowl, and whatever creeps upon the earth, after their kinds, went forth out of the ark.* That was a very wonderful procession! It was the new beginning of everything upon the earth! Whatever evolution or any other folly or evil of man may have done, everything had to begin over. Everybody was drowned save these great fathers of the new age—and all must begin from this stock.

20. *And Noah built an altar unto the LORD, and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.* Commonsense would have said, "Spare them, for you will need every one

of them." But Grace said, "Slay them, for they belong to God. Give Jehovah His due." I have often admired that widow of Zarephath. When she had but a handful of meal, she made a little cake for God's Prophet, first, but then God multiplied her meal and her oil. Oh, if we would but seek, first, the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, all things would be added unto us! Out of the small stock he had, Noah took of the clean beasts and of the clean fowls, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

21. *And the LORD smelled a sweet savor.* Noah's *faith* was pleasing to God. It was Noah's confidence in a bleeding sacrifice that gave him acceptance with the Lord. God thought upon His Son and that great Sacrifice to be offered long afterwards on the Cross and He, "smelled a sweet savor."

21. *And the LORD said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.* God always speaks comfortable words to those who bring an acceptable sacrifice. If you would hear the voice of a Divine promise, go to the atoning blood of Jesus. If you would know what perfect reconciliation means, hasten to the Altar where the great Sacrifice was presented.

22. *While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.* They never have ceased. We have had, this year, a long and dreary winter. It looked as if spring would never come. Only a few days ago the chestnuts were just beginning to turn green and then there came the little spikes. And now you can see them in full flower. How faithfully God fulfils His Covenant with the earth! How truly will He keep His Covenant with every believing sinner! Oh, trust in Him, for His promise will stand fast forever!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—649, 499, 501.

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

BLESSED DISCIPLINE
NO. 2374

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 19, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 24, 1888.

"Blessed is the man whom You chasten, O LORD, and teach out of Your Law; that You may give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit is dug for the wicked. For the LORD will not cast off His people, neither will He forsake His inheritance. But judgment shall return unto righteousness: and all the upright in heart shall follow it."
Psalm 94:12-15.

THERE are times when the wicked seem to have things all their own way. This earth is not the realm of final justice—we are not yet standing before the Lord's great Judgement Seat. God permits many things to be, for a while, in confusion. They who are highest with Him are often lowest with men and, those for whom He has no regard seem to heap up the treasures of the world till their eyes stand out with fatness, and they have more than heart can wish! Let no child of God be astonished at this arrangement. It has often been so in the past and it has been the great enigma that has puzzled the world. The children of God have also sat down and looked into it, but it has been, even to them, a great deep which they could not fathom. They have sighed over it, but their sighs have not altered the facts. It is still true that often the wicked triumph and the servants of iniquity delight themselves in the high places of the earth. The righteous need not wonder that they suffer, now, for that has been the lot of God's people all along, and there have been certain times in human history when God has seemed to be altogether deaf to the cries of His suffering people. Remember the martyr age and the days of the Covenanters, who were hunted upon the mountains like the partridge. You must not wonder if the easy places of the earth are not yours and if the sentinel's stern duties should fall to your lot. It is so, and so it must be, for God has so ordained it.

To comfort any of the Lord's children who have begun to worry themselves because things do not go with them as they desire, I have selected this text, and I pray the Lord to bless it to them.

I. First, I shall ask you to notice that GOD'S CHILDREN ARE UNDER INSTRUCTION.

Other children may run about and take holiday. They may wander into the woods, gather the flowers and do very much what they like, but God's own children have to go to school. This is a great privilege for them, although they do not always think so. Children are not often good judges of what is best for themselves. No doubt we should like to play the truant—we should be very glad to put away our schoolbags, quit the

schoolhouse, go out by ourselves and wander at our own sweet will—but our heavenly Father loves us too well to let it be so with us. Because we are His children, therefore He will have us trained and prepared for that high destiny which awaits us, by-and-by.

Note how this tuition is described in our text. The very first word concerning it is, "chasten." "Blessed is the man whom You chasten, O Lord, and teach," as if the chastening were the primary part of the teaching, as if it occupied so large a share of it that it was put first. "Blessed is the man whom you chasten, O Lord, and teach." In God's school house the rod is still extant—*with the Lord, chastening is teaching.* He does not spoil His children, but chastens them, yes, even unto scourging, as the Apostle puts it. His chastening is the most severe with those whom He loves best—"Whom the Lord tenderly loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives." Some of us know what it is to have this teaching by chastening. I have often told you that I am afraid I have never learned anything of God except by the rod and, in looking back, I am afraid that I must confirm that statement. I have forgotten some of the gentle lessons, but when they have been whipped into me, I have remembered them.

I met with a friend the other day who said that it was the very reverse with him. He could not remember any benefit that he had ever gained by chastening and he thought that all the good he had received from the Lord had come to him by tenderness and prosperity. I did not argue with him about the matter, for the experiences of God's people may differ, but this I know, dear Friends, that some of us have learned much from the Lord's chastening rod!

For instance, we have learned the evil of sin. "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Your Word." There are some sorrows that evidently come as the result of our own folly. We have to reap the harvest of the seed that we sow and, by this process we are made to see that it is an exceedingly evil and bitter thing to sin against God. This is an important lesson. I wish that more had thoroughly learned it. I wish that some Christian professors had anything like a true idea of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, but I believe that instruction upon this point often comes from the chastening hand of God.

Our chastening teaches us the unsatisfactory nature of worldly things. We can easily become attached to the things which we possess. It is a very difficult thing to handle gold without allowing it to adhere to your fingers and, when it gets into your purse, you need much Grace to prevent it getting into your heart. Even our children can soon grow into idols—and our health and our comfort may make us forget God. I never knew affliction and trial to make us do that, but when the gourds are taken away, then the sun shines on us. How often has God shaken all the leaves off our trees and *then* we have seen the heavens which we never saw when all the leaves were green! By losing this, and losing that, we are made to feel that all the things which we possess perish in the using and are such temporary joys that we cannot hope to fill our hearts with them.

Do we not, also, learn by affliction our own frailty and our own impatience? We are wonderfully patient when we have nothing to suffer, as we

are all great heroes and very courageous when there is no fighting to be done. We sometimes say to one another, "What a mass of faith that Brother has! What a vast mountain of faith that Sister possesses!" We are almost inclined to envy them, but we remember the fable of the stag which had such magnificent antlers that he said to himself, as he looked at his fine figure in the water, "It is most absurd for us stags to be afraid of dogs. The next time I hear a dog bark, I will just toss him on my horns and there will soon be an end of him." Yes, so he thought, but just then the baying of a hound was heard in the distance and the boastful stag took to his heels and ran as fast as the rest of the herd did! So it is often with those who seem to have great faith when they do not need it—but when they do need it, where is it? Stretch some men upon a bed of sickness for a week or two and see whether they will be able to swagger at the rate they now do! They would sing another song, I guarantee you, if once they had such a twist of pain as some of us have had to endure, and the beads of perspiration stood on their brow while they tried to bear it. Ah, yes, we find how great our weakness is when first, one thing is taken away, and then another, and the chastening hand of God makes the blows to fall thick and heavy upon us!

Do we not, then, learn also, the value of prayer? I said to this friend to whom I have referred, "Did you not pray much more under your affliction than you did before?" "Oh, yes!" he replied. "I grant you that—

Trials give new life to prayer."

Do we ever pray in such dead earnest as when everything seems to be sinking from under our feet and our sweetest cups are full of bitterness? Then we turn to God and say, "Show me why You contend with me." I do not think that we ever pray with such fervor of supplication in our prosperity as we do in our adversity.

And then how precious the promises become! As we only see the stars when the shadows gather at night, so the promises shine out like newly-kindled stars when we get into the night of affliction! I am sure that there are passages of Scripture which are full of consolation, the depths of which we do not even imagine—and we shall never know all that is in them till we get into the deeps of soul trouble which correspond with them. There are points of view from which scenery is to be beheld at its best and, until we find out those points of view, we may be missing the sight of some of the most beautiful objects in nature! God leads us one way and another by our chastisements to understand and prize His promises.

And, oh, dear Friends, how should we ever know the faithfulness of God if it were not for affliction? We might talk about it and theoretically understand it, but to try to prove the greatness of Jehovah's love and the absolute certainty of His eternal faithfulness—this comes not except by the way of affliction and trial!

I might talk on forever about the sweet uses of adversity and not exhaust the subject. You experienced people of God know even more than I do about this matter, for some of you have done business in deeper waters than my boat has yet plowed, and yet, I think my keel has passed over the deep places of the sea of trouble, and there may be deeper

depths before me still. I have probably said enough to prove to you that chastening is a Divine way of instructing us. You will find that if you want the most Christ-like saints, and the most deeply experimental Believers, and the Christians who are best acquainted with the Word of God, you must look for them among those who are the most intimately acquainted with the fiery furnace and its burning heat.

If you read the text through, dear Friends, you will notice that the rod is not without the Word. I call your special attention to that—"Blessed is the man whom You chasten, O Lord, and teach Him out of Your Law." The rod and the Book go together! The rod drives us to the Book and the Book explains the meaning of the rod! We must have them both if we would be fully instructed in the things of God. *The Word of God is our school book.* At first, it is our primer, and when we get furthest advanced in Grace, it will be our most profound classic! And all the way along it will supply us with our choicest poetry and everything else that we desire.

We look to the Bible for comfort when we are chastened—we turn over its pages and seek to find a passage which fits our case and ministers relief to our necessity. Have you not often done so? Why, this Book is something like the locksmith's bunch of keys! Perhaps you have lost the key of your drawer and you cannot get at your things. You send for the smith and he keeps on trying different keys till, at last, he finds one that exactly fits the wards of your lock. So, if you keep on fingering away at the promises, you will come, at last, upon one that was made on purpose for your case! Perhaps your lock is one with very peculiar wards—you could never make out why it was shaped just as it is—but now that you have found the key that opens it, you understand that both lock and key were made to fit each other.

The Word of God is not only used at such times for comfort, but also for direction. How frequently you have been unable to see your way! You have wished that there was some Prophet of God with the Urim and Thummim, that he might tell you what to do. The great guiding principles of God's Truth, His Law and His Gospel, faith in Him and in His Providential care, have furnished you with a direction quite as clear as if some Prophet had plainly told you what to do. You have sought the direction of the Word of the Lord when you have gone to enquire in His Temple—He has answered you out of the secret place of thunder—and you have known without a doubt the way that you should take.

That, then, is the second use of the Word, first for comfort, and next for direction.

At such times, too, we have proved, dear Friends, the *power* of the Word of God. When your vessel is sailing along very smoothly, the Word of God may grow to be a dead letter with you, but when the waves are rolling mountains high, and dashing over you, and you are soaked through and through and fear that the deep will swallow you up, then you begin to test the promises and to prove the power of the Word of God! When its inexpressible sweetness reaches your heart, then you can, indeed, feel that you have been taught out of God's Word. You see how the two things go together—"Blessed is the man whom You chasten, O

Lord, and teach Him out of Your Law." O Lord, still use the rod if You see that it is necessary. But go on teaching us out of Your Word! We are slow to learn and poor scholars at the best, but You may yet make something of us.

That leads me to say that, according to our text, *God Himself is our Teacher.* He is not satisfied with giving us a Book and smiting us when we are inattentive to its teachings, but He, Himself, teaches us. Was there ever a Teacher so full of wisdom, a Teacher who understood His pupils so well, a Teacher so altogether master of the whole art of teaching? Was there ever a Teacher so patient, so able to apply His lessons to the heart, itself, so full of power to give understanding as well as to make the thing clear to the understanding when it is given? Happy people, who have God to be their Tutor! Happy pupils, even though, when the school bell rings, you have half a mind to stay away and play with yonder children who do not belong to your school! Yet happy are you if you are truly God's scholars. Even if, every now and then, your days are spent in weeping, and your lessons are so badly done that they bring the rod upon you, yet are you happy children. "Blessed is the man whom You chasten, O Lord, and teach Him out of Your Law."

So much, then, for our first head.

II. Now upon our second point I will say a little, and only a little. We have had God's children under instruction. Now let us think of GOD'S CHILDREN EDUCATED. The Lord has chastened and taught His child for this purpose—"That You may give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit is dug for the wicked." "What?" you ask, "chastened to give us *rest*? It is usual for chastening to *break* our rest." Yes, I know that it is so with other chastening, but in very deed this is the way in which God gives rest to His people.

First, *we learn to rest in the will of God.* Our will is naturally very stubborn and when we are chastened, at first we fight back, like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, but by degrees we feel that we must bear the yoke. We then go a little further and we feel that we *ought* to bear it, even though God should lay upon us anything He pleases, and we should feel it very galling. By-and-by, the yoke begins to fit our neck and we come even to *love* it. I do not suppose that many of us will ever get like Samuel Rutherford, when he said that he began to wonder which he loved better—Christ or his cross—for his cross had brought him so much blessing that he was quite in love with it. No, we have not reached that point, yet, so that we love our cross—still, we can say this, that we have learned that it is—

"Sweet to lie passive in His hands,
And know no will but His."

If we struggle against God's will, we only increase our sorrow. Our self-will usually lies at the root of our greatest griefs. Give way, and you have won! Yield to God and you have obtained the blessing you desire. The bitterness is gone out of your grief when you consent to be grieved if God will have it so.

We make advances in our spiritual education when *we learn to rest after our afflictions.* When any trouble is over, great delights often come to

us. It is with us as it was with our Master—He had been with the wild beasts—worse, still, He had been tempted of the devil. But angels came and ministered to Him. There is, to a Believer, sometimes, a wonderfully clear shining after the rain. Perhaps there is no happier period of life than the state of convalescence, when the sick man is gradually recovering his former strength after a long illness. So God gives surprising peace to His people when He takes away their troubles, but He also gives them a great measure of peace *in* their troubles. Thus, for another lesson, *we learn to rest in adversity.* The Lord chastens us in order that we may learn how to stand fast and bear up bravely while the trouble is yet upon us.

I have often had to notice the singularity of my Lord's loving kindness and tenderness to myself in the time of need. I do not say that it is singularity for *Him*, for He is often doing it, but the singularity lies in the fact that the Lord does it when nobody else could or would do it. He gives us comfort when nobody else is either willing or able to render any comfort to us. This very afternoon I have had a remarkable instance of how good cheer is sent to me by my gracious God just when I most need it. I was heavy and sad at heart and there came to my door, to see me, a foreign gentleman, an officer of considerable rank in the Italian army. He spoke to me in very good English, but I cannot tell you all that he said to me, though it was most cheering and kind. I asked him why he should come so far to see me.

He spoke of me as though I were a great man and I assured him that he was quite mistaken, for I was nothing of the kind. As we walked along and talked, he said, "But you are the greatest man in all the world to me." "Why is that?" I asked. And He answered, "I was a Catholic, and a bad Catholic, too. I did not rightly know anything about the Lord Jesus Christ and I was fast becoming an infidel. But I met with a sermon of yours in Italian and, by reading it, I was brought into the light and liberty of the Gospel. I found the Savior and I felt that I must come and tell you about it." Then he further cheered and encouraged my heart by letting me see how much he knew of our Lord Jesus—and he had learned it all from nothing but the Bible, itself—which he had read after being guided to it by a stray sermon of mine.

"Well," I thought, "my Master sends this man all the way from the south of Italy to come just at this particular time, when I was sorely needing just such a comforting message." Why should He do so? Only that He likes, when His children have to take bitter medicine, to give them a piece of sugar after it! Therefore, my Brothers and Sisters, be willing to take your medicine, otherwise there may come a sharp chastening with it. Oh, for Grace so to suffer, and so to endure, that we may give ourselves up into the hands of the Ever-Blessed One, and thus He will perfect in us the instruction of His wonderful Word! Then shall it be true that the Lord has taught us to rest even in the days of our adversity.

Much more might be said upon this part of my subject, especially about learning to look beyond this present life, but I have not the time or the strength to say it.

III. I must now go on to the third point which is that GOD'S CHILDREN ARE STILL DEAR TO HIM. We have thought of them at school, chastened and instructed, and we have seen them learning a few lessons. Now let us notice how dear they are to their Lord at all times, for the text says, "The Lord will not cast off His people, neither will He forsake His inheritance."

First, then, *the Lord will not cast off His people.* Sometimes you are cast down, but you are never cast *off*. Sometimes others cast you off, but the Lord will not cast off His people! Sometimes you are cast into the furnace. Yes, it may be so, but in the furnace you are not cast off. Metal put into the furnace is not thrown away. Had it been worthless, it might have been left on the heap with the slag. But it is put into the furnace because it is of value. When you are put into the furnace and into the greatest heat that can be obtained, it is that the Lord may take away your dross and purify you for His service—

"In the furnace God may prove you.
There to bring you forth more bright.
But can never cease to love you—
You are precious in His sight!
God is with you,
God, your everlasting light."

"The Lord will not cast off His people." Lay hold of that precious assurance! Even if Satan should come and whisper to you, "The Lord has cast you off," do not believe it! It cannot be. The devil has *his* cast-offs, but God has no cast-offs. Sometimes He takes the devil's castaways and makes them to be the trophies of His mighty Grace—and when He has done so, they are His people, concerning whom the Psalmist says, "The Lord will not cast off His people."

Then, further, *the Lord will not forsake His people,* for it is added, "Neither will He forsake His inheritance." He chose them to be His inheritance. He has bought them as His inheritance and He will never forsake them! Still shall you be supported by the Lord, but never forsaken by Him! Still shall you be owned by Him, but never forsaken. Still shall you be kept, defended against all comers, and preserved to be the Lord's own people, for He will not forsake His inheritance!

I do not feel as if I need say much more upon this theme, but it is enough for me, I think, just to remind you of those precious Words of our great and gracious Father which are many times repeated in His Word, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you," and leave them with you, His children. Take them and feed upon them! God give you to know the full comfort of them!

IV. So I shall close with this fourth point—GOD'S PEOPLE WILL BE RIGHTED IN THE END. "Judgment shall return unto righteousness: and all the upright in heart shall follow it."

Just now, *judgement has gone away.* It has gone up to its own land. Judgment is within the veil, but there are reasons for its absence from us. Judgment has gone away, perhaps, that it may try the faith of God's people. The Lord does not, today, strike down the profane, nor slay the hypocrite, as He might if He dealt with them in strict justice. Judgment has gone out of the world for a while, though it watches and records all

things. It is gone, partly, for our trial and testing, that we may learn to trust an absent God and Savior. Judgment is also gone away in order that mercy may be extended to the ungodly, that they may live and that they may turn to God, for He wills not the death of any, but that they may turn to Him and live. Judgment has gone up to the Throne for a while until the wicked shall have completed the full measure of their sin, "until the pit is dug for the wicked." Not yet is the iniquity of the Amorites full—and judgment has gone away and will stay away until it is.

Do not be in a hurry, child of God! The Lord has timed His absence. Listen to this next Word—"*Judgement shall return unto righteousness.*" You shall soon hear the trumpet. You shall hear the sound of that blast, "the loudest and the last," telling you that the day of the great assize has come and that the Judge has arrived to right all wrongs, to punish all iniquity and to reward all virtue, all true, faithful service! "Judgment shall return." We cannot tell how long it will linger, but it will return. Christ will come again! As surely as He ascended into Heaven, He will so come in like manner as He went up. He shall judge the earth in righteousness and His people with His Truth. Behold, He comes! And when He comes, judgment shall return unto righteousness.

And what then? *Judgement shall be welcomed by the godly.* When it comes, "all the upright in heart shall follow it." The chariot of righteousness shall lead the way and all the people of God shall follow it in a glorious procession. Then shall they receive their Lord's commendation, "Well done, good and faithful servants." They shall follow it as they wear their golden crowns, no, as they cast them at the foot of the Throne of God, saying, "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power." Saints will follow the chariot of judgment coming forth from their concealment and shining as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father! They shall come from the places where slander has banished them and show themselves, again, and God shall be glorified in them! Now you who love the Lord, be not in a hurry to have all this fulfilled. Leave your cases in the dear hands of Him who will, ere long, judge all righteously.

I have done when I have reminded you that He is accursed who has never felt the chastening hand of God, or sat at His feet to learn of Him. But he is blessed, indeed, who yields himself entirely up to the discipline of the Lord. May it be so with everyone of you, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

Let us read, this evening, the 94th Psalm, and may the Spirit of God instruct us while we read it!

Verse 1. *O LORD God, to whom vengeance belongs; O God, to whom vengeance belongs, show Yourself.* God is the God of Justice and when iniquity and oppression prevail, it is natural that His people should call upon Him to come forth out of His hiding places. Sometimes, when oppression and iniquity and error prevail, it seems as if God had hidden Himself away. Hence the prayer of the Psalmist, "O Jehovah, the God of recompenses (or *revenges*, as the margin has it), show Yourself."

2. *Lift up Yourself, You judge of the earth: render a reward to the proud.* As one who is about to strike a heavy blow lifts himself up to increase the force of the stroke, so the Psalmist prays to the Lord, "Lift up Yourself, You Judge of the earth. The proud are lifted up; lift up Yourself. They boast, they glory, Lord, show them how great a God You are in the defense of righteousness; lift up Yourself, You Judge of the earth."

3. *LORD, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph?* That question, "how long?" uttered twice over, sounds a little like howling, and, sometimes, God's saints get so dispirited that they cry to God and weep and wail before Him until their wailing becomes almost like howling—"Lord, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph?"

4, 5. *How long shall they utter and speak hard things? And all the workers of iniquity boast themselves? They break in pieces Your people, O LORD, and afflict Your heritage.* Their words are heavier than stones and when they hurl them at the Lord's people with cruel intent, they do great mischief. "They utter and speak hard things. All the workers of iniquity boast themselves." It seems to be the mark of the righteous that they are humble and lowly—and the mark of the wicked that they are boastful and proud. They have nothing of which they ought to boast, yet they boast very loudly. Pride is ingrained in our evil nature and the more there is of sin in us, the more there is of boasting by us.

6. *They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless.* Do you wonder that the Psalmist prayed, "O God of Vengeance, show Yourself"? Can you see the fatherless robbed and the widow and the stranger oppressed, without feeling your indignation burn? He who is never indignant has no virtue in him! He who cannot burn like coals of juniper against evil does not truly love righteousness. The Psalmist was not a man of that sort—he was righteously angry with the wicked who slew the widow and the stranger—and murdered the fatherless.

7. *Yet they say, The LORD shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it.* They were practically atheists, for, if they had a god, nominally, they regarded him as a god who did not observe sins, a blind deity, a god who took no note of evil! Do you not think that this is the prevailing religion of today? Are there not many who say, "Jehovah shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it"? God is not in all their thoughts. He is, to them, a nonentity, not the Omniscient Jehovah and hardly even a person, but a kind of secondary power or a feeble force—an unknown something or other of not much account—"Jehovah shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it."

8. *Understand, you brutish among the people.* When a man turns away from God, he casts off his manhood. He ceases to be a man and becomes like a brute, a boar, for so this expression might be read, "You boars among the people."

8, 9. *And you fools, when will you be wise? He that planted the ear, shall He not hear?* Did the Lord make men's ears, and put them near the brain in the very best place for hearing, and shall He not, Himself, hear? The argument is overwhelming! God gave us ears and made us hear—is He, Himself, deaf?

9. *He that formed the eye, shall He not see?* God makes all eyes. Is *He* without eyes? The supposition is an absurdity! It needs only to be mentioned to be held up to ridicule. "He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the eye, shall He not see?"—

"Shall He who, with transcendent skill,
Fashioned the eye and formed the ear—
Who modeled nature to His will—
Shall He not see? Shall He not hear?"

10. *He that chastises the heathen, shall not He correct?* Whole nations were driven out of Canaan to make room for Israel. Many other nations have been crushed, doubled up, utterly destroyed on account of their sin. Everybody who reads history knows that this has been the case, so the Psalmist argues, "He that chastises the heathen, shall not He correct?" He that executes judgment upon heathen nations, can He not deal with sinful man and with single individuals? He that broke the power of Persia, Assyria, Greece and Rome—will He not punish guilty men when they dare to set themselves up as oppressors of His people?

10. *He that teaches man knowledge, shall not He know?* Our translators finish the question by putting, "Shall not He know?" But those words are not in the original and they are not at all necessary to the argument. It is as if the Psalmist abruptly broke off his utterances, as much as to say, "It is of no use arguing with you fellows," or else as if he said, "Finish my sentence, yourselves—I put the truth so clearly before you that there is no escaping from it." "He that teaches man knowledge." If God has taught men all that they know, does not He, Himself, know all that is to be known? The Psalmist does not say so much as that in words, but he leaves us to draw that as the only inference from what he says.

11. *The LORD knows the thoughts of man.* God knows not only men's words and acts, but also their *thoughts*. God knows thoughtful men, the best sort of men, when they are at their best, when they are thinking. And what does God think of the thoughts of man?

11. *That they are vanity.* Yet people talk about the thoughtful men of the age and want us to bow down and worship their thoughts! This boasting about man's thoughts is only like the cracking of rotten sticks! "The Lord knows the thoughts of man, that they are vanity."

12. *Blessed is the man whom You chasten, O LORD, and teach him out of Your Law.* Here is the truly blessed man—not the boaster, not the infidel, not the proud thinker—but the Divinely-chastened man! He is sore through the chastening of the Lord, his bones are full of pain, his heart is heavy and his home, perhaps, is a place of torture to him, but still it is true that he is a blessed man—"Blessed is the man whom You chasten, O Lord, and teach him out of Your Law."

13. *That You may give him rest, from the days of adversity, until the pit is dug for the wicked.* Christ has gone to prepare Heaven for His people. It is a prepared place for a prepared people. So is it with the ungodly and their eternal inheritance—it is a prepared place, "prepared for the devil and his angels." And when men make themselves like demons and so, are ripe for Hell, then is the pit ready to receive them!

14. *For the Lord will not cast out His people, neither will He forsake His inheritance.* If any of you are deeply troubled, I counsel you to get a hold of this promise! Perhaps it seems to you as if two seas of sorrow had met around you and that you were in a whirlpool of trouble. Then I say again, lay hold of this text and grip it firmly—"Jehovah will not cast off His people, neither will He forsake His inheritance."

15, 16. *But judgment shall return unto righteousness: and all the upright in heart shall follow it. Who will rise up for me against the evildoers? Who will rise up for me against the workers of iniquity?* Well, David, you may ask the question, but we cannot tell you who among your fellow men will stand up for you! It sometimes happens that God's people are left without an earthly friend. Their case is so hard, their cause involves so much question, so much shame, perhaps, that nobody will stand up for them. If this is your trying condition just now, listen to the Psalmist's testimony—

17. *Unless the LORD had been my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence.* If it had not been for God, he would not only have had no hand to help him, but not even a voice to speak for him! He might not have suffered quite in silence, because he would have, himself, spoken, but what he would have said would only have made the matter worse. What would he have said if he *had* broken the silence?

18. *When I said, My foot slips.* "It is going, it is gone! My foot is now slipping"—what then?

18. *Your mercy, O LORD, held me up.* God is grand at holding up His people in slippery places—and not only in slippery places—but when their feet actually slip. When they think that they are gone, they are not really gone. "Underneath are the everlasting arms." "Your mercy, O Lord, held me up."

19. *In the multitude of my thoughts within me*—"I cannot collect my thoughts—they will not be gathered into orderly array. They rush to and fro, there is a multitude, a mob of them." It is good to have thoughts, but sometimes you may have too many of them, and they may come helter-skelter, blasphemous thoughts, perhaps, despairing, proud, unbelieving, all sorts of thoughts! "In the multitude of my thoughts within me"—

19. *Your comforts delight my soul.* "Comforts which You bring me, comforts which arise from thoughts of You, the comforts of the Comforter, the comforts of the God of All Comfort, Your comforts delight my soul." You must often have noticed that troubles seldom come alone. If you get one trial, you will probably have a whole covey of them. It very rarely happens, I think, to any one of us to have a lone sorrow. In another place the Psalmist says, "Deep calls unto deep at the noise of Your waterspouts; all Your waves and Your billows are gone over me." It is so with some of us at this time—we have a multitude of troubled thoughts within us. But have you also noticed that God's mercies do not come alone? They come in flocks! The Psalmist says, "Your comforts"—not merely *one* comfort, but a great host of them—"Your comforts delight my soul." they not merely sustain me, and keep me alive, but they delight my soul. God never does anything in halves—when He gives us comfort, He does it thoroughly. The Lord's flowers bloom double! He gives us not

only comfort, but delight—"Your comforts delight my soul." Now the Psalmist turns to God in prayer and says—

20. *Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with You, which frames mischief by a law?* Oh, how strong are the wicked! They think they can have everything their own way, that they can make what laws they like and crush out anything that they despise! Yes, there are many thrones of iniquity, but God has no fellowship with them! And if God has no fellowship with a throne, that throne will tumble down—God will not uphold it. The day will come when He will no longer tolerate its iniquity and then one blow of His mighty right hand shall shiver it to atoms!

21. *They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous and condemn innocent blood.* Agreed about nothing else, they all agree against Christ and against the holy seed—"the soul of the righteous." They would blot out the righteous from under Heaven if they could.

22. *But the LORD is my defense; and my God is the rock of my refuge.* I commend these expressions to all Believers, let them treasure them up. "My God." Ah, you must *personally* appropriate God to yourself if He is to bless you! Another man's god is nothing to you unless you can also say, "My God." When you have said, "My God," you have uttered the grandest words that human lips can frame! If God is yours, all things are yours—earth and Heaven, time and eternity! "My God is the rock of my refuge." You are on the Rock. You are in the Rock. You are behind the Rock. You must be safe now.

23. *And He shall bring upon them their own iniquity.* That is the punishment of sin. It seems strange that it is so, but *sin* is the punishment of *sin*. When a man has once sinned, it is part of his punishment that he is inclined to sin, again, and so on, *ad infinitum*. "He shall bring upon them their own iniquity."

23. *And shall cut them off in their own wickedness.* It needs no fire nor worm to torment the ungodly—their own wickedness, itself, is fire, worm and pit without a bottom—and the Hell that ends not.

23. *Yes, the LORD our God shall cut them off—*

"Surrounded by His saints, the Lord
Shall, armed with holy vengeance, come
To each his final lot award
And seal the sinner's fearful doom."

God save us from being of that company! May we all be numbered with His people forever and ever! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"— 121, 745, 748.

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

FOUND BY JESUS—AND FINDING JESUS
NO. 2375

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 26, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 24 ,1888.

"The day following, Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and He found Philip, and said to him, Follow Me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael, and said to him, We have found Him, of whom Moses in the Law, and the Prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." John 1:43-45.

FOR a soul to come to Jesus is the grandest event in its history! It is spiritually dead till that day, but it *then* begins to live—and a saved man may reckon his age from the time in which he first knew the Lord. That day of first knowing Christ is important in the highest degree because it affects all the man's past life. It sheds another light on all the years that have gone by. If he has lived in sin, as no doubt he has, the transaction of that day blots out all the sin. The day in which a man comes to Christ—that very day—his transgressions and iniquities are blotted out, even as the thick clouds are driven from the sky when God's strong wind chases them away! Is not that a grand day, in which our sins are cast into the depths of the sea so that from then on it can be said of them, "They may be sought for, but they shall not be found; yes, they shall not be, says the Lord"?

I say that the day in which a soul comes into contact with Christ is the greatest day of its history because all the past is changed by it! And, as for the present, what a different life does a man begin to live on the day in which he finds the Lord! He commences to live in the Light of God instead of being dead in the darkness! He begins to enjoy the privileges of liberty, instead of suffering the horrors of slavery! He is started on the way to Heaven, instead of continuing on the road to Hell! He is such a new creature that he cannot tell how changed he is. One said to me, "Sir, the change in me is of this kind—either the whole world is altered, or else I am." So is it when we are brought to know Christ—it is a real, total, radical change.

With many, it is a most joyous alteration. They feel like the man who had been lame, and who, when Peter spoke to him in the name of Jesus, and lifted him up so that his feet and ankle bones received strength, was not satisfied with walking, for we read, "He, leaping up, stood and walked, and entered with them into the Temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God." He was walking, leaping and praising God! Do you wonder at it? If you had lost the use of your legs for a while, you would feel like leaping and praising God when you had them all right, again!

And thus is it with a soul when it first finds the Savior. Oh, happy, happy day when the miraculous hand of Christ takes away the infirmities of the soul and makes the lame man to leap as a hart, and causes the tongue of the dumb to sing!

The day in which a man comes to Christ is also a wonderful day in its effect upon all his future. It is as when the helm of a ship is put right about—the man now sails in a totally different direction. His future will never be what his past was. There may be faults. There may be infirmities and shortcomings, but there will never be the old love of sin any more. "Sin shall not have dominion over you." This is God's own promise to us, given through His servant, Paul. When Christ comes to our soul, He so breaks the neck of sin, that though it lives a struggling, dying life and often makes a deal of howling in the heart, yet it is doomed to die. The Cross of Christ has broken its back and broken its neck, too, and die it must! Henceforth the man is bound for holiness and bound for Heaven!

Now, dear Friends, have any of you come to Christ? I know that you have, the great mass of you, and I bless God, and so do you, that it is so with you. But if there are any of you who have never come to the Savior, I wish that this might be the night when you should find Him. I am but a poor lame preacher—you are not often troubled with the sight of one sitting down and preaching—yet I think that if I had lost my legs and had always to lie on my back, I would like, even then, to preach Christ Crucified, and to—

"Tell to sinners round,
What a dear Savior I have found."

I do pray that some of you, tonight, made to think all the more by the infirmity of the preacher, may be led to seek and to find the Savior. And then it shall be a happy day, indeed, for you, as it has been for so many more.

I am going to talk to you about Philip's conversion and first, I ask you to notice, in our text, *the convert's description of it*— "Philip found Nathanael and said to him, We have found Him, of whom Moses in the Law, and the Prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." That is Philip's description of it—"We have found Jesus." It was a true description, but it was not *all* the truth, so, in the second place, we will notice *the Holy Spirit's description of it*—"The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and He found Philip." Philip's account of the incident is that *he* found Christ, but the Holy Spirit's record of it is that *Christ found Philip*. They are *both* true, however, although the latter is the fuller. We will talk a little about both descriptions of Philip's conversion.

I. First then, THE CONVERT'S DESCRIPTION OF HIS COMING TO CHRIST is given in these words, "We have found…Jesus," and what he says is perfectly true.

If any of you is saved, it will be by finding Christ—by your *personally* making a discovery of Him, as that man did who found the treasure that was hid in the field. There must be a search for Christ, but if there *is* a search for Him, we may be certain of this one thing—there will *first* be a consciousness of *needing* Him.

Philip had sought Christ, or else he would never have said that he had found Him, but, before that, *Philip knew that there was need of a Messiah.* When he looked round about on the world and on the Church, he said to himself, "Oh, that the promised Messiah would come! There is great need of Him. The people need Him, the Church needs Him, the world needs Him." When Philip looked into his own heart, he said, "Oh, for the coming of the Messiah! I feel that I need Him! I have urgent need of Him."

Dear Hearer, do you feel that you need a Savior? You never will seek Him until you feel your need of Him. You must recognize that there is sin in you, sin for which you cannot make Atonement, sin that you cannot overcome. You must realize that you need another and a stronger arm than your own, that you need Divine help, that you need One who can be your Brother to sympathize with you, and be patient with you, and yet who can be the Mighty God to conquer all your sin for you! You need a Savior—that is the first thing that will prompt you to search for Him.

Needing a Messiah, *Philip read the Scriptures concerning Him.* He speaks about Moses and the Prophets and of what they had written concerning the promised Deliverer. O my dear Hearers, if you need to find Christ, you *must* search the Scriptures, for they testify of Him! Oh, that you did search the Scriptures, more, with the definite objective of finding the Savior! Probably the great majority of unconverted people never read their Bibles at all, or they read only just enough to satisfy their curiosity, or their conscience. Perhaps they read the Bible as a part of literature which cannot be quite ignored, but they do not take down the Holy Book and read it carefully and prayerfully, saying, "Oh, that I might find holiness, here! Oh, that I might find Christ, here!" If they did, it would not be long before they found Jesus. Well does Dr. Watts sing—

"Laden with guilt and full of fears,
I fly to You, my Lord,
And not a glimpse of hope appears
But in Your written Word!
The volume of my Father's Grace
Does all my griefs assuage,
Here I behold my Savior's face
Almost on every page."

He who reads the Bible with the view of finding Christ will not be long before some passage of Scripture will seem to leap up to attract his attention, as though it were set on fire—and then it will speak to him of Jesus, whispering to him of the great Sacrifice on Calvary and speaking to his heart of Divine Love and Mercy. Philip was a searcher after Christ in the place where Christ loves to be—in the pages of Scripture—and you must be the same if you desire to find Jesus!

But then *Philip also gave himself to prayer.* We are not told so, but we feel sure of it. He asked the Lord to reveal Christ to him, to guide him to where the Christ would be, to let him know the Christ. Oh, if you want to be saved, be much in prayer! I do not mean merely *saying* prayers—what is the good of that? I do not mean simply saying fine words of your own, merely for the sake of uttering them. Prayer is communing with God! It is

asking the Lord for what you really feel that you need. What wagon loads of sham prayers are shot down at God's door, as if they were so much rubbish thrown away! Let it not be so with *your* prayers, but speak to the Lord out of your very soul when you come to the Throne of Grace. I cannot give you a better prayer than the one we have been singing—

"Gracious Lord, incline Your ear,
My requests vouchsafe to hear!
Hear my never ceasing cry—
Give me Christ, or else I die!
Lord, deny me what You will,
Only ease me of my guilt.
Suppliant at Your feet I lie,
Give me Christ, or else I die!
You freely save the lost.
Only in Your Grace I trust:
With my earnest suit comply—
Give me Christ, or else I die!
You have promised to forgive
All who in Your Son believe—
Lord, I know You cannot lie
Give me Christ, or else I die!"

With the open Bible before you to guide your understanding, kneel down and say, "O God, graciously reveal Christ to me by Your Holy Spirit. Bring me to know Him! Bring me, this day, to find Him as my own Savior!"

It is certain, also, that *Philip realized that he might claim the Messiah for himself.* One of the things that every man, who would find the Savior must do is to make sure of his right to come and take the Savior. The question that puzzles many is, "May I have the Savior?" My dear Friends, every sinner in the world is permitted to come and trust the Savior, if he wills to do so. "Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely." "But," asks some troubled soul, "will Christ have me?" That is not the question—the question is, "Will you have Christ?" He says, "Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out." It is *you* who cast out the Savior, not the Savior who casts you out! The bolt to the door is on the *inside*—it is you who have bolted it and it is you who must undo the bolt and invite the Savior to enter your heart. He is willing enough to come in—wherever there is a soul that wants Him, He comes at once! Therefore, do not raise any quibbling questions about whether a sinner may come to Christ, or may not come! Is he not *commanded* to come? We are told to preach the Gospel to every creature, and He who gave us our great commission also added, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned."

Philip accepted Christ as the Messiah. Do you ask, "What am I to do that I may find the Savior?" Well, what you have to do is, practically, this—*accept* Him! If you were sick and the doctor stood before you with the medicine ready prepared, you would not say, "What am I to do with this medicine, Sir? Am I to rub my hand on the outside of the bottle?" You know very well that there are certain directions as to how much is to be taken and how often. What you have to do with the medicine is to take

it! "But I cannot make that medicine work for my restoration." Who said you could? All you have to do is to *take* it. It is just this that you have to do with Christ—*take* Him, *accept* Him, *receive* Him. Remember the 12th verse of this chapter out of which our text is taken—"As many as *received* Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name."

That is it, you see, *receive* Him, believe on His name. "But surely I am to do some good works." Certainly, you *will* do good works *after* you have received Christ. But for your soul's salvation, you are to do no good works, but simply to receive Christ. "Oh, but I must lead a holy life!" Yes, and you *will* lead a holy life *after* you have received Christ. But in order to the leading of a holy life you must have a *new heart*—and to get a new heart—you have to receive Christ! He will change you, He will renew you, He will make you a new creature in Himself! What you have to do is to *receive Him and to believe on His name*. O my dear Hearers, I trust that I am speaking to some, this evening, who will understand what I am saying! I fear that I am addressing many who will not believe, though I may put the Truth of God as plainly as it can be preached. You know that you may hold a candle right against a blind man's eyes and yet he will not see, even then. The Holy Spirit must open your eyes to see what is meant by this receiving Christ, or else you will not understand what you are to do. You are not to *give* anything to Christ—you are to *take* all from Him! You are not to bring anything to Christ—you are to come to Him just as you are—and He will bring to you everything that you need. Then, when you have accepted Him by the simple act of faith, you will say with Philip, "We have found Jesus!" That is the convert's description and a very good one, too—"We have found Jesus."

II. But now, secondly, what is THE HOLY SPIRIT'S DESCRIPTION? I will read to you the very words again. Here they are—"The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and He found Philip." Jesus finds Philip before Philip finds Jesus. *Philip finds Jesus because Jesus has found Philip*.

Now, notice, that *this is the previous work.* It came before Philip's own finding. Jesus would go forth into Galilee to find Philip. Dear Friends, I remember very well that after I had found the Lord, I did not, at first, fully understand the Doctrines of Grace. I had heard them preached, but I had not comprehended them. I think at the time I would have been very much puzzled with the Doctrine of Election if anybody had spoken to me about it. But I was sitting down, one day, gratefully reflecting on what God had done for me. I knew that my sins were pardoned, I knew that I was accepted in Christ Jesus and I knew that I was renewed in heart—and in one moment the revelation came to me—"All this is the work of God!" The instant I saw that Truth of God, I said to myself, "Yes, that is the fact, and God be glorified for it! But why has this great work been worked in *me*?"

I knew that there was no merit in me before the Lord had dealt in mercy with my soul, so I said to myself, "This is the effect of Sovereign, Distinguishing Grace." Then I understood in a moment how it is that *God*

begins with us and that it is God's will and God's eternal purpose, which, after all, lie deeper down than *our will or our purpose*—and God's will and God's eternal purpose must have the Glory! What a revelation it was to me! I saw the Doctrines of Grace immediately and I think that anybody who has been brought to find the Savior and who, *prayerfully studies the reasons for his salvation*, can see the same Truths of God that the Lord revealed to me.

Because, first of all, you began to be thoughtful, did you not? Who made you thoughtful? You would never have found the Savior if you had not become thoughtful instead of careless and indifferent. Who made you think of Divine things? What influence was it which worked upon you and caused you to feel that you must think about eternity, and Heaven, and Hell? Surely it was *God the Holy Spirit* going forth, in the name of Jesus Christ, and dealing with you in mercy!

Then you had a sense of your need and of your sinfulness. There was a time when you had no such sense. Who gave it to you? Where do you think that repentance, that sorrow for sin, that desire after Christ came from? Did all that grow in your own fallen human nature? Ah, believe me, that dunghill never brought forth such fair flowers as these! No, it was Christ who sowed the good Seed in your soul—it was He who made you feel your need of Him!

Next, when you read the Bible, you understood it. You perceived that Jesus was the only Savior of sinners. You saw His fitness to meet your case and you understood the plan of salvation. Who made you understand it? I know that it is plain enough for a child to comprehend, but *no one ever understands* spiritual things except by the operation of the Spirit of God! It was the Holy Spirit who gave you the spiritual power by which you were able to grasp the simple Truth concerning the way of salvation.

Then you began to pray. I have already spoken of that matter. But who taught you to pray? You had not been accustomed to real prayer—you had often had great mouthfuls of words—that was all. But now you began to cry, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" Oh, the groaning of your spirit and the anguish of your heart as you cried to God! Who gave you that anguish? Who broke you all to pieces and made every broken bone cry out for mercy? Who, indeed, but Christ who worked mightily in your soul by the power of the Holy Spirit?

And when you yielded yourself up to Christ, when you believed in Jesus and found salvation, where did that faith come from? Is it not always the work of the Spirit of God? Is not faith the gift of God and do you not confess that it is so in your case? Once, when I was a little child, I thought I saw a needle moving across the table and I would have been wondering who made the needle march as it did, but I was old enough to understand that somebody was moving a magnet underneath the table and the needle was following the magnet which I could not see. Thus the Lord, with His mighty magnet of Grace, is often at work upon the hearts of men, and we think that their desire after God and their faith in Christ are of themselves. In a sense, the desire and the faith *are* their own, but

there is a Divine Force that is at work upon them, producing these results! It is Jesus finding Philip, though Philip does not know it. Philip thinks that *he* is finding Jesus, but behind the veil it is Jesus finding Philip! This was the previous work.

And, dear Friends, *this was very delightful work for the Lord Jesus Christ.* Notice how it is put—"The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and He found Philip." O my blessed Lord, how He will go forth to find a soul! A journey is never too long for Him and He never wastes a day. "The day following Jesus would go forth, and He found Philip." Oh, may my Lord delight to come forth and find some of you! You are, tonight, in a place where He has found a good many. I pray that He may find some of you. Perhaps you do not know how it was that you came here. You did not mean to come out, tonight, but here you are in this crowd, in the thick of this great throng. My Lord has found many a precious jewel here—to itself it seemed nothing but a poor pebble, but to Him it was a diamond of the first water! O my Master, find some more of Your jewels tonight! Lord Jesus, come and find Philip, and find Mary, and then let Philip and Mary declare that they have found You!

When our dear Master goes forth to find a soul, *it is very effectual work.* He said to Philip, "Follow Me," and Philip at once followed Him. Christ did not need to preach a long sermon. His discourse contained only two words, "Follow Me." I will gladly end my sermon here if my Master will preach to some of you His two-worded sermon, "Follow Me," "Follow Me," "Follow Me!" "Come, poor Soul, you do not know the way! 'Follow Me.' You need someone to go before you, to be your leader, 'Follow Me.' You need someone to be your shelter, your companion, your all, 'Follow Me.'" That is what you have to do, good woman. You have been worrying about what you have heard from different preachers. Christ says to you, "Follow Me." That is what you have to do, young man! You have been reading those modern thought books till you do not know whether you are on your head or on your heels. *Burn them*! Jesus says, "Follow Me." I know that some of you have been distracted with all sorts of silly talk—let that go to the dogs. Jesus says, "Follow Me." The crucified Savior says, "Follow Me." Take Him for your Atonement! The risen Savior says, "Follow Me." Take Him for your life! The Savior on the Throne of God says, "Follow Me." Take Him for your joy! The Savior coming in Glory hereafter says, "Follow Me." Take Him to be your hope! "Follow Me." "Follow Me"—that is the text for tonight—and that is the sermon, too! Jesus said to Philip, "Follow Me," and Philip followed Him, directly. And he not only followed Christ, but he immediately began to try to get others to follow Him!

Please notice, also, that *Philip was found by Christ in a very different way from the other disciples.* Two of them had been found through the teaching of John the Baptist, but Philip had apparently had no teaching. Another of the little company had been found through the private call of his brother. Philip may not have had any relative or friend to speak to him, but the Savior just said to him, "Follow Me," and he followed Him! Dear Friends, do not begin comparing your conversion with somebody

else's. If the Lord Jesus Christ calls you and says to you, "Follow Me," and you follow Him, if there never was another soul converted in exactly the same way, it does not matter at all! If you have come to Him, if you have trusted in Him, you are saved.

The pith of all that I have to say is this. Do not get to worrying yourselves, as some of you do, about God's eternal purpose and about the secret working of the Holy Spirit—and about how this can be consistent with your following Christ when He bids you. They are perfectly consistent! Some persons have asked me, at times, to reconcile these two things, and I have said to them, "Very well, tell me the difficulties, and I will reconcile them." It would be quite as easy to state them as to meet them, for, in fact, there are none! "Oh, but," says one, "you tell me to believe in Christ and yet you constantly preach that faith is the work of the Spirit of God!" I know that I do. "You say that God has a chosen people." Yes, I do. "And yet you say that men are to choose Christ?" I do. "Well, how do you reconcile those two things?" Show me that there is any difficulty about the two things and then I will reconcile them. You *imagine* the difficulty, for there is none in reality! There does not exist any in practical life!

I believe that God has predestinated whether I am going down to the Lord's Supper at the close of this service, but I shall go down as well as my legs can carry me. "Oh," you say, "you make it out to be a matter of your own free will?" Yes, I do. "And yet you believe it to be God's eternal purpose?" Yes, I do. "Well, then, reconcile the two things." Again I say that there is no difficulty in the case! There is nothing to be reconciled, for both statements are true! You might as well ask me to reconcile the land and the water, or to reconcile the dog-star, Sirius, and a farthing rushlight. There is no quarrel between them and I have no time to waste on needless argument. Come to Christ! And if you do, it will be because the Holy Spirit draws you! If you find the Savior, it will be because the Savior first found you! Perhaps, in Heaven, you may see some difficulties and get them explained. Down here you need not see them and you need not ask to have them explained. Salvation is all of God's Grace, from first to last—yet is it true that the Grace of God leads men to do what Moses did, according to our subject this morning [See Sermon #2030, Volume 34—*Moses—His Faith and Decision*—Read/download entire sermon at http://www.spurgeongems.org .] to make a choice and to choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. God grant that you may make an equally wise choice!

I have done when I have said this one thing more. Philip, Peter and Andrew were all of Bethsaida—"Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter." These three good men, these three Apostles, were all of Bethsaida. That ought to be some comfort to many of you, my dear Hearers, because there are numbers of you who are here, tonight, who are of Bethsaida. Sitting all round me, I see people who, I believe, are of Bethsaida. "Oh," you say, "we were never there in all our lives!" Listen. Bethsaida was one of the places in which Christ had done many of His mighty works and you remember that when the people repented not, Je-

sus uttered over them that sad lamentation, "Woe unto you, Chorazin! Woe unto you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the Day of Judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, which are exalted unto Heaven, shall be brought down to Hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in you, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the Day of Judgment, than for you."

Now, there are some of you here who have heard the Gospel for many years and have seen the power of the Grace of God in your families—and it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, and for Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgement, than it will be for you, inasmuch as you have rejected the Savior! But, as there were these three men—Philip and Peter and Andrew who were of Bethsaida—and I should think that the home of James and John was not very far off from the same place—why should *you* not come to Christ? Why should *you* not become members of His Church and, if it is the Lord's will, preachers of His Word? God grant that it may be so!

Oh, how I long in my soul for the salvation of every one of you! Many of you who have come here, tonight, are strangers to me. I trust that you will not be strangers to my Master! Tonight, I pray you, here in the very heat of midsummer, before the harvest shall be past and the summer shall be ended, "Seek you the Lord while He may be found! Call you upon Him while He is near! Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." Receive Christ! Trust in Him! God grant that you may do so, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
John 1:29-51

Verse 29. *The next day*—This chapter is a record of the events that occurred on different days. Sometimes God does great things in a single day—one extraordinary day may have more in it than a hundred ordinary years! It is well for us to try to live by the day and not to let any day pass without some good action having been done in it. Let us never have to cry, "I have lost a day."

29. *John saw Jesus coming unto him, and said, Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.* We ought never to be slow in delivering such a message as that which John the Baptist uttered! I do not wonder that as soon as John knew that Jesus was the Messiah, he told the good news to others! Have you found Jesus? Tell your brother, tonight, or, if not tonight, go as soon as you can, and bid him, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."

30-34. *This is He of whom I said, After me comes a Man who is preferred before me: for He was before me. And I knew Him not: but that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bore record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from Heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom you shall see the Spirit descending and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizes with the Holy Spirit. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.* John was acquainted with Jesus, for they were related to one another, and were brought up together, but he did not officially know Him as the Messiah until He saw the Holy Spirit descending and remaining on Him, for that was the Lord's token by which he was to recognize Him. He refused, therefore, to follow any knowledge or judgment of his own. He would not know Jesus as the Christ until he saw the private sign for which the Lord had told him to look. As soon as he saw that, then John said that he knew Him, and as soon as he thus knew Him, he began to preach Him! Has the Lord given you in your soul a token that Christ is your Savior? Do you know Him by the witness of the Holy Spirit? Then go and speak of Him to others and, like John, say, "Behold the Lamb of God!" Let this be your one business between here and Heaven.

35, 36. *Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as He walked, he said, Behold the Lamb of God!* "Again the next day." See how the Evangelist goes by *days* in his record. John preached the same sermon two days running—and if you proclaim Christ and Him crucified—you may preach Him 200 days running, but you will never preach Him too often! If you preach Christ as the Lamb of God, the great Sin-Bearer, you may be always at that blessed work. There are some who very seldom preach Christ as bearing the sin of men, so that others of us must do it all the more often to make up for their shortcomings. As for me, I can say with Charles Wesley—

"His only righteousness I show,
His saving Truth proclaim;
'Tis all my business here below,
To cry, 'Behold the Lamb!'"

37. *And the two disciples heard Him speak and they followed Jesus.* It is hard preaching when you preach away your congregation, but John did this deliberately. He wished these two no longer to be his disciples, but to become the disciples of Jesus. He had mastered the meaning of his own words, "He must increase, but I must decrease," and he was quite willing that it should be so—"The two disciples heard Him speak and they followed Jesus."

38, 39. *Then Jesus turned and saw them following, and said unto them, What do you seek? They said unto Him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where do You dwell? He said to them, Come and see.* He gave them a full invitation to come to the place where He tarried and see for themselves. That is what Jesus still says, "Come and see." If any of you want to know Him, "Come and see." You are perfectly welcome to "Come and see" all that Jesus has to show you!

39. *They came and saw where He dwelt and abode with Him that day: for it was about the tenth hour.* The best part of that day was the portion which they spent with Jesus—it was the best day they had ever enjoyed, for they lived with Jesus! It was also the beginning of better days for these two disciples, for, having once lived with Jesus, they learned never to live without Him. Oh, that we, also, may abide with Him!

40, 41. *One of the two which heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother, Simon, and said to him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.* Where should missionary work begin? A brother should begin with his brother. It is all very well to have a desire to go to the heathen in Africa, but you had better begin work as a missionary in England, and then go to Africa. He who cannot win his brother is not likely to win anybody else. "He first found his own brother, Simon." This Andrew, who was afterwards to bring so many to Christ, must begin at home and succeed there. If we are not faithful with one or two relatives, how can God trust us with a pulpit and a congregation?

42. *And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, He said, You are Simon the son of Jonas.* "Simon, son of a dove, your name may point you out as being timid—mind where you wing your flight."

42. *You shall be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone.* Something more solid than the son of a pigeon! Something more stable than the son of a dove! Christ changes men's names and changes their natures, too. He can make the most fickle of us to become firm and steadfast. Oh, that He would thus work by His Grace upon us!

43, 44. *The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and found Philip, and said to him, Follow Me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.* "The day following." See, Friends, what a wonderful chapter this is! There is a book called, The Book of Days. I call this chapter, the Chapter of Days. Every day seems memorable for some great event. "Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter," was a poor, miserable village, but God greatly honored it. Great works often begin in little places. The best of beings came out of the despised town of Nazareth! And three of the best of men—Philip, Andrew and Peter—came out of Bethsaida.

45. *Philip found Nathanael, and said to him, We have found Him, of whom Moses in the Law, and the Prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.* True faith may make blunders. Jesus was *not* the son of Joseph, except by reputation, and He was Jesus of Bethlehem quite as much as He was Jesus of Nazareth—but true faith is accepted of God even though it makes some mistakes. It believes God's Word and it believes God's Son and, therefore, it shall be accepted.

46. *And Nathanael said unto him, Can there be any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip said to him, Come and see.* Christ had said, "Come and see." Now Philip used the same words, "Come and see." It is always right to follow the example that the Lord Jesus has set for us!

47, 48. *Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him and said of him, Behold an Israelite, indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathanael said to Him, When did*

You know me? You may remember that, a short time ago, I preached a sermon upon Nathanael. [*See Volume 34, No. 2021, "Nathanael—Or, the Ready Believer and His Reward."*—Read/download entire sermon at http://www.spurgeongems.org .] He was a kind of Jewish John Blunt, a man who always spoke his mind. He had a mind and he had a mind to speak it—and he spoke his mind! So, the moment that Christ spoke of him, he asked, "When did You know me?" He was conscious that Christ knew him and, being a man who was altogether free from cunning and craftiness, he pointedly asked how Christ came to know him.

48. *Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.* What was he doing under the fig tree? Jesus knew and Nathanael knew, but nobody else knew and, perhaps, nobody else ever *will* know. That was a secret between Christ and Nathanael. He was doing something there that he regarded as quite private—and the Savior's allusion to his being under the fig tree was the most plain proof he could have of Christ's Divinity. "Oh," he thought, "He who can remind me of that secret transaction must be God."

49, 50. *Nathanael answered and said to Him: Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel. Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You shall see greater things than these.* You who are honest in heart. You who can be convinced by a single argument—and, mark you, one good argument is as convincing as 20 good arguments, and a great deal better than a 100 bad ones—you who are willing to be led by a single thread shall be led! If you are willing to believe on what is clear evidence, you shall have more evidence—"you shall see greater things than these." God will show much to that man who has eyes with which to see. He who will not see and does not wish to see, shall grow more and more blind—and the darkness shall thicken about him.

51. *And He said to him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter you shall see Heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.* He could see *actually* what Jacob saw only in a dream when he beheld that wonderful stairway of Light which leads from earth to Heaven, even the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by His Manhood and His Godhead bridges the distance between us and God!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—605, 576, 606.

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

"I WILL," YET, "NOT AS I WILL"
NO. 2376

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 1, 1883.

"Father, I will." John 7:24. ***"Not as I will." Matthew 16:39.***

We have, here, two prayers uttered by the same Person, yet there is the greatest possible contrast between them. How different men are at different times! Yet Jesus was always essentially the same—"the same yesterday, and today, and forever." Still, His mood and state of mind varied from time to time. He seemed calmly happy when He prayed with His disciples and said, "Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My Glory, which You have given Me." But He was in an agony when, in Gethsemane, having withdrawn from His disciples and fallen on His face, He prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as You will." It is the same Man and an unchangeable Man, too, as to His *essence*, who uttered both prayers, yet see how different were His frames of mind and how different the prayers He offered! Brother, you may be the same man and quite as good a man when you are groaning before God as when you are singing before Him. There may be more Grace, even, in the submissive, "Not as I will," than in the triumphant, "Father, I will." Do not judge yourselves to have changed in your standing before God because you have undergone an alteration as to your *feelings*. If your Master prayed so differently at different times, you, who have not the fullness of Grace that He had, must not wonder if you have a great variety of inward experiences.

Notice, also, that it was not only the same Person, but that He used these two expressions almost at the same time. I do not know how many minutes—I had better say minutes rather than hours—intervened between the Last Supper, the wonderful high-priestly prayer and the agonizing cries of Gethsemane. I suppose that it was only a short walk from Jerusalem to the olive garden and that it would not occupy long to traverse the distance. At one end of the walk Jesus prays, "Father, I will," and at the other end of it, He says, "Not as I will." In like manner, we may undergo great changes and have to alter the tone of our prayers in just a few minutes. You prayed, just now, with holy confidence. You took firm hold of the Covenant Angel and, with wrestling Jacob, you said, "I will not let You go, except You bless me." And yet it may be equally becoming

on your part, within an hour, to lie in the very dust and, in agony, cry unto the Lord, "Pardon my prayers, forgive me that I was too bold, and hear me, now, as I cry to You and say, 'Not as I will, but as You will.'"—

"If but my fainting heart is blessed
With Your sweet Spirit for its guest,
My God, to You I leave the rest—
'Your will be done!'"

Never be ashamed because you have to mend your prayers! Be careful not to make a mistake if you can help it, but, if you make one, do not be ashamed to confess it and to correct it as far as you can. One of our frequent mistakes is that we wonder that we make mistakes. Whenever a man says, "I should never have thought that I could have done such a foolish thing as that," it shows that he does not really know himself, for had he known himself, he would rather have wondered that he did not do *worse*, and he would have marveled that he acted as wisely as he did. Only the Grace of God can teach us how to run our prayers down the scale from the high note of, "Father, hear me, for You have said, 'Ask what you will,'" right down to the deep, deep bass of, "Father, not as I will, but as You will."

I must further remark that these two prayers were equally characteristic of Christ. I think that I should know my Lord by His voice in either of them. Who but the eternal Son of God may dare to say, "Father, I will"? There speaks Incarnate Deity! That is the sublime utterance of the well-beloved Son. And yet, who could say as He said it, "If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as You will." Perhaps you have uttered those words, dear Friend, but in your case they were not concerning such a cup of woe as Christ emptied! There were but a few drops of gall in your cup. His was *all* bitterness, from the froth to the dregs—all bitterness—and such bitterness as, thank God, you and I can never taste! That cup He has drained to the dregs and we shall not have to drink one drop from it. And it was of that cup that He said—and I detect the voice of the Son of God, the Son of Man, in that brief utterance—"Not as I will, but as You will."

My two texts make up a strange piece of music. Blessed are the lips that know how to express the confidence that rises to the height as far as we can go with Christ—and descends, even, to the deeps as far as we can go with Him in full submission to the will of God! Does anybody say that he cannot understand the contrast between these two prayers? Dear Friend, it is to be explained thus. There was a difference of *position* in the Suppliant on these two occasions. The first prayer, "Father, I will," is the prayer of our great High Priest with all His heavenly garments on—the blue, and purple, and fine twined linen, and the pomegranates, and the golden bells, and the breastplate with the 12 precious stones bearing the names of His chosen people. It is our great High Priest, in the Glory of His majestic office and power, who says to God, "Father, I will."

The second Suppliant is not so much the Priest as the Victim. Our Lord is there seen bound to the altar, about to feel the sacrificial knife, about to be consumed with the sacrificial fire, and you hear Him as

though it were a lamb bleating, and the utterance is, "Not as I will, but as You will." The first petition is the language of *Christ in power* pleading for us. The second is the utterance of *Christ made sin for us*, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. That is the difference of position that explains the contrast in the prayers.

Let me tell you, also, that there is a difference in the subject of His supplication which is full of instruction. In the first prayer, where our Lord says so majestically, "Father, I will," He is pleading for His people. He is praying for what He knows to be the Father's will. He is officiating, there, before God as the very mouthpiece of God, and speaking of something about which He is perfectly clear and certain. When you are praying for God's people, you may pray very boldly. When you are pleading for God's cause, you may speak very positively. When you know you are asking what is definitely promised in the Scriptures as part of the Covenant ordered in all things and sure, you may ask without hesitation, as our Lord did.

But, in the second case, Jesus was praying for Himself—"If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me." He was praying about a matter, concerning which He did not, as Man, know the Father's will, for He says, "If it is possible." There is an, "if," in it—"If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me." Whenever you go upstairs in an agony of distress and begin to pray about yourself, and about a possible escape from suffering, always say, under such circumstances, "Nevertheless not as I will, but as You will." It may be given you, sometimes, to pray very boldly even in such a case as that, but, if it is not given you, take care that you do not presume. I may pray for healing for my body, but not with such confidence as I pray for the prosperity of Zion and the Glory of God. That which has to do with myself I may ask as a child of God asks of his Father, but I must ask *submissively*, leaving the decision *wholly* in His hands, feeling that, because it is for myself, rather than for Him, I must say, "Nevertheless not as I will, but as You will."

I think that there is a plain lesson, here, for Christians to take heed that, while they are very confident on one subject for which they pray, they are equally submissive on another, for there is a heavenly blending in the Christian character, as there was in Christ's Character, a firm confidence and yet an absolute yielding to the will of God—let that will be what it may—

"Lord, my times are in Your hands.
All my sanguine hopes have planned
To Your wisdom I resign,
And would make Your purpose mine."

Now all this while, you may say that I have only been going round the text. Very well. But, sometimes, there is a good deal of instruction to be picked up around a text. The manna fell round about the camp of Israel. Perhaps there is some manna round about this text. May the Lord help every one of us to gather his portion!

I want you now, for a few minutes, to view this great Suppliant in the two moods in which He prayed, "Father, I will" and, "Not as I will," and

then to combine the two. We will, first, view *Jesus in the power of His intercession. N*ext, we will talk of *Jesus in the power of His submission. A*nd in the third place, we will try to *combine the two prayers,* "I will," yet, "Not as I will."

I. First, let us view Jesus IN THE POWER OF HIS INTERCESSION, saying, "Father, I will."

Where did He derive that power? Who enabled Him thus to speak with God and say, "Father, I will?" First, *Jesus prayed in the power of His Sonship.* Sons may say to a father what strangers may not dare to say and such a Son as Jesus was so near to His Father's heart, He was One who could say, "The Father has not left Me alone; for I always do those things that please Him." He was One of whom the Father had said, "This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Well might He have power with God so as to be able to say, "Father, I will."

Next, He derived this power from *the Father's eternal love to Him.* Did you notice how, in the very verse from which our text is taken, Jesus says to His Father, "You loved Me before the foundation of the world"? We cannot conceive what the love of the Father is to Christ Jesus His Son! Remember, they are one in *Essence.* God is one—Father, Son and Holy Spirit and, as the Incarnate God, Christ is unspeakably dear to the Father's heart. There is nothing about Him of which the Father disapproves. There is nothing lacking in Him which the Father would desire to see there. He is God's ideal of Himself—"In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Well may One who is the subject of His Father's eternal love be able to say, "Father, I will."

But *our Lord Jesus also based this prayer upon His finished work.* I grant you that He had not yet actually died, but in the certain prospect of His doing so, He had said to His Father, "I have glorified You on the earth: I have finished the work which You gave Me to do." Now, He has actually finished it, He has been able, in the fullest sense, to say, "It is finished," and He has gone up to take His place in Glory at His Father's side. You remember the argument with which Paul begins his Epistle to the Hebrews—"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in times past unto the fathers by the Prophets, has in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His Glory, and the express image of His Person and, upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had, by Himself, purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as He has, by inheritance, obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said He at any time, You are My Son, this day have I begotten You? And again, I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son?"

When the Father looks at Christ, He sees in Him Atonement accomplished, satisfaction presented, sin annihilated, the elect redeemed, the Covenant ratified, the everlasting purpose settled on eternal foundations! O Beloved, since Christ has magnified God's Law and made it honor-

able—and since He has poured out His soul unto death—He may well possess the power to say, "Father, I will."

Remember, too, that *Jesus still possesses this power* and possesses it for you and for me. O my dear Hearers, you may well go to Christ and accept Him as your Mediator and Intercessor, since all this power to say, "Father, I will," is laid up in Him on purpose for poor believing sinners who come and take Him to be their Savior! You say that you cannot pray. Well, He can—ask Him to plead for you! And I thank God that, sometimes, when we do *not* ask Him to plead for us, He does it all the same, as He did for Peter, when Satan had desired to have him, but Christ had prayed for him. Peter did not know his danger, but the Savior did, and He pleaded for him at once. What a blessing it is to think of Christ, clothed with Divine authority and power, using it all for us! Well does Toplady sing—

"With cries and tears He offered up
His humble suit below!
But with authority He asks,
Enthroned in Glory now
For all that come to God by Him.
Salvation He demands,
Points to their names upon His breast
And spreads His wounded hands.
His Covenant and Sacrifice
Give sanction to His claim—
'Father, I will that all My saints
Be with Me where I am.'"

Further, that power of Christ will land every Believer in Heaven. Notice how Christ turns all His pleading with God that way. He says, "Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My Glory." The devil says that we shall never get to Heaven, but we remember that declaration of Moses, "Your enemies shall be found liars unto you," and the arch-enemy will be found to be the arch-liar, for the Lord's Prayer will be heard and, as He pleads that those whom the Father gave Him should be brought up to be with Him where He is, you may depend upon it that they will all arrive safely in Heaven! And you, if you are among those who are given to Christ—and you may know that by your faith in Him—shall be among that blessed company!

I shall have finished with this first point when I have said this—*that power which Christ had, may, in a measure, be gained by all His people*. I dare not say and I would not say that any of us will ever be able to utter our Savior's words, "Father, I will." But I *do* say this—if you abide in Christ and His words abide in you—you may attain to such power in prayer that you shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you. This is not a promise to all of you—no, not even to all of you who are God's people—but only to those of you who live wholly unto God and serve Him with all your *heart*. You can, by habitual communion with God, attain to such power with the Most High that men shall say of you what they used to say of Luther, "There goes a man who can ask what he likes of God and have it." You may attain to that glorious altitude! Oh, I

would that every one of us would seek to reach this height of power and blessing! It is not the feeble Christian. It is not the worldly Christian who has just enough Grace to make him miserable—the man who has only about enough Grace to keep him from being absolutely immoral! That is *not* the man or woman who will prevail with God. You paddlers in Christianity who scarcely wet your toes—you who never go in beyond your ankles, or your knees—God will never give you this privilege unless you go in for it! Get where the waters are deep enough to swim and plunge in! Be perfectly consecrated to God! Yield your whole lives to His Glory without reserve! Then may you obtain something of your Master's power in prayer when He said, "Father, I will."

II. Now I ask you kindly to accompany me, in the second place, to notice JESUS IN THE POWER OF HIS SUBMISSION. Our second text is all submission—"Not as I will."

This utterance, "Not as I will," proved that *the shrinking of Christ's Nature from that dreadful cup were all overcome.* I do not believe that Christ was afraid to die. Do you believe that? Oh, no—many of His servants have laughed at death! I am sure that He was not afraid to die. What was it, then, that made that cup so awfully terrible? Jesus was to be made *sin* for us. He was to come under the *curse* for us! He was to feel the Father's wrath on account of human guilt and His whole Nature, not only His flesh, but His whole *Being* shrank from that fearful ordeal! It was not actual defilement that was to come upon Him, but it looked like it and, as Man, He could not tell what that cup of wrath must contain—

"Immanuel, sunk with dreadful woe,
Unfelt, unknown to all below—
Except the Son of God—
In agonizing pangs of soul
Drinks deep of wormwood's bitterest bowl,
And sweats great drops of blood."

After dwelling in the love of God from all eternity, He was, in a few hours, to bear the punishment of man's sin, yet He must bear it and, therefore, He said, "Not as I will, but as You will." Do you wonder that He prayed, "If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me"? Is Christ to be blamed for this shrinking of Nature? My dear Friends, if it had been a pleasure to Him and He had had no shrinking, where would have been His holy *courage*? If it had not been a horrible and dreadful thing to Him, where would have been His *submission*, where would have been the *virtue* that made Atonement of it? If it had been a thing that He could not, or must not, shrink from, where would have been the pain, the wormwood, and the gall of it? The cup must be, in the nature of things, something from which He that bears it must shrink, or else it could not have been sufficient for the redemption of His people and the vindication of the broken Law of God! It was necessary, then, that Christ should, by such a prayer as this, prove that He had overcome all the shrinking of His Nature.

"Not as I will," is also an evidence of *Christ's complete submission to the will of His Father.* "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter and, as a

sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opens not His mouth." There is no resistance, no struggling. He gives Himself up completely. "There," He seems to say to the Lord, "do what You will with Me; I yield Myself absolutely to Your will." There was on Christ's part no reserve, no wish, even, to make any reserve. I go further, and say that Jesus willed as God willed—and even prayed that the will of God, from which His Human Nature, at first, shrank, might be fulfilled. "Nevertheless not as I will, but as You will."

O Brothers and Sisters—for you both need this Grace—pray God to help you to learn how to *copy your Lord in total submission!* Have you submitted to the Lord's will? Are you submitting now? Are not some of you like bullocks unaccustomed to the yoke? There is a text, you know, in the 131st Psalm, "My soul is even as a weaned child." I have sometimes thought that, for some of the Lord's children, the passage would have to be read, "My soul is even as a *weaning* child," and there are many of God's people who are very long in the weaning! You cannot get satisfaction, quiet and content, can you? Can you give yourself up entirely to God, that He may do whatever He likes with you?

Have you some fear of a tumor, or a cancer? Is there before you the prospect of a painful and dangerous operation? Is business going badly with you, so that you will probably lose everything? Is a dear child sickening? Is the mother likely to be taken away? Will you have to lose your position and reputation if you are faithful to the Lord? Will you be exposed to cruel slanders? Will you probably be cast out of your employment if you do what is right? Come now, whatever you dread or expect, can you give yourself up wholly to God and say, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seem good to Him"? Your Lord and Master did—He said, "Not as I will." Oh, that He might teach you this Divine art of absolute resignation to the purpose and ordinance of God till you, also, would be able to say, "Not as I will"! Thus you will sing—

"I bow to Your will,
O God, and all Your ways adore!
And every day I live I'll seek
To please You more and more!"

III. I have finished my discourse when I have just twisted these two sayings together a little. So, thirdly, let us COMBINE THE TWO PRAYERS— "I will," yet, "Not as I will."

First, let me say, *Number One will help you very much to Number Two.* If you learn to pray *with* Christ, with the holy boldness that almost says, "Father, I will," you are the man who will know how to say, "Not as I will." Is it not strange that it should be so? It looks like a contradiction, but I am sure that it is not so. The man who can have his will with God is the very man who does *not want his own way with God.* He who may have what he likes is the man who wishes to have what God likes!

You remember the good old woman who lay near to death, and one said to her, "Do you not expect to die soon?" She answered, "I do not know whether I shall live or die and, what is more, I have no concern which way it is." Then the friend asked, "But if you had your choice

whether you should live or die, which would you choose?" She replied, "I would rather that the Lord's will should be done." "But suppose the Lord's will were to leave it entirely to you to choose whichever you liked?" "Then," she said, "I would kneel down and pray the Lord to choose for me." And I think that is the best way to live—not to have *any* choice at all, but to ask the Lord to choose for you! You can always have your way, you know, when your way is God's way. The sure way to carry out self-will is when self-will is nothing else but God's will! Oh, that the Lord would teach us this mighty power with Him in prayer! It will not be given without much close fellowship with Him. Then, when we know that we can have what we will of Him, we shall be in the right state to say, "Not as I will."

The next remark that I would make is, that *Number Two is necessary for Number One.* That is to say, until you can say, "Not as I will," you never will be able to say, "Father, I will." I believe that one reason why people cannot prevail in prayer is because they will not yield to God. And they cannot expect God to yield to them. God does this and that with you, and you quarrel with Him. And then you go upstairs and begin to pray—get down on your knees and make your peace with Him, first—for if you must not come to the altar till you have become reconciled unto your brother, how can you come to the Throne of Grace till you have given up your quarrel with God?

But some people are never at peace with God. I have heard of a good friend who lost a child and he was wearing mourning clothes several years afterwards. And he was always fretting about the dear child, till a Quaker said to him, "What? Have you not forgiven God yet?" And there *are* some people who have not yet forgiven God for taking their loved ones. They ought always to have blessed Him, for He never takes away any but those whom He lent to us, and we should bless His name as much for taking them, again, as for lending them to us. Dear Friends, *you must submit to the will of God or else you cannot have power with Him in prayer.*

"Well," you say, "you will not let me have my own way at all." Certainly, *I* will not let you have your own way! But when you say, "There, Lord, I have no quarrel with You. Do what You will with me," then *He* will say, "Rise, My child, ask what you will, and I will give it to you; open your mouth wide and I will fill it."

Notice, also, dear Friends, that *Jesus will help us to have Number One and Number Two.* He gives Himself over to us to teach us the power of prevailing prayer, but He also gives Himself over to teach us the art of blessed *submission in prayer*—and it is His will that these two should not be separated. "Father, I will," is Christ's word on our behalf. And, "Not as I will," is equally Christ's word on our behalf. When you cannot pray either of these prayers as you would, fall back upon Christ's prayer and claim it as your own.

Lastly, I think that *true sonship will embody both Number One and Number Two.* It is the true child of God who knows that he is his Father's

child, who says, "Father, I will." He is often very bold where another would be presumptuous. Oh, I have heard full often of somebody's prayers—I will not say who the somebody is—he seems so familiar with God in his prayer. Oh, yes, I know! You love those very stately prayers in which the bounds are set about the mountaintop and no man may dare to come near! You make the Throne of Grace to be like Sinai was of old, of which the Lord said, "Whoever touches the mount shall be surely put to death: there shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it is beast or man, it shall not live."

"Oh, but," you say, "so-and-so is so familiar at the Mercy Seat!" Yes, I know, and you think that is a pity, do you not? Perhaps you are acquainted with a judge. Look at him on the bench wearing his wig and robe of office! But you will not dare to speak to him, there, unless you address him as, "My Lord," and behave very respectfully to him. By-and-by he goes home—and he has a little boy there, Master Johnny. Why, the child has seized hold of his father's whiskers! There he is, up on his father's back! "Why, Johnny, you are disrespectful!" "Oh, but he is my father!" says the boy, and his father says, "Yes, Johnny, that I am; and I do not want you to say, 'My Lord,' and talk to me as they do in the court." So, there are certain liberties which God's children may take with Him which He counts no liberties at all, but He loves to be treated so by them. He will let each one of them say, "Father, I will," because they are His children!

Then, mark you, you are not God's child unless you can also say, "Father, not as I will." The true child bends before His father's will. "Yes," he says, "I would like so-and-so." His father forbids it. "Then I do not want it and I will not touch it." Or he says, "I do not like to take that medicine, but my Father says I am to take it," and he takes the cup and he drinks the whole of its contents. The true child says, "Not as I will," although, after his measure, he also says, "Father, I will."

I have only been talking to you who are the Lord's people. I hope you have learned something from this subject. I know you have if the Lord has taught you to pray after the fashion of these two prayers, as you humbly, yet believingly may, copying your Lord.

But oh, what shall I say to those of you who are not the Lord's people? If you do not know how to pray at all, may the Lord teach you! If you do not yet know your needs, may the Lord instruct you! And let me tell you that if ever there shall come a time when you feel your need of a Savior, the Lord Jesus will be willing to receive you! If ever you should yearn after Him, you can be sure that He is also yearning after you. Even now—

"Kindled His relentings are,"

and if you will but breathe the penitent's prayer, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," and turn your eye Christ-ward, and Cross-ward, there is salvation for you even now! God grant that you may have it, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

John 17:15-26; Matthew 26:36-46.

We will read, this evening, a portion of two prayers offered by our Divine Lord and Master on that night in which He was betrayed. The first is that memorable intercessory prayer of His recorded in the 17th Chapter of the Gospel according to John.

John 17:15. *I pray not that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the Evil One.* Christ did not pray that His disciples should be taken out of the world. It is very seldom that we ought to present such a petition. If that had been a proper prayer for us to offer, it would have been authorized by the Master. There are times when, in great pain of body, or in deep depression of spirit, the Believer, like Elijah under the juniper tree, requests for himself that he may die. If you ever do pray such a prayer, utter it very softly, for the Master does not authorize it and that is a matter that must be left to the Lord of Life and Death. Jesus says here, "I pray not that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the Evil One." Sin is the real evil of the world—the danger of our being entangled in worldly customs, or dropping into the evil ways of an ungodly generation. Christ prays that we may be kept from the evil that is in the world and we, also, may and must pray that the Lord will keep us from the evil by which we are surrounded—and especially from the Evil One who seeks our destruction.

16. *They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.* "They are of another race—they are swayed by other motives, they have another life—they have another destiny, 'They are not of the world.'" Is that true of you, dear Hearer? We are reading out of God's Book, remember. This is the description of *Christ's people*—does it describe *you*? "They are not of the world." They are not worldly, they are other-worldly. Their thoughts and hearts are set upon the *world to come*."

17. *Sanctify them through Your Truth: Your Word is Truth.* What? Do they need to be sanctified? They are not of the world and are kept from the evil in the world—do they need to be sanctified? Yes, we shall always need sanctifying until we reach our heavenly Home where sin cannot enter. Every day we need the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit to lead us unto holiness! "Sanctify them through Your Truth: Your Word is Truth." It is only the Truth of God that can beget holiness. False doctrine is never the medium of sanctification. You can tell which are false doctrines and which are the true by our Lord's own test—"By their fruits you shall know them." The same men who reject the old-fashioned doctrines also rebel against the old-fashioned style of living! Loose living generally goes with loose doctrine. There never was an age in which the Doctrines of Grace were despised, but, sooner or later, licentiousness prevailed. On the other hand, when we had Puritan teaching, we had also pure and holy living. This prayer is still needed for all Christ's disciples—"Sanctify them through Your Truth: Your Word is Truth."

18. *As you have sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.* This is the original Missionary Society and the model for all others. Christ sent, commissioned, of the Father, and every saint commissioned of Christ. Are you carrying out your mission, O you people of God? How dare you call yourselves by that name if you have no mission to anybody! If you are living here only for yourself, how can you belong to Christ who never lived a moment for Himself, but always lived wholly for others?

19. *And for their sakes I sanctify Myself.* "I set Myself apart, as One who is consecrated, dedicated, devoted to a grand design."

19. *That they, also, might be sanctified through the Truth.* This is our Lord's prayer for His disciples. In the ninth verse we read, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which You have given Me; for they are Yours." Now our Lord Jesus prays for those who are to be His people. I wonder whether there are any of them here tonight?

20. *Neither pray I for these, alone, but for them, also, which shall believe in Me through their word.* There is a great company of people who are not, at present, Believers, but who shall yet believe on Christ through the testimony of those who are already Believers on Him. O God, call out many such through our word!

21. *That they all may be one.* This is Christ's prayer for all those who shall believe on Him, that they may be converted and brought into the one Church, together, with those who are already there—"that they all may be one."

21. *As You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they, also, may be one in Us: that the world may believe that You have sent Me.* Christ would have all His people joined in communion with Himself and with His Father. And when that is the case, then will men know that Christ came into the world for a definite purpose—"that the world may believe that You have sent Me."

22-23. *And the glory which you gave Me, I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are One: I in them, and You in Me, that they may be made perfect in one.* Christ is the Incarnation of God, and the Church should be the incarnation of Christ. Oh, when shall this great prayer be answered?

23-26. *And that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them, as You have loved Me. Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My Glory, which You have given Me: for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world has not known You: but I have known You, and these have known that You have sent Me. And I have declared unto them Your name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them.* A very short time after our Divine Lord offered this intercessory supplication, He prayed a very different prayer, in a strangely-altered style. You will find it in the Gospel according to Matthew, chapter twenty-six. Remember that there was a very short interval between the utterance of the majestic prayer I have

been reading and the presentation of the cries and tears of which we are now to read.

Matthew 26:36-40. *Then came Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and said unto the disciples, Sit you here, while I go and pray yonder. And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then said He unto them, My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death: tarry you here, and watch with Me. And He went a little farther, and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as You will. And He came unto the disciples and found them asleep, and said unto Peter, What, could you not watch with Me one hour?* He felt the need of human sympathy in that awful hour. Yet He trod the winepress alone.

41. *Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation: the spirit, indeed, is willing, but the flesh is weak.* Admire the tenderness of Jesus in making this apology for His disciples. What He said about them was true, but it is not everybody who would have uttered that gentle truth at such a trying time. Dear Friends, make excuses for one another whenever you can! Never make them for *yourselves*, but often make them for others, and especially when some treat you as you think very untenderly, be the more tender towards them.

42-44. *He went away, again, the second time, and prayed, saying, O My Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Your will be done. And He came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. And He left them, and went away, again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.* You cannot use much variety of language when your heart is very heavy. You will usually dwell upon just a few words at such a time. Do not blame yourself for doing so—it is natural, and it is right. Even your Lord, the Master of language, "prayed the third time, saying the same words."

45, 46. *Then came He to His disciples, and said unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that does betray Me.* May the Master never have to say this concerning any of us, for His dear name's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—262, 701.

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

LOVE STRONGER THAN DEATH
NO. 2377

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, JULY 5, 1888.

"When Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end."
John 13:1.

THIS is a kind of preface to the story of the foot-washing, and a very wonderful preface it is, when coupled with the third and fourth verses, upon which I commented. "Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God, and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself." This is the frame of the picture that is here presented to us. To what shall I compare it? It is like unto a gate of the Golden City—each gate is one huge pearl and surely this verse is a jewel of inestimable price! The foot-washing picture is set within this precious frame.

This memorable and symbolical act took place at the end of our Lord's sojourn here below. The Passion was the end of His life and we may consider that the Passion was about to begin. That same night He would go to Gethsemane and, in less than 24 hours, the dear hands that washed the disciples' feet would be nailed to the accursed wood and He who spoke so tenderly to His little band of followers would be in His death agonies.

It is an important thing to know how a man feels when he comes to the real crisis of his life. He has cultivated a great variety of feelings during his career, but what has been his ruling passion? You will see it now. It has passed into a proverb that, "The ruling passion is strong in death," and there is great truth in the saying. In the light of the man's departure, we shall see what power really ruled him. It was precisely so with our Divine Master. He had almost reached the end of His earthly life. He had come to a season of awful agony. He was about to endure the great and terrible death of the Cross, by which He was to purchase eternal redemption for all His people. What will be uppermost in His mind, now? What will He think of His disciples, now that He has so many other things to think of—now that the thought of His approaching death comes over Him—now that the agony and bloody sweat of Gethsemane are so near?

What will Jesus think of His disciples at such a time as this and under such circumstances as these? Our text is the answer to that question—"Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God, and was going to God, rose from

supper and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself." His love was burning as brightly at the Paschal Supper as ever it burned before! Yes, and it seemed as if, in that wondrous prayer that is recorded in the 17th Chapter of John, and in the wonderful discourse which accompanied it, the love of Jesus had never before flamed out so clearly! Then were the great beacon fires lit and the fierce winds that blew around the Savior fanned them to their full force of flame. Now can you say of Jesus, "Behold how He loved His disciples!" for even at the end of His life He still loved those whom He had loved before!

With that thought in your minds, will you follow me while I take the text to pieces and dwell upon almost every word of it?

I. First, then, concerning our blessed Master, let us consider WITH WHOM HE ASSOCIATED and of whom this verse now speaks. They are called, "His own." It is a brief description, but it is wonderfully full—"Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end."

"His own." There was a circle—sometimes a wide circle—round the Savior. It was made up of publicans and sinners and He had a measure of love to all of them, a benevolent desire to bless them, but there was an inner circle, containing the 12 Apostles and some godly women who had joined themselves unto Him. These were, "His own." To them He often expounded the hidden meaning of a parable which He left unexplained to the crowd. To them He often brought many a dainty dish which was especially reserved for their table and not intended for the multitude. Bread and fish would do for the crowd, but Jesus had choicer fare for "His own." They were a special people—many knew them, many despised them—but Jesus loved them, and this was the main thing which made them "His own."

You know how they came to be "His own." *He chose them before the earth was.* A man may surely choose his own wife and Christ chose His own spouse. He chose His own Church and, while the Scripture stands, that doctrine can never be eradicated from it. Before the day-star knew its place, or planets ran their rounds, Christ had made His choice and, having made it, He stood to it! He chose them for His love and He loved them for His choice.

Having loved them and chosen them, *He espoused them unto Himself.* "They shall be Mine," He said. "I will be married to them, I will be bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh." Consequently, in the fullness of time, He came here, made one with our humanity, that He might be seen to be a true Husband to "His own"—"His own" by choice—"His own" by espousal.

They were "His own" also, *for His Father gave them to Him.* The Father committed them into His hands. "Yours they were," said Jesus, "and You gave them to Me." The Father loved the Son and committed all things into His hands, but He made a special committal of His own chosen people. He gave them to Him and entered with Him into surety engagements on their behalf, that as they were His sheep, committed to His charge, He would deliver them up and not one of them should be torn by the wolf, or die by the frost or the heat, but that all should pass, again, under the

rod of Him that counts them. That Great Shepherd of the sheep will take care of the whole flock that was entrusted to His care! He will not lose one of His sheep or lambs. At the last, Jesus will say, "Here am I, Father, and the children that You have given Me; of all that You gave Me, I have lost none." Thus, they are "His own" by His own choice, "His own" by espousal and, "His own" by His Father's gift!

But these whom He called, "His own," were soon to be His *by a wondrous purchase*. He looked upon their redemption as being already accomplished, for in His prayer He said to His Father, "I have finished the work which You gave Me to do." Beloved Friends, have you ever thought how dearly we are Christ's by His redemption of us? "You are not your own; you are bought with a price." Have you ever realized the price that was paid for you? I sometimes think that if I could have been there, I would have said, "O great and glorious Lord, I beseech You not to pay such a price for me! It is too great a sacrifice that You should be made sin for me, that I might be made the righteousness of God in You!" But He would do it. He loved us better than He loved Himself! He would do it and He has paid the purchase price for us, and we are His—and we will not run back from the glad confession! Well may He call us, "His own," when it cost Him so much to redeem us!

But we have become "His own" *by His conquest of us*. He had called His disciples by His Grace. He had drawn each one of them by cords of love and they had run after Him—and it is the same with you and me. You remember when He drew you, do you not? Can you ever forget when, at last, you yielded to the power of those bands of love, those cords of a Man? Often since then have you sung—

"Oh, happy day, that fixed my choice
On You, my Savior, and my God!
Well may this glowing heart rejoice
And tell its raptures all abroad!
'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."

Beloved, you are "His own," now, because *you have yielded yourselves to Him*. You delight to think that you are His. There is no greater joy to you than to feel that you belong to Christ! The fact that you are truly Christ's is the fountain of innumerable pleasures and blessings to your heart! Jesus calls us, "His own"—His own sheep, His own disciples, His own friends, His own brethren, the members of His body! What a title for us to wear, "His own"! I have heard of some who have felt it an honor to be called, "The Devil's Own." I trust that you have escaped from such a title as that and now you are Christ's own. How many regiments have felt pleasure in being called, the King's Own, the Queen's Own, the Prince's Own! Oh, but we are HIS OWN! He owns us! He calls us, "His own." Thus He distinguishes us from the rest of mankind and sets us apart unto Himself. "My name shall be named on them," He says. We are "His own." Surely, this is the highest honor that can be put upon us even in the Last Great Day. "They shall be Mine, says the Lord of Hosts, is that day when I make up My jewels."

Now I trust we can say that we desire to serve Christ in our vocation. I feel happy to be among the favored few whose vocation it is to serve Christ, those who are permitted to spend all their time and all their strength in that dear service. We are, "His own," but so are you, "His own," if you *believe* in Him. You, also, are Christ's own, up in an attic. Christ's own at the washtub. Christ's own in the fields at the plow. Christ's own making the hay. I am not wandering from my subject when I say this, for Christ has "His own" among all these classes! "His own" were fishermen. "His own" cast the net into the Sea of Galilee. "His own" drew it to shore. "His own" were the poor of this world. His own, His very own, His choicest and His best friends and followers, were just such! They were unlearned and ignorant men, yet they were "His own." So the Apostle says, "God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confuse the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confuse the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yes, and things which are not, to bring to nothing things that are: that no flesh should glory in His Presence."

Oh, the wondrous sovereignty of Divine Love! I trust that there are some here, tonight, who Christ calls "His own" although they do not yet know that it is so! Bought with His blood and they are not aware of it? Chosen before the foundation of the world and yet they have not discovered it? May the Lord reveal to you His everlasting love and help you to make *your calling and election sure from this time forth*!

I have said as much as time will permit me to say about our Lord's dear associates, the disciples, whom He calls "His own."

II. Now, in the second place, you have a full description of *how Jesus had felt towards them* up to that moment—"Having loved His own."

How much can be done with one stroke of a pen! I have sometimes marveled to see how much a great artist can do by a single touch. His work has seemed unfinished, but he has come with a brush and just thrown in a few strokes—and the canvas that was dead has seemed to live before you! Now, John is a great master of the art of word-painting and he gives you the whole history of Christ's dealings with His disciples in these few words, "Having loved His own."

For, remember, *that is how He began with them*. They were poor and inconsiderable, but He loved them, and He showed His love to them by calling them to be His disciples. That love worked upon their hearts and made them obedient to His call. He began by loving them. David says, "You have loved my soul out of the pit." I do not know a more beautiful description of conversion and salvation. The love of God loves us up out of the pit and loves us to Christ. Thus Christ loved His people from the beginning and proved His love by drawing them to Himself—and the cords He used to draw them were the bands of His love.

Having begun by loving them, *He went on teaching them,* but all His teaching was love, for they were such dull scholars, quick to forget, yet slow to remember, that He had to keep on loving them or He would have been tired of trying to train them! "Have I been so long time with you and yet have you not known Me, Philip?" There is a mass of love in that ques-

tion! So was it when He was dealing with Thomas. In His tenderness He submitted without question to the doubting disciple's test. He said to Him, "Reach here your finger, and behold My hands; and reach here your hand, and thrust it into My side: and be not faithless, but believing." All His teaching was uttered with lips of love—and all His instruction consisted of lessons of love.

The Lord kept on loving His disciples although *their natures were amazingly imperfect*, all of them! There was not one among them who had what one would call an all-round nature, unless it was John, and even he was nasty in temper and would have called down fire from Heaven upon certain Samaritans. Yet the Master kept on loving them. He had made up His mind to love them and He never ceased to love them as long as He was with them! And He has gone on loving them ever since. At the time when He was about to depart out of the world unto the Father, they still needed to have their feet washed, and He loved them enough to render even that lowly service for them. All the infirmities, the imperfections, the carnality, the dullness and the slowness of their nature which He saw much more clearly than they saw it, did not make Him cease to love them—"Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end."

Strangest of all, when He opened His eyes and looked into the future and saw that *they would soon be cowardly and faithless*, He loved them all the same! He said, "All you shall be offended because of Me this night," and so it came to pass, for, "they all forsook Him, and fled." He told Peter that he would deny Him three times and so he did. Yet it was true all the while, "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." That sums it all up! There was never a touch of hate, there was never any anger, there was never any weariness, there was never any lukewarmness in Jesus towards His disciples—it was always just this—"Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." That is the love of Christ to His chosen and that is the love of Christ to me! I do not think that those gentlemen who have written a, "Life of Christ," could write this part of it. This is a portion of the life of Christ that needs not so much to be written as to be *known in the heart and in the soul*.

How have *you* found Christ, my Brothers and Sisters? If you have known Him, what has been His conduct towards you? You answer, "Love." As for me, I never knew, I never heard of such a Lover as He is! I never dreamed that He could be such as He has been to me! Oh, how I must have vexed and grieved His gracious heart and caused Him pain! But never, never, never *once* have I had anything from Him but love! "Having loved His own." That expression sums up the whole of Christ's conduct towards His chosen people! It is like a miniature painting—it has every feature of His character. There it is, all of it. You may apply a microscope and look as long as you like, but you will find that it is all there. "Having loved His own."

So then, you have seen your Lord associated with His disciples up to this point, and you have learned that He has manifested nothing else towards them but love.

III. But now, thirdly, WHAT A CHANGE WAS COMING OVER HIM! "Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father."

Dear Friends, it was an amazing change that was coming over Him, for, in the first place, though it is so tenderly described here, *yet He knew that He had to die*. You do not wish me, I am sure, to tell you of all the surroundings of the Cross, of all the bitterness and woe that culminated in that cup of mingled wormwood and gall. Your heart can never fail to remember the wounds He endured when suffering for you.

Well, now, if you and I had to bear all that Christ had to suffer, it would engross our thoughts—we should not be able to think of anything else but that—but it did not engross our Lord's thoughts! He still thought of "His own." He loved "His own" unto the end! He went on with that same calm, solid, resolute love which He had shown towards them before. He set His face like a flint to go up to Jerusalem, but there was no flint in His *heart*—it had all gone into His face. He had undertaken the work of His people's redemption and He must go through with it! Death, itself, could not change His love. You know the love of which Solomon sings at the end of the Canticles—"Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the deeds drown it." And he says, "Love is strong as death." Truly, in our Lord's case, love was *stronger* than that death of deaths which He deigned to die that He might make us live! Now is His great "hour" of trial, but He is true to "His own" even in this dread hour. He is about to die, but He still loves "His own."

Dear Brothers and Sisters, that is not all! Jesus was about to depart out of this world, *to go away from His disciples*. After a while He would see them no more with His bodily eyes—neither would they hear His voice leading them and teaching them. It may be true that, "Absence makes the heart grow fonder," but, alas, we have met with many instances in which mortal men have quite forgotten those whom they professed to love when once the sea has rolled between them. Many hearts are dependent upon eyesight. It is a pity that it should be so, but it was not so with Christ. All the distance between earth and Heaven was soon to intervene between our Lord and His disciples, but still He *loved* them and He *loves* them still. No distance makes any difference between Jesus and "His own." "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end."

Yet, remember, that the Savior was about to undergo a very amazing change in another respect—*He was going to the Father*. Have any of us the slightest idea of what He is, now, with the Father? I will not attempt to describe the supernal splendors of His Throne, the glories which His redeemed delight to lay at His feet, the songs which angels and cherubim and seraphim continually present before Him—but this verse we love and we can truly sing—

"Now though He reigns exalted high,
His love is still as great;
Well He remembers Calvary,
Nor lets His saints forget."

I cannot describe these wonderful changes of our Lord, from life to death, from death to resurrection, from resurrection to ascension, from

ascension to the glories of His Father's Throne. Would all these changes make any alteration in Him? No, none of them! "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end."

I shall try to speak of that, presently, and that will be my last point. But before we come to that theme, we must see what would be the condition of "His own." I have shown you what would be Christ's condition, and the change that would take place in Him.

IV. Now, fourthly, WHAT WOULD BE THEIR CONDITION?

Why, they would remain where they were—"His own which were in the world." To me, there seems to be a great abyss of meaning in that expression, "in the world." Some of you know more about what this means than others of us do. The Church of God in London is nothing but a camp in the midst of heathendom. The sooner we believe that terrible truth the better, because it is really so—and the Church of God in the world is nothing but a traveling tent in the midst of a world that lies in the Wicked One. We are "in the world." Now, some of you know what it is to be "in the world." When you get home, tonight, there will be little but oaths and cursing. Some of God's dear people, whom He loves with all His heart, are still in the *world*, seeing that which vexes them as much as Lot was vexed by the filthy conversation of the men of Sodom. "In the world!" Now, those whom Christ was about to leave in the world would be left in the midst of all the abounding wickedness, idolatry and blasphemy in about as ungodly an age as man could live in—yet He left them "in the world."

Being in the world, you see, they began to be *persecuted*. They were stoned. They were shut up in prison. They were dragged into the amphitheatre to be torn apart by lions. But "He loved them unto the end." You know how that blessed eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans concludes. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For your sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

In addition to being persecuted, they were liable to be severely *tempted*. All kinds of bribes were put in their way and all sorts of pleasures and lusts were presented to them. They were men of like passions with ourselves, so those temptations were very real to them. They were "in the world" and Jesus had gone to Heaven. They were "in the world," also, in *affliction*. Ah, dear Friends, we find that we, too, are, in this sense, "in the world." However closely we live to God, we have pains of body and we have to grieve as we see our dear relatives suffering. We have losses and crosses because we are "in the world." God's curse still rests upon the earth—"Thorns, also, and thistles shall it bring forth to you." You may do what you like with it, but you cannot make it stop

bringing forth thorns and thistles! They will continue to spring up as surely as the dust will return to the dust from whence it was taken.

In the world, of course, they were in *great labor*, for they were left in the world to seek to convert it, or, at least, to call out the redeemed of Christ from among men by preaching the Gospel to every creature. And, being "in the world," they were surrounded by *much weakness*—weakness of body and weakness of mind—always needing to call to their Lord for help. He was up there upon the Throne of God and they were down in the dungeon! He was up there, clothed with all power, and they were down here in all weakness!

V. NOW, HOW WILL JESUS BEHAVE TOWARDS THEM? That is our last question. We began with it and we will finish with it. Well, here is the answer. "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." And we may rest sure that He always will love them and that He will never change from the tenderness of His heart towards them! "He loved them unto the end." What does that sentence mean?

I think it means, first, that *He loved them right on*. The Hebrew, "His mercy endures forever," might be rendered, "His mercy endures to the end." That is, to the *end which has no end*, for there never will be an end to His mercy—and His love is continual, everlasting love, *it will never come to an end*! Christ, Himself, in His Passion, may be said to have come to an end—and He loved His disciples until His death—but it means that He loves them without any end, forever and ever. Having loved them while He was in the world with them, He loves them right straight on and always will love them when time shall be no more!

I am sure, dear Friends, you believe in the everlasting love of God towards His people. If any of you do not, you are robbing yourselves of one of the greatest comforts that are to be found in the Scriptures. If the Lord can change, where are we? Everything has gone when His everlasting love is gone! I delight to believe that the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed but His kindness shall not depart from us, neither shall the Covenant of His peace be removed—it stands fast forever and ever!

But the sentence may be rendered, "*He loved them to perfection.*" "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them to perfection." He could not love them any better—that was impossible. He could not love them more wisely—that would be out of the question. He could not love them more intensely—that is not supposable. Whatever the perfection of love may be—that is what Jesus Christ bestows upon His people! There is no such love in all the world as the love of Christ to His people! And if you were to gather up all the loves that ever were, of men and women, of mothers and children, of friends and friends, and heap up all these loves, the love of Jesus is of superior quality to them all, for none of those loves are absolutely perfect, but Jesus Christ loves to perfection!

Those of you who have the Revised Version will find in the margin the following words, "*to the uttermost.*" "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them to the uttermost"—to that which is uttermost, farthest and most distant—or, if I turn the word in another way, "He loved them utterly," unutterably, in such a way that you cannot tell, or conceive, or describe, or imagine how much He loved His people! He

loved His people to the utmost stretch of love! So is it, there is no love like His and, as I said just now, all the loves in the world, compressed into one, would not equal it! "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them to the uttermost."

Now, it seems to me that this Truth of God ought to tempt some poor soul to wish to enjoy Christ's love. "Oh," says one, "if I did but get *that* love, I would never lose it. He would love me to the uttermost. Oh, if I could but creep in among His people!" The way to discover Christ's love to you is that you should begin by *trusting* Him, and surely He will help you to do this. He is so true, so good, so able to save unto the uttermost, that if you will come and trust Him, trust Him wholly, trust Him, now, trust Him just as you are—He will save you to the uttermost and show His love to you to the uttermost! I have been preaching what I trust will comfort God's people, but I wish that some poor soul would come to Christ through it. I believe that is the right way to preach the Gospel.

Have you not noticed, in the story of the Prodigal Son, that the father said, "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet," and so on? But he did not go on to say, "Feed him." Do you notice what he said? It was, "Let *us* eat and be merry." "Well, but I thought he was thinking about his son." Yes, and he says, "Let us eat." So, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, let us eat and then sinners will begin to feel their mouths watering and they, also, will want to eat, and to have a share of the feast! This is the only way to make them eat! You can bring a horse to the water, but you cannot make him drink. But you are very likely to do so if you set another horse a-drinking! So, if you and I enjoy the sweetness of the love of Christ, there may be some in the gallery, and some downstairs who will say, "We wish that we knew it, too," and they will be wanting it! That is the way to make them eat. I pray the Lord, by His Spirit, to lead them to put their trust in this loving Savior, and each one to say—

"Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to Your bosom fly."

He *will* let you fly to His bosom! therefore—

"Come, and welcome, sinner, come."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
John 13:1-19

Verse 1. *Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.* Our Lord Jesus Christ had a clear foresight of all He had to endure. Future things are happily hidden from *our* eyes. We do not even know the moment when we shall die, nor how it will be. It is well that it is so, but our Lord was able to anticipate His sufferings by knowing all about them—"Jesus knew that His hour was come." It was all appointed and nothing happens to any of us by accident—chance is banished from the Believer's creed! There is an appointed "hour" for each one of us and it will come in due season. "Jesus knew that His hour was come, that He should depart out of the world unto the Father." What a beautiful way of

describing death! Christ's death was certainly a more trying one than ours will be, so that this description may apply to ours as well as to His.

2. *And supper being ended.* I suppose that was the Paschal Supper.

2. *The devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him.* What a horrible purpose for Satan to put into the heart of Judas even in the Presence of Jesus! I hope that the devil will not put any such purpose into your hearts or into mine while we are in this House of Prayer, but no place is sacred from his intrusion, he will come in anywhere. Even where Christ, Himself, is at the head of the table, Judas may be sitting at that same table and Satan may then and there, put into his heart the horrible purpose of betraying his Master.

3, 4. *Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God, He arose from supper and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself.* Notice those words, "Jesus knowing...He took a towel, and girded Himself." If He had not known how great He was, there would not have been such condescension in His action, but He knew who He was and what the Father had entrusted to Him—"The Father had given all things into His hands." You might suppose that He would stand up, in a very dignified manner, and put on a purple robe and a golden belt, but, instead of that, He rose from the supper table, laid aside His garments, and took a towel, and girded Himself. He knew that He had come forth from God and that He was going back to God—and He performed this action on the way home to His Father. O dear Brothers and Sisters, if Christ thus stooped, how humble ought we to be! No office should be counted too lowly, no work for His servants should seem to be too humiliating, since Jesus "took a towel and girded Himself."

5. *After that, He poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded.* You see that Jesus does His work well. He omits none of the details of it. He puts Himself in the place of a slave and He performs a slave's duty very thoroughly. I am afraid that, sometimes, we do our work for Him in a slovenly way, but Jesus was not satisfied with simply washing His disciples' feet—He must do the wiping, too. I bless Him that He did so, for this is a picture of what He has done for *us*. He has washed our feet and He often repeats the gracious act. The feet that Jesus washes, He will wipe—He has not begun His task without intending to finish it. I know that He will complete in my soul the work which He has undertaken, for He fulfilled, on the feet of His disciples, the office He had undertaken—"He began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded."

6. *Then came He to Simon Peter: and Peter said to Him, Lord, do You wash my feet?* I do not wonder that he said that. Would not you have been equally astonished had you been there? Peter had some faint idea who Christ was. He had confessed Him in such a way that Jesus had said to Him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona: for flesh and blood has not revealed it unto you, but My Father which is in Heaven." Knowing so much about Christ, Peter marveled at His action. He felt so astonished that He asked, "Do You wash *my* feet?"

7. *Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do, you know not, now; but you shall know hereafter.* I have heard this saying of our Lord applied to affliction and it is very true that what Jesus does, we do not, at present, understand, but we shall know, by-and-by. I do not think, however, that this sentence is very applicable that way, for there was no affliction in having his feet washed. The fact is, Brothers and Sisters, though it is a very humbling thing to say, we do not understand that which Jesus does—even His simplest actions are a mystery to us. We have never gone into the very depths of them so as to comprehend them. "What I do—even though I only wash your feet, plain and simple operation as that is—you know not now; but you shall know hereafter." Our *knowing* times, dear Friends, are *to come*. We need not be so very anxious to know at present—this is the time of *love*. I would forego the filling of my head, for a while, if I could have my *heart* full, but, alas, we are generally so busy trying to attain merely *head* knowledge! My most intense longing is for a growing *heart*, a heart that truly loves the Savior. That is the way for the head to learn, for knowledge that comes by the way of the heart, and so enters the head, is the best of knowledge! Jesus said to Peter, "What I do, you know not, now; but you shall know hereafter."

8. *Peter said to Him, You shall never wash my feet.* That is just like Peter. If John had not told us who it was that said this, we would have known that it was Peter! He was always in such a hurry and he spoke so quickly that he made many mistakes, yet he was always so honest and so true, that his Master forgave his faults and helped him to correct them.

8. *He answered him, If I wash you not, you have no part with Me.* If Christ does not cleanse us, we do not belong to Him. If He does not, day by day, exercise a purifying influence over us, we are not His.

9. *Simon Peter said to Him, Lord, not my feet, only, but also my hands and my head.* How that pendulum swings to and fro! It went this way just now—"You shall never wash my feet." Now it goes right away to the other extreme—"Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." Go more gently, Peter, be more quiet! Why do you go so far in one direction and then rush off so far in another way? Your Master knows better than you know what is right for you.

10. *Jesus said to him, He that is washed, needs only to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and you are clean, but not all.* Dear Friends, when we believe in Christ, we are washed in the Fountain filled with blood, and we are clean. But this world is such a sinful place that we cannot walk through it for even a day without some of its mire and dust clinging to us. Besides, God's lilies are so pure that they are hardly fit to bloom in such a defiling atmosphere. Oh, how we need that the dew should wash the lily when the night comes! How greatly we need to have the foot-washing administered to us every day! We need not repeat the first great washing—the bath by which our sins were cleansed—when that was done, it was done once and for all. Our sin was pardoned as before a Judge, but we need it to be taken away as before our Father, for we are now under His loving discipline!

Christ further said to His disciples, "You are clean, but not all." Does He say that to us at this time? "You are clean, but not all." Where sits the man, in this House of Prayer, who is not clean? The sinner who has not yet been washed by Jesus Christ? Where sits the woman who is not clean? The Lord have mercy upon you, dear Friends! You know, that in the olden days, they put a red cross on the door of the house where the plague was. We cannot put a cross upon you, but I pray you to consider yourselves as marked men and marked women in the sight of God. And I pray the Lord to take that mark away by causing you to be washed, that you may be clean every whit. How quickly He can wash the foulest sinners! He that believes in Jesus is washed in the precious blood and he is clean. God cleanse us all for His great name's sake!

11-15. *For He knew who should betray Him; therefore said He, You are not all clean. So after He had washed their feet, and had taken His garments, and was set down again, He said unto them, know you what I have done to you? You call me Master and Lord: and you say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; you, also, ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.* Christ's actions are the pattern for us to imitate! Oh, that we followed them more closely!

16. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.* Sometimes we think that we are a deal too great to wash anybody's feet—we would like to see a person dare propose it to us, such big people as we are! If we talk like that, there is great need that we should be taken down. That would be the true way to rise in the likeness of Jesus! Oh, that we were lowlier in humility! We should be higher in Grace if we were.

17. *If you know these things, happy are you if you do them.* Peter needed to know them. Jesus would have us do them.

18. *I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen.* Christ has a chosen people, though some will not believe it. Yet it is so, for He says, "I know whom I have chosen."

18, 19. *But that the Scripture may be fulfilled, he that eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me. Now I tell you before it comes, that when it has come to pass, you may believe that I am He.* "That I am." So, you see, even the great trouble of the early Church—the betrayal by Judas—was used by Christ for the strengthening of His disciples' faith. He foretold that it would be *as it came to pass*. So, dear Friends, in these latter days, many forsake the Gospel, but Jesus told us that it would be so. He taught His servants to write that there would be a falling away and that in these last days there would be scoffers—and as we read the prophecies and compare them with the fulfillment—even the doleful fact, itself, confirms our faith in our Lord! God bless to us this brief reading of His own Word! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—731, 815, 377.

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

PARDON FOR THE GREATEST GUILT
NO. 2378

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 8, 1888.

"Manasseh did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, like unto the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel. And when he was in affliction, he asked the LORD, his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto Him: and He was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him, again, to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD, He was God."
2 Chronicles 33:2, 12, 13.

THIS story of Manasseh is a very valuable one. I feel sure of this because you meet with it twice in the Word of God. It is a dreary story—a very dreary story—and the sad part of it is given twice in the Bible, while the consoling part of it is only recorded once. The Holy Spirit has some motive and reason for this, we may be sure. If you look in the Second Book of Kings, in the 21st Chapter, you will find, with some little alteration, the very same story that we have been reading, so far as the deplorable part of it is concerned. I take it that this is because God would have us pay great attention to this narrative. He would have us, again and again, dwell upon such wonders of Sovereign Grace as Manasseh presents to us.

Dear Friends, you have, here, the history of a great sinner, saved—I might say, a very *great* sinner, saved—and this is narrated in the Word of God that other great sinners, seeing it, may be encouraged to seek mercy as Manasseh sought and found it! No man, I trust, will be so base as to turn the mercy of God into an excuse for sin. He would deserve the deepest Hell, who would take encouragement to sin from the greatness of pardoning love! I will not suppose that anyone here is so driven by the devil as to do that, but I will trust that some great sinner, in whom despair has fixed itself, who has said, "Because there is no hope for me, therefore I will go farther into sin," will be stopped in his evil course as he hears of the amazing, the immeasurable mercy of God to the greatest and most diabolical form of sinner!

This case of Manasseh is put in Scripture that it may breed its like, not in its sinfulness, but in its *faith*, its *prayer*, its *humiliation*, its *seeking and its finding mercy*. How many souls have been converted by reading the story of John Bunyan as he has written it in his, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners!* I doubt not that many a swearing tinker has said, "There is mercy for me as well as for John of Elstow." Who, that has

read the first part of the, "*Life of John Newton*," has not felt encouraged to seek and find the Savior? The story of Colonel Gardiner and how the Lord met with him has been blessed to many a soldier, and he has had hope against hope that there may be mercy even for him in the depth of his sin.

I can well remember the time when I carefully treasured up every instance of God's mercy to sinners, as a man might store up pearls, for it seemed to me, then, that if I could find a soul like myself—equally sinful and equally convicted of sin, who, nevertheless, found mercy—then I, also, might find mercy, for I believed that God acted upon a certain style and scale and that He would do for me what He had done for others. "Then will I teach transgressors Your ways," said David, as much as if he had said, "If You save *me*, then I shall know that it is Your way to save great sinners, and I will go and tell other sinners what Your ways are, and my case shall be a proof of how You will act towards them."

I pray that while the door of Divine Mercy is open, some of you may come in. When the door of Noah's Ark was open, you know that it was wide enough to let in the elephant and, consequently, there was plenty of room for the mouse, and where the camel could enter, you may be sure that the sheep could go. If you should not feel that you have sinned after the terrible fashion of Manasseh, yet, if there is room in God's love for such as *he*, there is room enough for you! And the silver trumpet is ringing out the joyous invitation that we have often sung—

"Come, and welcome, to the Savior,
He in mercy bids you come!
Come be happy in His favor,
Longer from Him do not roam.
Come, and welcome,
Come to Jesus, sinner, come!"

The good Brother who prayed, just now, pleaded that God would give us an unusual blessing and your hearts, as well as mine, said, "Amen!" May it come to some of you who did *not* pray for it! May the Lord be found of them that sought Him not, according to His ancient promise! May He now say, "Behold Me, behold Me," to those who were not His people! And may some be found of Him who never could have been found of Him if His Grace were not most sovereign, most rich, and most free!

Now, in coming close to our subject, we are going to do two things. First, *let us examine the case before us.* And, secondly, *let us consider why there should be others like it.*

I. First, LET US EXAMINE THE CASE BEFORE US.

We begin by noticing that *Manasseh was the son of a good father.* I think that it always aggravates sin in any man when he comes of a holy stock. You who were nursed amid a godly mother's prayers and trained by a faithful father's earnest teachings cannot sin as cheaply as others. You know that in doing evil you have to go against all your home influences—some of you would have to go over hedge and ditch to get to Hell, after having such parents as you have had. Mr. Whitefield tells us of a young man who said that he could not live in the house that his father had left him, for, as he coarsely put it, "Every chair and table in it stinks of piety." He could not be happy in it, he said, living as he lived, while he

remembered what his father used to do there. If I am addressing any men or women who have sinned against early training, I remind them most solemnly that their guilt has an extraordinary blackness about it! I am sure that Absalom was a greater sinner because he rebelled against a loving father, who cried over him, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for you, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

Oftentimes, in my youth, I felt that I could not live without Christ, for my mother's sake, for my father's sake, for my grandfather's sake whom I revered so much. It was a great inducement to me to keep from the ways of sin and to seek after their God and Savior. And it should be to every right-minded young man, to every right-minded boy or girl, a sweet inducement to seek the Lord because He is your father's God. But if you throw this all away. If you are determined that you will *not* know the God of your fathers, then on your head shall rest the greater sin!

In the next place, *this young man undid all his father's actions*. He repaired the altars that his father had thrown down and he threw down the altars which his father had built up. Do I address one who is trying to do that—seeking to change all that was done by those who went before you? You have turned the house upside down. You have altered the character of your father's business. You have discharged his godly servants. Everything that used to be is changed—people hardly know the place, now, after the alterations which you have made—and you have gloried in them! You said to yourself, as you came in here, tonight, that if you lived, you would turn the thing upside down worse than ever! Oh, is it so, that you think it is such a desirable thing to be undoing all that was done by your godly ancestors and predecessors?

Then, this *Manasseh served false gods*. You say that *you* do not so. Oh, but if I speak, and your conscience speaks, will not the still small voice whisper to you that you have been doing just that? Your lusts, are they not your god, young man? Are you not giving your very body to the commission of sin? And strong drink—do you not worship that vile thing? Or have you even taken to gambling? There are many ways in which men ruin themselves and this is one of the chief of them, just now, in this city. What is the sin of which you are most fond? *That* is your god and, oh, I fear that I am not talking to the wind! I fear that I am speaking distinctly into the ears of men and women who have forsaken the living God and given Him no thought, whatever, much less the love of their hearts. They are living for self, for vanity, for pleasure, for iniquity in some form or other! Are there not some whose god is their belly and others whose god is Mammon, all of them minding earthly things? I only speak in a quiet style to you, but, were I to address you as I might, I think that I could speak as with thunder and lightning on such a subject as this, for the multitudes of this city are not the worshippers of the one living and true God, but of other gods—many of them diabolical gods, for they are demons, and not God!

This man, Manasseh, had gone farther, even, than that, for *he had desecrated the Lord's courts*. He had set up Baal and Ashtaroth in the courts of the Temple at Jerusalem! Well now, there are some, today, who do this, for they make even their attendance at the House of God to be an

occasion for evil! I have been shocked, sometimes, when I have found persons going out from worship across to the nearest gin palace, or coming up to the place of prayer, not with any idea of hearing to profit, but to meet some friend and that for an evil, rather than a commendable design! O God, how is Your House defiled, even tonight! Some sit here who have come with the worst of motives—they are rather grieving the Holy Spirit by being in the assembly of God's people than bringing any blessing upon themselves!

Manasseh had gone still farther in the way of evil, *for he had dedicated his children to the devil* by passing them through the fire unto Moloch. After they had been set apart unto God by circumcision, he tried, as it were, by giving them a baptism of fire, to dedicate them more fully to the false god. Nobody here will dedicate his children to the devil, surely, yet many do. Have I not seen a father dedicate his boy to the devil, as he has encouraged him to drink? I heard one say, the other day, "Take a pull at it, boy. Open your shoulders." He wanted him to drink like a man! And do not many in this great city dedicate their children to the devil by allowing them to go into all kinds of licentiousness until they become the victims of vice? Do I speak to any here who have brought up their children after a "fashionable" style? Well, there is not much difference between passing your girls and boys through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom and bringing them up very "fashionably!" I have known parents grow rich and then they have hardly cared to take their children to the humble place of worship where they used to go—they must devote them to the world and bring them up in such a way that if they do not go to Hell, it will be ten thousand miracles! Mind what you do with your children. If you are determined to perish, yourselves, yet add not to your other transgressions the great sin of passing your children through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom!

Still, even this abomination did not satisfy Manasseh. He was a very glutton for iniquity, so *he fraternized with the devil* by seeking after all kinds of supernatural witcheries and wizardries. It seemed as if he could not get far enough away from God! Everything that was forbidden appeared just suited to his depraved taste and if he *must* not do it, why, then he resolved that he *would* do it! I am drawing my bow at a venture now, but the arrow will go between the joints of somebody's harness. I may be speaking to some who have made a covenant with death and an agreement with Hell. "Thus says the Lord, your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with death shall not stand." Give yourself up to all manner of iniquities as you may, yet the Grace of God is able to deliver you from the terrible bondage!

Not satisfied, even, with this awful form of evil, *Manasseh led others astray*. All Judah and Israel felt the force of this evil king's influence and the people seemed as eager for idolatry and every kind of vice as the king, himself, was. Alas, when the weather bell allures all the flock to their destruction! You, young man, know that you are leading others in the house away from God. And, young woman, your influence on your sisters is very destructive. I may be addressing some man who has even *gloried* in the shameful fact that he has led others in the ways of sin!

It is an awful picture that I have to paint in giving you Manasseh's portrait. I hardly care to go through with it, but I must, in the hope that some other great sinner may say, "If such a man as *that* was, nevertheless, forgiven, why should not I be?"

If worse could be, here was one thing worse than I have mentioned. God spoke to Manasseh, sent His Prophets to him, but he would not hear. He that is often reproved intensifies his sin. If you did not know better, if you had never been warned, if nothing had ever crossed your path to stop you from evil, why then, there might be some excuse for you! Behold, tonight, a hand lays hold upon your horse's bridle and throws the animal back upon its haunches—and a voice cries out in a tone of authority, "You shall go no farther! In the name of the living God, I bid you dismount and bow the knee and seek mercy." It may be that you will reject my feeble words as you have refused others, much more powerful, but that would be a terrible adding of sin to sin.

And then, to crown all, *Manasseh persecuted the people of God.* "Manasseh shed very much innocent blood till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another." It is said—we do not know whether it was so, or not—but it is highly probable that he caused Isaiah to be cut in sunder with a wooden saw. An awful agony of death, indeed, for so grand a Prophet. Now, *you* never killed anybody. You were not willing—you could not do such a thing, I know, but yet how many there are who have added to all their other sins—that of *ridiculing God's people*? O husband, if you have persecuted your wife, do not so again, I beseech you! There is sin enough for you to answer for without adding that awful iniquity. He that ridicules and persecutes the people of God, does, as it were, put his finger into God's eye, and it will not be long before Jehovah, Himself, will deal with him. The God of patience may bear long with him, but, in the end, the persecutor shall not go unpunished!

Now, heaping up all that I have said, mountain on mountain, foul sin upon foul sin, I may say of Manasseh that he is a compound of every sort of wickedness! I scarcely know what more of evil he could have done, yet *he was pardoned*, and if you look straight up there, amidst the glorious band that sing before the Throne of God of Free Grace and dying love, you will see Manasseh in the front rank! And you will hear his voice among the sweetest and the loudest of them all, shouting, as we sang just now—

"Oh may this strange, this matchless Grace,
This God-like miracle of love,
Fill the wide earth with grateful praise,
And all the angelic choirs above!
Who is a pardoning God like Thee?
Or who has Grace so rich and free?"

When he was pardoned, this is how it came about. *Being in great trouble, he turned to Jehovah, his God.* Yes, it is by the way of *trouble* that many are rescued from sin. They are brought to have just a little taste of the fruit of sin and that tree bears very bitter fruit. And when they have a taste of it, then they turn to God. I could not help saying, the other day, of a young man, "Well, if he should have to suffer for his sin, it may be the saving of him." Sometimes the sorrow that follows upon transgres-

sion is the only way by which the transgressor can be delivered from it. So Manasseh was brought among the thorns and *then* he turned to Jehovah.

And we are also told that *he humbled himself greatly*. Great sinners must have great humbling. If you want to be saved, you who have greatly transgressed, bow very low—lie in the very dust before God. Nothing will do for you but to prostrate yourself before the Lord in the confession of your sin. Do not attempt to cloak it. Make no apologies for it, but humble yourself greatly before God.

Then it is added of Manasseh that *he prayed*. Prayer has wondrous power to bring peace to a troubled conscience, but, mind you, it must be *prayer mixed with faith*. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved," is the Gospel command to an awakened sinner! Pray with your whole heart until the Lord hears you and sends you a gracious answer of peace! God heard Manasseh, dealt graciously with him and brought him back to his kingdom. But, best of all, the Lord first of all brought him back from his sin and made a new man of him! And, by His Grace, Manasseh set to work to bring forth fruits meet for repentance, to lead back his people to the worship of God and to clear the House of the Lord from the idols with which he had polluted it! Oh, that the Lord would speak to some man, tonight, who has been a slave of sin and break his bonds asunder! It may be done in a moment! God's Grace can take a slave of Satan who wears manacles on his hands, fetters on his legs and chains about his heart—and the Lord shall only *speak* and that man's chains shall drop from him and, in a moment, he shall be free! And he shall go home to change everything and to astonish his old companions with the story of the marvelous miracle that the Grace of God has worked!

I am not trying to preach to you with any fine words. I do not need to do that, but if God would apply His Truth to your hearts, it would be a thousand times better than the grandest of human oratory! And why should He not do so? Where is the man who would not ask Him to do it, the unsaved soul that came in here resolved on sin? O Spirit of the living God, lead that soul to cry to Jesus, now, and to trust Him to give immediate deliverance! You need not wait till you get home—this transformation may be worked in a moment! This marvelous change is the miracle of Christianity! Those who say that it does not take place, say so for lack of knowing better. We have seen it! Yes, we have felt it! Do I not remember when, from the depth of conscious sin, condemned as I was in my own judgment and ready to be swallowed up in the jaws of Hell, I leaped into eternal peace and into new life from hearing that word, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth"? Let some other poor soul look to Christ and he or she shall be saved as I was!

There was more that I had meant to say about Manasseh's case, but I think I have said enough about his sin and his salvation, so now let us turn to the other side of our subject.

II. I shall spend only a very few minutes upon my second head. LET US CONSIDER WHY THERE SHOULD BE OTHERS LIKE MANASSEH. I will give you a very few considerations. Will you please put them away in your hearts, you for whom they are intended, you who are great sinners

and have not yet found the Savior? I should say, judging from many probabilities, that God will save other great sinners as He saved Manasseh.

I should say so, first, because He speaks to such great sinners and *commands them to repent*. I will only give you the one command mentioned in that part of the first chapter of Isaiah which we have read and the other that is recorded in the 55th Chapter of the same Book. The Lord is speaking to men whose hands were full of blood—that is an awful condition for anyone to be in—yet He says, "Wash you, make you clean." "Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Well now, if the Lord bids men repent and turn to Him, He must mean that He will save them! It would be a cruel tantalizing of the human heart to say, "Repent," and yet not to save those who do so! God's calls to repentance are promises of forgiveness. Where He says, in the 55th of Isaiah, "Let the wicked forsake his ways and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord," you do not wonder that it is added, "and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." The very duty of repentance gives a hope of pardon. Is it not so? Do you not catch this idea? Do you not know that God has commanded even *you* to repent, great sinner as you are? If so, there is implied in the command a promise to receive you!

But, then, notice, next, *the great promises God has given to great sinners*. The Bible is full of them and the promises are not put in for sinners of a certain degree, only, but *all* the guilty are bid to come, believe and live. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that *whoever* believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "*Whoever* will, let him take the water of life freely." The gate of mercy is set wide open and over the portal is inscribed the invitation, "Come and welcome; come and welcome." Have you never heard the story of a man who, in his dream, thought that he stood outside the gates of Glory? He saw a company come up to Heaven's gate, singing as they went along, and when they had entered, there were great shouts and much sounding of trumpets. And he asked, "Who are these?" And it was told him, "This is the noble host of Prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord, and they have come up here." His eyes filled with tears as he said, "I cannot go in with them."

Then there came another company, a slender band, who sang to the praise of Almighty Grace and entered Heaven amidst triumphant shouts, and he asked, "Who are they?" And the answer was, "That is the goodly fellowship of the Apostles." "Alas," he said, "I cannot enter with *them*." And the tears stood in his eyes, again. He was cheered as he heard the joyous tramp of others who came along—these wore the red uniform and they sang psalms of victory and, when they entered through the gate of pearl, there were exultant cries amidst the glorified, and the man said, "I pray you, tell me, who are these?" And they answered, "These are the noble army of martyrs." Then the tears flowed still more freely, for he said, "I cannot enter with them."

He was in despair till he saw a great white-robed company coming up the hill, but, as he looked at them, he recognized Saul of Tarsus among them, and the woman who was a sinner, and the Philippian jailor, and Manasseh, and they came along chanting right lustily the praises of Free Grace and dying love. He heard that this was the company of sinners saved by Sovereign Grace and he said to himself, "I think I can enter with them," so he joined the train and stole in within the gate. But he said within himself, "There will be no songs of welcome, no shouts of exultation for us." What was his astonishment, however, to find all Heaven ringing with a louder shout than ever because *great sinners* had come home to Heaven, saved by the blood of the Lamb! This is not a dream, it is a fact, so I expect, since there are so many precious promises in God's Word that a good many great sinners will be saved!

I expect it, again, from *the Nature of God*. God is merciful and He is Infinite in every attribute, so that He is prepared to be greatly gracious. Oh, yes, if there are any little sinners about, and they trust in Jesus, He will forgive them, but, oh, how He delights when there comes along a great sinner and He blots out all the sins of the Jerusalem sinner and makes him perfectly clean! You may be willing to sign a receipt for sixpence or a shilling, but really, it seems more worthwhile, when you do get a pen in hand, to write a receipt for a thousand pounds! So, God delights to give a receipt where there has been great sin and to pardon great iniquity! I should say, judging from the greatness of God's mercy, that there would be a great many sinners saved!

And I should say it yet more positively from what I know of *the value of the blood of Jesus*. I see on yonder—

"Green hill, far away,
Outside the city wall,"

there stands a tree and on it hangs the Glory of the universe put to shame by men, the everlasting Son of God bleeding and dying, "the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." I cannot set a limit to Christ's love! I should not like to *attempt* the task—can you? He dies. His crimson tears put out the sun, the touch of His Cross tears the rocks asunder. O great sinners, from the Glory of our crucified Savior, I expect to see many of you saved!

I will say no more upon this point, but beg you to go and try it. Men and women, if you have not yet obtained mercy, go home and fall on your knees before God—and do not get up until you have received it! Even now, plead the promise, "O Lord, You have said that You will forgive all who believe in Christ. I know that You cannot lie. I trust Your dear Son, therefore, O Lord, save me!" Cast yourselves at the feet of the crucified Christ and, trusting in Him, pray earnestly until the answer of peace comes to your heart!

Just notice this, that from now on impenitence is inexcusable! I can imagine a great sinner saying, "It is no use for me to repent, for I can never be forgiven." But now that we proclaim to you free pardon through the finished Sacrifice of Christ, impenitence becomes a sevenfold crime! Turn you, turn you, turn you, turn you! Quit your sins! Fly to Christ and begin a new life, for there is forgiveness for the very chief of sinners!

There is forgiveness for theft, for lying, for fornication, for adultery, for murder—there is forgiveness for the most crimson and scarlet sins—for all who leave them and fly to Jesus! Trust Him, for His Grace will enable you to start anew!

As for despair, it is damnable. While the story of Manasseh stands on record, no mortal has a just excuse to perish in despair! No one is justified in saying, "God will never forgive me." Read over again the history of Manasseh. See to what lengths of sin he went, to what extravagant heights of evil he climbed, and then say to yourself, "Did Sovereign Mercy reach *him*? Then it can also reach *me*! I will draw near to the great King at once and sue for pardon at His Mercy Seat."

As I shall meet you again in that Great Day when Heaven and earth shall rock and reel beneath the footsteps of the coming Judge, I beseech you, let us meet on good terms on that day! Let me not be there to be a swift witness against anyone for his condemnation, but rather let me say, "We spoke together on that midsummer evening in 1888 and we remember it, for that night we gave our hearts to Christ, and now we meet in Heaven!"

Now, dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I have not been talking to you, you see, but you are not like the prodigal's elder brother—you will not fit here and growl because there is nothing for you. I know what many of you have been doing—you have been praying, "Lord, bring Brother Prodigal home!" Perhaps, after all, some of you have been grumbling because you have not had even a kid to feed upon, tonight, that you might make merry with your friends. But if a sinner has come to Jesus, if Brother Prodigal comes home, why, then the calf will get killed and you will have your share of it, and we shall have music and dancing, tonight, over sinners saved! The great Father's joy shall flow over into our hearts and we will rejoice with Him! May He send a blessing! I beseech you, pray for it, for Jesus' sake!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—201, 202, 568.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
2 Chronicles 33:1-20; Isaiah 1:2-19.

2 Chronicles 33:1. *Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign.* He was, therefore, born after the time when Hezekiah was raised up from the bed of sickness. That prolongation of life was not all mercy—I am not sure that we should be so eager for such an extension of earthly existence either for ourselves or for others. Had Hezekiah been able to foresee what would be the abominations of the first part of Manasseh's reign, should he come to the throne of Judah, I think that the godly king might have been content to die at once rather than live any longer to become the father of such a sinner—and one who would prove to be such an enemy of the true faith. "Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign." It was too early for a youth to reign over any nation. It is a great temptation and a serious peril, when an individual has too much power before he reaches his manhood. It would have been far better for

Manasseh if his accession to the throne had been postponed for a good while. You who are very young and are entrusted with wealth and position, may God keep you from going wrong! It will need great Grace to preserve you in the right path.

1. *And he reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem.* Manasseh's was a long reign, a varied reign and, at first, a wicked reign of the very worst kind. Sometimes men are spared, notwithstanding their sin. Manasseh's was one of the longest reigns on record—"He reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem."

2. *But did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, like unto the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel.* The Lord drove out the Canaanites for the very sins that Manasseh committed! If we follow in the sins of others, we must not wonder if we share in their doom. It is a sad thing, however, when the child of such a father as Hezekiah does evil in the sight of the Lord, "like unto the abominations of the heathen, whom Jehovah had cast out before the children of Israel."

3. *For he built, again, the high places which Hezekiah, his father, had broken down.* These high places were, at first, built for the worship of God, the true God—but, then, the Law of Jehovah was that there should be only one altar, namely, that at Jerusalem. This was not Popery, but Ritualism—it was *adding* something to the simple worship of God and, therefore, it was wrong. He who goes a little way in sin will soon go a long way. It is always a mercy to stop where you ought to stop and not begin going down. Hezekiah had broken down the high places and his son, Manasseh, rebuilt them.

3. *And he reared up altars for Baalim, and made groves, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them.* He not only worshipped them, but he *served* them. He threw his whole strength into the propagation of this form of idolatry. They who build altars to God, contrary to the Lord's Law, will soon have false gods! First, men set up *images* to remind them of the true God, and then they go off to the worship of the idols, or false gods. Oh, that we may have Grace to make no similitude of the Lord and to set up nothing contrary to the simple teaching of the Word of God!

4-5. *Also he built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, In Jerusalem shall My name be forever. And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the House of the LORD.* There was plenty of room elsewhere for them if Manasseh needed them, but nothing would do for him but that in the *House of God*, itself, must be built altars for the worship of the sun and all the host of stars!

6. *And he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom: also he observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards.* All which is imitated, nowadays, by certain persons who try to break through the veil which parts us from the spiritual world. Manasseh did this on a large scale.

6-11. *He worked much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger. And he set a carved image, the idol which he had made, in the House of God, of which God had said to David and to Solomon, his son, In*

this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen before all the tribes of Israel, will I put My name forever: neither will I any more remove the foot of Israel from out of the land which I have appointed for your fathers, so that they will take heed to do all that I have commanded them, according to the whole Law and the statutes and the ordinances by the hand of Moses. So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen, whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel. And the LORD spoke to Manasseh, and to his people: but they would not listen. Therefore the LORD brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon. If you will not learn anywhere else, you will have to be taught among thorns, in chains and in exile. There are some men who will never go to Heaven except through a sea of affliction and trial. Oh, for wisdom to yield to Almighty Grace at once!

12, 13. *And when he was in affliction, he asked the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto Him: and He was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him, again, to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD, He was God.* He had set up Baal and Ashtaroth, but now he knows who is the true God, and he bows before Jehovah.

14-17. *Now after this, he built a wall outside the city of David, on the west side of Gihon, in the valley, even to the entering in at the fish gate, and compassed about Ophel, and raised it up a very great height, and put captains of war in all the fenced cities of Judah. And he took away the strange gods, and the idol out of the House of the LORD, and all the altars that he had built in the mount of the House of the LORD, and in Jerusalem, and cast them out of the city. And he repaired the altar of the Lord, and sacrificed thereon peace offerings and thank offerings, and commanded Judah to serve the LORD God of Israel. Nevertheless the people did sacrifice, still, in the high places,* They do the same, today, and we cannot get them away from them. Even some who love the Gospel yet cling to the old Romish rites and ceremonies. Ah, men do love to multiply outward performances instead of spiritual worship! The one altar of Calvary is not enough for them—they must have many altars—"Nevertheless the people did sacrifice, still, in the high places."

17. *Yet unto the LORD their God only.* So far, it was well, but it would have been better if they had given up all those altars.

18-20. *Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and his prayer unto his God, and the words of the seers that spoke to him in the name of the LORD God of Israel, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel. His prayer, also, and how God was entreated of him, and all his sins, and his trespass, and the places wherein he built high places, and set up groves and graven images before he was humbled: behold, they are written among the sayings of the seers. So Manasseh slept with his fathers, and they buried him in his own house: and Amon, his son, reigned in his place.* The short passage, which I am going to read from the first chapter of Isaiah, seems to get a fine illustration in this story of Manasseh.

Isaiah 1:2, 3. *Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord has spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me. The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel does not know, My people do not consider.* Heaven and earth might well be called to witness such strange ingratitude as this of which the Lord had to complain of!

4. *Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward.* What a terrible indictment and every word of it was true!

5-9. *Why should you be stricken any more? You will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment. Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. Except the LORD of Hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.* As the Prophet's vision proceeds, the true state of the people is seen.

10-15. *Hear the Word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the Law of our God, you people of Gomorrah. 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? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto Me; the new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot! Away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates: they are a trouble unto Me; I am weary to bear them. And when you spread forth your hands, I will hide My eyes from you: yes, when you make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.* They were horribly wicked people, they could hardly have been worse. They were so bad that even their prayers were not fit for God to hear. Yet He says—

16-19. *Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land.* What blessed words of mercy! Oh, that everyone of us may prove them true in our own case, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

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

A DISCOURSE TO THE DESPAIRING
NO. 2379

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 15, 1888.

"Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said to his sons, Why do you look, one upon another? And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get down there, and buy for us there; that we may live, and not die." Genesis 42:1, 2.

JACOB had reached an age in which natural vigor had gone out of him. He was getting very old and was worn and weary, yet here he seems to lead the way in providing for his family. It was he who spoke to the younger men, his sons, and urged them to go down into Egypt to buy food. Jacob was of a timorous disposition in his latter days—he had an old man's fear of that which is high and the grasshopper had become a burden to him—yet he proposed to his sons that they should make a venturesome journey into Egypt! It was a great undertaking for them, for they were stay-at-homes, and not travelers. They were shepherds, whose time was occupied in looking after the welfare of their flocks, and not in roaming over foreign countries. They thought it would be a burdensome responsibility and a perilous risk to cross the desert and go down into Egypt, yet Jacob proposed this to them as the only way of escape from famine and death. Here is an instance in which an aged father woke up his sons to action by telling them good news and by chiding them because of their despairing looks and words.

I am going to use the passage in this way. There are many persons who are sitting down in a kind of stupor. They have no hope and, therefore, they are doing nothing at all. They need to be told the good and blessed tidings concerning salvation and to be urged to make a right use of that news and to avail themselves of the provision of which they are informed. I shall give myself, under the Holy Spirit's guidance, to the happy task of following out that line of thought under these three heads. First, *despair is useless.* "Why do you look, one upon another?" *Secondly, hope is well-grounded.* "I have heard that there is corn in Egypt." Thirdly, *action is reasonable.* "Get you down there, and buy for us there; that we may live, and not die."

I. First, DESPAIR IS USELESS.

I have never heard, yet, of anybody who derived any good from despair. Let me correct myself, there *is* a kind of despair which is the work of the Spirit of God. I wish that you all felt it—a despair of self-salvation, a despair of washing away your own sin, despair of obtaining any merit

of your own by which you can become acceptable in the sight of God—but men never come to it unless *the Spirit of God brings them*. We are always ready to hope in ourselves with that self-conceited hope which is abhorrent to God. And it is a great mercy when, at last, the Spirit of God, like the hot blast of the Sirocco, passes over the green field and every flower therein is withered! What said the Prophet? "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness, thereof, is as the flower of the field: the grass withers, the flower fades: because the Spirit of the Lord blows upon it: surely the people is grass." That is a blessed kind of despair! But of any other sort of despair, in reference to eternal things, I cannot say anything that is good. I believe that Giant Despair has his dungeons full of the skeletons of men—he is a giant and devours those who come in his way—and he never helped a pilgrim on the road to the Celestial City. He never worked any good to any soul that came under his power. I cannot set you free from his grasp, but I can and do pray that the Spirit of God may deliver you out of his clutches!

These sons of Jacob looked upon one another despairingly, it seems, and their old father watched their looks till, at last, he asked them, "Why do you look, one upon another?" *Their looks expressed great sadness.* They had never before been in such a plight. No corn for the asses, no bread for the children, no food for themselves. Not one of them smiled, but grim sadness sat on every countenance, and all their faces gathered blackness. One looked at his brother and saw that he was sad. And that brother looked at the next one and perceived that he was mournful and gloomy. The light of a man's countenance is often like the shining of the sun—one bright face will make another full of joy and gladness—but when all the sons of Jacob were sad, their sadness was increased as they looked, one upon another. Now, when a man knows that he has no hope. When he feels that he cannot save himself. When he hungers for the Bread of Life and yet has none of it—when he looks to others who are in same case, and they only reply, "It is even so. We are also starving. We are lost"—well, then, it is a sad, sad business altogether.

Next, *their faces expressed inability*. Judah looked on Reuben and Reuben stared back at his brother, as much as to say, "Do not gaze at *me*, Judah, for I cannot do anything! I have emptied my last sack of corn." Then Reuben looked across to Simeon and Simeon turned to Zebulon—and they all shook their heads and each one said—"It is no use looking to me. I cannot relieve you in this time of famine, even in the slightest degree. I have more than I can do to take care of my own wife and children." So is it when one sinner looks upon another sinner. If really awakened to a true sense of his condition in the sight of God, each one says, "I cannot help you. I cannot even help myself." There are a number of foolish virgins with their lamps all gone out, and they have not a drop of oil between them and, therefore, not one of them can help another. So, sadness and inability are both implied in old Jacob's question to his sons, "Why do you look, one upon another?"

Besides that, I have no doubt that there was *a great degree of bewilderment expressed on their countenances*. One asked his brother, "Can-

not you suggest anything?" "No," replied the other, "I am at my wits' end. I never was so puzzled before." "But, surely, So-and-So, the one member of the family who has always been so quick with his suggestions, will have something to say in this crisis." No, not one of them had anything that he could contribute towards the hopefulness of the outlook. Sad, indeed, was the household in which all the brothers seemed, each one, more bewildered than the rest! So, if I were to gather, here, a company of men, awakened to a sense of their true condition as sinners, but not yet led to faith in Christ, and if I were to ask them, "What is to be done to deliver you from this sad state?" they would, in utter bewilderment, look first at me, and then at one another, and sadly say, "What can we do?" One of them might even cry, with John Newton—

"The help of men and angels joined
Could never reach my case"

and in his perplexity he might forget to quote the two lines that follow—

"Nor can I hope relief to find
But in Your boundless Grace."

Such a man might say, "If all in this world who love me were to conspire together to assist me out of the deep pit of sin into which I have fallen, they could not lift me a single inch!"

Bewilderment, then, was upon the faces of the 12 sons of Jacob.

Their looks also expressed apprehension. As they looked on each other, their faces wan, their persons gaunt, each one seemed to say to his brother, "I dare not tell you what I think." And the other would reply, "I knew what you meant before the dreadful words came from your lips, for what can this long famine bring but absolute starvation? We shall see our poor old father die, or, perhaps, we shall, ourselves, perish, and all our children with us before the old man passes away. Anyway, we are doomed. We cannot eat the grass. We cannot devour what the birds of Heaven might live upon—there is nothing for us to do but to die. There is no corn in the land. There is universal famine—grim death will soon overtake us." So they looked at one another every day with more and more of anxious foreboding, for the famine was in the land of Canaan as well as in all the other parts of the earth.

But, dear Friends, what good did their sad looks and their perplexed looks do? They did not make one mess of pottage for any of them! They did not grind for them even a single grain of corn! They were as bad off after all their despair as they were before it—their waiting was absolutely useless—no improvement in their condition came of it! And addressing *you*, my despairing friend, to whom I am sent tonight, I do not think that I ever saw you before, but you are here, and I am sent to speak thus to you! You have believed that there was no hope for you. You did not think that you could be saved and you have been, now, for years in that sad condition! What is the use of it to you? What is the good of all your despair? It has not improved you in the least! It has not even kept you back from sin. It has just made you sit in darkness, like one who is chilled and benumbed, and over whom death is slowly creeping. This despair is no benefit to you. God help you to shake yourself clear of it even now! There is a lie at the bottom of your despair—there *is* hope—there *is* hope for the

very *chief of sinners*! Do not believe what Satan tells you, that you must sit still and die.

The waiting time of the sons of Jacob was wasting time. If they had started earlier, they might have reached Egypt and, perhaps, have been back, again, with the corn which they had bought. But now the weary hours which brought them no hope were depriving them of the possibility of deliverance. So, dear Hearers, you have waited because you did not think that there was a possibility of your being saved—and all this waiting time has been wasted! Would God that you had been converted when you were a boy! Would God that you had known my Lord when you were a young man and started out in business! Oh, that you had known Him even in middle life! But now you are growing gray. Surely, the time past suffices to have been wasted. May God help you to begin, tonight, to obtain that heavenly bread, that true corn upon which your soul may feed!

These sons of Jacob had waited so long that if they delayed much longer, they could never go, for they would all be dead. Did not their old father hint at that when he said to them, "Get you down there, and buy for us there; that we may live, and not die"? Death seemed waiting for them outside the door and if bread did not soon come in, they would all have to be carried out as corpses. So, Sinner, you have waited long enough, and far too long! You have tarried so long that if you wait much longer, the great knell of your soul will toll out with that most dismal sound, "Lost, lost, lost, and lost forever!" God grant that this may not come to pass, but may the Word of the Lord, which I am declaring in my Master's name, lead you to another course of action than that of sitting still and looking, one upon another! I repeat what I said before, despair is useless! I think that you who have tried it are quite convinced that it is so—you cannot squeeze any juice out of this flint! You can dig nothing that will help you out of this barren soil!

II. But now, secondly, HOPE, as we preach it to the very chief of sinners, IS WELL-GROUNDED.

In the story before us, old Jacob said to his sons, "Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt." *Good news had been heard.* Did you notice that the first verse put it rather differently—"Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt"? There is a good old proverb, quaint but true, "Faith *sees* with its ears." It is a new use for ears, according to some people's notions. My own opinion is that there is no organ that we have with which we can see so well as we can with our ears if we use them aright. In spiritual things, "faith comes by hearing," and that faith becomes the sight of things hoped for! Good old Jacob *saw* that there was corn in Egypt and he *heard* that there was corn in Egypt. That is to say, he heard it upon such good evidence that the old gentleman seemed to see it! He had questioned some passing travelers, some Ishmaelites, some wandering Bedouins, who had answered him, "Oh, yes, there is corn in Egypt! We have been down there—we have bought sacks full of it! We have brought it away with us. We know it is so, for here it is." And Jacob, though yet very timorous, weighed the evidence, and judged all

about the matter, and he said to himself, "Oh, yes! It is quite clear, I see that there is corn in Egypt."

Well now, dear Friends, the most of you now present and, I should think, all of you who have come through the rain this wet night, have heard this good news! "Heard it?" you say, "we have heard it times out of mind." I wonder how many times you *have* heard it? It would be worthwhile to sit down and figure away, to see if you could calculate how many times you have heard the Gospel. You know, when a boy has a father who is what a father ought to be, he says to him, "Do not let me have to speak to you twice, Sir." If he does speak to him twice, he says, "Do you think I am going to speak to you three times? Listen, I shall not stop at *speaking* if you do not listen pretty soon!" Would you kindly set down on a sheet of paper, not perhaps on a slate, for you might wipe it off, there—write down how many times God has spoken to you, distinctly, in the preaching of the Word? I will not ask you to reckon up how many times He has spoken to you in private, on your bed and so on. Some of you have heard thousands of sermons, but they have done you no good. I am afraid that you are like Bunyan's Slough of Despond. Many thousands of tons of the best road making material had been poured into that slough and it took it all in—and it was as bad a slough as ever! And is it not so with some of you?

I get astonished at some of you people who come and hear me whenever you can. I am not going to look at the particular persons to whom I refer, but it does astonish me when I know that there are those who have come here for *years*, and yet are as bare of religion as the palm of my hand is of hair! If you ask the wife or children about them, you will find that though they say, "we enjoy Mr. Spurgeon's ministry," yet they enjoy the drink rather *more* on certain other days! They would not miss a sermon! Yes, and they will even come to Prayer Meetings and *enjoy* Prayer Meetings. But still, ah me! Well, I will not say all that I know. May God have mercy upon such people! But what am I to do? Am I to keep on preaching to people like that? Am I to go on perpetually washing Blackamoors who will never be a bit the whiter? God have mercy upon you and upon me, too, and grant that I may not labor in vain towards you, lest in the end your guilt should be increased by the rejection of His Truth!

The good news has been heard by all of you. Whatever may be the destiny of the heathen, they can, at the last, say, "We never heard of Christ. We were never bid to come and put our trust in Him. We never knew the story of the Cross and all the love of God in Christ Jesus." *You* cannot say that, but you will have to confess, some of you, in that Great Day, that you closed your ears to it all and would have none of it. The Lord prevent it, by His mercy!

Well, the good news has been heard, dear Friends, and, by many of us, *the good news has been believed*. I believe with Jacob that there is corn in Egypt, that is to say, I believe that there is salvation in Christ Jesus, that it has, "pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell." There are many here who believe that Truth of God with me. There are myriads, all over the world, who believe this and who have

seen it for themselves—there is pardon for sin! There is renewal of nature! There is every blessing that is needed, stored up in Jesus Christ! The good news has been heard and the good news has been believed! If I were to ask you to stand up and give your testimony after the manner of the Salvation Army, very many here would do so, each one saying, "I believe it. It is even so. I have proved it to be true."

Further, *the good news conveyed to you is to the point*. Suppose that Jacob had said to his sons, "I believe that there is gold in Egypt," they might have asked him, "What has that to do with us?" Suppose he had said, "I believe that there is fine linen in Egypt." They did not need fine linen. Suppose he had said, "I believe that there are chariots in Egypt, and horses," for there were such in abundance. Solomon was known, in later days, to bring them out of Egypt. Yet Jacob's sons would have said, "Dear Father, we do not need horses. We do not want chariots. What we need is *bread*, for we are dying, or soon shall die, of hunger." Well now, my dear Hearers, there is, in Christ Jesus, exactly what you need! If you are guilty, there is pardon! If you are weak, there is strength! If you are foul, there is cleansing! If you are naked, there is clothing! If you are dead, there is life! In fact, there is, in Christ, all that you can possibly need! Christ is as much fitted for you as a glove is for a hand and He is exactly fitted for you, Mary, Thomas, or whoever you are—even as when I came to Him, I found Him to be exactly fitted for me! He is the very Savior for such a sinner as you!

Well now, *this is good news concerning an available blessing*. Supposing Jacob had said, "Dear sons, there is plenty of corn in Egypt, but you cannot have any of it. If you go down there, they will not sell any corn to you." Now, we who believe in the Doctrine of Election are supposed to say to some men, "It is of no use for *you* to believe—*you* will not have the blessing." I never said—I never *thought* such a thing—nor did any other preacher of the Doctrine of Election! We have freely declared to every man that whoever believes in Christ Jesus has everlasting life! And though we believe that God knows who will have it, even as God knew who would go down into Egypt, yet that does not *in the least* affect the freeness of the preaching of the Gospel! Let those who hear us bear witness to the fact. There was never a man, or woman, or child, yet, who applied to God through Jesus Christ for mercy, who was refused. "Him that comes to Me," says Christ, "I will in no wise cast out." If you believe, you live. If you believe, you are saved. We have eternal life when we come and trust in Jesus. Believe and receive it at the hands of Christ. "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." Let that bell ring round the Tabernacle! "He that believes on the Son has everlasting life." If you believe, eternal life is yours. So, this good news is concerning *an available blessing*.

And, once more, *this good news is in the present tense*. Jacob did not say to his sons, "There *was* corn in Egypt," but, "I have heard that there *is* corn in Egypt." So say I to you—"There *is* salvation. There *is* forgiveness. There *is* acceptance, there *is* reconciliation—there *is* eternal life!" There *is*, in Christ Jesus, all that is necessary to lift a soul from the por-

tals of Hell to the gates of Heaven! There *is now*, on this 15th day of the month of July, 1888—there is corn in Egypt, there is eternal life for all who trust in Jesus—

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One!
There is life at this moment for you!"

I do not know how to preach more plainly and simply to you. The last thing that crosses my mind is to try and make "a fine discourse." All I want to do is to talk right to your hearts about the way to Heaven—and not to let you go until you have come to Jesus and have trusted in Him.

So I have set before you two things, first, that despair is useless, and, next, that there is a hope which is well grounded. There is nothing more certain in this world than that whoever believes in Christ shall be saved. I wish that you would all come and try, and see for yourselves, for we have not preached to you cunningly-devised fables, but the most sure Word of God, which we have tasted and handled for ourselves!

III. So I shall close with my third division—ACTION IS REASONABLE.

O my dear despairing Hearer, I say again that I do not know who you may be, but I know that I am sent to you, tonight, with a message! I wish that I knew you, so that I could take you by the hand and have you here on this very platform, and look into your eyes with my eyes. But as I cannot do that, I will speak to you as if I were doing it.

It was time that these men should go at once to Egypt, for *they would die if they did not go*. They could but die if they went to Egypt—if they were met by robbers on the road, and killed, they could but die. This is your case. Without Christ, you must eternally die—there is no hope for you. Remain as you are and you are damned. No, I soften not the word, for it is no light sentence which the word conveys. If you do not find Christ, you are lost forever! Say, then, as we have often sung—

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

I will here bring up Giant Despair if I can, in the rear, that he may howl a little at you, and set your feet in motion. There is no hope for you unless you go to the Savior, even to Jesus Christ. You must die if you do not go to Him.

It was very reasonable that Jacob's sons should go down to Egypt, for evidently *others had gone there and had found corn*. O man, would to God that you would repent and leave your sins, and come to Christ, for others have done so, and they have found eternal life! There never was, there never will be, there *cannot* be one who ever obeyed the Gospel call and yet was disappointed! I challenge the depths of Hades and the deep abyss of Hell, itself, to display a single soul that truly sought the Lord and was refused! No, if you come to Him by Jesus Christ, He must receive you. Therefore, you who feel your need of Christ, I beseech you to awaken yourselves and seek Him now!

Further, *these sons of Jacob got what they went for*. They went to buy corn, and corn they bought, and plenty of it. And you may fare better than they did. It is not half such a task for you to go to Jesus as it was

for them to go to Egypt. You can get to Christ in the twinkling of an eye! Behold, He comes flying to your relief. One look of faith and you are at His feet! Trust is the great railway that will bear you to the blessed terminal of salvation!

The sons of Jacob found in Egypt what they went for and *they found it on better terms than they supposed*. Jacob said, "Buy for us there," but they had their money put back in the mouth of their sacks! Joseph did not want their money—he would not sell anything to his own brothers, he would *give* them whatever they needed! The Lord Jesus Christ does not need your money. He does not even need your repentance and your faith as the purchase-price of salvation. "The wages of sin is death, but the *gift* of God is eternal life." It is a free gift to you who are poor as beggary itself. Do but come and you shall find how free are the gifts of Sovereign Grace!

And, in addition, *Jacob's sons gained a great deal more than they bargained for*, for while they brought corn home, they found that there was a great man in Egypt who was their brother—and they were invited to go and stay with him and they were made great men in that land! Oh, if you will but come to Christ, you will come for silver, but you will get gold! You will come for gold and He will give you diamonds! You will come for a rag and He will give you a royal robe! You will come to Him for life and He will give you everlasting glory! He gives infinitely more than any of us dare to ask, or even *think*—and happy is that man who does but come to Him! Oh, if you had any idea of what Christ will make of you, you would want wings to your heels to fly to Him with all your might! If that young woman did but know what joy the love of Christ would pour into her heart, she would not wait till tomorrow's sun had risen ere she had laid hold of Jesus Christ! When we come to Christ, there is a destiny before us which an angel's future does not rival! We become brothers of Christ, heirs of God, peers of the blood imperial, exalted to sit with Christ upon His heavenly Throne and to share in all His joys! Would God that you would come! If you did but know what is to be had by trusting in Jesus, how swiftly you would be drawn to Him!—

"His worth, if all the nations knew for
Sure, the whole world would love Him, too,"

and if they did but know what He gives, they would hold out both hands and take from Him, now, all that He delights to bestow upon those who trust Him!

I have finished my discourse to the despairing when I have made just two or three concluding remarks.

These sons of Jacob went down into Egypt and they did well. Right reasoning led them to go when they heard that there was corn there and knew that they needed it. But *they were never invited to go there*. Joseph did not send an invitation to Jacob, Reuben, Judah and Simeon, saying, "Come down into Egypt." Up to the moment when he revealed himself, they did not know that he was there. They were never invited and yet they went. Is there anybody here who says, "I do not think I am invited in the Bible to trust Christ"? Then come to Him whether you are invited or not! Do as these men did—they were not invited, but they went! The

feasts of God are of this kind, "Whoever will, let him come." There are no tickets demanded at God's gate of mercy. If you come, you would not have come if He had not drawn you, for no man can come to Christ unless the Father, who sent His Son, draws him, and, "Him that comes to Me," says Christ, "I will in no wise cast out." You are the right man if you but come, for the wrong man never came, never can come and never *thinks* of coming! You are the man to be saved if you but trust Christ!

But I must remind you that there are many of you who have been invited, pressed, urged, entreated with tears to come to Christ. I will not say anything about the many times that I have tried to press those things upon you, for I feel my feebleness, and, if you refuse *me*, I do not wonder. But still, if I knew how to put eternal things before you better than I do, how earnestly would I labor for the salvation of your souls! Sometimes, when I am at home, I say to myself, "That is it. I think I see, now, how to put the Truth of God to the people." But when I get here, I do not feel that I can speak as I desire. What more is a man to say than to tell you that you are in danger, that you will perish if you despair of hope, that there is good ground for hope and, that if you come to your God, trusting in Jesus as your Savior, He will never cast you away? Therefore, come, and come at once! Come even *now*, while sitting in those pews! What more can I say? Spirit of God, You say whatever more is needed and make what is said to go home to the hearts of the hearers!

Now, note again, that you are in a better state than the sons of Jacob, for you are invited, and next, *you have no journey to make*. How far is it to Christ? Well, there is no distance! If you believe, He is there. Our railway people, as a rule, in making railways to a certain town, do not make the railway to the town, but within a half-mile, or a mile, or two miles, so that you must have an omnibus or a cab to get into the town. And there is far too much Gospel preaching that is like that. It is so far before you get to Christ and when you do get to Him, it needs another journey in your own omnibus to finish up the work!

But I believe that the railway to Heaven for you starts just there, in that pew where you are sitting, and that it goes all the way, and that if you enter the glorious Free-Grace train, it will carry you to the terminal! And if you take a ticket, tonight, with a simple trust in the Lord Jesus, you will not need any new ticket, but it will take you all the way through! Oh, I would to God that by faith you would take that ticket right now! There is a journey to get to Heaven, but there is no journey to get to *Christ*, for He is here! You need a Mediator between your souls and God, but you do not need a Mediator between your souls and Christ! You must be prepared to see God in Heaven, but you need not be prepared to see Christ on earth! You may come to Him just as you are! Here He is, look at Him by faith and the great transaction is done!

Last of all, you are informed, as these sons of Jacob were *not* informed, that *no payment is required*. Jacob said to his sons, "Take money in your hand," and when they went the next time, he said, "Take double money in your hand." That was very honest on his part, to send money to make up for what had been put back in the sacks, as well as the dou-

ble price, for the wheat would have risen since the last time, and old Jacob also said, "Take of the best fruits of the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds." That is just what human nature says, "Take Christ a present. Carry something with you." Now, I would advise you to drop that present into the sea! Do not take *anything* with you to Christ except your *emptiness*. That is all He wants—take your emptiness, and He will fill it! Take your sin, and He will wash it away!

When persons advertise that they clean garments—(you see their notices everywhere, nowadays, a wonderful trade it must be)—do they expect that when you send a coat to be cleaned, you are to put a guinea in the pocket? Oh, dear no! You send the garment to be cleaned—you will have to pay for the work, one of these days, but you need not put sovereigns in the pocket! Just take your soul to Christ to be cleansed, with nothing but the spot, and the stain, and the filth—and He will make it whiter than the driven snow!

The Holy Spirit's message is, "Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." Tarry not to cleanse or mend, but come to Christ just as you are and come at once! Sons of Jacob, starving for need of heavenly food, look no longer, one upon another, but up and away to the Christ who has a superabundance of everything you need! Freely He invites you—gladly go to Him! Spirit of God, compel them to do so, by Your sweet love, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"— 531, 375, 435.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
Isaiah 48.

Verse 1. *Hear you this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah, which swear by the name of the LORD, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth, nor in righteousness.* There were always false professors and, I suppose, there always will be till Christ comes. A Judas was among the 12 Apostles and we cannot wonder that we find such in every Church—but what a dreadful thing it is to wear the name of God and yet not really to serve Him—to be called Christians and yet not to be like Christ! It must be a very God-provoking thing to be called by His name and then insult it by not being true to it.

2. *For they call themselves of the holy city, and stay themselves upon the God of Israel; The LORD of Hosts is His name.* They profess to trust Him, but they do not love Him—"they call themselves of the holy city," but they certainly are not holy citizens. Ah me, that God should have to speak to men upon such a matter as this! It is self-evidently wicked, but they will not see it.

3. *I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of My mouth, and I showed them; I did them suddenly, and they came to pass.* There is no better proof that God is God than that His

prophecies have been fulfilled. Only the eternal can see into the future. He has done so and every Word of His has either been fulfilled, or will yet be fulfilled.

4, 5. *Because I knew that you are obstinate, and your neck is an iron sinew, and your brow brass; I have even from the beginning declared it to you: before it came to pass I showed it you: lest you should say, My idol has done them, and my graven image, and my molten image has commanded them.* See the care of God towards the most obstinate of men! He knows that they will pervert things, so He prevents *them* as far as it is possible to do so! He tells them what is to happen, that they may not, afterwards, say that their idol gods have done it. Ah, dear Friends, God has taken great interest in many of us! He has, as it were, laid His plans to keep us out of sin and yet we have often broken out, and have gone over hedge and ditch in the ways of sin. We have seemed resolved to do evil—we have been desperately set on mischief—therefore He speaks of us as being "obstinate." "Your neck is an iron sinew, and your brow brass." Will God ever speak in mercy to such people as these? We shall see as we read on.

6-8. *You have heard, see all this; and will not you declare it? I have showed you new things from this time, even hidden things, and you did not know them. They are created now, and not from the beginning, even before the day when you heard them not; lest you should say, Behold, I knew them. Yes, you heard not; yes, you knew not; yes, from that time that your ear was not opened: for I knew that you would deal very treacherously, and were called a transgressor from the womb.* What a description! Treacherous, false, yes, very treacherous—beyond the usual degree of treachery! Transgressors from our very birth—*born* in sin. The very heart is wrong and all that comes out of us is, therefore, wrong. And now, what follows?

9. *For My name's sake will I defer My anger, and for My praise will I refrain for you, that I cut you not off.* "I cannot spare you for your own sake; but I will spare you for My name's sake. I cannot spare you because of anything good in you; but I will spare you because of good in Myself." If God can glorify Himself by your salvation, He finds a blessed motive for saving you, and, since there is no good in you, He will fall back upon His own Glory and save you for His own name's sake!

10. *Behold, I have refined you, but not with silver; I have chosen you in the furnace of affliction.* You sinful one, yet one of His own children, He will refine you again and again, and He will glorify Himself by saving you.

11. *For My own sake, even for My own sake, will I do it: for how should My name be polluted? And I will not give My Glory unto another.* This verse ought to ring like music in the ears of one who is seeking mercy and who cannot find out how mercy can come to him.

12, 13. *Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, My called; I am He; I am the First, I also am the Last. My hand also has laid the foundation of the earth, and My right hand has spanned the heavens: when I call unto them, they stand up together.* What a great God is He whose right hand

spanned the heavens, making the arch of the sky, as it were, with the span of His hand!

14. *All you, assemble yourselves, and hear, which among them has declared these things?* He still dwells upon prophecy. God claims that He is God because He foretold all that happened, which the idol gods could not do.

14-18. *The LORD has loved him: He will do His pleasure on Babylon, and His arm shall be on the Chaldeans. I, even I, have spoken; yes, I have called him: I have brought him, and he shall make his way prosperous. Come you near unto Me, hear you this, I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the Lord God, and His Spirit, has sent me. Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. I am the Lord your God which teaches you to profit, which leads you by the way that you should go. O that you had listened to My Commandments!* God again breaks out in lamentations over His wandering people! Not only is He ready to forgive them, but He grieves to think that they should have brought so much sorrow on themselves.

18, 19. *Then had your peace been as a river, and your righteousness as the waves of the sea: your seed also had been as the sand, and the offspring of your heart like the gravel thereof; his name should not have been cut off nor destroyed from before Me.* All manner of possible good would have been yours had you not rebelled against God. And as you have lost it, God grieves that it should be so.

20. *Go you forth of Babylon, flee you from the Chaldeans, with a voice of singing declare you, tell this, utter it even to the end of the earth, say you, The LORD has redeemed His servant, Jacob.* What a grand message for anyone to tell! Tell it, tell it, tell it everywhere, that Jehovah has redeemed His people!

21. *And they thirsted not when He led them through the deserts.* Neither shall you thirst, O redeemed one, when you are in the desert!

21. *He caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them.* Most unlikely places shall yield you succor.

21. *He split the rock, also, and the waters gushed out.* And yet, to finish up the chapter, stands this remarkable sentence—

22. *There is no peace, says the LORD, unto the wicked.* O God, have mercy upon us, and let us not be numbered with them!

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

ENCOURAGEMENTS TO PRAYER
NO. 2380

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON, AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, JULY 19, 1888.

"I am the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt: open your mouth wide, and I will fill it." Psalm 81:10.

THE PRECEDING verse bids us turn away from any strange God—"There shall no strange god be in you; neither shall you worship any strange god." Idolatry is the natural sin of man. It covers a very large surface of the realm of sin and it is always cropping up in some form or other. Idolatry is not merely the bowing before graven images—the essence of it lies in putting trust in any other than the great invisible God. We can easily make to ourselves gods of our experience, of our wealth, of our talents. We can make idols of our children, of our wives, of our husbands, of our friends. We can make a god of *anything* by valuing it more than we do our Savior, or by trusting in it beyond our God, or by refusing to trust in Him apart from it. You can make a god of the means of Grace—when you think more of the *means* of Grace than of God and the Grace of the means! You can make a god of your Bible when you think that the reading of it, apart from the illumination of the Holy Spirit, will be all that you require! So you see that it is very easy for man to fall into idolatry.

The cure for this evil lies in our having a living God always before us. If you forget the living God, you will make to yourself an idol god. It is a necessity of your nature that you should have a god of some sort and, to prevent your having a strange god, you must trust, cling to and love Jehovah, the one only living and true God.

The man who has Christ before him does not need a crucifix. The man who comes to God through Jesus Christ does not need the intercession of the Virgin Mary or of saints and angels. The man who has set the Lord always before him does not desire symbols of Jehovah's Presence—in fact, he remembers the words of Moses to the children of Israel—"Take you therefore good heed unto yourselves; for you saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spoke unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire: lest you corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flies in the air, the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth: and lest you lift up your eyes unto Heaven, and when you see the sun, and the moon,

and the stars, even all the host of Heaven, should be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the Lord, your God, has divided unto all nations under the whole Heaven."

Such a man is afraid, sometimes, if there is *anything* like a similitude about his prayers, lest his mind should be taken away from worshipping God, who is a Spirit, in spirit and in truth. He, therefore, generally seeks after great simplicity of worship, for an ornate ritual is a stumbling block to him, although there are some who think that it is a help to them. It only hinders him and, therefore, he rejects it. Oh, that God might always keep us clear of all idolatry by His good Spirit enabling us to worship Him in spirit and in truth! Then would these words be fulfilled in our experience—"There shall no strange god be in you; neither shall you worship any strange god." He who has learned to trust the Creator will not want to trust the creature! He who has stayed himself upon the Rock of Ages will not be tempted to support himself upon the broken reed of human strength! Who will lean on a cloud when his defense may be the munitions of stupendous rocks? Who will wish to feed on the mist when he has eaten the true Bread which comes down from Heaven? God, the true God, casts out all strange gods!

In our text we have God coming very near to His people, and coming near them to *encourage* them to come nearer to Him. We have the Lord speaking to them, that they may speak to Him. He opens His mouth to them, that they may open their mouths to Him. The text contains one encouragement and two arguments for it—they will be our two divisions. First, *God encouraging His people.* And, secondly, *God using two great arguments*. You see, the exhortation is sandwiched in between two arguments. The first is, "I am the Lord—I am Jehovah—your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt." Then comes the exhortation, "Open your mouth wide." And that is followed by the other argument, "I will fill it." There is a good reason, indeed, for opening the mouth wide, when God has promised to fill it!

I. To begin, then, the exhortation of the sermon will be that which we find in the text, in which we hear GOD ENCOURAGING HIS PEOPLE by saying, "Open your mouth wide."

I suppose that the Lord means by this exhortation, first of all, to help us *to get rid of the paralyzing influence of fear*. A man, in the presence of one whom he dreads, cannot speak boldly. And if he has been guilty of some great crime and stands before one whom he regards as his judge, he is like the man in our Lord's parable—"speechless." A man on his knees, conscious of his sin, fearing the justice of God, would very naturally be unable to speak. And to encourage him, God says, "Open your mouth; be not afraid. Open your mouth wide; confess your sin; acknowledge your wanderings from your God; go into the particulars of your iniquity; ask for My mercy; plead My promises; set forth the arguments that can be drawn from the Cross of Christ. Open your mouth wide; be not afraid to speak."

Am I addressing some child of God, or rather, one who hardly knows whether he *is* a child of God or not, but who wants to be one? Do you feel as if you cannot pray? God, here, encourages you to plead with Him! He

says, “Open your mouth.” Your eyes are filled with tears, or perhaps you are wishing that they might be. Your heart is swelling with grief, but you cannot find expressions for your feelings. You are afraid to come before the Lord. You dare not take hold of the horns of the altar. You think that it would be presumption on your part to look to Christ and hope for mercy, so, there you lie, dumb before God! But, bending over you in infinite compassion, the Great Father says, “Open your mouth! Speak, My child! My ears are waiting to hear your cry. I am ready to grant your request. Oh, be not silent before Me! Pour out your heart like water in My Presence—turn it upside down and, to the last dregs, let all flow out before Me. Reserve nothing! Spread your case before Me, now.” I think that this exhortation means just that.

Next, “Open your mouth *wide*.” That is, *speak freely in prayer to God,* be not hampered in your pleading. I have known children of God who have felt a terrible awe in the Presence of the Lord—which is a most proper feeling up to a certain point—but they have had a fear which has brought them into bondage, and bondage is a sad evil. We need freedom and liberty of access to God when we come before the Mercy Seat. And the Lord, therefore, encourages His people to break loose from all their shackles when He says, “Open your mouth wide.” There are many prayers that it would not be right to pray in public, but they are very dear to God’s ears in private. I believe that there are prayers uttered by godly men—uneducated and illiterate Believers—that might provoke a smile from us, but they are accepted in the Beloved, and received as good, sound supplication before the Lord God of Sabaoth. “Open your mouth wide.” If you cannot pray as you would, pray as you *can*, but make yourself free with your heavenly Father! Be bold with your Lord! Shake off all reserve and keep back nothing from Him!

Bare your hearts before Him—you cannot conceal anything from Him—do not attempt to do so. Freely commune with the Lord as friend speaks to friend, or as a child addresses his father. You are not, now, before your judge. You are not before an enemy. You are not before one who will harshly criticize you and pull you to pieces—the Lord is all love and gentleness to those who seek His face. Then open your mouth wide! What is it that you have done? What is it that you need? What is it that your soul is craving for? What is it that drives you to despair? Open your mouth wide—let all come out—hide nothing from your God! Let your very heart come marching out at the open doors of your lips, for God is waiting to hear your petition.

The exhortation of the text means, then, shake off all fear, and, also, exercise a holy boldness of familiarity and freedom in the Presence of the Most High.

Do you not think, however, that it means something more than that? It must also mean, *ask great things.* “Open your mouth *wide*.” Now note this. The greater the thing that you ask, the more sure you are to have it! With men it is, usually, the smaller the favor you crave, the more likely you are to obtain it. But with God it is the other way—the greater the gift for which you ask, the more sure you are to have it! There is nothing greater to ask for than Christ—and you may have Christ for the asking—

for God has already given Him to all who believe. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." If you ask for wealth, you may not get it, for it is a small and paltry thing which the Lord may not care to give you. But if you ask for eternal life, you shall have it, for this is a *great thing* and God delights to give the greatest blessings to those who come to Him by Christ Jesus, so that, what might seem to hinder should now encourage! God can hear you if you cannot open your mouth, for He can hear the inward groans of your heart. But, oh, you can be sure that He will hear you if you can open your mouth wide!

Is your sin great? Use that as an argument! Say with David, "For Your name's sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity; for it is great." Are you in a very sad plight? Are you spiritually bankrupt? Then plead your poverty—there is no plea like it with God! Do you feel empty? Plead your emptiness! The more urgent your necessity, the more sure will mercy be to relieve you! The greater your need, the readier is God to come to you! If, in going through the town, I see a doctor's carriage hurrying along at a great speed, I do not think that the physician is driving to a person who has only a toothache! I should conceive that somebody, in dire extremity, had sent for him in hot haste to come and cure him, if possible, of a serious malady. And when God rides upon a cherub and flies, yes, does fly upon the wings of the wind, He is coming to relieve some great need of His people! To the man who has a great need, God says, "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it." Ask great things! God's people need to be taught to ask great things! That was a noble utterance of William Carey, "Attempt great things *for* God, expect great things *from* God." The less you expect from man, the better, but the more you expect from God, the more you are likely to receive. Look for great things from Him and come to Him with large requests—

"You are coming to a King,
Large petitions with you bring."

Our text must mean that, must it not—*ask great things*?

I think that it also means, in the fourth place, that we are to *feel intense desires*. "Open your mouth." It has been noticed that whenever a man speaks with very great earnestness, he opens his mouth wide. We read in the Gospels that when our Lord went up into a mountain and, "was set, his disciples came unto Him: and *He opened His mouth*, and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit," and so on. Someone observed that it was quite unnecessary to say that He opened His mouth, for how could He preach without doing so? But another and a wiser person replied, "Oh, if you go into many a Church and Chapel, you can see the thing done!" When a man does not speak distinctly and clearly, he does not open his mouth—but when he is emphatic and earnest in his address, he must open his mouth wide!

The Lord urges us to be in earnest when He says, "Open your mouth wide." Cold prayers, so-called, are not real prayers—they are rather entreaties to be denied—all their force works backwards! We must pray with fervency, importunity, reiteration, if we would prevail with God! We must say, "I will not let You go, except You bless me." The Lord loves that

kind of pleading! There is no music in God's ear that is more sweet from His child than a loud earnest cry! God delights to hear the knocker of prayer hammering away at the door of mercy! If you have been denied six times, go for the seventh time and knock, and knock, and knock—each time with greater vehemence—if you would be heard. "Open your mouth wide."

O dear Hearers, some of you have been seeking the Lord a little, lately, and you have not found Him! No, but He is not a little God, to be sought a little! And when your whole heart and soul go after Him. When you are deeply anxious and sorely exercised, and solemnly in earnest, *then* will this great God give you His great salvation! Oh, that you would open your mouth wide! Cry unto Him! I mean not with actual loudness of voice, but with the loudness of the heart's voice which shall be heard in Heaven. Sometimes, when it rains very hard, and the servant does not come to the door very quickly, you give such a pull at the bell that it rings all over the house—now give such a ring as that at the gate of Heaven! A storm is raging and you cannot endure waiting outside in the tempest. Pull the bell as if you would pull Heaven, itself, down! Give a ring that seems to say, "I must come in! Infinite Love, I must possess You! Sovereign Mercy, I must receive You! I die, I perish, I am lost forever unless You come to me, my God." Open your mouth wide and then He will be sure to fill it!

Once more, I think that this exhortation means *exercise a great expectancy*. I inadvertently touched upon that point just now. The figure is, no doubt, taken from a bird's nest. Have you ever seen the little birds, inside a nest, when they expected their mother to come and feed them? If you have ever peeped in and they mistook you for their mother, what did they look like? Why, they looked like a mass of mouth! They opened their mouths as wide as they could and it is really surprising how very wide a little bird can open its mouth! The mother is about to bring a worm, or some other thing for it to feed upon—the wee birdie is famishing and it cannot receive food any other way but by opening its mouth! And its hunger makes it feel as if its mouth was not half wide enough and so it at least makes it as wide as it can when the parent bird comes to it—the father or mother which has been toiling and working all day long to satisfy its needs. They do work, poor little creatures, and how fast and how often they fly to and fro! They seem to say to their little ones, "We will fill you. Open your mouths wide and we will fill you."

As for you, poor Souls, what a mouth you have, if you do but open it! I mean, what needs you have! I tell you that your needs are so great that if all the saints on earth, and all the angels in Heaven, were to put their stores together and say, "We will fill you," they would undertake a task utterly beyond their power! None but God, Himself, can fill the human heart! Only He can truly say, "Open your mouth wide and I will fill it." Christ will fill it, however great your sense of sin and your need of pardon. The Father will fill it, however great your grief for having left His house. The Holy Spirit will fill it, however long your death in sin, however great your alienation from God! None but the Trinity can fill the heart of man! It was one of Quarles' quaint sayings that the heart was a triangle and the world a globe and, he says, "a globe can never fill a triangle, and

none but the Trinity can fill the heart of man." Quaint as the saying is, the Truth of God which it embodies is absolutely certain!

"Open your mouth wide and I will fill it," says God. Expect just this, that God will give you, in answer to prayer, all that you need—"I will fill it." Somebody, misquoting this text, says, "I will fill it abundantly." Tush! What do you want with your, "abundantly"? God's Word is big enough without any of your adverbs! "I will fill it." If it is filled. it is filled, and God will fill you full! He will give you all that you require and all that you can ever require between this place and the gates of Heaven! "Open you your mouth wide, sensible of your urgent necessity, and I," says God, "will supply all your needs, according to My riches in Glory by Christ Jesus." "Open your mouth wide and I will fill it."

Now, just two or three words, here, concerning arguments that I might use to induce children of God to come before His Presence asking great things.

First, *consider God's greatness*. You may expect great things from Him who made the heavens and the earth! Look up at the stars, see how the Lord flung them about by handfuls, and remember that all the stars that are visible to you are only the sweepings of stardust by the door of God's great House! There is an infinite number of bright worlds which our telescopes have never seen. He who made all these things is great in power. Therefore, ask something great of Him when you come before Him in prayer. Remember, also, *His goodness*. God delights to give—you are not asking Him to do that which will vex Him. The Lord is no miser who miserably doles out His coppers under pressure. He is a God to whom it is as natural to give as it is for the sun to shine, or for a fountain to flow! Come, then, to Him with large petitions, since He is so greatly good!

Remember, also, *the channel by which mercies come to you.* It is Christ Jesus your Lord. Are you coming to the Lord for pennyworths, in the name of Christ? Say, will you satisfy yourself by asking for pence and farthings through the Lord Jesus? Such a Mercy Seat as this was meant for something grand and glorious! Such a Sacrifice as Christ's was provided for the greatest needs of men! Open your mouths wide when you mention the name of Jesus Christ! It seems a poor thing to stint yourselves in your prayers when the name you plead is—

"The name high over all
In Hell, or earth, or sky!
Angels and men before it fall—
And devils fear and fly."

Note, next, that *the Holy Spirit is the Author of true prayer.* He "helps our infirmities." and will you stutter and stammer when the Holy Spirit helps you? Will you say of such a thing, "This is too great for me to ask"? What? When the Holy Spirit prompts you to ask, does He not know what is fit for you to ask? Yield yourself to His gracious impulses! Be borne along the stream of supplication by the Spirit's influence and ask what you will! That is a pretty story that they tell of Alexander having given a man a present which seemed far too great. So he was afraid that it could not be his and then Alexander said, "It may be too much for *you to receive*, but it is not too much for *me to give*." So the mercy may seem too great for you to have, but it is by no means too great for Christ to grant

you! Open your mouth wide, then, while you have such a Father, Son and Holy Spirit to go to in prayer!

"Open your mouth wide," for *your needs are very great*. They are much greater than you know—do not, therefore, fall short in your petitions. I think that if I could have anything I asked for of any friend, I would be inclined to overleap my necessities a little, rather than to fall short of them. Certainly with God, who is not impoverished by giving, and not enriched by withholding, we may take vast liberties. "Open your mouth wide and I will fill it." Ask much in prayer because your needs are so great.

And then think of *the needs of others*. Oh, when I think of what power prayer has, I would encourage Brothers and Sisters to pray great prayers for the conversion of London, for the establishment of Christ's Church in the land and for the conversion of China, Africa, India. "Open your mouth wide." There was one who seemed to have great power in prayer and I have often read his life, but I think the prayers he used to pray were for a pair of horses, or for a new suit of clothes, or something of that sort. He always obtained what he asked, but it seems a miserable business to pray like that! It is much nobler to pray, like Carey, "India for Christ!" or, "Lord, save China!" *Now* you have asked for something great this time! "Open your mouth wide," as you have such a great God to deal with about such great matters! You may ask for little things when you need them and you are encouraged to do so, but still, do not confine your requests to them. Come to great things and ask great mercies for others, if you are not under any great necessity yourself!

Remember, once more, *God's exceedingly great and precious promises*. How can you be praying on a right scale if you are always praying straitened in yourselves? O dear Friends, the promises of God are not narrow! They are "exceedingly great and precious promises." You have never fully measured them! Come, then, with an open mouth, and ask great things of your Father who is in Heaven. Thus have I, at some length, handled the exhortation in the text, but I cannot do much with it—it is only the Holy Spirit who can effectually whisper into your ear and heart, "Open your mouth wide."

II. Now, secondly, observe GOD USING TWO GREAT ARGUMENTS upon which I will only speak briefly. One is put *before* the exhortation and one is put *afterwards*, to keep it with an attendant on either side.

The first reason why you should open your mouth wide is *because of what God has done*. He says, "I am the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt." You remember where these words occur, do you not? They are recorded very solemnly in the 20th Chapter of Exodus, at the commencement of the Ten Commandments—"I am the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me." And now the same solemn words come before a promise, as if God made this precept to be as solemn as His Law and confirmed the promise with all the solemnities with which He established the Covenant. "Open your mouth wide," He says.

Child of God, this text belongs peculiarly to you. "I am Jehovah, your God." The Lord has an election of Grace—He has a peculiar people whom He has chosen unto Himself—and they shall show forth His praise. God is the God of His people. "I am Jehovah, your God," He says. If He is not the God of others, yet He is *your* God. He has revealed Himself to you. He has chosen you and you have chosen Him, Now, can you not open your mouth wide to your own God, to Jehovah, the great, "I AM," the boundless, the infinite, the almighty God—can you not speak freely to Him?

And then it is added, "I am Jehovah, your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt." Now, that is the greatest thing that God could do for His people and, if He has done *that*, will He not do the lesser things? Oh, what a wondrous deliverance that was, when, with a high hand and an outstretched arm, He brought forth His people, despite all the opposition of Pharaoh! With terrible plagues He broke the power of the proud monarch, but as for His people, He led them forth like sheep and brought them out into a glorious liberty—and crushed the chivalry of Egypt at the Red Sea so that they could never again pursue the Israelites—nor disturb them in their wilderness march towards the land which God had promised them.

Well now, the Lord has done just that same kind of thing for all His people! He has brought us out of our spiritual bondage! We have eaten the Paschal Lamb. We have sprinkled the blood. We have escaped the destroying angel. We are no longer under the power of sin and Satan—the Lord has set us free! And, as for our sins, the depths have covered them! There is not one of them left—they sank to the bottom like a stone. Glory be to God for what He has done! If this does not lead us to open our mouths wide in prayer, what will?

"Ah," sighs a poor soul, "He has never done that for *me.* I am still a bond slave." Listen! If He has done it for others, take hope from it that God will hear prayer and save *you*, seeing that He has saved others. Did you ever notice, in the old slave times, in the Southern States of America, how, when a slave escaped, others heard that he had followed the pole star and so gained liberty, and they all took hope? Well now, if the Lord has brought some of us out of bondage, take hope, you who are still in chains! God can deliver you! Ask Him to do so—open your mouth wide! When you get home, cry to God in your chamber. Better still, here in your pew, breathe a prayer for salvation and liberty—and if you need a word of advice and counsel, come on to this lower platform and there shall be some friend to speak with you, and pray with you about your soul. Only open your mouth! Do not be ashamed! God says to you that He has brought His people out of Egypt and He who has done that can do anything! Open your mouth wide and He will fill it.

But the second argument, with which the text closes, is concerning *what God will do.* "Open your mouth wide and I will fill it." "I will fill it." The story goes—I know not how true it is, but I remember reading it very well—that the Shah of Persia, a strange man, altogether, on one occasion said to a person who had pleased him very greatly, "Open your mouth." And when he had opened his mouth, the Shah began to fill it up with diamonds, emeralds, rubies and all sorts of precious stones! I feel morally

certain that the man opened his mouth *wide*! I do not know what your opinions may be, but I have the firm conviction that when he found that such treasure was being put into his mouth, he made it as large as it very well could be, whether it looked beautiful or not! Would not you do the same if you had such an opportunity? Suppose that your mouth was to be filled with sovereigns and you were in extreme poverty—would you not open your mouth? It would prompt a man to open his mouth wide if he heard the Shah say, "I will fill it." Now, the Lord says to each of His own people, whom He has so highly favored, "Open your mouth wide and I will fill it."

Suppose you open your mouth wide in prayer. "I cannot," says one. Well, open your mouth and God will fill it with prayer and then, when you have prayed the prayer that He has given you, He will fill it with answers! God gives prayer as well as the answer to prayer! Only open your mouth and, as it were, make a vacuum for God to fill. God loves to look for emptiness where He may stow away His Grace!

When you have done that, then open your mouth with praise! It is wonderful, when a man begins to praise God, how the praise keeps on coming. The praise of God is something like Mr. Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. He began to write, he says, and he does not know how he wrote so much, but he quaintly says, "As I pulled, it came." And you will find it is so with the praise of God. Praise Him and you *will* praise Him. If you do not praise Him, you never will praise Him. If you do not begin, you will never keep on—but once open the sluices of gratitude and the streams will flow more and more copiously every hour! "Open your mouth wide and I will fill it."

So is it in comparing our testimony concerning God's goodness. Sometimes we who are preachers have to cry, "What shall we say to the people?" I see some dear Brothers, here, who, I dare say, get as I do, into a very poverty-stricken state. They say, "Where shall we get the next sermon from?" Well, go in God's name and say what He bids you, and He will tell you more! Open your mouth wide and He will fill it. Bear testimony to what the Lord has done for your soul, in your own small way, and He will be pleased to fill your mouth with His good Word, so that you shall abundantly utter the memory of His great goodness!

Now, then, let us all come before God with open mouths. Whatever state of mind we may be in, if we cannot pray, let us come and open our mouth and pant, as David did when he said, "As the hart pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after You, O God." So let us come before our God. You who feel as if you could not speak and could scarcely *think*, come with your mouth wide open and stand there before God! Or be like the little bird in its nest—open your mouth towards Heaven! Mark how the parched earth, in times of drought, cracks and opens its mouth for the rain. Let your parched heart begin to pray in the Presence of your God and thus ask for His Grace. May God give us mighty desires! We read of Daniel, in the margin of our Bible, instead of, "a man greatly Beloved," "a man of desires." He was a man of great desires! And if we are like he in this respect, we shall soon be greatly blessed, and God will be greatly glorified! May it be so, for His great name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
Psalm 81

We have here an exhortation to praise God and this is always in season. Perhaps we need more stirring up to praise than to prayer, yet it ought to be as natural for us to praise God as it is for the birds to sing. Thus the Psalm begins—

Verse 1. *Sing aloud unto God our strength.* Yes, the strength which the Lord gives you should be spent in praising Him. "Sing aloud." Throw your whole soul into it. If the Lord makes you strong, then give your strength back to Him in sacred song—"Sing aloud unto God our strength."

1. *Make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob.* Other gods, such as Moloch and Ashtaroth, are worshipped with mournful cries and sorrowful lamentations. But the God of Jacob, the God that hears prayer, the God of salvation, the God of the Covenant, is to be worshipped with joy! He is the happy God and He loves happy worshippers—"Make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob." You do not need to be forced to praise Him—you will do it with alacrity and delight! The very sweetness of your song will consist in the cheerfulness of it! "Make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob."

2-4. *Take a Psalm and bring here the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the Psaltery. Blow the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day. For this was a statute for Israel, and a Law of the God of Jacob.* It is "a statute" that we should praise God. It is "a Law" that we should make a joyful noise before Him. Happy Law and happy men who are under such a Law! Let us be quick to obey it and let not the King's statute be disregarded by any one of us.

5. *This He ordained in Joseph for a testimony, when He went out through the land of Egypt: where I heard a language that I understood not.* God understands His people's language and, in very truth, He understands everything. But here He uses a Hebraism to show that He did not care for the speech of the Egyptians—"I heard a language that I understood not." This sentence is like that other expression, "I never knew you." Of course the Lord knows everyone as a matter of acquaintance, but not as a matter of affection. He cared not for the Egyptians—they were aliens to Him. He went out *against* the land of Egypt. It was for Joseph and for His own people who were under the leadership of Joseph in that heathen land, that He ordained this statute that they should praise the name of Jehovah.

6. *I removed his shoulder from the burden.* Is not that true of many of you in a spiritual sense? Oh, what a burden of sin we used to carry! How have we got rid of it? Does not the Lord, here, remind us of how we lost that grievous load? "I removed his shoulder from the burden."

6. *His hands were delivered from the pots.* We used to be busy enough with the slave's occupation of making bricks without straw. Hard was the task when we were under legal bondage—harder, still, the toil, when under the bondage of our own sin, slaves of ourselves! Who could ever have a more tyrant master than himself? But that is all over, now, and the

Lord can say, "I removed his shoulder from the burden: his hands were delivered from the pots."

7. *You called in trouble and I delivered you.* What a gracious Word is this! How it reminds us, in the most loving tones, of our obligations to the Lord! "You called in trouble and I delivered you."

7. *I answered you in the secret place of thunder: I proved you at the waters of Meribah. Selah.* A very humbling sentence this! God has often proved us and He has often disproved us. When He has tried us, we have not endured the test as we ought to have done. We have murmured and complained and the waters which ought to have been waters of joy and of happy patience, have been waters of strife. "Selah." That is, "Pause." Tighten the harp strings, lift up the heart! Such a Psalm as this is to be read by installments, with little halts on the road for us to meditate and think upon the Truth of God brought before us. We may well pause, here, when we hear the Lord reminding us of our faults and of His great mercy to us—"I delivered you; I answered you; I proved you at the waters of Meribah. Selah."

8. *Hear, O My people, and I will testify unto you: O Israel, if you will hearken unto Me.* What? Is there any question as to whether God's people will listen to Him or not? Alas, sometimes our ears grow very heavy—we are so occupied with the cares of the world, so sleepy while passing over the Enchanted Ground that we do not hear that dear voice to which we ought to give heed whenever it speaks—"Hear, O My people, O Israel, if you will hearken unto Me."

9. *There shall no strange god be in you; neither shall you worship any strange god.* It is strange that we should ever wish to do so. Oh, that we might be wholly delivered from everything that looks like idolatry and be enabled to cleave to the worship of the one living and true God with the serenity and certainty of faith!

10, 11. *I am the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt: open your mouth wide and I will fill it. But My people would not hearken to My voice; and Israel would none of Me.* Oh, how plaintive is this lament! Is it not full of sorrow? "Israel would none of Me." Her own God, her own Friend, her own Benefactor, her own Husband has to cry, "Israel would none of Me—would not have My Law, My promise, My guidance, Myself—Israel would none of Me."

12. *So I gave them up*—Dreadful word! If God gives us up, even for a moment, there is no telling into what sin we may plunge! And if He were to give us up altogether—ah, me, this is the most direful of sentences—"So I gave them up"—

12. *Unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels.* O God, save us from this awful state! This, indeed, is Hell—to be given up of God! Pray, dear Brothers and Sisters, that such a terrible curse may never come upon you! Yet it is a most righteous punishment if a man will not have God—and will give God up—what can be a more righteous retribution than that God should give *him* up? He does so, at last, with ungodly men, yet He does it very reluctantly, and He says, "How shall I give you up?" May He never give up one of you!

13. *Oh that My people had listened to Me, and Israel had walked in My ways.* And can we not echo that lament and say, "Oh, that we had listened to God, and that we had walked in His ways"? What a happy life would the Believer enjoy if he always had an ear for God's Commandments and a foot for His ways! "Oh that My people had listened to Me, and Israel had walked in My ways!"

14, 15. *I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned My hand against their adversaries. The haters of the LORD should have submitted themselves unto Him; and their time should have endured forever.* "Their time"—the time of His own people—"should have endured forever." They might have been always conquerors, always kings, always favored of God, always walking in the light, as God is in the light. So might it be with us if we would first, listen to God, and next, walk in His ways. The mark on the ear and the mark on the foot are two of the tokens of Christ's sheep—"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." May we all have both the ear-mark and the foot-mark!

16. *He would have fed them, also, with the finest of the wheat.* How sweet would Gospel doctrine be if Gospel precepts were observed! When you do not enjoy the preaching of the Word, is it not because you are out of health and your spiritual appetite is impaired? "He would have fed them, also, with the finest of the wheat." When the soul lives near to God, then the Word of the Lord is sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.

16. *And with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied you.* You know what this "honey out of the rock" is. You have tasted it and in days gone by you have feasted on it! Perhaps you have not had much of it of late. If so, remember why this is. God will give His children bread, but He will not give them honey unless they live very near to Him—you shall have the necessaries of life, but not luxuries. The high and heavenly joys of the Divine Life shall be denied you if you work at a distance from your God. But if you stay close to Him, you shall have the finest of the wheat, and you shall be satisfied with honey out of the rock.

May the Lord bless the reading of His Word to us, and may He draw us nearer to Himself! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—214, 980, 994.

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

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

By the Grace of God, for all 63 volumes of C. H. Spurgeon sermons in modern English, and more than 400 Spanish translations, visit: www.spurgeongems.org

"I WOULD, BUT YOU WOULD NOT"
NO. 2381

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY,
OCTOBER 7, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 22, 1888.

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kill the Prophets, and stone them which are sent to you, how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing!" Matthew 23:37.

THIS is not and could not be the language of a mere man. It would be utterly absurd for any man to say that he would have gathered the inhabitants of a city together, "even as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings." Besides, the language implies that for many centuries, by the sending of the Prophets, and by many other warnings, God would often have gathered the children of Jerusalem together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. Now, *Christ* could not have said that throughout those ages He would have gathered those people, if He had been only a man. If His life began at Bethlehem, this would be an absurd statement, but, as the Son of God, always loving the sons of men, ever desirous the good of Israel, He could say that in sending the Prophets, even though they were stoned and killed, He had, again and again, shown His desire to bless His people till He could truly say, "How often would I have gathered your children together!" Some who have found difficulties in this lament have said that it was the language of Christ as Man. I beg to put in a very decided negative to that—it is, and it must be, the utterance of the Son of Man, the Son of God, the Christ in His complex Person as Human and Divine. I am not going into any of the difficulties just now, but you could not fully understand this passage, from any point of view, unless you believed it to be the language of One who was both God and Man.

This verse shows, also, that the ruin of men lies with themselves. Christ puts it very plainly, *"I would; but you were not willing."* "How often would I have gathered your children together, and you were not willing!" That is a Truth of God, about which, I hope, we have never had any question. We hold tenaciously that salvation is all of Grace, but we also believe, with equal firmness, that the ruin of man is entirely the result of His own sin! It is the will of God that saves—it is the will of *man that damns*. Jerusalem stands and is preserved by the Grace and favor of the Most High. But Jerusalem is burnt and her stones are cast down through the transgression and iniquity of men who provoked the justice of God.

There are great deeps about these two points, but I have not been accustomed to lead you into any deeps and I am not going to do so at this time. The *practical* part of theology is that which it is most important for us to understand. Any man may get himself into a terrible labyrinth who continually thinks only of the Sovereignty of God. And He may equally get into deeps that are likely to drown him if he meditates only on the free will of man. The best thing is to take what God reveals to you and to believe that. If God's Word leads me to the right, I go there. If it leads me to the left, I go there. If it makes me stand still, I stand still. If you so act, you will be safe. But if you try to be wise above that which is written and to understand that which even angels do not comprehend, you will certainly befog yourself.

I desire to always bring before you practical rather than mysterious subjects—and our present theme is one that concerns us all. The great destroyer of man is the will of man. I do not believe that man's free will has ever saved a soul, but man's free will has been the ruin of multitudes. "You would not," is still the solemn accusation of Christ against guilty men. Did He not say, at another time, "You will not come unto Me, that you might have life"? The human will is desperately set against God and is the great devourer and destroyer of thousands of good intentions and emotions which never come to anything permanent because the will is acting in opposition to that which is right and true.

That, I think, is the very marrow of the text, and I am going to handle it in this fashion.

I. First, consider from the very condescending emblem used by our Lord, WHAT GOD IS TO THOSE WHO COME TO HIM. He gathers them, "as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings." Let us dwell upon that thought for a few minutes. It is a very marvelous thing that God should condescend to be compared to a *hen*, that the Christ, the Son of the Highest, the Savior of men, should stoop to so homely a piece of imagery as to liken Himself to a *hen*. There must be something very instructive in this metaphor, or our Lord would not have used it in such a connection.

Those of you who have been gathered unto Christ know, first, that *by this wonderful Gatherer, you have been gathered into happy association*. The chicks, beneath the wings of the hen, look very happy all crowded together. What a sweet little family party they are! How they hide themselves away in great contentment and chirp their little note of joy! You, dear Friends, who have never been converted, find very noisy fellowship, I am afraid, in this world. You do not get much companionship that helps you, blesses you, gives you rest of mind. But if you had been gathered to the Lord's Christ, you would have found that there are many sweetnesses in this life in being beneath the wings of the Most High! He who comes to Christ finds father, mother, sister and brother—he finds many dear and kind friends who are, themselves, connected with Christ and who, therefore, love those who are joined to Him.

Among the greatest happinesses of my life, certainly, I put down Christian fellowship, and I think that many who have come from the country to London have, for a long time, missed much of this fellowship till, at last, they have fallen in with Christian people and they have found

themselves happy again. O lonely Sinner, you who come in and out of this place and say, "Nobody seems to care about me," if you will come to Christ and join with the Church which is gathered beneath His wings, you will soon find happy fellowship! I remember that in the times of persecution, one of the saints said that he had lost his father and his mother by being driven away from his native country, but he said, "I have found a hundred fathers, and a hundred mothers, for into whatever Christian house I have gone, I have been looked upon with so much kindness by those who have received me as an exile from my native land, that everyone has seemed to be a father and a mother to me." If you come to Christ, I feel persuaded that He will introduce you to many people who will give you happy fellowship!

But that is merely the beginning. A hen is to her little chicks, next, a cover of safety. There is a hawk in the sky—the mother bird can see it, though the chicks cannot. She gives her peculiar cluck of warning and quickly they come and hide beneath her wings. The hawk will not hurt them now—beneath her wings they are secure. This is what God is to those who come to Him by Jesus Christ, *He is the Giver of safety*. "He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings shall you trust: His Truth shall be your shield and buckler." Even the attraction of your old sins, or the danger of future temptations—you shall be preserved from all these perils when you come to Christ and thus hide away under Him.

The figure our Lord used is full of meaning, for, in the next place, the hen is to her chicks *the source of comfort*. It is a cold night and they would be frozen if they remained outside. But she calls them in and when they are under her wings, they derive warmth from their mother's breast. It is amazing, the care of a hen for her little ones! She will sit so carefully and keep her wings so widely spread, that they may all be housed. What a cabin, what a *palace* it is for the young chicks to get there under the mother's wings! The snow may fall, or the rain may come pelting down, but the wings of the hen protect the chicks. And you, dear Friend, if you come to Christ, shall not only have safety, but comfort. I speak what I have experienced! There is a deep, sweet comfort about hiding yourself away in God, for when troubles come, wave upon wave, blessed is the man who has a God to give him mercy upon mercy! When affliction comes, or bereavement comes, when loss of property comes, when sickness comes in your own body, there is nothing needed but your God! Ten thousand things, apart from Him, cannot satisfy you, or give you comfort. There, let them all go! But if God is yours and you hide away under His wings, you are as happy in Him as the chicks are beneath the hen.

Then, the hen is also to her chicks, *the fountain of love*. She loves them. Did you ever see a hen fight for her chicks? She is a timid enough creature at any other time, but there is no timidity when her chicks are in danger! What an affection she has for them—not for all chicks, for I have known her kill the chicks of another brood—but for her own, what love she has! Her heart is all devoted to them. But, oh, if you want to know the true Fountain of Love, you must come to Christ! You will never

have to say, "Nobody loves me. I am pining, with an aching heart, for a love that can fill and satisfy it." The love of Jesus fills the heart of man to overflowing and makes him well content under all circumstances. I would that God had gathered you all, my dear Hearers! I know that He has gathered many of you, blessed be His name, but still there are some here, chicks without a hen, sinners without a Savior, men, women and children who have never been reconciled to God.

The hen is also to her chicks, *the cherisher of growth*. They would not develop if they were not taken care of—in their weakness they need to be cherished that they may come to the fullness of their perfection. And when the child of God lives near to Christ and hides beneath His wings, how fast he grows! There is no advancing from Grace to Grace, from feeble faith to strong faith, and from little fervency to great fervency, except by getting near to God!

The emblem used by our Lord is a far more instructive figure than I have time to explain. When the Lord gathers sinners to Himself, then it is that they find in Him all that the chicks find in the hen, and infinitely more!

II. Now notice, secondly, WHAT GOD DOES TO GATHER MEN. They are straying and wandering about, but He gathers them. According to the text, Jesus says, "How often would I have gathered your children together!" How did God gather those of us who have come to Him?

He gathers us, first, *by making Himself known to us*. When we come to understand who He is and what He is, and know something of His love, tenderness and greatness, *then* we come to Him. Ignorance keeps us away from Him, but to know God and His Son, Jesus Christ, is eternal life! Therefore, I diligently urge you to study the Scriptures and to be, as often as you can, hearing a faithful preacher of the Gospel, that, knowing the Lord, you may, by that knowledge, be drawn towards Him. These are the cords of love with which the Spirit of God draws men to Christ. He makes Christ known to us. He shows us Christ in the grandeur of His Divine and Human Nature, Christ in the humiliation of His sufferings, Christ in the Glory of His Resurrection, Christ in the love of His heart, in the power of His arm, in the efficacy of His plea, in the virtue of His blood and, as we learn these sacred lessons, we say, "That is the Christ for me, that is the God for me"—and we are gathered unto Him.

But God gathers many to Himself *by the call of His servants*. You see that of old, He sent His Prophets. Now, He sends His ministers. If God does not send us to you, we shall never gather you. If we come to you in our own name, we shall come in vain, but if the Lord has sent us, then He will bless us and our message will be made to you a means of gathering you to Christ. I would much rather cease to preach than be allowed to go on preaching but never to gather souls to God! I can truly say that I have no wish to say a pretty thing, or turn a period, or utter a nice figure of speech—I want to win your souls, to slay your sin, to do practical work for God with each man, each woman, each child who shall come into this Tabernacle—and I ask the prayers of God's people that it may be so! It is thus that God gathers men to Himself—by the message which He gives to them through His servants.

The Lord has, also, *many other ways of calling men to Himself*. You saw, this morning, [Sermon #2034, Volume 34—*Peter's Restoration—Read/download entire sermon at http://www.spurgeongems.org* .] that Peter was called to repentance by the crowing of a cock, and the Lord can use a great many means of bringing sinners to Himself! Omnipotence has servants everywhere! And God can use every kind of agent, even though it appears most unsuitable, to gather together His own chosen ones. He has called some of you—He has called some of you who have not yet come to Him. The text says, "How often!" It does not tell us *how often,* but it puts it as a matter of wonder, "How often!" with a note of exclamation.

Let me ask you how often has God called some of you? Conscience has whispered its message to the most of you. When you come to see men dying, if you talk seriously with them, they will sometimes tell you that they are unprepared, but that they have often trembled and been suspicions. They have long suffered from unrest and, sometimes, they have been, "almost persuaded." I should not think that there is a person in this place who has not been made, sometimes, to shake and tremble at the thought of the world to come! How often has it been so with you? "How often," says God, "would I have gathered you!"

The Lord sometimes speaks to us, not so much by conscience, as by Providence. That death in the family, what a voice it was to us! When your mother died, when your poor father passed away, what a gathering time it seemed to be! You soon forgot all about it, but you did feel it *then*. Ah, my dear woman, when your babe was taken from your bosom, and the little coffin left the house, you remember how you felt? And you, father, when your prattling boy sang the Sunday school hymn to you on his dying bed and well-near broke your heart, then was the Lord going forth in His Providence to gather you! You were being gathered, but you were not willing to come. According to our text, you, "would not."

It has not always been by death that the Lord has spoken to you, for you have had other calls. When you have been brought low, or have been out of employment. When, sometimes, a Christian friend has spoken to you. When you have read something in a tract, or paper which has compelled you to pull up and made you stand aghast for a while—has not all that had a reference to this text, "How often, how often, how often would I have gathered you?" God knocks many times at some men's doors. I know that there is a call of His which is effectual—oh, that you might hear it! But there are many other calls which come to men, of whom Christ says, "Many are called, but few are chosen." How often has He called you? I wish you would try and reckon up how often the Almighty God has come to you and spread out His warm wide wings—and yet this has been true—"I would have gathered you, but you were not willing."

One more way in which God gathers men is *by continuing to have patience with them and sending the same message to them*. I am always afraid that you who hear me constantly will get to feel, "We have heard him so long and so often that he cannot say anything fresh." Why, did I not use to shake you, when first you heard me, and compel you to shed many tears in the early days of your coming to this house? And now—

well, you can hear it all without a tremor—you are like the blacksmith's dog that goes to sleep while the sparks are flying from the anvil! Down in Southwark, at the place where they make the big boilers, a man has to get inside to hold the hammer while they are riveting. There is an awful noise—the first time that a man goes in, he feels that he cannot stand it and that he will die! He loses his hearing, it is such a terrible din. But they tell me that after a while some have been known, even, to go to sleep while the men have been hammering!

So it is in hearing the Gospel—men grow hardened and that which was, at one time, a very powerful call—seems to be, at the last, no call at all. Yet, here you are and your hair is getting gray! Here you are, you have long passed the prime of life! Here you are, you were in a shipwreck, once, or you had an accident, or you caught the fever, but you did not die, and here you are! God still speaks to you, not saying, "Go," but, "Come, come!" Christ has not yet said to you, "Depart, you cursed," but He still cries, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." This is how God calls and how He gathers men by the pertinacity of His infinite compassion, in still inviting them to come unto Him that they may obtain eternal life!

III. Well, now, a third point, and a very important one is this—WHAT MEN NEED TO MAKE THEM COME TO GOD. According to the text, God gathers men—but what is needed on their part? Our Savior said of those that rejected him, "You would not."

What is needed is, first, *the real will to come to God*. You have heard a great deal, I dare say, about the wonderful faculty of free will. I have already told you my opinion of free will, but it also happens that that is the very thing that is needed—a will towards that which is good. There is where the sinner fails! What he needs is a *real* will. "Oh, yes!" men say, "we are willing, we are willing." But you are *not* willing! If we can get the real Truth of God, you are *not* willing. There is no true willingness in your hearts, for a true willingness is *a practical willingness*. The man who is willing to come to Christ says, "I must do away with my sins, I must do away with my self-righteousness and I must seek Him who, alone, can save me."

Men talk about being willing to be saved and dispute about free will, but when it comes to actual practice, they are *not willing*. They have no heart to repent. They will to keep on with their sin. They will to continue in their self-righteousness, but they do not will, with any practical resolve, to come to Christ! There is need of *an immediate will*. Every unconverted person here is willing to come to Christ before he dies—I have never met a person, yet, who was not! But are you willing to come to Christ *now*? That is the point. "Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." But you answer, "Our hearts are not hardened! We only ask for a little more time." A little more time for *what*? A little more time in which to go on rebelling against God? A little more time in which to run the awful risk of eternal destruction?

So, you see, it is a *real will* and an *immediate will* that is needed.

With some, it is *a settled will* that is needed. Oh, yes, they are ready! They feel as soon as the preacher begins to speak. They are impressed

during the singing of the first hymn. There is a revival service and after the meeting they begin telling you what they have felt. Look at those people on Wednesday. They have got over Monday and Tuesday with some little "rumblings of heart"—but what about Wednesday? They are as cold as a cucumber! Every feeling that they had on Sunday is gone from them! They have no memory of it, whatever! Their goodness is as the morning cloud and, as the early dew, it passes away. How some people deceive us with their good resolves, in which there is nothing at all, for there is no *settled will*!

With others, what is lacking is *a submissive will*. Yes, they are willing to be saved, but then they do not want to be saved by Grace. They are not willing to give themselves up, altogether, to the Savior. They will not renounce their own righteousness and submit themselves to the righteousness of Christ. Well, that practically means that there is not any willingness at all, for unless you accept *God's way of salvation*, it is no use for you to talk about your will! Here is the great evil that is destroying you and that *will* destroy you before long, and land you in Hell—"You would not, you were not willing." Oh, that God's Grace might come upon you, subduing and renewing your will, and making you willing in the day of His power!

IV. My last point is a very solemn one. I shall not weary you with it. WHAT WILL BECOME OF MEN WHO ARE NOT GATHERED TO CHRIST? What will become of men of whom it continues to be said, "You would not?"

The text suggests to us two ways of answering the question. *What becomes of chicks that do not come to the shelter of the hen's wings?* What becomes of chicks that are not gathered to the hen? Well, the hawk devours some and the cold nips others—they miss the warmth and comfort that they might have had. That is something. If there were no hereafter, I should like to be a Christian. If I had to die like a dog, the joy I find in Christ would make me wish to be His follower. You are losers in this world if you love not God! You are losers of peace, comfort, strength and hope, even now! But what will be your loss, hereafter, with no wings to cover you when the Destroying Angel is abroad, no feathers beneath which you may hide when the dread thunderbolts of Justice shall be launched, one after another, from God's right hand? You have no shelter and, consequently, no safety—

"He that has made his refuge God,
Shall find a most secure abode,"

but he who has not that refuge shall be among the great multitude who will call to the rocks and the mountains to fall upon them, to hide them from the face of Him that sits upon the Throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb! O Sirs, I pray you, run not the awful risk of attempting to live without the shelter of God in Christ Jesus!

But the text suggests a second question, *What became of Jerusalem in the end?* "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered your children together, but you were not willing!" Well, what happened to Jerusalem, after all? I invite you who are without God, and without Christ, to read Josephus, with the hope that he may be of service to you. What

became of the inhabitants of that guilty city of Jerusalem? Well, they crucified the Lord of Glory and they hunted out His disciples, and yet they said to themselves, "We live in the City of God, no harm can come to us! We have the Temple within our walls and God will guard His own Holy Place." But very soon they tried to throw off the Roman yoke and there were different sets of zealots who determined to fight against the Romans. But they murmured and complained and began to fight among themselves.

Before the Romans attacked Jerusalem, the inhabitants had begun to kill one another! The city was divided by the various factions. Three parties took possession of different portions of the place and they fought against one another, night and day. This is what happens to ungodly men—manhood breaks loose against itself. And when there are inward contentions—one part of man's soul fighting against another part—there is an internal war of the most horrible kind! What is the poor wretch to do, who is at enmity with himself, one part of his nature saying, "Go," another part crying, "Go back," and yet a third part shouting, "Stop where you are"? Are there not many of you who are just like battle-fields trampled with the hoofs of horses, torn up with the ruts made by the cannon wheels and stained with blood? Many a man's heart is just like that. "Rest?" he says, "that has gone from me long ago."

Look at him in the morning after a drinking bout. Look at him after he has been quarrelling with everybody. Look at the man who has been unfaithful to his wife, or that other man who has been dishonest to his employer, or that other who is gambling away all that he has. Why, how does he sleep, poor wretch? He does not rest. He dreams, he starts, he is always in terror. I would not change places with him, no, not for five minutes! The depths of poverty and an honest conscience are immeasurably superior to the greatest luxury in the midst of sin! The man who is evidently without God begins to quarrel with himself.

By-and-by, one morning, they who looked over the battlements of Jerusalem cried, "The Romans are coming, in very deed they are marching up towards the city!" Vespasian came with an army of 60,000 men and, after a while, Titus had thrown up mounds round about the city so that no one could come in or go out of it! He had surrounded it so completely that they were all shut in. It was, as you remember, at the time of the Passover, when the people had come from every part of the land—a million and more of them—and he shut them all up in that little city. So, a time comes, with guilty men, when they are shut up. This sometimes happens before they die. They are shut up, they cannot have any pleasure in sin as they used to have—and they have no hope. They seem altogether cooped up. They have not been gathered by God's love, but now, at last, they are gathered by an avenging conscience—they are shut up in God's Justice.

I shall never forget being sent for, in my early days, to see a man who was dying. As I entered the room, he greeted me with an oath. I was only a youth, a pastor about seventeen and a half years of age, and he somewhat staggered me. He would not lie down on his bed. He defied God. He said he would not die. "Shall I pray for you? "I asked. I knelt down and I

had not uttered many sentences before he cursed me in such dreadful language that I jumped to my feet. And then, again, he cried and begged me to pray with him again, though it was not any good. He said, "It is no use. Your prayer will never be heard for me, I am already damned!" And the poor wretch spoke as though he really were so, and were realizing it in his own soul. I tried to persuade him to lie down upon his bed. It was of no use. He tramped up and down the room as fast as he could go. He knew that he would die, but he could not die while he could keep on walking, and so he kept on.

Then again I must pray with him and then would come another awful burst of blasphemy because it was not possible that the prayer would be heard. It does not often happen that one sees a person quite as bad as that, but there is a condition of heart that is not so visible, but which is quite as sad, and which comes to men dying without Christ. They are shut up. The Roman soldiers are, as it were, marching all round the city, and there is no escape—and they begin to feel it and so they die in despair.

But then, when the Roman soldiers did come, the woes of Jerusalem did not end. There was a famine in the city, a famine so dreadful that what Moses said was fulfilled, and the tender and delicate women ate the fruit of her own body. They came to search the houses because they thought there was food, there, and a woman brought out half of her own babe, and said, "Well, eat that, if you can," and throughout the city, they fed upon one another and oh, when there is no God in the heart, what a famine it makes in a man's soul! How he longs for a something which he cannot find and that all the world cannot give him—even a mouthful to stay the ravenousness of his spirit's hunger!

And this doom will be still worse in the next world! You know that Jerusalem was utterly destroyed—not one stone was left upon another—and this is what is to happen to you if you refuse your Savior! You will be destroyed. You will be an eternal ruin. No Temple of God, but an everlasting ruin. Destroyed—that is the punishment for you. Destroyed from the Presence of the Lord and the Glory of His power and so, living forever with no indwelling God, no hope, no comfort! How terrible will be your doom unless you repent!—

"You sinners, seek His Grace
Whose wrath you cannot bear!
Fly to the shelter of His Cross,
And find salvation there!"

I pray you do so, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
MATTHEW 23:29-39; 24:1-21.

Matthew 23:29-31. *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the Prophets and garnish the sepulchers of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the Prophets. Therefore you are witnesses unto yourselves, that you are the children of them which killed the Prophets.* They talk in the same conceited manner

and they claim self-righteousness, as their fathers did! And if their ancestors killed the Prophets, these men garnish their sepulchers, and so are sharers in their forefathers' deeds. How often it happens that men say they would not have done such crimes as others have committed—but they do not know the vileness of their own hearts! If they were under the same conditions as others, they would act in the same way. It would have been a better sign if the scribes and Pharisees had lamented before God that they, themselves, were not treating His Prophets as they ought to be treated. How very faithful was our Master! He was very tender in spirit, but still, He spoke very severely. The old proverb says that, "a good surgeon often cuts deeply," and so it was with the Lord Jesus Christ. He did not film the evil matter over! He lanced the wound. He is not the most loving who speaks the smoothest words. True love often compels an honest man to say that which pains him far more than it affects his callous hearers.

32, 33. *Fill you up, then, the measure of your fathers. You serpents, you generation of vipers, how can you escape the damnation of Hell?* This is *Christ's* utterance, let me remind you. Our modern preachers would not talk like this, even to scribes and Pharisees who were crucifying Christ afresh and putting Him to an open flame! They would search the dictionary through to find very smooth and pretty words to say to Christ's enemies! We are not of their way of thinking and speaking, nor shall we be while we desire to follow in the footsteps of our Lord!

34. *Therefore, behold, I send unto you Prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them you shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall you scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city.* Which they did—the servants of Christ were thus worried and harried all over the land.

35, 36. *That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom you slew between the Temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.* So they did. The destruction of Jerusalem was more terrible than anything that the world had ever witnessed, either before or since. There must have been nearly a million and a quarter of people killed during that terrible siege and even Titus, when he saw the awful carnage, said, "What must be the folly of this people that they drive me to such work as this? Surely, the hand of an avenging God must be in it." Truly, the blood of the martyrs slain in Jerusalem was amply avenged when the whole city became a veritable Aceldama, or field of blood.

37, 38. *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! You that kill the Prophets, and stone them which are sent unto you, how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.* What a picture of pity and disappointed love the King's face must have presented when, with flowing tears, He spoke these words! It was the utterance of the righteous Judge, choked with emotion. Jerusalem was too far gone to be rescued from its self-sought doom and its guilt was about to culminate in the death of the Son of God!

39. *For I say unto you, You shall not see Me henceforth, till you shall say, Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord.*

Matthew 24:1. *And Jesus went out and departed from the Temple: and His disciples came to Him for to show Him the buildings of the Temple.* Ah, me, the rejected King took but slight interest in the Temple of which His disciples thought so much. To them the appearance was glorious, but to their Lord it was a sad sight. His Father's House, which ought to have been a House of Prayer for all nations, had become a den of thieves and soon would be utterly destroyed.

2. *And Jesus said unto them, See you not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.* And it was so. Josephus tells us that Titus, at first, tried to save the Temple, even after it was set on fire, but his efforts were of no use and, at last, he gave orders that the whole city and Temple should be leveled, except a small portion reserved for the garrison. Yet the stones of the Temple were such as men very seldom see, so exceedingly great. They looked as if, once in their place, they would stand there throughout eternity—but all are gone, according to our Lord's prophecy.

2. *And as He sat upon the mount of Olives.* The little procession continued ascending the Mount of Olives until Jesus reached a resting place from which He could see the Temple.

3. *The disciples came unto Him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the world?* There are, here, two distinct questions, perhaps three. The disciples enquired, first, about the time of the destruction of the Temple, and then about the sign of Christ's coming and of "the consummation of the age," as it is in the margin of the Revised Version. The answers of Jesus contained much that was mysterious and that could only be fully understood as that which He foretold actually occurred. He told His disciples some things which related to the siege of Jerusalem, some which concerned His Second Advent and some which would immediately precede "the end of the world." When we have clearer light, we may possibly perceive that all our Savior's predictions on this memorable occasion had some connection with all three of these great events.

4. *And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.* Jesus was always practical. The most important thing for His disciples was not that they might know when, "these things," would be, but that they might be preserved from the peculiar evils of the time.

5. *For many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.* And they did. A large number of impostors came forward before the destruction of Jerusalem, proclaiming that they were Messiahs.

6. *And you shall hear of wars and rumors of wars.* And they did. The armies of Rome were soon, after this, on their way to the doomed city.

6-8. *See that you are not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquake, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.* One would think that there was sorrow enough in famines, pestilences and earthquakes in divers places—but our Lord said that all these were only,

"the beginning of sorrows"—the first birth-pangs of the travail that must precede His coming, either to Jerusalem or to the whole world.

9-14. *Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and you shall be hated of all nations for My name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false Prophets shall rise and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.* But as for this destruction of Jerusalem, the Savior gave them clear warning.

15, 16. *When you, therefore, shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the Prophet, stand in the Holy Place, (whoso reads, let him understand), then let them which are in Judea flee into the mountains.* As soon as Christ's disciples saw "the abomination of desolation," that is, the Roman ensigns with their idolatrous emblems, stand in the Holy Place, they knew that the time for them to escape had arrived and they did "flee into the mountains." You will say to me, perhaps, "but there were Romans there, before." Yes, the Romans were in possession, but the eagles and other idolatrous symbols were never exhibited in Jerusalem. The Romans were often very lenient to the different people whom they subdued and these symbols were kept out of sight until the last war came. But, wherever the Jews and Christians looked and they could see those various images of Caesar and of the Roman state which were worshipped by the soldiers—then were the faithful to flee to the mountains. It is a remarkable fact that no Christians perished in the siege of Jerusalem—the followers of Christ fled away to the mountain city of Pella, in Perea, where they were preserved from the general destruction which overthrew the unbelieving Jews!

17, 18. *Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.* They were to flee in all haste, the moment they saw the Roman standards,

19-21. *And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray you that your plight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath Day: for then shall be great tribulation, such at was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.* You and I would have believed that all this came true without any confirmation from outside history, but it was very remarkable that God should raise up the Jew, Josephus, and put it into his mind to write a record of the siege of Jerusalem—which curdles the blood of everyone who reads it—and bears out exactly the statement of the Master that there was to be "great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world, no, nor ever shall be."

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—417, 265, 612.

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

THE HOLY SPIRIT'S CHIEF OFFICE
NO 2382

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY,
OCTOBER 14, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JULY 26, 1888.

"He shall glorify Me: for He shall take of Mine, and shall show it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine and shall show it to you."
John 16:14, 15.

IT is the chief office of the Holy Spirit to glorify Christ. He does many things, but this is what He aims at in all of them—to glorify Christ. Brothers and Sisters, what the Holy Spirit does must be right for us to imitate! Therefore, let us endeavor to glorify Christ. To what higher ends can we devote ourselves, than to something to which God the Holy Spirit devotes Himself? Be this, then, your continual prayer, "Blessed Spirit, help me to always glorify the Lord Jesus Christ!"

Observe that the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ by showing to us the things of Christ. It is a great marvel that there should be any Glory given to Christ by showing Him to such poor creatures as we are! What? To make us see Christ—does that glorify Him? For our weak eyes to behold Him, for our trembling hearts to know Him and to love Him—does this glorify Him? It is even so, for the Holy Spirit chooses this as His principal way of glorifying the Lord Jesus. He takes of the things of Christ, not to show them to angels, not to write them in letters of fire across the brow of night, but to show them to us! Within the little temple of a sanctified heart, Christ is praised, not so much by what we do, or think, as by what we *see*. This puts great value upon meditation, upon the study of God's Word, and upon silent thought under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, for Jesus says, "He shall glorify Me: for He shall take of Mine, and shall show it to you."

Here is a Gospel word at the very outset of our sermon! Poor sinner, conscious of your sin, it is possible for Christ to be glorified by His being shown to you! If you look to Him, if you see Him to be a suitable Savior, an all-sufficient Savior. If your mind's eye takes Him in. If He is effectually shown to you by the Holy Spirit, He is thereby glorified! Sinner as you are, unworthy, apparently, to become the arena of Christ's Glory, yet shall you be a temple in which the King's Glory shall be revealed and your poor heart, like a mirror, shall reflect His Grace—

"Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,
With all Your quickening powers"

and show Christ to the sinner, that Christ may be glorified in the sinner's salvation!

If that great work of Grace is really done at the beginning of the sermon, I shall not mind, even, if I never finish it! God the Holy Spirit will have worked more *without me* than I could possibly have worked myself, and to the Triune Jehovah shall be all the praise! Oh, that the name of Christ may be glorified in every one of you! Has the Holy Spirit shown you Christ, the Sin-Bearer, the one Sacrifice for sin, exalted on high, to give repentance and remission? If so, then the Holy Spirit has glorified Christ, even in you!

Now, proceeding to examine the text a little in detail, my first observation upon it is this—*the Holy Spirit is our Lord's Glorifier.* "He shall glorify Me." Secondly, *Christ's own things are His best Glory.* "He shall glorify Me: for He shall take of Mine, and shall show it to you." And, thirdly, *Christ's Glory is His Father's Glory.* "All things that the Father has are Mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it to you."

I. To begin, then, THE HOLY SPIRIT IS OUR LORD'S GLORIFIER. I want you to keep this Truth of God in your mind and never to forget it—that which does *not* glorify Christ is *not* of the Holy Spirit, and that which is of the Holy Spirit invariably glorifies our Lord Jesus Christ!

First, then, *have an eye to this Truth in all comforts.* If a comfort which you think you need and which appears to you to be very sweet, does not glorify Christ, look very suspiciously upon it. If, in conversing with an apparently religious man, he prates about truth which he says is comforting, but which does not honor Christ, do not have anything to do with it! It is a poisonous sweet—it may charm you for a moment, but it will ruin your soul forever if you partake of it. But blessed are those comforts which smell of Christ, those consolations in which there is a fragrance of myrrh, aloes and cassia, out of the King's palace—the comfort drawn from His Person, from His work, from His blood, from the Resurrection, from His Glory—the comfort directly fetched from that sacred spot where He trod the winepress alone! This is wine of which you may drink, forget your misery and be unhappy no more!

But always look with great suspicion upon any comfort offered to you, either as a sinner or a saint, which does not come distinctly from Christ. Say, "I will not be comforted till Jesus comforts me. I will refuse to lay aside my despondency until He removes my sin. I will not go to Mr. Civility, or Mr. Legality, for the unloading of my burden. No hands shall ever lift the load of conscious sin from off my heart but those that were nailed to the Cross, when Jesus, Himself, bore my sins in His own body on the tree." Please carry this Truth of God with you wherever you go as a kind of spiritual litmus paper by which you may test everything that is presented to you as a cordial or comfort. If it does not glorify Christ, let it not console or please you!

In the next place, *have an eye to this Truth of God in all ministries.* There are many ministries in the world and they are very diverse from one another, but this Truth will enable you to judge which is right out of them all. That ministry which makes much of Christ, is of the Holy Spirit, but that ministry which decries Him, ignores Him, or puts Him in

the background in any degree, is not of the Spirit of God! Any doctrine which magnifies man, but not man's Redeemer. Any doctrine which denies the depth of the Fall and, consequently, derogates from the greatness of salvation. Any doctrine which makes sin less and, therefore, makes *Christ's work* less—away with it, away with it! This shall be your infallible test as to whether it is of the Holy Spirit or not, for Jesus says, "He shall glorify Me." It were better to speak five words to the Glory of Christ, than to be the greatest orator who ever lived and to neglect or dishonor the Lord Jesus Christ!

We, my Brothers, who are preachers of the Word, have but a short time to live. Let us dedicate all that time to the glorious work of magnifying Christ! Longfellow says, in his *Psalm of Life*, that, "Art is long," but longer, still, is the great art of lifting up the Crucified before the eyes of the sin-bitten sons of men. Let us keep to that one employment! If we have but this one string upon which we can play, we may discourse such music on it as would ravish angels and will save men! Therefore, again I say, let us keep to that alone! Cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer and all kinds of music are for Nebuchadnezzar's golden image, but as for our God, our one harp is Christ Jesus! We will touch every string of that wondrous instrument, even though it is with trembling fingers—and marvelous shall be the music we shall evoke from it!

All ministries, therefore, must be subjected to this test—if they do not glorify Christ, they are not of the Holy Spirit.

We should also *have an eye to this Truth in all religious movements* and judge them by this standard. If they are of the Holy Spirit, they glorify Christ. There are great movements in the world, every now and then, and we are inclined to look upon them hopefully, for any stir is better than stagnation. But, by-and-by, we begin to fear, with a holy jealousy, what their effects will be. How shall we judge them? To what test shall we put them? Always to *this* test—does this movement glorify Christ? Is Christ preached? Then, therein, I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice! Are men pointed to Christ? Then this is the ministry of salvation! Is He preached as First and Last? Are men bid to be justified by faith in Him and then to follow Him, and copy His Divine example? It is well! I do not believe that any man ever lifted up the Cross of Christ in a hurtful way. If it is but the Cross that is seen, it is the *sight of the Cross*, not of the hands that lift it, that will bring salvation. Some modern movements are heralded with great noise and some come quietly, but if they glorify Christ, it is well.

But, dear Friends, if it is some new theory that is propounded. If it is some old error revived. If it is something very glittering and fascinating and, for a while it bears the multitudes away, think nothing of it. Unless it glorifies Christ, it is not for you and me. "*Aliquid Christi*," as one of the old fathers said, "Anything of Christ," and I love it! But nothing of Christ, or something against Christ—and it may be very fine and flowery, and it may be very fascinating and charming, highly poetical, and in consonance with the spirit of the age—but we say of it, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity where there is no Christ!" Where He is lifted up there is all that is needed for the salvation of a guilty race! Judge every movement, then,

not by those who adhere to it, nor by those who admire and praise it, but by this Word of our Lord, "He shall glorify Me." The Spirit of God is not in it if it does not glorify Christ!

Once again, Brothers, I pray you, *eye this Truth of God when you are under a sense of great weakness*—physical, mental, or spiritual. You have finished preaching a sermon, you have completed a round with your tracts, or you have ended your Sunday school work for another Sabbath. You say to yourself, "I fear that I have done very poorly." You groan as you go to your bed because you think that you have not glorified Christ. It is as well that you should groan if that is the case. I will not forbid it, but I will relieve the bitterness of your distress by reminding you that it is the *Holy Spirit who is to glorify Christ*—"He shall glorify Me." If I preach and the Holy Spirit is with me, Christ will be glorified! But if I were able to speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but without the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ would *not* be glorified. Sometimes our weakness may even help to make way for the greater display of the might of God. If so, we may glory in infirmity, that the power of Christ may rest upon us! It is not merely we, who speak, but the Spirit of the Lord who speaks by us.

There is a sound of abundance of rain outside the Tabernacle—would God that there were also the sound of abundance of rain within our hearts! May the Holy Spirit come at this moment and come at all times whenever His servants are trying to glorify Christ—and do, Himself, what must always be His own work! How can you and I glorify anybody, much less glorify Him who is infinitely glorious? But the Holy Spirit, being, Himself, the glorious God, can glorify the glorious Christ! It is a work worthy of God and it shows us, when we think of it, the absolute need of our crying to the Holy Spirit that He would take us in His hands and use us as a workman uses his hammer. What can a hammer do without the hand that grasps it? And what can we do without the Spirit of God?

I will make only one more observation upon this first point. If the Holy Spirit is to glorify Christ, *I beg you to have an eye to the Truth of God amid all oppositions, controversies and contentions.* If we, alone, had the task of glorifying Christ, we might be beaten. But as the Holy Spirit is the Glorifier of Christ, His Glory is in very safe hands. "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?" The Holy Spirit is still to the front! The eternal purpose of God to set His King upon the Throne and to make Jesus Christ reign forever and ever must be fulfilled, for the Holy Spirit has undertaken to see it accomplished! Amidst the surging tumults of the battle, the result of the conflict is never in doubt for a moment! It may seem as though the fate of Christ's cause hung in a balance and that the scales were in equilibrium, but it is not so. The glory of Christ never wanes—it must increase from day to day as it is made known in the hearts of men by the Holy Spirit! And the day shall come when Christ's praise shall go up from *all* human tongues. To Him every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father! Therefore, lift up the hands that hang down and confirm the feeble knees. If *you* have failed to glorify Christ by

your speech as you should, there is Another who has done it and who will still do it, according to Christ's words, "He shall glorify Me." My text seems to be a silver bell, ringing sweet comfort into the dispirited worker's ears, "He shall glorify Me."

That is the first point—the Holy Spirit is our Lord's Glorifier. Keep that Truth of God before your mind's eye under all circumstances.

II. Now, secondly, CHRIST'S OWN THINGS ARE HIS BEST GLORY. When the Holy Spirit wants to glorify Christ, what does He do? He does not go abroad for anything—He comes to Christ, Himself, for that which will be for Christ's own Glory—"He shall glorify Me: for He shall take of Mine, and shall show it to you." There can be no Glory *added* to Christ! It must be His own Glory which He has, *already*, which is made more apparent to the hearts of God's chosen by the Holy Spirit!

First of all, *Christ needs no new inventions to glorify Him.* "We have struck out a new line of things," says one. Have you? "We have discovered something very wonderful." I dare say you have, but Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever, needs none of your inventions, or discoveries, or additions to His Truth. A plain Christ is always the loveliest Christ. Dress Him up and you have deformed Him and defamed Him. Bring Him out just as He is—the Christ of God, nothing else but Christ, unless you bring in His Cross—for we preach Christ Crucified! Indeed, you cannot have the Christ without the Cross, but preach Christ Crucified and you have given Him all the Glory that He wants. The Holy Spirit does not reveal in these last times any fresh ordinances, or any novel doctrines, or any new evolutions—He simply brings to mind the things which Christ, Himself, spoke, He brings Christ's own things to us and, in that was, glorifies Him!

Think for a minute of *Christ's Person* as revealed to us by the Holy Spirit. What can more glorify Him than for us to see His Person, very God of very God, and yet as truly Man? What a wondrous Being, as Human as ourselves, but as Divine as God! Was there ever another like He? Never!

Think of His Incarnation, His birth at Bethlehem. There was greater Glory among the oxen in the stall than ever was seen where those born in marble halls were swathed in purple and fine linen! Was there ever another Baby like Christ? Never! I wonder not that the wise men fell down to worship Him!

Look at His *life*, the standing wonder of all ages! Men who have not worshipped Him, have admired Him. His life is incomparable, unique—there is nothing like it in all the history of mankind! Imagination has never been able to invent anything approximating to the perfect beauty of the life of Jesus Christ!

Think of His *death*. There have been many heroic and martyr deaths, but there is not one that can be set side by side with Christ's death. He did not pay the debt of nature as others do, and yet He paid our nature's debt. He did not die because He must—He died because He would. The only "must" that came upon Him was a necessity of all-conquering love. The Cross of Christ is the greatest wonder of fact or of fiction! Fiction in-

vents many marvelous things, but nothing that can be looked at for a moment in comparison with the Cross of Christ!

Think of our Lord's *Resurrection*. If this is one of the things that are taken and shown to you by the Holy Spirit, it will fill you with holy delight! I am sure that I could go into that sepulcher, where John and Peter went, and spend a lifetime in reverencing Him who broke down the barriers of the tomb and made it a passageway to Heaven. Instead of being a dungeon and a *cul-de-sac* into which all men seemed to go, but none could ever come out, Christ has, by His Resurrection, made a tunnel right through the grave! Jesus, by dying, has killed death for all Believers!

Then think of His *Ascension*. But why need I take you over all these scenes with which you are blessedly familiar? What a wondrous fact that when the cloud received Him out of the disciples' sight, the angels came to convoy Him to His heavenly Home!—

"They brought His chariot from above
To bear Him to His Throne!
Clapped their triumphant wings and cried,
'The glorious work is done.'"

Think of Him, now, *at His Father's right hand*, adored of all the heavenly host, and then let your mind fly forward to the glory of His Second Advent, the final judgment with its terrible terrors, the millennium with its indescribable bliss and the Heaven of heavens, with its endless and unparalleled splendor! If these things are shown to you by the Holy Spirit, the beatific visions will, indeed, glorify Christ, and you will sit down and sing with the blessed Virgin, "My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God, my Savior."

Thus you see that the things which glorify Christ are all in Christ—the Holy Spirit fetches nothing from abroad, but He takes of the things of Christ and shows them to us. The glory of kings lies in their silver and their gold, their silk and their gems, but the Glory of Christ lies in Himself! If we want to glorify a man, we bring him presents. If we wish to glorify Christ, we must accept presents *from Him*. Thus we take the cup of salvation, calling upon the name of the Lord, and in so doing we glorify Christ!

Notice, next, that *these things of Christ are too bright for us to see till the Spirit shows them to us.* We cannot see them because of their excessive Glory, until the Holy Spirit tenderly reveals them to us, until He takes of the things of Christ and shows them to us.

What does this mean? Does it not mean, first, that He enlightens our understandings? It is wonderful how the Holy Spirit can take a fool and make him know the wonders of Christ's dying love. And He does make him know it very quickly when He begins to teach him. Some of us have been very slow learners, yet the Holy Spirit has been able to teach something, even, to us! He opens the Scriptures and He also opens our minds—and when there are these two openings, together, what a wonderful opening it is! It becomes like a new revelation—the first is the revelation of the letter, which we have in the Book—the second is the revelation of the Spirit, which we get in our own spirit. O my dear Friend, if the

Holy Spirit has ever enlightened your understanding, you know what it is for Him to show the things of Christ to you!

But next, He does this by a work upon the whole soul. I mean this. When the Holy Spirit convinces us of sin, we become fitted to see Christ and so the blessed Spirit shows Christ to us. When we are conscious of our feebleness, then we see Christ's strength, and thus the Holy Spirit shows Him to us. Often, the operations of the Spirit of God may seem not to be directly the *showing* of Christ to us, but as *they prepare us for seeing Him*, they are a part of the work.

The Holy Spirit sometimes shows Christ to us by His power of vivifying the Truth of God. I do not know whether I can quite tell you what I mean, but I have, sometimes, seen a Truth of God differently from what I have ever seen it before. I knew it long ago, I acknowledged it as part of the Divine Revelation, but now I realize it, grip it, grasp it, or, what is better, it seems to get a grip of me and hold me in its mighty hands! Have you not, sometimes, been overjoyed with a promise which never seemed anything to you before? Or a doctrine which you believed, but never fully appreciated, has suddenly become to you a gem of the first water, a very Kohinoor, or, "Fountain of Light"?

The Holy Spirit has a way of focusing the Light of God and, when it falls in this special way upon a certain point, then the Truth is revealed to us. He shall take of the things of Christ and show them to you. Have you ever felt ready to jump for joy, ready to jump from your seat, ready to sit up in your bed at night and sing praises to God through the overpowering influence of some grand old Truth which has seemed to be, at once, quite new to you? The Holy Spirit also shows to us the things of Christ in our experience. As we journey on in life, we pass up hill and down dale, through bright sunlight and through dark shadows—and in each of these conditions we learn a little more of Christ, a little more of His Grace, a little more of His Glory, a little more of His sin-bearing, a little more of His glorious righteousness! Blessed is the life which is just one long lesson upon the Glory of Christ! And I think that is what every Christian life should be. "Every dark and bending line" in our experience should meet in the center of Christ's Glory and should lead us nearer and nearer to the power of enjoying the bliss at His right hand forever and ever. Thus the Holy Spirit takes of the things of Christ and shows them to us, and so glorifies Christ.

Beloved, the practical lesson for us to learn is this—*let us try to live under the influence of the Holy Spirit*. To that end, let us think very reverently of Him. Some never think of Him at all. How many sermons there are without even an allusion to Him! Shame on the preachers of such discourses! If any hearers come without praying for the Holy Spirit, shame on such hearers! We know and we confess that He is everything to our spiritual life—then why do we not remember Him with greater love, worship Him with greater honor and think of Him continually with greater reverence? Beware of committing the sin against the Holy Spirit! If any of you feel any gentle touches of His power when you are hearing a sermon, beware lest you harden your heart against it! Whenever the sa-

cred fire comes as but a spark, quench not the Holy Spirit, but pray that the spark may become a flame.

And you, Christian people, cry to Him that you may not read your Bibles without His light. Do not pray without being helped by the Spirit. Above all, may you never preach without the Holy Spirit! It seems a pity when a man asks to be guided of the Spirit in His preaching—and then pulls out a manuscript and reads it! The Holy Spirit may bless what he reads, but He cannot very well guide him when he has tied himself down to what he has written! And it will be the same with the speaker if he only repeats what he has learned and leaves no room for the Spirit to give him a new thought, a fresh Revelation of Christ! How can he hope for the Divine blessing under such circumstances? Oh, it were better for us to sit still until some of us were moved by the Spirit to get up and speak, than for us to prescribe the methods by which He should speak to us and even to write down the very words we mean to utter! What room is there for the Spirit's operations then—

"Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,"

I cannot help breaking out into that prayer, "Blessed Spirit, abide with us! Take of the things of Christ and show them to us that Christ may be glorified."

III. I am only going to speak a minute or two on the last point. It is a very deep one, much too deep for me. I am unable to take you into the depths of my text, I will not pretend to do so. I believe that there are meanings here which probably we shall never understand till we get to Heaven. "What you know not now, you shall know hereafter." But this is the point—CHRIST'S GLORY IS HIS FATHER'S GLORY—"All things that the Father has are Mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it to you."

First, *Christ has all that the Father has.* Think of that! No mere man dares to say, "All things that the Father has are mine." All the Godhead is in Christ—not only all the attributes of it, but the *essence* of it. The Nicene Creed well puts it and it is not too strong in the expression: "Light of Light, very God of very God," for Christ has all that the Father has. When we come to Christ, we come to Omnipotent, Omnipresent Omniscience—we come to Almighty Immutability—we come, in fact, to the eternal Godhead! The Father has all things and all power is given to Christ in Heaven and on earth, so that He has all that the Father has!

And, further, *the Father is glorified in Christ's Glory.* Never let us fall into the false notion that if we magnify Christ, we are depreciating the Father. If any lips have ever spoken concerning the Christ of God so as to depreciate the God of Christ, let those lips be covered with shame! We never preached Christ as merciful and the Father as only just, or Christ as moving the Father to be gracious. That is a slander which has been cast upon us, but there is not an atom of truth in it! We have known and believed what Christ, Himself, said, "I and My Father are One." The more glorious Christ is, the more glorious the Father is—and when men, professedly Christians, begin to cast off Christ, they cast off God the Father to a large extent. Irreverence to the Son of God soon becomes irreverence to God the Father, Himself! But, dear Friends, we delight to honor Christ,

and we will continue to do so. Even when we stand in the Heaven of heavens, before the burning Throne of the Infinite Jehovah, we will sing praises unto Him and unto the Lamb, putting the two evermore in that Divine conjunction in which they are always to be found!

Thus, you see, Christ has all that the Father has, and when He is glorified, the Father, also, is glorified.

Next, *the Holy Spirit must lead us to see this,* and I am sure that He will. If we give ourselves up to His teaching, we shall fall into no errors. It will be a great mystery, but we shall know enough so that it will never trouble us. If you sit down and try to study the mystery of the Eternal—well, I believe that the longer you look, the more you will be like persons who look into the sea from a great height, until they grow dizzy, and are ready to fall and to be drowned. Believe what the Spirit teaches you and adore your Divine Teacher—then shall His instruction become easy to you. I believe that as we grow older, we come to worship God as Abraham did, as Jehovah, the great I AM. Jesus does not fade into the background, but the glorious Godhead seems to become more and more apparent to us. Our Lord's Word to His disciples, "You believe in God, believe also in Me," as we grow older, seems to turn into this, "You believe in Me, believe also in God." And as we come to a full confidence in the glorious Lord, the God of Nature, and of Providence, and of Redemption, and of Heaven, the Holy Spirit gives us to know more of the glories of Christ!

I have talked with you as well as I could upon this sublime theme and if I did not know that the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ, I would go home miserable, for I have not been able to glorify my Lord as I would. But I know that the Holy Spirit can take what I have said out of my very heart and can put it into your hearts—and He can add to it whatever I have omitted. Go, you who love the Lord, and glorify Him! Try to do it by your lips and by your lives. Go and preach Him, preach more of Him, and preach Him up higher, and higher, and higher!

An old lady, of whom I have heard, made a mistake in what she said, yet there was a Truth behind her blunder. She had been to a little Baptist Chapel where a high Calvinist preached and, on coming away she said that she liked "High Calvary" preachers best. So do I! Give me a "High Calvary" preacher—one who will make Calvary the highest of all the mountains! I suppose it was not a hill at all, but only a mound. Still, let us lift it higher and higher, and say to all other hills, "Why leap you, you high hills? This is the hill which God desires to dwell in! Yes, the Lord will dwell in it forever." The Crucified Christ is wiser than all the wisdom of the world! The Cross of Christ has more novelty in it than all the fresh things of the earth! O Believers and preachers of the Gospel, glorify Christ! May the Holy Spirit help you to do so!

And you, poor Sinners, who think that you cannot glorify Christ at all, come and trust Him—

"Come naked, come filthy, come just as you are,"

and believe that He will receive you, for that will glorify Him! Believe, even now, O Sinner at death's door, that Christ can make you live, and your faith will glorify Him! Look up out of the awful depths of Hell into

which conscience has cast you and believe that He can pluck you out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay and set your feet upon a rock, and your trust will glorify Him! It is in the power of the sinner to give Christ the greatest Glory, if the Holy Spirit enables him to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. You may come, you who are more leprous, more diseased, more corrupt than any other! And if you look to Him and He saves you, oh, then you will praise Him!

You will be of the mind of the one I have spoken of many times, who said to me, "Sir, you say that Christ can save *me*? Well, if He does, He shall never hear the last of it." No, and He never will hear the last of it! Blessed Jesus—

"I will love You in life, I will love You in death
And praise You as long as You lend me breath;
And say when the death-dew lies cold on my brow,
If ever I loved You, my Jesus, 'tis now!
In mansions of glory and endless delight,
I'll ever adore You in Heaven so bright.
I'll sing with the glittering crown on my brow,
If ever I loved You, my Jesus, 'tis now."

We will do nothing else but praise Christ and glorify Him, if He will but save us from sin! God grant that it may be so with all of us, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
John 16:1-16.

Verse 1. *These things have I spoken unto you, that you should not be offended.* Or, "made to stumble." Christ would not have you who are His people caused to stumble by anything that happens to you. He wants you to walk without tripping. His angels bear you up in their hands lest at any time you should dash your foot against a stone. He, Himself, as your Guardian, comes and speaks beforehand to let you know what is to occur to you, that you may not be caused to stumble by any fresh trial that may assail you.

2. *They shall put you out of the synagogues: yes, the time comes, that whoever kills you will think that he does God service.* Christ's disciples were to expect opposition of the most cruel kind. They were to be put away from those with whom they had long worshipped. They were even to run the risk of losing their lives, but Jesus foretold what would happen to them, that they might not be stumbled at it. Such was their Lord's love to them that He would not have them attacked unawares. By His Grace they would hold on and hold out—they would persevere to the end, but there would have to be a struggle—and to help them in the fight, Jesus tells them all about it before it begins. We say, "Forewarned, forearmed." So the disciples were, and so are you. Your Lord tells you that you will not get to Heaven without trials—"In the world you shall have tribulation." And He tells you this that it may not surprise you when it comes—that it may not act upon you like a sudden gust of wind that would upset a little ship—but that you may just keep everything in trim

looking for the storm to come. "These things have I spoken unto you, that you should not be caused to stumble."

3. *And these things will they do unto you because they have not known the Father, nor Me.* The persecuting Jews professed to be worshippers of Jehovah, but they did not know the Christ, whom He sent and, therefore, in very truth they did *not* know the Father, either. How can you expect that those who do not know the Father will know the Son, or any of the other children of the Divine family? As they rejected the Elder Brother, will they not, also, reject the younger ones? Is the disciple to be above his Master, or the servant to be treated better than his Lord? Think not so and, therefore, expect that *you* will not be known, even as the Father and the Son were not known—

"'Tis no surprising thing
That we should be unknown!
The Jewish world knew not their King,
God's everlasting Son."

4. *But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, you may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.* Our Lord did tell His disciples something about, "these things." He warned them to expect opposition, but He did not dwell upon that theme. He did not expatiate upon it. He did not, at first, give that prominence to it which He was about to do, and He explains to His disciples *why* He had not talked much upon that topic—"because I was with you." It did not matter how they were opposed so long as He was with them. His society more than made up for anything they might have to suffer and, dear child of God, if you now enjoy the Presence of Christ, and the power of His Spirit, you need not mind what happens to you!

5, 6. *But now I go My way to Him that sent Me, and none of you asks Me, Where are You going? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow has filled your heart.* They were cast down because He was going away from them. Love awoke fear. It was a hard thing for them to have to miss Him—they could not tell what might happen to them when their Leader was gone from their midst. Do you wonder that they were filled with sorrow? Yet there was no real cause for grief—there was, rather, reason for rejoicing when they understood the true lesson of Christ's departure! There is no real cause for your sorrow, dear Friends. If you knew all things, you would rejoice exceedingly in that very thing that *now* most troubles you.

7. *Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.* And the Comforter is better for us than the personal Presence of Christ! We do not always think so, but it is true. It is better for the Church to have the Holy Spirit in the midst of her than for Christ to be here in His bodily Presence on the earth.

8. *And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement.* The world is not as yet convinced, but it is convicted—though it does not acknowledge its guilt—there is more than sufficient evidence to prove it guilty in the sight of God.

9. *Of sin, because they believe not on Me.* What must be the depth of human wickedness that sinners will not accept a Divine Savior? This is the crowning, crushing proof of human guilt—"They believe not on Me."

10. *Of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and you see Me no more.* Christ was righteous, the Righteous One, whom men rejected, for He has gone up to the Father's side, where He could not have been if He had not perfected righteousness. The very going back of Christ to the Father's Throne proves that righteousness does exist and convicts men of sinning against it!

11. *Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.* The Gospel judges him and dethrones him and, as there has been a judgment of the world's king, so there will be a judgment of the world, itself.

12. *I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.* Some teachers overload their hearers with the Truth of God till, I might truly say, that they pile on the agony. Truth which cannot be received is often most irksome and burdensome to the hearer. When the mind is not in a fit condition to bear any more instruction, it is cruel work to impose it. Our Lord Jesus did not so overburden His disciples—"I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now."

13. *Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all Truth: for He shall not speak of Himself.* This is a very wonderful expression—"He shall not speak of Himself." We have plenty of men, nowadays, who boast that they *do* speak of or from themselves—that is to say, they profess to borrow from no one, not even from God! They are original thinkers, inventors! They bring forth fresh things out of the depth of their wonderful minds. But even the Holy Spirit is, here, said not to "speak of Himself."

13. *But whatever He shall hear, that shall He speak.* That is just our business—to hear God's message and then to speak it—and if the Holy Spirit does this and if Jesus did it, we may also be glad to do the same! We are no inventors of great novelties—we are simply the bearers of the message of the Most High, the declarers of the old Truths of God which God has revealed to us.

13-16. *And He will show you things to come. He shall glorify Me: for He shall take of Mine, and shall show it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it to you. A little while, and you shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and you shall see Me, because I go to the Father.* How wonderful this is! We are to see Jesus because He has gone to the Father! It looks as if that were a reason why we should *not* see Him, but we see Him better, by faith, now that He has gone to the Father, than we could have seen Him while He was here below covered with the veil of His humiliation! Yet it is hardly surprising that the disciples were puzzled by their Lord's words—"A little while, and you shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and you shall see Me." And, "Because I go to the Father."

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"— 426, 437, 416.

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

SEEING AND TESTIFYING
NO. 2383

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, OCTOBER 21,1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 29, 1888.

"And we have seen and testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world."
1 John 4:14.

THERE are two things joined together in the text which must never be parted—"We have seen and testify." In the first place, never let any man testify what he has *not* seen. If you are not personally aware of it, do not tell it—it is the personality of the testimony that is the power of the testimony. That Truth of God which you have never experienced, you had better leave to somebody else to preach. This is the cause of the failure of a great many ministers—there is no personal conversion at the back of their ministry and, consequently, no Christian life within them. Their preaching is the testimony of a man who says that he heard such and such a thing and you know how a judge will stop a witness when he begins to say what others have told him. "No, no," he says, "what did *you* see, yourself, my good man? What do you know about this business on your own account? I do not want to know what others said to you about it." So is it with the message delivered from the pulpit—what is needed is that the preacher should bear testimony of what he has seen, tasted, felt and handled. When you try to bring others to Christ, you must do it by bearing witness of what *Christ has done for you*. If He has never done anything for you—*personally* for you—you cannot testify for Him and must not pretend to do so.

In the next place, what you have seen you should testify. If you have seen those things for yourself, do what Mary did when she had seen the risen Christ—she ran to bring His disciples the news! What right have you to see for yourself, alone? No, no, tell the glad tidings! The Light of God is not put to your candle for the candle's sake, alone—it is that men may be enlightened by its beams. If you have received Light from God, let your Light so shine before men that they may see it and glorify God for it! I am afraid that this observation ought to trouble a great many professing Christians. They say that they have seen the Lord. I have no reason to doubt the truth of what they say, but, having seen, why do they not testify? In our text, it is written, "We have seen and testify," but in many cases, nowadays, it might be written, "We have seen and do *not* testify," for some who profess to have seen Christ by faith do not even come forward to confess Him in Baptism, according to His Word—and many do not unite with the visible Church and do not occupy themselves in the

Sunday school, or in any form of Christian usefulness! What will become of you who, having a talent, never put it out to interest? O slothful ones, who have wrapped your talent in a napkin, how will you answer for it in the day when the Master calls your servants to give in their reckoning? If we are what we ought to be, we shall first make sure of the seeing and *then* we shall make equally sure of the testifying! What God has joined together, let no man put asunder. "We have seen and testify." There can be no divorce in this case, no breaking of the marriage bond—"We have seen *and* testify."

I am going to dwell upon these two topics, seeing and testifying, and first, I shall speak to you about *Apostolic seeing*, for doubtless John may be understood as referring to himself and his brother-Apostles when he says, "We have seen and testify." That will be our first theme—Apostolic seeing. And then, secondly, *our seeing*, or, how far Christian men and women can say, "We have seen." And then, thirdly, *Apostolic testifying and our testifying,* for they ought to be alike in a great many particulars.

I. First, then, dear Friends, let me speak a little about APOSTLIC SEEING. John and his fellow-Apostles say, "We have seen and testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world."

Note that this saying was, in their case, *eminently clear*. Let me read to you the beginning of this Epistle— "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life; that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you." These men, who were chosen to dwell with Christ, to see His miracles, and to hear His teaching, come forward with a very clear witness. They tell us that which they had seen, that which they had heard, that which they had looked upon and that which their hands had handled.

In the first place, they had *heard* Christ. This was a high privilege, for, "Never man spoke like this Man." Never was there such hearing as when Christ preached! The Apostles had heard their Master's voice in private as well as in public, when He expounded to them Truths of God which He did not fully explain to the multitude. What marvelous sweetness there must have been in the voice of Jesus! I have no doubt that the melody of it would ring out in the Apostles' ears as long as they lived. They knew, from what they heard from His lips, that the Son of God, even the Lord Jesus Christ, was really before them, for they heard Him say things which no mere man could have uttered. They heard Him declare wonderful Truths such as never fell from the lips of anyone but the long-promised Messiah, the Divine Messenger, who was sent of God. They had heard from Him that which made them know that He was sent by the Father to save men!

John also says that the Apostles had *seen* Christ. For more than three years, they had seen Him daily, constantly. They had also looked upon Him, the Apostle adds, apparently meaning that sometimes they had gazed upon Him with fixed attention. You know what it is to merely see a person, but it is a different thing to look earnestly at him, to feel so struck by his appearance that you cannot help looking him up and down from head to foot. You are fascinated by him, your eyes are held captive

by him, they seem to drink him in and to photograph him on your soul! Now, John says that the Apostles did that with their Lord. They saw Him and their eyes looked upon Him. They could not be mistaken about their Lord. John had seen Him on the Mount of Transfiguration and He had also seen Him on the Cross. He says, in his Gospel, when writing of the soldier piercing Christ's side, "He that saw it bares record, and his record is true: and he knows that he says true."

The Apostles, therefore, were hearers of Christ and seers of Christ. Besides that, they had handled Him. One of them had laid his head on his Lord's bosom. After He had risen from the dead, Jesus said to them, "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I, Myself: handle Me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see I have." They were not in any doubt that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among them! They could not doubt it—all their senses testified to the real Incarnation of the Son of God. They knew that He was a real Person, clothed in real flesh and blood. Thus, they had heard, seen and *handled* the Christ of God!

Well now, perhaps some of you will say, "We wish we had their evidence. If we had been alive, then, we could speak, now, with much greater confidence." Listen to me—the mere *hearing* of Christ would not convince anybody! There were thousands and tens of thousands who heard Him, yet they heard nothing remarkable in His teaching and even turned away loathing and hating Him because of the Truth of God which they could not bear! There was not much advantage in merely *seeing* Him. Did not myriads see Him? Yet they saw not His Glory and did not understand that He was the Redeemer of men! Even when He hung on the Cross, many who saw Him only jeered, sneered, turned their backs and went their way. As to *handling* Him, did not the soldiers handle Him when they scourged Him? Did they not handle Him when they laid the Cross upon Him and when they laid Him upon the Cross? Oh, yes, there was more than enough of handling, and rough handling, too, but they were convinced of *nothing* even by *touching the precious body of Jesus*.

The fact is, Brothers and Sisters, genuine faith comes not merely by the ear, or the eye, or the hand, but it is flashed into the *soul*—perhaps, through the ear—but always directly *by the Spirit of God operating upon the heart*—and if these Apostles had not had another sense, a *spiritual* sense, they would have remained unbelievers! So, after all, they had no great advantage over you. And you, Beloved, who know the Lord *spiritually*, may also be able to truly say, "We have seen and testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world."

But mark you, next, granting that the Apostles were spiritually enlightened, their seeing was *eminently conclusive as to the mission of Christ.* What they saw was not only Christ, but, "that the Father sent the Son." Now, Beloved, this was seen in Christ's miracles. It is specially recorded of our Lord's first miracle, when He turned the water into wine, "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His Glory; and His disciples believed on Him." It was rather a simple miracle, the turning of water into wine, but Jesus did it in such a marvelous manner that the thought flashed upon the Apostles as He did it, "This is the Son of God! This is the Messiah!" A greater miracle which

followed further on, is said to have had the same effect upon those who witnessed it. When our Lord Jesus came to the grave of Lazarus, before He raised him, you remember that He said to Martha, "Said I not unto you that if you would believe, you should see the Glory of God?" And when He had called Lazarus back from the dead, those who were round about saw the Glory of God beaming out in that miracle, and we read, "Many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on Him." If any of you had been with Christ during His earthly life and *had been spiritually enlightened*, you would have seen, in His walking the waves, or in His opening the eyes of the blind, or in His healing all manner of sick folk who were brought to Him, something of His Glory, and you would have felt that the evidence as to His mission was very conclusive.

But, Beloved, the *Apostles*, also, had conclusive evidence as to the Savior's mission in His life. What a life that was! I can admire the life of Elijah without wishing to imitate it. I can admire all the lives of the saints of the Old Testament and of the New, as I find them recorded, and I can even forget their failings. But there is not one, even of the purest and best lives that we have ever read in the sacred page, that leaves upon us the impression that the life of Jesus does! It is not only perfect—it is Divine! Singularly enough, it is more worthy of imitation than any other life and yet it cannot be imitated! It is the most human of all lives, but it is superhuman to a very high degree—and yet in no one respect superhuman in the sense that it cannot be copied by our humanity. It was, indeed, an extraordinary life! One who could have seen it in its different phases and learned, by the Spirit's teaching, what it all meant, must have been convinced that none but the Son of God could have lived like this. What the Centurion said about His death, the enlightened observer would have said about His life, "Truly this was the Son of God."

I cannot stay to go into all the other proofs of this point, but I am sure of this, that those gracious men, with the Spirit of God instructing them, must have felt that Jesus Christ was sent of God when they saw His miracles and when they saw His life, which was a greater marvel than all His miracles!

Still, I have not quite hit the nail on the head until I say that what they saw was *eminently conclusive as to His being sent to save men*—"We have seen and testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world." There was nothing about Christ's life that was contrary to that declaration. He cursed no man. He called no fire from Heaven upon any man. Even when wicked men had nailed Him to the tree, He breathed a prayer for them! In every way, He was not a destroyer, but a Savior. These men were, themselves, saved—saved from known sin, saved from groveling occupations, saved from themselves—and they knew it. They knew that the Father must have sent the Son to be the Savior of the world, for He had saved them!

They had also seen Him heal the sick. What a sight it must have been to see Him going through the crowd, as He often did, when the people were laid on their beds in the streets and others came thronging about Him! When they saw Him laying a hand on one, here, and healing an-

other, there, and another, there, and yet others, yonder, as though He marched through a regiment of devils and cleared a pathway for Himself, not with sword and spear, but with His own gentle glance and with a touch of His loving, yet mighty hands, what a wonder! He came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them—and those innumerable cures, which He so freely dispensed, were clear proofs to the Apostles that the Father had sent His Son to be the Savior of the world!

But they knew it still better after they had seen Him die, after they had beheld His empty sepulcher, after they had felt the descending Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Then, when the tongues of fire were given them and they went out to speak in His name and 3,000 felt the mighty touch of Grace, they knew that the Father had sent the Son to be the Savior of the world! And when the bonds were broken which held them in as preachers to the Jews and they went throughout all Asia and boldly crossed to Europe, going everywhere preaching the Word—and Parthians, Medes and Elamites heard the Gospel, and Greeks and Romans bowed in penitence, and Philippians and Colossians flocked to Christ—then the Apostles understood that the Father had sent the Son to be the Savior of the world! All along their lives there was this clear line of evidence of which they were quite certain—and they came forth to testify that it was so!

Thus I have brought before you the first point, that is, Apostolic seeing.

II. The second thing is OUR SEEING. Let me put a few matters very plainly and personally, and let each person ascertain how far he can follow me.

Brothers and Sisters, some of us have seen that Jesus is sent of God to be the Savior of the world. HOW have we seen it? Well, first, *by the power of His Word.* You have noticed, I daresay, that singular incident concerning the woman of Samaria. The woman told the men of Sychar that she had met a Man who had told her all that she ever did, and she believed that He was the Messiah. They listened to her words and then they went out to hear the Savior, Himself. He preached to them and what was the result? The Samaritans said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of your saying, for we have heard Him, ourselves, and know that this is, indeed, the Christ, the Savior of the world." Do you not think that when John was writing this Epistle, the record of what the woman of Samaria said was in his mind and that he unconsciously repeated the words, "The Savior of the world," using the very same phrase as the men of Sychar had done? They were convinced of Christ's Messiahship simply by the power of His Word!

Brothers and Sisters, there are many of us who have the same evidence as these Samaritans had! We have experienced the power of Christ's Word! I do not mean that we have felt the force of human eloquence, or that we have known the weight of human argument, but we have proved the might of the Word of the Lord. There is a certain something which goes with the Word of God which is altogether independent of the mannerisms of the preacher. It is the Truth of God, itself, which thrills us, conquers us, holds us in chains, leads us captive, sets us free,

puts a new song into our mouths and makes us dance with holy joy! You know that experience, do you not? I believe that often, in this House of Prayer, my Brothers and Sisters, you have felt a power far beyond any force that human lips can possess—you know it has been so! You have gone home saying, "God has spoken to my soul, today, and I know that the Gospel is true, and that the Christ is Divine. The Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world, for I have felt the matchless power of His Holy Word."

Then there are three evidences, mentioned by John in the latter part of this Epistle, each of which is a present power to us. He says, in the 8th verse of the last chapter, "There are three that bear witness in earth: the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one." Have you not felt *the influence of the Holy Spirit* as well as the power of the Word? Did not the Spirit come and wither your righteousness, as the Sirocco of the desert destroys the flowers of the field? Did not the Spirit of God come and put life into you when you lay like the dead? Did He not come and point you to the Savior—even giving you eyes with which to look to Him? Has not the Spirit of God often illuminated you, quickened you, comforted you, guided you? Has He not been to you as the fire, the dew and the wind? Then, if you know the operations of the Spirit of God and, you do, unless your profession is a lie, you, also, have seen that the Father has sent His Son to be the Savior of the world!

The next witness is concerning *the purging by the water*. Now, has not the water, which flowed from Christ's riven side, operated upon you? If you are what you profess to be, my dear Brother, you are a clean man. Once you were foul enough, but you have been washed and now you are a different man. The things you then loved are now horrible to you, and you hate them, for a great change has come over you. You have been washed from your love of filthiness and your delight in sin! Yes, and the washing process goes on every day—you are daily helped to leave off one sin and another—you are made not only to *see* the evil within you, but to conquer it. Is it not so, dear Brothers and Sisters? You know that if the Grace of God has not sanctified you, you are without one great evidence of its power—but if it has changed your character, then depend upon it, you have an evidence that it came from God. Thus, we also, "have seen and testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world," because He has cleansed us and made us to love holy things, and to hate everything which God hates.

The third witness tells of *the cleansing by the blood*. Do you know anything about cleansing by the blood of Jesus, the blood that speaks to a conscience all in a tempest through sin? The blood that gives access to God to sinners far off from Him by wicked works? The blood which we plead in prayer? The blood which has become the foundation of all our hope? I can truly say that when I first learned the Doctrine of the Substitution of Christ, His dying in my place, and understood that I had nothing to do but to look to Him and live, it was with me as when the sun shines in Lapland after months of midnight! Oh, what a blessed dawning was that to my soul! Now, if you know the power of the blood of Jesus upon your conscience and your heart, then you, also, can say, "We have

seen." And I hope you may truly be able to add, "and testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world!"

Besides all this—the power of the Word, the influence of the Holy Spirit, the purging by the water and the cleansing by the blood of Jesus—we have other evidence, namely, *the aspirations of our souls*. Are there not, within you, longings and desires for which you never can account if there were not a Savior for men? When God gave to humanity the appetite of hunger, you might have inferred from it that He meant to provide food to satisfy it. When He gave to us the capacity for thirst, we might be sure that, somewhere, there would be rippling rills from which that thirst might be slaked. When the Lord gave to us, as He has given, a sighing after holiness, a longing after nearness to Himself, a devout hope that we shall be caught up to be with Him where He is, these Heaven-given longings are *proofs* that they will be gratified—but they cannot be unless there is a Savior of men! Thank God there is such a Savior who will give us all that for which we are sighing! "It does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is."

But I need not talk of mere aspirations. As far as I am concerned, I can speak about matters of *fact* which prove to me the power of my Lord and Master, for I have seen *the triumphs of Christ*. I saw some of them last Tuesday. I am always seeing them and, God willing, I shall see some more of them next Tuesday! I have seen men who used to live in sin and drunkenness, made honest and sober! And I have seen fallen women brought to Jesus' feet as penitents! All along what is growing to be a long ministry, the chariot of the Gospel, in which I have ridden, has had captives to grace Christ's triumphs! All along, multitudes have decided to quit the ways of sin and have turned to the living God! And I must believe in the power of Divine Grace, I cannot doubt it! The proof of what the tree is, surely, is found in the fruit, and the fruit is most abundant. Ask the missionaries what Christ has done in the Southern Seas and they will tell you of islands, once inhabited by naked cannibals, where now men are clothed and in their right mind, sitting at the feet of Jesus! The whole world teems with trophies of Christ and shall yet more fully teem with them. "We have seen and testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world," and we preach with the full conviction that "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

III. So now I come to my last point and that is a practical one. Thirdly, let me speak about APOSTOLIC TESTIFYING AND OURS.

I trust that many of you can join in what the Apostle John said, "We have seen that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world." Now let us bear our testimony concerning it as the Apostles did and, first, *we should do it in the same manner*. What was the Apostolic manner of testifying? Well, I would say that it was very fervent and ardent. Those first preachers of the Gospel never preached cold sermons. Why, some sermons hang like icicles upon the lips of the speaker, but the Apostles preached as if they were all on fire! Their lips were like the mouth of Mount Aetna when it vomits lava—every word burnt its way into the

hearts and consciences of men! Never talk coldly of Christ who was on fire with love to you—preach the Gospel ardently!

The Apostles also proclaimed their message very simply. I do not believe there ever was an Apostolic sermon in which the preacher tried to show himself off. There is no record of any display of oratorical fireworks, no grand closing peroration. I always tell my students that this is the 12th Commandment, "You shall not perorate." [Speak at great length, in a grand manner.] Yet many preachers will do it—there must be something very splendid at the end of the discourse to impress people with the idea of how wondrously they can do it! Do not do it, Brothers, do not do it! Tell the people the way to Heaven and point it out to them as plainly as you can—and if there are two or three little words of plain Saxon that will do it, use them, and fling the long Latin words on the dunghill where they ought to rot! They are no good, whatever, in the pulpit, for we need speech that can be easily understood by the people—the plain speech of the common folk of our day. So the Apostles spoke and so should we.

But they also spoke very boldly. You never meet with any timidity in them. We read in the Acts of the Apostles, "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." Do not some preachers appear to apologize for what they are about to say? They trust that they will be excused for venturing to intrude their opinion. I would ask your pardon if I intruded my opinion, but in proclaiming the Gospel of Christ I have not any opinion of my own! I preach God's Word to you, and at your peril do you reject it! You are bound to receive it as it comes from Him and no apology is to be made by the man whom God sends. So the Apostles spoke boldly in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, and Jesus Christ of Nazareth backed up their words. If God has not sent you, my Brother, go home! But if He has, in God's name, do not apologize for His message! There is an honor put upon you by your Lord who sent you, and you must put honor upon your Master by being faithful to Him.

Thus, like the Apostles, we have to bear testimony for Christ, and *we should do it in the same power.* What was the power with which the Apostles testified? Was it the power of their superior education? They had not any, with, perhaps, the exception of Paul. They could manage a boat better than most of us can, but that was their principal attainment. Did they speak in the power of being (—what is the word, now?) "*en rapport* with the spirit of the age"? I may as well use a fine expression *sometimes*! Did they speak as men "keeping themselves abreast of the times"? Not a bit of it! They hated "the spirit of the age" in which they lived and struggled against it with all their might! What was the source of their power? Their only power was the Holy Spirit and, Brothers, we, also, must come to see that there can be no power in us to win a soul for Christ but the supernatural energy of God the Holy Spirit! If we have that, the work will be done. If we are without it, we shall be as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.

Then, again, if we are to testify as the Apostles did, *we should do it with the same message.* What was that message? "The Father sent the

Son to be the Savior of the world." Then, the world is *lost*. We must not stammer in saying that! And every man in the world is lost by nature and by practice, lost, with a great loss, a loss from which he cannot recover himself, a loss from which only God can save him! We must bear our testimony to that Truth of God. Then we must dwell upon the Sender of the Savior—"The Father sent the Son." That great Father against whom we have rebelled, who will bring His wandering children home, again, "The Father sent the Son." We must also testify much about the Sent One. "the Father sent the Son," not an angel, not a man prepared by education or training, but He sent the Son out of His own bosom, the Son out of the glories of Heaven! The Eternal Son of God, commissioned by the Father, came to earth!

And with what design did Jesus come? He came to save, to save by making such a propitiation for sin that God could be justified, and also the Justifier of him that believes. He came to save by delivering us from the dominion of sin, that henceforth we should not serve sin, but should be lifted above it, right away from the power of everything that held us as slaves to Satan. And what was the scope of Christ's work? "The Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world." He did not come to condemn the world, but to save it, that the world, through Him, might be saved. His one mission here was to be the Savior. He will come a second time to be the Judge of all—but in His first coming, He came to be a Savior, and only a Savior. He has gone up into Heaven, but He is still the Savior, able to save to the uttermost them that come to God by Him—and He is the *only* Savior.

In a certain district there may be many who pretend to cure the sick, but only one who is qualified to act as surgeon. And there are many who pretend to save, but there is only one qualified Savior beneath the cope of Heaven, and He is the Lord Jesus Christ, who is here styled, "the Savior of the world," because He *is* the *only* Savior in the world. As a man may be said to be the doctor of a district because he is the only doctor in the district, so is Christ the Savior of the world because He is the only Savior who ever was or ever will be in this world!

He is "the Savior of the world," that is to say, of all ranks, classes and conditions of man. No difference of color, no difference of race, no difference of wealth, no difference of talent, no difference of standing and rank, no difference of education and attainment makes any difference to Him. Jesus Christ has come to be the Savior, not of the rich, nor of the poor. He has come to be the Savior, not of the learned, nor of the ignorant, but, "of the *world*." He comes to save men as sinners. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," not merely great sinners or little sinners, open sinners or secret sinners, but plain "sinners." This is the sort of people for whom He laid down His life. He has come to seek and to save that which was lost, not that which was lost in one particular way or in another special way, but that which was lost *any* way—lost to itself, lost to God, lost to goodness, lost to hope, lost to Heaven—yes, if lost to morality, Jesus Christ has come to seek and to save that which was lost!

He was sent to be the Savior of the world because no man, believing in Him, is excluded from the merit of His death. "God so loved the world,

that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." He will ultimately, as a matter of fact, save none but His elect. This will be the end of all His coming, and living, and dying—but that does not conflict, for a single moment, with the universal invitation that is to be given to you and to every creature under Heaven— "Whoever will, let Him take the water of life freely." Whoever believes in Jesus has everlasting life. "Come unto Me," says Christ, "all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out." "Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

What I am saying is the result of what I have seen and of what many here have seen. "We have seen and testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world." Will you, dear Hearers—I speak to some who have never heard me before—will you accept our testimony? If you judge us to be false, you will not receive it, but if you have judged us to be honest and true men, accept what we declare to you!

I pray you, receive our message, for to what end do we bear our testimony? I should like John to say a final word to you and then I will have done. This is why we bear our testimony, *we do it with the same design* that led John to write concerning the life of Christ, "and many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this Book: but these are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you might have life through His name." There is salvation! There is Christ ready to save! Look to Him, blind eyes! Look to Him, dead souls! Look to Him! Say not that you cannot—He in whose power I speak will work a miracle while yet you hear the command and blind eyes shall look, and dead hearts shall spring into eternal life by His Spirit's effectual working! God grant that it may be so, for His dear name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
1 John 4.

Verse 1. *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.* It was so in John's day. It is so in these days. If there were only one false prophet, we should have need to be on our guard, but, "many false prophets are gone out into the world." If false prophets were all shut up in a cage, and we had to go to seek them, there might be some danger to be apprehended from them, but there is so much more danger, now that we can truly read, "Many false prophets are gone out into the world."

2. *Hereby know you the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God.* Where the Godhead and the Manhood of Christ are truly and properly confessed, so far, at any rate, the confession is of God.

3. *And every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, of which you have*

heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. So that there were deadly errors very early in the history of the Christian Church! The loving Apostle John did not handle them with gloved hands, but he dealt with them honestly and sought to destroy them. We must not wonder if, in our days, the Church has many heresies in it—but they are *not* to be tolerated, but to be cut up—root and branch!

4. *You are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world.* The people of God are few, feeble, and weak, but there is a Spirit in them mightier than the spirit of the world! And, as the ultimate victory will depend upon the strength of the indwelling Spirit, the Church of God will yet overcome the world that lies in the Wicked One.

5. *They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world hears them.* These false prophets teach doctrines that suit carnal men—"They are of the world, therefore speak they of the world." They take their cue from "the spirit of the age." They speak according to the fashion of the world and, therefore, it is no wonder that the world hears them.

6. *We are of God: He that knows God hears us; he that is not of God hears not us.* Here is an Inspired answer to those who say that they attach no importance to the Apostles. They profess to be the followers of Christ, but they say that they do not agree with Paul and with John. Very well, John speaks in the name of *all* the Apostles when He says, "He that knows God hears *us*; he that is not of God hears not *us*."

6. *Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.* If you reject any part of the Word of God, the spirit of error is within you. Truth is one, and the Revelation of God is one—let us not rend it, let us hold fast by it all—and so prove that the Spirit of truth is in us.

7. *Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and everyone that loves is born of God, and knows God.* The spirit of love, kindness, self-sacrifice, holy charity—this is of God. This is the distinguishing mark of the Christian dispensation, the distinguishing mark of the Christian—that he abounds in love, not in malice, anger, revenge, bitterness. "Let us love one another: for love is of God."

8. *He that loves not knows not God; for God is Love.* I have known men, professing to be Christians, at enmity with their brothers. I have heard of a father and a son who have not spoken to one another for months. Did I hear of a mother and a daughter who would not speak to each other, and of sisters who had fallen out? This will not do! You must either give up your Christian profession or give up your hatred! The very attempt to combine enmity and Christianity is a sin against God—"He that loves not knows not God; for God is Love."

9-10. *In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* Sometimes people say, "How can we love a person who is not lovable, one who will not love us in return?" Yet God did so—He loved us when we loved Him not! He loved us

when there was nothing lovable in us and we ought to take God as our Pattern in all things.

11-12. *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought, also, to love one another. No man has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwells in us, and His love is perfected in us.* Though we cannot see God, yet if we love one another, that is a proof that we have Him dwelling within us.

13-16. *Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. Whoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwells in Him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God has to us.* The two things go together, knowing and believing.

16-18. *God is Love; and he that dwells in love dwells in God and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the Day of Judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world.* There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts off fear. There is no slavish dread, no spirit of bondage—perfect love casts it all out. May we all have that love and get rid of all fear!

18-20. *Because fear has torment. He that fears is not made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us. If a man says I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar.* That is very plain language! John does not mince matters. He is all love, but he is also all truth. Some people think that if you love, you will never use strong language, but that is not the case. Sometimes, because a surgeon loves the patient, he cuts the more deeply.

20, 21. *For he that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment have we from Him, That he who loves God, loves his brother, also.* Now I do not know to whom this message may specially apply in all this great congregation, but there is the Word of God as plain as a pike-staff! If you do not live in love, you do not live in God! and if any of you are harboring any animosities, ill-feelings and unkindnesses, get rid of them, get rid of them at once! The sun has well near gone down—remember the Apostle Paul's injunction, "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath," but, as God has forgiven you, forgive all others for Christ's sake, and dwell in a loving-hearted Christ-like spirit toward all mankind.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"— 551, 408, 561.

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

"FORGET YOU, I WILL NOT"
NO. 2384

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, OCTOBER 28, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON, AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 12, 1888.

"You are My servant: O Israel, you shall not be forgotten of Me." Isaiah 44:21.

The idols said nothing to their worshippers. They had mouths, but they spoke not. You might go on worshipping an image for 20 years, but you would never get a reply to anything you said to it. It could not see you, it could not hear you, it could not answer you. That is a poor kind of worship! I do not think that I would care to go on worshipping a Madonna even if she winked—one cannot make much out of a wink—we need something more than that from the object of our adoration.

But God has spoken to His people! We have a Revelation from the one living and true God. Jehovah has broken the eternal silences. He has torn the veil behind which He was hidden and He has revealed Himself. I believe this Book to be Inspired of God. I accept every word and every jot and tittle of it as God's voice to me. He has spoken and the record of what He has said is before me and I can rejoice in it. This was a blessed speech when God said to His ancient people, "You are My servant: O Israel, you shall not be forgotten of me."

I cannot, at this time, stop to make any preface, but I must speak to you, first of all, upon *the title which the Lord gives to His people*—"My servant." Secondly, I will remind you of *the promise which He makes to them*—"You shall not be forgotten of Me." And then, thirdly, I will give you *some reasons which assure us that His promise must and will be kept.*

I. First then, dear Friends, here is THE TITLE WHICH THE LORD GIVES TO HIS PEOPLE—"My servant."

Notice what *a practical title* it is—"My servant." It has to do with action and service. It has to do with the heart, but also with the hands, with the inner and with the outer life. There is no true Christian but the *practical* Christian. The merely doctrinal professor has only the dead logs of wood—there is no fire of devotion, there is no warmth of fervor, there is nothing that is really worth having. The man who talks about his experience as a Christian, who never does anything for Christ, is, I am afraid, only an idle dreamer! There must be *practical obedience* to God from those who claim to be His servants. A servant is not always at work, but a servant is always a servant and always ready for work. I have known some servants who were very particular about what work they did. If

there was a little given them to do that they thought was outside their special duty, they went about it in a very grumbling humor. I do not call such a person as that a servant! But the Lord's servants belong entirely to Him, they are His property, their time and talents are wholly at His disposal, their whole mind and heart and soul are subservient to His will. Let Him say, "Do this," and they do it. Let Him say, "Go there," and there they go.

I want you, dear Hearers, to ask yourselves, "Are we servants of God?" Are not some of you servants of *sin*? Are not others of you servants of *self*, servants of the *world*, servants of the *devil*? Well, there is nothing comforting in the text for you! There is nothing comforting in the whole Bible for you while you remain as you are! You must quit that evil service. You must, by Divine Grace, become servants of God! But I know that I am speaking to some who *are* the servants of the Lord and who wish that their service was more perfect than it is. The will is present with you—with hearty goodwill you wear the golden yoke of Christ and you desire that every member of your body, and every faculty of your soul, may be yielded up to Him—for that is your reasonable service.

That is the first point, then, this is a practical title, "My servant."

Notice, also, that in the text it is *a personal title*. The Lord says, "*You* are My servant." There were a great many who were not God's servants. Multitudes of people were the servants of those idol gods of theirs, which they had made with their compass and their rule, their line and their plane. Poor things—the servants of a piece of wood! It must be beggarly service to serve that which you, yourself, have made! But God says to each one of His people, "You are My servant." Would the Lord Jesus go round this Tabernacle, and stop in front of each of you, and say, "You are My servant. Do not judge your fellow-worshippers, nor try to find out whether this man or that may is My servant. You, yourself, are my servant"? Oh, would not some of us, if our Master would do this, just leap to our feet, take hold of His hand, and say, "Lord, it is so. Brand us as your slaves, for we would gladly bear in our body the marks of the Lord Jesus. We would let all men know that, indeed, we are Your servants"? Will you just turn your thoughts away from this great crowd? I am trying to do so, that I may take to myself the personal title, "You are My servant." Will you, each one individually, either allot to yourself these words of the Lord, "You are My servant," or else honestly put them on one side as not belonging to you?

Next, notice that, as the title is a practical and personal one, so *it is an exclusive title.* "You are My servant. These other people are servants of Baal or Ashtaroth; but you are *My* servant." When a man has a servant, he expects him to serve him, and not to be in the employ of other people. God's servants must serve God—not idols, not the world, not self, not sin, not Satan. "You are My servant." When you get up tomorrow morning and begin to light the fire, and prepare the breakfast, it is true that you will be your earthly master's servant, but, as you commune with your God, hear Him saying to you, "You are My servant." When you take down the shutters, to begin the business of the day, hear a voice saying

to you, across the counter, "You are My servant." You will live better, you will serve better, it will put a glory about your actions if you can know and feel that you are truly serving God!

"You are My servant." I can tell you that this passage has very greatly comforted me. One has said, "You are altogether wrong." Another has said, "You are very bigoted," and so on. "Yes," I have answered, "but I am not your servant. I am not responsible to you. And if my Master is satisfied with me, I am satisfied with His satisfaction." Certainly I am not going to be the servant of men, to put my neck under their feet and do their bidding! Send your own slaves on your business! I shall attend to my Lord's work, for I have only one Master to serve. I want you tonight, and all the week, when the devil says, "Now here is a fine chance for you to get rich very quickly, you can make a lot of money," just say to Him, "I am not *your* servant, and I cannot take your wages. I can do nothing wrong in order to get gain, for I am the servant of God."

And if, young man, there should come in your way, during the week, a pleasurable vice which may seek to win you, flee from it! Say, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God, for I am God's servant?" "You are My servant, not the servant of anybody else." Hold your heads up! Be not ashamed! He is a free man whom God has made to be His servant. "You have loosed my bonds," said David, after he had said, "I am Your servant." "I am Your servant and the son of Your handmaid. You have loosed my bonds. By the very fact of taking me into Your service, You have made me a free man."

Note, next, that as this is an exclusive title, so it is *an honorable title*. I will not dwell upon that fact, but it must be so, for God uses the title in this verse twice over. He says, "You are My servant: I have formed you; you are My servant." It is a greater honor to be the Lord's servant than to be an earl or a duke, a prince or a king! To serve God is truly to reign. My dear Friends, is this high dignity yours? Never mind about earthly stars and garters—this is the highest degree that you can take—the highest honor that you can win in earth or Heaven—to be the servant of the ever-blessed God!

Once more, this is *a title of acceptance*. As God says, twice over, "You are My servant," He means by this, "I accept you as My servant; I acknowledge you as such." What a grand thing it will be if, at the Last Great Day, God is able to acknowledge us as His servants! He will do so if He can accept us now. Do you not, sometimes, have a servant in your employment to whom you say, "Really, I cannot keep you any longer. The sooner that you are gone, the better"? One does not care to have some people for servants. Now and then a man pleads that he cannot get any work and begs you to employ him. You give him a broom and set him to sweep a path, and he sweeps it in such a way that he makes your flesh creep, and you pretty soon sweep him out. You would be ashamed to have anybody know that he was a servant of yours. But when God says, "You are My servant: you are My servant," it means that He is not ashamed of us!

Brothers and Sisters, we are often ashamed of ourselves when God is not ashamed of us. He overlooks a thousand imperfections and it is well for us that He does, for who among us can serve God perfectly? I have sometimes known Christian people, who were doing a good work for God, get quite down-hearted because they found somebody else doing a larger work. Oh, do not envy your brethren who have more service than you have! I daresay that they almost envy you, and think how nicely they could do the work that you have to do. One said to me, the other day, when I had preached, and preached in what I thought to be a very poor way, too, "I feel as if, after hearing you, I cannot preach again." "Oh dear," I said, "if you knew what I thought of the sermon, you would feel very differently! You would think that *anybody* could preach better than *that*."

I often think that anybody can preach better than I can till I sit and hear them, and then I say to myself, "Well, after that, I will try again." But, dear Friends, whether we think we fail, or others think we fail, how little does it matter if the Lord says, "You are My servant: you are My servant. It was a poor sermon, dear One, but you are My servant. That work was very poorly done when you visited the sick, but you did it with all your heart. You are My servant. You are not a very brilliant teacher for that class of yours, but you love your scholars, and you love your God. You are My servant"? He does, as it were, pat you on the back, and say, "You are My servant. Go on with your work for Me. I will acknowledge you, I intend to bless you. You are My servant."

One reason why we are God's servants is that He has forgiven us our trespasses. Shall I read to you, again, the next verse to my text? "You are My servant. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sins." Is not that a reason why we should serve Him? Forgiven sins should bind us to His service with bands stronger than steel! We can never run away from Him who has pardoned such grave faults as we have committed! Then He adds, "I have redeemed you," and in the 24th verse He goes on to say, "The Lord has redeemed Jacob." Oh, we must serve Him who has redeemed us! If He has bought us, we are not our own—we belong to Him—and we must spend and be spent in His service. And then the Lord says, "Jehovah has redeemed Jacob and glorified Himself in Israel." Well, if He has been able to get any Glory out of *us*, we will keep on serving Him! What a marvelous God He must be to glorify Himself in such poor wretches as we are! But as He does so, we will continue in so Divine a service while life shall last and then we will serve Him forever above!

Thus have I spoken upon the title which the Lord gives to His people—"My servant."

II. Now, secondly, comes a sweet part of the subject, THE PROMISE WHICH HE MAKES TO US—"You shall not be forgotten of Me."

Men forget us, do they not? And they turn against us. Those for whom you do the most are often those who will be most unkind and most bitter against you. I will not speak as I might, but I know and I have felt, and I daresay that you know, and that you have felt, in your measure, too,

that, "cursed is he that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm." The whole of mankind put together in the scales are lighter than vanity—there is no use in trusting in them at all! But God says, "You shall not be forgotten of Me." Remember those comforting words that we sang just now—

"Forget you I will not, I cannot. Your name
Engraved on My heart does forever remain!
The palms of My hands while I look on, I see
The wounds I received when suffering for thee."

What does this promise mean? It means, first, that *God will never cease to love His servants.* If you are His servants, He loved you before the world began! He still loves you and He will love you, world without end. "You shall not be forgotten of Me." Do not *dream* that God can cast away His people! We are members of the body of Christ—do you think that Christ will ever lose any of the members of His body? I should not like to lose my little finger and Christ will not lose one of the members of His body. You would think, according to the teaching of some, that Christ's members keep dropping off, something like the limbs of lobsters, and that new ones were constantly growing! There is nothing in Scripture to warrant such a notion as that!

Do you remember Mr. Bunyan's parable of a child, who is in a room, and a stranger comes in and says, "Come here, child, I will cut off your finger." "No," says the child. "Yes, but I will. I will take off your little finger. Here is a knife, I will cut off your little finger." "No," says the child again, and he begins to cry. "Oh but," says the stranger, "that is a poor little finger that you have! I will take it off and I will buy you a gold finger, such a brave gold finger, and I will put it on your hand instead of your little finger." "Oh," says the child, "but it would not be *my* finger! I cannot lose my own finger." Whereupon Mr. Bunyan says, "If Christ could have better people than those He has, He would not make the change, 'For,' says He, '*they* are not My people; *they* are not a part of My own living Self."' So, the Lord Jesus would not change you for a golden saint, for one much better than you are! That new finger would not be what the Father gave Him, nor what He bought with His precious blood. "You shall not be forgotten of Me," means that God will never cease to love His servants.

Next, it means that *the Lord will never cease to think of His servants.* The thoughts of God are wonderful! He can think of every individual saint as much as if there were no other saint in the universe! He never leaves off thinking of each one of His people. The Divine mind is distinctly set on you, Brother, on you, Sister, and it is never taken off from you. If God were to cease to think of us for five minutes, in that five minutes we might be ruined—but He never forgets us and, consequently, there shall be no part of our body without its armor, and no portion of our time without a sentinel set to watch over us every single moment of it! Listen to the Lord's promise about His vine—"I the Lord keep it. I will water it every moment, lest any hurt it. I will keep it night and day." God will never leave off thinking of you as well as loving you!

Next, *the Lord will never cease to befriend His servants*. God's thoughts are always practical. The gifts of His hands go with the thoughts of His mind. Our text means, "You shall not be forgotten of Me in the distribution of My benefits." The Lord will not cease to give you bread, water and garments. His Providence shall always take care of you. Remember the passage we read at this morning's service, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want"? He will never cease to bestow upon you the blessings of His Grace. He will go on to pardon you, to guide you, to teach you, to strengthen you, to lead you until you shall be in His glorious Presence without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing! "I, Jehovah, will not forget you. You shall not be forgotten of Me."

I think I hear some dear child of God crying, "I was afraid that the Lord had forgotten me the other day." It is you who had forgotten Him! "Oh, but I thought surely that He had cast me off!" What right had you to think anything of the kind? Will the Lord cast off His people? Will He be faithful no more? Shame on you that you should think He could or would act in such a fashion! "But, oh, I am so little and so feeble!" Are there any of His saints that are not just the same? "Oh, but I am so unworthy!" And pray, what child of God does not have to make the same confession? The Lord says, "You shall not be forgotten of Me," and He will stand to it! Depend upon it and you shall share with the rest of His people in the high privileges of the Covenant of His Grace. He will not cease to love you, nor cease to think of you, nor cease to befriend and benefit you. With John Newton, you may sing—

"His love in time past forbids me to think
He'll leave me at last in trouble to sink.
Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review
Confirms His good pleasure to help me quite through."

Once more, *the Lord will not cease to commune with His people*. Whenever you desire to commune with Him, He is ready to meet you. Knock at His door—the servant will not say that He is not at home, for He waits to be gracious. Have you been slipping away from your God of late? Come back to Him, come back at once. The Lord Jesus Christ has rebuked you for your Laodicean lukewarmness, but, after having said some hard words about you, how does He finish? "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." He will take supper with you, tonight, if you are willing. O dear child of God, this is the cure for your lukewarmness, for the Lord to come to you and have high fellowship with you—and He is waiting for that communion! "You shall not be forgotten of Me."

I do not feel that I need say any more upon this promise; but I should like everyone who is a Christian to take it home. "*You* shall not be forgotten of Me." Perhaps, in a few days, you will be lying upon the bed of pain. The Lord bids me say to you in preparation for that affliction, "You shall not be forgotten of Me." Or, possibly, during this week, you will have a very serious loss in business that will occasion you a great staggering unless, as you read this promise to yourself, you say, "But the Lord has said, You shall not be forgotten of Me." Dear children of God, you never

know what trouble or alarm is coming, only you have often proved the truth of Mr. Bunyan's quaint ditty—

"A Christian man is never long at ease
When one fright's gone, another does him seize."

Therefore, be ready for anything, be ready for everything! You will be prepared for whatever may come if you remember this promise, "You are My servant: you shall not be forgotten of Me." The Lord will help you, He will help you right through, He will help you even to the end. Fall back upon this precious promise, "You shall not be forgotten of Me." I wish that I could put this passage, like a wafer made of honey, under every tongue where the mouth is full of bitterness, so that you might suck at it and get the sweetness out of it, and so say to yourself, "I shall be happy, yet, and happy, come what may, for the Lord will not forget me!"

III. My last work at this time is to mention SOME REASONS WHICH ASSURE US THAT GOD WILL NOT FORGET THOSE WHO ARE TRULY HIS SERVANTS.

I should say, first of all, that the very best reason is that *He says He will not forget us*. As He says, "You shall not be forgotten of Me," then, He cannot forget us! He is God who cannot lie and His every Word of Grace is worthy of our utmost confidence. You remember what a boy said about his mother? "How do you know it is true, Jack?" asked one. "Mother said so," answered the lad. "Well, but that is no reason at all." "Yes," he said, "it is. It is the best reason of all, for if Mother says so, it is so if it is not so." That is the way for a boy to trust in his mother's word—what she said must be true, her son would not believe that it could be otherwise! We have just to trust in God like that—it is so for He says it! "You shall not be forgotten of Me." We cannot tolerate a doubt as to the Truth of what the Lord says.

But the next reason is this, *God cannot forget us since He has made us*. The former part of the verse says, "You are My servant: I have formed you." The Lord has fashioned us—not merely in the common way in which others of His creatures have been formed, but upon the wheel of Grace He has made us revolve like the clay in the potter's hand! With His own fingers He has made us into vessels of mercy so He cannot forget us. I think I have heard that before the siege of Paris, Gustave Dore had nearly finished one of his greatest paintings, one of the finest pictures which has ever been produced. Having to flee from the city, all of a sudden, as the Germans were coming up, he hid his picture in a cellar, down under a heap of rubbish.

When the siege was over, Dore came back to Paris and, of course, when he returned he had forgotten all about his picture, had he not? Not he! He had taken too much trouble with it to forget it. He knew the value of it and he remembered where he had put it. He did not have to go up and down the house and say to the people, "Do you know where my picture is?" No, he never forgot where he had, himself, put it, so he found it where he had hidden it, brought it out to the light of day and finished it! Now, in a far higher sense than that, God will have respect unto the work of His own hands. The very bodies of the saints, though they are hidden

away for a while in the rubbish of the earth, He will fetch out and He will complete the work of Grace which He has begun upon each one of them! The Lord having formed us to be His servants, we shall not be forgotten of Him!

A further reason is that *He has blessed us*. He has blessed us so much, already, that He cannot, now, forget us. If you needed persons to love you, perhaps you would set to work to do them a kindness. Very good and very proper. But you may be beaten over that plan. As a matter of selfish prudence I would suggest to you that you had better let them *do you* a kindness, and then they will be bound to you forever! A boy forgets his mother's love—alas—it is often so, but the mother never forgets the kindness she has shown to her son, because she has done so much for him. The persons you love best are not those who have done most for you, but those for whom *you* have done the most. If I should bind God to me by anything I can do for Him, I should feel that the ties would be very feeble ones, but when God binds Himself to me by His blessings and mercies, it is another thing, for then the ties are Divinely strong! I say, then, that God has blessed us, and He has done so much for us that He cannot leave off loving us. "You shall not be forgotten of Me."

Again, the Lord will not forget us, because *He has loved too long already*. I was talking with an old saint this week—once a renowned preacher of the Gospel—who is now some 84 years of age. He shook my hands and he said, "I am with you, my Brother, I am with you, my Brother. I know what the contention is and I am on your side, heart and soul." Then he added, "You and I have known the Lord too long to run after this new trumpery." And it is so—you get so bound to the old Truths of God that you cannot give them up! You grow to love the Gospel so fervently that you cannot renounce it! Well, now, the effect that such love has upon us is still more clearly seen in God. He has loved us so long that He cannot forget us. How long has He loved you? "Oh," you say, "it is about 10 years since I was converted." Well, but did not the Lord love you before that? Did not our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ die for you before you were converted?

"Oh, I see!" you say, "then He has loved me more than 1,800 years." But did He not purpose and plan that Christ should die for you before the world began? Was there ever a time when the redeemed of the Lord were not written on the heart of Christ? He loved you before the first star began to dart its golden arrows through the darkness of space! Rest secure, then! Love so ancient will never die out!

Further, the Lord must continue to love us. He cannot forget us, for *we have cost Him so much*. Oh, how much we have cost our Lord! "By Your agony and bloody sweat," by the scourging and the spitting, by the false accusations and the ridicule, by the nails, the vinegar, the spear, that bitter cry, "Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabachthani," by Your sorrow, even unto death—by all this, Lord Jesus, You have bought us! These are the travail pangs of our spiritual birth and He, by whom all those agonies were borne, can never forget us! In us He sees of the travail of His soul and He is satisfied. Look at His hands, look at His side, look at His feet—there

are the records of the costly price that He paid down for our redemption—and they are the pledge that He cannot let us be forgotten!

Besides, Beloved, if we had no other reason for thinking that we should not be forgotten of God, if we are His servants, we know that *He is too good a Lord to cast us out*. He is a wretch of a man who casts off an old servant simply because he is old. Yet many, when they grow old and feeble, find that their masters want to get rid of them. A young fellow has given all his life, ever since he was 15, to a firm in the city, and when he gets over 60, the employers think to themselves, "A nice brisk young man will be better in the place of old Jones," and they pick some little hole in him and off he goes—to the workhouse, for all they care, as a general rule. "Ah, but," says the Lord, "you shall not be forgotten of Me." He does not turn His old servants adrift—for He says, "Even to your old age, I am He; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you."

In olden times, and I am afraid it is still so, masters have been known to get rid of their servants when they have been ill. What did the Amalekite do with the young Egyptian? David found him left behind in the field and he said that his master was an Amalekite, and left him because he fell sick. Ugh! So they still say of their sick servants, "We must get rid of them! They are not strong enough to do their work." But our Lord never forgets His servants when they are ill. Then He is more near, more dear, more tender, more considerate than ever! "You shall not be forgotten of Me, O My servant!" Sick and sad, yes, and sinful, and worn out, yet still we shall not be forgotten of our Lord! Young man, enter the service of this blessed Master! You will never rue it. I love my Master and I would like to see you in His blessed employment. It is always a sign that a man has a good master when He would like to see his own boys in the same service, and I can truly say that nothing gives me so much joy as to think that both my sons are in the same service as I am in!

Sons of godly parents, may God put you in the same service as your fathers are in! Daughters of holy mothers, I do pray that your mother's God may be your God! There is no service like our Master's. If the Lord were a hard master, tyrannical, changeable, unkind, ungenerous, austere—if He discharged His servants right and left, for this fault and for that, or because they grew feeble and faulty—well then, I think I would stand here and tell you the truth about Him, and urge you not to think of entering His employment! But oh, He is a blessed Master, therefore I can plead with you to be His servant and I can assure you that you shall never be forgotten of Him!

This morning [Sermon #2039, Volume 34—*Crossing the Jordan*—Read/download entire sermon at http://www.spurgeongems.org .] I spoke about being on the verge of Jordan. When you are about going into Heaven, passing over that last stream, dear child of God, you shall not be forgotten! The Lord will be very near you, then—He will especially help you in your dying moments.

I cannot at all make out how you who are without a God get on, especially you poor people. With no comfort in this world, with nothing worth living for, here, how can you exist without a good hope for the hereafter,

without a Savior to trust in, without a God to run to for protection, as the chicks run to the hen? And you rich people, how can you do without a God? What is to become of you? You will have to lose all that you have and over you it will be said, "Ashes to ashes, and dust to dust." Members of parliament, or whoever you may be, you will have to go down to the worms, like other people. What a horrible thing for you, Dives, to be dragged down with all your scarlet and fine linen on, and cast into Hell! You who have fared sumptuously every day—denied even a drop of water to cool your burning tongue! What a change for you! If the poor need a Savior, so do you, just as much! May the Lord make both—rich and poor—to be His servants and then whisper in the ear of each one of you, as you go down the Tabernacle steps tonight, "You are My servant: you shall not be forgotten of me"!

God bless you all, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
Isaiah 44:1-22.

Verses 1-2. *Yet now hear, O Jacob My servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen: thus says the LORD that made you, and formed you from the womb, which will help you; Fear not, O Jacob, My servant; and you, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen.* God cannot bear His people to be sad, He delights to drive away fear, trembling and mistrust. He loves faith, for faith brings confidence, hope, rest. So He says to us, "Fear not, fear not, be not afraid." It is God Himself who made us, and who chose us, who says to us, "Do not fear." Come, dear Hearts, lay aside your disquietude. If God bids you cast away fear, will you not do it? Nothing hushes a babe to sleep like its mother's voice. Let God's voice hush you into sweet and blessed calm whenever you are troubled and full of fear.

3. *For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground.* God will never do anything by halves. He will not only send rain, but the waters shall pour down from the sky. He will not merely moisten the surface of the dry ground, He will send floods to saturate it. God is great in giving His Grace. When once you reach the region of Grace, you have entered the region of plenty, even the riches of God's unspeakable Grace. If, dear Friends, you have at this time no spiritual power, unction, favor and love, you may have it, for here is the Lord's own promise—"I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground."

3. *I will pour My Spirit upon your seed, and My blessing upon your offspring.* Is that your great burden—trouble about your boy? Does your dear girl grieve you? Well, He who blesses the father and the mother will bless the children—the God of Abraham is the God of Isaac! Pray that this promise may be fulfilled to you, that your seed may get a share of that Spirit of Grace which has been given to you.

4. *And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses.* You can track a stream by the willows. Standing on a hill and looking down the valley, you can tell where the little brook winds, for

there are the willows. So shall it be with your children—they shall spring up by the waters of Grace, and be a joy and a blessing.

5. *One shall say, I am the Lord's.* That is the brave son who comes out boldly and avows his faith. "One shall say, I am the Lord's."

5. *And another shall call himself by the name of Jacob.* That is the one who goes and joins the Church and does not say much about it, but he has united himself with the Lord's people. "And another shall call himself by the name of Jacob."

5. *And another shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD, and surname himself by the name of Israel.* He cannot speak much, but he can write. He is not so bold as the others, perhaps, but he is quite as true. "Another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord." It does not so much matter how our children are converted so long as they really are converted—and as to the particular way in which they join the Church—we have only to bid them seek the guidance of God's Word and His Spirit and follow wherever They lead! Pray earnestly, dear Friends, that the Lord will bless your children. I thank God that most of the members of the Church known to me, have their children saved. There are many families that are altogether in the Church. There are others which have not that privilege, yet, but, dear Friends, you may have it! Ask believingly, act faithfully, watch hopefully and you shall see it joyfully before long.

6, 7. *Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, and his redeemer the Lord of Hosts, I am the First, and I am the Last, and beside Me there is no God. And who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for Me, since I appointed the ancient peoples and the things that are coming, and shall come, let them show unto them.* Jehovah challenges the idol gods to utter a prophecy! Let *them* tell the future if they can, but they cannot. Prophecy is always the mark of the one living and true God!

8-11. *Fear you not, neither be afraid: have not I told you from that time, and have declared it? You are even My witnesses. Is there a God beside Me? Yes, there is no god; I know not any. They that make a graven image are all of them vanity, and their delectable things shall not profit, and they are their own witnesses, they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed. Who has formed a god, or molten a graven image that is profitable for nothing? Behold, all his fellows shall be ashamed: and the workmen, they are of men: let them all be gathered together, let them stand up; yet they shall fear, and they shall be ashamed together.* Well they may. Men who pretend to make a god ought to be ashamed.

12. *The smith with the tongs both works in the coals, and fashion it with hammers, and works it with the strength of his arms.* What irony! Making god with hammers and bellows!

12. *Yes, he is hungry,* This god-maker is hungry!

12. *And his strength fails: he drinks no water, and is faint.* The god-maker is getting faint. There is a sarcasm about this description which ought to convince the most blind devotees of an idol!

13. *The carpenter stretches out his rule, he marks it out with a line; he fits it with planes, and he marks it out with the compass, and makes it af-*

ter the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house. A god in the house! A god shut up in a room! A god that has been made with compasses and planes! How ridiculous it seems!

14. *He hews him down cedars, and takes the cypress and the oak, which he strengthens for himself among the trees of the forest: he plants an ash, and the rain does nourish it.* The raw material for a god is an ash, a watery tree—"The rain does nourish it."

15-17. *Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take, thereof, and warm himself; yes, he kindles it, and bakes bread. Yes, he makes a god, and worships it, he makes it a graven image, and falls down thereto. He burns part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eats flesh; he roasts roast, and is satisfied: yes, he warms himself, and says, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire: and the residue thereof he makes a god.* Oh, the folly of idolatry! Perhaps you do not see your own folly, you who are worshipping yourselves! A man who worships his belly is a worse idolater than the one who worships a god of wood! A man who worships gold and silver, if that gold and silver should take the shape of sovereigns and shillings, is not a bit more justified in his idolatry than if he had made it into the shape of a calf and had bowed before it in idolatrous homage and reverence!

17-20. *Even his graven image: he falls down unto it, and worships it, and prays unto it, and says, Deliver me; for you are my god. They have not known nor understood: for He has shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand. And none considers in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yes, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten it: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? Shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? He feeds on ashes.* Mad people have been known to do even that, they have thrust cinders into their mouths—and this is what everybody does who is not trusting in the living God. "He feeds on ashes."

20, 21. *A deceived heart has turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his oath, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand? Remember these, O Jacob and Israel.* Think of these false gods and be ashamed of them!

21, 22. *For you are My servant: I have formed you; you are My servant: O Israel, you shall not be forgotten of Me. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions and, as a cloud, your sin: return unto Me; for I have redeemed you.* These wooden gods have done nothing of the sort. Come back to the true God and worship Him—/and be happy in His love.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN PRAYERBOOK"—720, 733, 716.

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

ANOTHER LESSON FROM MANASSEH'S LIFE
NO. 2385

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, NOVEMBER 4, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON, AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 19, 1888.

"And the Lord spoke to Manasseh, and to his people: but they would not listen. Therefore the Lord brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria; which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon."
2 Chronicles 33:10, 11.

THE proper way for a sinner to be brought to God is for God to speak to him and for him to hear. Manasseh would not come that way—"The Lord spoke to Manasseh, and to his people: but they would not listen." Therefore, as God determined to save the rebellious king, He fetched him back by a rougher road—He sent the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, who took him among the thorns.

I am going to talk to you a little about the plain and proper road by which you should come to God. And then I shall deal with those who have gone among the thorns. There may be some such characters here, tonight. Let me say that if I should happen to describe anyone very correctly, I hope he will not do as a friend did the other Monday. He had come up to London and I gave such an accurate description of him on the Sunday that he came in very indignantly to see me the next day, to know whether his wife had not written to me. He looked as if his wife and myself might, both of us, have rather hard times with him. When I assured him that I did not know his name and had never seen him or his wife, or heard a word about him, he grew a little more calm—but the portrayal of him appeared to be so accurate that I could not help saying to him, "Surely *God* has spoken to you. Take the message home to yourself. Do not blame me or your wife, but blame yourself to think that such a description should apply to you."

Now, first, as I have already told you, the proper way for a sinner to be brought to God is for God to speak to him and for him to hear. In Holy Scripture, God warns men. He tells them that sin is an evil thing and that if it is persisted in, it will bring endless ruin to them. Now, the proper thing for the man who hears that warning is to take heed to it, to run to the helm of his vessel and steer the ship in another direction. God grant that you and I may not be as the horse and as the mule, that need

bit and bridle, but may we listen at once to the warning so kindly given and turn from every evil way!

Sometimes God speaks by way of invitation. "Come to Me," He says. "Return to Me. I am ready to forgive. I delight in mercy." Now, the proper way for one who hears this invitation is not to wait and linger, but to accept it at once. "When You said, Seek you My face; my heart said unto You, Your face, Lord, will I seek." The Lord invites you to come to the ark to escape the flood, to come to the banquet to satisfy your hunger, to come to the sacred bath, that you may wash and be clean, as he of old did who washed his leprosy away in the Jordan. Whenever God speaks to us in any way, let us listen and, listening, let us obey—especially when He sets before us Jesus, Crucified, and says to us, "Trust in Him and you shall be forgiven. Accept the Great Sacrifice! Believe that your sin was laid on Him and you shall be forever clear of it." Oh, that you would accept Him at once! We do not need to go round about, over hedge and ditch, to find the Savior—there is the Cross, look to it and live!

I was asking a friend, just now, concerning a sermon he had heard, and he said, "It was a very clever sermon, but if anybody had followed its teaching, he would not have been within 6,000 miles of the Cross of Christ." Well now, that is *not* what I want to do with you, to lead you thousands of miles away from Christ! But, as God has set forth Christ to be a propitiation for sin, I pray that you may accept Him and live by Him. "Look unto Me," He says, "and be you saved."—

"There is life for a look at the Crucified One."

May the Holy Spirit, whose word is, "Today, today, today," speak with power to your hearts that you may hear because God speaks!

You understand the way sinners are saved, do you not? "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." We hear the Gospel, we believe it, we live by it—there is the whole machinery of salvation! We preach a Crucified Savior, and whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. Yet we cannot beat it into men's heads that salvation is as simple as this! I remember how Martin Luther said that it was so difficult to get the Doctrine of Justification by Faith into the minds of the Wittenbergers that he had half a mind to take the Bible and beat them over the head with it! I am afraid that he would not have gotten the Truth of God into their heads that way. "Look," he said, "if these sectaries come to you with a new doctrine, you stare at it like a cow at a new gate! But when I bring you the Gospel, you will not even look at it, much less will you receive it!" Oh, that the Spirit of God would deliver us from such folly, that we may accept Christ, trust Him, and live!

This is the happy way of salvation, to hear, believe, and live. Men go about to try and invent a salvation that makes its followers miserable—you must have so many wretched feelings, so much despair, so many gloomy thoughts. No, no! The Gospel message is, "Believe and live." Why should men need to make their case worse than it is? It is already as bad as it can be! Why struggle to find an impossible addition to your present danger? Why try to import foreign and extraneous griefs into your already unbearable misery? I was trying, once, to explain the Gospel to a young woman, so as to make it very simple to her, but she said, "Why,

dear Sir, I thought I was to *feel* a great deal! My father, before he found Christ, was so bad that he had to be put away in a lunatic asylum, and I thought I must be like he was." That is the rough way that many people think they have to travel. But the proper way, the *Scriptural* way is, "Come to Jesus, put your trust in Him. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." This, then, is the happy way!

It is also an *accessible* way. If I preached to you that you must have so much despair, so much of terrible agony of soul, you might say, "I cannot go along that road. I am a young man full of spirit. I am a young woman with ruddy cheeks and happy heart. Must I be miserable in order to find Christ?" Ah, my dear Friend, it is not so put! You *will* have, you *must* have, sorrow for sin. That, the Lord will *give* you—you have not to make it yourself—the Holy Spirit will work it in your heart if you yield yourself wholly to Him. How often have I told you that if you cannot come to Christ *with* a broken heart, come to Christ *for* a broken heart! If you have not a proper sense of sin, I do not expect that you ever will have it until the Holy Spirit *gives* it to you! Come to Him and trust Him to work it in you. Remember that repentance *does not come before* faith—it is a kind of Siamese twin with faith! Which comes first, I cannot tell, until you tell me which spoke in a wheel moves first when the whole wheel moves!

Repentance is the lovely sister of Faith, if it is not Faith's first-born child. *So you are not to repent, first, and then to come to Christ.* Bring nothing to the Savior except your nothingness! Come to Him empty, just as you are. In a short time, some of the fruits in our gardens will be ripening. Suppose we have a fine apple tree, or pear tree, with fruit on it, quite ripe. As you stand under it, you can imagine that you hear it talk. Trees have a language—shall I interpret what that tree is saying? It says, "Baskets, bring baskets." What for? Here is a basket, but I dare not bring it. "Why not?" asks the tree. Because it is empty. If the basket were full, I would bring it. But the tree will say to you, "I need *empty* baskets, that I may fill them with fruit." So Jesus needs nothing of you but your emptiness—and you may come to Him just as you are. In fact, *this is the only way to come to Him aright.* If you live in the country, where you have an old-fashioned well, do you ever say to yourself, "I dare not let this bucket down till I fill it"? Everybody would laugh at you if you talked like that! You let it down *empty* that it may be filled! So let your empty soul down into the deep well of Christ's infinite merit, that it may be filled to the brim!

Thus, you see, this is a happy way, and it is an accessible way. You can come to Christ, can you not, in such a way as this?

It is, next, a way which has frequently been taken. Talking, some time ago, about the difficulties I had when coming to Christ, I said to some Brothers and Sisters present, "They were self-made difficulties. They were not necessary, except it was that I might know the rough road in order that I might the better help others." And I remember that our beloved and honored Brother, William Olney, said, "I never had such difficulties at all. I know nothing whatever about them. As a boy, I trusted in Christ and I found peace with God at once." I believe that there are hun-

dreds and thousands of earnest Christians who simply come to Jesus without any particular pang of conscience, or grief of heart—and they are as truly in Christ as any of us—and their *lives* prove it! This is a way that has been frequently taken—all men are *not* fools—some do take the straight and narrow road, by God's Grace, that leads to everlasting life. I pray you, therefore, my dear unconverted Hearer, especially you young men, and you young women, to enter the King's highway which leads to everlasting Glory! Hear while God speaks, believe what God says, and live forever!

Is not this the Gospel way? "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Is it not the right way? Where else should we look but to our Savior? What can we do but look, for we have nothing of our own to bring? Let us even now look out of ourselves to Christ and live forever! Would it not be a blessed circumstance if, without any further question about the matter, every unconverted man and woman here tonight would close in with Christ, crying, "I will perish, if I do perish, at the foot of the Cross! I will trust you, Emmanuel, the unique Savior, the one and only Interposer, the one Mediator who can lay His hand on God by virtue of His own Godhead, and on man by reason of His Manhood, and join us both together in a blessed league of endless amity"? May that be done for each one of you! Let the prayer go up from you who know the Lord, you who can pray—"Lord, save the whole congregation!" What a congregation it is! Every Sabbath, morning and night, these masses gather here! Lord, why do they come if You do not intend to bless them? Shall they come up like waves of the sea and then go rolling back, again, and leave not a trace behind? No, rather may some precious pearls be washed up on the shores of salvation, tonight, that shall adorn the crown of Christ forever and ever!

But now I come to the tug of war in the other side of my subject. When men reject this simple and easy way of trusting Christ, then and there the Lord might leave them. And if He *did* leave them, woe would be unto them! There is no greater curse than that solemn sentence, "Let him alone." But, instead thereof, the Lord begins to take men along a rough road. Let me read the text again—"The Lord spoke to Manasseh, and to his people: but they would not listen. Therefore the Lord brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon." Perhaps He will do the same with you. It may be that He is dealing thus with some of you and here is the point where I thought it was likely that I might describe somebody's case very particularly.

I. First, THE LORD OFTEN ALLOWS TEMPORAL TRIALS TO TAKE MEN CAPTIVE. It often happens that God, with a view to the salvation of men, sends them temporal trials to capture them, as Manasseh was taken "among the thorns." Is it so, my Friend, that after hearing the Gospel for years, you are still unconverted, and that God is now beginning no longer to speak to you with words, but to deal with you by blows?

I have known persons in this case to find *everything going wrong with them in business.* It has seemed as if the current which had flowed toward them had suddenly dried up, or flowed backward! Do what they may, nothing prospers. There is a blight and a mildew on all their crops. They are disappointed where they had the highest hopes. Their speculations all turn out failures. Everything goes wrong. This is one of the black dogs with which the Good Shepherd fetches home His stray sheep—perhaps He is thus going to fetch *you* home. I pray that He may!

In the case of another, *the man finds himself out of work*. He has always been able to bring in enough for the wife and the family, but now he is out of a job and cannot get employment. He has tramped the streets of London till he has worn out his boots but he cannot find anything to do. The table had a very scanty meal upon it, today, and this Sabbath has been a very sorrowful day in that home. We read of one, the other day, who destroyed himself because he could not bear to be so long without work. Do not so act, I pray you! Oh, do not think of such an evil course as that! Rather say to yourself, "Here is another of the Lord's black dogs come after me. I would not go when the Shepherd called me, but He means to have me, and so I am being tried in this way."

If, like Jonah's gourd, your hope withers and you feel ready to faint, do not faint, but be of good courage—some of these rough waves may wash you on the Rock. I am sure I pray that they may. Come and flee away, flee away, flee away, now, to the God who smites you in love! Kiss the rod and yield yourself to Him who holds it, for these troublous ways are often the very ones by which the Lord brings His exiled children home to His heart!

Sometimes *God permits men to fall into very extraordinary troubles*. Some of you have read the life of Mr. John Newton. As a young man you know how boldly wicked he was. What a shameful thing it was for him, the son of parents who were able to support him in comfort, to be found on the Gold Coast, literally a slave, with scarcely a rag to cover his nakedness! Yet this severe discipline was necessary. He would never have been the Lord's free man if he had not been man's slave. If he had not been brought as low as that, he might never have looked up to God! I have known some people get into very strange circumstances, so remarkable that if they were to describe them, they would hardly be believed—and I may be speaking to some such just now. Horror has taken hold upon you! Your condition has become indescribable, yet, perhaps, this is the only point of view from which your eyes will begin to see your Savior! It is strange that men should need to be flogged to Christ, but they do. If you will not come by the easy way, you shall come by the rough road. And if a call is not enough, you shall be made to smart—but, by His Grace, you shall come, for the Lord means to save you! Yield to Him, I pray you! You have the hook in your jaws, now, and the more you pull, the more that hook will tear and the more you will be made to bleed! But the great Fisherman will never lose you. I have come with the landing net, to see what can be done to get you safely on the bank. Oh, for

almighty Grace to make your sharpest trials the surest way of saving your soul!

Very frequently does it happen that persons are dealt with by *bodily affliction*. One said that he would never have seen Christ if he had not been blinded. It was only when his eyesight failed that, by faith, he looked to his Savior. Another, who had lost both his legs, declared that it was the best thing that ever happened to him, for he could no longer go with his evil companions in the ways of amusement and folly. He was brought to the House of God and there the Lord met with him! So the doctor tells you that your lungs are affected and, he says, he hardly thinks that you will recover. God is speaking to you somewhat roughly by that dread disease, but listen to its voice! Let the consumption warn you that your *sin* should be consumed! Many and many a time, headache and heartache have brought sufferers to their knees and made them turn to God. If I am addressing any who are in the condition—most pitiable and sad—of being likely to end their days in the hospital, let me interpret to them the voice of God in this trying dispensation—"Turn you, turn you to Him that smites you; turn at once unto the Lord, and live."

Another very likely means by which God takes men among the thorns and brings them to Himself, *is the loss of dear friends*. A dying mother, in her death, has been mother in a *spiritual* sense to those whom she brought forth naturally. How often has a wife beckoned her husband to Heaven! And the dear children of London who die so numerously, are among the ablest missionaries of the Cross! How they speak to the father's heart! How the mother is moved as she remembers little Jane and the hymn she sang when she came home from Sunday school. And what little Harry said about meeting mother with Jesus in Heaven! God often brings men and women to Himself by taking their children from them. There was a sheep that would not follow the shepherd, so He stooped down and took the lamb up in His bosom, and walked away with it—and then the mother followed bleating after him. May it be so with all of you who have lost dear children! May you follow that gentle Jesus who has gathered your lambs into His bosom in Heaven! But you do not want to lose your children, do you? No, and you do not want to lose your wife or your mother. Then follow Jesus without needing such trials.

In brief, all I have been saying amounts to this—take the old road by the Cross of Christ and do not need to have your path strewn with thorns! Come to Jesus just as you are, and come now! Spirit of God, draw them! I feel that my words are so feeble when I talk to you about this great salvation. What can *I* do? If you are to be saved, the arm of God must be revealed—and *then* the work *will* be done!

II. I am going, now, a step farther. Manasseh was not only taken "among the thorns," but he was "bound with fetters." So The LORD SOMETIMES PERMITS MEN TO BE BOUND BY MENTAL TRIALS.

All other trials put together can never be compared with mental trials. I mean such as these. For instance, *when sin ceases to afford pleasure*. The man used to be a very jovial companion. He could sing a comic song and he was fine company, but, all of a sudden, he lost all that pleasure

and he could enjoy it no longer. If he is taken to the theater, it seems all hollow to him. He went only a few nights, ago, and when he came back, he said, "Pooh! Call that amusement? It is worse than hard work." The very things that once made him all aglow with delight do not affect him, now, nor cast a single ray of light on his path! He has lost all zeal for that which he once loved in the way of sinning!

Beside that, *his daily avocation has become distasteful*. He used to take an interest in his business, but he has no pleasure in it now—it seems a mechanical drudgery. His life has turned into a treadmill, all hard work without an atom of joy. Friend, if this is your case, God is dealing with you! He knows how to pull your proud spirit down. He can bring your gaiety into the very dust and you, who danced and reveled, the other day, will mourn in sackcloth and ashes when He begins to visit you.

Worse, even, than this, *your old sins come out of their hiding places*. You buried them long ago. You forgot all about them. You never thought of seeing any more of them, but now they haunt you, those ghosts of your former sins! You are like a man on one of the Russian plains when the snow has fallen deeply. The wolves, your old sins, are after you—you have tried to drive hard and you have given up one habit after another to the wolves, but here they come! You can hear their howl behind you! You will have to give up something more and on you speed, lashing the coursers of your resolution, yet you cannot escape from the cruel pack! They are upon you, they will tear you in pieces! Even when you are asleep, you hear them in your dreams. When you wake in the morning, you can still hear them. I remember when, at night, I used to dream of Hell. And when I woke in the morning, and all day long, I had a horrible remembrance of my past iniquities which I could not put away. Are you getting fettered like this? If so, I cannot say that I regret it, for, so long as you are saved, I shall not mind the roughness of the road if you will not come by a smoother one!

It may be that you have *great inability in prayer*. I heard you say "Why, I can pray when I like!" Can you? "Oh, we have only to say, 'God have mercy upon us!' and all will be right." Yes, but you do not find it so now, do you? You have been praying, but you have not been heard. You have cried to God, but you find no peace. You have gone on pleading, but you have found no rest. This is where you are now, with an iron Heaven above that reverberates with your cry. Ah, poor Soul, yours is a sorrowful condition, but this is the way they must go who will not take the easier road to Heaven! If God means to save you, He will save you even thus, as you will not hear His voice and live.

I daresay, too, that now you feel *a great need of power to grasp the promises.* If, in preaching, I say anything dreadful, you will believe it and take it home to yourself. If there is a threat, you will cry, "Ah, that is true! That is true to me!" But when I utter a sweet word of encouragement, you say, "Oh, I dare not take that! It would be too presumptuous." And when a glorious promise is set before you, you say, "I wish that I could appropriate *that*, but it is too good to be true to *me*." I am only tell-

ing you what I have gone through, myself, therefore I can speak, I was going to say, as one who knows every inch of the ground. Oh, what a fool I was that I did not believe in Christ the straight way, but that I must need to go round this road of learning my own nothingness and powerlessness—and learning it by a painful and bitter experience!

And, dear Friend, if I understand your position, you have *a fear of death and a dread of judgment upon you*. "Oh," you say within yourself, "the wrath to come, the wrath to come!" It is no use for anybody to preach to you the new and false doctrine, you know very well that—

"There is a dreadful Hell,"

for you have the premonition of it in your own conscience, and you cannot rest because of it! Well, well, this is the way by which the Lord will drive you to Himself! The captains of the host of the king of Assyria have taken you among the thorns, bound you with fetters and brought you down to Babylon. You seem to be under the cruel dominion of Satan—you hear about Zion, but you are carried away to Babylon—you are an exile in a strange land!

There is one thing I want to say to you, and then I will turn away from this point. If you are in the power of the enemy, but you are not *willingly* there, you will get away from it. You remember Mr. Bunyan's description of Giant Slay-Good? He would go up and down the heavenly road leading to the Celestial City and lay hold of the pilgrims, one by one, to take them into his den and pick their bones. But Mr. Feeble-Mind said that if they did not come there willingly, and if they needed to escape, they would escape. Now I want you to gather comfort out of that Truth of God. You do not want to be a slave to Satan. You do not wish to remain in doubt and fear, do you? "Want to remain as I am?" you say, "I would give my right hand to get out of this cruel bondage! I would yield both my eyes with cheerfulness if the Light of God might, thereby, come into my soul." You need not give up your hands or your eyes! And you shall not perish—you shall not die, but live! The Lord speaks comfort to you from this story of Manasseh in Babylon.

Listen to two or three observations and then I will close. In order to your comfort and peace, first, *know that the Lord is God*. You did not know it. You refused to know it, but know it now. When the Lord comes to try conclusions with a man, and puts out His almighty power, it is not long before that man will know that Jehovah is God, indeed! If we learn it quickly, as Manasseh did—"Then Manasseh knew that the Lord, He was God"—it will be for our salvation. But if we are very slow in learning it, like Pharaoh was, we shall have to learn it all the same, but it will be to our destruction! "Who is the Lord? Who is the Lord?" asked Pharaoh. The Lord soon gave him an answer, for the water was turned into blood and the frogs were even in his majesty's bed-chamber!

"Who is the Lord?" Listen to the thunder! Hear the rattling of the hail! Sit still in the darkness, the darkness that might be felt! Pharaoh began to make a shrewd guess as to who Jehovah was and he pulled in his horns a good deal, and promised to yield this, and yield that. But by the time Jehovah's 10TH bolt had been launched against him, and his first-born son was dead, then he knew who God was! Remember the result of

that great battle and see who it is against Whom you are contending. Throw down your weapons! Put an end to such a mad warfare! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth, but let not a man contend with his Maker!

That done, *humble yourself before the Lord* as Manasseh did. The lower you lie before God, the better. Stretch yourself flat down upon His promise. Have no pleas, make no excuses. Down, Sir, down! You cannot lie too low. Off with those feathers of pride! Remember how God said to the children of Israel, "Put off your ornaments from you, that I may know what to do to you." Fling away all thoughts of pride and human merit, and put a rope around your neck! Come before God like a condemned criminal who only owes his present absence out of Hell to infinite, unspeakable mercy! Now you are getting where God can bless you! It is impossible to pardon a man unless he is guilty. I insult him if I offer to forgive him for an offense he never committed. But you are guilty before God! Then confess your iniquity and transgression, and come before the Lord with penitent acknowledgments of all your wanderings out of the way of holiness.

What next? Well, do as Manasseh did, *begin to pray*. Cry mightily unto the Lord, but do, also, this thing, as I have twice bid you, tonight—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." I do not wonder that the Church of Rome puts up the cross everywhere. It becomes idolatry to worship a symbol; but if the symbol did no more than remind us of a Crucified Savior, that might be a different matter, for it is a Crucified Savior that we need always to remember. Christ died for sinners. Christ died, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God. "In due time, Christ died for the ungodly."

Now, look this way, look to Jesus. Do not look 20 ways, look only this *one* way. The Son of God, the Son of Man, bore sin in His own body on the tree. I have often seen, upon crosses in Italy, these words, "*Spes unica*," the unique hope, the only hope of a sinner. Salvation is all in Christ! It is not what *you* are, nor what you ever will be—your hope lies in Jesus Christ—dead, buried, risen again, pleading at the right hand of God, coming again in Glory! Rest there, my beloved Hearer! Rest there, *now*, whether you have come by the old original right way, or have come over hedge and ditch as I did, through the thorns and through the sea! So long as you get to Christ, I care very little how you come. "What is the right way of coming to Christ?" asked one. Well, if you get to Him at all, *any way* is the right way and, after all, there is no long journey to take to get to Christ! Where you are, tonight. Where you sit in that pew or those aisles, look to Jesus by faith and the great transaction is done—and you are saved!

What do I mean by your being saved—that you will thereby escape Hell? You will do that, but I am not talking about Hell just now. You will escape from the *power of sin—that* is something far more to be thought of. You will escape from the *love of sin* and from a *life of sin*. Holiness will be worked in you. You will be born a child of God. May the Lord grant it to every one of you! If the Savior were to say to me, tonight, "I will give

you every soul but one in the Tabernacle, and you are to pick out the one that is to be lost," I would not pick one of those little girls over yonder and, as I look round this gallery, I would not select any of you old gentlemen, nor the young ones, either. Where would I find the soul that would be lost? I thank God that I am not condemned to make such a terrible choice as that! But, I pray you, do not make it yourself! Do not make it yourself! May God in mercy lead you to say, "If there is only one soul that will look to Christ, tonight, I will be that one." While I stop a minute, look, look, LOOK. Look to Jesus, look and live! And to His dear name shall be the praise forever and ever! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
Psalm 38.

A Psalm of David, to bring to remembrance.

Remember, although this is a very sorrowful Psalm, it was written by a man of God. It will show you what a terrible thing sin must be, for even a child of God feels the smart of it very grievously. This is not the language of an unforgiven sinner—it is the cry of a saint who, for a while, has sinned and is feeling the bitterness of his transgression.

Verse 1. *O Lord, rebuke me not in Your wrath.* "If You do rebuke me, O Lord, do it gently! Be not angry with me, for I cannot bear it, I shall die under it. O Lord, rebuke me not in Your wrath."

1. *Neither chasten me in Your hot displeasure.* "Chasten me, it will do me good; it is necessary; it is profitable; but not in Your displeasure, certainly not in Your hot displeasure." The man of God is more afraid of God's anger than he is of suffering. He does not object to affliction—what he does fear is any degree of the wrath of God in the chastisement.

2. *For Your arrows stick fast in me.* Does God shoot at His own children? Yes, but only that He may kill the sin in them. And He knows how to make His arrows stick, and stick fast, too, in His own dear children. The Lord hates sin with a perfect hatred. Even when sin was laid on Christ, even though it was none of His, yet the Father forsook Him. He will not endure sin anywhere, but He hates it most in those whom He loves most—"Your arrows stick fast in me."

2. *And Your hand presses me sorely.* As if God's hand pressed heavily upon the soul of David. I remind you again that this was a man of God who thus cried out. If any of you, who are not the children of God, are feeling the heavy hand of the Lord on account of your sin, do not wonder at it. If His own children do not escape the rod, He is not likely to spare you! See into what a terrible condition David came, as he tells us in the third verse.

3. *There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your anger.* He felt as if his very flesh was decaying, rotting, dissolving, and that there was no soundness in it. When God deals with men in a way of anger, they cannot stand against Him any more than the wax can resist the heat of the furnace. Beware, I pray you, that you provoke not God's eternal wrath in

Hell, for even here it is not to be borne! What will it be when mercy's gate is closed? "There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your anger."

3. *Neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin.* His very bones suffered through his sin. He could not rest, he turned over and over in his bed, but he could not find a place soft enough to lie upon in peace. Sin will make any man's bones ache when once his conscience is really quickened and, with David, he will cry, "There is no rest in my bones because of my sin."

4. *For my iniquities are gone over my head.* David was like a man who has sunk seven fathoms deep! Big waves of iniquity rolled over him and he saw no light, no hope, no way of escape.

4. *As an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.* It is a great mercy when sin is a burden, for, when it becomes too heavy for us to bear, Christ will bear it! A man is in an evil case when he finds no burden in sin, when he thinks he is quite able to bear it himself! But he to whom sin is an insupportable, intolerable load, is already on the road to mercy. See how the Psalmist goes on to show that his case is still worse.

5. *My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness.* He got to be so bad that he could not bear himself! His sorrow on account of his folly had made him feel as if he were a corrupt being, like one suffering with a foul cancer, unfitted for the company of his friends—"My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness." As I read that verse, it brings up memories of my own state of mind before I found the Savior. Look at the title of the Psalm—"To bring to remembrance." That is just what it has done with me. Perhaps it is doing the same with some of you.

6. *I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long.* I again remind you that this is a child of God, a man who had enjoyed the Light of God's Countenance, and yet he was in this sad state. Do not utterly condemn yourselves. Do not say that you are not the people of God because you are troubled in heart. But if you really are *not* God's people as yet, but only seekers after Him, do not wonder if sin greatly grieves and vexes you.

7-9. *For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease: and there is no soundness in my flesh. I am feeble and sorely broken: I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart. Lord, all my desire is before You* The first beam of comfort comes in here. "Lord, I am almost at death's door, yet You know my desire; I do not love sin, I wish to be a true Believer, I desire to be holy. Lord, all my desire is before You. You can read it as if it were written in a book. I need not speak, for I would only spoil my case with my words; but all my desire is before You."

9. *And my groaning is not hid from You.* "I can hide my groaning in a measure from my fellow creatures. I try to suppress my moans when anybody is near, but my groaning is not hid from You." Thank God there is not a tear in any eye but God sees it, nor a groan in any heart but God hears it! Make much of this Truth of God and find sweet consolation in it.

10. *My heart pants.* That is the best sort of prayer in all the world, when there are no words, but in silence there is a panting and longing af-

ter God! We cannot explain what this panting is, but if you have ever seen a hunted stag panting for breath, you have some idea what David meant when he said, "My heart pants."

10. *My strength fails me.* That is good prayer, too. "When I am weak, then am I strong." When I cannot pray, I do pray. When my strength fails me, then God's strength comes in to help me.

10, 11. *As for the sight of my eyes, it also is gone from me. My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sores and my kinsmen stand afar off.* If you have ever had much trouble, you will find that your friends are rather scarce at such times. Friends are very much like swallows—they twitter about us in the summer and they build their nests under our eaves—but where are they in the winter? Ah, where are they? You may ask the question, but who can answer it? Sorrow is not a thing which attracts company. Men naturally hide themselves from grieving companions. So David says, "My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sores and my kinsmen stand afar off."

12, 13. *They also that seek after my life lay snares for me: and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things and imagine deceits all the day long. But I, as a deaf man, heard not; and I was as a dumb man that opens not his mouth.* It is a fine thing, when you are slandered, not to hear it. And it is a better thing to never reply to it. I have always tried to possess one deaf ear and one blind eye—and I believe that the deaf ear is the better ear, and the blind eye by far the more useful of the two! Do not remember the injury that is done to you, try to forget it and pass it over. Do not go about the world determined to grasp every red-hot iron that any fool holds out before you. Let it alone! It will be for your own good and for God's Glory to be very patient under the slander of the wicked.

14, 15. *Thus I was as a man that hears not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs. For in You, O LORD, do I hope: You will hear, O Lord my God.* So the Psalmist, by his example, encourages you to take your troubles to God, and not to handle them yourselves. Spread them before Him and trust in Him to deliver you in His own time and way.

16-21. *For I said, hear me, lest otherwise they should rejoice over me: when my foot slips, they magnify themselves against me. For I am ready to halt, and my sorrow is continually before me. For I will declare my iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin. But my enemies are lively, and they are strong and they that hate me wrongfully are multiplied. They also that render evil for good are my adversaries; because I follow the thing that is good. Forsake me not, O LORD: O my God, be not far from me.* The persecuted Psalmist resorts to his God. Let us do the same when we, also, are persecuted for righteousness' sake.

22. *Make haste to help me, O lord my Salvation.* David's case is urgent and his plea is earnest. If we are in a like case, let us also cry, "Make haste to help me, O Lord my salvation."

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—492, 584, 606.

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

THE DRAWINGS OF DIVINE LOVE
NO. 2386

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, NOVEMBER 11, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 26, 1888.

"No man can come to Me, except the Father who sent Me draws him and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the Prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Therefore, everyone who has heard, and has learned of the Father, comes unto Me." John 6:44, 45.

THERE is something here which troubles many seeking souls. They hear the Gospel preached in this manner, "Look and live," or, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." This comforts them and they say to themselves, "This is a way in which we can run. We delight to be told of salvation by faith in Christ." By-and-by, they hear a discourse upon our Savior's Words, "You must be born again," or they listen to descriptions of the inward experience of a child of God. They are taught that there must be a brokenness of heart before there can be a true binding up. There must be a stripping before there can be a clothing. There must be death before there can be resurrection and then they say to themselves, "This, we fear, is true. But how different it is from the message we heard the other day! Are there two things equally true—salvation by simple faith in Christ—and yet the necessity of a new heart and a right spirit?"

They *are* equally true, and they ought to be preached with equal clearness, and equal earnestness! But I would say to every seeker, "You will find it very injurious to get worrying yourself with such difficulties as these. As a rule, you had better leave those questions for another day." Suppose that you were puzzled concerning specific gravity, the weight of a body in water? if you were a drowning man, I would recommend you to waive the consideration of such a subject till you were safely on shore! It is hardly the time, I think, to enter into difficult disquisitions while you are in grave peril. And, in like manner, you may leave many theological questions until, by faith in Christ, you are saved. Then, going into His school, you may ask Him to teach you these other more advanced lessons.

Now, for your help, I desire to say that these two doctrines of Salvation by Faith and the Inward Drawing of the Spirit of God are equally true and, unless they are proclaimed in due proportion, mischief may come from the preaching of either the one, or the other. I think that when the preacher only says, "Believe, believe, believe, believe, believe, believe," mischief may come of that imperfect declaration, for it is a one-sided form of the Truth of God, and other important Truths of God may be for-

gotten, and men may get into a superficial habit of imagining that they believe when they hardly know what it is that they believe—and their faith is not the living faith of God's elect which works by love, purifies the soul and sanctifies the life!

On the other hand, I am quite sure that you may preach the need of inward experience and preach it very thoroughly and continually. But if this other matter of faith is left out, you may preach some of your hearers into despair, many of them into indifference and others of them into a kind of self-righteousness of feelings! I have met with persons who were certainly trusting in their *feelings* and who went so far as to condemn others because they had not endured the same amount of misery and passed through the same conviction of sin, or indulged in the same agony of despair. Truths of God are preached, we shall not stop to reconcile them—there is no need to do so, especially if they reconcile themselves to you while we preach! If the two doctrines are preached, they will act as a balance, the one to the other, and while men hear our Savior say, "He that believes on Me has everlasting life," they will not misunderstand what He says if they also hear as the deep bass note of that musical scale the equally Divine utterance, "You must be born again."

The text gives us good help upon this subject. I do not believe that there are any practical difficulties in the matter at all. I say, *practical* difficulties, for there *are philosophical* difficulties. Is there any subject about which there are *not* philosophical difficulties? Can you not, if you think of anything—be it the most commonplace fact in natural history, very soon surround it with a cloud of obscurity which nobody can remove? A fool can set a stool where a wise man will tumble over it and you can soon raise a difficulty if you want to. Here is one. There is a bullock in the meadow and there is also a sheep in the same pasture. They will both eat grass and on the bullock that grass will turn to hair, and on the sheep it will turn to wool. How come? Can you tell me? No, and I do not want to know. It may be a very interesting point for discussion, but, *practically* there is no difficulty about it. Those who tan the leather, or those who dye the wool are not hindered in the least degree in their handicraft by the philosophical difficulty I have mentioned! So, there are philosophical difficulties about this matter of simple faith and salvation by it, and of the Spirit's work and the necessity for it, but, practically, there is no difficulty at all, for the man who believes in Christ Jesus *is* born again! And every man who is born again *believes* in the Lord Jesus Christ! The two things come together, live together and are perfected together!

However, for the help of some sincere seekers after Christ who may be in perplexity, I will speak about this matter that troubles them. Let me read the text again—"No man can come to Me, except the Father who sent Me draws him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the Prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Therefore, everyone who has heard, and has learned of the Father, comes unto Me."

I. Our first observation upon this text is that THE ALL-IMPORTANT MATTER OF FAITH IS A VERY SIMPLE BUSINESS. Twice is it mentioned here, and the only definition of it that is given is *coming to Christ*—"No man can come to Me." And, again, in the 45th verse, "Comes unto Me."

Faith in Christ is simply and truly described as coming to Him. It is not an acrobatic feat—it is simply a coming to Christ. It is not an exercise of profound mental faculties—it is coming to Christ. A child comes to his mother. A blind man comes to his home. Even an animal comes to his master. Coming is a very simple action, indeed. It seems to have only two things about it. One is, to come *away* from something, and the other is, to come *to* something.

In coming to Christ Jesus as our Savior, we first come away from all other trusts. We leave all other confidences right behind us and come away from them altogether. My own works? I must come away from all trust in them, to Christ! My own feelings? I must come away from all reliance upon them, to Christ! Ceremonies, forms, rites, yes, even such as God has given, I must come away from all confidence in them and I must come to Jesus, quitting and leaving them all! You cannot come to Jesus and yet hold on to your old trusts. You cannot come to Jesus and yet cling to your old sins. You must come away from *righteous* self as well as from *sinful* self. To go *to* a place, I must go *from* a place. If you would come to Christ, you must bid, "good-bye," to your old sins and say, "farewell," to your old confidences. Are you ready to sue for a divorce between your soul and sin, between your soul and self-confidence? That is the first essential thing in coming to Christ—*leaving all other trusts*.

Then the other part of coming is drawing near to Christ to obtain everything we need. When we truly come to Christ, we draw near to Him. We do not any longer neglect Him, we do not look away from Him—on the contrary, we begin to think much of Him, our hopes center in Him and, having thought of Him, and so having come *mentally* to Him, we trust in Him. We come to Him for what He is. Is He a Savior? We come to Him that He may save us! Does He wash away sin? We come to Him that He may wash away our sin! Does He heal spiritual diseases? We come to Him that He may heal us of our diseases! You know what is meant by coming to such and such a physician. You must, in that same sense, come to Jesus Christ, the Divine Physician, for sin-sick souls.

This expression, coming to Christ, is so simple that I do not know how to make it any plainer. I am afraid that if I were to try to explain it, I might be like Thomas Scott when he wrote his notes to Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. Going round his parish, he found a woman who had *The Pilgrim's Progress* with his notes. "My good woman," he asked, "do you understand *The Pilgrim's Progress*?" "Yes, Scott, I understand The Pilgrim's Progress very well and I hope that, one day, I may be able to understand your explanation of it." I will not attempt to explain any further what coming to Christ is, lest I should not succeed any better than Mr. Scott did! It ought to be clear to everybody that coming *from* something, and coming *to* something, or someone, constitute the act of coming. Quit, then, both sin and self by determined resolve, and come to Jesus—rest in Him, take Him to be everything to you—and then believe that you have everlasting life, according to His declaration, "He that believes on Me has everlasting life."

Yet our Savior does, in close connection with this text, give us another illustration of what faith is. Faith is coming to Christ. It is also *eating or*

receiving Christ. A man has a piece of bread in his hand. He does not know where the wheat grew, nor in what mill it was ground, nor in what oven the bread was baked, but he knows that it is bread and that he is hungry. Nature, especially living nature, abhors a vacuum, so the man determines to fill the vacuum within with that piece of bread! What does he do, but eat it? You do not have to teach children how to eat. I said to a little boy this afternoon, "Why don't you put your bread and butter in your ear?" Of course, he knew better than to act like that, so all he did was to laugh at me! And you never yet met with a child who took to putting the bread and butter in his ear—he puts it in his mouth and eats it. So, there really is, if you would but use it, sense enough within you to understand what faith in Christ is. If you were not so ready to confound and confuse yourself, my dear Friend, you might know what faith is!

You tell me that it puzzles you. I think that it is *you* that puzzles yourself, not faith that puzzles you. When you get bread, you put it into your mouth, you eat it and let it go down into yourself. You may not know much about the processes that are going on within you and you need not want to know. If you do not understand anything about them, the bread will feed you just as well. Now, in that way take the Lord Jesus Christ into you, *spiritually*, and feed upon Him. Say from your heart, "Lord, I live upon You. I believe You to be God. I believe that You did take our nature. I trust You as the Incarnate God. I believe that You did suffer in the place of guilty men. I believe that You have put away the sin of all those who trust You, and put it away forever so that they can never be condemned. I trust You to be my Savior, altogether and solely my Savior." If you really do that, you are saved.

"How do I know it?" says one. Because Christ says it—is not that enough? "He that believes on Me has everlasting life." "But I have not felt any strange sensations! I have had no wonderful dreams." What? Are you asking for such signs as those? Is not Christ's Word, "He that believes on Me has everlasting life," enough for you? Lord, I believe on You. Therefore, I have everlasting life. Your Word is enough for me!

That is my first point, faith is a very simple matter.

II. But, secondly, TO THIS FAITH MEN ARE GREATLY DISINCLINED. He who knew most about men says of them, "No man can come to Me, except the Father who sent Me draws him."

Men are grievously disinclined to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Their unwillingness is so great that it amounts to an inability of this sort, that, as there are none so deaf as those that will not hear, and none so blind as those that will not see, so there are none so unable as those who are unwilling! And the Savior thus puts it, "No man can come to Me, except the Father who sent me draws him."

But why are men so unwilling to believe in the Lord Jesus? In Christ's lifetime on earth, their unwillingness arose partly because He was of such lowly origin. They said, "We know Joseph, and Mary, and the brethren of Jesus. How can we believe in Him as the Messiah?" He was so poor, so obscure, He came of a family that was not notable in Israel as far as they knew. Besides, He came out of Nazareth and they asked, "Can

any good thing come out of Nazareth?" He was a Galilean and they could not look up to one who came from that despised region.

In addition to that, all His teaching was opposed to their proud notions. If He had come as an earthly king, to overthrow the Roman power, they might have believed in Him, but, as He was, they regarded Him as a root out of a dry ground. They could see nothing illustrious about the Man of Sorrows, so they would not believe in Him. And numbers of people, to this day, do not receive Christ because faith in Him is not fashionable. True godliness is not held in high repute in the upper circles of society. O simpletons, to lose your souls for the sake of a little worldly grandeur! God save us all from such insanity as that!

The more common reason why men are not saved by faith in Christ is because they do not see any *need* of a Savior. I know you very well, my dear Mr. Good-Enough, and my dear Friend, Mr. Too-Good! You do not believe that you need saving—you think that you have as much as you ought to have of everything that is good, and even some to give away! Oh, yes, you hope to enter Heaven with all sails up. What will you do when you get there? The redeemed ones are all singing that they have washed their robes and made them white *in the blood of the Lamb.* But you will have to go up in a corner, by yourself, and hold your tongue, because you had not anything that needed to be washed and you were, yourself, perfectly clean! You would not be happy in Heaven, for the very Glory of that blissful place is the Lamb of God and His precious blood is the theme of continual thanksgiving! I pray God to bring you out of your miserable delusion, for it is no better than that. You are not the good man that you think you are—you are stained with sin from head to foot—and unless you are washed in the Divinely-provided bath, even in the atoning blood of Jesus, you will perish in your sin!

But many do not come to Christ and trust Him because they will not receive the doctrine of Substitution. Christ's *dying in the sinners' place*, the Just for the unjust, to bring them to God, they will not have—they kick at it! I assure you that you will never have rest and peace till you accept that blessed soul-saving doctrine, for other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, even Jesus Christ the Righteous, and there is no Jesus Christ to trust in except the glorious Substitute who bore our sins in His own body on the tree! Oh, that men would not be so foolish as to reject God's plan of salvation by the vicarious Atonement once offered on Calvary!

Many also refuse the Savior because they are occupied with other things. They cannot come to Christ because their farm, their merchandise, their newly-married wife, or something or other, keeps them back. Oh, how long some of you have been waiting—some of you who have attended the Tabernacle, too, all the time! If anybody had said, 20 years ago, that you would be sitting in your pew an unconverted man, tonight, you were not willing to have believed it! You will probably be sitting in that pew, an unconverted man, in 20 *more* years' time, I fear—you will either be saved, or you will have gone the way of all flesh! Oh, that the day would come when there shall be no more hesitation, no more post-

ponement, but when you would, from your heart, say, "I must have Christ. I will trust Him!" Say even now what we have often sung—

"I do believe, I will believe,
That Jesus died for me!
That on the Cross He shed His blood,
From sin to set me free."

There are many more who do not exercise simple faith in Christ because they do not like the consequences of it. "Why," says one, "if I become a Believer in Christ, I shall have to give up my old ways." You will. "If I become a follower of the Lamb, I cannot go where I now go." Quite right! I am glad you see that. I hope that you are not such a hypocrite as to imagine that you can trust Christ to put away your past sin and then go on living in sin as you have done. That will never do! Christ has opened a hospital for the sick, but it is that He may *heal* them! He receives sinners, but not that they may *remain* sinners—it is that He may make *saints* of them and deliver them from sin! You will never come to Christ as long as you are in love with sin. And you are so much in love with sin that you never will come at all except Omnipotent Grace shall draw you! And so says our Lord Jesus Christ, "No man can come to Me, except the Father who sent Me draws him."

There are many others who cannot trust in Christ and cannot come to Him because they wish for certain feelings or emotions. You want to experience amazing changes that you may know that God is at work in your soul, do you? Well, I do not wonder at that desire, but please notice what is said in the 46th verse, "Not that any man has seen the Father." The work of God in the heart is not *seen* by the soul until, first of all, the soul sees Jesus Christ! You must not think that you can deal with an absolute God. Apart from Christ, *you cannot approach God*, and God operating upon your heart, without faith in Christ, will not be the ground of any comfort to you. Whatever God may be doing in you, or may *not* be doing in you, is not the thing that you are to look to as the foundation of your hope! Your trust is to be in *Christ's work on the Cross*, and in nothing else! You shall see plenty of evidences, miracles and signs, by-and-by, but, to begin with, the Gospel for you is, "Believe, believe, believe." "I could believe if ____." Oh, yes! I see, the ground of your confidence is that, "if," not God's Word. "Oh, Sir, but I could trust God's Word if I - ____." Ah, that is the same thing, over again!

You see, it is not God's Word that you trust—it is that rotten, "if," to which you cling! Now, away with it, away with it, I pray you! Either call God a liar, or else believe Him. It must be one of the two! But do not pretend that you would believe Him under certain conditions that you would like to impose. If a man said to me that he would believe me under certain conditions, I would understand at once that he did not really believe me at all. That, in fact, he could not believe *me*, but he would believe somebody else, and perhaps trust me under cover of that other person. That would not be faith in me at all and, I pray you, deal not with the Lord in such a fashion!

So, you see, dear Friends, my text plainly teaches us that men are greatly disinclined to come to Jesus.

III. Therefore, THE OPERATIONS OF GOD ON THE SOUL ALL RUN IN THE WAY OF LEADING MEN TO COME TO JESUS. That is clear if you read the text, "No man can come to Me, except the Father who sent Me draws him."

You see, first, *the Father inclines us to come to Christ.* "It is written in the Prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.'" What are they taught? "Therefore, everyone who has heard, and has learned of the Father, comes unto Me." It is clear that the drift of the Divine operations in the heart of man is towards Christ. The Lord draws us, but all His drawings are towards Christ. If you think that you have experienced the work of the Holy Spirit in your heart, and yet it does not draw you towards Christ, you have made a mistake. The Spirit always draws away from self and away from sin, to Jesus Christ, alone! If you are drawn that way, it is the Lord who draws you, for all His drawings are in that direction.

Then, next, the drift of all God's teachings is this way. Whatever the Spirit of God teaches a man, the end and objective of that teaching is to get him away from self and draw him to Christ. All the teachings of affliction are intended to make us sick of self and fond of Christ. All the true teachings of the Christian ministry aim at putting down self and exalting Christ!

All the drawings and all the teachings, then, that come from God, are towards Christ. By this test you may try everything that professes to be a Divine operation. If any man says, "I am the subject of the work of the Spirit of God," and he does not exalt Christ, tell him that he is not the subject of the Spirit's work at all. If he comes to you with some fine idea about himself, making out that he is some great one, say to yourself, "It is no part of the work of the Spirit to set up any *man* as a great one. His work is to take of the things of Christ and show them to us." The Holy Spirit addicts Himself to the glorifying of Christ, so He withers our false hopes and gives us true hopes! He does this in order that Christ may be lifted up and that we may be drawn to Him.

I believe that this is the test of all kinds of preaching. Does a man come with a Divine message to my soul? I will try him by this test. Does he lift up Christ? Does he draw me to trust in Christ? Does he draw me to love Christ? Does he draw me to be like Christ? Well and good! I will hear some more of what that man says, but if, Sunday after Sunday, I have to say, "They have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid Him," I say, "Good-bye, Sir, other people may listen to you, but you are not the man that I want to hear." I must have Christ, Christ, Christ, Christ, Christ first, last, Alpha, Omega, beginning, middle, end and all through, or else I cannot believe that the teaching is of God, for the Father draws to Christ and teaches concerning Christ.

Further, *He makes us to hear and to learn that we may come to Christ.* Come, then, my dear Hearers! I think that I have now brought you a little into the Light of God. You say that you must be the subject of a Divine operation. Are you looking to Christ? Then you have had that Divine operation performed upon you, for it makes you look to Christ, alone! "Is believing an easy thing?" asks one. It is the easiest thing in the world! It is as easy as coming, or as eating. "Well, but why is it so difficult for *me*?"

Probably it is difficult because it is so easy. I believe that faith is a hard thing to many because it is *not* a hard thing. It is just like Naaman's washing in the Jordan—if the Prophet had bid him do some great thing, some difficult thing, he would have done it. But when he said nothing but, "Wash, and be clean," Naaman felt that he was too great to go to the River Jordan and too clean to go and wash. He is a nobleman and a gentleman—is he to go and wash like any pig?

Yes, he is, and only so can he be cleansed, for his leprosy makes him as foul as any swine could be and he must, therefore, wash if he would be clean! You, though you are the queen of morality, must trust in Christ just as a harlot must trust in Christ! And you, young man, though you are, in all things, noble and excellent, you must come and believe in Christ just as a thief must do, or else you can never come where that dying thief, is, who passed with Christ into Paradise! There is but *one* door—will you bow your head and enter? There is only *one* way of salvation—will you run along it? If not, if you will put *your goodness* before Christ, it shall become as bad as a crime or infamy, itself! God grant that the operations of the Holy Spirit may lead you up to simple faith in Jesus!

IV. So, then, I finish with this fourth point. IF WE HAVE COME TO JESUS, WE NEED NOT QUESTION OUR SAFETY. Christ says, "He that believes on Me has *everlasting life*." He who has come to Jesus is saved! You need not question your safety, for you could not have come to Christ without *having been drawn to Him*. "No man can come to Me, except the Father who sent Me *draws* him." You could not have come if you had not been drawn! Well, then, if you have come, you have been drawn, and if the Father has drawn you, you have come the right way! It all lies in a nutshell. If I have come to Jesus and have put my trust in Him—my nature is, in itself, so averse to this way of salvation that, if I have really and from my heart accepted it—there must have been upon my heart an operation *from God* to bring me into this condition! That operation could not have been badly performed, for God never works amiss or ineffectually. I am, therefore, in the very fact of being brought to Christ, assured that God has been at work with me!

"Oh!" I have sometimes heard poor souls say, "I came to Christ, but I am afraid that I have come the wrong way." You cannot come the wrong way. "Oh, but I heard of one who came to Christ so quickly!" Yes, and I have heard of one who came to Him very slowly. But as he came, it did not so much matter *how* he came! When the whole world was drowned, a pair of greyhounds found shelter in the ark. I do not suppose they started very early. But there was a pair of snails that went in with them—I wonder how soon they started? They certainly must have started a long while before the ark door was opened or the ark prepared. Come along, then, you poor crawling snails, come along! If some of you have the greyhound's speed, come along, bound and leap to Christ—the quicker the better! But if you are a man of slow action, remember that the snails in the ark were not drowned. Though they were slow in coming in, there they were, as safely preserved as the rest of the living creatures that were with Noah. "Well" says one, "I feel as if I could only creep to

Christ with broken legs and an aching back." Then creep to Christ, only come to Him! Come anyway—leaping or limping. If you shall come, He has said, "Him that comes to Me , I will in no wise cast out," and that includes any coming in all the world if it is but a coming to Him. If you trust Him, you are saved! That Truth of God ought, I think, to give some consolation to any who are troubled about their faith and about the inner life of the soul.

Yet again, remember that all teaching that is absolutely necessary to salvation concerns Christ. "Therefore, everyone who has heard, and has learned of the Father, comes unto Me." If there were any right teachings that would lead you beyond Christ—I do not know any, but if there were such—you can do without them. The only teachings that you need are those that lead you to Christ. Let this comfort anyone who says, "I understand no theology. I am only a beginner in the study of the Word. I could not even explain the plan of salvation to another person, but I am trusting in Christ." Well, rest satisfied with that glorious fact!

To close, the best sentence in the whole text, to my mind, is that with which the 44TH verse finishes, "I will raise him up at the last day." Is not that glorious? The Savior does not merely say that he that believes is drawn to Him by the Father and that he is now saved, but He says, "I will raise him up at the last day." It is as good as saying, "I will take that man's case into My own hands." He does not mention all the intervening circumstance, but He finishes up with the last victory, "I will raise him up at the last day." "This man is a sinner, Lord." "I will forgive him." "He has a black heart." "I will change it." "He will be very fickle." "I will keep him." "He will be much tempted." "I will pray for him." "He will have many afflictions." "I will sustain him." "But Lord, he will die." "I will be with him." "But he will be buried, Lord, and laid among the worms, dust to dust." "I will raise him up at the last day."

It is as good as saying, "I will go through with the business for the whole of the man," for if He takes care of the poor body, and raises it up, depend upon it that He will take care of the *soul* that shall be forever with Him! If this rag of a robe that I wear is yet so dear to Him that He will not leave it in the grave, then the man within the robe will be all right! Christ will take care of him, depend upon that! He who will preserve the casket will not lose the jewel. "I will raise him up at the last day."

The Lord bring every one of you to trust in this mighty Savior, for His great name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
John 6:41-71.

We shall read, tonight, part of that blessed sixth chapter of John's Gospel, beginning at the 41ST verse.

Verses 41, 42. *The Jews then murmured at Him because He said, I am the bread which came down from Heaven. And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that He says, I came down from Heaven?* Familiarity breeds con-

tempt. Because the Jews knew Jesus and His kindred after the flesh, therefore they would not believe that He came down from Heaven. Let us beware of foolish prejudices and let us not judge after the flesh. Why should Jesus not have come down from Heaven even though these men knew His reputed father and mother?

43. *Jesus, therefore, answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves.* It was a murmuring that was scarcely audible, but Jesus heard it and He checked it. The Lord cannot take any delight in murmuring. "Murmur not among yourselves."

44. *No man can come to Me, except the Father who sent Me draws him: and I will raise him up at the last day.* You did not expect the Savior to say just that, did you? He always speaks the Truth of God, even though He has to lay the axe at the root of the tree of self-confidence. He does not seem to be encouraging His hearers, but rather to be repelling them. He was trying to show them the state in which they really were. They had not been drawn to Himself. They were alienated from Him and they would continue to be at a distance from Him unless God should interpose and draw them to Him.

45. *It is written in the Prophets, 'And they shall be all taught by God.' Therefore, everyone who has heard, and has learned of the Father, comes unto Me.* This was as much as to say, "The Father has never taught you. You have learned nothing from Him, or you would come to Me. And in your rejection of Me, you prove that you are strangers to the Grace of God."

46. *Not that any man has seen the Father, save He which is of God, He has seen the Father.* Christ is "of God" in a very peculiar sense. He is not God's creature, but God's Son. He is of the very *essence* of God and, therefore, He knows what God is as we never can know.

47. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believes on Me has everlasting life.* This is a grand saying! Can you not catch the Truth of God it reveals? Whatever deficiencies there may be in you, if *you* believe on *Christ*, you have everlasting life—not a life which you can lose, or which will die out, but *everlasting* life! And we are not among those who clip the wings of that great word, "everlasting." We take this verse to mean just what it says—that is, if you believe on Christ, you have within you a life which will last forever and ever!

48-50. *I am the bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from Heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die.* Christ is the Bread for the soul, the Bread of immortality, the Bread which will fit a man for Heaven and sustain him till he arrives there. Oh, that we may all eat of this Bread of Life, and so live forever!

51-54. *I am the living bread which came down from Heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this Man give us His flesh to eat? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh, and drinks My blood has eternal life; and I*

will raise him up at the last day. How necessary it is to have a *spiritual* understanding of the Scriptures! These metaphors have a sort of cannibal meaning about them to a man who goes no further than the letter. But the *spiritual* man knows that the soul feeds upon the doctrine of Christ's Incarnation and drinks in the truth of Christ's Atonement. This is feeding, this is drinking—this is being nourished upon Christ's flesh and Christ's blood!

55. *For My flesh is meat, indeed, and My blood is drink, indeed.* Meat and wine are, after all, only shadows—they feed the shadow-life of the flesh. Christ and His precious blood are the great *realities*—they nourish the true life of the spirit. Blessed are they who know what it is in spirit to feed upon these spiritual things!

56-58. *He that eats My flesh, and drinks My blood, dwells in Me, and I in him. As the living Father has sent Me, and I live by the Father: so he that eats Me, even he shall live by Me. This is that bread which came down from Heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: He that eats of this bread shall live forever.* The Savior goes over the same ground several times. There is a variety in His utterances, but in essence, the *meaning* is the same. He wants to get it into our minds that we are to live upon Him—that He, not self, He, not works, He, not our feelings—is the real food of the soul, by which that soul acquires and retains immortal life.

59, 60. *These things said He in the synagogue, as He taught in Capernaum. Many therefore of His disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?* Preachers must not be astonished if they stagger their hearers when they proclaim the Truth of God! They must not retract what they have said, nor tone it down because so-and-so is offended by it! Truth is hard, especially to hard hearts. Every great Truth is hard to a beginner in the school of Christ—but it is, none the less, to be taught, for that which is difficult, today, may become delightful, tomorrow, or whenever we are better educated in the things of God!

61, 62. *When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples murmured at it, He said unto them, Does this offend you? What and if you shall see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before?* He that is offended at any Gospel Truth may expect to be still more offended, for there are higher and deeper doctrines than Jesus had then uttered. If you stagger under the elementary lessons, what will you do when you get into the grammar school of Divinity, and begin to learn the loftier lessons of the Truths of God? Oh, for a faith that never staggers when Christ speaks, and that believes whatever He reveals!

63. *It is the Spirit that quickens; the flesh profits nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.* Do not look at them as dead words! Regard them as full of life and understand them in their living spiritual sense.

64. *But there are some of you that believe not.* Some of Christ's own disciples, some who had kept Him company—believed not! This was a very sad statement for Jesus to be obliged to make, but it must be made

today about many professed Christians—"There are some of you that believe not."

64. *For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray Him.* He is not deceived by hypocrites. If we have crept into the Church unworthily, He knows all about us. He knows us better than we know ourselves! Oh, that we might be very careful, watchful, jealous! May we abhor hypocrisy of every sort! It is impossible to continue in it without being detected, but if it were possible, we ought not to practice it, but with such an eye as that which is in the Head of the Church, even Christ, we cannot deceive—therefore, let us not attempt it.

65, 66. *And He said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto Me, except it were given unto him of My Father. From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him.* It often happens, in the ministry of a faithful preacher, that he has to say unpleasant things. And there are some who withdraw because of his preaching of the Truth of God. Should he break his heart when they do so? Certainly not! They did the same with his Master. They acted the same with the Apostle Paul. It will be so to the end of the chapter and, indeed, it is part of our work to separate between the precious and the vile. Truth is like the fan which drives away the chaff and leaves the wheat the more pure. Yet it is sad to read that many of the disciples of Christ went back and walked no more with Him because they could not endure the faithful Words He spoke to them.

67, 68. *Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will you, also, go away? Then Simon Peter*—Who was always to the front, ever ready to speak, "Simon Peter"—

68-70. *Answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that you are that Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus answered them, have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?* Our Lord often surprises us by the way in which He speaks. He does not say what we would have expected to hear from Him, but He says something that is very startling and even discouraging! It is the way of our Master, because He sees further than we do—and He often replies, not to the question as it lies in the words addressed to Him—but to a belief in the heart at the back of the words. He did so here. Peter may have thought that "the twelve" were all steadfast and sincere, so Christ says to him, "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?"

71. *He spoke of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray Him, being one of the twelve.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—552, 448, 502.

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

GOOD ADVICE FOR TROUBLOUS TIMES
NO. 2387

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY,
NOVEMBER 18, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 9, 1888.**

"Come, My people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you: hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation is past." Isaiah 26:20.

THE Lord has a very peculiar care for His own people. He is their Shepherd and He feeds them like a flock. He is their Father and He guards them as His own dear children. Whenever times of great trouble come, He thinks especially of them. He drowned the antediluvian world, but not till Noah was safely in the ark. He burned Sodom and Gomorrah, but not till Lot had escaped to the little city called Zoar. In all His judgments He remembers His mercy towards His believing people—He does not suffer them to be destroyed even in the day of the destruction of the ungodly. Child of God, your Father's eyes are lovingly fixed upon you. His heart cares for you every moment. Unhappy are the men and women of whom we cannot say this! Unhappy are you who have never trusted and never loved your God, your Maker, and your best Friend! But thrice happy is the poorest and most tried among us who knows that the Lord is his refuge, his castle and high tower, his Defender and Provider, his God and his All!

Whenever there is any evil to come upon the land, God knows all about it, for He knows everything. He foresees all that is going to happen. He sometimes gives foresight to men, as in the case of His Prophets and, I do not doubt that even now, believing men, when they live very near to God, see farther into the future than others can. There were several occasions, in the life of John Linox, when he expressly foretold the deaths of certain men, and similar power has been given to other eminent saints who have walked on the hilltop with God. They have looked much farther than the dwellers in the plain, who forget God, have ever seen! But, whether we can see into the future, or not, is of little consequence, for the Lord can see! If the father of the family knows what is to occur, his children will not be without due warning and, therefore, God, when He foresees that His judgments will be abroad in the earth, takes care to forewarn His children. and when any great calamity is coming, He provides a shelter for them in the time of storm. Let us thank God for this.

O you who have no God to go to, the future must often look very dark to some of you, especially that blackest spot of all, where rolls the chilly stream of the river of death! When you come *there*, you will have to take a plunge in the dark! But the heir of Heaven knows that whatever lies before him, all is ordained and fixed, arranged and settled, by the Infinite Wisdom and Love of God, and he can trust himself without fear to the Lord's preserving mercy! Without wishing to pry into the future, he leaves himself entirely in the hands of God.

I began by saying that Believers are the objects of God's special care and, next, that God has a foresight which He exercises on their behalf. Now, further, the advice which our careful and foreseeing God gives us is sure to be wise. We should, all of us, be wise if we could do before an event what we would wish to do after it. Unfortunately, we are often wise when it is too late. I do not know a better definition of a fool than that he is a man who is wise too late. But God will make us wise in time if we are willing to take His advice. If we will do what He bids us, we shall do the right thing. Listen, then, to the advice that God here gives us when times of trouble come—and they will come—and before times of trouble come, when we foresee them. The proper and wise course for us is plainly marked out in our text—"Come, My people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you: hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation is past."

I. My first observation upon these words shall be that BEFORE OR IN TIMES OF TROUBLE, IT IS WELL TO DRAW NEAR TO GOD.

Is not that a sweet call from God, "Come, My people. Come, My people"? As the hen gives her peculiar "cluck" when the hawk is in the air, to bid her chicks come and hide under her wings, so does God, here, give a gentle loving note of alarm and a gracious call of invitation, as He says, "Come, My people." "No, do not go, My people, scattered here and there by the approach of danger, but, come, My people. Be not driven from Me by affliction, but be driven to Me by adversity. Come, My people." How sweet the words sound to me! If I had the voice of an angel, I should hardly be able to bring out all their sweetness—"Come, My people. Come, My people. The clouds are in the sky; the first flash of lightning has seemed to split the ebon darkness of Nature. Come, My people, hasten home, be quick about it, come, My people. No, linger not. Halt not through fear, be not paralyzed with apprehension! Come, My people; come to Me, come to your God, come to your Father, come to your Friend."

For what purpose should we come to the Lord? I think that in times of trouble, or when we are apprehending trial, we should come to spread our case before God. You fear that you are going to be very ill, or that your dear wife is likely to die. You are afraid that your property will be taken from you, or that something else that is dreadful will happen. Then come, and—

"Tell it all to Jesus, comfort or complaint."

Remember how Hezekiah acted when he received that abominable letter from Rabshakeh? He took it and spread it before the Lord. Now, do the same with any trouble of yours, present or impending, come and tell it all to Jesus! You were just going across the road to consult a neighbor, were you? I do not forbid you to do that, by-and-by, but *first* listen to this electric bell—"Come, My people! Come, My people!" It calls you to your God, first! Go and tell Him all about it. He will patiently hear your story, He will listen without weariness and He will efficiently help you! Therefore spread the case before Him.

The next thing you should do in coming to God is to consider His mind about such a case. Have you ever done that? When we consult a counsel, it is because we need to have his judgment upon some difficult point of law. We expect that he has had to decide something like it before. He knows the precedents that bear upon the case and we, therefore, ask his judgment. I love to see a man turning to his Bible, when a trouble is coming, to see what God has to say about such a case as his. If I am going to be bereaved, or if I am already bereaved, I wish to know how Jesus comforted those who lost their loved ones. If I am ill, I ask, "What do the Scriptures say to the sick?" If I am going down in the world, I want to learn what is God's direction to the man who is falling into poverty. Let me come and hear what God has to say about the matter! I believe that if we acted in that fashion, we should be much more calm than we are under surprising sadnesses, for we should say to ourselves, "My main question is not, 'How can I get out of this trouble?' But, 'How should I behave myself in it? What ought a man of God to do under the trying circumstances which have now come upon me?'" Does not God bid you, first of all, to consider what will be for His Glory, and afterwards to consult your own comfort? "Seek you first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness," and so the lesson of your trouble shall be shown to you. "Come, My people, then, tell me your anxiety, and ask what My will is about it."

"Come, My people," means, next, come to your God, in times of trouble, to make sure of the greatest matters. You are going to lose your little money, are you? Well, well, that is bad enough, but you have some jewels which you are not going to lose. You remember Little-Faith being robbed down Dead-Man's Lane? Bunyan says that when the three sturdy rogues, Faint-Heart, Mistrust, and Guilt, fell upon him, they robbed him of most of his spending money, but he had certain jewels that they never found and of which, therefore, they could not rob him. So, the world may come and take away many of our external and temporary comforts, but we have a treasure that *it* never gave us and *cannot* take away from us!

No, my Brother, you did not gain that treasure by keeping shop, and you will not lose it by keeping shop. If you have true religion, you did not buy it and you shall never sell it! It is yours forever, an inheritance that never can be alienated from you! Now that you have lost so much and suffered so much, I want you to come to God and just think of what you still have—God as your Father, Jesus as your Brother, the Holy Spirit as your Comforter—you still have all the resources of Providence, all the

riches of the promises, all the superabundance of the Covenant of Grace! Well then, you have not lost much, after all, have you?

I think I have told you before of a friend of mine who went to the Bank of England and came away to his business with a couple of hundred pounds in his pocket. As he passed down the Borough, he was robbed. His wife looked very white when he said that he had been robbed. "Yes," he said, "my Dear, I have been robbed of my pocket-handkerchief." Then the good man smiled—what did he care about his pocket-handkerchief so long as the hundreds of pounds were safe? So, if you only have to say, "My Lord, I have lost this little, and that little," so long as your *soul* is safe, your eternal welfare is safe, your Heaven is safe, why, surely, you will thus be helped to bear without murmuring those ills which are common to men!

Once more, "Come, My people," means that having made sure of the great things, you may leave all the little things with God. I was thinking, the other day, suppose any one of us had power over the weather, to make it rain or make it shine, just as we pleased, and I thought I should not like to be that individual because I should have people at me from morning to night, tearing me to pieces, one wanting rain, and another wanting sunshine! I would rather not have any such power! But if God gave me the control over winds and waves, and clouds and rain, if I had it tonight, the first thing I would do when I reached home would be to go upstairs and say, "Lord, You have given me power over the wind and the rain, but I know that I shall make all manner of mistakes with it. I have not the wit to manage these matters. O Lord, graciously tell me what to do." If you do like that, is it not much the same thing as if you had not any power and left it to God altogether? You may have just as much rest as that and even more, for, to be without the power is to be without the responsibility! So, Beloved, when you go to God in times of trouble, say, "Do what You will, Lord. I desire to leave the care and burden of all this trial to You. I am too foolish and too weak to deal with it, therefore, undertake for me and henceforth, having left it entirely in Your hands, I will be quiet, even as a weaned child, and say, 'Whatever happens, it is the Lord; let Him do what seems good to Him.'"

I will just ring that little silver bell and then leave this point. "Come, My people. Come, My people. Come and tell Me your trouble. Come and study My mind about your trouble. Come and make sure of the greatest matters. Come and leave your little matters with Me. Come My people, draw near to Me in times of trouble."

This is the first division of my subject.

II. The second is that IT IS WISE TO ENTER INTO THE CHAMBERS OF SECURITY WHICH GOD HAS PROVIDED FOR US. "Come, My people, enter your chambers." My business, in this second part of my discourse, is to bring a candle and to show you the way along the passages leading to the rooms provided for you—"Enter your chambers." It is a time of trouble with you—"Enter your chambers." "What chambers?" you ask. I

am going to show you. Here is the candle to light your way, take it and follow me—"Come into your chambers."

One of the rooms into which a man should enter in times of trouble is *the storeroom of Divine Power*. God is able to bear you through every trial. God is able to bring good out of all evil. God is able to comfort you. God is able either to prevent the trouble, or to make you strong enough to bear it! Nothing can happen to you which will be beyond the power of God and, according to His mighty power, He will certainly deliver you. He will show Himself strong on your behalf, if you do but trust Him, and you shall be able to sing, "The Lord is my Shepherd and my Shield." "Come, My people," get into this chamber, this well-guarded room of the Lord. Of what are you afraid? Afraid of the devil? God is stronger than Satan! Afraid of death? God is stronger than death! Afraid of poverty? Christ is stronger than poverty! Afraid of sickness? The power of God will sustain you while suffering from the most terrible disease that can possibly come to your mortal frame! "Come, My people." Hide away in this chamber of the Divine Omnipotence. You will never be afraid, surely, after that invitation, for the almighty God shall be your defense!

May I take you into another chamber, which will, perhaps, suit you better? That shall be *the council chamber of Divine Wisdom*. So you are in trouble, now, and you are a great deal perplexed—but God is not perplexed or troubled. He sees the end from the beginning! He has all means at His disposal—there are no entanglements and knots to Him, He has the clue to every labyrinth—and He can guide you into the center of joy. Be not afraid, though you are, yourself, utterly undone, though you see no way of escape—the Lord can see where you cannot! There are no such things as darkness and night to the eyes of Him who perceives all things. Oh, I delight to know that God is infinitely wise! I, a poor fool, have done this and that, and nothing comes of it, so it seems. I have tried to do right, but apparently without success. What then? There is a higher wisdom than any man's, and that Divine Wisdom is at work on behalf of the heirs of Heaven! "Come, My people," enter into this bright room and take a delightful rest in this council chamber of Divine Wisdom.

Let me show you into another chamber. Possibly some of you will feel more at home there, for it is *the drawing-room of Divine Love*. This is the state chamber of the palace—"Come, My people," and enter into it. Think of this wondrous Truth of God, that God loves you. Whether He strikes you or strokes you, the Lord loves you! Whether He chastens you or caresses you, He loves you! He loved you from before the foundation of the world and He will love you when the world's foundations shall be overthrown! He loves you without beginning, without measure, without change, without end! He has betrothed you to Himself in bonds of everlasting love. Come into this chamber with its golden hangings! Come to this couch that is softer than down and rest here! Let earth be all in arms abroad, there is perfect peace for the man who enters into this chamber of Divine Love!

But if these three chambers are not enough for your protection and comfort, may I take you to *the room of Divine Faithfulness*? This is a wonderful chamber! God is true. God is faithful. God keeps His promises. My dear Friends, do you study the promises recorded in the Bible? If you do not, I am sorry for you. The promises of God should be the constant subject of study by the child of God, because, when you get a hold of a promise from God, it is as good as the thing itself! God's promise to pay is always at par with those who trust Him—they need no discount on a Divine Promise—it is as good as the thing, itself, to their believing hearts! Oh, what an innumerable company of promises there is in this blessed Book! We need never be downhearted if we would but study this wonderful Book of God which has a promise to meet every trial and sorrow! And all the promises of God in Christ Jesus "are yes and Amen, unto the Glory of God by us." You are going into trouble—did you say that you are suffering from cancer? Oh, come into this chamber of the faithful promises! You have need to come. Did you say that your trouble is a bankruptcy caused entirely through misfortune? Come, then, into this chamber! Look at the motto hanging on the walls, "Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure." Believe it! You shall have bread and water as long as there is any beneath the cope of Heaven! God will never fail you, therefore trust Him! Be not dismayed. "Come, My people, enter your chambers."

There is one chamber into which I am very fond of entering, that is, the *strong room of Divine Immutability*. This is the one into which God took His servant Moses before He sent him down to Egypt. Moses asked the Lord what His name was, and He answered, "I AM THAT I AM." The children of Israel were not able to comprehend that glorious name of Jehovah, so the Lord gave them a shorter one, instead, "I AM." But to the full-grown child of God, this is the name in which he delights, "I AM THAT I AM," the same Immutable Jehovah, never altering, with "no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Oh, how my soul delights in the Lord's Immutability! We change like the weather glass. We never are at "Set Fair," or, if ever we do get to "Set Fair," it is sure to rain, as I notice that it generally does when the weather glass is at that point. But, dear Friends, God is always the same! We wax and wane, like the moon. God is the sun, without parallax or tropic! Blessed is the Immutability of God! What a chamber to get into! When I enter it, I feel like a man in the strong room of the Bank of England. I hear a voice saying, "I am the Lord, I change not, therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed."

There is only one more room which I will mention at this time, though I could have described many more, and that is, the *best chamber of Divine Salvation*. Look at the scarlet curtains dyed in the precious blood of Jesus! What a chamber this is for a man to dwell in, where his pardon was bought for him by the death of his Lord, where the new life is given to him by the life of his Lord, and where a throne and crown in Heaven are promised to him through the victories of his Lord! "Salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks." What a restful chamber does this salva-

tion make! "Come, My people. Come, My people. Come, My people. Enter into your chambers."

I have rung the silver bell. I have given you your candles. Now go and enter into your chambers and rest in Divine Power, Wisdom, Love, Faithfulness, Immutability and Salvation!

III. But now comes one thing more. God gives us, in the third place, further good advice. WHEN WE ENTER THOSE CHAMBERS, IT IS NECESSARY TO SHUT THE DOOR. Listen—"Enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you." If you go into a room and leave the door open, you have not hidden yourself, much, and you have not gained any protection by entering the chamber. I earnestly invite the people of God to enter the chambers I have pointed out—but I would also persuade them to shut the doors of those rooms. What for?

First, to shut out all doubt. You have entered the chamber of Divine Power. Now, do not doubt your God. "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Shut the door. Shut the door! You have come into the chamber of Divine Wisdom. Do not doubt your God. Do not say, "This is a mistake. Surely I have been led in the wrong way. Providence has erred." Shut that door. Shut that door! We cannot let any drafts come in to blow upon our trust in the Infinite Wisdom of God! And if you have entered into the chamber of Divine Love, how blessed it is to feel, "He has loved me from before the foundation of the world." Does there come in an, "if"? Shut that door! There is no rest or comfort till we shut out all doubt! We must know for certain that the Lord loved us or we cannot have any enjoyment in His love.

And suppose that it is the chamber of Divine Faithfulness into which we have entered? We must have no doubt about that—we must not say to ourselves, "God may forget His promise. Perhaps He will break His Word." Oh, shut that door, and lock it, and bolt and bar it! Say, "That door can never be opened any more! We cannot have any doubt about God's faithfulness—He cannot lie! Is He the Lord and shall His love grow feeble to His saints? Is He God and shall He turn aside from His Word and break His Covenant and oath?" Shut that door! Let not *anything* come in that way to disturb our peace! And as to the Divine Immutability, we cannot allow the door to be open to let even the *supposition* of change come in! "Oh, God loved me," says one, "twenty years ago!" And do you think that He does not love you *now*? "Oh, but He helped me so graciously then!" Will He not help you *now*? What? Has He changed? You are blaspheming God by the very *thought* of such a thing!—

"Whom once He loves, He never leaves,
But loves them to the end."

Do you believe this? Whenever there comes a doubt that He has cast you away, shut that door and drive a nail through it, that it may never be opened again, for the Lord cannot change! If He is God, He must forever be the same! "Come, My people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you."

I think that we must first shut the doors to shut out all doubts.

But we must also shut the doors to shut ourselves in, to shut ourselves in with God. Now, my Lord, a great storm is coming, but I am shut in with You. I trust Your power; I trust Your wisdom; I trust Your love; I trust Your faithfulness; I trust Your immutability; I trust Your salvation. I trust nothing else, but I repose wholly in You. You must often have noticed what our Savior did in the storm on the Sea of Galilee. He knew that a great tempest was coming on and He looked about Him—for what? For a pillow! What? For a pillow? Why, if you and I had been there, we would have looked round for a hencoop or a spar! But Jesus looked round for a pillow—not for a life-belt, but for a pillow—and when He found the pillow, what did He do? He went to the stern of the ship, stretched Himself out, and went to sleep! Why did He so act? Because He felt that He was perfectly safe in His Father's hands!

And there were His poor disciples wide awake, fretting and worrying! Did they stop the wind by fuming? Did they calm the waves by complaining? No, no. They tramped up and down the little vessel, but the sea did not take any notice of them. At last they went to wake their Master. He was so soundly sleeping that they could not get Him awake as soon as they wished, so they cried, "Master, cares You not that we perish?" O faithless disciples, your Master was doing the grandest thing that He could do! He was leaving the vessel in the hands of God and He, Himself, going to sleep! Brothers and Sisters, sometimes, when you get into a great deal of trouble, may I be allowed to be your solicitor and give you a piece of advice? Go to bed and go to sleep! "Oh, but I need to be doing *something*!" Yes, I know you do. And you will make a mess of it! Go to bed. Look for a pillow and go to sleep. Nine times out of ten, when we worry and fret, we undo what we try to do! To sit still would be a far wiser thing. Come, my people, hurry not into the market! Worry not in the shop! "Come, My people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you." Rest in God and wait patiently for Him, for He can do all things, and winds and waves shall be quiet at His bidding!

I wish that I could talk like this to you all, but I must not. Some of you have no chambers to go to—you who are out of Christ have no place to rest. Oh, that you had! God grant that you may have before tomorrow's sun has risen! May you believe in Jesus this very night! Then you shall have God for your Friend forever and ever, and all these chambers that I have mentioned shall be at your disposal.

IV. I finish up with this last remark, borrowed from the text. IT IS DELIGHTFUL TO THINK THAT THE TROUBLE WILL NOT LAST LONG. Let me read the text again. "Come, My people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you: hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation is past."

Is not that a wonderful expression—"a little moment"? A moment is but the tick of the clock, but here it is, "a little moment"—a *little* moment. Ah, me, we do not think so when the trouble comes! Perhaps it is some disease. Possibly it is incipient consumption. You have been coughing a great deal. Ah, my dear Friend, come and tell your God about it! It will

only last a little moment and then you will be where you shall cough no more—but you shall sing God's praises, world without end! "But it is the commencement of a cancer." I know, and that is an awful thing. But, my dear Sister, go to God, get into these blessed chambers of Divine Power, Wisdom, Love and so on, and you will hear Him say, "It is only for a little moment." "Ah," says one, "but I am hopelessly poor, and have been so for a long time, and I expect that I shall be so till I die." Well, if so, it will be but for a little moment, and then you will be rich forever!

I am not an old man, yet, though I am not young, but I am obliged to tell you that years are much shorter to me than they used to be 20 years ago. And weeks—why, they seem to fly! I never get to Sunday night without seeming to have another Sunday morning close on my heels. Do you not find it so? When Jacob said that his days were few, why did he so speak? Because he was an old man! If he had been a man of 25, he would not have said that! He would have thought that he had lived a good long while, but when he got to be over a 100, then his days seemed very few. After all, what is the longest life? Suppose that you should live to be 70 or eighty? We who are over 50 feel that it hardly needs an effort of mind to project ourselves through the next 25 years and find ourselves old and gray-headed, and ready to depart—and we shall depart in due season. It is only for a little moment that we are to be here. The cup is very bitter, but then there is not much in it! Let us take it all down at a draught. These pills are too small for us to make two bites at them. Besides, to chew them is to get their bitterness—to swallow them is to know nothing about it. So, do the same with the troubles of this life! Take them as they come, cheerfully and contentedly, thankfully praising God that there is good in the evil and sweetness in the bitter. Take it all. It will not last long—

"A scrip on my back, and a staff in my hand,
I march on in haste through an enemy's land.
The road may be rough, but it cannot be long,
And I'll smooth it with hope, and cheer it with song."

Get into the chambers that the Lord has prepared for you and hide yourselves "for a little moment, until the indignation is past."

Here I stand, on this 9th of September, in the year of Grace, 1888, still preaching to you. But there will come a time when there will be no voice of mine from this pulpit, and no glance of your eyes towards the minister here. We shall be in the world to come and then, in a short time, we shall all appear before the Judgement Seat of Christ. If we have never hidden in these chambers. If we have never fled to Christ, ah, then will come the time of woe, a darksome time, indeed! Sorrows without a shore, griefs without a terminus, a bitterness that must be everlasting! God help us to drink ten thousand cups of bitterness, here, rather than have to drink that cup of wormwood and gall forever! Come, fly to Christ tonight! The Lord help you to do so! Believe in Him, trust in Him, that you may never know His indignation, but, having hidden, for a small moment from the present trouble, you shall wake up to endless joy at God's right hand, forever and ever. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
Psalm 73.

The Psalmist here works out the problem of the prosperity of the wicked. He was troubled in his own mind about it. He knew that he feared God, but he also knew that he was greatly tried, whereas he saw many who had no fear of God before their eyes, who seemed to be always prospering. Their flourishing condition was a puzzle to him, but he examined the problem and unraveled the mystery. I think I have told you before, as a little exercise for your memory, that the 73rd Psalm and the 37th Psalm are both on the same subject. You can easily remember this, as the same figures are used in each instance, only they are turned the two ways, 73 and 37.

Verse 1. *Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.* The Psalmist knows that it must be so. He cannot doubt it. He lays it down as a proposition not to be disputed. Assuredly, "Truly, God is good to Israel."

2. *But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well-near slipped.* "I was almost seduced to sin. I seemed as if I must fall into iniquity."

3. *For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.* It really looked as if the big rogues did prosper, as if the great infidels were happy, as if, after all, religion brought trouble and irreligion brought pleasure!

4. *For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm.* Some of them so stifle conscience that they even die stupefied, with no sense of the dreadful wrath that is coming upon them—"There are no bands in their death."

5. *They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men.* They do not seem to have the afflictions of God's people, and certainly they are not plagued with soul-conflict such as Christians have—they seem to make themselves very merry at all times.

6. *Therefore pride accompanies them about as a chain.* They wear it as my Lord Mayor wears his collar, for a badge of honor!

6. *Violence covers them as a garment.* They are not a bit ashamed of it! They put it on as if it were their workday dress.

7, 8. *Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. They are corrupt and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily.* What big words they utter! How they boast! How they despise the poor! How they sneer at religion! It is dreadful to hear them and, for a child of God, who is conscious of doing right, and of suffering for it, it is a hard task to hear them talk thus.

9. *They set their mouth against the heavens.* As if this earth did not contain room enough for their malice, "They set their mouth against the heavens."

9. *And their tongue walks through the earth.* Leaving nobody alone, having a hard word for everybody except their own chosen group.

10, 11. *Therefore his people return here: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. And they say, "How does God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?"* They pretend that God is, as it were, only like King Log, taking no account of what is done by the sons of men. "He does not notice our feasts, or listen to our blasphemies." So they say.

12. *Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches.* And yet why do we wonder at this? The bullock that is intended to be killed is the first to be fatted and he that is doomed to destruction will often be allowed to prosper! Would you not let them have as much pleasure as they can have in this life, for they will have none in the next? Oh, envy them not their short-lived joys! Yet the Psalmist did so when he was down in the dumps and in an evil humor. He said, "Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches."

13. *Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence.* "Surely," he said "my holy life, my desire to be right with God and man, is a good-for-nothing thing! *I* do not prosper. *I* do not increase in riches, but it is the very reverse with me."

14. *For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.* Cannot you imagine a son of very wise parents, and very loving parents, saying, "Why, look at that boy in the street! He has no father to flog him, no mother to scold him, he can do just as he likes! But, as for me, if I do a little wrong, I am whipped for it"? Ah, my lad! The day will come when you will not envy the street-boy and you will be thankful, then, that you were not in his position! The child of God, if he sins, will have to smart for it—but there is nothing more dreadful than to be allowed to sin without being made to suffer! God save us from being given up to such a state as that!

15. *If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of Your children.* Do not always speak what you think. "But if you think it, you may as well say it," says one. Oh, no! There may be an evil spirit in yonder bottle, but nobody will get drunk upon it if you keep the cork in! So there may be evil thoughts in your hearts, but they will not injure other people if you do not, as it were, draw the cork by uttering them! It is always well to think twice before you speak once. "So," said the Psalmist, "I cannot speak thus, because such talk would grieve God's people."

16. *When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me.* It was too painful for the Psalmist to think of it, too painful to speak of it—and yet too painful for him to hold his tongue!

17. *Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.* When he came near to his God, when he went into the Holy Place, and communed with the Lord, *then* he saw what would be the end of the wicked. Ah, what a difference it makes when we look at the ungodly from the right standpoint! "Then understood I their end."

18. *Surely you did set them in slippery places.* Up there ever so high.

18. *You cast them down into destruction.* When the time comes, down they are hurled from those slippery heights into the awful depths below!

19. *Now are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors.* When the ungodly reach the next world, where are their riches, where are their feasts, where are their merry jokes, where are their lofty words? Listen—"How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors."

20. *As a dream when one awakens, so, O Lord, when You awake, You shall despise their image.* When a man wakes, his dream is over and gone. When God awakes to judgment and comes to deal with ungodly men, then all those who prospered in wickedness shall melt away, like the baseless fabric of a dream.

21, 22. *Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins. So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before You.* For the beast only measures by the day and the hour, as far as its eyes can see. Give it a meadow deep with grass and it is perfectly happy, but when good men get measuring by the day and by the hour, and by the lifetime here below, they are foolish—and like brute beasts.

23. *Nevertheless I am continually with You.* Oh, what a mercy this is for Believers! If we are ever so poor, we are continually with God! What if we are chastened every morning? It is clear that we must be with God, then, for a chastening God must be near!

23. *You have held me by my right hand.* "Even when You did whip me. *Everywhere* You have a grip of me. You hold me with Your right hand." The Psalmist does not envy the wicked, now—he has risen a stage higher than he was a little while ago!

24, 25. *You shall guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to Glory. Whom have I in Heaven but You, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside You.* Now he finds in God his riches, his joy, his prosperity, his portion!

26, 27. *My flesh and my heart fails: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever. For, lo, they that are far from You shall perish: You have destroyed all them that go a whoring from You.* To love the world, to love riches, to love sin, to love self—this is to be unfaithful to our Marriage Covenant with God—let such conduct never be ours.

28. *But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all Your works.* Thus, you see, the Psalmist went down to the depths, but he came up, again, all right, and his heart was made glad in the Lord, his God! So may it be with any of us who, like he, has been envious of the foolish, when we have seen the prosperity of the wicked.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—
91 (SONG I), 726, 23 (VERSION III).

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

ONCE DEAD, NOW ALIVE
NO. 2388

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, NOVEMBER 25, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 30, 1888.

"And you has He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." Ephesians 2:1.

I PREACHED to you, this morning, [Sermon #2046, Volume 34—*Consolation from Resurrection*—Read/download entire sermon at http://www.spurgeongems.org .] the Doctrine of the Resurrection of the Dead and its various bearings. But unless you have experienced *spiritual* resurrection, you do not understand that doctrine and you cannot grasp its meaning. Spiritual resurrection may be understood in theory, but it cannot be really comprehended until we, ourselves, have been raised out of spiritual death. Always remember that in the things of God, knowledge is only to be gained by personal experience. If you would understand regeneration, you must be born again. If you would understand faith, simple as it is, you must, yourselves, believe.

Tonight I want to give you another exposition of spiritual quickening as it is described in my text—"And you has He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." There are three things about which I am going to speak to you. First, *you were dead.* Secondly, *some of you have been quickened.* And, thirdly, of those of you who *have* been quickened, it can be truly said that *you are now alive.*

I. First, then, YOU WERE DEAD.

I think that I must, in imagination, take you into that death chamber. The blinds are all drawn, there is a great hush about the room. Here is a coffin covered with a white cloth—turn it back, gently, and stand with me—and look at the person who lies sleeping there. He is dead. Alas, there is woe in the family, for the brother is dead. Here is the terribly true picture of what we were by nature—I mean, what we *all* were—and what many still are. God grant that they may be delivered from this sad condition!

To find out what spiritual death means, I shall ask you to remember that this dead body, here, is characterized by an *absence of sense.* Be not afraid, it is your brother man. Come close to him and speak. He does not hear you. Speak more loudly. He does not answer you, he gives no sign of recognition. Shout at the very top of your voice—stoop down and speak into his ear. Alas, it is the clay-cold ear of death upon which no effect whatever is produced! I remember when I was spiritually just like that. I could not hear, even, the voice of Jesus, though it was very soft and tender. He said, "Come unto Me," but I did not respond to His call. There

were others near me who did, but I was dead and took no notice. Then there came a louder sound, a voice of threatening, a message of condemnation! God spoke from the top of Sinai and hurled at me the ten great thunderbolts of His Law. But I still did not hear. I had broken all those commands and I must bear the penalty of disobedience—the Law told me so, but I did not hear. Friends led me, sometimes, dead as I was, where both the Law and the Gospel were fully preached, but I did not hear. I *could not* hear. Sounds went past the drums of my ears and my body heard, but the ear of my *heart* was not reached. I could not hear, for I was dead.

Let us see if our friend in the coffin can see. Here, lift up the coffin lid, wave a lighted candle before his eyes. Pull up that blind, let in the sunlight. He does not see and he cannot see. There are none so blind as the dead. And there was a time with me—and I use myself sorrowfully as an example—when I could not see. I could not see my Lord, I could not see His love, I could not see His bleeding heart, I could not see His thorn-crowned head. I saw no beauty in the Altogether Lovely One. I was wrapped up in my own worldly pleasure and in myself—and I was not alive unto God. Ah, me, this is, indeed, death—to be unable to hear or to see!

Can this dead body perceive anything by smelling? Here, bring that smelling bottle and place it close to the man's nostrils. It contains the strongest volatile salts that would make the tears come to some of our eyes—but it does not affect him. Burn the rarest incense, fill the chamber with the smoke, yet he recognizes nothing as to what sweet perfume is in the room. And well do I remember when my mother told me that there had been much unction about the sermon and my father said that the Lord was there, and that it was as when one breaks a box of ointment and the house is filled with the sweetest odors—but I declare to you that I discerned nothing of its fragrance! There was, to me, no spiritual sweetness, no subtle delight about the doctrines of the Gospel, for I was dead!

Perhaps this man may have lost the power of sight, hearing and smelling, but yet he may be alive. Let us see if he has any sense of taste. Bring here the most nauseous drug, or give me gall and wormwood, and I will put a few drops on his lips. These things are not loathsome to him! Now let us try sugar and honey and all things that are luscious and sweet. Evidently you might as well lay these things upon a slab of marble, for the dead man has no taste for them! It was just so with me *spiritually*. I knew not, in those days, the sweetness of the Gospel of Christ, nor even the bitterness of sin. I had no taste, for I was dead—and that is what you all were, my Brothers and Sisters! That is what some are who are sitting at your side in the pew—dead—having no taste for heavenly joys.

But, perhaps, after all, these senses may be gone and yet life may remain. Let me see if the man can feel. Let me press his hand very gently. No, he does not press mine in return. I will stoop down and kiss the face of this, my brother, but there is no smile upon his countenance, though he would have smiled in other days. He is dead. He can feel nothing of pain or joy. It is a dreadful thing to be sitting in God's House as, per-

haps, some of you are, feeling nothing whatever! I would give my eyes, no, I would give even my *life* to save this company if I knew how to speak so as to reach men's hearts! But there is no mode of human language that can make a dead heart live, or make a stony heart to beat with the pulsations of life. This comes from another and a higher Power than mine. But, apart from the operations of the Spirit of God, all are, by nature, dead, and this is what some of you are even now, *spiritually dead* and, therefore, devoid of holy senses.

There is another test that we may apply to see if there is an *absence of desire*. I will speak to this dead man and say, "Friend, you lie here dead—do you know it? You who cannot feel, or hear, or see—do you wish to live? Do you desire to live? There is no answer to my question. But I can tell you that because he is dead, he does not even *desire* to live—and this, too, is the state of many spiritually. They have not any wish after heavenly things. You are quite content if you have money enough to pay your way, or if you have enough to enjoy yourself at the theater, or in some worldly gaiety. But as for God, Christ and Heaven—these may all go as far as you are concerned. You have no desire for them, you are dead—dead to the very things for which men were made to live, and by which, alone, men *do* live! You are dead and you have no desire after life.

Shall I speak to the corpse, again? It is no use, for the man has no senses and no desire. Beside that, there is an *absence of power*. Has not this man the power to get life, the power to do something good? I lift his hand—it drops down powerless. I try the other hand—it is no sooner up than it falls down, again. It is evidently useless to attempt to force him to any action, for he is without power. We, also, were "without strength." Oh, how can this dead man live if he can do nothing towards making himself alive? I will tell you that, by-and-by, but, meanwhile, this is an essential part of death—that the man is "without strength."

Further, in those who are naturally or spiritually dead there is an *absence of fellowship with the living*. If this man cannot do anything for himself, let us get him up and dress him! Come here, good woman, you who washed him, come, and put on his best clothes and make him sit up. It was not long ago that we saw the picture of a dead emperor lying dressed in his warrior's garments. So dress this man up in his Sunday suit and let him sit at the table with his wife and children! You shudder at the suggestion and tell me that it is impossible. Yet the Egyptians set a skeleton at their feasts, so as to remind themselves of death—and it was not altogether unwise. But if I had my choice of a place at the table, I would not elect to have our bony friend next to me! And I think that if the dead were seated at our festivals, we would all naturally shrink from that part of the table.

Thus you can see what death does *spiritually*—it shuts you out of fellowship with the living people of God. You were in a room, the other night, where there were half-a-dozen Christian people and you said to yourself, "This is about the dullest evening I have ever spent." You went to a service, the other day, where there was much prayer, and you made fun of it when you came away, it was so dreary to you. Yes, of course it was, and if you were condemned to go to Heaven—no, I have not made a

mistake, I mean what I say—if you were *condemned* to go to Heaven, it would be a Hell to you! You would not be able to endure that constant praise of God, that perpetual adoration of Him which is the occupation of the blessed! You would have no heart for that. "Let me out," you would say, "I had rather go to my own place than stay here." Thus, you see, you are dead. And the dead are shut out from fellowship with the living.

Then, once more, there are *tokens of decay*. We will not take this man from the coffin—we will let him lie there. Look at him. It is now four days since he was pronounced dead. I noticed, when I came into the room just after his death, that his face looked, perhaps, more sweet than it did during his lifetime. It often happens that when the time of the extreme pain which brought on death has come altogether to an end, the face seems to regain its former sweetness which was obliterated by the pain, and the man looks more beautiful than before. And often the countenance appears restful, though the heart, before death, was full of anguish. Yes, but that was a little while after death when I noticed this sweet expression of face. How is it with the corpse four days, five days, say, six days after death? Ah, me, come, Undertaker, nail this coffin lid down—it is not meet that any other eyes should look at this ghastliness, or that anyone else should see these tokens of decay!

It is just so spiritually. The young man who is dead in sin, may, under his mother's care at home, look very beautiful. There may be no trace of spiritual death about him. You might think him—and he may think himself—better than a great many Christians! Have I not heard him say that it is so? But give him time to show what he really is! Bring him to London—place him in a large warehouse. Let him go out in the evening and let there be nobody to meet him but the strange woman. Ah, within how short a time the destructiveness of horrible sin may be seen in his character! Could that fond mother, who sent him from her fireside comparatively pure, see what he has become, she might almost say, "Bury him out of my sight!" This is the way we were *all* going to decay till our Lord Jesus appeared to us and stopped the corruption by dethroning Death and putting spiritual life into us through faith in Himself!

I think, perhaps, I have said enough on this part of my subject, so I will not take you back to the death chamber.

II. Now, in the second place, dear Friends, to all who have believed in Christ it can be truly said, "YOU HAVE BEEN QUICKENED." So the text says, "You has He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins."

Do you remember how that happened? I can only speak about myself in such a matter as this, because one man cannot enter into another's experience, but I think that what I see in myself, you have seen in yourselves, you who are alive unto God. There came a time when I began to live! I remember it well—I not only remember when the new life first came into my soul, but I can distinctly recall the first effect of it. I am told that when a man has been drowning and he begins to return to consciousness, when they rub him back to conscious life, the first sensation is that of exquisite pain as the blood begins to flow, again, in the channels in which it had been latent.

When the life-blood began to flow in my heart *spiritually*, it gave me nothing but pain. I was lost and I felt that it was so. I was not dead, was I, if I *felt*? Then I heard the Gospel, and I *did* hear it, too, with awful distinctness! I remember to have had, on one occasion, a slight deafness, and when the surgeon had attended to my ears and I went into the street, I wished myself deaf again, for all the noises were so dreadful to my ears, so intense was every little sound! We ought to thank God that we do not hear more than we do—if we heard more, we would not hear anything at all—we would hear so much that the different sounds would not convey any meaning to our mind! So was it with me, I heard too much. The thunder of the Law of God deafened me and when I heard the voice of the Savior, it seemed to say, "You have rejected Me and I have left you to perish! The door of mercy is now shut and will not be opened to you." I began to feel what sin really was and to realize that I could not escape from it—and that a just God must punish me! Yet I consented to the punishment, dreadful as it was, and confessed that I did not wish the Lord to be unjust even to save me. This was the tremendous terror of my state—that I had received a living consciousness of what was right, and sided with the right—yet all the while felt that the righteous Judge condemned me!

What happened after that? Being quickened and having felt this pain, after a while I woke up as out of an awful sleep and I seemed to say to myself, "Where am I?" *I had been born into a new world*! Some of you know the egg-shell of this poor sinful world, but you do not know the real *life* of it. A man may go dreaming on through this world, seeing the sun, moon, stars and all things that are visible, but he may never have discovered the true *life* which is invisible. So it was with me. If, all of a sudden, this lamp, here, could be made into a living thing, it would be a strange change for it to find itself alive in the midst of this crowd of people, where it has stood so long a poor, dead, metallic thing! There was some such change as that worked in me—I thought that if the world was not new, I was! Something wonderful had happened to me! I can tell you that I had a sort of twist that day and I have never got over it—and I have no wish to get over it!

Everything seemed different to me. I looked at all things through new eyes and heard with new ears and, somehow, I discovered what I had never dreamed of, for I talked to God! Christ was near me! His Spirit was within me! I saw living men and women in this new world and I began to wish to get among them and would have been glad to have washed the feet of any of them so long as they would but permit me to be in their company! I remember that experience. Do you? We must all have felt something like that if we have really been born from above!

And then, being thus alive, we had *to learn everything*. You see, a person just born into the world and knowing nothing is like a newborn infant. I suppose that when an infant first sees, it cannot measure distances. It does not know whether a thing is close to it, or far away. All that the eyes can bring to it seems flat at the first. Mothers do not always reflect how little their children know—and how all the things that we know as a matter of course were really learned by experience. Once we

did not understand much, just like babies that do not, at first, comprehend what is said to them, and could not reply even if they understood. There are a few simple words, or syllables, by which they speak to mother and father—and you are very pleased when they are able to say them—and you talk of it to one another as a great achievement when baby has uttered a whole sentence!

I have heard you and I remember doing the same thing, myself. It is so natural for us to like to hear the first words of our children. That is just how it was with God and ourselves *spiritually*—we had everything to learn. We were alive, but we did not know much. We were rather puzzled by some of our big Brothers and Sisters, but our heavenly Father accepted our broken utterances and our oft-mistaken words. We did see, though we did not know much about the laws of perspective. We did hear, though we did not understand music and harmony. We did feel—and that was a proof that we were alive. Oh, what a mercy that was!

Very soon, we began to have *new needs*. Do you remember that experience? We felt a new hunger—we had never had that while we were dead. We needed to feed on the Truth of God! Do you remember when you went to hear a certain popular preacher deliver one of his wonderful sermons and everybody else spoke of it as, "splendid," but you said to yourself, "I do not know what there was in it, but certainly I did not get any food for my soul"? Another time, you were taken to hear a plain, simple minister who talked about Jesus and His love, and others exclaimed, "He is a poor preacher, with no name, and no fame," but you said, "I do not know how it is, but I am satisfied with the feast I have had, I feel as if I had been sitting at the King's banqueting table." Ah, God's people know the difference between flowers and fruit! They know the difference between meat and mere plate, spoon and fork—and they are not to be deceived! You remember when you began to hunger and to thirst, and oh, when you drank your first draught of the Living Water, you could not make out what it was! You see, you had been dead, and all these things were new to you. What was hunger? What was thirst? How did you come to have such sensations? You never hungered after Christ, you never thirsted after the Gospel while you were dead in sin! But now you have many things that are quite new to you—new fears, new cares, new doubts, new aspirations.

Let me remind you that you also had *new joys*. Your heart began to dance at the sound of Christ's name! You never danced at the sound of that name while you were dead, but when you had received spiritual life, that dear name had all the music of Heaven in it when it rang in your ears, and your heart responded, "Jesus, precious Jesus—

"'No music's like Your charming name,
Nor half so sweet can be.'"

Oh, what rapture you had in those early days! You went forth with joy and were led forth with peace. The mountains and the hills broke forth before you into singing and all the trees of the field clapped their hands! That delight has not gone from you now, has it? You are still happy in the Lord, you can sing as joyously as ever—

"Oh happy day, that fixed my choice
On You, my Savior, and my God!

Well may this glowing heart rejoice
And tell its raptures all abroad!"

You see how it is with you now—life has brought you, as a new creature, into a new world—old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new! So far, I hope that many have been able to follow me.

II. Now comes the closing point and I must say only a few words upon it, for I should like you to sing a verse of "Happy Day," before we separate. The third division is YOU ARE NOW ALIVE. Yes, as many as have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ are spiritually alive! Does not He say, "He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live"?

You are spiritually alive. Very well, then, *do not go back to the grave*. It was a madman's taste to go and live in a cemetery. The demoniac from the country of the Gadarenes had his habitation among the tombs and, surely, nobody in his right mind would think of having such an abode as that! If you are alive, do not go and live in the grave. Sometimes a person says to me, "Tell me, Sir, may I go to such and such a place of amusement?" When I hear the name of it, I say, "Well, if you want to go, go. If you are dead, go and be buried with the dead—we do not need any dead souls among the living in Zion. If that sort of thing is to your taste, go and enjoy it. But if you are a child of God, it will not be your taste. If you are alive from the dead, you will not want to go and live in a morgue." I once was in a place where there were said to be at least ten thousand skulls heaped up, one above another, from floor to ceiling. I should think that there must have been quite that number, and as I walked along through those rows of skulls, every one of them seeming to be grinning at me, I did not ask to be allowed to stay there all night! So, he that is spiritually alive does not wish to dwell with sinners in ungodliness! Their merriment would be his misery. That which is their delight would cause him the most exquisite pain. "Let me get out of this," he would say, "this is no place for me." To chain a living man to a skeleton would be a horrible torment—do not, I pray you, be chained to a dead man, or a dead woman, either—and do not seek your company among the dead. You are alive! Therefore, do not go back to the tomb.

Next, you are alive, therefore, *do not be carried on a bier.* I have seen living men carried about on biers. Here is a man who has long heard the good old-fashioned Gospel, but, the other day he met with a believer in evolution, one of the monkey-worshippers of whom I told you last Thursday night, [Sermon #2056, Volume 34—*Idols Found Wanting, But Jehovah Found Faithful—Read/download entire sermon at http://www.spurgeongems.org* .] whose father is not in Heaven, but up a tree! "Oh!" said the foolish man, as he listened to the heresymonger, "this evolution theory is a very wonderful thing!" And so three or four of them bore him off on a bier, carried him away from the Truth of God as it is in Christ. Of course, if the man is dead, the proper place for him is on a bier! But you are alive—therefore you know what the dead do not and, I pray that you may know it from the sole of your feet to the crown of your head, and stand up for the Truth of God, defend it valiantly, and not be driven to and fro with every wind of doctrine, just as if you were only a stray straw in the street! Know what God has taught you and be pre-

pared to live by it, and to die for it, if need be! You are alive, therefore, be alive for the Truth of God and be not carried away on a bier.

Further, you are alive, therefore, *do not be wrapped up in grave clothes*. Have you any on now? I should not wonder if you have. There is a piece of red stuff that many living persons still wear—it is called, "bad temper." Oh, get rid of that fragment of grave clothes, I entreat you! It smells of the tomb! The Lord help you to be sweet, gentle and meek! Do not wear your old grave clothes, now that you are alive from the dead! Were you covetous? Were you lustful? Were you false? Get rid of all these grave clothes. Oh, that God the Holy Spirit may sanctify you—spirit, soul and body—till you are clean delivered from these cerements of the sepulcher! Lazarus came out of the tomb with his grave clothes on, but the Savior said, "Loosen him and let him go," and they took the napkin from his head, the winding sheets from about his body and the man was free. Do not go about in a winding sheet! Put off the old man, with his deeds, and put on the new man. The Lord help you so to do!

You are alive—then another exhortation is, *get up and work*. You are alive unto God. Are you so alive that you mean to sit down and take it quietly? Are you going to Heaven in an easy chair? You have climbed up the Gospel coach, sat down on the box seat and you say that you mean to sit there as long as you live? Oh, you good-for-nothing wretch! Do not talk about being saved! Why, you are not yet saved from selfishness! When we are really saved, we begin to love other people as well as to love God and we desire with all our might to spend and to be spent in the Lord's service. You do not suppose that the Lord Jesus Christ came here to be a lackey to the lazy, do you? We are *not saved by works,* but if we have not works, we are not saved! We are saved by Grace, but Grace makes us a people *zealous for good works*! God grant that this purpose of mercy may be fulfilled in each one of us who was dead, but is now alive!

You are alive, now, therefore *glorify Him who quickened you*. If I had lived in the days of our Lord, I would have liked, if it had been possible, to have had a cup of tea with Lazarus. I think that I would have asked him down to my house and would have said to him, "Lazarus, tell me all about your resurrection. You were dead and your sisters buried you, and Martha said to the Lord Jesus, 'By this time he stinks: for he has been dead four days.' Tell me, did you really hear that voice that said, 'Lazarus, come forth,' and did you know the sweet tones of the dear Master's call? Were you dead and did that sound bring life with it? How did you feel when you found yourself lying on that cold stone shelf in the sepulcher, and when the light came streaming in where there had been a stone, before, to shut it out? Do you remember how you felt when you shuffled out and came from the sepulcher all wrapped up in the grave clothes?" "Oh!" Lazarus would say, "my dear Brother, I cannot tell you much about these things, but I remember that the first thing I saw, when they took the napkin off my eyes, was that blessed Man, my Lord and my God! And I knew that He had raised me from the dead, and I felt that I could lie at His feet and die again of overwhelming love! I loved Him so—for He had raised me from the dead! Do not talk about me, speak about Him! Go forth and preach about Him to others, wherever you have an

opportunity! Say that He raised me from the dead, that He can raise others from the dead, and He can make death yield up all his spoils, through the power of His resurrection life!"

That is what I want all you, who are spiritually alive, to do—go forth and tell what Jesus has done in raising the dead to life!

I have finished when I have said just this word to the unsaved. Trust Jesus. Trust Him now! Come to Him, now, even by one gracious stride of faith, for He is able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by Him!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *Ephesians 4.*

Verse 1. *I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you.* Paul puts force into the argument by his manner of speaking. You can hear in his words the rattle of his chains! Here is a man who, for Christ's sake, has lost his liberty and who, for that reason, pleads with his fellow Christians. "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you"—

1. *That you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called.* "Do not dishonor the good cause. Let not your lives bring disgrace upon Christ—if you are *called* Christians—*be* Christians."

2. *With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love.* This is the very spirit of Christianity—to be able to bear and forbear, to be gentle—not to be selfish or self-seeking, or angry and passionate, but full of lowliness and meekness. Brothers and Sisters, do not seek the highest place! If you do, you will at least have a contested election, for many want that position. But if you choose the lowest place, you shall have it, and nobody will try to run in opposition to you. There is always plenty of room in the lowly places and there is peace there! Let me whisper to you—they are really the highest places in the Church of God! If we will go *down*, we shall ascend! But if we are striving to be great—to be masterful—we shall not gain the ends we are seeking and we shall not honor our Master.

3. *Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.* That is a living ligature which binds the members of the body together. Try to keep in one spirit, united by "the bond of peace."

4. *There is one body.* Christ never had two.

4. *And one Spirit.* There never were two Holy Spirits. The one Spirit that quickened the whole Church of Christ is by Himself, alone.

4. *Even as you are called in one hope of your calling.* You have only one ground of confidence and you have only one Heaven in which you hope to meet all your fellow Believers.

5. *One Lord, one faith, one baptism.* There is only one Lord in the Christian Church! And there is only one faith. There may be many *forms* of faith, but there is only one true faith. "One baptism." There may be many baptisms, so-called, but there can be only one that is the true baptism.

6. *One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.* So that if we are one in all these things, we ought to be one in a hearty affection towards one another!

7. *But unto every one of us is given Grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.* That is, to every one of us who are members of His mystical body. The living members of the living body receive according to each one's function and place in the body a measure of Grace for the benefit of the whole.

8-10. *Therefore He says, When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now this, "He ascended," what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the same, also, who ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things).* When He received gifts for men, and gave them to men, what did He give?

11. *And he gave some, Apostles; and some, Prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.* Different gifts to different races.

12. *For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.* The early Church could not have been without Apostles and we cannot do without Evangelists. May the Lord send many faithful men who will range over the whole country preaching the Word! Neither can we do without pastors and teachers and it is idle to attempt to do so. Would God we had many more of the sort that Jesus gives! Those whom *men* make are worth nothing, but those whom Jesus gives are worth everything!

13. *Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.* When all Christian people shall be well developed, mature, then the whole body of Christ will come unto the stature of a perfect man. When will that be? There are some who are always looking for the perfect Church of Christ, but they have not seen it, yet. When Eve was in the making, Adam did not see her—it was only when she was complete that she became visible—and today the real Church of Christ is only in the making! When she has been fashioned out of the side of Christ, then she will be presented to Him without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. All the various agencies which God has appointed are working together for the fashioning of this perfect body of the Church.

Meanwhile, it is equally true that all Believers are intended to grow "unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Some of them are, in spiritual things, only like children of a span long. Others are but as boys and girls in the streets of Jerusalem, while some are half-developed men and women! Oh, that we could all come "unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ!" You know how the sergeants stand the recruits against a wall and then measure them to see whether they are up to the army standard. Now stand upright and see whether you have come "unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Alas! How very short we are! Oh, that we could grow! Spirit of God, make us more like Christ!

14. *That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning*

craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive. There are plenty of so-called Christians of that sort, nowadays, who are too weak to know anything for themselves. They are not settled and grounded—the last person who comes near them and pulls their ear a little hard, turns their head his way. The next person who will pull their ear a little harder, will turn their head another way! Be no longer children, I beseech you, Brothers and Sisters, but be men and women—know what you know—hold it with the tenacious grip of a Divinely-implanted faith and God help you to escape from those who lie in wait to deceive!

15, 16. *But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplies, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, makes increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.* Every part of the body supplies something that is essential to the whole. There are certain sacs and vessels, the use of which we cannot tell. Even the best anatomist does not know what are their uses, but he does know that if they are not there, health cannot be maintained and, in some instances, life, itself, would expire if some vessel, quite insignificant, should be taken away! Let us believe that all God's people are essential to the completion of the body of Christ and that all the workers and all the sufferers, too, are needed to make up the Church of which Christ is the Head.

17-19. *This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling*—That is a dreadful condition for anyone to reach! Let us pray to God to save us from that terrible state of heart!

19. *Have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.* Oh, dear Friends, we must come away from everything that is impure and unclean! May we never, by any conduct of ours, give countenance to unchastity and impurity! Christian people must be clear of these things!

20-25. *But you have not so learned Christ; if so be that you have heard Him, and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that you put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness. Therefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members, one of another.* They who lie in jest will find out that God puts it down as sinning in earnest. Let us never attempt to deceive. In the East, in olden times, and I might say as much of the present day, it was not usually reckoned a great sin to lie—the great evil was when the liars were discovered. Oh, but the Christian man must be true in every word that he speaks. He must faithfully keep his promises and be known to be a trustworthy, reliable man. If you are not true, Christ will not acknowledge you as belonging to Him.

26. *Be you angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath.* If ever angry, be only angry with evil and never retain anger in

your heart. It must not last more than a day. They say that a wasp's sting dies at night, so, let every resentful thought die away as the sun sets.

27. *Neither give place to the devil.* He will knock at your door and try to get in, but do not offer him a chair. If he forces his company upon you, let him know he is not welcome!

28. *Let him who stole steal no more.* If he has only been a petty pilferer, "Let him who stole steal no more." He that steals a pin will one day steal an ox if he can.

28. *But rather let him labor.* If he must have something that he does not at present possess, this is the way to get it—not by stealing it—but by laboring for it.

28. *Working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needs.* Observe that our trade must be a right one, not one that injures others—"Working with his hands the thing which is good." But what a remarkable verse this is! A man has been a thief and he is to go and get to work! What for? To supply his own necessities? Yes, but he is to rise to something *higher* than that! He is to work "that he may have, to give to him that needs." What changes the Grace of God makes in a man! He who once took from other people is taught to work that he may *give* to other people! This is, indeed, a turning of things the right side uppermost.

29. *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth.* Do not utter a dirty or corrupt word, no, though it has a merry jest appended to it, do not speak it! "He pares his apple who would cleanly feed," is a good proverb. Take away all that is corrupt about the story.

29. *But that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister Grace unto the hearers.* What sweet talking there would be if we all spoke in this way—to "minister Grace unto the hearers!" Ah, then, my dear Friends, it would not matter how much we talked, if every word were salted with salt.

30. *But grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption.* The Holy Spirit's being in you is your seal that you are the child of God—and the power by which you will be preserved till the resurrection! Therefore, do not grieve that blessed Spirit.

31, 32. *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be you kind, one to another.* "Kind" is a good old Saxon word! It means *kinned*. Be you kind, like men who are akin to one another—look on *all men* as your brothers!

32. *Tenderhearted, forgiving one another.* You will have something that will need to be forgiven, and your brother will have something which you will need to forgive.

32. *Even as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you.* The Lord write all these words upon our hearts, for Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—408, 897, 288, 658.

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

GUIDANCE TO GRACE AND GLORY
NO. 2389

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY,
DECEMBER 2, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
ON THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 4, 1888.**

"You shall guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to Glory." Psalm 73:24.

The Psalmist, here, evidently perceives that his Lord is near. He does not so much speak *of* God as *to* Him—"You shall guide me with Your counsel." You know what the French call, *tutoyage*—you-ing and you-ing—there is something of that kind of language in the text, a speaking in tones of hallowed familiarity with God. As if the Lord were close by, the Psalmist says to Him, "You shall guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to Glory"—not in the way of prayer asking God to *do* so, but in childlike confidence expressing the conviction that it shall *be* so and rejoicing in the blessed assurance of it. "You shall"—I know You will, I am sure of it, I have firm reliance on it, and I bless You for it—"You shall guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to Glory." It is not every man who can talk like that and it is not every believing man who has yet attained confidence enough to dare to speak so. It is well if you can only *pray* that this may be the case with you, but the sweetness lies in grasping this Truth of God with a childlike delight and, with unfaltering faith believing it to be yours. "You shall guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to Glory."

The Psalmist had been, to some extent, finding fault with the Providence of God. There had been, in his mind, a quarrel with God's proceedings. He saw the wicked in great power, having all their wishes and desires gratified in every way, while he, himself, was sorely plagued and chastened, and he could not quite understand it. But now, even though he does not comprehend it, he yields to God's superior judgment, he lays aside his own logic and arguments and he says, "No, Lord, I will no longer be a debater, but You shall guide me. I will no longer look for present joy, I will look to that which is to come afterward. You shall guide me with Your counsel, and afterward shall come my brilliant days, my times of joy—afterward You will receive me to Glory." You see that after drifting about for a while, the Psalmist has come to a good anchorage. He has found a resting place, as the birds do, when, after wandering away, they fly back to their nest and he sings, "Return unto your rest, O my Soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you." Sitting down once

more at the feet of his Lord, he looks up into those dear, tender, loving, watchful eyes and he says, "You shall guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to Glory. My discussions are all over now. My questions are at an end. I will rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him, and my soul shall be content with His will, whatever it is." I pray that what the Holy Spirit may lead me to say upon my text may have an effect something like that upon any tempest-tossed spirits here. May they also be brought to rest in the Lord!

First, dear Friends, I will speak concerning *the conviction which led the Psalmist to take a guide.* Secondly, I will say a little upon *the confidence which led him to take God for his Guide.* Thirdly, I will talk to you about *the delightful commerce between the Psalmist and his God* which began when God had become his Guide, and continued throughout his life. And then, the fourth point, which shall be our finis, shall be, *the sure result of this guidance.* "You shall afterward receive me to Glory."

I. First, then, concerning THE CONVICTION WHICH LED THE PSALMIST TO TAKE A GUIDE. Happily for him, that conviction came very early. If I am to have a guide on my journey, I should like to have one at the beginning, for it is the *starting* that has so much to do with all the rest of the way. If I start due south when I ought to have gone north, I shall have to retrace many a weary step! Dear young Friends, if you can have God to be your Guide, now, in the morning of life, how happy you will be! It will influence for good the whole of your future existence, depend upon it! As the river is colored by the glacier from which it flows and never, even when larger and deeper, quite loses the whiteness of its mountain source, so, if you begin with God at the fountainhead and spring of life, there will be a peculiar charm around your pathway as long as you live! Permit me to say that I have found it so myself. I can say to my Lord and *do* often say it, "O God, You have taught me from my youth, and until now have I declared Your wondrous works! Now, when I am old and gray-headed, O God, forsake me not." There is a sweet plea when years multiply upon you, if you can say to the Lord—

"In early years You were my Guide,
And of my youth the Friend."

David began to experience Divine guidance while he was a shepherd boy and it was well for him that it was so. But why did he ever feel that he needed a guide? I suppose it was because *of a work of Grace upon his heart,* for, naturally, we do not like being guided. The mother's apron strings grow irksome to the young man when he finds the down coming upon his cheek—he will have his own way—is it not manly to be one's own master? Allow me to say that there is no *worse* master! You had better serve the greatest tyrant than be your own master! But it is often thus with the young—at first they call it liberty to have their own way. And it is only when the Grace of God softens and sobers them, when He gives the young men wisdom, knowledge and discretion, that they begin to dream that they need a guide.

I heard a good old man speak, the other day. He was a doctor of divinity and I introduced him to the children, in a somewhat merry manner, by telling them that he was a doctor of divinity and that doctors of divinity knew everything, and a few things beside. But when he began to speak, he said, "My dear Children, I do not know everything, but I will tell you one thing that I *do* know, I know that I do *not* know much. I have been a long time learning it, but I have, at last, learned that I do not know much." And when he had expatiated upon that, he said, "and, dear Children, I have learned another thing—I know that I am not fit to take care of myself. I wonder," he added, "whether all the boys and girls here have yet come to that conviction, that they are not fit to take care of themselves, and that they need somebody to lead them all the way through life."

It is a fine piece of knowledge when you have learned as much as that! I pray that all who are young may learn it soon and that others who, by painful experience, begin to see that they are not quite as wise as they thought they were, will come to the conclusion that they are not fit to manage themselves, after all—and that they need a higher power, a wiser eye, a keener mind, a mightier hand, a more supreme will to govern them than any that they have of their own.

I suppose that the Psalmist said to the Lord, "You shall guide me," because *he had been convinced of his own folly* and, therefore, felt that it was well to commit himself into wiser hands. And also, perhaps, that *he had obtained some knowledge of the difficulties of the way*. The way of life is a trying one to most people. To many it is very difficult. To those who find it easy, it is probably less so than to those who find it difficult. It is a very unfriendly world to live in if you have to fight with poverty, or if you have to work hard to provide for the day's needs. But I question whether it is not a worse world to the man who has not to work and who has all that heart can wish. The most perilous position for a young man to be placed in is, very early in life, to have a large income with nobody to check him in spending it, and to be permitted to do just whatever he likes.

Oh, those very smooth ways—how many slip therein who might have stood, perhaps, had the road been rougher! But to no one of us is the path of life an easy one if we desire to be pure, clean, upright and accepted with God. He is, indeed, a fool who attempts to walk in *that* way without a guide! Look at yourself, full of folly. Look at the way, full of pitfalls and dangers of every kind. You may well stop and say, "I must have a guide, I dare not go alone a step further on such a perilous path." No doubt the Psalmist had seen others set out without a guide and he had heard of their falls, and of their ruin. You have not lived long, young man, but you have been in the world long enough to have seen or to have heard of many who seemed likely to be great and good who, nevertheless, have come to an evil end. That will be your portion, too, as well as theirs, if you venture to walk in this difficult way without a guide.

The Psalmist's desire to have a guide also showed *his great anxiety to be right*. I wish that all men began life with an earnest desire to act rightly and that each one would say, "I shall never live this life, again. I should like to make it a good one as far as I can." Since you cannot come back to mend it, but, as it is, it will have to be presented before the great Judge of All, seek to do that which is right each day and to obey your God every hour you live. If this were the intense desire of everyone of us, we would be driven at once to this conclusion—"I must have a guide. I want to live a glorious life and if I am to do so, I must be helped in it, for I am incompetent for the task by myself."

I am merely giving you the outline of a sermon. I have not time to fill it up, so now I leave this first point, the conviction which led the Psalmist to take a guide.

II. Secondly, let us think of THE CONFIDENCE WHICH LED HIM TO TAKE GOD AS HIS GUIDE. If we were but in our right senses, we would all do so!

A man, looking about wisely for a guide, will prefer to have *the very best*—and is not God, who is infinitely wise, the best Guide that we can have? Who questions it? Is not the Lord, also, the most loving, the most tender, the most considerate, the most fatherly of all beings who can be chosen as a guide? Wisdom, when attended with discourtesy and unfeeling roughness, may be shunned by us, but Divine Wisdom, dressed in robes of love and tenderness, invites us to run into her arms! Choose God, I pray you, because He so well knows the way and because He has such a tender love for poor trembling humanity.

Choose Him, also, because of *His constant, unceasing, Infallible care*. If I choose a guide who may die on the road, I am likely to be unhappy, but God will never die. If I choose a guide who, being my friend at the start, will not care for me when I have advanced half way on my journey, I am unwise in my choice. But God cannot change, He will always be the same! If I had to ascend the Alps and I selected a guide who could help me over the easy portions of the road, but would be unable to aid me in the more difficult parts of it, I should again be unhappy. The Lord is a Guide who will never fail, never alter and never die. Oh, you are wise, indeed, if you will say to Him, "My God, You shall guide me with Your counsel!"

But will God guide us? Well, it were in vain to choose Him if He would not! But of all beings, God is *most easy of access*. You know how it is with some of us who are very, very, very busy and who scarcely ever have a moment's rest at all from the rising of the sun till far into the night. There is a knock at the door. There is another knock at the door. There is another and, at last, if we are to be prepared for our public duties, we are obliged to say that we cannot be seen—we must have a little time to ourselves. But there is never an hour when God cannot be seen, never a moment when His door will not open to any who come to ask advice of Him! And God is everywhere, so that, wherever *you* are, you can find

Him—not only in the place where you bow the knee in private prayer, but out on the exchange, amid the throng of men, or in the streets, or on the omnibus, or in the ship at sea, or in the train—anywhere and everywhere! A breath, an aspiration will find Him, or—

"The upward glancing of an eye,"

a sigh, an unexpressed desire and you have come to Him at once! And He has servants everywhere to do the bidding of His love when we have sought His help.

The Psalmist was truly wise in saying to the Lord, "You shall guide me with Your counsel." Dear Friends, are you equally wise in that way? I see young men and women here in considerable numbers—will not each of you say, "Yes, Lord, it is even so. From this 4th day of October, my heart says to You, 'You shall guide me with Your counsel'"?

III. Now I must pass on to my third point, only skimming the surface of the subject. Think of THE HEAVENLY COMMERCE WHICH NOW BEGINS BETWEEN THE SOUL AND ITS GUIDE.

How does God guide men? Here, let me warn you against the superstitions which some persons use with the idea that God will guide them in that way. Above all, avoid the superstition which some practice by opening the Bible at random in the hope of being guided by the text which comes first to sight! You will often be misled if you act thus. The heathen acted so with Virgil and I think the heathen were, in that respect, better than Christians, because when they played the fool, they did it with Virgil—not with God's Book. Do not so, I pray you. One of these days you may open at this text, "He went and hanged himself," and if you are not satisfied with that passage, you may open the Bible at another place, and find it written, "Go, and do you likewise," but that will not excuse you if you commit suicide! Nothing can be more wicked and absurd than such a practice as that.

How, then, does God guide us? First, by *the general directions of His Word*. You need to know what God would have you to do. Nine times out of ten, look to the Ten Commandments and you will, at least, know what you must *not* do—and knowing what you must *not* do, you will be able to conclude what you *may* do. There are some wonderfully plain directions in God's Word as to all manner of circumstances and conditions. You may often imitate the saints of old and you may always imitate their Master! And, in imitating Christ, you will know what to do. This is the question that will guide you as to your course of action—What would Jesus Christ have done if He had been in my circumstances? Apart from His Godhead, in which you cannot copy Him, what would the Man, Christ Jesus, have done? Do that—for it is sure to be the wisest thing! So, first, be guided by the general directions given in God's Word.

The next way of guidance is that there are *great principles infused in every man who takes God for his Guide*. Among the rest, there are principles like this—avoid everything that is evil. That one direction post will often stop you and show you which way you ought *not* to go, because, if

there is anything wrong about the road, however profitable it may seem to be, however easy and pleasant it is and, above all, however customary it is for others to go that way, you must not travel along it! There are many in the broad road, but you must not make one more. "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leads unto life, and few there are that find it." You keep to the narrow way and you will be in the right road.

The next general principle of our holy religion is that we ought to live for the Glory of God, alone. You could not have a much better guide than such questions as these—"What action would reflect most honor upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ? Which course would be most creditable to my religious profession? Which would be likely to do most good?" Follow that rule—it is almost equal to the Urim and Thummim of the High Priest if you have these questions to guide you!

You are bid, also, to show love to your fellow men. If you are in a difficulty about two courses of action, do the more loving of the two—that by which you can most *deny yourself* and most benefit your fellow creatures—especially with reference to their salvation. Thus, by infusing principles of self-denial, principles of faith in God, principles of humility and contentment, the Word of God and the Spirit of God supply us with directions on the road we are to travel.

Next to this, God guides His people on the way of life *by giving a certain balance of the faculties*. When we come to God in penitence—when we are born again of the Spirit and live by faith in Christ—then, first of all, fear is banished and faith takes its place. We are then better able to judge which is the right road. "There were they in great fear, where no fear was." Many a man has done wrong because he had not the courage to do right, but you who have been born again have not the spirit of fear, but the spirit of love, courage and faith! And you have a sound mind, so that thus you are guided aright. By your faculties being left undisturbed by fear, your mental balance is maintained!

Obstinacy is a shocking thing as a guide in life. Young men have resolved that they will do so and so if they die for it. Yes, but the Grace of God dethrones obstinacy and gives us, in its place, acquiescence in the Divine will. Bowing with submission to the will of God—by that very fact we are furnished with unerring guidance!

Haste, too, is the author of a great deal of mischief in human life. Men are in such a hurry that they make all manner of mistakes, but the habit of praying about everything is, in itself, a great guide. You have to stop a while and the very stopping lets you see more than you would have seen in your hurry. The habit of praying before you leap leads to the habit of looking before you leap—and then, when you perceive that you cannot leap—prayer gives you enough of prudence to resolve that you will go round some other way. Thus you are wisely guided in life.

Above all, the Grace of God guides us very much by the dethroning of self as the traitorous lord of our being and makes us loyal to Christ. When a man acts out of loyalty to Christ, he is pretty sure to act very

wisely and rightly. On this point, alone, I would have liked to have had an hour's talk with you, but I must draw my remarks to a close.

I believe that, over and above this infusion of right principles, and balancing of the faculties, there is *a special illumination of mind which comes from dwelling near God.* Everybody knows how near akin sin is to insanity. Well, now, remember that holiness is as near akin to perfect wisdom as sin is to insanity! When you yield yourself to the holy influences of God's Presence, you shall have given to you what men call "shrewd commonsense," but what is really an illumination of mind which comes from dwelling near God and being made like He!

And, lastly, I believe that at the very worst times, when all these things will fail you as a guide, *you may expect mysterious impulses,* for which you can never account, which will come to you and guide you aright. There are many stories, which I should like to have told, relating to instances in which men of God have been directed, by some strange impulse on their minds, to do things which they had never thought of doing. And what they have done has turned out to be for the saving of life, or for deliverance from great evils. Oh, yes, if you live near God, He will say things to you that He will not tell anybody else! There are monitions of the Spirit which come to men who deal intimately with the Invisible that do not come to everybody—only let not every fool who gets a silly notion into his head run away with the idea that it came from God!

Only this week, a young man said to me, "You believe the Bible, Sir?" "Yes, I believe the Bible, certainly." "Do you believe what God says?" "Certainly I do." "Well," he said, "I had a revelation, the other night and a voice said to me, 'Behold, I have set before you an open door, and no man can shut it.'" "All right," I said. And he then said to me, "That door leads into your College and you are to take me in." I replied, "So I will when *I* get a revelation that I am to do so, but, you see, the revelation, whatever it is worth, has only come to *you* and I shall not let you in till I have one to the same effect." I have a notion that I shall never have that revelation, and that he received it, not from God's Word, but through a slight aperture in his cracked brain! There are many persons who get revelations of that kind, to which we pay no sort of attention. The mysterious impulses that I mean come only to those who are really serving God and who, in closely waiting upon Him, find that "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His Covenant."

IV. But I must finish my discourse. The *finis* was to be, THE SURE RESULT OF THIS GUIDANCE. "You shall guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to Glory."

On earth there is no real glory for us unless we are guided by God's counsel. There is no true glory for any man who takes his own course. Glory is for those of you who put your hand into the hand of the great Father and pray Him to forgive all your iniquities for Christ's sake and lead you in the way everlasting. Afterward, He will receive you to Glory.

This is a delightful thought, but I can now only answer this one question. *When we die, who will receive us into Glory*? Well, I do not doubt that the angels will. John Bunyan's description of the shining ones who come down to the brink of the river to help the pilgrims up on the other side of the cold stream—I doubt not is all true, but the text tells us of Somebody *better* than the angels who will come and receive us! Our dying prayer to our Lord will be, "Into Your hands I commend my spirit," and His answer will be, "I receive you to Glory." Our heavenly Father stands watching for the moment when our redeemed spirit shall pass into His hands that He may receive it! Our Savior, who bought us with His precious blood, stands waiting to receive the jewel for which He paid so dear a price! The Spirit of God, who dwells in us, is also waiting to perfect the work which He has carried on so long—and to lift us up into the blessedness of the Eternal City.

Oh, how I wish that every person here who has not yet yielded himself or herself to Christ, would do so now! Breathe silently these words before you leave the pew. I will give you a second or two in which to do it—"You shall guide me with your counsel, and afterward receive me to Glory." Bow your heads and let that prayer be offered.

* * * * * * *

Lord, You shall guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to Glory! For Jesus' sake, accept this resolve! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
Psalm 39.

To the chief Musician, even to Jeduthun, A Psalm of David.

Jeduthun was one of those who led the sacred song in the House of God in David's day and, long afterwards, we find the son of Jeduthun still engaged in this holy service! What a blessing it is to be succeeded in the work of God by your children from generation to generation! May that be your privilege, my dear Brothers and Sisters! May your families never lack a man to stand before the Lord God of Israel to sing His praises! This is called, "A Psalm of David." His life was a very checkered one. Sometimes he was very joyous and then he wrote bright and happy Psalms. But he was a man of strong passions and deep feelings, so at times he was very sad. And then he touched the mournful string. This is a very sorrowful Psalm, but it is full of teaching. How grateful we ought to be that such a man as David ever lived and that he had such wonderful experiences! It may be said of him that he was—

"A man so various, that he seemed to be
Not one, but all mankind's epitome."

Well was he made the type of Christ in whose great heart the joys and sorrows of humanity met to the fullest! Thus the Psalmist sings—

Verse 1. *I said, I will take heed to my ways.* It is not everybody who would like to remember what he has uttered, but David could remember and dwell upon what he had formerly said—"I *said*, I will take heed to my ways." That is a good thing to do. He that does not take heed to his ways had need do so. Heedless and careless and heedless and graceless are much the same thing. He that does not take heed of what he does will be sure to do wrong.

1. *That I sin not with my tongue.* He that does not sin with his tongue usually has his whole nature under government. The tongue is the rudder of the vessel and if that is managed well, the ship will be rightly steered. "I said, I resolved, I determined and I uttered my determination—I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue." Just then David was sinning in his *heart*, for it was in a great state of ferment, but he said, "I will not sin with my tongue." It was with him as it sometimes is with the captain of a vessel—if someone on board is suffering from the yellow fever, the ship master will not send a boat to shore for fear of spreading infection. His vessel will be in quarantine till all danger is past. It was thus with David—while all within him was seething and boiling in feverish impatience, he said, "I shall not speak for the present, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue."

1. *I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.* The marginal reading is, "with a muzzle for my mouth." David would not speak at all and herein he was *not* right. If he had said, "I will keep my mouth with a bridle," as our translation has it, that would have been perfectly proper. We ought never to leave off bridling our tongue, but David *muzzled* his. He would not speak at all while the wicked were before him. He knew that they would misconstrue his words, that they would make mischief of whatever he said, so he muzzled himself when in their company.

2. *I was dumb with silence.* "I did not speak, I could not speak—'I was dumb with silence.'"

2. *I held my peace, even from good.* David's conduct proves that even when we are doing something which is right, we are apt to overdo it, and so we stray into a vice while pursuing a virtue! You can run so close to the heels of a virtue that they may knock out your teeth—you may be so ardent for one good thing that you may miss another—"I held my peace, even from good."

2. *And my sorrow was stirred.* Not giving it vent, it boiled and seethed. "My sorrow was stirred." Sometimes a little talk is a great easement to a troubled spirit, but, as David was dumb, his sorrow was not still.

3. *My heart was hot within me, while I was musing, the fire burned.* There was an inward friction, his griefs kept revolving till his heart grew hot. This heat generated fire which burned so vehemently that, at last, the Psalmist could not help himself, and he was obliged to speak.

3. *Then spoke I with my tongue.* Whether rightly or wrongly, he must say something! He could not hold himself in any longer—"Then spoke I with my tongue."

4. *LORD.* If you must speak, address your words to the Lord! So David does. He does not speak to the wicked, but he prays to God most holy.

4. *Make me to know my end.* Did he wish to die? Perhaps so. You remember that one of the two men who never died once prayed that he might die. Elijah did so. And David does so, here, I think, if I put a hard construction on his speech—"Lord, make me to know my end." But if I read it more tenderly, I may make it to mean, "Lord, help me to recollect that my sorrows will not last forever!" That thought will tone them down and keep them in check—"Make me to know my end."

4-5. *And the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am. Behold, You have made my days as an handbreadth.* That is, the breadth of your four fingers—all the length of life is to be measured by a span.

5. *And my age is as nothing before You.* All that exists is as nothing before God. What are even the elder-born of angels but the infants of an hour in contrast with the ages of eternity? The world, itself, is only like a bubble blown yesterday! The sun is as a spark struck from the anvil of Omnipotence but a few days ago! And as for *man*, compared with the eternal God, he is "as nothing."

5. *Verily, every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah.* Or, as the Hebrew has it, every Adam is all Abel. Was not Abel the child of Adam, and was he not soon cut off? Every man, even at his best state, is altogether vanity! What poor creatures we are! Our breath is not more airy than we, ourselves, are! Our lives are but as a mist that is blown away by the wind. "Selah." When the Psalmist had come so far, he stopped a while, to tighten up the strings of his harp—such pressure as he had given it had taken away its melodious tones and it needed to be brought, again, up to concert pitch.

6. *Surely every man walks in a vain show.* Like players, or actors, all of us are walking in a phantom show which is not really anything, but only seems to be.

6. *Surely they are disquieted in vain.* They make a dreadful noise in the tumult of the battle, the din of the exchange, the hum of the streets, the fret and worry of the counting house, but it is all in vain.

6. *He heaps up riches, and knows not who shall gather them.* If a man does succeed in amassing wealth, it is a poor success. The muckrake gathers and then comes the fork that scatters. One man hoards it up and another takes as much delight in squandering it! They think that they have entailed their estate and that their name and house will continue as long as the sun, but it all comes to nothing. "Vanity of vanities," said the son of David, "all is vanity," and his father had said so before him!

7. *And now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in You.* There is no vanity in *that* declaration! Now we are on the Rock, now we have come to

something real. When a man trusts in the unchanging God and hopes in the ever-blessed Savior, he has come out of his state of vanity—"My hope is in You."

8. *Deliver me from all my transgressions.* We had not expected David to offer that prayer. We might have thought that he would say, "Deliver me from all my troubles and from my many vexing thoughts." But no, he lays the axe at the root of the evil—"Deliver me from all my *transgressions*." There is only One who can do that, even the glorious Son of God, who lived and died to save His people from their sins!

8. *Make me not the reproach of the foolish.* "The wicked will be ready enough to catch me up and pour scorn upon me. Lord, keep me so right with You and so near to Yourself that they may never be able to reproach me!"

9. *I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because You did it.* This verse should read, "I will be dumb, I will not open my mouth because You have done it." That is a better silence than the first, for the Psalmist is getting into a right state. This is the proper silence—the other was brazen—this is golden! God help us to know how and when to practice it! Never speak against God whatever He does—open not your mouth when He chastens because *whatever* He does must be right!

10. *Remove Your stroke away from me.* Having come to complete submission, he ventures to pray for deliverance from his sorrow. You may pray very boldly and very freely when you can truly say, "Your will be done." David had said that he would not open his mouth against his God—and now he begins to plead, "Remove Your stroke away from me."

10. *I am consumed by the blow of Your hand.* When God strikes it is no playing matter—a blow of His hand consumes us!

11. *When You with rebukes correct man for iniquity, You make his beauty to consume away like a moth.* As a moth eats up the fur or the cloth and spoils it, so, when God's corrections come upon us, our beauty is soon gone. Poor beauty it must be that can so soon go! Lord, let *Your* beauty be upon us, for no moth can ever eat into that!

11. *Surely every man is vanity. Selah.* In the fifth verse, you see that when the Psalmist reached that point, he stopped, and said, "Selah," and he does so, again, here. Striking his music with a heavy hand—he has put it out of tune, again, so he pauses and begins to tighten the strings up once more. You and I often need to be tightened up like the strings of a harp, to put us in right order before we go on to praise or to pray.

12. *Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear unto my cry.* See how David's "prayer" grows into a "cry"? It deepens in intensity—there is more power in a cry than in an ordinary prayer—it shows more earnestness and implies greater urgency! "Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear unto my cry."

12. *Hold not Your peace at my tears.* That is a still more powerful mode of pleading. Tears are the irresistible weapons of weakness. Women, children, beggars and sinners can all conquer by tears—when

they can win by nothing else! If they will take to these pearly drops and especially if they can look through them to the crimson drops of a Savior's blood, they can win what they will of God—"Hold not Your peace at my tears."

12. *For I am a stranger with You.* The Believer is a stranger in this world, just as *God* is! The Lord made the world, but the world does not know its Maker and it does not know His people—

"'Tis no surprising thing,
That we should be unknown!
The Jewish world knew not their King,
God's everlasting Son."

"I am a stranger," not to You, but, "*with* You, a stranger even as You are." There is another very beautiful meaning to this expression. You know how the Orientals exercise hospitality to strangers? When they once take them into their tent, they supply them liberally and treat them honorably. "I am a stranger with You." I am a poor alien who has come into God's House, to tarry for a while with Him, I have eaten of His salt, I have cast myself upon His protection, so He will certainly take care of me—"I am a stranger with You."

12. *And a sojourner, as all my fathers were.* "They did not remain here. My fathers used this world merely as an inn, at which they stayed for a night. In the morning, they hurried on to the City that has foundations, on the other side of Jordan—

"To the islands of the Blessed,
To the land of the Hereafter,"

where the saints dwell forever with their Lord!

13. *O spare me*—"Deal gently with me! Do not break me in pieces! If You must smite me, yet do not altogether crush me. O spare me"—

13. *That I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more.* "Let me be able to take a little nourishment and to gather my faculties together, yet again, that I may sing to You some sweeter hymn before I cease to be in the land of the living, and go out of this world." So, you see, this is a sweet Psalm, after all! It is a bitter sweet—a sweet bitter—a Psalm that tends towards our spiritual health. Many of us understand what David meant by it. May others, who as yet do not, soon be taught its gracious lessons! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—23 (VERSION II), 73 (PART II), 668.

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.

A ROYAL FUNERAL
NO. 2390

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 9, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 7, 1888.

"And after this, Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came, therefore, and took the body of Jesus. And there came, also, Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pounds weight. Then took they the body of Jesus and wound it in linen strips with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulcher, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus, therefore, because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulcher was near at hand." John 19:38-42.

LET US go to this grave, but not to weep there—no, not to shed so much as a single tear! The stone is rolled away, our Lord's precious body is not there, for Christ has risen from the dead! It may be that, like Mary at the sepulcher, we shall see a vision of angels, but if not, we may behold a company of comforting Truths of God which still linger about the empty tomb of our ascended Lord!

We are expressly told, in Holy Scripture, that our Lord was buried. It was evidently not sufficient for us merely to be told that He died—we must also know that He was buried. Why was this? Was it not, first, that we might have a certificate of His death? We do not bury living men and the Lord Jesus would not have been buried if the Centurion had not certified that He was certainly dead. The Roman officer had probably seen Christ's heart pierced by the soldier's spear, when blood and water flowed forth from His side. At any rate, when his men went to execute the *coup de grace*, which finished the lives of the other two, by the breaking of their legs, they were so certain that He who hung in the middle was really dead that they broke not His legs. Christ's being given up for burial was Pilate's certificate that He had not merely pretended to die, but that it was a real death and that His body had no life remaining in it. This is an essential point, for if Jesus did not die, He has made no Atonement for sin. If He died not, then He rose not—and if He rose not, then your faith is vain, you are yet in your sins! The sepulcher, therefore, occupies a very important place in the story of the death of Jesus.

Again, was He not buried to fulfill a type which He had, Himself, chosen? Like as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the fish, in the heart of the sea, even so was the Son of Man to lie for that

time in the heart of the earth. The casting of the runaway Prophet into the sea quieted the angry waves—the tempest fell asleep when he was given up as a victim—and Christ's being cast into the sea of death has quieted the storm of almighty wrath! We sail, today, as on a sea of glass because Christ was buried in those awful billows. He must fulfill the type of Jonah, or else He spoke not aright concerning Himself when He said, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the Prophet Jonah."

Further, was not our Lord buried to make His battle with death and His triumph over it more complete? He has conquered death, but He has also burst open the castle of death, that is the grave. He has bearded the lion in his den, the Douglas in his hall. In this matchless duel, He has set Himself to fight not only with death, but with death and the grave combined—and hence the paean of victory is not merely, "O death, where is your sting?" but it is also, "O grave, where is your victory?" Christ's victory is altogether complete. He has led captivity captive, because He became a captive. He has vanquished all death's allies, as well as death, itself, by going down into the grave and rending its bars asunder.

Beside all this, did not our Lord die and condescend to be buried, to sweeten the grave for His people? Rightly did we sing just now concerning the tomb—

"There the dear flesh of Jesus lay,
And left a long perfume."

Unless the Lord should speedily come, as He may—God grant that He may!—we shall fall asleep and these bodies of ours will be committed to the silence of the grave. We must not dare to dread the sepulcher—where Christ has been, we may safely and honorably go. As I told you, the other day, He left the fine linen to be the furniture of our last bed. He left the napkin rolled up by itself, that weeping friends might dry their tears thereon. He also left the myrrh and aloes, about one hundred pounds' weight, which Nicodemus brought. I never heard that they were taken away from the tomb—Jesus left them there and they still shed their sweet fragrance throughout the graves of all His saints! We are not going to a noisome vault, but to a perfumed chamber hung with the fine linen sheets that encompassed the Christ, and odorous with the spices that shed their sweetness upon Him! To die is now our *gain*—to sleep in Jesus is to be blest, indeed!

I may add, also, that I think our Lord was buried so that, from His tomb, He might leap to His Throne. He goes to the lowest depths that from there He may rise to the loftiest heights! You, too, Believer, may go as low as the grave, but you can never go any lower—and when you are at your lowest, you are then on your way to your highest! Your Lord stooped to conquer, so must you. You will have won the victory over death when you lie, stark and cold, upon your last bed. The adversary may think that he has defeated you—

"When silent is your pleading tongue
And blind that piercing eye,"

and inactive that once diligent hand, but it is not so—you shall *then* have broken loose from everything that hinders you from entering upon your highest service for your Lord—and you shall have entered that Holy

Place where you shall see His face and serve Him day and night in His glorious Temple!

I like to think of Jesus as going down into the lowest parts of the earth when I remember that He that descended is the same who also ascended. This should encourage us to feel that, sink as we may, lower and yet still lower, we shall rise all the higher because of that sinking—and shall enter still more completely into fellowship with Christ both in His sufferings and in His Glory! It was necessary, then, my Brothers and Sisters, that there should be a new tomb in the garden close by Golgotha and that our Lord should lie there. It is a very wonderful thing that He, whose face is the light of Heaven, whose hands are sceptered with the government of the universe and whose very feet are sandaled with the stars, should yet bear the image of death upon His pale Countenance and should lie there lifeless, to be handled by others, and to be wrapped as any other dead man might be, in fine linen and sweet spices.

But my subject at this time is concerning the wonderful working of God with regard to the burial of Jesus. The Providence of God began with the body of Christ from the very first, even from His Conception, and it followed Him right to the last, even to His burial. You see the Holy Child in the manger and you notice how all things round about minister strangely to Him. Throughout His life all things worked together for His good—not to screen Him from suffering, but to *cause* Him to suffer—and to make Him triumphant through those sufferings! And when He came to die, I see the finger of God displayed at every part of that dread tragedy. But now that He is dead, will that kind Providence forsake Him? Ah, no!

I want to stop here and say to you who anxiously ask, "What will become of me when I die? I am so very poor and needy"—never think about that matter—you have enough to do to trust God till you die! As to what is to become of your body when you are dead, never fret about that! It is wonderful how God takes care of the very dust and ashes of His chosen, how, sometimes, they receive in death respect and honor which they never thought would have come to them, and after they have passed away, their children and their household are blessed of God for their sake. The God of the living forsakes not His saints in dying, or after death! As Ruth would cleave to Naomi and said, "Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried," so, with greater faithfulness, does God cleave to His people! He will see them buried and take care of their children after they are gone. This is His comforting promise, "Leave your fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let your widows trust in Me."

Now let me remind you how God took care of the First-Born among many brethren. Jesus is dead and in the hands of wicked men. The executioners have Him in their charge, those same executioners who just now broke the legs of the two thieves, have hold of Christ! But that precious body must be preserved, not a bone of Him must be broken, no disrespect must be paid to that Immaculate Being. Death and Hell would have reveled in insulting Christ's body if they could. As Achilles dragged Hector by the heels round the walls of Troy, so would Satan have liked that men should have mauled the dead body of Christ. He would have

cast Him to the dogs or to the vultures if he could have had his way, but so it must not be! Many a man who has been a prince has been buried with the burial of an ass, but this great Savior, whom men despised, must have a royal funeral! How is He to have it? That is the point I wish to bring to your notice and, before I have finished my discourse, I hope I shall be able to prove to you that everything required for Christ's burial was supplied.

I. The first requisite was SOMEONE TO OBTAIN THE BODY.

The law has executed Jesus, though wrongfully, and His body, therefore, belongs to the executioner, or, at any rate, to the law. Who is to rescue that precious body from the clutches of the law? Ah, you may look your eyes out, but you cannot see the man who can accomplish this task—yet God knows where He is! There is one Joseph, who has an estate at Arimathea, a wealthy man, a member of the Sanhedrim, "an honorable counselor." He appears upon the scene and he is the right man to do what is required, for he is a *secret disciple*. He has great respect for that dead body, for he had great regard for Jesus while He was alive. As we look Joseph up and down, we say, "Yes, if he will do his best, he is the very man for this emergency." He is under great arrears of obligation to his Lord, whom he scarcely acknowledged in His lifetime—yet he is a real disciple. Joseph, if you can do anything in this matter, we give you this solemn charge—go and get the body of Christ.

He was, besides, *an official and influential.* Therefore he could gain an entrance where a private person could not. And, what was still more to the point with such a man as Pilate, he was *a rich man*, for in those days, in the courts, everything went by favor. The poor man's cause might be just, yet he could not secure a hearing. But the gold in a rich man's hand would speak more loudly than the most convincing arguments upon a poor man's tongue. So this secret disciple is the one to beg the body of Jesus because he is an honorable counselor and also because he is rich. If he is willing to undertake the task, he is the man to accomplish it.

But my heart misgives me, for Joseph has been secretly a disciple and, therefore, I conclude that he must be *very timid*. During the last two years or so, he has really been a follower of Christ, and yet he has stayed in the council. He has been a member of the Sanhedrim, yet he has not spoken out against its evil deeds! Ah, me, I am afraid that he will not be able to go and speak to Pilate. But note, Brothers and Sisters, what Mark tells us about him—"Joseph of Arimathea went in *boldly* unto Pilate and craved the body of Jesus." God can make a coward bold as a lion in the day when He needs him! And this good man, full of honor and abounding in wealth, said, "I will go to Pilate." Why, this cruel vacillating governor will put a man to death if he aggravates him! Who knows how this interview may end?

But Joseph says, "I will go to Pilate." He obtains admittance and he asks for the body of Jesus. Pilate exclaims, "Why, He is not dead yet!" "Yes, He is," answers Joseph, "I have seen Him die." When the Centurion comes, he certifies that He is dead. Pilate cannot imagine what Joseph can want with a dead man's bones, but he says, "You may have His body. Take Him down, you may have Him." So Joseph comes back to the

Cross. He has proven that he was the very man for this work. We would never have thought of *him*, but God had him in reserve for the hour of need and brought him to the front at the right moment!

Now you see Joseph hurrying away from Pilate's Hall to the hill of Calvary, where the crosses are still standing. He has, in his hand, the order signed by the governor. He shows it to the officer in charge and he is a man of such prominence, so well known as an honorable counselor, an official gentleman and a person of wealth, that everybody is ready to help him. He, himself, is probably first and foremost in raising the ladder, helping to pull out the great nails, and to let down the blessed body. He is the man for this work, for *he is objectionable to nobody*. He has been a counselor, so that those on the side of the Sanhedrim do not object to him. The holy women stand watching him, but they have no fears as to his action—they know him, for he has probably done them many a kindness privately in days gone by—and they know that he has been a secret disciple of the Lord. He has brought with him fine white linen which he was well able to buy. He reverently takes the body of Jesus down from the Cross and tenderly wraps it round with the costly winding-sheets which he has purchased—and so this trying business is finished without interference from anyone.

I hope that these details do not seem trivial to you, for nothing is trivial that concerns our Lord and His cause. In the Tabernacle and the Temple, even the nails had to be duly prepared, and I think that, in this matter of providing a suitable person to go and get the body of Jesus out of the hand of the legal custodian, we ought to admire the wonderful goodness of God! Depend upon it, if, at any other time, there should be some great and terrible task to be accomplished, God will find the man to do it! If one shall be needed, by-and-by, at peril of his life to bear witness for Christ, the right person will be found! And until this chapter of Divine Providence shall come to an end in our Lord's eternal Glory, there shall never be a crisis, however crucial, but the man shall be found whom God wants, or the woman who is to occupy the place which the Lord has for her to fill!

Thus, Joseph has obtained the body of Jesus from the hands of Pilate and he may do what he will with it—that is the first point.

II. The next requisite is SOMEONE TO BURY THE BODY.

We do not want one man to carry away that body and lay it in the grave, for such a person as Jesus should have an honorable funeral. Now see what happens! There is another man, also a counselor, "a ruler of the Jews," "a master of Israel," yet another secret disciple who had come to Jesus by night—he appears at just this very moment! "There came, also, Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night." Now we have two mourners for our Master's funeral. James and John—where are you? They cannot hear my question! Peter and Bartholomew, where are you? They are too far away—they cannot hear me. Who will follow the body of Jesus to the grave? Who will be chief mourner? There are some gracious women, brave enough to stand afar off, and willing enough, if beckoned, to come and join the sad *cortege* that attends the corpse to the tomb. But how honorable to Christ was it that the first two and the chief mourners

on that sorrowful occasion should be two members of the Sanhedrim—Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus—two men of note, two reputable individuals who were held in honor even among the Jews who crucified Christ!

First, let me say of these two men who attended the burial of our Lord, that *they did Him honor*. Thus was fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy, "He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death; because He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth." All the while until Christ had paid the dreadful price of our redemption, He was despised and rejected of men, but as soon as He could say, "It is finished," and the debt was fully paid, He must not be despised and rejected any more! Now, rich men must come and do Him homage and, accordingly, Joseph and Nicodemus came. It may seem only a little thing, but it indicates the turn of the tide, just as the floating of a straw may do. Jesus is no longer derided, nor even attended only by the poorest and most obscure of Galileans, but Joseph from Arimathea, and Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, attend the funeral of the great Lord and Savior of men—and so pay such honor as they can to His dead body!

While they thus did Him honor, *they received from Him much more honor*. Ah, my Brothers and Sisters, it was a great privilege that was accorded to these two men! I stand and wonder how it was that this position was allotted to two who had kept so long behind the scenes. They had lost—they had lost—I cannot tell you how much they had lost, two, perhaps three *years* of constant fellowship with Christ and of instruction from His own dear lips! They had lost incalculably! They were in the rear of all Christ's disciples—Mary Magdalene was in front of them, the woman that was a sinner was far ahead of them—they were right in the rear rank. Yet their Master, in the splendor of His Grace, gives them this privilege even while He, Himself, lies dead! To them is accorded the high honor of handling His blessed flesh and laying Him in the tomb.

I am afraid that some of you secret Christians who never come out boldly for Christ will not have such an honor as this. If the Lord ever uses you at all, it will be in some sad business such as a funeral—but even that will be an honor to you, if you are permitted to attend Him in His death though you have not shared the glory of His life. You lose—oh, you lose incalculable gifts by not acknowledging your discipleship! Yet I pray that there may come a time and that it may come at once, when even *you* will come out and do what you can for your Lord, saying to yourself, "Now is the hour when even I, timid as I am, must acknowledge Him." When soul murder is in your streets, when heresy is in your pulpits, when apostasy is in your churches, you are unfaithful to the last grain of your spiritual manhood if you who love Christ do not come out boldly on His side and declare that you belong to Him! If you never have confessed Him before men and you neglect this opportunity, wherein there is the greatest and most urgent of need, I fear that you will never acknowledge Him at all.

Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were both needed for this sad task and though we should never have thought of inviting them to perform it, yet they were the only two men connected with Christ who were

exactly fitted for the office. And, as I have said, they thus honored Christ and He thus honored them. I should also say, Brothers and Sisters, that among all the disciples, there were *no more sincere mourners for Christ then these two men*. I think that I hear Joseph fetch a deep sigh and say, "Ah, Nicodemus, how wicked I have been, for I have not been with Christ as I ought to have been! I ought to have gone with Him to prison and to death. Instead of that, I have been among the ungodly, rich and honored." "Ah," says Nicodemus, "and I went to Him by night and He talked so sweetly to me, but I have been hiding away ever since. I feel ashamed to touch this blessed blood-stained hand. I realize that it is a high honor to be allowed to handle these dear feet and to wrap the linen all about them, but I do not deserve such an honor, I am sure." And they would stop and weep, and sigh again, to think of how they had ill-treated their Lord, by what they may have thought was modesty, but which conscience now tells them was nothing else than shameful cowardice!

And I do not think that out of all Christ's followers, there were any who would be *more tender with that blessed body*, for they were gentlemen. They were not countrymen or fishermen, used to handling and being handled roughly—they were of a more tender mold, and when they looked on that dear form, how gently would they treat it! Being also men of property, they would have many servants able to help them in all sorts of ways. In His wonderful interment, our Lord Jesus could not have been better attended, nor have been buried by men who would have performed the mournful duty with more solemn feelings, more hushed reverence. They loved Him, yet felt that they had acted in an unloving manner towards Him and, now, they also felt that the best they could possibly do was all too little for the Blessed One who had sealed the forgiveness of their cowardice by permitting Himself to be entrusted to their hands.

I can see great love about this dead Christ, and great pity, and great kindness, that even His lifeless body would be giving life to the faith and hope of Joseph and Nicodemus and should be firing them with fresh ardor! While they looked upon His corpse, they must have been compelled to resolve that never more would they be ashamed of Him whom they had helped to lay in the grave.

So far we have, in imagination, brought our Lord Jesus Christ into the hands of two most suitable persons to bury Him.

III. The next requisite is THE MATERIALS NECESSARY FOR THE BURIAL.

The manner of the Jews is to bury the body wrapped in strips of fine white linen—where is that? I do not believe that Peter has a yard of it anywhere. I hardly think that James and John have anything much finer than fishermen's coats and so forth. *Fine linen*—let it be the best that can be bought! Let it be white as snow for wrapping around this perfect body! But where is it to be obtained? Joseph has it! He is a man of wealth, who can get anything that is needed, and he has brought with him the best winding sheets in which to wrap the Savior's body.

But we must also have *mixed spices in abundance*, fifty pounds' weight at the least. "Oh," says Nicodemus, "I have brought one hundred pounds' weight with me, and if I could have found a conveyance, and more spices

had not been superfluous, I would have brought *many hundred pounds* weight of myrrh and aloes, well mingled according to the art of apothecary, with which to surround that blessed form."

See, my Brothers, Christ needed for nothing when He was dead—do you think that He will need anything while He is alive? "Ah, but our little Church, our poor cause, is needing money badly and we are going to get up a bazaar." What? And you have not thought about going to your Lord for what you lack? The fact is, the Church of God has been looking to the devil to find funds for the Lord's work instead of seeking aid from the Lord, Himself! It is a pity that we cannot come back to Him who, even when He was dead, had a hundred pounds' weight of myrrh and aloes brought to Him! Cannot we trust Him for all that is required for His service? It will be a better and a brighter day for the Church when she believes that if Christ needs myrrh and aloes, He can get them! Does not the Lord say, "The silver is Mine and the gold is Mine…Every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills…If I were hungry, I would not tell you: for the world is Mine, and the fullness thereof"? Let us go forth to fight the Lord's battles without any doubts concerning the commissariat of His army! He can provide and He *will* provide—only let us trust Him and not go down to Egypt for help, nor lean upon an arm of flesh.

As Nicodemus gave so freely to the dead Christ, how generously ought you and I to give to our living Lord! If we have anything in the world, let us give it all to Christ. Even if we have nothing left but a grave, which we have provided for our own funeral, yet let us surrender that, as Joseph did when he gave up his new tomb that his Lord and Master might lie therein.

Thus, you see, that all that is needed for Christ's burial is there already! So I leave that part of our subject and go on to the next.

IV. Another requisite is A PLACE WHEREIN TO BURY THE BODY. We have the body, Pilate has given us that. We have the spices and the fine linen and we have the two men ready to bury the body. Now we need a tomb.

It would be very convenient and also very important, if we could get *a sepulcher near at hand* because, you see, if the body of Christ had to be carried a long way to be buried, the Jews would say, "Ah, they switched it on the road! They took it a mile or two out of the city and the Christ who rose from the dead is not the Christ that was buried." But here, just at the bottom of this rocky hill which is called Golgotha, there is a garden, and in that garden there is a tomb. Hark the Providence of God in this matter, for that tomb belongs to Joseph, and there the Savior's body is lovingly laid! He did not and He could not lack a tomb when it was required! When the time came for Him to be buried, the sepulcher was there already prepared, hewn out of the rock!

It would also be a great advantage if it could be *a new tomb*, wherein never was anybody buried, for if they buried Him in an old tomb, the Jews would say that He had touched the bones of some Prophet or other holy man and so came to life. Ah, well, Joseph's is a new tomb—there are no bones there, for nobody has ever been buried there before!

It would seem, too, to be the proper thing for our Lord to have *a tomb in a rock*. You cannot fitly put Him in sand who is, Himself, the Rock of Ages. No, let our Lord Jesus, with that grand Immutable Love and eternal faithfulness of His, let Him lie in the solid rock! There it is, all ready for Him, just the very kind of tomb that is needed for Him who is the Rock of our salvation!

If it should also be *a tomb in a garden*, there would be a touch of familiar beauty about that arrangement. One likes that the very surroundings of Christ's grave should be instructive. I cannot stop to tell you about all the beauty and the instruction which cluster around a garden—the gardens of Scripture, especially, are most fruitful subjects, and our Lord's garden-tomb might suggest to us a most profitable theme for meditation.

Thus, Christ's tomb is the very thing we would wish for Him. In no secondhand grave, in no town ditch, in no pauper's grave dug out of the earth, but in a rich man's sepulcher, worthy of a king—it is there that the Christ must lie! See how God provides for His Son and learn how He will provide for *you*. If He provides for His Son when dead, He will provide for you while living—therefore be comforted whatever your condition may be!

V. There is one more difficulty and, perhaps, it is the worst of all, for it concerns THE TIME FOR THE BURIAL. You see, it is very late in the afternoon and, besides, it is the "preparation" for a very important Sabbath, and these good people cannot do any work on the Sabbath—their consciences will not permit them to do so, for they are strict Jews. But it so happened that they obtained the body just in time to wrap it round about with the spices and with the linen, and then we are told, "There laid they Jesus, therefore, because of the Jews' preparation day; for *the sepulcher was near at hand*." To me, it is a very pretty thought that when there was so little time, the place of burial was so near. It would have taken all the lingering twilight to have carried Jesus far, but the right place was near! Providence knew all about the difficulty and provided for it!

Next, they could not take much time with the body and *the ceremony was the more fitting for Christ's rising.* Beloved, whenever you cannot do anything for your Lord as you would like to do, do the best you can and you may depend upon it, that you have done just what ought to be done! "Oh, no!" they say, "Oh, no! We would have liked to have wrapped Him up much more leisurely and more delicately—we would have made a finished work of embalming that precious body." Listen! Nothing more was needed. Jesus was not going to be in the sepulcher long. God's Holy One could not see corruption! He did not need to be embalmed, for He was to be up again so soon and, therefore, a hurried burial was quite sufficient.

Listen again—there is another thing worth mentioning. *The incompleteness brought them early to the sepulcher.* If they do not finish their task of love on the evening of the Crucifixion, they will be there early in the morning, when the Sabbath is over, to complete it! That was *precisely* what was needed, that, as soon as the Master was risen, on that first day of the week, they should be there to see Him—but they would not have

been there to see Him, perhaps, if they had not come, as the holy women did, with more spices to finish the work which had been, comparatively speaking, so roughly and hurriedly done on that dread evening!

It was all right and I drew much comfort and joy out of this fact when I was thinking it over. I said to myself, "Sometimes I am so oppressed with the care of the many things entrusted to me that I cannot study my sermon as I would like." Perhaps it is all the better for that—the Master does not need studied sermons. It may also be that it suits the hearer all the better. If you cannot bury Christ as you would like to because there is not time, when you have done the best that you could, and sorrowed over it, you have done the very thing that your Lord wants you to do! Rest content with that and just say to yourself, "He takes the will for the deed, and all my blundering and mistakes He overlooks because I did it all out of love for His dear name."

I have talked thus to you about Christ's dead body. Oh, that I had an opportunity of speaking to you about Him as the living Lord! But as I cannot, for our time is gone, I would ask you to just stoop down and, in faith and love, kiss those wounds, admire that pierced hand, that other hand, that nailed foot, that other foot, that side with the spear gash, that dear face with closed eyes and then say, "He bore all this for *me*—what have I done for Him? "God bless you! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
Mark 15:34-47; John 19:38-42; 1 Corinthians 15:1-9.

Concerning the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall read in three portions of the New Testament. First, in the Gospel according to Mark, the 15th chapter, beginning at the 34th verse.

Mark 15:34. *And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?* It is, "My El, My strong God, My mighty One, why have You forsaken Me?"—the most bitter words that were ever uttered by mortal lips—and expressing the quintessence of agony. Alas, that my Savior should ever have had to say as much as this when He hung upon the Cross, suffering and dying for me!

35. *And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, Behold, He calls Elijah.* Did they misunderstand His bitter cry of woe? Could they mistake what He meant? Was it not, on the part of these people that stood by, a willful wicked witticism upon what our Lord Jesus had said? We fear that it was so.

36, 37. *And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave Him to drink, saying, Let Him alone; let us see whether Elijah will come to take Him down. And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.* His last words were, "It is finished."—

"It is finished!"—Oh what pleasure
Do these charming words afford!
Heavenly blessings without measure
Flow to us from Christ the Lord—
'It is finished!'
Saints, the dying words record."

38, 39. *And the veil of the Temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom. And when the Centurion, who stood over against Him.* The officer who had charge of the arrangements for the execution—"when the Centurion, who stood over against Him"—

39. *Saw that He so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this Man was the Son of God.* Probably saying a great deal more than he understood! There was something so extraordinary about this central Sufferer that the Centurion could not understand who He could be unless He was truly, "the Son of God."

40, 41. *There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses and Salome; (Who also, when He was in Galilee, followed Him, and ministered unto Him), and many other women which came up with Him unto Jerusalem.* Where was Peter? We know that John was near the Cross, but James and the rest of the Apostles were apparently hiding away. But the holy women were there!

42, 43. *And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, an honorable counselor, which also waited for the Kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus.* I have no doubt that Pilate was very surprised that a member of the Sanhedrim should come and ask for the body of Jesus, when, a little while before, he had put Him to death, really, by the mandate of that body of men!

44, 45. *And Pilate marveled if He were already dead: and calling unto him the Centurion, he asked him whether He had been any while dead. And when he knew it of the Centurion, he gave the body to Joseph.* This very Centurion who had declared that Jesus was the Son of God now came forward to bear witness that he had seen Him die. And then Pilate told Joseph that he might go and take the body.

46. *And he bought fine linen.* This was probably the first time that fine linen had touched the flesh of the Son of Man—He had been accustomed to much coarser stuff in His lifetime—but now Joseph "bought fine linen."

46, 47. *And took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen, and laid Him in a sepulcher which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone into the door of the sepulcher. And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses beheld where He was laid.* That is Mark's account of our Lord's death and burial, very terse and very suggestive. Let us now read John's description of the sad scene.

John 19:38-40. *And after this, Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came, therefore, and took the body of Jesus. And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus.* Oh, how tenderly and with how many tears, did they take their Lord's body from the Cross!

40-42. *And wound it in linen strips with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where He was crucified there was a*

garden; and in the garden a new sepulcher, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus, therefore, because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulcher was near at hand. John's Gospel contains some particulars not mentioned by Mark. And the same may be said of Matthew's account and Luke's. Read them all when you are home and ponder the wonderful story! The Apostle Paul, speaking of our Lord's Resurrection, mentions His burial. We will now read in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, just a few verses from the 15th chapter.

1 Corinthians 15:1. *Moreover, brethren I declare unto you the Gospel*—Mark that Paul writes concerning "the Gospel." We shall see now what, "the Gospel" is.

1-3. *Which I preached unto you, which also you have received, and wherein you stand, by which also you are saved, if you keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless you have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you, first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.* That is the central Truth of the Gospel.

4. *And that He was buried.* That is an essential part of the Gospel.

4. *And that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.* This is the bright light of the Gospel, the Resurrection of our Lord from the dead—

5-9. *And that He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that, He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, He was seen of James; then of all the Apostles. And last of all He was seen of me, also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the Apostles, that am not meet to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God.* Yet He was one among the many testifiers to the fact that Jesus really died, was buried and rose from the dead, of which we will speak more particularly, by-and-by.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—306, 832.

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.

THE KEEPER OF THE VINEYARD
NO. 2391

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 16, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, JULY 5, 1863.

"I the LORD keep it. I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day."
Isaiah 27:3.

MY discourse this evening can hardly be called a sermon. It will be just a simple talk about a few experimental Truths of God, but I trust that it will be useful to some of the Lord's people.

The text follows a terrible verse in which the Lord's enemies are threatened with "His sore and great and strong sword." But even when God has the most anger against His adversaries, He is still full of love for His people. The Church of God is here compared to a vineyard. The vine is a tender plant, needing continual care, and if the vineyard is not well fenced and guarded, the enemies of the vine are sure to get in and destroy it. The Church is called "a vineyard of red wine," because the red grape happened to be the best kind grown in Palestine and, in like manner, God's Church is, to Him, the best of the best, the excellent of the earth, in whom is all His delight! But what is true of the whole Church is also true of every member—the same God who keeps the vineyard also protects every vine, no, not only so, but His care extends to every little branch, to every spreading leaf and to every clinging tendril of that vine which He undertakes to keep night and day. Well did Toplady sing—

"Upon my leaf, when parched with heat,
Refreshing dew shall drop.
The plant which Your right hand has set,
Shall never be rooted up.
Each moment watered by Your care,
And fenced with power Divine,
Fruit to eternal life shall bear
The feeblest branch of Thine."

Our text mentions two much-needed mercies and upon each of these I will speak briefly. We find in the text, first, *continual keeping.* And then, secondly, *continual watering.* In these gracious Words of the Lord, we have a promise that we shall be kept from foes without and from foes within. God is both a wall and a well to His people—a wall to guard them from their adversaries—and a well to supply all their needs out of His ever living, over-flowing fullness.

I. First, then, concerning the CONTINUAL KEEPING which the Lord promises to His vineyard—"I, the Lord, keep it...lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." I will talk of that keeping in an experimental way,

putting the subject before you in the form of questions which may be applied either to the Church as a whole, or to each individual Believer.

The first will be, "*Do I need keeping?* I trust I have been called by God's Grace, that I have been washed in Jesus' blood and that I have been made one of the Lord's children—do I need keeping?" Ah, if I know anything of myself, I shall be compelled to answer that I do, for my foes are innumerable and I, like the vine, am subject to all sorts of perils and dangers! Brothers and Sisters there is the arch-enemy—how he longs to lay the axe to the roots of God's vines! If we were in *his* power, you and I would not have a grain of faith or a spark of love left! He is desirous to have us, not only that he may sift us as wheat, but that he may burn us as chaff! When we think of his malice and cunning, we may well pray, "Deliver us not over unto the will of our enemy." When God's people have met Satan in a hand-to-hand conflict, they have always found it a stern and difficult struggle, for he is ferocious, malicious and powerful—and he comes against us, not only to worry us—but seeking whom he may devour! We need keeping, then, if it were only because of that one adversary who would make a speedy end of us if we were left in his grip even for an hour!

Like the vine, too, we have not only to dread him who would cut us down, but there is a wild boar of the woods that would gladly tear us up by the roots! I mean that wild boar of *unbelief* that is constantly prowling around us. How does it seek with its sharp tusks to tear our vines and fig trees! You know, dear Friends, how unbelief takes away your comforts, how it destroys your strength and how it mars your usefulness. Perhaps some of you, at times, hardly know whether you are the Lord's people or whether you are not His. Our friend, who addressed us last ordinance Sabbath, said that God's people ought never to have doubts and fears. I quite admit that they ought not to have them—but that they really *do* have them is quite as certain! I like that good old hymn of Dr. Watts and sing it as I find it—

"When I can read my title clear
To mansions in the skies
I bid farewell to every fear
And wipe my weeping eyes."

I am afraid, dear Brothers and Sisters, you and I cannot travel the same road if you are always confident and if you never have reason to look back and cry because you have lost your evidences. This I know—there are seasons with me when I do not doubt my Lord and Master, but I do doubt my interest in Him—and I have to come to Him just as I came at first, as an empty-handed sinner and accept His Grace as He freely presents it. Yes, if the Lord did not keep us, the wild boar of unbelief would soon tear us to pieces, and we would have no Grace left, but would become useless forever!

Then, you know, the vine is often subject to injury from various kinds of insects. Almost all plants of any value are attacked, at times, by a peculiar kind of fly which devours the leaves and prevents fruit-bearing. And the vine is specially liable to attacks of this sort. So is it with Christians—we have the fly of *pride*. If the great enemy never came to knock us down and unbelief never tried to root us up, the very quietude of the

atmosphere and the calmness of the soft summertime would begin to breed that deadly fly which goes before destruction! I think we have even more cause to fear the effects of carnal security, self-confidence and pride than the assaults of Satan, himself! I do not know how it is with you, my Brothers and Sisters, but at times I feel so dead that I would almost welcome a temptation from Satan, so that I might feel a little spiritual life stirring within me in opposition to it!

There have been dark times in our experience which have caused us great sorrow of heart and yet we have come to look back upon those sad seasons almost with a sort of envy—and we have wished that we might have them over, again, so that we might feel at least *some* pulsing, some palpitations of the new life within us! Oh, that dreadful fly of pride! John Bunyan tells us, in his *Holy War*, that it was Mr. Carnal-Security who drove Emmanuel from the town of Mansoul. He would have always stayed there and have given Mansoul high holiday, but that Diabolonian, Mr. Carnal-Security, whose father was Mr. Self-Conceit, and whose mother was Lady Fear-Nothing, filled the townspeople with such high notions of their greatness that the blessed Prince went His way in sorrow and anger!

Alas for us when we say, "My mountain stands firm, I shall never be moved." For we are then in direst peril! That cankerworm of conceit, that caterpillar of pride, that locust of carnal security would soon destroy God's vineyard if it were not written, "I the Lord keep it. I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." This promise assures us that the Lord will preserve us from the assaults of pride as well as from the attacks of unbelief and from the malice of the great adversary of our souls!

Then, dear Friends, beside the enemies I have mentioned, the vine is subject to the attacks of the little foxes that Solomon speaks of in the Canticles—"Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines." There are plenty of little foxes of all sorts about, nowadays. I mean false doctrine and skeptical teaching. Some of these crafty foxes come nibbling at us, trying to make us doubt the Inspiration of Scripture. Some of them even dare to try to root up and destroy our confidence in the Divinity of Christ! Others of these little foxes are still more insidious—they seek to tempt us away from the outward means of Grace and aim at making us forsake the assemblies of God's saints. Men pour into our ears all sorts of heresies and lies till our souls scarcely know the Truth of God from error and we are carried to and fro, and have a hard battle to fight! Ah, if the Lord did not keep His Church, she would soon become a prey to the graft of her adversaries! But He *does* preserve His vineyard from the little foxes and from the great foxes, too! His vines have tender grapes and the foxes would devour them if they could, but, blessed be the Lord, they are unable to do so! Our Lord preserves us and protects us from all the craft and cunning of our adversaries!

Besides, dear Friends, when we have a few grapes that are beginning to ripen, there are the birds that come and try to pick the fruit—those dark-winged thoughts of worldliness and selfishness which come to us all. We begin to say, "Well done!" to ourselves and then it is always ill-

done. The Prophet Habakkuk tells us of those who "sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag." And if we ascribe our success to our own perseverance, our own zeal and so forth, we shall be like the birds which steal the fruit that belongs to the master, or like dishonest workmen who are set to till the garden and rob their employer of the produce. Let us never try to get our Master's money, to put it out to usury, and then, when the interest comes in, spend it on ourselves! The temptation to selfishness—to live for this world alone—or to seek to bring forth fruit merely for our own aggrandizement, is so strong and comes so easily upon us, that if the Lord did not keep us, we would, none of us, retain our Christianity for a single hour—but would be wholly given up to worldliness, selfishness and every other form of sin!

I ask again the question with which I began and I pray you, each one, to ask it yourself—"Do I need keeping?" Oh, my Heart, never did the tender vine so much need the gardener's care as you need to be kept by your Lord! You are like an infant suffering from a thousand diseases and unable to cure itself of any *one* of them! You are helplessly weak and if your Father, God, should leave you, there is nothing for you but to die in despair! Dear Brothers and Sisters, let us have a deep consciousness of the dangers to which we are exposed—not that we may live trembling lives—but that we may be weaned from all trust in *self* and may be driven nearer to God and always seek to live under His Divine protection!

Another question may occur to someone here—"Even if I have to face all these dangers, *can I not keep myself* if I am very watchful and very prayerful? May I not by my own power and vigilance keep off these adversaries?" Ah, there is something wrong in the very question, itself, for who is to keep me watchful? Who is to make me prayerful? If my watchfulness and prayerfulness depended upon *myself*, I might slumber, and so I would, very soon, be destroyed! Brethren, it is a great mercy that the text puts it not that *we* must keep the vineyard *ourselves*, but, "I, the Lord keep it." Watchfulness is our duty—it is our privilege to abide much in earnest, wrestling prayer—but still, to keep up the watchfulness and the prayerfulness, there must constantly be the secret incoming of Divine Strength! Our watchfulness and prayerfulness are proofs of God's gracious working! The real cause of the vineyard of the Church and each individual vine being preserved must always be found in this blessed assurance—"I, the Lord keep it. I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day."

What did you say—"Cannot I keep myself?" Alas, you are your own worst enemy! Augustine was known to say, "Lord, save me from that evil man, myself!" And you and I have good reason to pray the same prayer. We can very soon *destroy* ourselves, but we can never *save* ourselves. I bless the Lord that there is not even a semblance of truth in that verse in Wesley's hymn book—

"A charge to keep I have
A God to glorify!
A never-dying soul to save,
And fit it for the sky."

It is the *Lord who saves the souls of His people*, and it is the Lord who fits them for the sky! If they had to do it, themselves, not a solitary soul

among them would ever see His face with acceptance, or stand with joy before His Throne! "I, the Lord keep it. I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." It is always so put and for us to entirely get rid of all idea of carnal strength is both right and safe! It is well for us to feel that, in ourselves, we are as weak as water and as insignificant as the insects that die in a day—and that for all true strength we must look to God, and to God alone! Rest assured that you and I are never so weak as when we fancy that we are strong, and that we are never so strong as when we are conscious of our greatest weakness! This is an enigma, but our experience has often proved it to be true. Our supposed riches are generally the marks of deep spiritual poverty, while conscious poverty is an indication of the unsearchable riches which faith is enjoying. Learn to live every day, dear Brothers and Sisters, in Jesus, as having nothing, yet possessing all things!

This is how God would have you live, trusting Him for all the Grace you continually need. When you wake in the morning, you are to look forward to temptations and trials, but you are to cry to the Lord for deliverance from them—and not to think of keeping yourselves during the day, but to place yourselves, again, in the hands of God—to be kept and preserved by Him who has said of the vineyard of His Church, "I, the Lord keep it. I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." Then, when the day is over, let this be your evening song—

"Sprinkled afresh with pardoning blood,
I lay me down to rest,
As in the embraces of my God,
Or on my Savior's breast."

I will mention only one other question and then we will leave this part of the subject—"*Do I enjoy this keeping?*" This is a question that must make you search your heart. Do you enjoy this keeping? Is it your habit and mine, every day, to look to God to keep us? When we wake in the morning, is this our first desire, "Lord, keep me this day beneath the shadow of Your wings"? When we go out to business, or on our Lord's service, are we conscious that we are still under the Lord's eyes and protected by the Lord's power? When, at any time, we have slipped and erred, do we bitterly repent that we could have acted so wrongly as to wander away from the Good Shepherd? And at night, when we look back upon the engagements of the day, are we in the habit of blessing God for as His unseen mercies? Have we learned to bless Him for preserving us from all the mysterious spiritual dangers by which we are surrounded? Has it, in fact, become our practice to make this text experimentally our *own*, "I, the Lord keep it. I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day"?

Beloved, do you not think that we often live all day long as if there were no God? Do you not, sometimes, find yourselves going about the world as if God and you were strangers to each other? Do you not, at least now and then, venture upon the stormy sea of another day without getting your Pilot on board? And do you not think that, at night, when you come to the temporary haven of your chamber, you may often have cause to say to the Lord, "Alas! Alas! My God, I have lived this day and

You have protected me, I doubt not, but still, I have not been mindful of You, I have not looked up to You, I have not been hanging on Your breast, I have not been nestling under Your wings as the chick hides itself under the hen"? I would that, as Church members, you and I, all of us, would learn the blessed lesson of this text, "I, the Lord, keep it. I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day. During My people's nights of adversity and during their days of prosperity, in their nights of soul-sorrow and in their days of hallowed rejoicing, in the nights when their spirit lies slumbering, and in the days when the sunlight of My Countenance shines upon them, and they go forth strong to labor and to do My will, I will keep them under all circumstances. I will never leave them, I will never, no never, forsake them."

I am always afraid, whenever I preach about the security of God's people, lest you should grow carnally secure, that is to say, lest, instead of realizing the preciousness of the doctrine and its practical bearing, you should merely be satisfied with the *outward shell of it*. I want you not only to know that God keeps you, but to feel the power of that blessed Truth in your inmost soul—to enjoy it and to live upon it. You know that it is one thing to look at honey and to be told that it is sweet to the taste. But it is a very different thing to eat of it and to prove its sweetness for yourself! Be it yours, like Jonathan, to dip your rod into the honey of this text and to eat of it abundantly, for so shall your eyes be enlightened and every day you shall be able to say, "The Lord is my Keeper: the Lord is my Shade upon my right hand: the Lord is my Helper; I will not fear what man or even the devil, himself, may try to do to me."

II. Now, with greater brevity, let me talk to you upon the second part of the subject, the Lord's CONTINUAL WATERING. He that keeps, waters—"I the Lord keep it. I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day."

I was rather struck, the other day, by this remark of a somewhat eminent horticulturist—"Depend upon it," he said, "that watering is a very essential part of a gardener's business." It is especially so in hot weather, for there is little doubt that if the flowers are to be kept constantly in bloom, and if the beds are to look fresh and beautiful, the watering pot must be in frequent use. In the summer, how very soon the grass looks brown and how very speedily the flowers begin to droop their heads and shrivel up their leaves, all for lack of watering! Well, now, we have this gracious provision in the text to meet the needs of the Lord's vines, the Keeper of the vineyard, Himself, says, "I will water it every moment."

We will handle this part of the subject as we did the other portion, in the form of questions, and the first enquiry shall be, "*Do I need watering within as well as keeping without?*" The answer that must be given is—Yes, that I do, for there is not a single Grace I have that can live an hour without being Divinely watered! Have I not seen many a professor come forward to join the Church full of faith of a certain sort and full of zeal after a fashion? But, after a few months—and there are some hypocrites who hold out even for years—they begin to falter! They do not care for the House of God as much as they did. They grow worldly and careless and, at last, they give up their profession altogether! What is the reason of

their failure? Just this, they were not watered—they never had the living sap to nourish their roots—they never sucked up the Living Water of God's Grace and so, having no watering from the Most High, their flowers all withered, drooped their heads and died. There is no wonder at this result, for he who has only the strength that is within himself will be like snow that melts and passes away! It is only the man who derives His strength from God who will be like the sun that shines brighter and brighter unto the perfect day! There is no Grace I have, then, which does not need watering from above!

Beside that, the soil in which I am planted is very dry. Ask any Christian whether he ever gets any real good out of the world. Do you not find it a very dry soil where you go to business? The other day you said that you would change your employment—you would be a fool if you did—it would only be a change of troubles! The God who gave you your present set of trials knew that they were the best for you. If all the crosses in the world could be laid in a heap and I were told to take my pick of them, I would choose those that I have right now, for I know what they are, and God fits my back to them! But I do not know what the others are and I have no proof that I could bear them. You had better not take *my* troubles, for they might crush you, while I can bear them through the Divine Strength that is given to me. But if I had yours, they might crush me, while you can patiently endure them through God's Grace. This earth, however, is no very genial soil for a Christian's growth. Worldlings may flourish in it, but if the Christian would have Living Water, he must get it from some other place than this earth, for, spiritually, it is a dry and thirsty land where there is no water!

Then, again, the atmosphere that is round about us does not naturally yield us any water. The means of Grace, which are like clouds hovering over our heads, are often nothing but clouds—they come and they go—but we receive no rain from them. The other day we looked up and we said that it would rain, directly, but lo, the one black cloud was soon gone! So, you sometimes go up to the House of God and you say to yourselves, "Our minister has often cheered and comforted us, perhaps he will have a good word for us today." And when the text is announced and the sermon is begun, you think, "Here is a cloud, there will be some rain, presently," but, whether it is your fault or the minister's, we will not say, often there is not a drop of moisture to refresh your spirit! The reason is that the Lord will have you know that He, and He, alone, must water you if you are to be effectually revived! He will teach you that you need watering, that all your Graces constantly require fresh supplies of Divine Grace, and that you must have them directly and only from Him.

The beauty of the text seems to me to lie in the last two words—"I will water it *every moment*." There is no plant except a plant of Grace that needs to be watered every moment—but we do. I do not know to what object I can compare a Christian better than to one of those gas lights yonder. The Believer is not a candle, for a candle can burn of itself when it is once lighted because it carries its own burning materials. Neither is he a lamp that is supplied with a store of oil, except in a certain sense, but he *is* just like one of these gas lights. Turn the tap, cut off the connection

with the gas meter, and out goes the light at once! There must be a stream of gas continually flowing to keep up the burning—and so is it with the Christian's spiritual life—it must be perpetually streaming in from his Lord! He cannot live even a tithe of a second unless life flows to him from God! Look at your hand. I suspect that if, for a moment, you could altogether suspend the circulation of your blood. If you could utterly cut off the life floods so as to dissever your hand from the rest of your body, though it were but for a second, yet vitality would be gone! And so, if the Christian could be for one instant without union to Christ, without receiving supplies of Divine Grace, he would at once expire!

I will not talk to you much longer, for we need to gather around the Communion Table, but I will just put this one question—"*Have we all realized, as a matter of experience, that the Lord waters us every moment?*" Brothers and Sisters, I am very much afraid that there are but few of us who have ever learned the full meaning of this gracious promise. You can, perhaps, say, "The Lord waters me every Sabbath and on Monday and Thursday nights." Possibly you can go even farther, and say, "He waters me every morning, and every evening," but to be watered every *moment*—to have continually such a conscious connection with Christ as to be really receiving His Grace—you ask, "Is this experience attainable? It may be possible for a minister, for he has time to think of these things, but it is not possible for us working people who have to earn our bread by the sweat of our brows! Nor for us business men who have to be all day long occupied with accounts."

Oh, but, Beloved, there are some of the Lord's people who have proved that this blessing *can* be obtained and that it is possible to be in the world and yet to be living near God, and every moment to be watered by Him! Have you never heard of that poor servant girl who expounded the meaning of the passage, "Pray without ceasing"? Some person could not understand how anyone could pray without ceasing, but Mary said, "Why, when I dress myself in the morning, my heart prays that I may be robed in my Savior's righteousness. When I light the fire, I pray the Holy Spirit to kindle a flame of sacred love in my heart. When I spread the cloth for breakfast, I ask God to feed me with the Bread of Heaven and whatever I do, all day long, I try to turn it into something that will make me live near to my God!" Do you not see, dear Friends, that a stirring life may yet be a *spiritual* life? There are some people, you know, who, when they get hold of some hobby, can attend to business and yet ride their hobby as well. It may be that they have taken to working out some mathematical problem—if so, you will see them attending to the shop, but all the while they are thinking about that problem—and the first opportunity they get, they begin figuring away on a scrap of paper, trying to work it out. Whatever takes place during the day, the man is always thinking of that problem! And when he is on his way home, as he is riding along, he is still thinking of that one thing because his heart is full of it. Thus it may be with you, so that while you are engaged in business and in the lawful affairs of your daily life, your heart may still be always going out towards God.

I was struck by a remark of a dear friend, the other day, who said that Mr. So-and-So was so fond of everything Gothic that he had his chairs Gothic, his bedstead Gothic and all the furniture of his house Gothic. I think that a Christian should have everything full of Christ, so that whether he eats, or drinks, or whatever he does, he does all to the Glory of God! It was said of Ambrose that he used to eat, drink and sleep eternal life—so may it be said of each of us! Why, sometimes, when we have some dear one upon our hearts, we may go and attend to fifty thousand things, but we do not forget that beloved object of our affection! A mother may have to go on an errand and she may be compelled to stay away a long while, but her sick child at home is on her heart all the time! So I want that we should have Christ and have the Holy Spirit, and have our Father who is in Heaven continually upon our minds! And in that way shall we learn the meaning of this passage, "I, the Lord keep it. I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day."

Now, as I close my discourse, I fear that there are some of you who are not saved—and to you I have to put a personal question—"*Why should not this night be the time of your salvation?*" Why did you come into the Tabernacle tonight? Some of you have been inconvenienced, for you have had to stand all through the service. I hope you have not come here for nothing. I trust that the Lord meant to bless you when He induced you to come up those steps and between those pillars. Remember that the righteous God must punish sin, but that His Son, Jesus Christ, was punished in the place of all those who will believe on Him! To believe on Him is to trust Him. Have you done that? Then, though your sins were as scarlet, they are now whiter than snow! If you have trusted Jesus, your iniquities, which were like a black cloud, have all been rolled away and you are so completely saved that there is, now, no condemnation to you, for you are in Christ Jesus! God bring you to trust in Christ, for believing in Him, you are saved!

May we, who are about to gather around the Communion Table, have our Master's special Presence and blessing! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
Isaiah 64.

Verse 1. *Oh that You would rend the heavens.* God's ancient people were in great trouble and the Prophet saw no way out of their perplexity. But God can make a way of escape where there is not one, He can rend even Heaven, itself, if need be, in order to deliver His saints. Therefore, the Prophet, or the people, pray, "Oh that You would rend the heavens"—

1. *That You would come down.* "Come down, Yourself, great God, in all the majesty of Your Glory! Burst through the firmament and appear in Divine splendor!"

1. *That the mountains might bow down at Your Presence.* The eternal hills are made to melt at the touch of God's feet. Mountains are the things that are last to move, but God moves them when He once comes near! How often we forget Omnipotence! That is a factor we are too apt to leave out of our calculations and yet, my Brothers and Sisters, Omnipo-

tence is at the back of all our feebleness when that feebleness is with the truth and the right, and is engaged in the service of God! If the Lord's Presence is manifested, even the mountains will flow down, as we read in Micah's prophecy, "For, behold, the Lord comes forth out of His place and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth. And the mountains shall be molten under Him and the valleys shall be cleft, as wax before the fire, and as the waters that are poured down a steep place."

2, 3. *As when the melting fire burns, the fire causes the waters to boil, to make Your name known to Your adversaries, that the nations may tremble at Your Presence! When You did terrible things which we looked not for, You came down, the mountains flowed down at Your Presence.* Where God is, everything begins to melt. He touches the mountains and makes them boil over with lava, like volcanoes in action! At His touch the very sea begins to boil with the fervent heat of Divine Power. Then, when these wonderful results are perceived, even God's enemies are compelled to say, "This is the finger of God," and they tremble at His Presence. We never know, Brothers and Sisters, what great things God will do, as we do not know all that He *can* do, but we do believe that all things are possible to the Omnipotent Jehovah! When He brings His reserve forces into the field, the battle is a short one. "When You did terrible things which we looked not for, You came down, the mountains flowed down at Your Presence." It was so when Sennacherib, in Isaiah's day, besieged the city of Jerusalem. There was, apparently, no way of escape from the stupendous hordes of the mighty monarch, but the Angel of the Lord killed a 185,000 of them in one night and utterly overthrew them! God has but to appear in His terrible power and His adversaries tremble at His Presence, or are destroyed in an instant!

4. *For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither has the eye seen, O God, beside You, what He has prepared for him that waits for Him.* The unexpected is always happening! God interposes in a way which we never thought of. Even if we have been listening for His footstep, we have not heard the sound of it—if we have been watching for His coming, we have not seen His approach. God alone knows all that He will do—

"He in the thickest darkness dwells,"

but out of that darkness He brings forth purposes of light and brightness to completely amaze His servants. "Ah," says one, "but is He not long in doing it?" No, no, it is *our impatience* that makes us think so, but the Lord never really delays.

5. *You meet him that rejoices and works righteousness.* God comes to meet us before we get to Him and then there is a blessed meeting. "You meet him that rejoices and works righteousness." If you do right, God will meet you. But He will meet you much sooner if you can rejoice at the same time, for there is no service for God that is so acceptable to Him as the service that is done with delight! "You meet him that rejoices and works righteousness." When we are glad to serve God. When we take a delight in suffering for His name's sake, then God will come and meet us for certain. We need not think that, under such circumstances, He will

let us stand alone—"You meet him that rejoices and works righteousness."

5. *Those that remember You in Your ways.* If you remember God, He will certainly remember you! The fact that you are thinking of Him is proof positive that the Lord has thoughts of love towards you!

5. *Behold, You are angry; for we have sinned: in those is continuance, and we shall be saved.* God's wrath has no continuance in it towards His own people. He soon makes it to pass away from them. His anger may endure for a night, but His mercy comes in the morning. His own Word is, "For a small moment have I forsaken you, but with great mercies will I gather you. In a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you, says the Lord, Your Redeemer." The Lord has a rod in His hand, but the scourging of His own children does not last long. It is a rod, mark you, not an *axe that brings death*. But His mercy, His goodness, the purposes of His Grace are perpetual—"In those is continuance, and we shall be saved." Now comes a very mournful passage. You have read some of the lamentations of Jeremiah. Here is one of the lamentations of Isaiah. He lived to see his country in a very sad condition. Perhaps this was the state of affairs when Sennacherib invaded the land.

6. *But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are as filthy rags.* If this is true of our righteousnesses, what must our *sins* be? If even our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, where shall we find a metaphor to describe our sins?

6. *And we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.* This does not allude to our mortality, but to our *sin*—"We all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." We are not like the green leaf on the tree—we may seem to be so for a moment, but very soon our righteousness fades like a withered leaf and, in consequence, our iniquities, like the wind which bears the withered leaves from the bough, carry us away. This is what we all are by nature. This is what the people were in Isaiah's day—the whole nation seemed to be unholy—its outwardly righteous men were not really righteous, its ministers were not truthful, its magistrates were not honest and even the professors of purity were, at heart, immoral!

7. *And there is none that calls upon Your name, that stirs up himself to take hold of You.* We have not come quite to that condition, yet. There are still some who stir themselves up to take hold upon God and who call upon His name. We are not left in so sad a state as the favored nation was in in Isaiah's days. It is a terrible thing when intercession fails! Perhaps the dark day that will mark the world's final doom will be a day unwhitened by prayer. Certainly, while prayer remains, the world is blessed, but when prayer shall cease, when that Divine disinfectant is taken away from this poor leper house, then the pestilence of sin will rage and destroy most terribly! It was so in the Prophet's day—"There is none that calls upon Your name, that stirs up himself to take hold of You."

7, 8. *For You have hid Your face from us, and have consumed us, because of our iniquities. But now, O LORD, You are our Father.* The Prophet,

himself, begins to plead with God. Jehovah was known as the God of the children of Abraham. He was not recognized as the God of the Assyrian, Sennacherib worshipped Nisroch as his God—"But now, O Jehovah, You are our Father."

8, 9. *We are the clay, and You our potter; and we all are the work of Your hands. Do not be furious, O LORD, neither remember iniquity forever! Behold, see, we beseech You, we are all Your people.* Isaiah could plead that, in a certain way, they were nominally the people of God. But if we can plead this truly and spiritually on the behalf of any man. If we can plead it for ourselves, what a mighty plea it is! "Lord, You have made us. You have new-made us and You can keep us. We are the clay and You are our potter; we belong to You. Oh, break not the vessels that You have made! Cast not away the people You have chosen. Be merciful to us, O God, for we are Your people!" Then the Prophet gives a pitiful description of the condition unto which the land of Judah was reduced.

10, 11. *Your holy cities are a wilderness, Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation. Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised You, is burned up with fire: and all our pleasant things are laid waste.* Their houses and God's House went together to destruction. When their houses were burnt, God's House did not escape. This is the most bitter part of the trial to a genuine Believer—when his own estate is impoverished, he can bear it, but when the Kingdom of God suffers damage—this cuts him to the quick! God's House is our house, the Prophet thus speaks of it—"Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised You, is burned up with fire: and all our pleasant things are laid waste."

12. *Will you refrain Yourself for these things, O LORD?* "Can You stand still and see all this?" This is the kind of pleading for the people of God to use when sin abounds. When the Truth of God is trampled like mire in the street, we may come before the Lord and say, "Will You refrain Yourself for these things, O Jehovah?"

12. *Will You hold Your peace and afflict us very severely?* May God teach us how to plead for His people and make us great intercessors on behalf of His Church and His cause in these evil days! Amen.

Special notice—The sermon to be issued next week is the one preached by MR. SPURGEON forty years ago, but not published in the *New Park Street Pulpit*. The text is Isaiah 7:14, 15, and the title, *The Birth of Christ.* It would make an appropriate Christmas present to anyone who is not a regular reader of the sermons. [Sermon #2392, Volume 40—Read/download entire sermon at http://www.spurgeongems.org .]

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.

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST
NO. 2392

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, DECEMBER 23, 1891.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK, ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 24, 1854.

"Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall He eat, that He may know to refuse the evil, and choose the Good." Isaiah 7:14, 15.

The kingdom of Judah was in a condition of imminent peril. Two monarchs had leagued themselves against her, two nations had risen up for her destruction. Syria and Israel had come up against the walls of Jerusalem with full intent to raze them to the ground and utterly destroy the monarchy of Judah. Ahaz the king, in great trouble, exerted all his ingenuity to defend the city and, among the other contrivances which his wisdom taught him, he thought it fit to cut off the waters of the upper pool, so that the besiegers might be in distress for lack of water. He goes out in the morning, no doubt attended by his courtiers, makes his way to the conduit of the upper pool, intending to see after the stopping of the stream of water, but lo, he meets with something which sets aside his plans and renders them needless! Isaiah steps forward and tells him not to be afraid for the smoke of those two firebrands, for God should utterly destroy both the nations that had risen up against Judah. Ahaz need not fear the present invasion, for both he and his kingdom would be saved. The king looked at Isaiah with an eye of incredulity, as much as to say, "If the Lord were to send chariots from Heaven, could such a thing as this be? Should He animate the dust and quicken every stone in Jerusalem to resist my foes, could this be done?"

The Lord, seeing the littleness of the king's faith, tells him to ask for a sign. "Ask it," He says, "either in the depth, or in the height above. Let the sun go backward ten degrees, or let the moon stop in her midnight marches. Let the stars move from one side to the other in the sky in grand procession! Ask any sign you please in the Heaven above, or, if you wish, choose the earth beneath, let the depths give forth the sign, let some mighty waterspout lose its way across the pathless ocean and travel through the air to Jerusalem's very gates! Let the heavens shower a golden rain instead of the watery fluid which usually they distill. Ask that the fleece may be wet upon the dry floor, or dry in the midst of dew. Whatever you please to request, the Lord will grant it to you for the confirmation of your faith." Instead of accepting this offer with all gratitude, as Ahaz should have done, he, with a pretended humility, declares that he will not ask, neither will he tempt the Lord his God! Whereupon Isaiah, waxing indignant, tells him that since he will not, in obedience to

God's command, ask for a sign, behold, the Lord, Himself, will give him one—not simply a sign, but *this* sign, the sign and wonder of the world, the mark of God's mightiest mystery and of His most consummate wisdom, for, "a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel."

It has been said that the passage I have taken for my text is one of the most difficult in all the Word of God. It may be so—I certainly did not think it was until I saw what the commentators had to say about it and I rose up from reading them perfectly confused! One said one thing and another denied what the other had said. And if there was anything that I liked, it was so self-evident that it had been copied from one to the other and handed through the whole of them!

One set of commentators tells us that this passage refers entirely to some person who was to be born within a few months after this prophecy, "for," they say, "it says here, 'Before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that you abhor shall be forsaken of both her kings.'" "Now," say they, "this was an immediate delivery which Ahaz required and there was a promise of a speedy rescue, that, before a few years had elapsed, before the child should be able to know right from wrong, Syria and Israel should both lose their kings." Well, that seems a strange frittering away of a wonderful passage, full of meaning, and I cannot see how they can substantiate their view when we find the Evangelist Matthew quoting this very passage in reference to the birth of Christ, and saying, "Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the Prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with Child, and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel."

It strikes me that this Immanuel, who was to be born, could not be a mere simple man and nothing else, for if you turn to the next chapter of Isaiah, at the 8th verse, you will find it said, "He [king of Assyria] shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of *Your land, O Immanuel*." Here is a *government* ascribed to Immanuel which could not be His if we were to suppose that the Immanuel here spoken of was either Shear-Jashub, or Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz, or any other of the sons of Isaiah! I therefore reject that view of the matter. It is, to my mind, far below the height of this great argument—it does not speak or allow us to speak one half of the wondrous depth which couches beneath this mighty passage!

I find, moreover, that many of the commentators divide the 16th verse from the 14th and 15th verses, and they read the 14th and 15th verses exclusively of Christ, and the 16th verse of Shear-Jashub, the son of Isaiah. They say that there were two signs, one was the conception by the virgin of a Son, who was to be called Immanuel, who is none other than Christ, but the second sign was Shear-Jashub, the Prophet's son, of whom Isaiah said, "Before this child, whom I now lead before you—before this son of mine shall be able to know good and evil, so soon shall both nations that have now risen against you lose their kings." But I do not like that explanation because it seems to me to be pretty plain that the same

child is spoken of in the one verse as in the others. "Before the Child"—the same Child—it does not say that Child in one verse and then this child in another verse, but before the Child, this one of whom I have spoken, the Immanuel, before He "shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that you abhor shall be forsaken of both her kings."

Then another view, which is the most popular of all, is to refer the passage, first of all, to some child that was then to be born, and afterwards, in the highest sense, to our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. Perhaps that is the true sense of it—perhaps that is the best way of smoothing difficulties—but I think that if I had never read those books at all, but had simply come to the Bible, without knowing what any man had written upon it, I would have said, "There is Christ here as plainly as possible! Never could His name have been written more legibly than I see it here. 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son.' It is an unheard of thing, it is a miraculous thing and, therefore, it must be a God-like thing! She 'shall call His name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall He eat, that He may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.' And before that Child, the Prince Immanuel, shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that you abhor shall be forsaken of both her kings, and Judah shall smile upon their ruined palaces."

This morning, then, I shall take my text as relating to our Lord Jesus Christ, and we have three things, here, about Him. First, *the birth.* Secondly, *the food.* And, thirdly, *the name of Christ.*

I. Let us commence with THE BIRTH OF CHRIST—"Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son."

"Let us even now go unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass," said the shepherds. "Let us follow the star in the sky," said the Eastern Magi, and so say we this morning. Hard by the day when we, as a nation, celebrate the birthday of Christ, let us go and stand by the manger to behold the commencement of the Incarnation of Jesus! Let us recall the time when God first enveloped Himself in mortal form and tabernacled among the sons of men! Let us not blush to go to so humble a spot—let us stand by that village inn and let us see Jesus Christ, the God-Man, become an Infant of a span long!

And, first, we see here, in speaking of this birth of Christ, a *miraculous conception.* The text says expressly, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son." This expression is unparalleled even in Sacred Writ! Of no other woman could it be said beside the Virgin Mary, and of no other man could it be written that his mother was a virgin. The Greek word and the Hebrew are both very expressive of the true and real virginity of the mother, to show us that Jesus Christ was born of woman and *not of man.* We shall not enlarge upon the thought, but still, it is an important one, and ought not to be passed over without mentioning. Just as the woman, by her venturous spirit, stepped first into transgression—lest she should be despised and trampled on, God, in His wisdom devised that the woman, and the woman, alone, should be the author of the Body of the God-Man who should redeem mankind! Albeit that she, herself, first tasted the accursed fruit, and tempted her husband (it may be that Adam, out of love to her, tasted that fruit lest she should be degraded,

lest she should not stand on an equality with him), God has ordained that so it should be, that His Son should be sent forth "born of a woman," and the first promise was that the Seed of the woman, *not* the seed of the man, should bruise the serpent's head.

Moreover, there was a peculiar wisdom ordaining that Jesus Christ should be the Son of the woman, and not of the man, because, had He been born of the flesh, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh," and merely flesh—and He would, naturally, by carnal generation, have inherited all the frailties and the *sins* and the infirmities which man has from his birth. He would have been conceived in sin and shaped in iniquity, even as the rest of us. Therefore He was not born of man, but the Holy Spirit overshadowed the Virgin Mary and Christ stands as the one Man, save one other, who came forth pure from his Maker's hands, who could ever say, "I am pure." Yes, and He could say far more than that other Adam could say concerning *his* purity, for He maintained His integrity and never let it go! And from His birth down to His death He knew no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth. Oh, marvelous sight! Let us stand and look at it. A Child of a virgin, what a mixture!

There is the finite and the Infinite, there is the mortal and the Immortal, corruption and Incorruption, the manhood and the Godhead, time married to eternity! There is God linked with a creature, the Infinity of the august Maker come to tabernacle on this speck of earth—the vast unbounded One whom earth could not hold and the heavens cannot contain—lying in His mother's arms! He who fastened the pillars of the universe and riveted the nails of creation, hanging on a mortal breast, depending on a creature for nourishment! Oh, marvelous birth! Oh, miraculous conception! We stand and gaze and admire. Verily, angels may wish to look into a subject too dark for us to speak of! There we leave it, a virgin has conceived and borne a Son.

In this birth, moreover, having noticed the miraculous conception, we must notice, next, *the humble parentage*. It does not say, "A princess shall conceive and bear a Son," but a virgin. Her virginity was her highest honor—she had no other. True, she was of royal lineage—she could reckon David among her forefathers—and Solomon among those who stood in the tree of her genealogy. She was a woman not to be despised, albeit that I speak of humble parentage, for she was of the blood-royal of Judah. O Babe, in Your veins there runs the blood of kings! The blood of an ancient monarchy found its way from Your heart all through the courses of Your body! You were born, not of mean parents, if we look at their ancient ancestry, for You are the Son of him who ruled the mightiest monarchy in his day, even Solomon, and You are the descendant of one who devised in his heart to build a Temple for the mighty God of Jacob!

Nor was Christ's mother, in point of intellect, an inferior woman. I take it that she had great strength of mind, otherwise she could not have composed so sweet a piece of poetry as that which is called the Virgin's Song, beginning, "My soul does magnify the Lord." She is not a person to be despised. I would, this morning, especially utter my thoughts on one thing which I consider to be a fault among us Protestants. Because Ro-

man Catholics pay too much respect to the Virgin Mary, and offer prayer to her, we are too apt to speak of her in a slighting manner. She ought not to be placed under the ban of contempt, for she could truly sing, "From henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." I suppose Protestant generations are among the "all generations" who ought to call her blessed. Her name is Mary, and quaint George Herbert wrote an anagram upon it—

"How well her name an ARMY does present,
In whom the Lord of Hosts did pitch His tent."

Though she was not a princess, yet her name, Mary, by interpretation, signifies a princess, and though she is not the queen of Heaven, yet she has a right to be reckoned among the queens of earth. And though she is not the lady of our Lord, she does walk among the renowned and mighty women of Scripture.

Yet Jesus Christ's birth was a humble one. Strange that the Lord of Glory was not born in a palace! Princes, Christ owes you nothing! Princes, Christ is not your debtor! You did not swaddle Him, He was not wrapped in purple, you had not prepared a golden cradle for Him to be rocked in! Queens, you did not dandle Him on your knees, He hung not at your breasts! And you mighty cities, which then were great and famous, your marble halls were not blessed with His little footsteps! He came out of a village, poor and despised, even Bethlehem! When there, He was not born in the governor's house, or in the mansion of the chief man, but in a manger! Tradition tells us that His manger was cut in solid rock—there was He laid and the oxen likely enough came to feed from the same manger, the hay and the fodder of which was His only bed. Oh, wondrous stoop of condescension, that our blessed Jesus should be girded with humility and stoop so low! Ah, if He stooped, why should He bend to such a lowly birth? And if He bowed, why should He submit, not simply to become the Son of poor parents, but to be born in so miserable a place?

Let us take courage here. If Jesus Christ was born in a manger in a rock, why should He not come and live in our rocky hearts? If He was born in a stable, why should not the stable of our souls be made into a house for Him? If He was born in poverty, may not the poor in spirit expect that He will be their Friend? If He thus endured degradation at the first, will He count it any dishonor to come to the very poorest and humblest of His creatures and tabernacle in the souls of His children? Oh, no! We can gather a lesson of comfort from His humble parentage and we can rejoice that not a queen, or an empress, but that a humble woman became the mother of the Lord of Glory!

We must make one more remark upon this birth of Christ before we pass on, and that remark shall be concerning *a glorious birthday*. With all the humility that surrounded the birth of Christ, there was yet very much that was glorious, very much that was honorable. No other man ever had such a birthday as Jesus Christ had! Of whom had Prophets and seers ever written as they wrote of Him? Whose name is engraved on so many tablets as His? Who had such a scroll of prophecy, all pointing to Him as Jesus Christ, the God-Man? Then remember, concerning His birth, when did God ever hang a fresh lamp in the sky to announce the

birth of a Caesar? Caesars may come and they may die, but stars shall never prophesy their birth! When did angels ever stoop from Heaven and sing choral symphonies on the birth of a mighty man? No, all others are passed by, but look—in Heaven there is a great light shining and a song is heard—"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

Christ's birth is not despicable, even if we consider the visitors who came around His cradle. Shepherds came first and, as it has been quaintly remarked by an old Divine, the shepherds did not lose their way, but the wise men did! Shepherds came first, unguided and unfed, to Bethlehem. The wise men, directed by the star, came next. The representative men of the two bodies of mankind—the rich and the poor—knelt around the manger—and gold, and frankincense, and myrrh, and all manner of precious gifts were offered to the Child who was the Prince of the kings of the earth, who, in ancient times was ordained to sit upon the Throne of His father, David, and in the wondrous future to rule all nations with His rod of iron!

"Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son." Thus have we spoken of the birth of Christ.

II. The second thing that we have to speak of is THE FOOD OF CHRIST—"Butter and honey shall He eat, that He may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good."

Our translators were certainly very good scholars and God gave them much wisdom so that they craned up our language to the majesty of the original, but here they were guilty of very great inconsistency. I do not see how butter and honey can make a child choose good and refuse evil. If it is so, I am sure butter and honey ought to go up greatly in price, for good men are very much required! But it does not say, in the original, "Butter and honey shall He eat, that He may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good," but, "Butter and honey shall He eat, till He shall know how to refuse the evil, and choose the good," or, better still, "Butter and honey shall He eat, when He shall know how to refuse the evil, and choose the good."

We shall take that translation and just try to make clear the meaning couched in the words. They should teach us, first of all, *Christ's proper Humanity*. When He would convince His disciples that He was flesh, and not spirit, He took a piece of a broiled fish and of a honeycomb, and ate as others did. "Handle Me," He said, "and see, for a spirit has not flesh and bones, as you see I have." Some heretics taught, even a little after the death of Christ, that His body was a mere shadow, that He was not an actual, real Man—but here we are told He ate butter and honey just as other men did. While other men were nourished with food, so was Jesus! He was very Man as certainly as He was verily and eternally God. "In all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." Therefore we are told that He ate butter and honey to teach us that it was actually a real Man who, afterwards, died on Calvary.

The butter and honey teach us, again, that Christ was to be *born in times of peace*. Such products are not to be found in Judea in times of strife—the ravages of war sweep away all the fair fruits of industry—the unwatered pastures yield no grass and, therefore, there could be no butter. The bees may make their hive in the lion's carcass and there may be honey there, but when the land is disturbed, who shall go to gather the sweetness? How shall the babe eat butter when its mother flees away, even in the winter time, with the child clinging to her breast? In times of war, we have no choice of food—then men eat whatever they can procure and the supply is often very scanty. Let us thank God that we live in the land of peace and let us see a mystery in this text, that Christ was born in times of peace.

The temple of Janus was shut before the Temple of Heaven was opened! Before the King of Peace came to the Temple of Jerusalem, the horrid mouth of war was stopped! Mars had sheathed his sword and all was still. Augustus Caesar was emperor of the world, none other ruled it and, therefore, wars had ceased—the earth was still, the leaves quivered not upon the trees of the field, the ocean of strife was undisturbed by a ripple, the hot winds of war blew not upon man to trouble him—all was peaceful and quiet! And then came the Prince of Peace, who, in later days, shall break the bow, cut the spear in sunder and burn the chariot in the fire.

There is another thought here. "Butter and honey shall He eat when He shall know how to refuse the evil, and choose the good." This is to teach us *the precocity of Christ*, by which I mean that even when He was a child, even when He lived upon butter and honey, which is the food of children, He knew the evil from the good. It is, usually, not until children leave off the food of their infancy that they can discern good from evil in the fullest sense. It requires years to ripen the faculties, to develop the judgment, to give full play to the man—in fact, to *make* him a man. But Christ, even while He was a Baby, even while He lived upon butter and honey, knew the evil from the good, refused the one, and chose the other. Oh, what a mighty intellect there was in that brain! While He was an Infant, surely there must have been sparklings of genius from His eyes! The fire of intellect must have often lit up that brow! He was not an ordinary child—how would His mother talk about the wonderful things the little Prattler said! He played not as others did. He cared not to spend His time in idle amusements. His thoughts were lofty and wondrous. He understood mysteries and when He went up to the Temple in His early days, He was not found, like the other children, playing about the courts or the markets, but sitting among the doctors, both hearing and asking them questions! His was a master-mind—"Never man spoke like this Man." So, never child thought like this Child—He was an astonishing One, the wonder and the marvel of all children, the Prince of children—the God-Man even when He was a Child! I think this is taught us in the words, "Butter and honey shall He eat when He shall know how to refuse the evil, and choose the good."

Perhaps it may seem somewhat playful, but, before I close speaking upon this part of the subject, I must say how sweet it is to my soul to be-

lieve that as Christ lived upon butter and honey, surely *butter and honey drop from His lips*. Sweet are His Words unto our souls, more to be desired than honey or the honeycomb! Well might He eat butter whose Words are smooth to the tried, whose utterances are like oil upon the waters of our sorrows! Well might He eat butter, who came to bind up the broken-hearted, and well did He live upon the fat of the land, who came to restore the earth to its old fertility and make all flesh soft with milk and honey, ah, honey in the heart—

"Where can such sweetness be
As I have tasted in Your love,
As I have found in Thee?"

Your Words, O Christ, are like honey! I, like a bee, have flown from flower to flower to gather sweets and concoct some precious essence that shall be fragrant to me, but I have found honey drop from Your lips, I have touched Your mouth with my finger and put the honey to my lips, and my eyes have been enlightened, sweet Jesus! Every Word of Yours is precious to my soul—no honey can compare with You—well did You eat butter and honey!

And perhaps I ought not to have forgotten to say that the effect of Christ's eating butter and honey was to show us that *He would not, in His lifetime, differ from other men* in His outward guise. Other Prophets, when they came, were dressed in rough garments and were austere and solemn in manner. Christ came not so—He came to be a Man among men, a feaster with those that feast, an eater of honey with eaters of honey. He differed from none and, therefore, He was called a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber. Why did Christ do so? Why did He so commit Himself, as men said, though it was verily a slander? It was because He would have His disciples not regard meats and drinks, but despise these things, and live as others do. It was because He would teach them that it is not that which goes *into* a man, but that which comes out, that defiles him! It is not what a man eats, with temperance, that does him injury—it is what a man *says* and *thinks.* It is not abstaining from meat, it is not the carnal ordinance of, "Touch not, taste not, handle not," that makes the fundamentals of our religion, albeit it may be good addenda thereunto. Butter and honey Christ ate, and butter and honey may His people eat! No, whatever God, in His Providence gives unto them, that is to be the food of the Child Christ.

III. Now we come to close with THE NAME OF CHRIST—"And shall call His name Immanuel."

I hoped, dear Friends, that I would have my voice this morning, that I might talk about my Master's name. I hoped to be allowed to drive along in my swift chariot, but, as the wheels are taken off, I must be content to go as I can. We sometimes creep when we cannot go and go when we cannot run, but oh, here is a sweet name to close up with—"She shall call His name Immanuel." Others in the olden time called their children by names which had meaning in them. They did not give them the names of eminent persons whom they would very likely grow up to hate, and wish they had never heard of! They had names full of meaning which recorded some circumstance of their birth. There was Cain—"I have gotten a man from the Lord," said his mother, and she called him Cain, that is,

"Gotten," or, "Acquired." There was Seth—that is, "Appointed," for his mother said, "God has appointed me another seed instead of Abel." Noah means "Rest," or, "Comfort." Ishmael was so called by his mother because God had heard her. Isaac was called, "Laughter," because he brought laughter to Abraham's home. Jacob was called the supplanter, or the crafty one, because he would supplant his brother. We might point out many similar instances—perhaps this custom was a good one among the Hebrews, though the peculiar formation of our language might not allow us to do the same, except in a certain measure.

We see, therefore, that the Virgin Mary called her son, Immanuel, that there might be *a meaning in His name*, "God with us." My soul, ring these words again, "God with us." Oh, it is one of the bells of Heaven! Let us strike it yet again—"God with us." Oh, it is a stray note from the sonnets of Paradise! "God with us." Oh, it is the lisping of a seraph! "God with us." Oh, it is one of the notes of the singing of Jehovah when He rejoices over His Church with singing! "God with us." Tell it, tell it, tell it—this is the name of Him who is born today—

"Hark, the herald angels sing!"

This is His name, "God with us"—God with us, by His Incarnation, for the august Creator of the world did walk upon this globe! He who made ten thousand orbs, each of them more mighty and more vast than this earth, became the Inhabitant of this tiny atom! He who was from everlasting to everlasting, came to this world of time and stood upon the narrow neck of land betwixt the two unbounded seas! "God with us." He has not lost that name—Jesus had that name on earth and He has it, now, in Heaven! He is *now*, "God with us."

Believer, He is God with you to protect you! You are not alone, because the Savior is with you! Put me in the desert, where vegetation grows not—I can still say, "God with us." Put me on the wild ocean and let my ship dance madly on the waves—I would still say, "Immanuel, God with us." Mount me on the sunbeam and let me fly beyond the western sea—still I would say, "God with us." Let my body dive down into the depths of the ocean and let me hide in its caverns—still I could, as a child of God say, "God with us." Yes, and in the grave, sleeping there in corruption—still I can see the footmarks of Jesus! He trod the path of all His people and His name is still, "God with us."

But if you would know this name most sweetly, you must *know it by the teaching of the Holy Spirit*. Has God been with us this morning? What is the use of coming to Chapel if God is not there? We might as well be at home if we have no visits of Jesus Christ and, certainly, we may come, and come, and come as regularly as that door turns on its hinges unless it is, "God with us," by the influence of the Holy Spirit! Unless the Holy Spirit takes the things of Christ and applies them to our heart, it is *not*, "God with us." Otherwise, God is a consuming fire. It is "God with us" that I love—

"Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find."

Now ask yourselves, do you know what "God with us" means? Has it been God with you in your tribulations, by the Holy Spirit's comforting influence? Has it been God with you in searching the Scriptures? Has the

Holy Spirit shone upon the Word? Has it been God with you in conviction, bringing you to Sinai? Has it been God with you in comforting you, by bringing you, again, to Calvary? Do you know the full meaning of that name, Immanuel, "God with us"? No—he who knows it best knows little of it! Alas, he who knows it not at all is ignorant, indeed—so ignorant that his ignorance is not bliss, but will be his damnation! Oh, may God teach you the meaning of that name, Immanuel, "God with us"!

Now let us close. "Immanuel." It is wisdom's mystery, "God with us." Sages look at it and wonder. Angels desire to see it. The plumb-line of reason cannot reach half-way into its depths. The eagle wings of science cannot fly so high and the piercing eye of the vulture of research cannot see it! "God with us." It is Hell's terror! Satan trembles at the sound of it. His legions fly apace, the black-winged dragon of the Pit quails before it! Let Satan come to you suddenly and do you but whisper that word, "God with us"—back he falls—confounded and confused! Satan trembles when he hears that name, "God with us." It is the laborer's strength—how could he preach the Gospel, how could he bend his knees in prayer, how could the missionary go into foreign lands, how could the martyr stand at the stake, how could the confessor acknowledge his Master, how could men labor if that one word were taken away? "God with us," is the sufferer's comfort, is the balm of his woe, is the alleviation of his misery, is the sleep which God gives to His beloved, is their rest after exertion and toil.

Ah, and to finish, "God with us" is eternity's sonnet, is Heaven's hallelujah, is the shout of the glorified, is the song of the redeemed, is the chorus of angels, is the everlasting oratorio of the great orchestra of the sky! "God with us"—

"Hail You Immanuel, all Divine,
In You Your Father's glories shine!
You brightest, sweetest, fairest One,
That eyes have seen or angels known."

Now, a happy Christmas to you all and it *will* be a happy Christmas if you have God with you! I shall say nothing, today, against festivities on this great birthday of Christ. I hold that, perhaps, it is not right to have the birthday celebrated, but we will never be among those who think it as much a duty to celebrate it the wrong way as others the right! But we will, tomorrow, think of Christ's birthday. We shall be obliged to do it, I am sure, however sturdily we may hold to our rough Puritanism. And so, "let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." Do not feast as if you wished to keep the festival of Bacchus! Do not live, tomorrow, as if you adored some heathen divinity. Feast, Christians, feast! You have a right to feast. Go to the house of feasting tomorrow! Celebrate your Savior's birth. Do not be ashamed to be glad—you have a right to be happy. Solomon says, "Go your way, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart; for God now accepts your works. Let your garments be always white and let your head lack no ointment."—

"Religion never was designed
To make our pleasures less."

Remember that your Master ate butter and honey. Go your way, rejoice tomorrow, but, in your feasting, think of the Man in Bethlehem—let Him have a place in your hearts, give Him the glory, think of the virgin who conceived Him—but think, most of all, of the Man born, the Child given! I finish by again saying—

"A HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO YOU ALL!"

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
Matthew 2:1-12.

Verse 1. *Now when Jesus was born is Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem,* Our Lord was born in Bethlehem, an inconsiderable village of Judea. Its name, however, is significant—it means, "the house of bread." Truly Bethlehem has become, in a spiritual sense, the house of bread to all who feed on Christ. When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem—

2. *Saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews?* There was another king, of whom we have just read—"Herod the king," but he was an Idumaean, an Edomite. He had no right to the throne. But here is born the true Heir to the throne of David, and the Magi from the East have come to ask for Him.

2, 3. *For we have seen His star is the East, and are come to worship Him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.* Tidings of the arrival of these strangers in the Jewish capital, asking for the new-born King, would be sure to spread rapidly! The news soon reached the palace and Herod, one of the most suspicious and cruel of tyrants and, therefore, the most cowardly of men, "was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him."

4. *And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.* They could tell him if they wished to do so, for they were deeply versed in the Scriptures. The Scribes copied the Sacred Writings. The Pharisees had counted the very letters of the Word—they could tell which was the middle *letter* of the Old Testament. They were great at the letter, but, alas, they had missed the spirit! Men may know a great deal about the Bible and yet really know nothing of it. The husks of Scripture yield small profit—we need to come to the kernel, the real corn, the *spiritual* meaning of the Inspired Word.

5-7. *And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea: for thus it is written by the Prophet, And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the princes of Judah: for out of you shall come a Governor who shall rule My people Israel. King Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.* He half suspected that he would not see them again, so he determined to get all the information he possibly could out of them.

8. *And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, "Go and search diligently for the young Child; and when you have found Him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship Him also.* It was like his deep, cunning

spirit to try to find out where the Child was, that he might kill Him! He looked upon Him as a rival, as one who might rob him of his throne, so he would put Him to death if he could and, meanwhile, he would pretend that he wanted to worship Him.

9. *When they had heard the king, they departed, and, lo, the star, which they saw in the East, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was.* It was probably not a star in the sense in which we use the word, that is a planet, or a fixed star, but a meteoric brightness which moved in the sky, and so guided the wise men. They do not appear to have seen its light after they set out on their journey—it directed them to the region of Judea so they came to the capital city, Jerusalem. When they departed from Herod, the star appeared, again, and guided them to the little town of Bethlehem, where they found the Christ. God may sometimes send us stars, bright lights of joy, to guide us on our way. He may also take them away, again, and then we must walk by faith. When they reappear, we will be glad to have them once more, as the wise men were.

10, 11. *When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. And when they were come into the house.* For it would seem that the mother and child had moved out of the stable into a house. The town was, perhaps, not now quite so crowded, and there was more room for Mary and her blessed baby—"When they were come into the house"—

11. *They saw the young Child with Mary, His mother, and fell down and worshipped Him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.* These were the products of their country, such as they would give to princes. Such treasures must have been of great use to Mary and Joseph to help them take care of the wondrous child who had been entrusted to their charge.

12. *And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.* I remember a long sermon by a learned man, to show that we may sometimes break our promise, if, upon further consideration, we find we did wrong in making it, saying that these wise men, though they had promised to go and tell Herod all about the young Child, did not do so when warned of God by a dream. After reading his very ingenious dissertation, I turned to the text and there discovered that the wise men *never made any promise of the kind*—so that it was a sermon on a nonexistent text! They never agreed to return! Herod told them to do so, which is one thing, but they did not promise to do so—that would have been quite another thing. They broke no promise and, therefore, needed no excuse. They were in supernatural communication with God—He had guided them by a star and now He speaks to them in a dream and bids them go back to their own country another way. May we all be under like unerring guidance! Amen.

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.

A COMFORTING MESSAGE FOR THE CLOSING YEAR
NO. 2393

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, DECEMBER 30, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 1, 1863.

"Rest in the Lord."
Psalm 37:7.

IT is certain, Christian, that you have nowhere else to rest. Of the whole of this time-state it was well said, "This is not your rest," and of all the comfort that you find in earthly friendships and relationships, in the good things of this life, or in any hopes short of Heaven, we may truly say, "This is not your rest." The other day, at Highgate, I passed some fine old trees that were marked with a white cross, to indicate, no doubt, that they were to be cut down. So, everything we have here is marked with the woodman's cross and the axe must fell all our joys. You birds of paradise, build not your nests on trees that are marked to fall! This earth is not your rest! You shall fly the wide world over till your wings are weary, but, you doves of Christ, you shall find no rest till you come back to the hand of your Noah and nestle in His ark of Covenant Grace. "Rest in the Lord," says the text, and in saying so it does, as it were, condemn all other pretended rests and fancied refuges! May everyone of you who have wandered hear the voice of Wisdom and may your hearts say, "Return unto your rest, O my Soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you!"

But though there is no rest to be found in earthly things, yet we may have rest even while here—rest which drops from above. Just as the wilderness yielded no bread to the children of Israel, yet there was bread for them in the wilderness, for it fell from Heaven! The arid sands could give no streams of cooling water, yet there was water even there, for the Apostle Paul tells us that "they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ." Because I tell you that this world is a wilderness and you find it true, do not think that you are never to have any rest in it. Behold, your rest is sent to you from on high! Behold, your refreshment comes from the Rock of Ages! In Jesus you have rest, even though you are pilgrims, and even though you are troubled, for we who have believed in Him, even now have entered into rest! True Christians, when they are in a healthy state of mind and heart, rest in the Lord and, as I hope this Tabernacle is not a leper house, but a place where the war-

riors of Christ have come to feast at the table of their great Captain, I desire for each of you, and for myself, also, that all of us who are in Christ may this night have perfect "rest in the Lord."

What is this rest that is mentioned in our text?

I. The rest which Believers enjoy is, first of all, REST FROM WANDERING.

You know that God promised to give rest to His ancient people. They had none in the wilderness, for, often, they had no sooner pitched their tents than they had to strike them again. As quickly as the fiery-cloudy pillar moved, so had they, though weary and footsore, to follow. Joshua said to the Reubenites and to the Gadites, and to the half tribe of Manasseh, whose inheritance was to be on the further side of Jordan "You shall pass before your brethren armed, all the mighty men of valor, and help them until the Lord has given your brethren rest." The Promised Land was always looked forward to by the weary and wandering tribes as a place where they would rest.

Well, Beloved, you and I no longer wander—we have come to our rest. O my Heart, how you did wander, like a weary pilgrim, through the Egypt of your bondage! You did wander to Sinai, where you did hear the Law of God that made you tremble! You did wander across the wilderness of Sin, where your good works vexed and tired you, and your evil works, like fiery serpents, bit you! But that is all over now. My Soul, you have crossed the Jordan and, having found Christ, you have no inclination to wander anymore. My Brothers and Sisters, remember how our minds used to wander after 50 pretended comforts and we found no joy in any of them? One day we thought this, the next day we thought that. One day we dreamed that peace was to be found here, the next day, we fancied it was to be obtained yonder, the bubble mocked us as we pursued it and it continually fled from our grasp! We thought full sure that we had secured something solid, but the apple of Sodom was crushed when we laid hold upon it—it turned to ashes in our hand!

We used to be always wandering—none could tell where we would rest on the morrow—but now we rest in the Lord! We have no inclination to wander to anyone else. "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise." Every now and then people discover a new gospel and they want us to believe it, but we say to them, "No, we are perfectly content with what we have received." Sometimes a new form of religion is invented, but it has no attractions for us! We have left off being pilgrims—we are settled down and cannot, by God's Grace, be moved! We say of all these inventions—

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

I do not usually find it worth my while, nowadays, when anybody tells me, at the beginning of a book, that he is going to disprove all that I believe, to read the book at all! If a cook informs me that a joint of meat is

bad and, on tasting the first mouthful, I find that it is so, there is no need that I should eat it all in order to prove that it is not good wholesome food! So, you had better leave these tainted doctrines alone! When you have your principles firmly fixed, especially when you have come to rest at the very feet of the unchanging Jesus and have learned the meaning of that text, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever," you have reached perfection's own self and you may well grow conservative and never go a step beyond! Paul could say to the Galatians, "If any man preaches any other Gospel unto you than that you have received, let him be accursed," for he could also say, "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."—

"Now rest, my long-divided Heart,
Fixed on this blissful center, rest,

never more to go gadding abroad, to seek after other loves and other trusts! In that sense, dear Friends, "rest in the Lord." Be not carried about with every wind of doctrine, but abide fast by Christ, whom you have received by faith.

II. We have also another rest, and that is, REST FROM ALL OUR FOES.

Scripture, speaking of the victories of the children of Israel under Joshua and Caleb, says, "The land had rest from war." When Saul of Tarsus, the great persecutor, was converted, we read, "Then had the churches rest." Now, dear Friends, the people of God are always being molested by enemies—there are multitudes of foes on the right hand and on the left. Yet was David right when he penned that verse, "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies." The moment we begin to think of the prevalence of Christ's plea, the merit of Christ's blood, the power of Christ's arm, the faithfulness of Christ's heart—what are all our sins within us, or all our foes without us? Do they not melt away like the host of Midian before the sword of the Lord and of Gideon? Does some stout sin, like Goliath of Gath, come out and challenge you to fight? Take the name of the Lord as your sling and stone, and you shall yet be able to cut off the giant's head! Do your foes come out against you with multitudes of chariots? Let your faith open its eyes and you shall see horses of fire and chariots of fire round about you! Put your trust in God and you shall soon learn that more are they that are for you than all that can be against you. "War, war, war!" the voices of enemies constantly cry around the walls of Zion, but what is that sweet sound within the city? It is the music of the harp and the song of them that make merry!—

"There is a stream whose gentle flow
Supplies the city of our God
Life, love, and joy, still gliding through,
And watering our Divine abode."

Yes, Brothers and Sisters, notwithstanding that Hell is against us, and that devilish trinity, the world, the flesh, and Satan—yet, when we come to our Lord Jesus Christ and sit under the shadow of His great Atone-

ment and remember His glorious Resurrection and Ascension—we feel at once that we can "rest in the Lord."

III. Further, we have REST IN THE SENSE OF CONFIDENCE.

In this meaning of the word, beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, we do really, "rest in the Lord." We are not Christians if we do not, for the first mark of a Believer is that he rests in Christ for everything, depending on the blood and righteousness of Christ as the Alpha and the Omega of his salvation. Now, as Believers rest in Christ for the first things, so ought they to rest in Christ for *all* things. Whatever need you have, rest on the bare arm of God to supply it. Though you should require infinity, it is at your beck and call. Only rest in God, for Omniscience is watching for your good and Omnipotence is prepared to aid you!

Beloved, I fear that we often place our confidence in ourselves, or get resting on an arm of flesh, depending first on this friend and then on that, relying first upon this scheme and then upon that plan. Happy is the man who has learned to cast off Saul's armor, saying, "I cannot go with these." The man who can cry, as David did to the giant, "You come to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to you in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied." "Rest in the Lord," Christian, whatever it is that you require to bring you safely to His dwelling place above, and let your confidence exercise itself upon your Lord's faithfulness, almightiness and truth.

IV. Now, though we have used the word, "rest," in three senses, we have not as yet come to the sweetest part of our subject. Believers have REST IN THE SENSE OF SAFETY.

A Hebrew, pursued by the manslayer, never rested till he reached the City of Refuge. Lot must not rest until he gets into the little city of Zoar. So, we must never think of resting till we are *saved*. You who are afraid you are not saved have no rest. There are some of you who never say more than this, "Well, I *hope* I am saved," or, "I trust I may be saved." You do not have real rest, dear Friends—you may have something like rest, but you do not know the perfect peace of one who has fled for refuge to Christ—one who has given up every resting place except the finished work of Jesus! Such a person, having taken refuge in Christ, feels *positively* sure that nothing can harm him. What if I should venture to make my boast in my God tonight? What if I should say—

"In my Surety I am free
His dear wounds avail for me."

What if I should glory in sin completely pardoned and in a robe of righteousness, woven from the top throughout, in which I stand arrayed before the Lord? If I said all this, I should say no more than *you* ought to say, you who are trusting in the Lord!

You are saved, you are saved *now*! You are safe for all the days and all the nights you may live. You are safe in life and in death, in time and through eternity! Since Christ endured your condemnation, it cannot rest

on you! God acquits you—therefore no accusation can lie against you. God absolves you. Christ pleads on your behalf—it is not possible that all your past sin can ruin you, for it was laid upon the Scapegoat's head of old—nothing in the present can daunt you, for Jesus says, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Nothing in the future shall cast you down, for even to the end does the Lord keep His people! He gives unto them *eternal life* and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of His hand.

I recollect when I first heard the glorious doctrine of the Believer's eternal safety—the good old man preached it very plainly, indeed, but its effect on me—I was then an unconverted but anxious soul—its effect on me was that it set my mouth a-watering. "Oh," I thought, "what would I not give to be saved?" I never had any relish for that tinkering gospel which is preached by Arminians—it is a very fine thing to look at, but it does not bear the wear and tear of life! I never cared for that sham gospel which may save today, but may damn tomorrow. I never admired that gospel chariot which has no bottom to it, or has wheels with rotten spokes, and that breaks down in the miry places of the way. I never had a taste for that sort of teaching, even before I was converted.

But that Gospel which says, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved," and makes no, "ifs," and, "ands," about it—that Gospel which promises *eternal life* and says that Believers shall never perish—oh it set my heart a-longing! How ardently I desired to get hold of it! And when I learned that I might have it, that I, the vilest of the vile, might have it, have it on these terms—"Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth"—oh, it seemed worthy of God's giving and worthy of man's accepting, worthy of the Spirit's work, worthy of Christ's procuring, worthy, indeed, of the man it blesses and of the God who is glorified in blessing him! O dear Friends, let us, if we are not safe in Christ, long to be so, and may the Lord bring us to Him, even at this very hour!

"Rest in the Lord," then, Christians, for in Him is every Believer perfectly safe—

> "***Munitions of stupendous rock***
> ***His dwelling place shall be.***
> ***There might his soul without a shock,***
> ***The wreck of nature see."***

V. But the word, "rest," has a further meaning. God gives to His people PERFECT REST FROM WEARINESS.

Man sometimes wipes his brow, and asks, "When will the shadows come? When shall I have fulfilled as a hireling my day of toil? " To think of being saved by our *feelings* and *works* brings much weariness to the spirit and, indeed, even to a Believer, this world's cares and strifes may often make him fling himself down upon his couch, and say, "Lord, let me die; I am no better than my fathers!" But, dear Friends, when we really rest in Christ—when we sit down under His shadow with great delight—all our weariness goes away at once! Do you not know what it is to spring up with elastic footsteps and go forth to some new duty, or to

some fresh suffering, at the mere mention of your Lord's name, when, just before, you were bowed down with sorrow and thought that surely your end must soon come, and that you must speedily fall by the hand of the enemy? Every now and then, you know, our bodily strength needs to be renewed in sleep—constantly must this experience recur, or else we must die. Now, Jesus, "gives His beloved sleep," and all the calm that sleep can infuse into the body, does faith in Christ give to the soul! The jaded mind is calm when He is near. The distracted heart, when Christ has breathed upon it, is like a mountain lake on a summer's day.

Absence from Christ produces weariness, but the Presence of Jesus always brings a sense of perfect ease. Have I not seen a man go staggering along beneath a little load of trouble because he had not gone to God with his burden? Yet I have seen another carry three times the weight and stand like a Hercules, unmoved, with his feet firmly set, because God was in him, and his confidence was in the Most High. I have seen you, Friend, groaning and repining because you had a trifling loss, or a slight sickness. And I have seen another, close to the verge of death, who has suffered the loss of all things, who has, nevertheless, rejoiced in the Lord and sung aloud in his Redeemer's name. All the difference is here—if we rest in the Lord, we rest, and nothing can make us weary—but if we go not to Him, we know no rest, and the slightest fatigue bows us down.

I would, dear Friends, that all the members of this Church had more of this resting in the Lord. Sometimes I wish that some of you had more weariness—you will never work yourselves to death serving Christ—you are a great deal more likely to weary yourselves by serving the world. How men will moil and toil, and run here and there, to get a little of this world's goods—and then they put it into a bag that is full of holes! They neglect the means of Grace and, as to the week-night service—dear, dear, dear, there is that shop that must be attended to! And some of you can scarcely give yourselves time to pray because you must rise up early and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness. I wish that you would sometimes grow weary in that kind of labor, and take to another Master, and work for Him as you have worked for the world, till you grew weary in *His* cause, for then would you know the sweet rest with which He makes the weary to rest when they have wearied themselves for Him in preaching, in teaching, in spreading His truth!

We read in Isaiah's prophecy, "This is the rest wherewith you may cause the weary to rest," and I know there are some weary ones here. You are not weary of God's work, but you are weary of bearing Christ's Cross. You have had so much shame and so much sorrow—well, well, Brothers and Sisters—"rest in the Lord." You may come to Him and since He carried His Cross, and that Cross was yours as well as His, you may put *your cross* upon His shoulder, and then you will find it easy work to carry the cross, yourselves! This, then, is one of the rests which every Christian may have—rest from weariness.

VI. There is also a rest called THE REST OF ACCOMPLISHMENT.

Was it not said of Boaz, by the mother-in-law of Ruth, "The man will not be in rest until he has finished the thing this day"? Some Christians never have any rest, or they have but very little, because they do not understand the doctrine of a finished salvation. If you and I are only half-saved, why, of course, we can never be *really* restful till the work is finished. No, if we are only three-quarters saved, we shall never have any true rest till the other quarter of the work is done! If there is one stone for us to lay in order to complete the edifice, we must not give sleep to our eyes, nor slumber to our eyelids, till it is fixed in its place.

But here is the joy, here is the peace of Christians, that our salvation is a finished one! We have not a farthing to pay to complete the ransom of our souls. We have not a stitch to set to finish the robe of our salvation. We have not an act to perform, a prayer to offer, a tear to weep, a thought to think in order to finish the work of our redemption! I know that all these things shall be worked in us and, that by the Spirit of God we shall be made to do them—but all that shall not be with any view to the completion of our salvation—that was finished in the Person of the bleeding Lamb of Calvary!

There are a great many people who imagine that they will be saved because they regularly go to Church—they might go to Church as long as Methuselah lived, but not get an inch nearer to Heaven by doing so! Others of you may suppose that you will go to Glory through constantly coming *here*. We will soon drive that delusion out of your minds if you are indulging any such notion! Still, there it is—you think that if you are kind, moral, upright, if you do good to your neighbors, if you bring up your families well—in some way Jesus Christ will mysteriously come in to make up your deficiencies and then when you get to Glory, of course, you intend to have a song all to yourself! You will say, "Praise and glory and honor be to myself! I did my part and Christ's assistance made the matter all right." The man who thinks that the work of salvation is partly his own does not understand the finished work of Christ! Either Christ completed all that was necessary for your salvation, or He did not! If He did finish it, then rest in Him and be glad, and say, "I am secure forever because my salvation is finished. I have nothing to do but to live to the honor of Him who has completely saved me by His Grace, His blood, His righteousness."

But if Christ did not finish the work, you cannot complete it! If He has left a stitch unsewn or a stone unlaid, you cannot supply the deficiency. What? The human and the Divine joined together as equals? What? Yoke your little, insignificant, insect-like power with the Omnipotent strength of the Divine Redeemer? God forbid! What? Shall the dross and scum of human merit come and be reckoned with the pure gold of Christ's atoning Sacrifice? No! That can never be! Grace reigns, and Grace, alone, reigns! It reigns in this, that there is a finished work! Therefore, Christian, rest—"rest in the Lord," for the work is done! Be of good cheer, take your ease in Christ. Eat of Him, drink of Him and be merry, for you have

much goods laid up for many years. Your feasting will never bring to you the censure of being a fool, but you will be as foolish as a thousand fools if you do not rest in Jesus!

VII. Once again, we have, as Christians, enjoyed and we do *now* enjoy, THE REST OF COMPLETE SATISFACTION. There are very few persons in this world who are perfectly contented, but true Believers, when they are in a right state of mind, are always so. I do not believe that I have a wish in all this world except to know more of my Master and to win more souls for Him. Besides that, I cannot see anything to long for and I can truly sing—

"I would not change my blest estate,
For all that earth calls good or great!
And while my faith can keep her hold,
I envy not the sinner's gold."

Rich sinners think poor saints are great fools. You, young man, over there, you own a fine horse and you have a splendid house and garden, or you have a flourishing business and very bright prospects. But I could pick out some old woman here—and, thank God, there are many such who regularly come to the Tabernacle, poor souls who have little else but the Grace of God to comfort them—I could bring this old women up for you to see. Her clothes are darned in a hundred places, or else she would be in rags. She works very hard to earn the little that keeps her out of the workhouse. She has not many comforts, yet sometimes, when we get a shake of her hand, we find she has some comforts, though they are of a sort that this young man does not understand.

Well now, come here, my good Sister! Do you see that young man over there? He never has rheumatism in his bones. He never has to sit shivering in winter because there is no fire in the grate. He never has to say to his landlord, "I do not know where I shall get the week's rent." He never has to pinch himself and live on nothing but a small piece of bread-and-butter for a couple of days—no, never! I ask her, "Will you change places with this young gentleman?" "Well," she says, "I should like to know, first, whether he has an interest in Christ." When I tell her that he has not, I am sure her answer would be, "Change places with *him*? No, never! I'd sooner starve and have Christ as my Savior, than own all the wealth and comforts of this world, and be without Christ." So say we, Brothers and Sisters, and in the language of Watts we sing—

"Go now, and boast of all your stores
And tell how bright you shine!
Your heaps of glittering dust are yours,
And my Redeemer's mine."

Having Christ, we feel perfect satisfaction and need nothing more! If we go up or down, to the right or to the left, we can find nothing beyond our Lord! Having Him, we possess all things, and our soul is satisfied! You remember that Naomi spoke of Ruth finding rest in the house of her husband. That is to say, she would have all she needed. Her husband would be all things to her. She did not need another husband, she did

not need to find another house, nor broader fields, nor larger wealth. Boaz was all in all to her and what he gave her was enough for all her needs. So is it with the Christian—Christ is All in All to him—whatever He may give, or whatever He may deny, the Christian is perfectly content!

VIII. I close, dear Friends, by noticing that all these forms of rest should bring to the Believer THE REST OF CONSCIOUS ENJOYMENT.

Going down to Windsor to preach some time ago, my friend, John Anderson, was with me. And about twelve o'clock, as we were near Datchet, under the broad trees of a park we saw a number of sheep lying down peacefully. My friend quoted that passage in the Canticles, "Tell me, O You whom my soul loves, where You feed, where You make Your flock to rest at noon." It was the very picture of content and restful enjoyment! And as I came along tonight, I was thinking that I should like to see the same picture in this Church when we meet presently around the Communion Table. May you all have the rest of enjoyment! You have Christ to feed upon. You have heard about Him, again, this evening. You know He is yours. Then kiss Him with the kisses of your mouth. You have not a doubt, I hope, of your interest in Him—if you have, come to Him, again, just as you came at first, as poor sinners resting on Him alone!

And if He is, indeed, yours, treat Him as you would treat a loaf of bread if you were hungry—do not merely look at Him, but eat of Him and eat abundantly, O Beloved! Leave all your cares behind. You remember what Pharaoh said to Joseph's brethren, "Also regard not your stuff, for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours." Now, do not regard that household of yours, tonight, leave that stock-in-trade behind, let all that lumber lie where it is, for the good of Christ and of all the land of Heaven is yours! Come now, and be satisfied with all the goodness of God's Grace. "Ah," you say, "it is not quite so easy to leave all these things. There are such attractions in the world." Attractions, Brothers and Sisters? Rather, call them *distractions*! But I say that the attractions of Christ are greater than the distractions of the world! Fix your souls steadily on this fact, that you have Christ, that Christ is All in All to them that trust Him, and so come, now, and take your full rest in the Lord your God!

Oh, that some might be set a-longing, tonight, and say, "That is what we want to do!" Well, if you long for Christ, then Christ longs for you! If you want Christ, then Christ wants you! If you penitently return to the Lord now, He will hasten towards you while you are yet a great way off! He will run to meet you, even as the father ran to meet his prodigal son. If you begin to confess with the prodigal, "Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in Your sight, and am no more worthy to be called Your son," the Lord will say to His servants, as the father in the parable said, "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring here the fatted calf, and kill it; and let

us eat and be merry: for this, My son, was dead, and is alive again! He was lost, and is found."

Remember that verse of Joseph Hart's which we have often sung, and as I repeat it, trust the Savior of whom He sings—

"Trust Him; He will not deceive us,
Though we hardly of Him deem:
He will never, never leave us,
Nor will let us quite leave Him."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
Psalm 123, 124. 125.

We shall read, this evening, three short Psalms—the 123rd , 124th and 125th . May the Holy Spirit, who Inspired the writers of them, strengthen our faith while we read these songs of joyous confidence!

Psalm 123:1. *Unto You lift I up my eyes.* Instead of looking downward in despair, or looking to the right hand or to the left to human confidence, or looking within in pride, "Unto You lift I up my eyes."—

1. *O You that dwells in the heavens.* It is always delightful to the Christian to remember what the title of his God is—"Our Father, which are in Heaven." It is the place of prospect from which God looks down and sees all men, and understands all their ways. And it is also the place of His Power and His Glory. Lord, I look up to You! You dwell in Glory, therefore all power is in Your hands, and You know how to use that power on the behalf of Your people!

2. *Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until that He have mercy upon us.* The servant looks to his master's hand for direction and for support. If he has a work to do that is too heavy for him, he looks to his master to send him help. And he also looks to his master's hand for his reward when his work is done. So, dear Friends, are we, day by day, walking as in our Master's light?

3. *Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us: for we are exceedingly filled with contempt.* The best thing that the best of men can ask for is God's mercy! And that mercy is so great, even to the heavens, that, under the weariness of trials and troubles, it is a sufficient help for them. When we are not only in contempt, but even filled with contempt and, as the text puts it, "exceedingly filled with contempt," so that we have lost our good name among men, still may we turn to our God and seek His mercy.

4. *Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud.* This was the lot of God's people in David's day. It is the same with Believers, now, and I suppose that, so long as the earth stands, the saints of the Lord will have to cry to Him concerning their adversaries. Let them remember always to use the same remedy that the godly ones of old used and not plead in earthly courts of

law, but take the case to the great Court of King's Bench in Heaven! Let not any of the Lord's children ever be concerned about defending their own characters, but let them always go at once to Him whose bare arm is quite sufficient to right all wrongs and to deliver the oppressed.

Psalm 124:1. *If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, now may Israel say.* There is a break here, the sentence is not finished, so finish it for yourselves. If the Lord had not been on your side, what then? You would have been condemned on account of sin! If the Lord had not been on your side as the Redeemer, you would have been left to perish through the natural depravity of your own heart! If He who is "mighty to save" had not been your Helper, just think, Christians, you who are today filled with joy, whose feet are treading Mount Tabor—think what you would have been if the Lord had *not* been on your side—and then praise and magnify that Grace to which you owe so much!

2, 3. *If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, when men rose up against us: then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us.* The word, "quick," here means, "living." Before we were dead, they would have swallowed us up, for the anger of men against God's people is always exceedingly great. They called the Master of the house, "Beelzebub," so they are not likely to be very warmly affected towards His disciples! Suppose that we had been given up to the devices of wicked men, where would we have been?

My brethren, a man may live so circumspectly that, outwardly, he may be without fault, yet he may wake up, come morning, and find his character blasted! And it may remain so for years, for the tongue of slander is full of all manner of villainy and, often, the more pure the alabaster of a man's character may be, the more black are the filthy spots which the world makes upon it! Be not too much cast down, O you children of the living God, when you are dishonored among men, for so was it with the Lord God, Himself, who was slandered in the garden of Eden! Expect not, therefore, that you will escape the serpent's venom!

4, 5. *Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul: then the proud waters had gone over our soul.* Here, in this life, we may have troubles, not only from our own evil hearts, but also from Satan and from the world. Truly, if it had not been for the Lord, the proud waters had gone right over our souls! It is a wonder that we are alive, Brothers and Sisters! We can sing with Watts—

"Our life contains a thousand springs
And dies if one is gone!
Strange, that a harp of thousand strings
Should keep in tune so long!"

But it is a ten thousand times greater miracle that we are spiritually alive when there are so many in this world seeking to destroy us! This is a marvel of marvels and the whole world, itself, contains no greater wonders than are to be found in that one little world of Mansoul!

6. *Blessed be the LORD, who has not given us as a prey to their teeth.* We were almost in their teeth, like David's lamb, but David's Son plucked

us out of the jaws of the lion and out of the paws of the bear! Now the Psalmist uses another figure. First he spoke of the proud waters, then of the wild beasts—now he mentions the fowlers.

7, 8. *Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped. Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made Heaven and earth.* What a blessed conclusion is it to our experience when we can sing of what the Lord has done and so are encouraged by the all of what He will yet do! Let us write this text upon our banners and lift them up in the face of every adversary, "Our help is in the name of the Lord." As John Wesley said, "The best of all is, God is with us," that is the best of all to the Christian, so good an, "all," that he is blessed with that even if he has nothing besides!

Psalm 125:1-3. *They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides forever. As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the LORD is round about His people from henceforth even forever. For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous; lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity.* By, "the rod," is here meant, "the scepter." The wicked shall not *permanently* rule over the righteous—they may have a temporary dominion and sovereignty but, in due season, their rod shall be broken and their power shall be scattered to the winds.

4, 5. *Do good O Lord, unto those that are good, and to them that are upright in their hearts. As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the LORD shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity: but peace shall be upon Israel.* May we have faith to lay hold upon that last blood promise and so enjoy the peace of God which passes all understanding! Amen!

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

END OF VOLUME 40.

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